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RAVANA



A MISTAKEN KING, AN UNMISTAKEN LEADER

THE MYSTERIOUS SIDE OF
LANKESHWAR

GAURAV KATARIA



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About the Author...



Gaurav Kataria, an accidentally planned author, is a 1990 born professional who, sometimes, does not agree with 'Everything that our Mythology says.' Before completing his MBA from NMIMS- Mumbai and starting his corporate career, he spent his initial- around 10+ years- managing his family business. Apart from inculcating on-the-field experience, that gradually developed his Marketing, Negotiation & Decision-making skills over the years. With time, he developed a keen interest in reading *Mythology*, its applications in the business world, and how it can positively influence society!

He lives in Delhi with his family!

He aspires to be a health enthusiast, Philanthropist, and a violinist!

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Ravana

A Mistaken King, An Unmistaken Leader

Gaurav

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Characters and their Relationships

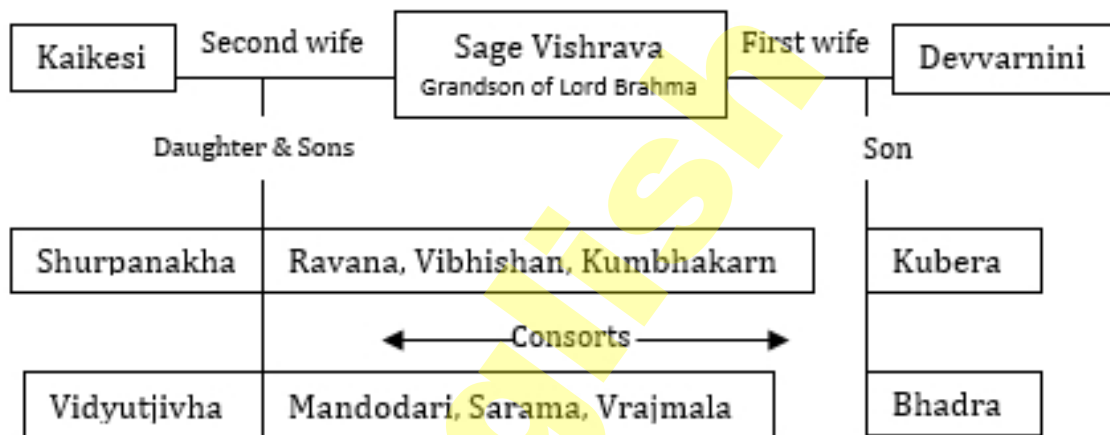
Akshayakumara (Akshaya) : Youngest son of Ravana.

Angada : Son of Vali. Nephew of Sugriva.

Dhumraksha, Virupaksha : Members of the council of Lanka.

Hiranyakashup: An Asura King, Father of Prahalada. Narsimah Avtaar of Lord Vishnu killed him.

Jambavan : The king of the Bear clan and a close aide of Sugriva.



Janak : King Hroshhoroma's son. Father of Sita & Urmila. King of Mithila.

Kaikeyi : Princess of Kekaya kingdom and third wife of King Dashratha. Mother of Bharath.

Kalenemi : Son of Maricha. Ravan sends him to kill Hanuman during his search for Sanjivani herbs.

Kaushalya : Mother of Ram. The first wife of Dashratha

Kumbha & Nikumbha : Sons of Kumbhakarn & Vrajmala

Khara : The governor of Dandaka Kingdom. Son of Kaikesi's sister-Raka.

Malyavan - One of the Chief Advisors to Ravana.

Maricha : Son of Tataka. Helps Ravana in the abduction of Sita.

Meghnad : Eldest son of Ravana. An *Atimaharathi* .

Prahasta : Maternal Uncle of Ravana.

Ram : Eldest son of Queen Kaushalya & King Dashratha of Ayodhya. Sita married to Ram.

Sage Pulatsaya : Father of Sage Vishrava. Grandfather of Ravana.

Sage Vashistha : Chief Guru of Ram and Lakshman.

Sumali : Maternal grandfather of Ravana. Husband of Ketumati. Father of Kaikesi.

Sumitra : Mother of Lakshman and Shatrughan. Second wife of Dashratha.

Trijata : Daughter of Vibhishan. Caretaker of Sita in Ashoka Vatika.

Vali : Father of Angada. Brother of Sugriva. King of Kishkindha.

Vedawati : A devotee of Lord Vishnu. Granddaughter of Guru Brihaspati. She rejected the proposal of Ravana and immolated herself when Ravana mocked her devotion towards Vishnu.

To Mom and Dad,
My Late Grandma,
and Maa Saraswati

Sarasvati Namastubhyam Varade Kaama-Ruupinni |
Vidyaarambham Karissyaami Siddhir-Bhavatu Me Sadaa ||

Salutations to Maa Saraswati, Giver of Boons, who fulfills all Wishes:
O Devi,

When I Begin my learning, Request you to, always, bestow on me the
calibre of Right Understanding

Acknowledgements

Our eyes see thousands of dreams in our life, but to convert even a single dream into reality...sometimes...one life is less!

It was an experience - complex and tough, but full of learnings and satisfaction. As they say, it is not the journey, but the people you meet on the journey who make it beautiful. I would like to thank and acknowledge those who made this journey possible!

My Parents who patiently listened to my unstructured thoughts and as they say- "Senseless" talks!

Anuj, my brother; Akanksha, my wife; Nishant & Neeti, my cousins; Shivkaran, my uncle- who supported and helped me in every possible way to come up with the structure, flaws, biases, and flow of the story.

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My editor, Design & communication Team, especially Rishab, for turning this dream into a reality!

Everyone who will read this piece of my work!

...and, finally *Ravana* (රවණ - in Sinhalese) for being the protagonist of my story!

Jai Maa Saraswati!

Novels

A Note Before You Begin...

A feeling of excitement and intrigue would overwhelm me whenever I watch or read about mythological warriors. These feelings, thoughts, and my impatience began taking shape with time... leading to my first book!

I am always intrigued by the behavior, habits, and actions of our mythology's controversial characters. One of the characters is **Ravana**, the King of Lanka. The first striking fact was that he was renowned as '*Dashanan*' before Lord Shiva blessed him with a new name- '*Ravana*'. As I tried to dig deeper into his life, I realized it was *not his love for Lanka or his desire for wealth* that steered the decisions of his life! It was not *Sita's abduction* or *Vibhishan's support to Ram* that led to his death!

To me, there were different dimensions,

Dimension 1,

Dimension 2,

Dimension 3 that led to the events deciding the fate of Ravana. Had those events not happened in the way they happened, we would have been reading a different version of mythology altogether.

The story starts with those *Dimensions* and flows towards the events that decided the destiny of the world's mightiest King!

The story of Ravana! - In his own words!

At the end of the *Chapters*, there are - "*Hidden somewhere in phrases*" business and corporate lessons. Inspired by the life of Ravana, these lessons may help professionals excel in their corporate journeys.

I prefer a different style of storytelling, i.e., sudden leaps and quick jumps in the flow of the story. You would feel the events diverting at specific points, which I intentionally do, to familiarize the reader with the context of those events!

You can also refer to the *Glossary* for more explanations.

I hope you will enjoy the book and pardon me for the mistakes I might have committed unintentionally!

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Your Friend
Gaurav Kataria

Novels English & Hindi

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I built it!
I bore the Pain!

Novels English & Hindi

Sita was never the reason for my death.
Her abduction was never the cause.

Novels English & Hindi

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If I ever believed in complacency...
You would have never read me in the pages of history!

Novels English & Hindi



Dimension 1

Yes!

This war would have never happened.

Had I believed in acceptance of humiliation!

After conquering Alkapuri, situated in the Himalayas, from Kubera, I proceeded towards Ayodhya and sent my message to Anaranya .

One of the most powerful Kings of Ayodhya was the descendent of Ishvaku , the first prominent monarch of the Suryavanshi dynasty. Ishvaku was the son of Manu , considered as the first human incarnation on Earth. It was when Ishvaku became the Chakravarti Samrat , or Universal Emperor establishing his empire all over the Aryavrata, the Solar dynasty reached its prominence.

(As per Manusmriti, Aryavrata ranged from the Himalayas, covering Eastern Bay of Bengal, extending towards Vindhya Ranges and then meeting the sea in the West)

Other kings of Ayodhya had already either surrendered without any resistance or had struck an alliance with us. It was Anaranya, who decided to confront our army and not accept suppression.

His spirit was commendable. His valor, admirable!

After a long time, I encountered someone who could challenge my courage, shake my ego!

Instead of conceding Ayodhya's throne to me, he ordered my messenger to invite my entire clan to the battleground. That statement by Anaranya was enough to awaken the evil in me.

On my orders, he died a tragic death at the hands of Maricha.

"Dashanan!

Your bravado can never vanquish the dignity of Ayodhya.

Your empire will vanish! Not even the dregs will remain!

Your ego will conspire against you!

A warrior from my lineage would be the reason for your death!" he cursed me before taking his last breath.

I laughed at those mumbled words and left.

We could see the dilapidated condition of Ayodhya (*Lord Ram was not born until then*). Untouchability was at its peak, and lower castes had to make way for upper castes. Even the pathways reserved for the upper-class elites were forbidden to the lower classes. People were dying of starvation. The entire caste system was divided based on the family they were born into.

*Maybe they were well disposed to those customs or...
they had, unwillingly, submitted to those rules....*

Witnessing the crumbling and miserable state of people in Ayodhya, I did not crusade deeper into other territories of it and did not attack or even make treaties with smaller kingdoms.

...which turned out to be the biggest mistake of my life...!
Thereupon my dearth and death began striding towards me!



Dimension 2

*Testing times reveal the real character of mortals.
They must be tested more than once...at regular intervals!
Humans, unlike seasons, can change any time!*

Warriors of Lanka had fought not one but multiple battles in Ayodhya at their full throttle and deserved a break to reenergize, heal and celebrate victories. We had sojourned in the jungles of Ayodhya when I sent Maricha back to Lanka to see if all was well under the leadership of my brother Vibhishan. The next day before sunrise, Maricha started his journey back to Lanka in my *Pushpak Vimana*.

He was greeted with great elation in Lanka. His mettle and valor in every battle we fought had been commendable, as always. Maricha got the news that my daughter was already born, and the family was yet to decide her name. My father, Vishrava, a renowned astrologer of that era, predicted that my first-born might become the reason for the destruction of my entire family. It would be the reason for my death. My family members took his prediction too solemnly and ordered Maricha to dispose of the child on his way back to the battlefield.

Such shallow but prevalent dogmas were terminating millions of lives for ages.

The next morning, Maricha left Lanka to join me back in the jungles of Mithila, carrying my daughter with him. On his way, he disposed of my first-born, somewhere in those jungles.

Until that time, I was unaware that my child had already been born and dumped somewhere in the jungles of Mithila. I had told Maricha to reach Mithila directly as we had planned to attack it after our victory in Ayodhya. We were planning to attack the North and then the whole of Aryavata post invading Mithila.

I was so powerful and confident that I never had any second thoughts about my victory in any battle...

We had a vast army of millions of Asuras selected based on their skills and acumen. Our recruitment policies and procedures were world-renowned and of the best possible standards. Our army included eminent *Rathis* and *Maharathis* like Prahasta, Kumbhakarn, Akampan, Yajnashatru, Sumali, Dhumraksha, and many more. We were equipped with highly destructive weapons, warheads, and divine arrows.

Our *Angampora* martial arts technique was one of the most abstruse fighting techniques in the world. Kings, Knights, and famed warriors from all over the world would come to our training camps to learn this art and weaponry. We had eliminated the hierarchy-based selection of our combatants, for that matter, even from our administration. We were driven by meritocracy and hence undefeatable in all spheres, whether finance, defense, arts, civils, management ...or politics!



Dimension 3

Premature decisions & unsound promises made to others, even selves, breed irreparable agony

It was chaotic in Hiranyakashup's durbar. Prahalada was arguing with his father over his belief and acceptance of Vishnu as his idol. As the argument turned violent, Vishnu, who disguised in the form of *Narsimah*, battled with Hiranyakashup and killed him.

Post his death, Prahalada was throned as the king, and he ruled the Asura Kingdom for many decades in collaboration with the Devas. Most of the Asura scriptures, rituals, and customs either had mixed with Deva culture or wiped out completely. It was when Mahabali, son of Virochana and grandson of Prahalada, ruled, the Asura culture revived. He was a well-learned, benevolent king who conducted many military campaigns all over the world during his rule.

Mahabali was conducting *Ashwamedha Yagya* to increase his control over land and expand his powers. Vishnu, in the form of *Brahmin Vamana (Fifth avatar of Vishnu)*, demanded some land from him in the donation. Mahabali, being a benevolent king, who never refused to help, agreed to provide as much land as Vamana requested. Vamana initially asked for his entire land but was later rejected by Sukracharya, the chief advisor to Mahabali.

Despite Sukracharya's warnings, Mahabali promised to provide some land to Vamana so that trade, arts, and collaboration in the form of exchange of customs, education, and martial arts could be initiated and Brahmins could benefit from some of the significant aspects of Asura culture. They had the best architecturally planned cities, drainage systems, streamlined reservoirs, and a perfect example of a well-executed, systematic administration in the world.

With time, those small institutions of Deva culture established under his regime started spreading up. Gradually Mahabali and entire Asura clan were discarded towards the south where they had to hide in jungles to survive and save themselves from probable attacks by Devas. On Mahabali's request, Vishnu allowed him to visit his place once in a

year and rejuvenate his memories of once being the king of the largest empire of the world.

(Festival of Onam, in Kerala, is celebrated to mark his yearly homecoming after Vishnu sent him to Patala).

Years passed by, and Asura clan thrived in the jungles extending to the south of Bharatvarsha and some parts of modern-day Srilanka. Their prosperity and span of the dynasty were decreasing, becoming one of the endangered cultures and breeds of that time.

ରାବଣ

100s and 1000s of years passed by.....

Sumali, Malyavan, and Mali asked the renowned architect Vishwakarma to build Lanka, made of pure gold. They ruled over Lanka for many years and were technologically hundreds of years ahead of their contemporaries. They were advanced in music, architecture, intellect, and mature enough to accept diversity as a norm and not as a liability. Women in their culture were treated at par with men and had special reservations in administration.

Later they had a fierce battle with Vishnu and his army where Mali was killed. Malyavan & Sumali safely escaped hiding in Patala .

By now, Gandharvas were ruling over the Northwestern Bharatvarsha and even beyond (including present-day Pakistan).

Naga devotees were ruling the central part of Bharatvarsha. They were relatively less powerful than others but still more powerful than Asuras.

Yakshas were ruling over the Northern and Eastern parts (Present-day Nepal and Uttarakhand). Indra, the king of gods, ruled certain parts of the North. Devas prominently stayed in North and were gradually expanding their dynasties and presence all over Bharatvarsha, except for certain parts of the south that were yet to be controlled.

Asuras were marginalized to the south; most of their customs and rituals were either destroyed or forced to abandon.

Sumali, Malyavan, and their family, along with a small number of remaining soldiers, were discarded from their homes and territories.

ରାବିଶ୍ରା

One night, all of the prominent figures of the Asura clan decided to visit Sage Vishrava's hermitage.

Vishrava was one of the most renowned sages of his time and son of the Saptrishi, Sage Pulatsya. *Pulatsya, who was also one of the ten Prajapatis, in turn, was the son of Lord Brahma.*

Vishrava was married to Devvarnini, daughter of sage Bharadwaja-one of the Saptrishis. *Devvarnini had a brother, Sage Garga, and a half-brother, Guru Dronacharya.*

The purpose of the visit was to get Vishrava's advice on the uncertain future of the whole of the Asura tribe. If a peace treaty with the Devas or a battle against them for their long lost empire of Lanka would be the only option or if he could suggest a middle way of getting their prestige and prosperity back.

My mother, Kaikesi, young, beautiful, and unmarried, accompanied them during that visit. She was one of the most beautiful women of our Asura tribe. She was standing behind a bunch of Asuras, followed by Sumali, Malyavan, Virupaksha, and Maricha, along with other prominent women of the tribe.

At first, Vishrava, with a cursory look, tried to view Kaikesi but was not successful. He invited all of them inside his ashram and welcomed them with food, rose water, and other refreshments.

They sat on a tattered rug, forming a semicircle around the Sage. The raised platform was for the Sage and some key representatives from Asuras. My mother sat on the right of the Sage, certain feet away. Vishrava looked at her for once and was glued to her face until the commotion in the hermitage disappeared. Their conversations witnessed occasional cursory eye contact with each other.

My mother's intermittent shy smiles at him sowed the seed of my birth in the ashram of my father, the Sage Vishrava.

Ravana

Maybe, I was arrogant but never ignorant.

For ages, people have judged me for my deeds but never for my intentions behind those deeds.

Some 5000 years ago....

Dasagriva, Dashakantha, Iraavanam, Ravana, Dashmukha, Lankeshwara, Dashanan are the names that history has adorned me with.

*I was obsessed with “**Ravana**”, the name that even invincible warriors felt a dread of.*

Some call me *Dashanan*, *Dashakantha*, or *Dashmukha* because of immense strength, which paralleled the might of ten humans.

Dasagriva , maybe because I had a melodious voice.

Iraavanam, as someone with immense beauty and immutable principles.

Ravana, as my Lord, my god, *lord Rudra*, gave me this name.

Lankeshwara , because I won *Lanka* back from Devas and ruled as a king that Lanka ever needed.

Some say I could create ten perfect successive illusory reflections of my face. Others say that I offered my head ten times to Lord Brahma, my great grandfather, at the time of penance.

Some even think that I could control all of the *Nine planets* and my self, hence *Dashanan*. The knowledge and preachings of *Six Shastras* and *Four Vedas* had always been my companion.

Maybe I had command over all of the *Ten elements* needed to dominate this world,

Manas (mind), *Buddhi* (intellect), *Kama* (lust), *Krodha* (anger), *Chitta* (consciousness), *Ahamkara* (ego), *Lobha* (greed),

Moha (worldly attachment), *Madha* (arrogance), *Matsarya* (envy).

Hence, I am *Dashanan*. I am *Dashagriva*. I am *Dashkantha*. I am *Dashamukha*.

Somewhere from the corners of the past, I silently see the pages of history discussing me, giving enough reasons to everyone to judge me for my deeds.

Meghnad, my puissant son, the only living *Atimaharathis* of that era, was raised to possess the ultimate weapons of mass destruction – *Brahmastra* , *Pashupatastra*, and *Vaishnvastra* . Whether alive or dead, no one could outnumber the weapons that my son -Meghnad and I possessed.

I was a world-renowned Rudraveena player and an impeccable astrologer. Author of *Ravana Samhita* , an anthology of Astrology.

I developed *Arka prakasha* , the science of curing wounds. *Nadi pariksha* , the book on pulse examination, was written by this devotee of Lord Shiva.

No one could challenge my mastery in Ayurveda, *Nadi pariksha*, and *Nadi Vijnana*.

I was the sole author of *Kumara tantraya* , based on the treatment of diseases of Infants.

I invented *Ravanhatha* , a musical instrument, considered the ancestor of the modern-day violin.

I was the composer of '*Shiva Tandava Strotam*,' the greatest hymns devoted to my Shiva, my Rudra, my Mahadeva.

I eliminated casteism and customs of animal sacrifices. I wiped off the *Satipratha* culture and, for widows, introduced the right to remarry.

I was the one to introduce *one leader* , *one decision* culture during my reign. This led to faster decision making and better results.

I was the creator and constructor of *Pushpaka vimana* , the only flying machine of my time. Something that even the Devas did not possess.

For what I had earned was due to my sacrifices, hard work, my pains, my scars, my silent screams. I was not born in a cradle of gold; I was not the son of a king. I was Ravana, a poor Asura. A self-made king!

People called it 'ego'; I call it BEING!

I was not a rebel without a cause. Pain, which was residing in me, started to matter less with time.

Then what happened to such a great warrior, maestro, technologist, philosopher, a king who wanted to spread 'Raksha' culture and equality all over the world, a loving father, husband, brother, and a devoted son. A living genius, who died a tragic death.

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Is it my karma or my destiny or betrayal from my blood or people...
only Lord Shiva knows!

I did my part...but destiny had its plans!

Novels English & Hindi

Let's not start from my birth...

Novels English & Hindi

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Chapter R.1

After defeating King Anaranya and conquering Ayodhya, I ordered Prahasta, Sumali, and Vidyutjivha to go back to Lanka. A spy informed me that a small group of invaders tried attacking Lanka through sea routes. Maricha, Virupaksha, and Dhumraksha stayed back to support me in the campaign. I was determined to continue my crusade, so I decided to hold off and attack the Western & Central part of Bharatvarsha as most of the remaining parts were already under my control.

Such impossible feats were accomplished because of our mighty army and its untiring commanders.

We had a hierarchy of commanders-in-chief in our army. With each level, the quota of strong commanders was increased. However, the count of weak commanders was kept constant. This was to create more competition at the bottom of the pyramid and allow them to climb the ladder up faster while upskilling themselves. Influential commanders, the best in the world, were anyhow already serving in our army. If we came to know of better warriors, serving some other kingdom, we either negotiated with them or offered them as much money, luxury, and fortune that they could have never earned in their lifetime and persuaded them to join us.

ରାତି

It was dark and silent outside.

The sound of the breeze was breaking that deafening silence when I saw a lean, well-built but short figure heading towards me. It was my uncle, Maricha, having a bit of dejection on his dull and gloomy face.

“Is there anything troubling the Mātulaḥ of the King Dashanan?”

I can see deep frowns on your forehead, uncle”, I asked with a smirk on my face.

First, he responded hesitantly, made expressions to show as if he was tired and exhausted, but after I insisted, he told me everything about

abandoning my little daughter in the fields of Mithila, the place we were to attack next.

He wrapped her in some tattered clothes inside a wooden basket, partially covered with some grass, and left her in the jungles of Mithila. After a while, he saw some army men screaming,

'Jai ho Raja Janak ,

'all hail to king Janak,'

'Long live Samrat Janak ,' all in the same pitch, moving in the same direction. He left the place in a hurry realizing that "*Jai ho Janak* " was getting louder and stamping of the footsteps rowdy, signaling his army getting closer to him with each passing second. Later, Maricha wanted to go and chase them to see if she was with them or still lying in the field, where he had forsaken her. However, the fear of being arrested or killed by his army stopped him.

"Janak or his army might have found her and taken her with them," he said in a nervous tone, standing in front of me with his head bent.

He was well aware of my anger, moreover, its intensity!

I was so infuriated that I wanted to kill him.

Maricha gave me all the illogical reasons for abandoning her. He started giving me unwarranted proofs of her birth being a bad omen to Lanka and my life.

I, the king, to be the ruler of the whole of Bharatvarsha, did not believe in all those dogmas. I was youthful, hungry to rule, eager to get the glory of the Asura kingdom back, where no one would suffer or die of hunger; equality would prevail over the customs and superstition.

I was a warrior, a king, not a coward!

I knew my father, Vishrava, a Brahmin himself, must have given that order to Maricha. I was an astrologer myself but had never been so obsessed with it that it could overpower my rationale. People bend the rules as they find it beneficial; my father could exemplify that.

How could one bring a change in the world if his own family was bounded by such illogical dogmas and predictions devoid of any reasoning !

I screamed at Maricha, wanted to kick that brute so hard that he would die. My anger was ruling my mind, throwing at him whatever I could get my hands on. Kumbhakarn came running towards me and

held me tightly, punched at my face till I was pacified, and told Maricha to go away.

I screamed at Kumbhakarn, asked him to leave me alone. I gulped two goblets of wine, sat on the Ottoman lying behind me, and slipped into deep thoughts.

රාවණ

As much as I knew Janak, a king of renowned stature, was one of the most generous and famous rulers of Aryavrata.

King Hroshhorma's son Janak's original name was King *Seeradhwaja*.

All the rulers who ruled Mithila (*Also known as Videha, currently in Bihar*) were famously known as *Janaks*.

(Janakpur in Nepal was named after him)

Mithila rose to prominence under his patronage. His court was decorated with renowned sages like Yajnavalkya, who promoted 'Advaita Vedanta' seeking knowledge about self and Brahma. Female sage Gargi, one among the expounders of Vedas, had written many hymns of Rigveda and was named Brahmavadini (*the possessor of Brahma Vidya*).

Under the guidance of Sage Astavakra, he attained enlightenment. Once, he wanted to relinquish all of his materialistic possessions, his family, his throne, his subjects...everything. Astavakra persuaded him not to follow that path since only an enlightened king can bring prosperity, justice, fame, and peace. Later under his reign, Mithila became a prominent cultural and political center of Aryavrata.

It would have been an honor to face such a king on the battlefield, but tides had already changed its course by then. I was not in a state to plan an attack or have a legal agreement with Janak to bring Mithila under the statehood of Lanka.

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It was dark outside. I looked up in the sky, full of stars, hopes, energy, and enormous possibilities. The thought of being away from family for so long, Mandodari's untiring wait, and thought of losing my daughter were constantly pinching me. I strived hard to divert myself, for those were not letting me act rationally...distracting me away from the future that I had imagined.

I called Kumbhakarn and Maricha in the praetorium to discuss our plans. I asked Maricha to pardon me for my unruly behavior. He knew about my furious and aggressive nature since childhood when I was just a five-year-old adamant kid. He hugged me, whispered "Aham tobhyam Pranyaami" (I love you!) in my ears, and allowed me to proceed.

We discussed our next attack on the land of Mahismati (Located in present-day Madhya Pradesh, on the banks of Narmada River).

King Kartavirya Arjuna, who belonged to the Yadava dynasty and considered one of the undefeatable kings of our times, ruled Mahismati. I was also one of the greatest admirers of his leadership skills, his command, and the control he had over his army. However, with time he got too drunk with that immense power and pride, got too engrossed in passivity and barbarism that a wave of dissension spread over the whole of Mahismati, creating numerous factions within the state. He started oppressing his subjects, hurting the hands that were once feeding him. He mercilessly killed all who raised their voice against him, against the law of his land.

I was not afraid of him; I could praise him for his valor and his abilities but in no way consider him better than me, Dashanan, the king of three worlds.

As planned, we entered Mahismati with my army, except for a small platoon reserved for exigencies. We followed the path along the banks of the Narmada River and planned to attack him via land and water routes. Lankan warriors were already aware of the strength of their opponent. They already knew they would be martyred, but still fought with zeal and spirit as winning was the only hope left in their minds after decades of fighting.

I made sure that every battle they fought become a memoir for the generations to come and not just forgotten or buried in the pages of

history.

The battlefield witnessed immense blood and vast piles of dead bodies surrounded by wild vultures and eagles fighting for their share of flesh. Amputated limbs and sundered bowels fed the jackals and the already blood-red battlefield. The battle lasted for 21 days, followed by a duel between Kartavirya and me.

Duel, a pretext to satisfy one's ego and jeered soul!

Both Arjuna and I were miffed, as no one was ready to accept the defeat. We agreed for a duel to show our magnanimity over the other. My ego had never let me retreat, even if that meant my demise.

Dead tired and exhausted, Kartavirya finally captured me. I was feeling so humiliated and exhausted that I no longer felt the glory of being the king of Lanka. The pride I felt in being Lankesh, the king who dreamt of ruling the whole world, had escaped my body.

My fists were tied up with heavy iron handcuffs and sharp rods. I was blindfolded and chained to a massive iron pole fixed in one of the corners of his durbar.

I cursed myself for my inability.

I could feel those pangs of pain and humiliation that the other kings who were captured by me in the past, would have experienced. Filled with the desire to die, the desire to wake up from my sleep, the desire to kill that entire episode from my life, I pitied my self.

I was brought in front of him like a slave in shackles from head to toe. As soon as the news reached Lanka, my father Vishrava requested my Grandfather, Sage Pulatsaya, to persuade Kartavirya Arjuna to release me.

I took this action of my father with a pinch of salt. I doubted, if he made this effort to protect his dignity or...if he actually cared!

I have always respected my father for his care towards my mother, Kaikesi, for everything he did for us. However, I frowned upon what I perceived as his favoritism for Devas and his chauvinism towards their culture.

Arjuna humiliated me in front of all of his leaders, his army, and handcuffed commanders of my army. I felt like either killing him with his sword or kill myself with that humiliation and not let anyone raise a finger at me for that incident.

...But my dreams were much bolder and bigger than what I was facing there in his citadel.

During his tirade of insulting remarks, Sage Pulatsya stepped into his palace. Arjuna was a renowned disciple of my grandfather Pulatsya. As soon as he got a glimpse of the Sage, he came running towards him and lain down at his feet. His eyes, filled with tears, sounded like a tumult in a calm ocean. He started singing paeon for him. Grandfather Pulatsya calmly blessed him and praised his valor. Noticing the purpose of his visit and knowing that I was the grandson of his guru, he promptly unfettered me and asked for forgiveness for unknowingly capturing and insulting me in front of the whole durbar.

In our culture, denial of any request from Guru is considered a sin; hence, moksha could not be attained even after multiple births.

Sage Pulatsya asked us to sign an amicable political treaty enforcing the conditions to work in agreement. We were told to take the Oath of Friendship in front of him and fire as the witness.

For a fire is considered the most pious, pure, and unbiased aspect of nature. All the Yagyas, oaths, and ceremonies are conducted under its auspicious presence .

I was burning with rage and anger as I had lost my pride, my prestige to Kartavirya. Since I was never defeated in any battle so far, my success was perpetually feeding my ego. With each win in the past, my esteem reached new heights. I started feeling inviolable, immortal. This incident was a big blow to my self-proclaimed ego that I believe was necessary to happen.

An insult to your strength gives you a chance to gather more strength.

I swallowed my pride and left from there with anger and the guilt of not proving my mettle. I looked at my grandfather, but like a mature and indifferent Sage, he retired from there without uttering even a single word.

As per the Agreement of Release, 1/4th of my army, gold, weapons, and various commodities were to be seized by Kartavirya Arjuna. We were left with few thousands of army men and some weapons to go back with-however, enough to wage war against one or two smaller kingdoms.

Later, after many years, when Arjuna's desire and lust for *more* reached its pinnacle, got too drunk with power, he attacked the *ashram* of Sage Jamdagani (*Father of Lord Parashuram*) and killed him when the sage refused to give his divine cow, *Kamadhenu*, to him. In a fit to take revenge for his father's death, Parashuram destroyed him *as well as* his entire clan.

Holding his axe (*Parashu*), Parashuram avowed to *vanish* 21 generations of Kshatriyas from the Earth and pledged to teach only Brahmins under his patronage.

Being the Son of a Brahmin, I was fortunate enough to have some initial years of behavioral, social, and political training under his tutelage.

My philosophy of '*Sama, Daam, Danda, Bheda*' was influenced by those initial years of 'guidance' and 'encounters' with such genius Sages and leaders.

Hidden somewhere in phrases

- Give Honest, Face-to-face, To-the-point and Candid feedback. Not vague, silver-tongued, or generic one!

It may hurt the Employee and even his or her manager at first, but as the dust settles, both the parties feel content, improved and trustfully even more ready for the next course of action.

- Certainly!

To grow, apart from your Talent & Skills, you must focus on two things!

- How you can coordinate, help or work closely with the Leaders (Leadership)!
- Your Network!

Leadership gives Depth to your Understanding; Network gives Width to your Experience!

Connect with people- Up your hierarchy, Your peers, and Subordinates...as much as possible. Obviously, not the extent that people find it intrusive. Connect genuinely!

Be cautious of not compromising on your values, in this entire process!



Chapter R.2

*Try not to be brutal in the battlefield for a while,
Soon you will not exist to celebrate the victory!*

Luckily, none of Kumbhakarn, Maricha, or our foremost leaders were harmed during our crusade. Our remaining army, leaders, and our advisor Malyavan assumed that I would now command them to retreat to Lanka. We were sitting in our pandals when Kumbhakarn asked me about our plans to leave for Lanka. I glared at him and asked him if he was in his senses. All were surprised to have that look on my face as if they were expecting something else.

I got up, left my food there, sponged off my fingers with a stole, tightened the veshti of anagavastram and said –

“We are going to attack Kishkindha tomorrow. I am not going to stop until we win or I die. I expect the same vigor in my army and my leaders too.”

I noticed the awe on their face but ignored it as usual. Malyavan inclined towards Maricha and whispered something in his ears, about my decision. I gave him a glaring look while leaving and ordered everyone to leave for Kishkindha before sunrise.

I headed towards my Pandal to get some sleep. Instead, the pain of humiliation from Kartavirya Arjuna did not let me even close my eyes.

I was insanely drunk with the belief in my competence in war skills. I suffered the delusions of grandeur as someone who could defeat the opponent of any potential. So conceited by self-made promises to take revenge for my defeat that I forgot what Malyavan had told me about Vali, the undefeatable king of Kishkindha.

Vali had the knack to reduce the strength of his opponent into half. He was so magnificent in armory and duels that it is impossible to defeat him, at least in a duel. He was a disciple of Lord Brahma, my great grandfather, the God of creation.

Lord Brahma belongs to the prestigious clan- Trimurti that includes Shiva, Vishnu, and himself. He can be revered as the most elevated form

of Devas. The torchbearer of four Vedas, he takes care of knowledge and creation. He is always seen carrying *rosary beads* to symbolize the strength of focus, dedication, and Time, which is infinite. The *lotus* represents the importance of birth as universal constant. The *Kamandalu* signifies water as the means of creation of all forms of life in the universe, including himself. He has millions and trillions of devotees from all over the world, let alone Lanka or Aryavrata.

How could I overlook the strength of someone trained by Lord Brahma himself?

Nevertheless, yes! I made that mistake.

Now everything was in vain in front of my desires and adamant mind. We had left for Kishkindha with a desire to win the world's mightiest emperor and become one of the mightiest kings of Bharatvarsha. I, along with my leaders and remaining army, had a temporary stay at Dandaka kingdom (*present-day Nasik*), that was under the reign of my Cousin *Khara*, the son of my mother Kaikesi's sister- *Raka*.

He was appointed the governor of the Dandaka Kingdom under the suzerainty of Lanka and had been ruling it pretty well for many decades. Dandaka and nearby kingdoms were the most profit-making and highest tax earning regions under the control of Lanka.

I sent my messenger to convey my greetings and proposal to Vali. The proposal was to surrender or accept the suzerainty of Lanka.

Messenger, even if sent by an enemy, was treated with respect and honor as part of a protocol that all clans, tribes, kingdoms, and dynasties had been following for ages. Diplomatic neutrality and immunity were provided to the emissary. If a messenger was harmed or hurt, then the respective king could declare war against the accused king without prior intimation as per the code of conduct. Other allied kingdoms also had the authority to remove their political immunity from the accused.

Our messenger was sent back by Vali's brother Sugriva, as he was busy in *Sandhya-Vandana*. The messenger was requested to visit once again after sunset. Although I did not have the patience to wait for that

long, yet I did. It is better to resolve the matters of wars with treaties than ending up in fierce battles. Thus a win-win situation for all.

War leads to annihilation, destruction of lives, resources, emotions, souls, hopes and dreams, and a future worth preserving in. It ends up in the loss of wealth, weapons, and the most significant asset- *Time*, that a king would never want to let go.

We waited until the dawn of the next morning, but there was no response from Vali. Frustrated and exhausted, I ordered my troops to attack Kishkindha with whatever army we had after Kartavirya seized 1/4th of our army. We positioned half of our army around Tungabhadra River on the west and remaining on land, in the north of Kishkindha. We also cautioned Khara to be vigilant of the war situation that might arise and provide necessary support in case of emergency. I was so confident about the strength and war skills of my army that I challenged Vali to either surrender or wage war against me.

Standing at the outer periphery of Kishkindha, some yojanas away from the mainland, I ordered my squire to blow the trumpet followed by war cry to signal the battle invitation. After getting no response from Vali, I ordered squire to blow it again. As soon as the war cry began, I saw an arrow heading towards us, making a parabolic green colored trail of powder in the sky. I ordered my army to raise their shields to offset the arrow. However, it landed with a roaring thud a few meters away from the front row of the battalion.

My commander in chief, Prahasta, stepped up to read the message written on the rolled-up sheet of jute, attached to the arrow's tail:

"Honourable king!

With all due respect to your intentions to battle with us. We sincerely apologize for not responding to your earnest request for a meeting with us. In case your intentions can be pacified amicably, respond with an affirmation.

If you are determined to battle, you can play your kettledrums, and war can begin in the 3rd pahar.

I invite the honorable king for a duel, and the army can battle as per the rules."

~ Vanara Vriksharaja Vali

“A short, crisp and to the point message, with due respect to the opponent wherever needed. I am impressed, Prahasta!

I am impressed with this Vanara king”, I told Prahasta in elation.

He had written the message on that jute cloth with a chemical that changed its color when exposed to sun rays and existed only for five minutes or so.

A clever King indeed!

Like a desperate warrior, waiting for the battle for ages, I took out my sundial and checked for the Pahar. There was still some time remaining for the sun to reach the third pahar, but I had already cursed it for moving so slow. In desperation, you tend to lose your common sense, and that is precisely what was happening with the impatient me.

I did not ponder much over it and ordered my army to play kettledrums and trumpets to indicate our readiness for war.

A little bit of impatience is good. It creates an impression of the attacker's eagerness and aggression, creating some space for much-needed “anxiety” in the minds of the opponents.

I asked for my gold plated monocular to have a look at Vali's citadel. I noticed a prominent vanara figure with a shining mace in his right hand, resting on his shoulder. He looked utterly unperturbed, and his gestures exuded flair as if that was something usual for him. He was accompanied by another vanara, his younger brother Sugriva. He possessed lean built with broad shoulders but did not look as dominating as his elder brother did.

Vali roared and challenged me for a duel and ordered his army to attack us. Prahasta, our chief commander, ordered the Lankan army to attack them from both sides, i.e., from the west and north of Kishkindha. I pinched my horse with my boots, pulled his bridle up, tightened the saddle belts in a rearing position, and shot towards Vali.

“Jai Rudra,” “Jai shiva,” I roared.

The fierce battle had started. The deafening sound of swords clashing, thuds of spears crushing the warriors' chests, the spiraling sounds of bloodstained surujins, had filled the surroundings. I was surprised to see warfare planning by Vali. War tactics used by his army,

the way they maneuvered and handled their weapons were commendable. It seemed like all vanara soldiers of his army were capable of making decisions independently, without the instructions of their respective commanders or their commander-in-chief, Sugriva. However, they were nowhere close to the strength and capabilities of my army.

My confidence never allowed me to consider my valor lesser than anyone else's.

"They called it my 'ego'; I claimed it my 'confidence'. For what I had earned was due to my sacrifices, my hard work, my pains, my scars, my silent screams....I was not born in a cradle of gold. I was not born to a king.

It was Dashanan. A poor Asura. A self-made king! "

I would always remember and repeat those lines to myself- before I headed to sleep, after I woke up, once I joined the durbar, before the battles, the treaties, or whenever I doubted my competence. It filled me with power, with anger, pushed me to achieve the impossible, and earn the things that even Devas could not possess.

This is Dashanan! Dasgriva Dashanan! Lankapati Dashanan!

Exchange of words of self-praise from both the sides ensued a not-so-strong thunderstorm. As the dust vanished, the duel between Vali and me started.

I was surprised to see the mastery he had over *Kalaripayattu* , one of the martial art form created by my guru, Parasuram.

Vali's eminence over Malla-yudha (*combat wrestling*) was world-renowned. He had mastered all forms of Malla yudha – *"*Hanumati, *Jambuvanti, *Jarasandhi and *Bhimaseni"*.

The prominent one was *Jambuvanti* that he would use with all of his opponents. His acumen and dexterity in this art were to the extent that it could exhaust the opponents to half of their strength.

It had been a close and tough fight. Both of us, adamant and not ready to accept defeat, fought with all of our strength. With each striking blow from him, I was getting exhausted and devoid of energy. Finally, he took an about-turn, gripped my back with his left hand, and held my neck under his armpit, which made me lose my remaining strength. I was getting unconscious and saw Sugriva saying something

to Vali. I was unable to open my eyes but could faintly hear Sugriva saying,

“Bhrata! Leave him.

He is getting unconscious. Do not kill him. He is Dashanan. You must know him. We can have...”

...were the few words that I could comprehend before I fainted.

After some time, I gained consciousness. I was lying on a thick red-colored jute cloth, surrounded by Vali and Sugriva on my right, along with a few comrades of his army, maintaining some distance. Unaware of the condition of their king, my army continued the battle with their opponents. There was not in the slightest of dearth in their enthusiasm. Their energy was still at its peak, and their war cries still capable of bursting the clouds. Although an army surrenders when their king dies in the battle or is captured by the opponent.

I was neither dead nor captured.

I was still alive.

“No need to surrender ever. Ever, even if I die. You keep fighting warriors! The mighty Lankans.” I murmured.

He asked his aide to bring me some water and lent his hand to help me stand up. My hand gestures effectively communicated my denial to both of his offerings.

“Dashanan! Had you been one among the usual kings, I would have killed you,” he sneered at me.

“It’s always been my pleasure to fight with the *Chakravarti Samrats*, but this was a bit different, an enthralling one. You are a formidable opponent Dashanan!

Accept this praise from the invincible Vali!

It was my privilege to battle with you... I hope you believe the same!” he added in anticipation of an affirmative nod from me.

I threw a cursory glance and side-eyed him with arrogance.

He already knew that we both were disciples of Lord Brahma and about my relationship with the creator. He spoke a few impressive lines praising his Guru and then about what he had heard of me, my Lanka, the way I had ruled, and my victorious ventures. He also mixed his words of praise with a tinge of taunts, hinting at me his mercy on the battlefield.

Before any more bloodshed happened, he asked me to order my army to stop the battle and move back to their respective bivouac shelters. I was astonished and dejected at the same time but tried maintaining my demeanor and controlled my gestures. We both commanded our armies to stop the battle and drop their weapons as proof of acceptance of the commands. I was in awe with the glorious majesty of Vali's prowess and deeply impressed with his conduct.

The true signs of an effective king.

That gave me a reason as well as purpose to propose the treaty of Friendship to him.

Post our commands, dead silence ensued, followed by both the armies retreating to their respective camps, creating chaotic sounds of thuds.

No matter how genuine with his heart and soul, the partner in treaty appeared, I never trusted anyone!

I always treated that with a squinted eye.

It is Dashanan!

Vali greeted my commanders and me for dinner and merriment. The entrance of his castle was garlanded with precious stones embedded in gold plates, projecting rainbow-colored reflections in the vicinity. Each block, each stone was so even and perfect that it seemed as if Vishwakarma had created it. Horses laden with beautiful caparison carried magnificent chariots. Those were designed to carry goods to the citadel and could be used as convertible mobile archery platforms. The walls carried quivers with designer arrows, desperate to meet its bow. The castle, with its panoramic essence, exuded royalty, status, and aristocracy. The palace joined an open porch with exquisite pillars as if designed to bear the load of the whole of the universe. Painted in white, the corners of the palace were decorated with shining iron spikes like guards protecting its queen.

We were greeted inside the main hall designed for royal gatherings. As we made ourselves comfortable in wickers and marble tables, Kumbhakarn, as usual, began throwing tantrums for his favorite cuisine, and a loud outburst of laughter followed.

We had long conversations about our experiences, especially the memories, during our tutelage under Lord Brahma. We talked about

our crusading expeditions, except for a few incidents that no one needed to know about, not even our closed ones.

Every incident was coated with a display of valor and self-praise. A wise king would never disclose to any other king, his defeat, or subjugation from any kingdom.

Vali shared his stories too.

He told me how he was called by Devas to help them in the churning of the Ocean (*Samundra Manthan*) and how my Lord Shiva swallowed, the poison liberated from the ocean during its churning. Although I was aware of all of those incidents, I kept listening to him silently. I allowed him to narrate it, giving his soul a much-needed sense of satisfaction.

“Dashanan! Look at these immensely valuable gems and stones that I got from the *Manthan* .

The ones on your left are the ones that I earned during my battles against other kings.” Vali told us that while being in a state of exuberance.

A word or two in his praise made him open up a bit more about his war tactics, his strengths, and his weaknesses. For that matter, he openly talked about his investments in artillery and the aggressive production of weapons. He told us about his investments in the growth of other developing kingdoms. The way he was taxing and generating revenues from those kingdoms was commendable. With only meager investments, he made sure he had a steady inflow of fortune by taxes or by returnings on his investments. The alliance that he had got from those kingdoms anyway was a perquisite.

A true king and a shrewd businessman - a perfect combination .

I was introduced to the queen, *Tara* , and his son *Angada* , a little husky child with a brawny, bull neck built. Although his appearance disproved his little age, his presence radiated the essence of courage.

I never imagined such a young child would turn the course of history and become a key warrior in my battle with Ram.

My leaders, Sumali, Malyavan, Khara, and Kumbhakarn, exchanged knowledge on administration, finance, politics, weaponry with Vali, and his council of leaders. The meeting turned out to be a great source of

information and insights. For we did not have any stronghold in central regions of Bharatvarsha except Dandka kingdom, we had limited knowledge of its resources, demographics, geography, and culture. We signed amicable treaties with each other and left for Lanka with some supplementary army, food, gold, and weapons.

That destined turning of battle into friendship was enough to rip apart my pride. Thoughts of the defeat were hammering my mind. I could have let myself die in that battle and let the pain of defeat not haunt me. Just a matter of fate that turned the tables on the battlefield, otherwise Vali and Kartavirya stood nowhere closer to me.

The logical decision is to have amicable relations with kings of equal or more strength. Learn from them, earn more strength, enhance your skills, and challenge them on the battlefield again when the right time comes.

This is what I, invariably, believed in.

‘Jai Vali’

Jai Lankesh’, echoed on the streets of Kishkindha.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- *We acted upon what was required in the need of hour even if that made people of Lanka a bit uncomfortable, and not what was famous or well accepted by everyone in Lanka .*

Sometimes, Organizations need to act on exigent situations, even if that makes Employees a bit ill at ease or anxious, and not what is well accepted by everyone in the organization.

It never means that Employees are ignored or sidelined.
Their opinions must be respected!
Their dignity must be protected, always!

- Followers follow their leaders!

To some extent their Behavior, Actions & Habits influence the actions of their followers.

If you are a leader, behave like one!



Chapter R. 3

Stay relevant!

Even to the person, you hate the most.

Each passing second must force you to stay relevant.

Our supplies of food, fuel, army, and weapons were gradually exhausting, hampering our efforts in conducting battle campaigns. We planned to head back to Lanka now.

On our way back to Lanka, I, along with my army, visited *Meenakshi Temple* at Madurai, dedicated to Goddess *Parvati* and *Sundareshwar*, my *Shiva*. The shrines indicated the real power of the better half of *Rudra*.

The temple signifies - '*Woman*', who is independent, with devotion towards her family. She dignifies the balance of physical and emotional strength, one who bears the pain of procreation so that this universe gets its meaning.

We worshipped at the temple, got our supplies replenished, and left for Lanka after two days of stay. We followed the course alongside the *Vaigai River*. We reached Lanka around one month after leaving from Madurai.

Until I was on my battle crusade, my younger brother *Vibhishan* managed the administration. He would disagree with me on most of my decisions, but I loved him, unconditionally, for his innocence and placid behavior.

"*Vibhishan!* You experience the politics involved in ruling a country like Lanka, at least for one day.

Face the intricacies... the intricacies of being the king of a country. Understand the nuances of ruling a kingdom; it is Lanka, not an *Ashram* where discipline would be sufficient to lead your survival", absorbed in my own thoughts, I soliloquized.

A ruler has to make the toughest of the decisions that challenge his integrity.

He has to make certain choices that often go against his values and his principles.

To be a true king, Lanka gave enormous opportunities to Vibhishan to experience. That was the only time when I could make him learn the political tactics that a prince must be apprised of,

Sama,

The strategy of negotiations, creating a win-win situation for all, through promises, amicable treaties, and alliances.

Daam,

The strategy of making the person feel privileged and well-compensated. I have preferred this form of strategy as it has always given me an upper hand in the negotiation, whether it was in trade, expansion, acquisitions, or sometimes coup.

Danda,

Punishment or assault, the second most preferred strategy of Lanka Kingdom. When it seemed impossible to influence someone through negotiation or alliance, danda became the last resort. This had always been my ultimate strategy on kings too adamant about surrendering or the expanse of regions they ruled, too dispersed.

And the final one,

Bheda,

The strategy of feeding dissension and rule. One of the shrewdest tactics of breaking the strength of a kingdom from within. As cancer feeds on the body of its target, this strategy creates insurgents who rebel, either silently or through guerrilla warfare. Not so intelligent and gullible ones and narcissist kings are vulnerable to bheda strategy.

He also learned the *Shadguna Sidhanta* , the policy of Diplomacy. *Guru Sukracharya* , the chief advisor of Lanka in the matter of politics and the master of *Arthashastra* , taught him this policy and its components,

Sandhi,

The policy of establishing peace with kingdoms stronger or equal in strength. An opportunistic king would make amicable treaties with another king, do the handshake for his benefits, learn from the best, and then subjugate the opponent.

Vigraha,

The offensive and defensive strategy of responding to the attack by an enemy. We had our council who did exhaustive research on the assets and powers of major kings and their kingdoms, their military strength, finances and treasure reserves, courtiers in their privy councils, and even their food stocks, their dominance in medicines and Ayurveda, their warhead development centers...and so on. We had well-planned, designed, and executable strategies to counter all seemingly impossible-to-handle attacks from any of the opponents. Dashanan had left no stones unturned in doing the groundwork!

Our journals on the art of battle, technology, medical science, astrology, peace, and politics were much admired and revered, the world over. Disciples from Arabs, Armenia, Libya, Tibet, and even China used to refer and conduct researches on our works. Being aware of the points of frailty in the enemy's strategies and then destroying them is like attacking the foible of a sword. This strategy made Lanka invincible and...so did Dashanan.

Asana,

Be a spectator and let the enemy get involved in some misadventure that destroys it.

Vibhishan was taught to learn tactics of waging proxy wars or methods of secretly weakening the enemy. Although it was contrary to his morals and behavior, yet as a king, it was imperative to master those skills. I was one of the astute admirers of this strategy and wanted every member of my coterie of advisors to inculcate it in their behavior.

Sansraya,

Shaking hands with a king and, in turn, get his protection. Lanka has never been a propagator of Sansraya, but we all were taught this policy as a part of Sukracharya's curriculum. It is invariably necessary to extend your hand for shelter before you yourself become the target of the king, you were to seek shelter from.

Guru Sukracharya advised me for Sansraya with Kartavirya Arjuna.

I am Dashanan!

I could accept an unmeaningful death but no meaningful protection from anyone.

During my absence, he was able to take care of Lanka except for once when Lanka faced the outrage of its citizens. It was because of an increase in taxes and a simultaneous reduction in the subsidies. When I had a prolonged discussion with my council about this incident, I could connect the dots and figured out the probable reason.

Most of our trade would happen with the countries in the North, Middle East, and North East. Our monopoly on import and export resulted in huge revenue collection in the Lankan treasury. Our strict trade regulations left no loopholes and hence no chances of loss-making. Lanka flourished as the largest exporter of all major commodities, ores, minerals, metals, weapons, spices. If there was something that we could not produce, we made sure that Lanka became the hoarding ground for it and earned enormous commissions on its reselling.

Business is something that my childhood made me experience. Unlike my contemporaries, no Guru, no advisor, was there to guide me.

I, myself, nourished those skills, so did Lanka!

As I was on my mission to establish the authority of Lanka all over the world, two active groups were parallelly doing their job,

The brand-bearers commissioned to promote and maintain a positive image of their lord. Come what may, they would never digress from their task of handling public relations, maintaining a formidable image, instill fear, and suppress the voice of those who tried harming my image.

The other ones, *The Rumormongers*, who would spy and secretly cripple the economy and restrict as much trade as possible from Lankan ports. Their sole motive was to do the negative publicity of Lanka and its ruler.

Negative perceptions about Lanka, in Bharatvarsha and other countries, spread like wildfire. Although it was for a brief period, but long enough to cause the intended damage to our image. That apprehension among traders and other allied kings decreased our trade exchanges with them. They increased their import duties, which in turn diminished our profit margins, eventually building stress on our coffers. Our council began the process of overhauling the situation. Meanwhile, we increased our internal taxes and parallelly removed subsidy. That

was apart from the annual increase in taxes that Lanka otherwise would impose.

It was done to supplement our infrastructure growth, give better facilities to our citizens, and strengthen our defense and expansion trajectory. We had also suffered significant losses due to battles and wars and had to increase the taxes a bit more to compensate for those losses.

All those unprecedented events led to the upheaval that Lanka witnessed under Vibhishan. However, our council, considered the best in the world, was able to handle that effectively .

“Effectively” was something that my council would invariably communicate to me, and I always relied on their words. Like in politics, your second-in-command would always show you a rosy picture of what they did in your absence. I could sense the same haze over reality. Lanka, over the decades, was witnessing this blurred reality, coated with growing accomplishments, expressed verbally, and escalated figures of revenues on papers. I had no reason to distrust them. Thus all seemed fine, and the suppressed voices of Lankan citizens again faded behind the lies of my own council.

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Vibhishan organized a grand feast for our homecoming. Everyone from Gandharvas, Yakshas, Apsaras, Asuras to Nagas, Rakshas, Daityas, and a few invited Devas were present in the ceremony. One of the intentions to invite the powerful, the dignified ones, was to make them know about the feat Lanka had achieved. It was more of a display of valor than a real celebration.

I was the bearer of the title of Chakravarti Samrat now, something that must be known to this world .

The ceremony began with loud chanting praising Lord Rudra, followed by Shiva Abhishekam to the Lingam. The Lingam was situated in the middle of the closed garden facing the entrance of the palace. Priests filled the vessel, hung at the top of a tripod, with milk and rose water. The vessel was constantly dripping the milk drops on the lingam.

Pieces of aloe were offered to please *Naga Vasuki* , who always finds peace around Lord Shiva's neck. Lime, ghee, sandal paste, coconut, and curd were offered to bring moksha, remove the fear of death, and bring wealth and grace, contentment and detachment from greed.

The chanting grew louder as the ceremony proceeded. Everyone was lost in the waves of joy created by Mantras. Some were dancing with their eyes closed, and others were applauding in rejoice. Having grave silence on their faces, some were looking at the statue with folded hands as if they were sharing their pains and grief with Shiva through ether.

As Mandodari and I were busy performing the rituals, I saw my mother standing beside Kumbhakarn. Her eyes seemed so locked at me as if she was seeing me for the first time. Her eyes were wet, teardrops rolling down her cheeks.

She was my pride, the reason for my existence. Her happiness- the purpose of my life .

I gestured at Kumbhakarn to take care of her and not let any tear wet her eyes anymore.

Kumbhakarn nodded in affirmation.

After *Pooja* concluded, I headed towards the main gate of the central palace of Lanka. I saw my mother, Mandodari, Vibhishan, and other leaders greeting me after the *Shiva Abhishekam* ceremony was performed. I adjusted my angavastram, took blessings from the elders, and went to the assembly hall, where the people of Lanka welcomed us with great excitement and warmth.

I came over to the dais to pay tribute to the martyred soldiers and gratitude to those who could join me in that gathering.

"Har Har Mahadev!"

"Jai Shiva, Jai Mahadeva" reverberated all over the Lanka.

"A seed breaks its wall of adversities, feeds on the water for years only to see a world full of opportunities, a world of brutality as well as a world of pleasure. It fights the weed only to mark its presence among its contemporaries.

Like that fully mushroomed flower, Lanka has endured the same in its process of existence.

It had recuperated from those walls of adversities. Your unwavering efforts, your selfless love, had fed it like water for years, just to let Lanka see a more beautiful and invigorating morning every day.

An ideal warrior must be the one eager to raise arms to protect its flag, to fight till his last breath, and aid its comrades even while dying.

As we have shown our valor, in the past, on foreign lands!

We shall show the same to the utmost of our strength in the future!

I would not have any qualms even if I die this very moment, for I have led the most determined, fiercest, and professional army in the world. I have got immense love from my countrymen, my own family!

What else does a King need!

You have given me more than I deserve!

Today I feel accomplished and content in sharing this credit of victories and accolades with everyone present here!

Lanka is yours! Dashanan is yours!

All hail Rudra! "

The speech followed praise of Lord Shiva and Lanka, reverberating even in the deepest corners of the world.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Major focus of the organizations must be on - Training and Development of its employees, at each layer.

Surplus of talent may not harm, but deficiency will definitely kill the business!

- As Employer, you touch the soul and wallet of Employees & see how your company and profits grow!

As Employee, you take care of results/output and values of the Organization & see how you and your worth grows!

- Artificial delays are created in the organization!

To look more relevant and important, information is often hidden and delays are created in providing it along the chain of communication.

If everything goes well, credits are claimed!

If not, blame game crops up, loopholes come into the picture as a way to shift the blame.

Work on a strong infrastructure, make people accountable for each deliverable and set deadlines for those deliverables.

If it is achieved- Reward them publicly!

If not, Inform, Caution, and Advise them! If not publicly, then at least privily!



Chapter R. 4

Perfection is rare.

*It's serendipity to have those rare ones without efforts or,
You put in efforts to make the available ones perfect.*

I prefer the second one!

I will have the first because of the second one.

I concluded my speech, picked my *Chandrasasa* from the lectern, and left the podium. As I was adjourning to the palace, I saw Vidyut standing beside my sister Shurpanakha, close enough to make me frown.

As per the Lankan code of conduct, any civilian or even a courtier, during any proceedings, or otherwise, cannot be present within 30 Padas (equivalent to 30 footsteps) of the royal lineage or anyone in direct blood relation of the king or his family.

Assuming it a usual affair, I did not pay much heed to it. I hugged my mother, met Mandodari, and went to my room directly, as I was tired and exhausted to the core. Mandodari brought me cuisines, my favorite somras, and a glass of wine. She made herself comfortable on the couch, placed at a certain distance from where I was sitting. I could notice the desperation in her eyes, desperate to recount her stories of the void of solitude that she suffered for decades. Her expressions seemed as if she was waiting for me to ask her to sit beside me. Although I was engrossed in having my food and somras, I could feel the longing in her heart for a hug and a desire to ask millions of questions.

I made her sit beside me, held her hands, and let her speak her heart out. We talked incessantly for hours and filled the void those decades of separation had created between us.

During our conversation, she told me about the marriage of Vidyutjivha and Shurpanakha. She also told me about her plan to elope with him to avoid facing his brother's wrath.

Vidyutjivha belonged to Danava clan, the descendants of Danu (*mother of Danavas*). Shurpanakha was well aware of the enmity between Asuras and Danavas.

Vidyut joined our army based on his exemplary combat skills; his innate leadership acumen made him the commander of our battalions in some of the toughest expeditions. He was included in our elite club of warriors, looking at his weaponry skills, especially in melee battles. However, I never imagined that he would dare to lay eyes on my sister, Shurpanakha.

I got up in a fury, lifted my sword lying adjacent to the couch, and stormed out of the room, banging the door as I walked off. Mandodari rushed towards me, clutched my hand, and asked me to, at least, listen to her. I twitched my fist in anger and nodded to let her continue. Adamant on not giving me any space to even move, she tried very hard to convince and pacify me with her own logic.

She explained to me how he was able to help Vibhishan and would always be curious to get involved in the practical details of ruling my Lanka. He was dedicatedly handling finances and all of the operations of Lanka besides commanding our army in mock battles.

The chief commanding officer for actual battles was still, Prahasta, one of the skilled warriors of Lanka and brother of my mother, Kaikesi.

I was listening to Mandodari with rapt attention, saying some 'yeahs' and 'oks' in agreement. At the same time, I was a bit unconvinced that a person of Danava clan taking so much interest in Lanka, an Asura regime, despite knowing the long enmity and hatred that both the clans had for each other.

Dodging those salvos of thoughts, I turned my conversation to something else and discussed my whole journey, my experiences during the wars. As we got too engrossed into the conversation, I slowly slipped into slumber, without making her notice it.

I woke up after witnessing a deep tranquil sleep and soothing chirpings of tailorbirds on the porch. I performed my daily ritual of worshipping Lord Shiva, played Rudraveena, and went for practicing warfare. The devotee in me could not live without Shiva, the artist without Veena, and the warrior without practicing combat. That is what kept me alive, invincible!

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I joined the durbar as usual, with the same glee and authority but now with more experience, valor, and dignity. I was the *Chakravarti Samrat* now, the king of three worlds. As I approached the court, the silence ensued for seconds, and then the praise of 'Lord Rudra' and 'Jai Dashanan' echoed in the durbar.

I approached my throne, escorted by my close aide Vibhishan, Sumali, and Kumbhakarn. There was a usual commotion in the court with all the leaders in front, leaders at second-in-command in the rows behind them, and representatives of Lanka citizens in the last rows. The council members were across my throne, followed by the cabinet ministers assigned to various ministries of Lanka.

For kingship is only half-possible without your followers.

I believe in creating successors who could, at least, prolong Lanka's existence, if not grow .

I raised my right hand to calm down the elated voices of praise reverberating in the charged-up durbar. As the cheerings grew feeble, I ensconced myself in the throne with one hand on my knee and the other covering the face of Lion, decorating the armrest of my throne. There were kings and samrats from various parts of the world who came to congratulate me on my win over Aryavrata and other regions of Bharatvarsha.

Display of valor is one of the political strategies to let the world know about your strengths and capabilities. This word of mouth from your well-wishers spreads like fire and, in no time, creates an illusionary and exaggerated image of yours in the minds of others.

Half of the work is already done if someone has an escalated impression of your personality in his mind .

After our Prime Minister Vibhishan greeted the court, Malyavan announced the chronological sequence of events along with their time of occurrences. The court delved into a mild frenzy of its usual proceedings. Many of the Danava kings were sporadically joining the court and were greeting me. Vidyutjivha occupied his seat at the right corner behind the council. I noticed him giving a smirky smile to many

of the guests belonging to the Danava clan, as soon as they entered the durbar. I got a bit curious, seeing all that and took that with a pinch of salt. I glanced at Vibhishan, then at Sumali, to let them know of the suspicion still dormant in my mind. I wanted to inquire with my council if we had any treaty or collaboration with so many Danava kings. Although I trembled with a multitude of thoughts, I showed no signs of anxiety or caution and let the court run its course as usual.

As soon as holdings of the court got over, I called for Prahasta and Vibhishan to discuss Vidyutjivha and about those Danava kings. As expected, Prahasta explained to me his frequent visits outside Lanka and his deep involvement in day-to-day internal affairs where involvement of even our council was forbidden. He detailed me about the misuse of finances in administration and his unwarranted control over the collection of taxes. Vibhishan also hinted at the mismatch in the tally of armory and the annual defense budget allocated to weapons' production. No one noticed about the anomalies in due course since everything was quite well planned and executed by Vidyut in collusion with people who seemed to have good knowledge of our assets, various ministries, and the way those functioned. Our council tried to dig deeper into finding the incongruity, but he left no loopholes in its execution. Whenever we thought we were close enough in catching him red-handed, his actions went undetected with no signs of his involvement whatsoever.

I was calmly listening to what they said, as I did not want to let any bias or blame occupy my already agitated mind. However, as a king, I could not let even a small solecism escape unnoticed, even if a family member did it. Vidyut was now my brother-in-law, and to some extent, our relation had loosened the enmity between Asuras and Danavas.

It was already late afternoon, and we had a lot to discuss about Lanka, its struggling past and promising future. I ordered my council to keep the discussion about Vidyut for some other day and work on improving the already dilapidated state of Lanka.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Knowledge, Maturity, and Skills grow like compound interest!

Each day, compare your Past-self with your Present-self...!

Be ready to infuse more efforts later -

If your Present-self is not 'Enhanced' compared to your Past-self.

To achieve the same goal-

Delayed efforts, someday or the other, make you put more efforts!

Keep reminding this to yourself every day!



Chapter R. 5

“Narayan,” “Narayan!”

The signature phrase of Narada muni.

From the King to an insignificant drunkard of Lanka, everybody knew about this famous peripatetic tale-teller. A lean and dainty figure, carrying Khartal and Mahathi (*Tambura*), suddenly appeared at the entrance of the palace of Lanka, reciting, “Jai Lankesh,” “Jai Dashana”.

Famously known as *Rishiraj*, he was the son of Goddess Saraswati and Lord Brahma. Renowned among all Asuras, Danavas, Gandharvas, and Devas, he was respected by everyone for his knowledge, his craft of storytelling, networking skills, and most predominantly, his sleight of tongue.

Mounted a magnificent chariot, I, myself, came to receive him at the entrance. He was greeted in Lanka with all due respect. I adjourned the durbar and, along with Vibhishan and Kumbhakarn, proceeded towards the main meeting hall. I asked him about his well-being and served him the unique dishes from the kitchen of Lanka. He congratulated me on my feats and wished me luck for the future. We discussed the current happenings in Aryavrata, how the dynamics were changing between Devas and Asuras!

Devas expanding their territories under the guidance and rule of Indra also fitted in between our conversation.

He apprised me of battles between Devas and Daityas & Danavas of Rasatal Loka, the current state of tension existing among them, and how that strained relationship was affecting the trade between those clans and how an urgent overhaul was needed on the tariffs imposed. He also alerted me of probable attacks by Indra, like the one on great Asura king *Vritra*.

Vritra once tried to bring drought to most of the world's regions by artificially restricting the flow of the major rivers of Aryavrata. That was his revenge on Devas for killing his brother *Trisiras*, the son of the Deva named Tvastar and Daughter of Hiranyakashup. Tvastar had a

daughter as well, named *Saranyu*, who married *Surya* and had *Yama* and *Yami* as their offsprings.

Yami, also known and worshipped as the *Yamuna*, the goddess of life, dedicated her whole life to the service of others. She would carry the magical water with her that could heal the wounds of the hurt and bring them to life. The magical water could convert barren land into a fertile one, making the livelihood possible for millions of people on Earth. For such good deeds towards humanity, her father, *Surya*, blessed her with eternal reverence and honored her with the title of 'Goddess'.

Gods chose *Yama*, famously known as the God of Death, *Yamaraja*, for maintaining the records of a person's deeds. *Chitrakupta*, the scribe of *Yama*, was assigned the role of caretaker of *Agrasandhani*, the name of the catalog where records of those deeds are maintained. It is used as a reference to sustain the cycle of birth & death and preserve the natural equilibrium of punishment or protection based on the person's deeds.

Intrigued by the dominance of *Yama*, I insisted *Narada* muni tell me more about him. He introduced him as the King of *Naraka* (hell) and one of the world's mightiest rulers. He apprised me of his mystical and occult powers that undeniably made him acquire a place in *Devas'* clan. Fond of his huge black buffalo and his weapon, *Kaladanda*, he was portrayed as the most resolute guardians and judges of humanity. His stern countenance was what most people dreaded of and his authority, filled with fear, has remained,

Unquestionable,

Unchallenging,

Undisputable, in the minds of people for several centuries.

I was a bit surprised to hear those unheard accounts of the faculties that *Yama* possessed. Certain events of his valor described by *Narada* were enough to shake my pride, the ego of the mightiest ruler of the *Lanka*. Now, it made me more determined to attack his kingdom and challenge his dominance. In front of *Narada*, I did not reveal any signs of unease and diverted the topic towards inquiring about the happenings in *Kailash* and the wellbeing of my Lord *Rudra* and Goddess *Parvati*. Post our long conversations and occasional bursts of laughter, we headed for the royal dinner. Later I bade him adieu and offered him a badge of gold as a token of gratitude.

From the next day onwards, I started planning to attack the Yama kingdom, and this time I was determined to involve my brother *Kumbhakarn*.

Habitually drenched in materialistic pleasures, he mostly abstained from getting involved in the affairs of Lanka. A typical traveler, the connoisseur of good food, he indulged heavily in drinking habits. Usually, for half of a year, he used to be a complete nomad and remained disinterested in getting involved in any internal matters of Lanka. Although I was not in favor of his extreme self-indulgent behavior, at least, didn't want him to struggle the way I did. Kumbhakarn and Shurpanakha both had always been closer to my heart than anyone else had. Kumbhakarn had always refrained from his responsibilities towards Lanka. However, in dire need, he would always show up and display the true spirit of a Lankan.

Bogged down by the desire to spread *Raksha* culture and establish the suzerainty of Lanka, I finally decided to attack Yama. My next motto was to sail the flag of Lanka in Yama kingdom, by any means. Although a few members of my council, including Vibhishan and Malyavan asked me to reconsider my decision, I was obstinate enough to disapprove of their proposition.

With that fervor of victory, I launched an attack on him the next day. As soon as my army reached Naraka, I could feel the fear and commotion among the army of Yama. His surprised face trembled with anger and astonishment, was a delight to my soul. I roared and invited him for the battle...the battle, if I won, would make me immortal, the mightiest, the invincible one!

Like an audacious warrior, Yama ordered his army to be as merciless as possible with their opponents.

In most parts of Bharatvarsha, mostly Aryavrata, Yama was worshipped as a celestial god, especially on the day called Yamadeepam (also *Dhanteras*). Our strategy was to launch the attack on the same day, owing to the simple reason that '*Praise blinds a person faster than it elevates him*'.

On the day of Yamadeepam, he would be in an illusionary state of self-adulation; narcissism would take over his consciousness and not allow him to think wisely. He would be busy receiving praise and

accolades from his followers or in the inauguration of some temples built in his reverence. Let alone launching a counter-attack, even the thought of it would not strike his mind.

Sumali and Prashata accompanied me in the battle.

The battle continued for seven days, and no one was ready to accept defeat. I picked up the divine bow and simultaneously launched a thunder of thousands of arrows upon him and his army. It was to shroud the battlefield with the blanket of arrows and block the vision of Yama and his army. I quickly picked up my *Chandrasahsa*, the sword given by Lord Shiva, and ran towards Yama to kill him with a final blow. He anticipated the trap and launched a similar weapon at me. Amidst the chaos, one of his arrows hit me in my left chest, making me stumble on the field. As I started feeling unconscious, I saw my sword sliding past a few meters away from me on the ground. In the desperation of killing me, Yama ran towards me with his *Kaladanda*.

Fortunately, Narada had already apprised Lord Brahma of my intentions to attack Yama.

Narada was aware of my impatient and intolerant behavior. He found it better to let Brahma know about that probable battle.

I made tremendous efforts to regain my consciousness and went for my *Chandrasahsa* with the remaining strength. Suddenly Yama came, pulled me away from the sword, punched my face, and kicked my waist even harder. I could hear his boisterous burst of laughter and provoking remarks, calling my courage a fake display of bravado. He dragged me up on to his chariot and tied me with a rope. Its little bristles were pinching my skin. He took out his weapon *Kaladanda*, gifted to him by Lord Brahma himself. The moment before he could put me at the safest distance, of some half a mile, and launch it at me, he saw a divine figure approaching him.

The divine figure was of Lord Brahma.

As Brahma neared him, he greeted him with a slight bow with his palms joined. When he politely asked the purpose of his visit, Brahma appealed to him for not using the weapon on me. The weapon would generate so much energy that it could kill me and leave most of the Naraka barren.

No matter the panoply of armor you wear or boon you were blessed with, that much energy from such a weapon could kill anyone and leave hundreds of countries sundered.

Although Yama was feeling impatient and agitated, he did not let those expressions be visible on his face. He nodded to Brahma's request and released me from the hold of the noose that was already choking me to death.

I was still lying unconscious until Sumali came to wake me up and told me about the whole incident.

Dejected and broken by pangs of guilt, I asked Sumali,
"Mātāmaha! At any moment during the battle, do you feel I lacked courage?"

Did my spirit not justify my valor? "

Sumali, like a pampering grandfather, used his diplomatic words of flattery blaming the circumstances and not my lack of preparation for that unplanned attack on Yama.

Perception of me as "Too much of an authoritarian" King, suppressed the liberty of even my kins to argue about my flaws openly.

I was surrounded by flattering Leaders and cajoling commanders.

I believed I was building a Lanka of my dreams; instead, it was a mirage seeding on the shoulders of sycophants.

With time, that trust became my foible.

Except for my brother, Vibhishan, and mother Kaikesi, who was always candid in her opinion, everyone flattered me even for the wrongs that I did. In the furor of building my own dreamland, I mistook her blunt remarks and advice as her way of diverting me from my audacious vision. The vision to regain the long lost glory of Asuras!

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In Lanka, our battle with Yama was propagated as the battle of equals. It was showcased as a gimmick. Strict orders were given not to disclose the reality to anyone outside Lanka. The pretentious "Political treaty" with Yama was presented to the world with a coat of dominance and supremacy of Lanka over Naraka.

Dashanan could never tolerate even slightest of stigma to his image or Lanka. The reality of that battle could never be propagated as a sheer chance of luck or Brahma's request to Yama for sparing my life.

My hunger for the win was not yet pacified; instead, it intensified after that loss. For me, the battle with Yama was a realization than a sheer revelation.

Sometimes the biggest mistakes done at the right time make you learn far better than the right things done at the right time.

For educated and erudite one, efforts are needed twice.

The first one, to destroy his ego and the second one to make him realize his mistakes.

For illiterate one, it is just a single shot,

His innocence makes him surrender entirely to it.

Those incidents were threatening my self-esteem, turning a self-made monarch into a submissive orphan.

Dashanan can never be anyone but a king. The king, who fought for his rights, strove hard for years building the shield to counter the sharp words of society.

A king who turned the course of history, a ruler who did not succumb to the relentless supremacy of elites, instead, thwarted those ridiculous customs that never made any sense.

That was how I struggled, challenged, survived, and won!

That is Ravana!

Ravana, the name given by Lord Shiva himself.

We were left with four Akshuhini army, eighty thousand Chariots, and around the same number of Elephants, more than two lakh horses, and around four lakhs of infantry. That was enough to launch an attack and cause extensive damage to Rasatal Loka, where Daityas and Danavas lived.

This time it was a planned and well-executed attack on Rasatal, unlike the one on Yama's kingdom. We destroyed most of Daityas and Danava territories, inflicting enough damage that would have had taken them myriad years to recover. We proposed suzerainty to the kings who peacefully agreed to our terms and seized their thrones in case anyone opposed it.

Nevertheless, during our crusade in Rasatal, I noticed some familiar faces.

“What bothers you, son!” Virupaksha asked me, looking at my troubled gestures.

“Mātulaḥ! Did you notice something peculiar?” I asked him inquisitively.

“Do you think the same!”, he replied in surprise.

“I can never be wrong. You know me!

Those kings are definitely the ones smiling at Vidyutjivha in the ceremony”, I assured him.

I was able to connect the dots now, strengthening the suspicion we had on intentions of Vidyutjivha.

ରାଜ୍ୟ

We were greeted in Lanka with huge pomp and show post our win over Rasatala. Food, clothes, and gold were distributed. There were celebrations even in the remotest parts of Lanka. All key representatives of all major tribes, like Nittaewo and Vedda, were also invited to the ceremony.

Five pahars had already passed, and I could not notice my sister Shurpanakha and Vidyutjivha anywhere in the court, not even in the vicinity of the celebration hall. Mandodari told me about their visit to Vidyut’s paternal house.

After returning to Lanka post my battle with Vali, I had already had a spy to keep an eye on the activities of Vidyut.

As a king, it becomes imperative to be vigilant, even if your heart says otherwise.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- One of the best corporate drugs is 'Praise' !

Genuinely praise your peers or anyone that encircles your corporate life. No one avoids a person who praises him or her, howsoever obnoxious that person is!

- Organizations tend to ignore insignificant losses related to productivity, efficiency, return on their investments...even pilferage.

Organizations would avoid raising any significant warnings or resorting to extreme measures as it might be misconstrued as Micro-Management in the eyes of its employees!

Hence, this reluctance from the organization's side & thus significant losses accumulated over a period of time.

Whereas, Employees tend to ignore small losses related to work-life balance, their gradual shift towards robotic behaviour, health issues, and moral support. Employees ignore or may not feel comfortable discussing it with their organization.

Hence this reluctance from Employees' side & thus significant losses over a period of time.



Chapter R. 6

Lanka was flourishing again with more trade and new allies through various pacts with rulers from different parts of the world. Our hold on trade exports in the Middle East, including the Indo Scythian region, the Iranian Empire, and Western Asia, was rapidly increasing.

We were among the largest traders who traded with Achaemenes, the progenitor of the Achaemenid dynasty in Persia. Lankan trade in the west flourished after we aggressively expanded across Arabian states, the states of Illyrians and Mesopotamia. After invading the North of Bharatvarsha, we further wanted to expand our reach following the span of Karasuk culture. On one side, Lanka was aggressively focusing on expanding its footprints all over the world. On the other hand, my obligations towards family were demanding my attention.

My brother, Vibhishan, married Sarama, a celestial dancer of Gandharva lineage and the daughter of Sailusa, a not so known Gandharva. Sarama gave birth to my beautiful niece Trijata. Soon came the auspicious day of my brother Kumbhakarn's marriage. He married Vrajmala, maternal granddaughter of Virochana, who was the son of Prahalada. Their sons were named Kumbha & Nikumbha.

Whole Lanka was immersed in merriment and ecstasy. The opportune time had come when my eldest son was to be born. Invitations were sent to all the renowned munis to conduct Yagya for the wellbeing of nine months pregnant Mandodari. I had channeled all of my celestial powers for this occasion. I made all possible efforts to make sure that my son was born during the most auspicious time. I desired my son to be invincible, highly intelligent, an asura with raised consciousness, and be the most powerful warrior of all times. I used my Ayurveda and parturition knowledge to align his birth timings with the presence of all planets in the Eleventh house of his horoscope.

From nurses, physicians, pediatricians to medical practitioners, everyone was present in the room, looking after Mandodari and our to-be born son. After a long wait of about three pahars, I heard thunderous cries coming out of Mandodari's room. I saw the nurse coming out of the room with my child. I ran towards her to get the first glimpse of

him. She placed him into my lap, adjusting the cloth he was wrapped in. Kumbhakarn came forward and said,

“Brother! His deafening loud cries seemingly are capable of displacing even mountains!”

We all burst into laughter. He looked at us with surprising innocence!

When mother Kaikesi asked for the right name for him, everyone started looking at each other's faces in surprise. I was swaying him in my hands, with one hand supporting his neck. I glided him up in the air and said, “MEGHNAD!”

As soon as I announced his name, his chilling cries faded. He looked pacified as if he was waiting for his name to be announced; Meghnad – ‘Roar of Thunder,’ ‘the lord of the sky.’

That moment marked its presence in the ledger of history. Meghnad, the heir of Lanka, the Atimaharathi whom even celestials would dread of, was born now.

The celebrations began with free food for all in Lanka. Gold and silver coins were distributed to everyone. Lanka was glittering with variant colors like a bride heavily adorned just before her marriage. I again swayed him up in the air and roared ‘Meghnad’ at the top of my voice.

Like a father blinded by powers, I assumed everything was plying as per my orders.

Some munis, with *Patras* in their hands, frowns on their forehead, were whispering something in each other's ears. I gave a cursory look at one of them and asked him to explain to me the chaos. He came forward and in a trembling voice, said,

“Oh, Lord! Meghnad's horoscope...”

With a taut faced expression, I asked, “What! What horoscope...”

“Meghnad has all the planets in his Eleventh house but Shani... Shani dev moved to the Twelfth house at the time of his birth.”

My eyes sparked with fury, as soon as I heard him saying that. Flooded with extreme emotions, I screamed vehemently to vent out my anger. I commanded them to reduce its effects on my son, no matter what it cost. I wanted its evil effects to vanish even if it took millions of such yagyas.

“Dashanan! It is not possible now to reverse its effects.
Its Meghnad’s destiny, he must endure it.

You do not dispute the desire of almighty. I warn you!” urged the head of munis.

I took out my sword in anger and ordered them to fade away from my sight. Anticipating some mishap, Kumbhakarn grasped me from behind and snatched my sword away from me. Vibhishan and my mother came running towards me hastily. They tried pacifying me with all their illogical and naive arguments.

“I would leave no stones unturned to make him unconquerable and the most powerful warrior,” I vowed in front of all present in the ceremony.

I requested Shukracharya, the chief protector and advisor of Asuras, the chief guest of the ceremony, to be the Guru to my son Meghnad.

Sukracharya was the son of Sage Brigu (one of the seven great and highly revered Sages of Bharatvarsha, and one of the Prajapatis who facilitated Brahma during the creation of this world) and nephew of Prahalada. He acquired the rare science of resurrecting the dead from Lord Shiva. Guru Brahaspati and Shukracharya had their primary education under Sage Agnivasa, who was the father of Brahaspati.

(In certain cultures, Thursday and Friday are dedicated to worshipping Bharaspati and Sukracharya respectively) .

Sukracharya was the chief guru, a stern supporter, and a wellwisher of Asuras. With his mastery over that rare science, he would revive almost all Asura warriors who died in the battles with Devas.

That frustrated the entire Deva clan.

Devas, with the support of their Guru Brahaspati, planned to, somehow, acquire that knowledge from Sukracharya. Later Brahaspati sent his son Kacha to his ashram, instructing him to obtain all the knowledge that Sukracharya possessed, without disclosing his real purpose of stay in his ashram.

Kacha beguiled Sukracharya to teach him the science of reviving the dead. On the pretext of marrying his daughter, Kacha asked Devyani (the daughter of Sukracharya) to help him in pleasing her father, Sukracharya.

Asuras owe him immensely for his self-sacrificing support and his undisputable political advice. He was revered for his flair in weaponry, and Chakravyuh formations and his firm stand in favor of Asuras.

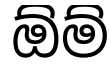
“Meghnad would be bestowed with all the knowledge of divine weapons. All *Astra* and *Shastras* , all *Pashas* will be at his service.

He will be the possessor of ultimate Trimurti weapons – *Brahmastra* , *Vaishnavastra* , and *Pashupatastra* ,” Shukracharya promised me while looking at the shining face of Maghnad.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Life, undeniably, and inarguably holds more importance than work.
It will be easier to balance your work if your life is balanced.

Practice!...Practice! more to maintain that balance. The more you get into the practice of balancing your Work & Life, the more accomplished and satisfied you would feel at the end!
Keep reminding this to yourself at least, once every day!



Chapter R. 7

A leader who calls a spade a spade is revered more than who gets swayed in conversations of 'yes' & 'oks'

Vidyutjivha and Shurpanakha were sent a royal invitation for Meghnad's birth ceremony. I noticed Shurpanakha and a bunch of her bodyguards entering the ceremony hall.

Vidyut was not accompanying her.

As I was already occupied and surrounded by guests, she directly went to meet Mandodari to congratulate her. After a while, she surprised me with a back hug, as she would do when she used to be elated. I inquired about her wellbeing and asked about Vidyut. She saw him going inside to meet someone in the palace.

As time passed, the whole of Lanka went into merriment, dancing, and enjoying the exotic feast.

Suddenly I saw a spy running towards me, bypassing my squire. He informed me that Vidyut had gone inside the inner chamber of Royal Kitchen, where the chief chef stayed. At the time of food preparation, no one except the King and his authorized personnel was allowed in the royal kitchen. He saw him handing over a small jute bag to the chef.

As soon as my spy mentioned it, I picked my sword and quickly made a move towards the kitchen through a secret passage. Without wasting any time, I entered the kitchen and hid in a dark corner on my left. Suddenly, I noticed a faint sound of moccasin and a shadow falling on the wall beside me. I raised my sword above my head to divert when I suddenly saw the shadow attacking me with a knife.

It was Vidyutjivha.

Before losing any more time, I dodged his attack and leaped over him, wrapped my forearm around his neck, and cut his fingers with my sword. While he was withering in pain, I went behind and stabbed him in his back, making him lose consciousness. Within a few minutes, he was dead. It was insensible to create any chaos during celebrations and let others know about the internal matters of Lanka. I chose to let his

body perish and wait until the ceremony ended. I closed the doors and let his corpse lie there, oozing out blood in all directions.

I could see the dots connecting his keen interest in my Lanka and my personal life. He wanted to kill me and planned to take over the reign of Lanka as its default successor.

After the death of the king, one among his brothers or brothers-in-law is chosen as the successor. For Lanka, Vibhishan was too naïve to be considered the king, and Kumbhakarn was already never up for that.

It would have been Vidyutjivha then.

“I have killed Vidyut...

I have taken away an essential part of her life...

How would Shurpanakha react to it!!

Mata Kaikesi...

Will, anyone, believe me....now....ever?”

With each passing moment, I was being tormented by grim thoughts.

I sponged the sword, cleansed my mantle stained with blood gores, and later, as usual, joined the hall.

Before I could divert my mind off it, I heard deafening loud wails of Surpanakha. She came scurrying towards me, screaming in pain, with dark red eyes and her hair unkempt. Confused and shocked, everyone gathered around me, watching her accuse and curse me for killing Vidyut.

The chef had told her the truth.

I was yearning to let everyone know about his hypocrisy, how he was using my sister for his shrewd motives, but amidst that chaos, it was all in vain.

My mother walloped me in the chest, screamed at me, and cursed me for bringing pain and destruction to my family to satisfy my ego, my false pride.

There was no point of repenting over what I had done.

I knew I was just.

I had killed a traitor, the traitor who had his evil eyes on my family and my Lanka.

Surpanakha's bellows were piercing my heart. Her cries were pinching me, screaming at me that I had killed someone she loved the most. I could not muster enough strength to go and face her. I left the palace, ordered my squire to bring me a horse, and went to a nearby shore of Lanka. I tethered the horse to a peg and sat on a rock lying nearby.

Those piercing words of my mother, grief-stricken images of Shurpanakha, were afflicting me, not letting me focus on the calmness of the immense sea in front of me.

When I came back, I saw that Vidyut had been cremated, and my sister had already left Lanka to live the rest of her life in the Dandaka kingdom, where my cousin Khara ruled.

Before leaving from Lanka, *she cursed me to suffer from the same fate*, one of my aides told me.

The killing of Anaranya flashed before my eyes.



Chapter R. 8

*Bureaucracy is a way to delay the action.
A way to satisfy professional ego!*

Caste-based discrimination was getting prominent due to the amalgamation of different cultures and the increasing hold of migrators living in Lanka. Atrocities on lower castes, including Lanka and some regions of Aryavrata, were at its peak.

The killing of a Shurda named *Shambuka* by a Kshatriya prince of Aryavrata had already created an uproar in the shudra community all over Bharatvarsha.

Shambuka was practicing extremely rigorous penance, which was forbidden for his community. Going against the established customs, led to his killing by the Kshatriya prince.

Dying at the hands of superior beings was considered, instead, propagated as a path to mergence with the Ultimate soul, the God.

Nevertheless, it never made sense to me. It was irrational to give so much of privilege to one section of society and none to the other.

Trade, political and cultural centers of different religions were aggressively expanding in Lanka. Higher positions in administration, defense, or services were meant for elites. The merit-based selection was either avoided or suppressed, mainly if it did not involve upper classes. This issue, which I invariably wanted to eliminate, was getting broader and more prevalent with time. I abhorred the fake encouragement of dogmas and suppression by aristocratic classes.

Since I belonged to *Brahmin varna* because of my father and *Asura varna* due to my mother's lineage, I had regards for both the *Varnas*.

Lanka was facing internal clashes because of rising untouchability. Higher caste societies were reluctant to mix up with the lower castes. The unsaid rule of '*lower classes not permitted to use the streets used by upper classes*,' was being followed. Apart from prohibiting untouchables from worshipping in temples, there were restrictions on using wells already in use by upper castes. That incurable gap between

higher and lower classes was radically expanding with each passing day.

At one point in time, Lanka was on the verge of civil war. War among certain factions had already started in various parts, but strict measures were taken to curb the hostilities. The army was enacted all over Lanka to cease any riot. No council, Prime minister, or even *Rajmata* was allowed to make any decisions at the time of emergency. The instructions and orders from the King were final and abiding. To set examples, the best warriors, administrators were inducted at our leadership positions based on merit and not on lineage or caste.

Post wars, dedicated areas for temples, schools, centers for preaching, places for public gatherings, were allocated to all of its citizens. Lanka managed to unite all of the Lankan tribes. At that time, it had been among the major countries, to be meaningfully the secular one.

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At the same time, Maya, the chief architect of Lanka and the father of my wife, Mandodari, helped us in revamping Lanka and its infrastructure.

We established *Shiva linga* at *Mahabaleshwar* in Gokarna that was later revamped into Mahabaleshwar temple.

Once, my mother, Kaikesi, insisted I have *Shiva linga* in Lanka. I journeyed to Mountain Kailash in the Himalayas and did penance to please Lord Shiva to fulfill my mother's wish. After a long penance, Lord Shiva bestowed me with *Shiva Linga*. He also honored me with a name, the name that became the purpose of my existence, my identity for the generations to come!

'Ravana'- The name given by Lord Rudra.

The formidable Shiva commanded me to neither lift nor move the *Linga* once established. However, I had to install the linga in Mahabaleshwar during my journey back to Lanka because of some unanticipated turning of events. As commanded, it was not auspicious now to lift or move the Linga. Thus with Lord Shiva's grace Mahabaleshwar Temple came into existence.

Lanka had developed chemicals and highly advanced machines to create long tunnels and shape enormous rock structures embedded in Earth. Our technologies, in many ways, were well ahead of what our contemporaries possessed.

Ketheeswaram temple, dedicated to Shiva, was constructed near the Northern Province of Lanka (now called Mannar). Sage Brigu, the father of our Guru Sukracharya, visited it on many occasions.

Later, the magnificent *Koneswaram* temple in the Eastern province of Lanka, now called Trincomalee, was built. This temple was also dedicated to Lord Shiva. All the temples and shrines in Lanka were open for all castes and levels of varnas. No distinction was made based on anyone's caste or race.

With time, Lanka was creating indelible marks in all spheres, whatsoever.

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After some years, Mandodari and I were blessed with our youngest son, Akshayakumara. The occasion was celebrated with the distribution of free food and clothes all over Lanka. The entire history, growth, and achievements of Lanka were presented in a series of tableaux.

By then, Meghnad had also completed his education under Sukracharya and was ready to take the onus as one of the *Yuvarajas* of Lanka. He was made the second-in-command deputy defense minister under the guidance of Prahasta and made to serve various administrative roles of business, trade, finance, civic administration before serving the position of deputy defense minister.

We had not assigned any official position to Kumbhakarn until then. As suggested by Sumali in the council's meeting- *Kumbhakarn was too engrossed living life with inordinate pleasure and luxury. Hence, it would be an injustice to the position itself.*

In the same meeting with the council, I proposed removing the ancient Lankan tradition of holding the council's decision as the final and abiding one. Instead, the final decision must be from the supreme leader, the king in power, ruling the throne. Devas used to follow the

same rule, which had invariably helped them in quick decision-making and prompt actions.

There was much resistance from some members of the council because of their selfish reasons, but it was later accepted and implemented.

That decision was a direct threat to the authority of the members, which they were able to enjoy and exploit for many decades. They were agitated as it challenged their status quo and hence their say in the affairs of Lanka.

As the meeting got over, I resumed the court to discuss our plans with representatives of various states of Lanka. Most of the day was spent on assessing the work and progress in the states. Post assessment, badges were allocated along with the corresponding upgrade in their rank. Only extreme performers were included in the *Elite Ranks* of Lanka. Those selected were further assigned relevant ministries of Lanka and were called the *influencers*.

I adjourned the court as the dusk crept up on the shores of Lanka. For a change, I planned to roam around its avenues and witness the beauty of marvelous places, beautiful roads, decorated pathways, and the people, the prestige of Lanka. My Lanka, having beautiful trees, leaves of banyan scattered on streets, laden with beads of dew, looked as splendid as it could be. Flowers were exuding fragrance s like the charm of ornaments on a bride. The moon looked exhausted as if it were waiting for the sun to appear to get into the deep sleep that it deserved later.

Comforted in my chaise, I was gazing at the vastness of the sky and the unexplored opportunities leading my way to glory.

"I would not stop until I get what I deserve!

I am Ravana. Dashanan Ravana!" I convinced myself.

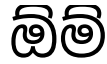
Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Focus on making ‘The Decision-making hierarchy’ leaner.

If possible, eliminate Bureaucracy!

Create a culture where employees can approach their leaders without hesitation or delays!

This makes the process faster and saves time!



Chapter R. 9

Among all insincere desires, the most undesirable one is to have someone who'd never question us.

Shradula, one of our most trusted spies, informed me about Swayamwara , the marriage ceremony organized by king Janak, the king of Mithila.

I confirmed from Shradula if the bride was Sita.

“Yes! My lord. I am sure it is Sita!

Pardon me for my audacity! ” he replied.

I ordered Shradula to convey that message to Maricha.

In a Swayamwara , the girl's father would invite Kings from all over the world, where eligible suitors, as per the custom of Swayamwara, would compete. She chooses the potential groom of her choice and garlands him.

Later, the couple ties the nuptial knots as per the customs.

Those decades of void were finally going to diminish. I was so eager to see my grown-up daughter that each moment seemed like ages.

I asked Maricha to arrange for Pushpaka Vimana and left for Mithila as soon as dawn hit. We planned to reach Mithila after sunset so that no one could recognize our vimana or us once we entered Mithila's territory. We spent the whole night on the Mahanand River's shores and left for Mithila as soon as dawn struck.

The exterior of the kingdom seemed like a peninsula, surrounded by hundreds of boats simultaneously leaving and arriving at ports. Janka's kingdom had been one of the busiest and affluent trade centers of Aryavrata, and such an extensive flow of trading ships was validating that fact.

Beautiful big clay pots attached to the poles on both sides of the roads, carried inflammable material burning inside, to illuminate the darkness. The sidewalks were rugged at some places and smooth on the others, making some irregular patterns, not soothing to the eyes. Some people with bright white clothes were walking on the other side

of the road. A pack of dogs was barking at them while eating pieces of bread lying in front. Huge portraits of the royal lineage were painted on the walls of Mithila, with well-carved and gold embedded boundaries around the paintings.

We blindly followed the crowd assuming that everyone was heading towards Janak's palace. The crowd was divided into different lanes for those on chariot and horses, leaving minimal space for pedestrians.

As we neared the palace, it sparkled like a vast crystal-white marble structure laden with shining stones in it, something so irreplicable even if eons were spent waiting. It had well ornate and gracious architecture as if designed by Vishwakarma himself.

We disguised as Brahmins and joined the lane along with other Brahmins. We were welcomed with trumpets and showers of rose petals. Pavilion for elite guests and the kings participating in the ceremony was around a hundred feet away from the area for ritual purification. There was a huge pandal reserved for sages and the council members of Janak's court, where I saw a very old Sage named Vishwamitra, the creator of the *Gayatri Mantra*.

Gayatri Mantra, dedicated to Sun ('*Tat-Savitar*' in *Gayatri Mantra* describes the Sun as the creator or source of all lives), was enshrined in *Rigveda* and is one of the holiest and most revered mantras of our history.

After everyone settled at their respective places, Vishwamitra presided over the ceremony and mentioned about Triambaka, the bow gifted by Lord Shiva to *Devaraata*, who belonged to Janak's lineage. Being a Shiva devotee, my eagerness to have a glimpse of the bow piqued.

"Honorable Kings, mighty rulers, formidable sages, and the citizens of Mithila!

On behalf of King Janak, I feel obliged by your benign presence in the *Swayamwara* of the Princess of Mithila.

I feel honored to mention about Triambaka, the bow once borne by highly revered Shiva. As we commence the ceremony, I reserve the liberty to announce that it would not be easier to lift and string Triambaka by an ordinary warrior. It is due to the complex science behind its construction," Vishwamitra cautioned the audience.

His words made me more eager to have a glimpse of that highly revered bow.

As soon as *Triambaka* , enclosed in a chamber, was brought into the hall, thunders of cheerings enveloped the surroundings as thousands of eyeballs responded to have the first glimpse of that revered bow. The whole environment resonated with 'Jai Shiva,' 'Om Namah Shivay,' 'Jai Rudra' chantings. The pleasure of serenity was flowing amidst that oasis of chaos. I also started screaming 'Jai Rudra', Jai Shiva' at the top of my voice.

Janak explained the rules of Swayamwar and called for the potential Kings, Princes, Gandharvas, Yakshas, and all elite lineages present in durbar. One by one, best of the best warriors and kings tried stringing the bow but could not lift it, let alone break it into two. Every time a King, who looked promising but could not even lift the bow, I made gestures of disappointment. As soon as someone lifted it a bit but could not string, a pang of dismay rushed through the audience.

It seemed like the gathering was devoid of real warriors, but filled with plenty of kings with great wealth but not wealthy enough in weaponry skills. With time the science and art of mastering weapons were changing, which was what most of the kings were unaware of. Sitting in the crowd, I was glad that my daughter would at least not marry those hypocrites.

Like her Father, she deserved someone who would possess deep knowledge of archery, the potential of an invincible warrior and master in using the fiercest weapons .

As time progressed, the whole of Mithila witnessed anxiety on the face of Janak.

With a heavy heart, Janak said,
"If this were the fate, I accept it!

But I cannot accept that Bharatvarsha has failed to raise real warriors!

My daughter, who belong to the gentry, is no less than the goddess of extreme beauty, the one as pious as the flames of fire!

Is there anyone in my durbar who can challenge these piercing words of mine...? “

Janak, with his dejected expressions, looked at the intact Triambaka and then at Vishwamitra in anticipation of some miracle.

Before he could further vent his dismay on everyone present in the hall, he saw two charming boys standing at the extreme end of durbar walking towards Sage Vishwamitra. Although their appearance was ascetic, wearing saffron-colored angavastram, they seemed to possess royal lineaments. Their posture was remarkable, exuding the confidence like that of princes. Their skins were flawless except for some roughness on their fingertips that justified their Kshatriya demeanor. They stood in front of Janak, carrying the aura that could challenge even the best of the best kings, Gandharvas, or even Gods.

Their Guru, Sage Vashistha, one of the seven highly revered Saptarishis of Bharatavarsha, accompanied them. One of the boys introduced himself as Ram and the other one, Lakshman. Ram, with the permission of Sage Vashistha, introduced himself to Vishwamitra and King Janak as the eldest son of Kaushalya and King Dashratha, the ruler of Kosala Kingdom.

Ayodhya, the capital of Koshala Kingdom, was the center of rule, where King Dashratha and his family lived.

He introduced briefly about his half twin brothers Lakshman and Shatrughna. Both were born to Sumitra, the princess of Kashi, and the second wife of King Dashratha. Ram had one more half-brother, Bharata, born to Kaikeyi, the princess of Kekaya Kingdom (*extending from present-day Pakistan to Afghanistan, not to scale*) and third wife of Dashratha. He apprised the durbar of his birth on the ninth day of Chaitra in Ayodhya, a city near the banks of River Sarayu. (*March-April months in Hindu calendar are called Chaitra*)

Ram's guru, Sage Vashistha, was the son of Sage Mitra and Apsara Urvashi. (*Varuna, is also claimed to be his father*). Urvashi, one of the most beautiful Apsaras, was married to Sage Mitra. Varuna happened to meet her in one of the ceremonies arranged by Devas, where Sage Mitra and Urvashi were also invited. Varuna praised her for her immaculate beauty. Sage Mitra mistook her innocence as her acceptance of favors from Varuna and renounced her. Later, Lord Brahma intervened and

requested both of them to accept her as their counterpart as it was not her mistake but a result of the misunderstanding that stained her piousness. Both of them accepted her gracefully and then, one of the renowned Prajapatis, Kulguru of Aryan civilization, and the purohit of the Ishvaku dynasty, *Vashistha*, was born.

Vashistha and his wife Arundhati established Gurukul on the banks of the river Beas, where thousands of students were imparted education. When the invasions from Asuras, Daityas, and Danavas on Aryavrata were at its peak, Vashistha requested King Dashratha to allow Ram to have tutelage under his patronage. For years, Lakshman and Ram underwent severe hardships and acquired immense knowledge in weaponry under Guru Vashistha.

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Looking at Ram and Lakshman, Janak seemed a bit muddled, but his eyes filled with hopes.

Vashistha gave Vishwamitra a glaring look that reminded them of the rivalry they had for a long time. For a moment, it seemed like the time had paused for both of them. Vashistha possessed the divine cow *Kamadhenu* that Vishwamitra wished to have. Vishwamitra went to the extent of assaulting Vashistha and take the Cow by force but was severely defeated by him. After continuous setbacks, Vishwamitra finally yielded to Vashistha.

*Greed doesn't discriminate based on your status or intellect.
It destroys the poor and the rich...or even Sages...without bias!*

Ram bowed before the King, asked for permission from his Guru Vashistha, and moved to the place where the bow was enshrined. For a few seconds, he looked at the bow with rapt attention. In an attempt to embrace the bow, he lifted it from the riser, clutched the strings around his fingers, placed one limb on the ground, and quickly stretched it at the perfect angle.

I was deeply impressed by the acumen and accuracy with which he broke the bow, showing no signs of strain in his grip. As soon as the bow limbs fell apart on the floor, King Janak stood up from his throne in

surprise and elation. The whole durbar went into ecstasy and cheers from the crowd all over Mithila surrounded the sky. The spirit was so high, the cheers so strong that could have put the galaxies sundered.

After a few moments of celebrations, a sturdy figure with a dark red Tilak on his forehead entered the court. I could not see his face as he entered from the rear side of the hall. He had a long black beard with a few strands of white hair entangled, held an axe, and wore angavastram. His presence was dominating, and aura exuded the formidable arrogance of a godson. From his demeanor, I could speculate who he was but was unsure of his real identity. Janak, with his hands folded, pleaded to him for mercy. Even after countless pleadings, he was not ready to calm down. His anger had conquered his senses. He turned towards the crowd and raised his axe (*Parashu*) to show his disconcert.

"Parashuram!" screamed Sage Vishwamitra.

He was infuriated at the breaking of the bow that belonged to his cherished Deva, Lord Shiva. It was considered inauspicious to break or discard a weapon that belonged to the celestials, and here, it belonged to the God of gods, Lord Shiva.

I was one of the greatest followers and admirers of Guru Parashuram. His principles of equality and valor had always made me look up to him as one of my idols. During my youth days, I went to his hermitage, requesting him to teach me about politics, weaponry, and philosophy. His views, although extreme, were highly influential. As I was a Brahmin, he agreed to teach me under his patronage.

He spoke about his feat of eliminating almost all Kshatriyas 21 times from this earth and even threatened to kill everyone present in the durbar. Janak, terrified and shocked from the words of admonition from Parashuram, apologized for the blunder. Vashistha, without wasting any time, asked Ram to go forward and ask for the apology as it was his actions that enraged the most powerful sage ever alive.

Ram touched the feet of Vashishta and quickly placed himself in front of raging Parashuram, to divert his tirades of curses away from Janak and his aides.

With a steady kind gaze, the young man pressed his delicate palms together and, with a slight reverent bow greeted him with "*Pranaam*". He apologized, praised his valor and dignity, and justified his intentions

for that act with the charisma of his words. I was impressed with the way he politely countered the flow of piercing words from Parashuram.

After the exchange of some intense arguments, Lord Parashuram was pacified, and the ceremony proceeded as planned.

Surrounded by a thick blanket of flowers, Sita was brought into the hall, and the couple witnessed the moments of nuptial bliss. Saints and Brahmins uttered the lineage of Ram, as the descendants of Ishvaku and Sita as the one who belonged to the *Mithi* clan. Alongside, the marriage of his brother Lakshman was announced with Urmila, the second daughter of Janak and brothers Bharata and Shatrughan, with the daughters of Janak's younger brother, Kushadhvaja.

The ceremony was finally over by the sixth pahar with the showers of blessings on couples by everyone present in the hall. Standing far off the crowd, I blessed my daughter with warmth and caring words that quaked my soul but remained silent in my mind.

After the ceremony was over, Maricha and I left for Lanka, giving our blessings to the newly wedded couples.

"Long live, Sita!" I shouted with elation.

"Long live, Ram!" said the crowd in chorus.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- More often than not, Talking man-to-man is mistaken as rudeness in the corporates.

Never avoid it!

A leader is respected for his straight talks & the respect he gives to his colleagues!



Chapter R.10

*Your world revolves around what you believe in.
Your struggles & hence your efforts to fight those struggles will be decided
by what you believe in!*

Lanka was flourishing with prosperity and power. Its dominance in the fields of arts, science, finance, and artillery, was spreading all over the world. Under my dream to establish secularity and meritocracy, we declared equal rights for all religions and castes. Our fortune and dominance surpassed that of other Kings and Devas, including Kubera, Vali, Varuna, or even Indra- the leader of all Devas. Compared to our contemporaries, we were among the best in war tactics, weapons, and even the strength of the armies.

Having mastered the best of the forces- King, ministers, allies, treasures, army & territory, we also possessed the best of the defenses in terms of water, mountains, forests, artificial means, and a strong army. Equipped with the philosophy of Sama, Daam, Danda, Bheda, we were ready to rule the entire world.

The Asura kingdom was making its mark.

During our annual celebration, we organized a feast for the common masses and decorated the entire Lanka with flags, diamonds, and rare pearls. Arcades plated with gold, gardens enriched with a variety of flowers, crystal-clear water sprinkled by large fountains, were a delight to witness.

Black swans preened at the ponds, sounds of other exotic birds and migratory peacocks, and the soothing voice of cuckoo birds dissolved all over Lanka. The entire episode of the activities thrilled the ambiance.

Grand archways, decorated with Asura sculptures on the main streets, were illuminated like sunrays scintillating on gems. Palaces were adorned with the skins of tigers killed in hunting. The entrances were spotted with elephants shining with gemmed caparison on them. The ambiance was filled with different scented colors. The sweet

fragrance of sandalwood decorated the foreheads of all the pandits in Lanka.

On one end *Nagadas* and mridangas were being played in praise of Lord Shiva, on the other, loud chanting of 'Om Namah Shivay' filled the ambiance.

Various scriptures, artifacts, pillar engravings were designed by architects from different parts of the country. My Pushpaka vimana would glitter with diamonds and gems obtained from the distant places of the earth. The world's best brains created windows of crystal and platform made of ruby with engravings of emerald. Lanka was a unique masterpiece that even many Devas aspired to have.

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Soon after the celebrations, Akampan, the most trusted spy of my council, informed me about Dashrath's wife Kaikeyi's demand of 14 years of exile for Ram and Bharath to be anointed the king of Ayodhya.

Once King Dashratha was fighting with Bali, my maternal father's brother. Kaikeyi, who was the chief commander of Dasharatha's army, accompanied and protected him during the war. A poisonous arrow launched by Bali wounded him. When he was profusely losing his blood, she saved his life and made him abscond the battlefield with utter ease. In return, he thanked her with his promising words. He entreated her with two wishes that he would fulfill at any condition, come what may.

As per Akampan, it was Kaikeyi's maid Manthara who influenced her to ask for the exile for Ram, as her first wish and the throne of Ayodhya for her son Bharath, as her second one.

As per Raghukul's code of ethics, a promise once made to anyone can never be broken and becomes gospel truth .

Dashratha had already committed to fulfilling those two desires, and now he, himself, could not deny it.

Ram agreed and accepted that desire as his father's command. While he was on the verge of leaving Ayodhya, Lakshman and Sita insisted

Dashratha to allow them to accompany him and live an ascetic life in the forests. After many persuasions, they finally convinced Dashratha.

When Urmila, wife of Lakshman, insisted Lakshman to take her along with them, she was persuaded with all the alluring reasons to stay back in Ayodhya.

“Urmila!

It pains me even to think of living my life without you. With time, our love has grown abound and deep. If I could ever go into the past and change it, I would have destroyed all the reasons that could get us apart.

You are foremost to me! My wife!

Being your husband, the one foremost to you!

I order you to stay here with my mother, Sumitra, and take care of my father, Dashratha. It would be a privilege for you to serve them and Ayodhya as its daughter-in-law. Your life in exile would be full of struggles and agony. This Raghu's son cannot do injustice to the promise he made to your father, the promise of a life full of bliss and comfort. At the time of misery, it becomes my Rajdharma to take care of my elder brother and his wife, Sita.

Pardon me! Urmila!

I cannot take you with me. Let this love between us grow fonder with time”, justified Lakshman with his voice swelled with care and guilt.

Shocked and terrified, Urmila looked stunned as if she expected something opposite of what Lakshman had just told her. She looked at the chandelier to restrict her own tears trickle down her cheeks, with dejection on her face. She sobbed, with her lips wetted by tears.

“I still remember the moment we tied the nuptial knot, and you promised me to tread this path called ‘life’ together.

Like every woman, I also had millions of dreams in my eyes, dreams that I wished to see in the lap of my husband.

Whom would I rely upon when I need a shoulder to cry, a lap to love?

Whom would I trust when I am in pain and need to pour my heart out?

Like you, if I could ever go into the past and change it, I would have destroyed all the reasons that set us apart. If I had known this as my fate, I would have ended my life without any guilt.

Sita is blessed to have Ram, who accepted her presence alongside him, forever!

Can't you fulfill the same desire of mine!

I know your heart would not melt at my wailings. I would swallow this pain of separation and wait for you to come and hug me again.... after 14 years! "Urmila sobbed and ran into her room, crying incessantly.

Lakshman lurched deep into the dilemma, troubling his already agitated mind. On one side, there was Raghukul's tradition "*Pran jaaye par vachan na Jaayi*" and, on the other, his duty as a husband. Muddled between his priorities, he finally decided to accompany Ram in his exile.

Dashratha cursed his wife Kaikeyi for her shrewd and cold-hearted behavior towards her sons. Within a few days of their exile, grief-stricken Dashratha's health deteriorated to the extent that he would skip his meals and used to attend the court while being devoid of sleep. After a while, when he was bedridden, the whole incident of his killing Sharavan was visible to his mind's eyes.

.....
Once upon a time, during his younger days, he went to a forest for hunting. A teenage boy, Sharavan, who was carrying his blind parents on a sling, was filling his waterpot from a nearby river. When Dashratha heard loud gurgles in the river, he mistook Sharavan for a deer. Impulsively, he unleashed an arrow that killed Shraavan. Guilt-stricken, he took that waterpot to his parents and admitted his mistake. Unable to bear the loss of their son, they cursed Dashratha to experience the same fate...the fate that he would never be able to escape from!

.....
Dashratha desperately desired to have his Ram and Lakshman back in Ayodhya. Soon he passed away in his sleep with the unbearable pain of separation in his heart.

Ram, on the advice of Sage Bhardwaj, began his expedition from far south in Dandaka Kingdom's Chitrakoot forest (*in present-day Madhya Pradesh*). Within a few days of his exile, Bharath, his youngest half-brother, approached him and tried persuading him to come back to Ayodhya and rule as its king. He denied coming back to Ayodhya, but on Bharath's request, he gave him his Padukas (*Khadao*) as a souvenir.

Later, Bharath kept ruling the throne of Ayodhya under Ram's name, by placing his Padukas on the throne.

I was grieved to hear the news of their exile- more so thinking about my daughter Sita. A princess, destined to be a queen, would now live like a destitute, devoid of all the luxuries of life. When Mandodari heard about it, a stream of lightning flew down her spine. She started cursing me for abandoning her and held me responsible for her agonies.

I consoled her and promised to take care of Sita by keeping a watch on her.

I instantly ordered my spies to look after the trio.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- You must work!

Certainly! You must work.

Whether you are in a job that you hate or love or you are neutral about it, you must spend some time in it, at least at the initial stages of your career.
(How much Time? - Use your discretion)

The job that you do not love at all may frustrate you, will affect your work-life balance, and challenge your mental peace. However, it would develop patience, maturity, and ability to make decisions in unexpected situations and help you learn how to serve Positive politics.

All these abilities are 'a-must' to develop if you want to sustain & grow faster in your career.

If you learn the ability to handle the odds that frustrate you, half of your battle is already won!

Everything needs time, some time!

Even to hate something, you need to have spent some time with it!



Chapter R.11

Let the enemy either succumb to your demands or die a sweet death.

Years passed by...

Akshayakumara had his primary education in Vedas and warfare. Meghnad was still completing his stints in various administrative departments, and Shurpanakha was living with Khara and Dushana in the Dandaka kingdom.

Lanka was expanding its footprints globally, creating trade centers in various parts of the world, mostly the southern and some parts of the western world (*Devas and their allies primarily served north*)

For a long time, I was under the impression that my Kingdom was flourishing and establishing its footprints worldwide. However, I could not sense the unrest and dissension growing up among Lanka citizens, especially farmers and lower class traders. In our fervor to take Lanka to new heights of glory, we forgot about those who had hopes in their eyes at dawn but ended up sleeping without food. We focused so much on the upper echelon, the position holders in the administration that we forgot about the pillars, the common people of Lanka, and their miseries.

My council and I were discussing the audit of our resources, its utilization, and a separate budget for the development of diverse societies when suddenly my sister Shurpanakha, crying in pain, entered the court with her left hand covering her nose and another one her left ear. I rushed towards Shurpanakha, embraced her in my arms, and took her into my room, along with Vibhishan, Kumbhakarn, Sumali, and my mother, Kaikesi. With every passing second, her screams were getting louder, and hence my anxiety.

“On whose commands even the celestials dread.

One who challenged Yama! Defeated the king of gods, Indra!

Bhaginī, tell me! Who dared to give you this pain? “

My anger knew no bounds when I heard my sister expounding the humiliation she faced after she proposed to one of the two men wandering, along with a woman, in the jungle.

"Ram and Laksh....Lakshman!

I can never forget these names...brother!" she said.

"Whom did they accompany?...the woman!" I asked

"Sita!" she replied at once.

For a while, I went numb, lost control of my senses. Enraged and fazed, I swayed back and forth in the room, trying to understand the situation.

Shurpanakha had already complained to Khara about the incident. Khara, the most trusted well-wisher and Governor of Dandaka Kingdom, sent Dushana with other commanders, Sthulaksh, Prmathi, Parusha of his army. With the sole motive of slaying, they went into the forests of Dandaka in search of Ram and Lakshman. The battle went on for three days when finally Ram killed all of the commanders and later, Dushana, one of the valiant warriors of Khara's army, as well.

"Brother!

Even his comrades could not confront those wanderers. Khara's army had to bear the brunt of that nomad's anger. He killed Khara, the prominent and the fiercest one, with the arrow given by Sage Agastaya", said Shurpanakha in anxiety.

"With Brahmadata! "I asked with surprise and curiosity.

"Yes, that arrow was Brahmadata," She replied.

It was something that pinched me in my eyes. If a warrior could wield Brahmadata, let alone use it, he could not be an ordinary warrior. If someone has challenged Khara and his army, he cannot just be a nomad. My ego was not letting me believe that those boys had killed Khara and Dushana.....but it was true.

I felt paralyzed, disturbed by millions of thoughts creating chaos in my mind,

How can someone... who grew up with millions of wounds on his chest, who defeated Yakshas, Gandharvas, mighty Danvas, and invincible Devas, the one who possessed the power of 10 humans, a Mahatapasvi...bow down in front of those novice wanderers?

They disrespected my sister, killed my chief commanders How could I spare them for what they had done!

*I shall avenge Shurpanakha's humiliation.
How will my people have faith in me! If I can't take care of my own family!*

*I can't let my Lanka's reputation take this blow.
I'm Lankesh!*

Whoever comes in the path that I've set for my country will have to suffer at the hands of their own fate, even if it means taking away happiness from my daughter's life!

Sumali, who was silently listening to our conversations, asked me to accompany him and calmly discuss it rather than taking any witless action in rage.

He suggested that I should play politically and break Ram, morally, by abducting Sita.

We were aware of Ram's devotion towards Sita and that her abduction would be extremely devastating for him. That being a part of our political tactic was well accepted by all council members, except Vibhishan. He was against her abduction, as it would have been an outright contempt of the Dharma of Asura culture.

"The valiant ones!

The protagonists of Raksha culture!

It has cost millions of lives and thousands of years for our ancestors to bring back the glory of trodden Asuras.

Their unrelenting efforts have made us reach the stature that cannot be challenged even by the supreme ones.

For God's sake! Do not let the sacrifices of our ancestors go in vain.

Asuras cannot stoop so low in their beliefs; they cannot be so self-centered in their deeds and thoughts."

Vibhishan said with a hue of disgust and admonition.

"Vibhishan! The innocent one!

We honor your apprehensions!

We assure that the sanctity of the promise that Sita had made to his Father-in-law would be intact.

For 14 years, she would be given a place in our Ashoka Vatika and not in the Palace, so that she can live the remaining years of her exile as an ascetic." I promised him.

“...but...” Vibhishan whispered.

Ignoring Vibhishan’s arguments, I explained to all about Sita’s plight that she would have been going through in exile.

My adamant behavior had always backed me in doing what I believed, and this time the situation was over in my head.

When Vibhishan was still reluctant towards accepting our plan, we ignored his advice and went ahead.

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Maricha and I left for the Dandaka forest in my Pushpaka Vimana to the place where we could find the trio. I brought Maricha with me, as he possessed excellent skills in sorcery and impersonation. The trio was residing near the Godavari River at a place named *Panchavati*, in the Dandaka forest, the colonial state of Lanka. We had hidden our vimana on the other side of the Godavari, covered under a blanket of bushes and straws. As planned, Maricha disguised as a deer, shining like a masterpiece as if nature designed it by herself.

He made his way as close to Ram and Sita as possible.

He was seductive.

He was irresistible to the eyes.

His body was shining like lustrous gold and neck having a tinge of Rainbow colored streaks.

His art of impersonating any creature had always helped us in winning even the battles that seemed impossible to win.

I could see Sita giving expressions, full of excitement and energy, to Ram as if she was in desperate need of the deer.

Maricha came in proximity to pastures near their shed made of straws. I also found a safe place to hide, listen to their conversation, and watch on them.

“Lakshman, behold!

Did you see that deer! So unique! So elegant! Its skin is so beguiling.

Sita always wished to adopt such a masterpiece.” Ram told Lakshman in astonishment.

“True, Brother! He is indeed a masterpiece!

Nevertheless, I have a sneaking suspicion that such a wonder can even exist!” Lakshman reverted.

“No doubt about the non-existence of something like this in *Panchavati*,” Ram told Lakshman in elation.

There was reluctance from Lakshman, as he already knew about Asura’s dominion over the Dandaka forest and their ability to impersonate and confuse the prey.

For Ram was not able to resist Sita’s request also his prestige and Rahgukul’s pride was at stake, he sprinted and launched an attack on Marich. Warnings from Lakshman faded in the air in the haste of catching the deer.

“Take care of Sita, Lakshman!” could be heard, leaving a feeble trail of syllables.

Maricha, an expert in escaping even the mightiest arrows, quickly darted into the deep dimensions of that forest. He made Ram drain his energy and exhausted him to the core. Ram got a little wary of the maneuvers Maricha performed. After much struggle, Ram launched a divine arrow that he could not escape. It hit him in the abdomen and paralyzed him instantly.

While dying, he kept on screaming “LAKSHMAN” at the top of his voice and repeated his name until it echoed all over the forest. Although I could sense the tricks he played while deceiving Ram but never imagined that he would die in that act.

He was never defeated. Whether big or small, he was always invincible in all of his battles. His own confidence took the toll of his life. I had lost my uncle, the pride of Lanka, because of my own foolishness.

They gaped at each other in surprise, Sita having tears flowing down her cheeks. Lakshman tried to pacify her, saying it could be a trick played by some miscreant, as it was impossible to harm his inviolable brother Ram. Surprised by his reaction, Sita accused him of his indifferent behavior even in that moment of exigency. She screamed at Lakshman for his inaction. In the dilemma of either leaving Sita alone

or saving his brother's life, Lakshman finally reminded himself of his promise to his father.

*He swore in to accompany Ram like his shadow...
Whatever may come, protect him from every calamity .*

He finally created a ring of fire around Ashram and furnished her with a chemical that could increase the intensity of the fire if thrown over that ring. He instructed Sita to use the chemical over the ring if any mishap befell her. Under any circumstances, she was told by Lakshman not to cross the ring.

Later, the ring was famously known as Lakshman Rekha.

As soon as he maintained a sufficient distance, I emerged out of bushes, disguised as Brahmin wearing saffron clothes. Without further ado, I reached in the vicinity of the hermitage, where I saw Sita feeding a bird.

I asked for alms with a loud and fake groaning voice. Terrified and worried, she begged her pardon and asked for some more time; time till either of the duos came back.

In a modulated cursing voice, I asked for food and some water.
"Bhikshaam Dehi! " I repeated multiple times in a louder tone.
(Bhikshaam Dehi – "may you give me some alms")

She couldn't deny my request as it was considered inauspicious to deny a Brahmin's request.

The fear of getting cursed for life would invariably make people respond to the requests made by a Brahmin.

As I could not afford any more delays, I got furious as well as guilty of what I was doing.

"Ravana!

Don't be overwhelmed with emotions!

It's the time to act practically and work towards the dream that whole Lanka has seen in its eyes.

Our victory is ensured!

We are on the verge of it !" my alter ego intervened.

As she approached me with food in her hands, I forwarded her a cloth, laced with a sweet-smelling potion. Once I realized she was well within my reach, I pulled her out of the fire ring and covered her nostrils with the cloth until she fainted. Quickly I moved towards Pusphaka Vimana with Sita loaded on my shoulders. She had her left hand's fist clenched tightly, having the leftovers of the chemical. I quickly unlatched the rotors of Vimana and parallelly tied Sita to a pole. She was breathing heavily but still unconscious.

The moments when I advised Maricha to join Lanka directly, and if needed, stay at Khara's kingdom, flashed through my mind.

I knew he was dead, but my mind was not ready to accept the reality!

Vimana had just lifted a bit in the air when she revived from her stupor and screamed,

"SWAMI...LAKSHMAN....SWA ...LAKSH....SW....." in all directions.

She tried dropping objects down from vimana to let Ram know about her whereabouts. The vimana had already attained sufficient height to contain the sound of her screams. She was floundering, her wails bursting the staunchest of the clouds and her father writhing in suppressed guilt.

My daughter was in pain.

Her father was in pain.

Ram was in pain.

Lakshman was in pain.

Earlier I resisted her reactions, tried to defend scrimmage, but later realized that in this way, it would be easier for Ram to find Sita. *That was actually what I wanted.*

When I turned the direction of Vimana with its yoke towards the south, suddenly, I noticed a gigantic and sharp-beaked eagle heading towards vimana, making a deafening screeching sound. Seeing the danger, I swerved the vimana to divert the eagle from my path. As soon as I lifted my sword, I saw Sita whining "JATAYU", screaming "JATAYU, JATAYU..."

The bird launched an attack on vimana's base and tried disbalancing it. Realizing all of his efforts going in vain, he started attacking me with

his claws. Annoyed and maddened at him, I took my sword from the scabbard and made a sharp cut on his left-wing. Screaming in immense pain, he started falling, his body making circular rotations. Sita kept struggling to escape vimana and, in chaos, dropped some jewelry off it. She managed to drop pieces of her necklace and a ring in the forest.

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After reaching Lanka, I headed directly towards Ashoka Vatika, named after the Ashoka tree in the Vatika.

(Known as Seetha Eliya in present-day Srilanka)

Decorated by exotic birds and peacocks, surrounded by the pleasant voice of cuckoos, filled with the colors of orioles, Ashoka Vatika always resembled a woman attaining her youthful age- a woman full of energy, full of beauty and full of unfulfilled desires. An enormous pond full of colorful fish brought from various parts of the world, different breeds of trees planted all over the place, made it irresistible to eyes.

I appointed Trijata, daughter of my brother Vibhishan and his wife Sarama, as the caretaker of Sita. She was the most trustworthy member of our family. We trusted her instincts, her ability to sense the impending danger. She was able to give all the comforts that Sita needed, at the time of her grieving over separation from Ram.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Organizations must allow Employees, at each level, to Debate and Participate. They must be encouraged to contribute & participate.

When organizations do not communicate with their employees frequently, they feel disconnected, and their miseries or thoughts do not reach the helmsman of the organization.

There must be direct connects of Leaders with the Employees so that the messages can directly flow from Top to bottom.

This reduces/eliminates confusion and manipulation of information.

- Organization's own Desires & Vision must not conflict with "What is right for the employees of organization!"

An organization is built by its employees. Its goals must not be a direct threat to the existence of its employees.

It must not impose its miseries and inabilities on them.

- Luck is just a reason to escape reality and reality never demands an immediate response to every action.

Organizations and Employees must take some time and ponder for a while before reacting to a situation.

Perceptions, reactions, thoughts change within some fraction of seconds!

Give those 'Fraction of seconds' to your actions & reactions!



Chapter R.12

*Success, indeed, is the absence of Failure.
Failure is inevitable.
You do not succeed you actually fail less.
Fail more initially...to fail less later!*

I called for spy Shradula whom I had appointed to keep an eye on both Ram and Lakshman. He told me about their coincidental meeting with the bird, Jatayu, whom I had fatally wounded during Sita's abduction. In search of Sita, they had passed through Janasthana and stayed in Krauncharanya forest (*in present-day Karnataka*) for a while.

There, a female demon, Ayomukhi, fell for Lakshman's charm and proposed to him to marry her. Like Shurpanakha, Ayomukhi also had to pay the price by losing her nose and ears. Post that incident the duo got more alert and cautious of all the possible tragedies that may befall them in their journey ahead.

The spy conveyed that later they met an older woman, Shabari, the disciple of Sage Matang.

Shabari, an elderly lower caste woman living in a hermitage on Mountain Rishyamukha near Pampa River (*In present-day Karnataka*), was in search of "true wisdom" and developed a deep inclination towards Brahma Gyan and self-realization. Her being a lower caste woman, no sage was ready to accept her as his disciple. Moreover, she was insulted and reprimanded for having nerves to seek knowledge of Vedas and Sacred texts.

Indulgence in the recital of Holy Scriptures, penance, and performing sacred rituals was limited to society's upper echelons.

After a lot of toiling and criticism, Sage Matang, who lived on Mountain Rishyamukha, accepted her as his disciple. He imparted her complete knowledge on Advaita Vedanta, the realization of truth behind one's existence and Brahmagyan. His fellows and contemporary sages condemned him for being ignorant and sinful. However,

unperturbed by castigation, he kept on treading the path of righteousness.

Ram was advised by Shabari to meet Sugriva, the monkey kingdom king, who was taking shelter at Mt. Rishyamukha. After having her half-eaten berries and spending some time at her place, they headed towards Rishyamukha Mountain to meet Sugriva.

Sugriva was the younger brother of the king of Kishkindha, Vali, with whom I had amicable relations post our encounter in a duel. Accompanied by a small platoon of monkey soldiers and Hanuman, the deputy defense minister of his soldiers, Sugriva was hiding in Mountain Rishyamukha from his elder brother Vali.

Sugriva was one of the most trusted aides of Vali. Once, despite multiple warnings, Vali was repeatedly challenged by a demon for battle. Frustrated and agitated, he finally chased the beast down to a deep cave. Vali had already advised Sugriva to wait at the entrance instead of accompanying him in the cave. The battle lasted for many days while Sugriva kept on waiting for his brother outside the cave. After a while, he heard loud clamors and a thick stream of blood oozing out of that cave.

Assuming those screams and blood of his brother, he left the place covering the cave entrance with a huge rock. He declared Vali dead and began ruling the throne of Kishkindha as its King. After a few days, Vali, exhausted and worn out, reached Kishkindha and saw Sugriva ruling as its king. He was devastated and shocked at the deeds of his brother. Despite multiple attempts from Sugriva explaining his innocence, Vali ostracized him from Kishkindha. He warned him never to turn his eyes to his kingdom. Meanwhile, Sugriva traversed various places to find a safe shelter for himself and bear the agony of insult inflicted on him by his brother.

One day, Vali was insulted and prohibited to enter Rishyamukha Mountain, by Sage Matang (*the guru of Shabari*) after he killed Mandodari's brother Dundubhi in a duel.

The place of the duel was near Matang's hermitage.

Blood and chaos made Matang's place unconsecrated and cursed. The Sage cursed and insulted him for the mayhem. For Vali, his dignity and prestige were more important than his desires. He vowed never to

visit that place again, making Rishimukya the safest place for Sugriva to hide.

Sugriva, while hiding away from Vali, mostly covered all of the places in and around the entire Bharatvarsha. That led him to have abundant knowledge of most of the places, including the ones down south.

Sugriva's vast geographical knowledge would have given Ram an advantage while exploring places in the search for Sita.

Sugriva, already knowing about the valor and influence of Ram in the whole of Aryavrata, found it favorable to join hands with him. He also desperately needed someone who could help him get his Kingdom, his Kishkindha, his prestige, and his wife, Ruma, back.

Ram assured Sugriva that he would help him in killing Vali.

Sugriva was defeated in his first faceoff with Vali. During their combat, he wanted Ram to strike Vali down, furtively, with his arrows. Ram got confused as Vali and Sugriva both resembled each other in expressions and features.

It seemed as if it was a confrontation between the twins.

Ram did not intervene and let the battle continue until Sugriva was knocked-down to the exhaustion. Wounded and spared by the mercy of Vali, Sugriva managed to escape his death that day.

Furious at the inaction of Ram on the battlefield, he sledged him for hours, having no signs of respite on his face.

“Ram! The valiant of all. The hope of vanaras!

You have lost all my trust. At the time of dire need, when I was being choked to death, when I could feel Yama himself on my chest, you absconded the field.

Do I assume that your heroism has faltered or you have also turned your sides, to join Vali?

I was a fool that I trusted a stranger, the so-called “Prince of Ayodhya”!”

Before he could utter even a single word, further....

“SUGRIVA!

Watch your words!

Do not test my patience.

Let your tongue not destroy your honor and the existence of vanaras.” Lakshman yelled at Sugriva with utter impudence.

Sugriva got stunned as well as frightened, listening to those piercing words from Lakshman.

Hanuman, who was silently watching that battle of intense arguments, was in dilemma *whether to support the one who gave him a ray of hope, the purpose of his life, or the one who made him capable enough to realize that purpose.*

Sensing the growing heat in the surroundings, Ram intervened.

“Sugriva!

I respect your anger. I respect your pain.

For a Kshatriya warrior of Raghukul, his promise matters more than his own life. Do not taint me with your disparaging words.

Do you think I betrayed you? Do you think I raised no weapon to let you die at the hands of Vali?

Your fear is meaningless. Your doubt is unwarranted. I was blinded by the look-alike appearance of both of you. You both were adorable. You both were valiant. You both played the same tricks on each other in that duel. You both were immense and veterans in *Malla Yudha*.

How could I string my bow without knowing my target?

An unnecessary rush could have destroyed your dream to become the King of Kishkindha again and my hopes of having my Sita back.”

Ram justified his inaction like a mature saint.

“Enough, Brother! Your pleading is falling into deaf ears!” Lakshman retorted in frustration.

Ram cut Lakshman in between and said, “I leave up to you, Sugriva, to decide. If you believe my words, come and embrace me. Else, I will accept the fate you choose for me.”

A deep silence prevailed in the surroundings for a while. That lapse of silence gave Sugriva enough time to reckon all the possibilities and finally realize his mistake.

He apologized for his impudence and embraced Ram. Loud cheering of “Jai Ram, Jai Sugriva” from everyone present around them followed.

The next day, all the leaders of Sugriva’s army schemed for their next attack on Vali with an impregnable plan.

This time, Ram helped Sugriva in successfully killing Vali with a fatal arrow. Vali, although, was warned by his wife Tara about that

impending danger. Even his son Angada apprised him of Sugriva's collaboration with two sage-like men, Ram and Lakshman.

It was considered a disdain to the king and his entire clan if he refused to accept the challenge imposed by anyone.

Their acceptance would feed their ego, their

Vachana(Commitment) was supreme, even if it inspired death .

Post Vali's killing, Sugriva was made the king of Kishkindha and Angada as the prince of the regime. Angada had no choice but to accept Sugriva as his majesty. The pain of his father's death, even if through controversial means, gradually dwindled with time.

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As time passed by, Sugriva got too engrossed in the luxuries of life, overpowered by the grandeur and addiction to hear the kingly word – "Your majesty!"

Dominated by a life of indulges, he forgot the promising claims he made to Ram. His promise of finding Sita.

Later, when Lakshman reprimanded Sugriva for his delinquency, he ordered Hanuman, Angada, Nila (*The commander in chief*), and Nala (*The chief architect-engineer*), an exhaustive search in all directions for her.

The spy informed me of the struggles and unrest that was growing up in the army of monkeys. It was due to the strict deadline given by Sugriva to his leading commanders. Angada, even after being utterly devoted to Sugriva, got carried away when the pressure from Sugriva escalated. He was on the verge of turning into a rebellion and deserting the kingdom. Later, Hanuman pacified him with his eloquence.

Hanuman, a celibate (*Brahmachari*) and an ardent devotee of Ram, was known for his excellence in controlling human emotions. A psychologist, renowned yogi, master in ancient martial arts, and a perfect example of self-control. He used assertion and emotion as the tools to influence Angada and his army. He reminded him of the pains that his mother Tara had undergone through all those years, and now it

was the moment to bring that long lost glory to his family and make her proud. He asserted the obligations he had towards Ram and Lakshman, who gave him a reason and purpose of life.

Listening to his persuasive words, Angada turned silent for a while but responded affirmatively later on. Now, he and his army were back with refilled energies and burning desire to get Janaki back.

“Jai Hanuman,”

“Jai Sugriva,”

“Jai Shri Ram,” echoed in the entire Vindhya ranges.

During the quest, exhausted and debilitated, the army headed south in search of Sita. On their way south, they found Sampati.

Sampati, a wingless vulture, somewhere in the middle of his 80's, was the elder brother of Jatayu. His son *Suparshva*, who also witnessed the abduction of Sita, accompanied Sampati. Both of them were of great help to Ram, as a vulture can see the targets even beyond 100 Yojanas, far from the human capabilities.

(As per Vishnupurana, one Yojana is equivalent to 12 Kilometers)

Sampati, his eyes red in anger, vowed to take revenge from me for the tragic killing of his brother Jatayu.

Before taking another gasp of pain, he cautioned them of the huge army of Lanka and the strength of its ruler, me, Ravana.

Without further ado, Hanuman, along with Sampati, headed towards Ram and Sugriva and informed them about the possibility of Sita's presence in Lanka.

Ram, as if a stream of hope had flown through his veins, asked Jambavan, the king of the Bear clan, if he knew anyone who could fathom the immense waters between Rameshwaram and the North West of Lanka.

“The one who has the flair, the one valiant and sturdy as Mountain Kailasha, the one rife with enormous potential,” said Jambavan extolling Hanuman.

“His fortitude and courage know no bounds”, he added in praise.

Jambavan nominated Hanuman for the task of crossing that enormous sea and finding the whereabouts of Sita.

We had a separate rank of leaders working as spies, dedicated to carrying out specific espionage activities. Prominent among them were

Suka, Sarana, and Shradula. We had trained Access agents, Redoubled agents, Sleeper agents, and other designated agents who were in contact with me only and not even to my close aides like Kumbhakarn, Vibhishan, or Sumali.

No one! Except me!

I had assigned Suka to keep a vigil on the activities that happened in or around the seaports of Lanka, related to trade, construction, invasion, or infiltration by unauthorized entities. He was informed to report any anomaly directly to me.

Sugriva and Jambavan suggested Hanuman inspect and accurately survey the region before heading towards Lanka.

Mountain Mahendra (*In present-day Odissa*) was one of the perfect vantage points for that purpose. He moved to the peak of Mt. Mahendra praising the vastness of the Indian Ocean on his left, stretches of beautiful forests on the right and thousands of Kilometers away, towards the south, the shining Lanka, on the peak of Mt. Trikuta. It would have been difficult for anyone to fathom such a long-distance via the usual route. View from Mt. Mahendra helped Hanuman in finding a displacement route and then plan his entire course of the journey to Lanka.

It was appreciable that Sugriva's army was putting in efforts and resources sensibly at the time of scarcity of almost everything, except hope.

When you do not have sufficient resources, you are naturally forced to devise intelligent ways that are efficient and economical at the same time.

That was precisely what Sugriva and his aides were doing!

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Fulfill/act on your promises made to others as soon as possible and as fast as feasible.

You cannot imagine the trust it builds in the eyes of people. Moreover, if repeated over time, the power of accrued trust.

If you are not able to deliver as promised, admit your mistake and work like hell to fix it!

- Highly passionate, extremely smart, hardworking, or who can take gut calls at the time of crisis –

Put them at the position of command; entitle them as the Captain of your organizational ship.



Chapter R.13

Perception that 'Everything is in order' submerges even the strongest of the empires.

Caution and perseverance are the sole remedies to sustain the existence of a realm.

Completely engrossed in making Lanka the world's most powerful country, I forgot about my daughter's pains for all those months. She lived her life like an ascetic, a forest dweller passing each day at the mercy of Lord Rudra. Despite providing all the luxuries of life to her, she looked gloomy, her demeanor miserable, and her appearance impoverished.

Her happiness was Ram, her pleasure was Ram, her joy, her breath was Ram!

One fine day, I planned to visit Ashoka Vatika to meet Sita and let her know the truth. From the balcony of my palace, I saw her sitting under the Ashoka Tree, her head bent down, resting on her knees. Suddenly she looked up in the sky, lost in her thoughts, murmured something to herself, and slid aside, resting her back on its trunk.

I sent one of my guards for Trijata.

As soon as I turned left, I saw Trijata, her face drenched in sweat. She was gasping heavily with untamed breathings, and her hair tattered. She told me about a vanara creating havoc in Ashoka Vatika.

"Hiding behind the bushes, jumping on one or the other tree, it seemed as if he was desperately searching for something," she caught her breath, surprised by the calmness on my face.

Initially, she ignored it, thinking that to be some casual mischief by the vanara. However, she found him talking to Sita and saw him giving her a ring, as a proof, that Ram sent her. As soon as the guards, Trijata and Dhanyamalini, tried to catch him, he yelled "Jai Shri Ram" and disappeared somewhere in the Vatika. They did a thorough search from every nook and corner of the Vatika to even impossible-to-access places in it. However, it was all in vain.

If that were true, it was a sheer breach of our security. Infiltration of such kind was a matter of concern for the whole of Lanka.

It was imperative to raise the matter in front of the council. However, before that, I wanted to meet Sita in person. I asked my guards to arrange for a chariot and my Chandrahasa. I left for Ashoka Vatika.

At a distance of one *Dhanu* , Sita saw me approaching her. She started sobbing, shivering, and cursing me with every bitter word possible.

“This Lanka, that you are so obsessed with will be destroyed soon due to your sins. All the luster and eminence of Lanka that gratify your ego will soon vanish.

You would be weeping silently in pain for your own life.

Your family would perish in front of you; you will be able to save none of them.

I curse you! Ravana!

I curse you!” She imprecated me with impending misfortune.

While shedding her tears, she looked up and prayed for Ram as if he would come and save her. He would mutilate every piece of my body and serve it to the flesh-eating vultures. He would dry up the beautiful gardens that Lanka boasted and that the ocean’s fury would gulp every bit of it.

“Your empire would crash like ashes after Ram unleashes his weapons. There will be no one to serve your funeral pyre, Ravana!” She cursed me.

She continued throwing the tirade of words, and I was quietly listening to her, controlling my emotions.

I was fighting with my own pride.

Ravana, who was not accustomed to those sharp hurtful words, who annihilated his enemy before he even thought of bearing a single thought against him, the one who instilled fear even in Gods and celestials, the one who challenged Indra and Yama, was looking at Sita peacefully, controlling his anger gracefully.

She was my daughter. Sita. My daughter.

Let her anguish speak her heart out.

My daughter.

Sita.

Suddenly Trijata came to me, joined her palms, lowered her head, and begged for mercy for Sita. I nodded and went off. I ordered Ekjata, Harjata, Vikata, and Durmukhi to accompany Trijata, to take care of the situation and pacify agitated Sita.

The vanara had already created havoc in the Vatika, uprooted plants and trees, turned clean ponds into filthy slurry, broken trunks of trees submerged in the fountain pool with water flowing in all directions. The garden had turned from a beautiful apsara into a demon with disheveled hair. After such chaos in Ashoka Vatika, he went out onto the roads of Lanka, broke chariots, damaged the pathways, and destroyed magnificent wooden structures. Some warriors who were practicing with bow and arrows also noticed the unauthorized movement of a vanara figure towards arsenal.

By his actions, it was clear that he followed the strategy of Danda (*Open assault*), as he already knew it would be ineffective to use,

Sama (negotiation),

Our council and, ultimately, me, would not negotiate on the matter of releasing Sita back to Ram.

Daam (Bribery),

Our administration allowed no loopholes for bribery that was not in favor of Lanka. Although Lanka considered it as one of the most powerful tools for getting things done, Lankans knew if anyone had dared to do it in Lanka, I would have spared no piece of veins in them.

No mercy. Only death!

Bheda (Strategy of dissension),

Our Asura culture had allowed amalgamation of different cultures, from Brahmins to Kshatriyas, Gandharvas to Yakshas, from Daityas to Danvas. Although with our own regulations, we had let all cultures establish their trades, cultural and political centers. It would have been impossible for the vanara to sow dissension among Lankans.

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Praghasa, quivering in terror, recited the entire account of destruction caused by the Vanara. Whole Lanka was trembling in fear, animals running haywire in panic, some were shocked, and some confused. That rendition of chaos lurched my spine into a shiver.

On one side, I was surprised to see a vanara creating such havoc without even being noticed by our guards for so long.

On the other, I was still muddled in the thoughts about the conversation between Vanara and Sita. His purpose of intrusion into Lanka was something continually pushing me into suspicion.

Fulminating with anger, I ordered Praghasa, my uncle and son of Sumali & Ketumati, Jambumali, the son of Prahasta, our commander in chief of Lankan army, to meet me in court.

I ordered them to launch an attack on the Vanara immediately.

Praghasa, who was well versed with spear and sword and Jambumali, adept in using arrows attacked the Vanara, whose identity remained unknown to the whole of the Lanka, even to our most astute spies, Suka and Sarana.

With a burly and sturdy built, Praghasa ran towards the vanara and attacked him with his spear. He hit his face causing his mouth to spurt blood on the spear shaft. Screaming in pain, the vanara made a creaky sound and turned towards Praghasa with a cudgel that he acquired from one of the guards. The vanara swiftly maneuvered to hold his back, attacked him on the neck, and kicked his knee, causing his knee bone to break. Praghasa, groaning in pain, stumbled on the ground.

As the vanara turned around, a flying arrow swooshed past his head. Shocked and alert, he saw Jambumali standing on his chariot, holding his resplendently rugged bow with an arrow already placed over the nocking point, ready to leave the strained bowstring. The vanara quickly bent down to dodge the approaching arrow, attacked Praghasa in his abdomen, rupturing his intestines. Praghasa died on the spot with a fountain of blood gushing out of his veins. The vanara quickly turned towards Jambumali and threw the cudgel at him, hitting his chest, although he escaped unhurt but broke his bow riser, splitting it into two.

I sent Virupaksha to see and quickly apprise me of the situation.

The battle between the Vanara and Jambumali was turning gruesome. Jambumali, who was not-so-well practiced in duels, was challenged by the vanara for a duel battle. Swayed under the influence of Asura's "accept the challenge, no matter what" propensity, he roared with affirmation and stepped off his chariot to have a duel with the vanara.

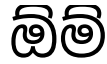
Jambumali forgot the purpose for which he was sent - to capture or kill the vanara; instead, he indulged in the display of his manliness, inviting his death.

Vanaras, usually known for their mastery in duels, are swift in attacking the fragile joints giving you a paralytic, near-death experience.

Jambumali fell into the prey of the strategy played by the vanara and tried handling him from behind, displaying some clumsy maneuvers with his bare hands. Quickly, vanara wrapped his arms around his head and held his neck, clasped his hands like a lock. He turned sideways, thumping on his chest with his fist, inflicting enough damage to his ribs. The vanara, well versed in wrestling skills, positioned his head against Jambumali's lower abdomen, wrapping both of his arms around his legs, making his body movement difficult for him. After a while, with a sudden jerk, he broke his left forearm and leg joints, leaving him paralyzed.

Screaming immensely in pain, Jambumali got a view of Virupaksha, who was mounted on his horse at a distance far away from the battlefield. In a desperate attempt to call Virupaksha for help, he tried raising his right hand, but before he could even move, the Vanara gave him a curb stomp on his cheek, crushing it in a jiffy. He groaned in pain and died the very next moment.

Virupaksha looked at Jambumali's motionless body, kicked his horse in his barrel, pulled his reins, and immediately made his way towards the court of Lanka.



Chapter R.14

The sound of the footfalls of Virupaksha filled the dead silence in the court. He recited the entire episode in front of everyone present in the durbar. After listening to that disturbing account of the merciless killing of Praghosa and Jambumali, I suddenly upstood from my throne and cursed that vanara with insulting remarks. I was shocked to see how an ordinary vanara could kill one of the most dreaded warriors of Lanka.

That was a matter of grave concern for both, the Lanka as well as the prestige of Lankesh.

Akshayakumara, standing at dais alongside the throne, was burning with rage for the killing of his cousins. He was muscular, carried sturdy built and youthful looks, vibrant and energetic. He was holding his Gladius sword inside his leather scabbard hooked to his belt. Looking at his face, I could feel his desire for revenge and his yearnings to prove his mettle as if that was the appropriate time for him to show his valor.

I asked Akshayakumara, my youngest Son, to channel his anger for the greater good of Lanka. I praised him for the blood he had lost, the sweat he had burnt on the training ground. I eulogized him for the feats he had achieved with weapons difficult even for the best of the warriors to handle.

With fire in his heart ignited, he roared 'Jai Rudra,' 'Jai Shivay' that filled the air in the court. Everyone present in court followed suit. A thundering ovation resounded through the roads of Lanka, cheering up all the souls with the name of Lord Shiva.

His chariot was full of the deadliest weapons, from swords to spears to darts to his favorite hatchet. He carried his bow and his quiver that adorned him like a true warrior and a poised prince. He invited that vanara for battle, with all the strength that he could summon. Creating a thunder shrill, he launched an attack from all possible directions, giving that vanara no time even to blink.

He was well learned in switching between weapons, launching arrows, spears, and darts, concomitantly, that created some deep

wounds on the already exhausted body of the vanara.

For a moment, it seemed like it was not Akshayakumara, a kid who had not even attained his youth but fighting like a Maharathi.

He made the Vanara bow down in pain, making him lose much blood from his wounds. His courage was not ready to fade, and his weapons not ready to contain his anger. Vanara, after balancing himself, hid behind a large rock to muster some energy. Sensing the dearth in the flow of arrows coming from Akshayakumara, Vanara made a swift move towards him, escaping a few arrows bombarded at him.

Running with the speed of light, he quickly approached the chariot of Akshaya, punched him on his thigh, and kicked on his chest. The vanara brought him also into the trap of *duel* and did not allow him any chance to use his weapons. Akshaya, while trying to take his dagger out, was caught from behind and hit hard with a suplex, breaking his left shoulder bone. He was successful in hitting vanara in his lower abdomen, releasing the clutch that vanara formed with his hands around his neck. He hit him on his head with the butt of the dagger, making the Vanara lose his balance. He made a kick jump without wasting a second, held Akshaya's left hand, and quickly twisted it to the extreme, attacked at his stomach, broke his thighs, and jabbed him in his ribs.

With a final blow on his chest, Akshaya collapsed and died.
Silence ensued his killing, only to be disturbed by the blow of winds.

The vanara kept looking at his dead body for a spell, while his hands and limbs were pouring out blood incessantly. He sat near his lifeless body, touched his shoulders. His gestures seemed as if the majesty and the spirit my Akshaya had shown during the combat spellbound him.

I had sent Akampan to update us about the happenings on the battlefield.

Dejected and drenched with sweat, Akampan entered the court and informed us about Akshaya's killing and the spirit with which he fought with that vanara. The court was in a state of shock as no one had expected that the events would turn out that way.

I rushed to meet Mandodari in her room. She was already in anxiety since she heard me sending Akshaya to fight that Vanara. As I entered

the room, Mandodari came running towards me and asked about his well-being.

My gloomy face was enough to convey the truth.

"Our Son is dead. Akshaya is dead.

He is martyred, Mandodari!" I said with a drop of a tear rolling down my cheeks.

"That vanara has killed our..." I paused with a heavy heart and burst into tears.

Mandodari went numb for a while.

She grieved in pain, wailed buffeting my chest with her hands. I hugged her and promised that vanara would not be spared; he would die a death more gruesome than what he inflicted on our son Akshaya. She looked into my eyes; her eyes turned red, burning with the desire to get revenge.

With a groaning voice, she said,

"Give him a death that even Yama would be incapable of!

Let his noble soul witness what his father can do to the person who dared to kill him!"

Provoked and filled with a burning desire to wreak revenge, I called Indrajit into the court and instructed him to be equipped with deadliest divine *Astras* and *Shastras*, and weapons that could outweigh even the most destructible weapons.

"The possessor of great intellect, the bearer of indestructible weapons, the one who dignifies the ultimate weapons of Trinity, Indrajit! I command you to cause the deepest of pains to this foe.

Let the whole world witness the immense power of mystic missiles that glorify your grace!

Let your penance, your courage, be your ornaments.

I bestow you with my blessings and prestige of Lanka.

Go and show your valor, my son! "I spoke to inspire Indrajit before he left for combat.

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Unwary of any attacks, the vanara was sitting beside a rock, having some moments of respite after those fierce battles. Indrajit made a thundering clang with his bow and invited the vanara for battle. The vanara, with sly laughter, mocked and challenged him for a fight.

Indrajit initially used cudgels and slingshots on vanara, but he swiftly diverted those. He aimed spears at him and simultaneously threw darts to inflict more damage but all in vain. The vanara attacked Indrajit with rocks in his attempt to distract and reach as close to him as possible. He used a harpoon on Indrajit, which was acquired from Akshaya after killing him. It passed by Indrajit's left ear.

Both were skilled in warfare and combatant enough to give fierce competition to each other.

Realizing that it was getting difficult to contain the fierce assaults and strikes by Vanara, Indrajit launched an arrow that he had earned from Brahma. The arrow got split into thousand parts, each converging towards the vanara, making it impossible for him to escape. It hit vanara's chest, making a loud thud even noticeable by Indrajit, standing on his chariot at a faraway distance. He fell on the ground, motionless and unconscious.

Indrajit called his aide to fetter him in ropes and iron chains. His hands were handcuffed, allowing him no chance to escape Lanka, and was carried on a chariot and brought to the court.

By that time, he had already regained his consciousness.

In court, the vanara was made to stand amidst all council members, Dudhara, Prahasta, Sumali, Indrajit, and Vibhishan, along with all the key leaders and ministers of Lanka.

When asked about his identity and his reason for creating havoc in Lanka, he stared at each one of the elites present in the court and started laughing.

I stood up from my throne in anger.

"Pardon the majesty!

Nevertheless, a king of such grandeur cannot lay such a treatment to an envoy, that too to an unarmed one. It is a rare sight to meet a king of such might.

You! To whom the army of millions of Asuras is at service all the time, whom even the celestials would fear waging war with.

Who, at the mention of his name, instills fear in the king of Gods, has brought dishonor to the glory of Lanka with this vile act.

Pardon me, the majesty!

Pardon me for my sharp words, but this is true!" Vanara said with praise and sarcasm in his words.

"Who dared to instruct you to create chaos in Lanka?

Are you an envoy of Indra or Vishnu or if your sole purpose was to find the whereabouts of Sita.

Who commanded you to challenge the royal blood?

How do you know so much about Lanka and Lankesh! ", Vibhishan asked him, with authority.

To that the vanara replied, "This vanara is Hanuman, son of Kesari (a vanara) and Anjana (an apsara)."

As soon as he introduced himself, the whole of the durbar looked at each other in surprise.

"Hanuman!" Vibhishina repeated.

Hanuman added, "As one of the advisors to Sugriva and a devotee of Lord Ram, I am obliged to convey their messages to the king of Lanka."

"I have come here at the command of Sugriva, in search of Mata Sita.

Ram, along with Lakshman and Sita, had been exiled to Dandaka forests for 14 years, at the command of Dashratha, Ram and Lakshman's father. After she had been abducted..."

As soon as Hanuman uttered those words, I got up from my throne and roared with a raucous voice, "HANUMANNN!"

"As an envoy, it's my duty to convey the message of my lord, and it's your duty to listen to it with due heed.

My apologies!

However, this is the truth and the royal code of conduct. I, as a messenger, have come here with a proposal to send Sita back with me, and Ram would pardon you for your unpardonable act.

By now, you would have realized the power of Ram, who killed more than 14000 demons alone in the forests of Janasthana, who shares the status of Maharathi, killed Vali, and have joined hands now with Sugriva, the king of vanaras", Hanuman candidly conveyed his message.

Seeing his impudence, I reminded him of his actions. His act was unpardonable, illegal, and against the law of Lanka.

“It is against the dignity of the messenger and his lord if he does not remain within the boundaries defined for him.

An envoy cannot dare to infiltrate the host’s territories, does not cause destruction to its country, and even not dare invite him for combat.

You! Have crossed all the limits of being an envoy and must not be spared. You are the messenger of a wayfarer, who talks about being fair and proclaims to be a descendent of a virtuous dynasty.

Where did those ethics go when Ram slyly killed my friend Vali?

Where were those morals when Lakshman mercilessly cut the nose and ears of my sister!

Lanka must not set the wrong precedents by letting you go free.” I blurted out in anger.

I ordered the killing of Hanuman. This time I needed no consent from my council or any advice from our advisor Malyavan.

I was sure. I was determined.

“The vanara must be killed for his actions that caused the ruination of thousands of people of Lanka,” I ordered.

Before I could issue the orders for his execution, Vibhishan, unexpectedly interrupted and insisted on revoking the decree. With his mellow and diplomatic tone, he said that he did not agree with the envoy’s killing. He apprehended us of repercussions that Hanuman’s execution would have on the image and glory of Lanka.

“Brother! Your decision would bring bad omen to the grace of Lanka.

Our allies and partner kings would start distrusting us. The whole world would disrespect Lanka.

The messengers, in our culture, must not be killed at any place, at all times. “He said in an apologetic tone.

“Let’s inflict severe punishment on him but not kill him.

Let him go back!

Let our foes know who Dashanan is! about his strength and impeccable prestige of Lanka”, he added.

I contemplated the logic given by Vibhishan in favor of the envoy; even my council later supported the same.

Like he snatched the vital part of my life, My Akshaya, I would also take away the most beloved part he possessed, his tail. I wanted him to go

through the same pain that my mighty sons and brothers underwent a few pahars back.

Let him suffer.

Let him bear the pain.

Let him experience the agony of separation from loved ones.

"Jai Rudra, long live Lanka!" I roared in the durbar.

'Har Har Mahadeva,' the whole durbar resounded repeatedly.

Cotton strips of clothes were wrapped around his tail, drenched in oil, and a burning log of wood was brought into the court.

Let that torture torment him forever. Let Lanka also watch what happens when an envoy turns into a spy.

I ordered my commander to let whole Lanka witness that delight. Surrounded by the army, he was taken onto the roads of Lanka. A soldier was walking behind Hanuman, holding that burning log. He was to be taken to *The Central place*, the place for the execution of offenders.

Hanuman was clever enough to use that situation to his advantage. He deliberately made gestures to the commanders alluding as if he was feeling uncomfortable with that humiliating parade. Those discomfoting gestures further instigated the commanders to take him to all the lanes, all the roads of Lanka, to demean and make him feel more embarrassed.

It was Hanuman's tactic to roam around the whole of Lanka, look at the architecture, Pathways, temples, apartments, maps of various highways, and even unnoticeable routes to familiarize himself with all probable locations in Lanka.

Before anyone could notice and react, Hanuman got himself freed and snatched that burning log of wood from the soldier. He made his way through those inattentive soldiers and ran away from the crowd as swiftly as possible. By then, the group of commanders, along with Hanuman, had already reached the outskirts of Lanka, far from the palace or that *Central place* for execution. It was then impossible for those soldiers to expect any quick help from Indrajit or me from that location. Hanuman strategically started setting ablaze thatched huts

and dry vegetation. He then moved to residential areas consisting of mansions and flamed one house after another within a short period.

By the time anyone could respond, he had already reached my palace. Fortunately, he could not burn its interiors, but the outer façade was reduced to ashes. As the intensity of the flames was increasing, large wooden cranes, elephants, and mangonel catapults full of water were used to control the fire.

Agitated and frustrated, I was cursing the moment when I trusted Vibhishina and set that vanara free that too unhurt. Women and children were running helter-skelter; men were trying to save their families and their own lives; it was chaotic all over Lanka.

I saw thousands of Lankans being burnt alive, my whole Lanka turning into ashes.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Organizations must teach and train its Employees to go beyond the boundaries of their official territories, their deliverables, to perform beyond the expected, to believe in their ownership towards their organization-

That is how organizations build their status among their contemporaries and remain unconquerable even generations later.

- Inspire risk-taking attitude in organizations- It eliminates 'Everything is working great!' behavior of employees, improves the output, instills a positive attitude towards failure, and builds an outlook towards ownership.
- A Leader's noteworthy trait is his ability to be alert and be in his senses, everywhere & at all times.

He has the potential to exploit the best opportunities in any situation!



Chapter R.15

Secrets are meant to be preserved!

If you can't treasure them, do not expect it from others!

Be ready to be destroyed!

Be ready to regret it!

Hanuman had already escaped from Lanka, leaving no traces of his whereabouts. It took us months to bring the lives of citizens back to normal, build houses and mansions, and rejuvenate the palace. A significant portion of our exchequer was spent on rebuilding the dilapidated Lanka. Some scriptures and antique valuables were destroyed, but we were able to safeguard most of our possessions.

I loathed Lakshman for his unforgivable crime of disrespecting my sister and now, Hanuman, who turned my Lanka into ashes. Not Ram, but Lakshman and Hanuman had inflicted deeper wounds on my soul.

Somewhere in the far corner of my heart, I knew, Sita being with us, could be considered impure by Ram.

I dreaded if that could lead to Ram renouncing her.

I knew the behavior of the princes and kings of Aryavrata.

Our spies had already alerted us about the commotion in Ram's army across the sea. Suspecting a probable attack from the enemy anytime soon, I ordered an emergency meeting with the council. We could not afford another breach in our security and intelligence network. Preparation for that probable war was the need of the hour.

Dhumraksha, one of the council members, was in the view of afflicting damage to the enemy's army first from our side. Affirmation from Virupaksha and Nikumbh followed suit. Kumbhakarn also spoke about the sufferings and disgrace Hanuman had brought to Lanka.

Sumali and Malyavan were listening to our views patiently.

Abruptly, Vibhishan came forward and talked about handling the matter calmly. Always solemn and thoughtful, Vibhishan was invariably revered for his advice and logical arguments, but lately, he seemed more inclined towards Devas and their mode of conduct. His behavior

and mannerism exuded the tinge of *Devaism*. Even during the meetings, he would talk about the strength of the Devas, the power they possessed, the virtues they held. He was constantly urging me to return Sita to Ram to save Lanka from an unprecedented disaster.

“Our prestige would be questioned! Our honor would be at stake!

My Lord! The foremost of all!

Why do you not foresee the invisible?

Let not Sita be the reason for impending catastrophe.

Give her to Ram, who is revered even by his contemporaries”, he submitted without reweighing his own words.

Malyavan, our chief advisor, advised us to send a messenger to the enemies to convey our proposal.

“Ask them to handover Lakshman to us!

Gracefully! We would return Sita to Ram.”

“The genesis of that entire chaotic environment in Lanka was the unpardonable misdeed of Lakshman.

If they handover Lakshman to us, our revenge would be taken.” he added with polite justification.

I was in favor of his viewpoint and expected the whole council to be in agreement. However, again Vibhishan favored the deeds of those two Aryans. He favored the mutilation that Shurpanakha suffered and the mistake Khara committed by sending his troops to kill the duo. He blamed her immoral behavior for being the reason for her own sufferings, and thus Lanka faced the fate it deserved. Everyone was surprised at the audacity with which Vibhishan uttered those sharp words.

A fierce argument started.

I cursed him for being inconsiderate of his sister, Shurpanakha, and questioned his loyalty to Lanka. Moreover, he dared to say such words in front of me. He kept harping on Raghu’s sons’ abilities to conquer even the toughest of battles, their network with powerful kings of Aryavrata, and their mastery over the rare weapons that only celestials possess.

I asked him to be clear & straight in whatever he needed to convey.

I reminded him of our capabilities, the abilities of Lanka army that challenged even the most powerful stalwarts of Aryavrata, the victories

that were achieved in the hardest of terrains, Indrajit, Prahasta and our lead commanders who possessed rarest of weapons of the *Trinity*, their combat skills- incomparable and exquisite.

He was still adamant about returning Sita to Ram. He even dared to suggest I ask for forgiveness from Ram for her abduction.

Enraged and irritated, I yelled, "VIBHISHANNN!" loudly.

Before I could lambaste him further for his impudence... Malyavan, being the eldest of all, commented,

"Leave it, Ravana! Let him speak his heart out. At the time of adversities, your loved ones betray first.

Trust a stranger, but not your kin!

Vibhishan! Do whatever you feel like, but do not doubt our intentions.

Who knows it better than you do!

You know the truth. You knew our vision. Then what happened now?

We never expected we would lose our blood, our Akshaya, Jambumali, Khara...hundreds of people of Lanka in this fiasco.

(Malyavan paused for a while)

Wait!

Vibhishan! Is it your fear that you may have to pay the price of this war? Or is it, as always, your tendency to salute the rising sun, so that you can have an alliance with Ram and later rule Lanka, in case Ram wins?

Were you the one who colluded with Vidyutjivha to take over the reign of Lanka?

I feel skeptical about trusting you anymore, Vibhishan!"

Listening to those pinching allegations, Vibhishan, with a heavy voice said,

"Stop!

The formidable one!

Seize your words as they are hurting me more than anything that could ever hurt. My intentions were pure and pious. I cannot even let those thoughts occupy my mind, let alone do it. I feel broken and disheartened.

I renounce the post of Prime minister of Lanka".

Vibhishan, like a shameless traitor, continued praising Raghu's sons. Looking at his temerity, I ordered him to leave Lanka.

"For the sake of Lanka, its prestige, and your own esteem, I command you to leave Lanka. You no longer deserve to be its son.

You! Traitor!

It pains me to call you, my brother. It pains me to call you the son of Lanka.

Do not come to me with this fake mask of innocence, ever." I blasted on Vibhishan with no guilt or remorse.

Vibhishan, without any second thought, left Lanka and later joined hands with Ram as his advisor.

We had lost our brother in Devas' hands, and with that, all the secrets of Lanka.

The secrets of the trade, weapons, policies, administration... now everything was vulnerable; everything was exposed after his mergence with Ram's union.

I passed the order to summon the durbar immediately.

All representatives of respective states were called into a meeting to establish an immediate ban on migration all over Lanka. That was done to restrict the unauthorized flow of trade and to ban illegal travel. Vibhishan's affiliation with Ram had already put us on the radar of probable stealth attack from the enemy. Vigilance at seaports was increased; more and more secret agents were inducted for espionage.

Lanka was being prepared for something, unforeseeable, uncertain, and unpredictable.

Rallies were organized in different parts of Lanka to disperse the message from the King. The representatives, even in the remotest areas of Lanka, announced new orders and laws. Instead of any designated authorities, I, myself, supervised its enactment and ensured that everyone in Lanka abided by the laws. Production of maces, javelins, crossbows, catapult, and other weapons was increased to tackle unexpected blows and sudden attacks.

Prahasta, the commander in chief of Army, had already alerted our army divisions – Cavalry, infantry, chariots, and elephants.

Kumbhakarn was also informed about the changes in administration, but as usual, he refrained from his involvement in any public affairs or governing operations of Lanka. Sometimes it felt he had turned a blind eye to the sufferings of his family and what Lanka was going through. Mandodari also suggested that the right time had come to make him realize his responsibilities and bring him back from his world of fantasy.

As usual, I ignored her advice and indulged myself in my own anguishes.

I inquired from my spy Suka if he had any update on the actions of our enemy. He detailed me about their plans for constructing a bridge of stones across the sea, connecting the Island to Lanka. I listened to him with rapt attention initially and then burst into laughter.

“Their stupidity has no bounds,” I said.

It was not just difficult but impossible even to imagine what those wanderers were planning for.

“Constructing a bridge...that too of stones. Do they even know the vastness of the Sea?

Poor souls!” I burst into incessant laughter.

I asked the spy if he had anything else to tell me.

“It seemed like Vibhishan!...” the spy said and paused suddenly.

With grave expressions on my face, I asked him, “What Vibhishan! Tell me what you are trying to hide from me”.

With evident expressions of fear on his face, he informed me of probable attacks on Lanka from Sugriva’s army. Vibhishan had already apprised Ram & his confederates of all the details about Lanka, its administration, about the major commanders in the army of Lanka- Prahasta, Kumbhakarn, Akampan, their strengths & weaknesses and about the immense powers Indrajit possessed.

Vibhishan disclosed to them, our treaties and conditions laid in memorandums that we had with other kings. He revealed the volume of our artillery and the capabilities of our army. To make the matter worse, he exposed the secretive routes in the sea that Lanka would use during emergencies and wars.

Although our spy could not infiltrate much into enemy’s network but from his words, it was explicit that now Lanka was no more a country hidden behind its self-contained ways of ruling. Our secrets have been

revealed to the enemy, and we could no more rely on our indigenous style of warfare, trade, or immigration policies.

My decision to make Vibhishan the regent of Lanka during my battle crusade turned out to be the biggest mistake of my life. I should have kept him away from the affairs of Lanka. Now he was more dangerous to the Lankan regime than Ram himself.

Ram had even promised him consecration and vowed to declare him the King of Lanka after my death.

“What a joke!” I mumbled.

I asked my butler to convey my regards to Malyavan and meet me in my chamber.

“Ram had vowed to spend 14 years in exile, and like a virtuous wife, Sita had also promised to be with him in forests, living an ascetic life. It was obligatory that she lived in Ashoka Vatika and did not violate the vow she had taken!

The vow of 14 years in exile!

The vow of austerity!

I would have given her all the comforts, the palace, the luxuries that even celestials longed for, but she was made to stay in Ashoka Vatika to let her oath remain pious and divine as she, herself, was.

Luxury had no meaning for her. My palace had no place for her,” I tried convincing, justifying my actions to myself.

Before I could further soliloquize, Malyavan appeared wearing his favorite white-colored veshti. Adjusting his angavastram, he asked me the reason for such a quick summon, and sat on a wooden chair lying in the corner. I called him to consult over the decision of sending our proposal to Ram,

– “The proposal to handover Lakshman to Lanka’

Before I could even blink, he nodded in affirmation.

Suka, our most trusted spy, was called the next day and briefed about the proposal to be made to Ram.

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Suka entered the durbar laced with iron chains. Surprised and dumbfounded, I asked him why he was chained up like an animal!

Unable to speak, he made incomprehensible gestures with his hands. I asked him again in agitation when suddenly Shradula, another spy, spoke on his behalf.

“Pardon me, my lord!

Suka is too exhausted!

His face is hurt so severely that he is not able to speak,” Shradula whimpered.

“When Suka tried to mingle up with the soldiers of Sugriva’s army to gather information, Vibhishan recognized him and asked him the reason for trespassing into their enclave.

Suka conveyed your proposal to Ram.” Shradula added.

Enraged and infuriated, Ram screamed, “Vahak!”

Suddenly Angada, who was standing behind him, brought his cudgel and hit Suka on his back. Sugriva, with his club, struck his head and kicked on his face. He was beaten until he lost consciousness. Later Ram and Vibhishan asked both of them to spare him and send him back to Lanka, as killing a messenger was against Rajdharma.

He was sent back with some spared bones and a little ability to walk. Shradula also accompanied Suka but fortunately managed to escape from the clutches of enemy.

When asked about the enemy’s strength and magnitude of his army, he said,

“My lord! Angada commands around a hundred Mahashanku Vanaras in Sugriva’s army.

Hanuman, along with Vibhishan, is one of his advisors.

Nala, the Vanara son of Vishwakarma, is the chief engineer responsible for carrying out the construction of the bridge.”

“Bridge!” I exclaimed.

“Yes! My Lord, they are planning to lay a bridge across the ocean between Rameshwaram and Lanka. However, the execution is still in the initial phase.” he replied with disheartening expressions.

“Nila, another vanara, is the chief designer of that bridge”, he added.

They already had financial help from Kubera, weapons & infantry support from Kishkindha as well as Ayodhya. I enquired from Sumali if Kubera was still the chief treasurer of Devas since the support from Kishkindha was apparent.

Sumali, who hated Kubera to the core, said, "Yes! That arrogant toad is still breathing under the mercy of Devas. Like that traitor, Vibhishina, he also betrayed his family.

Shiva will have no mercy on them, I pray!"

The tip about the bridge and support from their allies gave me sufficient reasons to be cautious. Nevertheless, I believed in my strength, the strength I gathered over years of struggle.

"We cannot spare the destroyers of Lanka. The ones who killed innocent Lanka citizens. The ones who betrayed us. The ones who are against the "Raksha" culture. We will not spare those who are not with us!

Jai Rudra!" I roared and upstood from my throne.

"Om Namah Shivay! Long live Lanka."

"Om Namah Shivay! Long live Lanka."

"Jai Dashanan! Har Har Mahadev!".....echoed in the durbar.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Employees must leave the organizations where they are not respected, trained, not given any say in decision-making, and the mentor is merely a people pleaser.

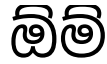
Employees must stay in organizations that constructively challenge their opinions & ego, teach professional politics, and give strict deadlines (directly or indirectly) and everyone adheres to the company's values.

- Reward the vision supporters & ones who exhibit organizational values, and Caution those who undermine it.

‘Neutral’ employees make the organization oscillate like a pendulum. Do not encourage or support neutrality. It wastes efforts, energy & time of both- Organizations and Employees themselves.

Those who are Rewarded must be lauded publicly. Their feat must be shared openly with everyone in the organization. It makes the rewarder feel good about his achievements & encourages others to work harder.

Those who Default should be cautioned and advised (If not publicly, then at least, privily)!



Chapter R.16

*When a companion is not in good terms with you,
He is liberated from the responsibilities of withholding your secrets.*

Time had made it imperative now to break the morale of Sita. To get her out of misery she was going through, it was necessary to coax her into forgetting Ram. I headed towards Ashoka Vatika & tried making her believe that Ram had already returned to Ayodhya, and no one was coming to rescue her.

“Like Sun betrays the sky and retreats in the west, Ram has run away from Lanka, leaving you here alone in despair. My commanders have already seen him and his army retreating, having no qualms for leaving you behind.

Why are you so thoughtful of him!

Why do you care even a bit for him! Sita!

Be the princess of Lanka! It is yours! Sita!” I said, in a beguiling voice.

Face drenched in sweat, terrified, and surprised, she was not able to realize what had just happened a few moments ago.

I was assured that the trick had worked. I ordered Trijata to take care of Sita and left from vatika with my guards.

While I was on my way back to the palace, I saw Sarama, wife of Vibhishan, heading towards Ashoka Vatika. I was not sure of the reason for her visit but ignored considering that to be a routine visit of hers.

I joined the durbar and called for an urgent meeting with the council. It was just a few minutes after its commencement when I saw Trijata rushing towards me. I gave her permission to step in and asked the council to leave the room until further orders.

She saw Sarama telling Sita about Ram & Lakshman and his army’s plan of laying a bridge to Lanka. She informed her that Ram had not retreated to Ayodhya; instead, he and his army were approaching Lanka with more rigor and could attack anytime soon. It was one of our tricks to break her morale. To make her lose hopes, she had weaved until now.

Distraught, I asked my guards to take Sarama captive and produce her before me. I commanded Trijata to leave if she did not have anything else to tell.

Surrounded by guards, Sarama was made to stand in front of the council and justify her betrayal.

"I am deceived again by my blood, Sarama!

Nothing is more painful than the wounds inflicted by your own kins.

You! The most trusted member of my family, the wife of my beloved brother, has let the prestige of Lanka down.

It was Vibhishan who betrayed us, and now you!

Whom do I trust if my own are changing sides!

I should have discarded you along with Vibhishan.

Sarama, you betrayed us!" I lambasted her in front of everyone to let all witness the worst that could happen if Dashanan was betrayed, if Lanka was cheated.

Council decided for her complete banishment from Lanka, but I was not in favor of it. She might have had avenged her exile by disclosing our secrets to the enemy.

I overruled their decision and ordered her imprisonment.

Punishment, if not inflicted as a medicine at the right time, can let the virus grow and ultimately destroy the host.

What it leaves you with are some bones and a repenting soul, ready to merge with eternity.

I could never see Lanka submerged under the rule of Devas.

No, I could not!

Lanka was mine! It would always be!

Nikumbha entered the hall gasping heavily, asking for mercy for the ruckus created in Durbar.

"Pardon me for the impudence, my king!

I need to let you know....the enemy is approaching. Our Lanka demands a reaction, my Lord!" exhausted, he said.

I reprimanded him for his audacity, but now if the rules were not bent, Lanka would have lurched into incurable danger. I asked my guards to take Sarama off to prison and ordered Nikumbha to apprise durbar of the situation.

“The enemy has bivouacked on the northwest of *Suvela Mountain* . The chain of vanaras is entering the peripheries of Lanka via the northern route. Their armies have been split into four zones.

Vibhishna, Sushena, the father of Vali’s wife, Angada, and Jambavan, the king of bears, were leading the groups. Hanuman, the vanara who reduced Lanka to ashes, stood at the end of the bridge and was observing Lanka impatiently,” Nikhumba reiterated with exasperation.

“VIBHISHAN! ...” I screamed in frustration. It was due to him that the enemies had dared to reach Lanka. Only he, among the majors, knew the hidden ways to reach Suvela. It was time for me to step up, take the reins, and prepare for war.

“Alert the army! Indrajit!” I commanded.

Nikhumba briefed about the enemy’s positions at their respective zones.

Angada was accompanying Nila to make the first attack from the West.

Hanuman, along with Sushena, to launch the attack from the Northern gates.

Lakshman with Sampati, at the Eastern block and,

Ram along with Sugriva to attack from the Southern side.

Vibhishan, along with other commanders, Nala, Rishabha, Durmukha- the chief of Vanaras... all were positioned at the center to supply support in all directions.

Our spies were continually keeping a watch on their activities.

I still remembered how Hanuman had killed my son Akshaya. I was getting impatient to slaughter them all, avenge his killing, retaliate the atrocities Devaas inflicted upon Asuras, and avenge the humiliation they caused to my sister Shurpanakha.

Prahasta, accompanied by Mahapaksha, was assigned the Western portion of Lanka.

Indrajit with Virupaksha, at the Northern gates.

Dhumraksha with Nikumbha at Eastern periphery and,

Agniketu with Akampan taking care of Southern Lanka.

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The central portion was highly secured and well supported by various commanders, including me.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Never...Ever!

Never indulge yourself in badmouthing anyone!
Refrain from accompanying someone who is not trustworthy!
Especially in the corporate surroundings.

Not just wall, even ether has ears. 'Chinese whispers' has the potential to destroy your career, your work, your life & ultimately 'You'.

In the corporate settings, always assume that 'Whatever you speak' would be portrayed and later communicated to others in a distorted or exaggerated form.

Synchronize your mind and thoughts before you speak!



Chapter R.17

*If time, enough time, is not spent on reviewing what you practice,
Be ready to lose your blood...suffer on the battlefield!*

On the command of vanaras' chief Sugriva, Angada launched an attack on Lanka from the western end. He was leading the army, and Nila positioned himself at the rear end.

Lanka was about to witness a bloodbath that had never ever happened in its course of history.

Prahasta, commander-in-chief of the army, encouraged the army gathered in the fields of Lanka.

"We carry the prestige, the blood, the lineage of Lanka. Let your shoulders be upright and ready to hold that prestige. These hands have slain the fiercest of our enemies, then where do Raghu's sons stand!

Nowhere! My countrymen!

The patronage of our king Ravana will stand by us even in the toughest of the times. Be ready to sacrifice your lives for the land of your esteem.

All hail the era of a new Lanka.

"Jai Jai Mahadev! Har Har Mahadev! "He shouted with grave emotions.

"Har Har Mahadev!

Jai Rudra!

Jai Lankesh!" Followed suit.

Whole Trikuta witnessed the thuds created by crores of Vanaras and billions of Asuras around the fields of Lanka. Sugriva, in search of a vantage point, went southwards with his army of Vanaras. Ram chose the southwest portion to provide support to not-so-well trained warriors, Angada and Nila.

The sound produced from conch shells marked the beginning of the battle, the beginning of the events that transformed the course of history!

Beautiful and colossal armors, cudgels radiating blinding shine, magnificent arrows, and bows decorated the warriors on both sides. The trumpets of elephants ridden by the Mahouts, deafening neighs of sprinting horses, marvelous chariots adorned by trained commanders of Lanka, sounds of the waves created by fire cannons filled the air around the battlefield.

Agniketu, carrying a spear with an iron hem on both the ends, accompanied Akampan. The spear was so heavily pointed that it could crumble even a mountain into pieces with a single blow. Agniketu was mercilessly decimating the foot soldiers. Akampan mounted his golden chariot, launched an array of arrows at Ram. The battle between Akampan and Ram seemed like the battle of invincibles. Equipped with celestial weapons, Ram broke the wheels of his chariot, taking away his advantage of having panoramic visibility. Akampan left his bow on the broken chariot and wielded his flail, crushing the vanaras who blocked his way towards Ram. He made swift and quick strides, reached closer to Ram, and made a hard blow on his chest in no time.

The armor on Ram's chest bore the attack but developed a small thick crack on it. Ram, enraged and frustrated, launched Agneyastra on Akampan, incinerating his body in the blink of an eye.

Lakshman, with the help of his longbow, caused the chariot of Dhumraksha to fall. He stumbled down his chariot and hit his head on a rock. Feeling the sudden eruption of blood from his forehead, Dhumraksha screamed in pain and aggressed towards Lakshman with his mace.

Before he could attack Lakshman, Sampati hit him on his head with a huge rock, making him fall on the ground. Nikumbha, seeing those incessant attacks on Dhumraksha, came to his rescue. He threw the *Bardiche* towards Sampati that hurled past his chest. Dhumraksha, after regaining his senses, got into a duel with Sampati, whereas Nikumbha advanced towards Lakshman with a shield and pike.

Prahasta, the mightiest of all, unterrified and invincible, ordered his troops to sally out towards Angada and his battalion.

Nila led half of the assigned troops and ordered the remaining half to support Angada. Prahasta, like a veteran, launched multiple attacks on

Angada and simultaneously wounded his troops with sharp arrows, beheading many of his soldiers.

Our focus was not just on providing the training but also on how quickly it could be mastered. The faster it is, the quicker it is for us to build a highly capable force, and making it easier for us to defeat the enemy.

In an attempt to strike down Nila, Mahapaksha launched an array of spears at him. He dodged that continuous inflow with swift movements but got hurt by one of the spears, profusely losing blood from his shoulder. Angada was still unharmed amid the storm of shafts flung at him. He hurled his *Haladie* at Prahasta, hitting the crown on his head. He lost balance and tumbled down his chariot.

Indrajit, on his chariot, surrounded by elephants and horses, rushed towards Hanuman. His chariot was loaded with iron bars, clubs, bardiches, shields, and his favorite Gladius sword.

A violent clash between Vanaras and Asuras ensued, each desirous of the destruction of the other one.

With glittering eyes and swift moves, Hanuman made his way as close to Indrajit as possible. Hanuman, unaware of the mastery of Indrajit in weaponry including duels, challenged him for a duel. For every sharp move of Hanuman, Indrajit had a bone-breaking reply. He quickly wrapped Hanuman around and gave a hard blow beneath his chin, attacked his skull with a strike from his elbow. Hanuman, exhausted and tired, held Indrajit from his head and pulled him down to hit his head with his knee. He kicked him in his abdomen and got himself freed, with a quick jerk.

By now, Hanuman had realized that defeating Indrajit in a duel would be impossible. He called Sushena, who was fighting with Virupaksha. Sushena diverted the blow from the sword of Virupaksha and ran towards Hanuman to engage Indrajit. It was planned to allow Hanuman to get more help.

On the other hand, Sampati was engaged in battle with Dumraksha. Lakshman avoided the blow of pike from Nikumbha and launched

hundreds of arrows at him. Before Nikumbha could lift his shield, hundreds of arrows hit his chest, splitting his ribs into pieces. He was killed on the spot.

Ram, holding his broken armor, took his sword and made a sharp attack on the thighs of Akampan. Not able to maintain his balance, he fell on the ground, losing his blood profusely. Before he could pierce the body of Akampan with his sword, he noticed Hanuman, aggressively, waving a high mast flag. Lakshman, who had just killed Nikumbha, also noticed it.

The raised flag was an indication that some trouble has befallen the commanders, and the leading commanders or whosoever was not indulged in any fight at that moment has to gather around that flag post, strategically.



Chapter R.18

*Let the Time,
not your conscience, decide the victor!*

Ram, leaving behind the groaning Akampan, rushed towards the flag post where Lakshman, Hanuman, and Vibhishan had already gathered. When inquired about such an uncalled-for huddle, Hanuman replied,

“It was not a normal battle that I just had with that warrior. He seemed uncompromising. Each blow of his was like a thump by *Indra's Vajra*. I had already witnessed his powers in the past. It seemed like lord Shiva, himself, has blessed him with supreme powers. Only an Atimaharathi would dare to fight him alone.”

Vibhishan, standing beside Lakshman, supported the arguments raised by Hanuman. Only Vibhishan knew the real powers of Indrajit, his invincibility, and the weapons he possessed.

“A disciple of Sukracharya, Indrajit is the master of most of the Aastras and Shastras. An Atimaharathi, possessing *Bharamastra*, *Vaishnavastra*, and *Pashupatastra*. He owns the imperishable *Chandrasasa* sword, just like his father, which he earned after pleasing Lord Shiva. From *Narayanastra* to *Maheshwarastra*, he possesses all the indomitable weapons and all possible strategies to ignite them. He is the one who imprisoned Indra in the cages of Lanka. Lord Brahma himself had to request Ravana for his release and thus called him *Indrajit*.

He is the master of sorcery and black magic that makes him unconquerable when combined with his weaponry skills. It would not be an exaggeration if I call him the most powerful warrior alive on earth,” Vibhishan added.

“He is a compassionate and rational Asura but has been blinded by his devotion towards his father,” he emphasized.

Everyone started looking at each other's faces in indecision. Confused and baffled, Lakshman asked Vibhishan- “Does there exist any weapon that can strike him down?”

Hesitantly, Vibhishan replied, "Saumitra! I dread to say No! but that is true. He can be killed only when unarmed. Else, it would be beyond impossible to even overpower him."

Ram was patiently listening to Vibhishan.

He suddenly instructed Lakshman to wield his bow and accompany him.

"Whatever our fate is! We will not retreat. We cannot turn our backs. Ravana has demeaned the dignity of Raghukul. The prestige of Ayodhya, my Sita, the citizens of Ayodhya. These reasons should be enough to sacrifice our lives for the honor of Suryavanshis," Ram said vociferously.

He commanded Hanuman to back him up.

Indrajit, after enervating Sushena, noticed Akampan's body turning into Ashes and Nikumbha, his cousin, dying in severe pain. Provoked and maddened by those incidents, he launched Indrastra, showering millions of arrows in the sky, killing uncountable vanaras.

Without any further delay, Ram made his way towards Indrajit, attacking him with arrows, maces, javelins. Lakshman, battling with Asuras, launched Vayuastra, creating tornados of dust, killing thousands of Asuras within a moment. Indrajit, wearing his impregnable shield, dodged the wild blows of maces and Javelins. His quiver packed with mighty arrows, arrowheads laced with toxins and poison, were ready to pierce through its enemies. Exchange of scorn and insulting remarks occurred between Ram and Indrajit. Lakshman lost his patience and fired a celestial missile at Indrajit. Taking note of the missile, Indrajit smiled and launched Parvastra, destroying the missile and at least one-fifth of the Vanaras. Simultaneously, Ram launched Parvatastra on the Asura army, killing thousands of them instantly.

Indrajit realized the powers of Ram and Lakshman and found it insensible to use low or medium intensity weapons on them.

He knew it would be difficult to battle with both of them simultaneously.

Warriors try hard not to use high-intensity weapons in the battle against their enemies. Heavy destruction weapons are hard to acquire, and casualty is uncontrollable, and hence are avoided in battles unless it becomes extremely critical to use them.

Vexed and annoyed, Indrajit ignited *Nagapaasha* Astra on Ram and Lakshman. Nagapaasha liberated thousands of venomous snakes and entangled them into a massive network of those snakes. They were incapable of moving or escaping; it seemed as if their bodies had been frozen. The arrows had inflicted countless wounds on their bodies. Both of them started losing their consciousness, leaving Lakshman the most injured one.

Indrajit was skeptical whether his arrows had struck down Raghu's sons or not. However, he got assured of their slaying when he heard loud hue & cry from Hanuman and Sugriva. Although he was standing far away from them, but was able to see Ram and Lakshman's lacerated body. Lying motionless on the ground, their limbs and abdomen were besmirched with blood.

Taking advantage of that situation, Indrajit shouted,
"Ram and Lakshman are dead!
The princes are dead!
You! Vanaras! Your leaders are dead. Your purpose exists no more."

Overwhelmed with his presumed victory, he declared himself as the victor- The utmost blunder that a warrior can commit.

The Vanara army started retreating as soon as they heard that their leaders had been mutilated. Their morale was undermined.

All commanders gathered around the wounded duos to apprise of the situation. Stretchers were brought to take them to the canopies.

Hanuman, the adherent devotee of Ram, was the most affected one.

"I am now left at this juncture of indecision. Do I kill your slayer or save you, my Lord!

Ram! I do not see my life, my purpose without you.

Sugriva! Permit me to renounce my body. My soul finds no purpose without Ram." Hanuman lamented.

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Indrajit returned to Lanka with the Asura army, cheering, "Ram & Lakshman are dead!"

“Father! I killed both of them. You have found a reason to be elated now. We have defeated those wanderers.”

I was overjoyed at his success, moreover, on his first big success in his battle with many Maharathis. However, my alternative self was not ready to, so easily, accept what Indrajit said.

You are the king! Come what may, you cannot accept everything or anything so quickly.

I ordered the spy to get me the latest update on the enemy's army, its leaders, and each of their commanders, especially Ram and Lakshman's condition. I had also informed Trijata to let Sita know about the killing of Ram.

She was now not confined to the oath of exile; she was now free to rule Lanka as its princess.

The daughter of Ravana.

The daughter of Lanka.

I praised my son-Indrajit and all other commanders for their outstanding gallantry in the battle. I was at peace that, now, Lanka has found its true and deserving heir.

Indrajit, my son! The next king of Lanka! The would-be king of three worlds.

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Vibhishan consoled Hanuman and assured him that Raghu's sons would be saved. The knowledge of Nadivigyan that he had acquired from me helped him assess Ram and Lakshman's health conditions. After a while, he suggested Sugriva arrange for certain medications and herbs that were present on the outskirts of Lanka. However, that could save only Ram's life. Lakshman had been inflicted with grave injuries that could not be recovered from those herbs.

Without further ado, Sugriva instructed Angada to bring the herbs as directed by Vibhishan.

Meanwhile, Garuda, the king of birds and a key member in the council of Vishnu, gave some physical therapy to Ram. He was able to regain his breathing but was still unconscious.

After a while, Angada showed up with the required herbs and helped Garuda let Ram regain his consciousness.

Ram, exhausted and lifeless, somehow couraged enough to sit upright and looked at Lakshman's wounded body.

"It pains me to see your senseless body, the wounds, and lacerated limbs, Lakshman!

What do I do with my own life now!

What would I do even if I rescue Sita!

Cannot you hear my cries! Your wailing brother's laments!

I can have all the riches of the universe with me but not a companion like you.

Do you want me to be silent if mother Kaikeyi asks me about you?

I will not be able to wipe off the tears of Mata Sumitra!

Your wife Urmila would curse me, for I have broken her promise to guard you till my last breath.

Ayodhya needs you, my brother!

Ram needs you! "Ram mourned with extreme emotions with his head lying on Sugriva's shoulders and tears flooding his eyes.

Seeing the agony of Ram, Sushena solaced him and suggested a way that could save Maharathi Lakshman. Enlivened and stunned, Ram asked him for his advice. All other warriors surrounded him to know the remedy for such a predicament.

He made them remember one of the battles, in the long past, between Demons and Devas, where enormous atrocities were inflicted upon Devas by Demons. The battle was so fierce that, if continued, could have eliminated the existence of Devas. Guru Brahaspati, the counselor of all Devas and celestials, was summoned by Vishnu to suggest a fix to that mishap and save them from complete annihilation.

Brahaspati called his son, Kacha, who had mastered the *Mrityu Sanjivani* hymn for reviving the dead. He had learned that practice from the Guru of Asuras-Sukracharya, the chief advisor of Asuras at that time. Kacha advised them to bring magical herbs from Dronagiri Mountains in the Himalayas. Those medicinal herbs could save Lakshman's vital organs and replenish the blood that was already lost owing to deep wounds.

Hanuman considered the altruistic among all, took leave of his cohorts, and headed towards the Mountain Dronagiri.

In no time, he was able to bring all essential herbs from the Mountain. Lakshman's revival from his long stupor, after two days, brought ecstasy among all vanaras. There was merriment all over the place. Vanaras were shouting 'Jai Shri Ram, Jai Lakshman,' at the loudest of their voices.

ରାବଣ

Mahodara entered the room where I was sitting with Mandodari and my son Indrajit. I asked him if he had brought any news about the enemy. After a long pause and his head down, dejectedly he said,

"The duos are not dead, my Lord!

Pardon me for my impudence, but both of them are still alive."

I got up from my chaise in a fury and screamed, "MAHODARA!"

Indrajit caught hold of the sword from my hand and asked Mahodara to leave the hall.

I reprimanded Indrajit for the immaturity he had shown on the battlefield.

A king can never be so negligent.

It was in no way expected from Indrajit, an *Atimaharathi*. A warrior well equipped with all the knowledge of warfare, politics, sorcery... would never commit the blunder that Indrajit had committed.

Before I could chastise Indrajit for his fault, a fault that, if not committed, could have turned the history of Lanka entirely, Mandodari came rushing towards me and pacified me. She praised me for my valor and my vision. She persuaded me to praise Indrajit for the courage he had shown on the battlefield than repenting on what he could have done!

My anger subdued.

Occupied with millions of thoughts, I again started planning for the next course of action against the enemy.

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This time I could not leave even a single chance for them to escape death.

Novels English & Hindi

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Except for a few roles and Responsibilities in an organization, most of the roles must be framed in a way that they are dependent on each other i.e., one role/department should be mutually dependent on another role(s)/department(s).

Thus, everyone feels responsible & accountable for the output. It promotes Teamwork & Collaborative behavior.

It encourages teams to find loopholes and scope of improvement in processes.

Everyone knows what others are doing & how they are doing.

Although it delays the output, it ultimately benefits the organization.

Just try to focus on the bigger picture!



Chapter R.19

*Greed blurred my vision.
My vision blurred my deeds.
My deeds destroyed my everything!*

Council members and all key commanders were summoned to the court to strategize and plan for infallible attacks on the enemy.

Narataka, accompanied by Dhumraksha, was sent as the leader of the army. Dhumraksha was sent first, for he was already familiar with the terrains and strength of the enemy. Narataka, a master of maces and shuriken, was assigned the rear end of the army situated on the eastern side. Loaded with exquisite weapons, horses, and elephants, both bowed to me and withdrew for battle.

Dhumraksha, wielding a magnificent bow, exterminated thousands of Vanaras with his arrows. Narataka, with his spears and maces, launched attacks on the Vanara army trying to enter the castle. Thousands of vanaras fell into the surrounding moats and died a tragic death. Sugriva sent Hanuman and Angada to battle with Dhumraksha and Narataka.

Fierce clangs of bows followed thumps of cudgels in that battle of prestige and supremacy.

Hanuman, looking at the destruction caused by the Asura army, lifted a giant wheel from a broken chariot and flung towards the asuras while attacking them from every possible direction. Angada backed Hanuman in killing Asuras with ceaseless showers of pointed arrows. Narataka, noticing the havoc created by Angada, launched multiple rounds of maces at him. Many of the maces hit Angada on his chest and limbs, creating multiple injuries. Quick in maneuvers, he dodged many of the attacks.

Hanuman's eyes turned red in a fury. He lifted his cudgel and threw it towards Dhumraksha with immaculate precision. Before Dhumraksha could realize and lift his bow, the cudgel had already crushed his head

into pieces, making his lifeless body fall on the ground. The fountain of blood stained his surcoat and treasured chain of gems; blood storming out of each vein fed the thirsty soil. Witnessing the merciless killing of Dhumraksha, Narataka furnished himself with all kinds of maces, spears, and swords. He stormed towards the vanara army unleashing brutal attacks upon them. Unable to reciprocate to his fierce strikes, Vanaras ran adrift and were crushed under weapons' untamed intensity.

Angada, launching giant arrows from a ballista missile, ran towards Narataka with his *Ranseur trident*. Amidst the chaos, Angada swiftly ran towards him and made a sudden sharp blow to his chest. Wielding a giant armor and sturdy shield, Narataka, swerved the incoming attack successfully. He picked up his *Scimitar* and dared Angada to attack him from the front. Amidst the fire flames and their bodies effusing blood, the battle between the duos lasted for more than half of a pahar. Nobody was feeling exhausted or ready to accept defeat. During the battle, Narataka's armor tasset got displaced, making his abdomen visible. Unaware of that, Narataka kept on fighting Angada at the same pace.

Angada, on the other hand, took advantage of the situation and waited for the perfect moment to attack. He kept on defending himself under the shield until he found the moment when Narataka lifted his arm, and he pierced his trident into vital organs of Narataka.

A sudden stream of unbearable pain flowed through his body, making him motionless. He fell on the ground, the moment he died. A blast of cheer rushed through the vanara army upon the death of Dhumraksha and Narataka.

Angada cleaned his blood-stained face with a scarf attached to his loincloth.

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Virupaksha informed the court about the killing of Dhumraksha and Narataka, one of our best and ruthless commanders of the Lankan army.

That was an alarming situation; the fate of Lanka seemed to be at the brink of darkness.

The vanara army, by now, had created immense havoc against the Asura army. Within no time, I summoned our chief of the army, Prahasta, accompanied by second in command chiefs, Akampan, Mahodara, Atikaya, and Virupaksha. Prahasta ordered the commanders to possess the most powerful weapons, wield the most destructive shastras, cannons and missiles.

All the charioteers emerged with their bows and arrows with chariots full of spears, javelins, battle-axes, and sharpened swords. At Prahasta's command, all warriors headed towards the battlefield and provoked the enemy at the loudest of their voices.

Prahasta, who was always adorned with radiant necklaces and elegant garments, mounted his chariot, laden with exquisite weapons. With the clangs of bows, a violent battle ensued between Vanaras and Asuras, where the only worship was the slaughter of its opponent. Prahasta, like an unconquerable warrior with anger flowing through his veins, launched an attack on both- Nala and Nila by showering hundreds of arrows on them.

Nila was hurt on his chest, and Nala wounded his thigh. Nila, quickly balancing himself, ran towards Prahasta with his sword and shield. Whereas Nala, severely hurt and unable to stand, was taken by sentinels back to the base camp. Nila threw the battle-axe towards Prahasta and quickly made his way nearer to his chariot. He diverted the axe rushing at him, swishing audibly through the dusty air. He chose his longsword to counter the attack from Gladius sword of Nila. The clanks of the swords were louder than the deafening screams of thunder. Prahasta hit Nila in his chest with pommel that was quickly diverted by him striking his armor with the fuller.

Like a lightning thunderbolt, the swift Nila jumped over Prahasta and kicked him in the back, making him fall on the ground. Before he could turn to defend the attacks, Nila pierced his sword into his thighs. He stabbed multiple times in his abdomen, and with a sharp blow, cut off his head. His body jerking violently lost the whole of its blood.

Akampan, riding on a horse with his club, darts on his back and a spear in hand, provoked Hanuman for battle. Crushing the dead bodies underneath, he sprinted towards Hanuman with full strength.

Hanuman, who was ready with his cudgel, whacked his horse legs, making Akampan tip over. He hit his face against a rock, broke his nose, and rubbed gravels against his head. Akampan gathered his strength and tried to get up with his wounded hands to unsheathe his sword.

Both collided together with their utmost strength- one having his cudgel and another one, his sword. Akampan, although injured and exhausted, made continuous strokes at Hanuman. He was able to evade most of the knocks but got sharp cuts somewhere or the other. Swift and nimble, Hanuman swerved his blow and caught him from his back, picked him up off the ground, and threw him over his center of gravity, making an arc. This move by Hanuman broke Akampan's neck making his upper body immovable. Hanuman picked up his cudgel with his wounded hands and crushed his head into shreds of veins.

Holding a bludgeon, Mahodara was riding an elephant laden with spears and darts. He incessantly provoked Sugriva with insulting remarks, signaling no mercy in his words or his attacks. He hurled a flail towards Sugriva that got split into five more flails in air and hit Sugriva on his chest and legs, injuring one of his kneecaps.

Sugriva, burning with rage, continuously fired arrows that made him fall off the elephant he was riding. Mahodara escaped unhurt as most of the arrows hit his giant armor. Finding himself in danger, Mahodara called Virupaksha for support. Virupaksha quickly approached and saved him from the swift blow of Sugriva's sword. Seeing both Virupaksha and Mahodara attacking Sugriva, Lakshman rapidly sprinted to the spot showering arrows on them. Mahodara got hurt with an arrow that hit his shoulder while Virupaksha, being a veteran in wars, dodged all of them. Taking advantage of that situation, Sugriva signaled, with a wink of an eye, to one of his sentinel warriors to target a fireball at Mahodara. He was covering his wound with one hand and was attacking Sugriva with another one. Unaware of his trick, Mahodara kept on fighting with Sugriva, when suddenly he retreated to make sufficient gap from him. The already launched fireball hit Mahodara on his neck and exploded with immense intensity. His body ruptured into millions of pieces, leaving no signs of his existence.

Virupaksha, shocked to see Mahodara's killing, raged towards Lakshman with his sword. As he was about to leap at Lakshman, an arrow pierced through him. He fell in front of Lakshman, motionless

and vomiting blood. Suddenly he about-turned, with difficulty, to notice Ram standing with his bow.

“Traitor! Why did you attack from the back!

Only cowards can think of such a betrayal!

Ohh! You only stealthily killed Vanara Vali!”, although, with immense pain and difficulty, sarcastic Virupaksha insulted Ram.

“Ask your nephew! Ravana!” Ram blurted out, stabbing his already mutilated stomach.

Lakshman hurried and clasped, infuriated Ram from behind.

Ram stopped, released himself from the clutches of Lakshman with a nudge. He was gasping in exhaustion.

At the periphery of Lankan shore, Atikaya was fighting with Angada, making indomitable blows at him with his flail. He mounted a horse with a bow and quiver of arrows attached to its saddle. Angada, who was highly flexible and nimble, saved himself from each blow made by Atikaya. He adjusted his flail on the horse saddle and started attacking Angada with the bow. Hiding behind a huge rock, Angada protected himself from those incessant blows. He picked up the shield lying near to the body of a dead soldier and dodged most of the assaults.

Frustrated, he risked his life and started heading towards Atikaya with just a spear in one hand and shield in another. Atikaya also fired multiple arrows at him. One arrow hit him in one of his thighs. Angada kept on running towards Atikaya, as he was not in the situation to even blink, let alone feel the pain or make a halt. When he was in his proximity, he made a flying leap towards Atikaya and pierced his spear through his neck. Atikaya fell off the horse holding his choked throat. He screamed in immense pain, witnessing his death approaching him.



Chapter R. 20

Past is indeed past.

It renders no gain if you keep thinking about it.

Past only matters if supplemented with corrective actions.

In the case of the existence of Lanka, the time, zeal, and purpose, all had crossed its limits.

The war had already claimed many of my kins and millions of Asuras. I realized that I would not be able to see my uncles Prahasta and Virupaksha now. Never would I be able to praise the glory of Atikaya, Mahodara, and Akampan. That war had made me realize the feeling of losing your loved ones, losing your own blood, your own souls.

May their brave souls rest in peace!

I called Shradula to explain to me the entire account of what had happened on the battlefield. As soon as he entered my chamber, I saw Kumbhakarn rushing towards us, overwhelmed with anger all over his face. Indrajit also joined us and tried pacifying enraged Kumbhakarn.

He was not in his senses and started cursing the enemy for their audacity.

Mandodari and mother Kaikesi also entered the room and tried curtailing his agitation.

When he calmed down, he ensconced himself on a chair in the right corner.

“Elder!

I know it would hurt you deeply... but don't you think that we all know... (He took a pause)” Kumbhakarn said with a bit of reluctance.

“What do we all know? Tell me what you want to say.” I asked him.

“We should get Sita back to Ram,” he said instantly.

Indrajit, although passively, supported Kumbhakarn.

Sumali got angry at what Kumbhakarn said. He reminded him of the killing of our kins, the warriors who fought for the prestige of Lanka, about his own son Nikumbha.

"At this juncture, how could you even imagine this? Kumbhakarn!" Sumali said in frustration.

I pacified Sumali and advised everyone to be in his senses at such difficult times. I passively agreed to Kumbhakarn's argument, but it was not the time to repent on deeds already committed. Lanka was in danger, on the brink of devastation, if no right steps were taken.

"Who guarantees that those Raghu's sons would spare us if Sita is returned to them?

Don't you know! These Aryans would treat her as impure. They would not accept my daughter.

They are fighting with us for the dignity of Ayodhya, to save their honor.

They are fighting to suppress the voices that may arise if they do not put in efforts to save the queen of Ayodhya.

Queen of Ayodhya, not Sita, is important for them!

Who knows these Aryans better than Ravana!" I said without giving any second thought.

Except for Mandodari, everybody was taken aback to know that Sita was my daughter. Until now, they perceived her abduction as a political move to win over those wanderers, a reason to revenge humiliation of our sister Shurpanakha.

"Yes! Sita loves Ram immensely, but it does not mean she lives a life where her character will be continuously questioned, a life that she does not deserve!

Yes! It was her choice to be with Ram in his exile, but I can't see her youth withering in those jungles." I said with a heavy voice.

Do you still think it is not worth fighting for?

Kumba! Tell me!" I added in a demanding tone.

Dumbfounded, my mother, Kaikesi inquired, how could she be my daughter, and why did I never let them know about her?

I repulsively reminded them of their horrendous deed.

"It was when you sent Maricha to bury her at some faraway place because some astrologer insinuated her as the reason for my demise," I burst out.

"She was raised by King Janak of Mithila. I never let anyone know about her truth to save her from a deplorable fate and criticism of society. Ravana is not a coward to deprive a woman of her dignity..."

(As soon as I uttered it!, the moments when I proposed and touched Vedawati, flashed through my mind's eyes, overlaid by the images of Vedawati immolating herself)

"Ravana trusts his valor. He would die like a martyr but never beg... beg... to anyone, not even to those Raghu's sons. "I stammered with conviction, mixed with guilt.

(Conviction, because it was innate in me. Guilt because of the incident of Vedawati's death)

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I desired Kumbhakarn to lead the army of Lanka and bring back the glory of Asuras. My mother, with wet eyes, blessed him to be victorious and left the room with the pain that only a Mata can feel.

Kumbhakarn sallied for the battle on his magnificent chariot laden with destructive weapons, its mast carrying the flag of Lanka. Millions of Asuras soldiers accompanied his leader for a mission that would decide their fate and the fate of Lanka.

Kumbhakarn clamored for the praise of Lord Shiva.

"Jai Rudra, Jai Jai Mahadev" warriors roared in unison.

Sugriva, Angada, and Vibhishan, all were terrified with that new entrant on the battlefield. It seemed like the whole Lanka had rendered its life for that battle. Looking at the vast army of Asuras led by the invincible Kumbhakarn, vanaras started running amok in all directions, and seeing vanaras losing their fortitude, all of their leaders began preaching the lessons of bravery.

Undaunted and firm, Kumbhakarn, at the top of his voice, said, "Ram! Beware of this warrior standing like a mountain in front of you.

I would not let you see the dawn of the day. Let this field of Lanka witness who is more powerful and who deserves the defeat.

Let the pain of my sister Shurpnakha be comforted with the death of my enemies.

May Rudra save you from me! "Kumbhakarn lashed out in rage.

Charged with fury, he fired thousands of arrows at Vanaras, from all directions. He ordered the army to launch ballistic missiles at them,

target fireballs at even the farthest of the opponents. He commanded his army to have no mercy on the Vanaras, no matter what!

Sugriva and Hanuman looked at the destruction caused by the Asura army. They instructed Nala, Nila, Rishaba, Jambavan, and Angada to boost the morale of the Vanara army- *Don't fear death but fight for glory, the cause, and the purpose of saving Mata Sita, to battle for Ram.*

Hanuman, having scars partially healed with epithelial tissues, launched a multitude of arrows on the Asura army. Sugriva was decimating them with his long sword and shield with spikes. Many of the Asura army's commanders mounted war elephants and were struck down with powerful catapults hurling massive rocks and fireballs. Looking at the courage shown by Sugriva's commanders on the field and the motivation by their leaders, the vanara army rebounded with more vigor. They sallied forth towards the army of Asuras, both the sides were wailing at the loudest of their voices. A huge typhoon of thick dust emerged from the collision between the two fiercest armies, embracing everyone from a foot soldier to the mighty commanders. The courageous Asuras who never retreated in a battle killed those agile vanaras who were gratified with the sheer display of valor of their leaders.

Vanaras attacked Kumbhakarn with rocks hurled through cannons that either missed him or fell over the army, killing thousands of them, including charioteers. Kumbhakarn hurled a cluster of maces at the enemy, causing boundless destruction. Rishaba, one of the mightiest vanara warrior, was hit on his head by one of the maces, killing him on the spot.

Hanuman, holding his cudgel, attacked Kumbhakarn on his chest. The giant armor wielded by the mammoth body of Kumbhakarn bounced his cudgel back, hitting the face of Hanuman.

"You! The Maharathi!

Is this the gallantry you possess! Your bravado carries no strength to challenge my spirit.

Go and hide away from me, else my spear would pierce through your head and will not let you even render a chance to beg for mercy.

I can still hear the screams of those innocent people of Lanka you flamed to death.

Go! Hide behind your masters! “Kumbhakarn dared Hanuman with a daunting stance.

Burning with rage, furious Hanuman hurled his cudgel at the face of Kumbhakarn, with great force. The cudgel hit the pole of the umbrella-shaped guard fixed on his chariot. Quickly, Kumbhakarn threw a club at Hanuman, hitting him in his chest. He fell on the ground, vomiting blood, his face covered with dust. Kumbhakarn targeted Sushena, Nila, and Angada, who were fighting at the North side of Lanka, with countless arrows. One of the arrows hit Angada, penetrating through his shoulder. He fell flat on the field, gradually losing his consciousness.

Sugriva hurled a giant rock at Kumbhakarn, hitting him on his back, making him lose his balance. Kumbhakarn fell off his chariot and hit a rock beside its wheels. Frenzied with pain, his face smeared with gore, Kumbhakarn ordered his army to fire flaming arrows at vanaras. They were ordered to be as brutal with vanaras as they could be. Kumbhakarn, with his *Halberd* attacked Sugriva, who was wielding his *Shotel* . The clank, when his shotel hit the shield of Kumbhakarn, created blinding sparks & screeching sounds. While Sugriva kept on attacking him, Kumbhakarn quickly defended one of the blows and maneuvered to attack him on his back. The thump on his back with his halberd caused severe injuries to Sugriva, making him lose consciousness.

Ram, who was fighting with Mahapaksha somewhere in the middle of the field, caught sight of the tumult created by Kumbhakarn. He mounted *Suryastra* on his bow and launched it at Mahapaksha, splitting his body into thousands of pieces. He quickly mounted his horse and galloped towards Kumbhakarn, without spending any more time there.

Ram felt a bit dejected after using that Astra as it was one of the rare and elite weapons earned by him. It was the need of the hour to use that Astra else Kumbhakarn would have already slaughtered many of his commanders by that time.

Ram threw a spear, laden with spikes, at Kumbhakarn to instigate him for battle. Kumbhakarn laughed at Ram with excitement and aimed hundreds of arrows from the ballistic missiles at him. Ram, who was versed with archery, deflected each arrow approaching him and, in no time, launched a missile at the wheels of his chariot. The missile

crushed its wheels, making Kumbhakarn fall off it. A storm of dust was created around the chariot that gave Ram enough time to move closer to Kumbhakarn. He predicted Ram's moves, took his Gladius sword out of his scabbard, and made a calculated attack through that cloud of dust. The tip of his Gladius made a sharp cut on his biceps, making him lose his blood more than his confidence. Ram quickly wrapped the wound with his scarf while that storm of dust still existed.

Amidst the faded visibility, Ram nocked Vayuastra missile, in the form of an arrow on his bow, and launched it at Kumbhakarn. The missile cut off one of his hands and severely injured his left shoulder, making him groan in pain. While drenched in a pool of blood, he made a quick blow at Ram with his sword.

His shield saved him.

Enervated and annoyed, Ram launched another arrow at Kumbhakarn and strategically targeted a spear at him. Kumbhakarn, focusing on the approaching arrow, overlooked the spear advancing towards him. In an attempt to deflect the arrow, he bent forward and was hit by the spear in his abdomen. Taking advantage of that situation, Ram swiftly launched multiple arrows at him that pierced through his chest, thighs, and neck.

To make sure that he was slain, Ram finally chopped off his head.

ରାବିଶ୍ର

One of the chieftains ran into the hall and intimated me of the killing of my Kumbhakarn and Mahapaksha.

"If you have the willingness to survive! Repeat what you just said," I asked him in a shrilling voice.

Indrajit came rushing towards me, already knowing my reaction to that news. I took my Chandrahasa out, pointed at him, and commanded him to vanish away from my sight. I was struck with intense grief over the loss of my brother, my right hand.

I wish I could go back into the past and never let him go for that battle.

Horrorstruck and bereaved, Indrajit mourned over his death as he could not endure those torments of grief. My mother, unable to utter

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anything, almost fainted when she heard about Kumbhakarn.

Novels English & Hindi

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Refrain from revealing your weaknesses in front of those who would be indifferent or unconcerned about it.

Black spot shines brighter on white!

Remember! How many times you revealed your vulnerability to your office mates!

- Time, Interest, and Efforts spent on new relationships consume the time, interest, and efforts spent in nourishing existing relationships. It is like spending your whole life caring about a chapter when you had the entire book to read!

Take care of a chapter but not at the expense of the whole book.
(Had I focused less on Sita, I would have saved all of my brothers & elders).

Howsoever struck you are in your corporate life, give enough care to all of your existing relationships.

If all of this seems difficult then, Simply! Connect with them!

At least, connect!



Chapter R. 21

Completely disconcerted, I repent over the unworthy existence of this war. What is the point of winning a war if there is no one to celebrate the win! If my kith, who were an integral part of my life, are no longer alive! Does the winning matter if the knowledge bearer of all four Vedas, the wealthiest Samrat in the world, could not save his brother. What will I do with that wealth, with Lanka, if my brothers are not with me! What will I do if people with whom I saw the vision of 'Raksh culture,' equality, and domination of Lanka all over the world... are no more!

With all that chaos happening in my mind, motionless, I occupied the throne. Indrajit, his face raised but dejected, confronted me with his words of solace.

"Pitravyah is not dead, my lord!

He is a martyr who would never want to see us grieving over his death. His valor on the field has stunned even the bravest of the celestials. You should be proud of his courage; his stance on the battlefield had challenged Ram and his mighty army chiefs!

Do not mourn over the loss, father!

This bravest soul of Lanka deserves a grand departure.

May his soul rest in peace!" Indrajit said in anticipation of my reply in his support.

I made a conceding gesture with my right hand, and later met Indrajit in my chamber.

I ordered the distribution of free food and gold coins in Lanka in remembrance of my Kumbhakarn.

I adjourned the durbar and headed towards my chamber in fury, guilt, and pain. I asked Mandodari to leave me alone when she came to console me for my loss.

"This cannot be the Ravana I grew up with. Where has that strong-willed, inviolable Ravana gone!

You cannot bereave over Kumbhakarn's death. He is a martyr who fought for Lanka, for the dignity of his brother, for the prestige of Ravana.

Unlike you! A coward! "My alter ego said.

"A coward! How dare you say that! "I argued.

"You have got all of your warriors, your commanders, your loved ones killed in this bloody war. Lanka has borne grave loss in this battle, but you have well ensconced yourself in this palace, in its luxury!" It continued with its bitter words.

"Dare not say anything more! Go away!" I screamed, blindly swaying my sword in the air.

"I trust my son. He is still alive. He can kill those princes. He can kill all of them alone."

Suddenly Indrajit entered the chamber with his sword and his armor as if he already knew it was now his turn to pick up the baton. He asked for my permission to sally against the enemy.

I advised him not to go for a head-on attack, instead use his method of illusion or *Maya* to break Ram's morale and defeat the purpose for which he had that battle with us.

Thus, we could weaken Ram emotionally and the enthusiasm of his vanara army.

We planned to create an illusionary image of the body of Sita !

Seeing her lifeless body, Ram would succumb to his feeble emotions.

Indrajit! That would be the right time to kill the duo.

He planned to execute the killing in Pushpaka vimana so that the entire scene remained unapproachable by the enemy.

Indrajit, who was equipped with immensely powerful weapons, mystic warheads, destructive arrows, and voice-ignited arms, stood upright in front of the palace's facade. He mounted the Pushpaka Vimana, eager to lead Lanka's vast *Standing* as well as the *Reserve* army. I was standing at the raised porch, looking at the vast expanse of my armies. That gave me the desire and the hope to win.

The army and my son Indrajit!

"The bravest, the fortunate ones! The soldiers of Lanka!

Today I command you to prove your mettle in the battlefield thirsty of enemy's blood.

This war is not just a battle for the prestige of Lanka but for the dignity of martyrs whose blood gores are still visible on the soils of Lanka.

Brace yourself for the worst, your death! So that survival becomes a pleasant surprise.

None will be able to withstand your brutality. I allow the fire to burn more violently in your heart.

For the good of you!

For the good of Lanka!" I instigated our commanders, the army, and its leader, Indrajit.

"Son! Let your valor roar!

Let courage be your ornament!

I bless you with immortality," I added.

Maghnad departed with Vimana, rising higher into the sky. The army, following the instructions from 2nd -in-command leaders, sallied forth into the battlefield.

"Jai Mahadev, Om Namah Shivay"

Jai Rudra Shiva Shakti", flowed through the ether.

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Everyone, charged with weapons demanding the blood of the enemy, launched himself into the battlefield. While Asura commanders were slaying the vanaras, Indrajit hovered over the place where Ram and Lakshman were fighting with Mahananda and Trishara.

Shattered heads, torn arms, wounded legs, and limbs chopped into pieces, were lying asunder on the field. In between the clashing of swords and clanks of cudgels, Indrajit yelled at the duo to get their attention. He was in his Vimana with the exact representation of Sita, a pseudo-Sita .

"Look at me, wanderers! I praise you for the courage you and your army have shown here on the soil of Lanka. However, it never means that I am going to spare you for your recklessness. You killed my brothers, my uncles, all of my kith and kin!

I am surprised that both of you are still alive. You should have been killed by now!

Look at your Sita... She is lying unconscious here in this Vimana. Hold your tears that would pain your eyes when I kill her." Indrajit said while gritting his teeth.

"MEGHNAD! You coward! You would not see tomorrow's sun if you touch my Sita. I will kill you, burn your Lanka. I will feed your limbs to vultures. Wild foxes will devour your head.

I dare you!"

Before Ram could say more, Indrajit inserted his sword through her neck. A splash of blood stained his face. He got into unstoppable laughter after that.

Ram fell on the ground, crouched with his face down and his eyes wet. Vibhishan, who was witnessing the incident from quite a distance, rushed towards Ram and Lakshman. Sugriva, Jambavan, and Hanuman followed him.

Seeing their leaders dejected, the vanara army began losing hopes and started retreating. That created a huge uproar among the leaders as well.

Turbulence and chaos were evident.

Vibhishan, who already had mastery in magic and sorcery, told Ram about the illusion Indrajit created.

"Lord! No need to lose hopes! No need to wail upon something that has not happened." Vibhishan said in haste.

"VIBHISHAN!" Ram uttered in pain and anger.

"Don't be devoid of sentiments, Vibhishan!

We respect you. Don't force us to forget the formidable stature you possess", Sugriva said vehemently.

"My cohorts! Whatever you have seen is not true!

We need to rise and fight again," Vibhishan impulsively said.

Angada, who was noticing the commotion, interjected, "Uncle Sugriva! I told you! I had never had trust in this Asura. He was never with us. He has always worked in collusion with Ravana to defeat us. It is unfortunate that we got to know about his real intentions only after losing Mata Sita.

Pardon me! Esteemed Ram! I would chop off his head at once if you command."

Sugriva pacified him, advised him to be in his senses, and not use foul words for Vibhishan.

Looking at the panic-stricken Ram and other leaders, Indrajit got assured of the success of his trickery. He burst into vile laughter and swerved the vimana towards Lanka.

"Your Sita is no more, Ram! Go back to your Ayodhya," Indrajit screamed while departing.

Vibhishan cut everyone off and told Ram about the capability of Indrajit in creating delusion. He apprised them of the tricks that he learned from Asura Guru Sukracharya.

"I have no intention to hurt your emotions, Ram!

Indrajit has not killed your Sita. It was just her representation in the form of her shadow that he killed", Vibhishan said.

"What about the blood, the screams, the pains Mata Sita had gone through.

Was that also fake!" Lakshman countered him.

"Exactly! dear Lakshman!

That is *Maya* !" Vibhishan replied.

"Raise your arms and revert. Make haste, my Lord! Before all vanaras vanish in this war," Vibhishan added.

Ram, without further ado, picked up his bow and launched an arrow towards the Vimana. It hit one of the three hundred pivots to which its blades were attached. Indrajit did not notice it until the Vimana swayed into a steep descent. He pulled another chain to lift off the Vimana and swerved upwards to get more push from the air below. Vibhishan noticed the uplift and asked Ram to launch another arrow but hit the lever this time.

He did the same.

This time it completely swerved off the vimana, making a steep fall downwards. Indrajit, confused but unterrified, made a quick about-turn only to notice Ram with an arrow nocked on the string of his bow. Before he could make an effort to lift Vimana again, the arrow hit another lever making it impossible for Indrajit to balance it.

Indrajit, who was proficient in archery, launched multiple arrows into the ground from the falling vimana, creating a temporary ladder-resembling structure. He jumped over the frame from vimana and

leaped onto the field. Ram and Lakshman sprinted towards him with their bows and quivers full of destructive arrows.

Indrajit got into a chariot that was heavily armed with glorious weapons. Burned with rage, he launched Ravana Astra (*Astra invented by me*), producing so much energy that could annihilate millions of Vanaras within a moment. Ram noticed that highly radiant missile approaching his army and launched *Kodandaram Astra* to neutralize it. Now Indrajit got furious and attacked Nila, Angada, and Sugriva with maces, cudgels, and pointed spears simultaneously.

Mace hit Angada's chest. Nila was hit by the cudgel on his head gushing out blood and Sugriva, by the spear's shaft. His agility helped him narrowly escape the blade of the spear. He showered an avalanche of arrows on vanaras, killing thousands instantly.

Looking at the destruction caused by Indrajit, the remaining vanara army began to lose confidence in its leaders and started retreating. Lakshman, Hanuman, and Jambavan noticed the turning of events against them and launched a tirade of deadly Astras and Shastras at the Asura army. Indrajit launched *Agneyastra* upon Hanuman and Jambavan, which was neutralized by *Varunastra* activated by Lakshman.

Frustrated and tormented manifold, Indrajit avowed to kill Ram and Lakshman now even if that meant complete annihilation of humans from earth. He ignited *Vasavisakti* weapon and hurled it at both of them. The energy produced was so immense that it set ablaze everything in its trajectory. Ram saw it approaching Lakshman and instructed him to launch *Indrastra* to counter it.

Lakshman charged the arrow with sacred mantras and targeted the incoming Vasavi missile. Although not powerful than Vasavi, *Indrastra* was still able to reduce its effect and potency. With the remaining strength, Vasavi continued its trajectory and hit Lakshman on his chest, causing severe burns on his body. Ram, who was standing a bit off its path, was not injured, except some burns on his shoulder and chest. Both of them fell unconscious on the ground. Jambavan was also hurt while Hanuman and Angada escaped unhurt from that Astra.

Dumbfounded by the tragedy that had just happened, Angada, Vibhishan, Sugriva, including all other commanders, looked at each other.

Vibhishan, who was erudite in physical and pulse therapy, was able to recover Ram quickly from his state of unconsciousness. However, Lakshman had suffered numerous wounds that seemed beyond healing.

A lot of blood had already been lost from Lakshman's body, and it was not prudent to delay finding the panacea anymore. Jambavan, holding his fractured leg and wounded shoulder, advised them to bring *Sanjivani booti* from Dronagiri Mountain in the Himalayas.

It was already midday by then.

To save Lakshman's life, he had to be treated with those magical herbs before the next day morning.

Like before, Hanuman volunteered for the ordeal and asked Jambavan about the appearance of those magical herbs.

He asked him to bring *Mrita Sanjivani*, that has the ability to bring an almost dead to life,

Suvarnakarani that could restore the complexion of the body,

Vishalyakarani, to give numbness and heal the deep wounds caused by weapons and,

Sandhani that had the magical traits of joining fractured bones.

Hanuman, who was unaware of the appearance of those herbs, asked Jambavan a way to recognize them on that infinite mountain.

"The *bootis* would glitter with different colors at night. There would be deadly snakes protecting those herbs, venomous enough to kill a person instantly. You would find them in the central region of the mountain." Jambavan replied.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Coaches/Trainers should be the top priority for every organization!

If they are aligned, if they feel privileged, organizations need not worry... ever! Half of their battles are already won!

Apart from the Helmsman, It is the trainer who develops potential helmsman out of sailors.

- Be a well-read person! Be hungry for wisdom!...

Why?

Reading creates a dynamo effect!

You read-You get confident-You gain knowledge & insights-You get opinions.

Your opinions & knowledge are noticed by your subordinates, your peers, your bosses (direct & indirect), everyone in the left, right & center of your network.

You look knowledgeable; knowledge breeds a formidable aura.

You connect with people-People connect with you- Your network gets stronger!

Your network is your Resources.

Who has more resources now? – You!

More resources mean more power, probably more success & possibly more respect.

(Don't compromise on values, else this process would take no time to reverse its direction!)



Chapter R. 22

*Appreciate if they deliver as expected, but...
Honor those who deliver it better.*

After getting the news of Indrajit striking down the duo, I, myself, went to receive Indrajit at the gate. This time we were assured of our win as the damage caused to our enemy was beyond repair. Moreover, it would have taken our enemy days or maybe months to find a remedy for the damage caused to Lakshman.

I adjourned the durbar to make everyone celebrate that self-declared win. Whole Lanka had put its labor, its sleepless nights in winning that war, and now it was time to have a sigh of relief.

My council and I gathered in the hall as a part of our daily informal congregation. Suddenly I saw Indrajit approaching me with a spy. When asked about the conspicuous anxiety on his face, he apprised me of the enemy's plan to send Hanuman to the Himalayas to get some lifesaving herbs.

"Does it perturb you? Indrajit!" I amusingly inquired him.

With a doubtful and confused face, Indrajit replied, "Father!

We ought to ignore none of their actions. We have been considering our enemy inferior to us.

We have repeatedly been committing the same mistakes for long.

I leave it to your discretion!

Nevertheless, we must be alert. Howsoever impossible it is for Hanuman to bring those herbs, we cannot let him access those."

"Trust me! Kalanemi can carry out this task very well. The son of great uncle Maricha, who is adept in sorcery like his father, would kill Hanuman without even letting our enemy know," He added.

I was partially confident in his plan of sending Kalanemi. Nevertheless, I allowed him to send him on that arduous journey. He left Lanka with a few other accomplices, on Pushpaka Vimana. He was

already familiar with all the paths, terrains, rivers, and jungles that a person could, possibly, cross to reach the Himalayas in a short time.

Kalanemi, disguised as a sage, his followers who disguised as his disciples, reached the outskirts of Drona Mountain. He set up an artificial hermitage near a river in the jungle and ordered his disciples to stride into different directions. They were tasked to lure Hanuman to have a temporary stay in their hermitage. Following the same, they dispersed in different directions.

Hanuman, who had already left Lanka in the afternoon, reached the Dronagiri Jungles after Kalanemi's arrival. Exhausted and debilitated, he halted around a nearby river to reenergize.

One of the accomplices, disguised as a sage, noticed a vanara sitting on a rock close to the river. He could recognize him as Hanuman. Without further delay, he proposed to him for a sojourn in his hermitage.

Hanuman politely denied the invite but, on further insistence, accepted it.

Hanuman, with dire innocence, followed the path of the accomplice. It was a pathway full of wild grass and weeds growing amid beautiful plants and sturdy trees. Timbers and logs were lying abandoned. They had turned green with algae and were tattered by rains & winds. The path seemed endless until he asked, "how much more!" to the accomplice. He was enjoying that journey to the hermitage. The view was relaxing, but the recurring thoughts of Lakshman's degrading condition were making him anxious.

At about one-tenth of a Yojana, he saw a crudely built shanty, made of straws and twigs of trees. At first, the shelter looked newly built, but that did not go well with the accomplice's claim of him living for many years in that jungle. The accomplice was avoiding having much conversation with Hanuman. That made Hanuman a bit skeptical, but he ignored it.

They reached the hermitage and were received by Kalanemi with a jar of water and some fruits & raw vegetables. After a while, all of the remaining disciples of Kalanemi entered the hermitage one by one. Everyone greeted each other with a smile. Suddenly, Hanuman noticed something weird.

Tip of the sword.

Hidden under the angavastram of one of the disciples, Hanuman could see the shining tip of the sword. He got alert but with calm composure, asked Kalanemi if he could have some water to wipe off the dust he gathered on his feet during his journey to the hermitage.

That gave him a chance to step out of the hermitage safely. As soon as he stepped out of it, he quickly picked up a wooden log lying near his left foot and made a sharp attack on Kalanemi's forehead, making his head gushing out a stream of blood. His companions unsheathed their daggers and iron rods to kill him.

Hanuman planned not to get into a battle with them. Instead, he escaped the spot and saved time. He swiftly brachiated from one tree to another, leaving behind Kalanemi drenched in a pool of blood, wreathing in pain. His followers tried chasing Hanuman for quite a while but could not cope with his agility and speed. Kalanemi had eventually died, and his accomplices never returned to Lanka in fear of being punished for their cowardice.

By the time news about Kalanemi reached Lanka, Hanuman had already returned with those herbs and saved Lakshman. A loud cheering from the Vanara army resounded all over the battlefield.

That confirmed that Lakshman had been saved.

Ram, Lakshman, and Jambavan all had been saved.

That had brought the whole of Lanka into a worrisome state. All the key leaders were summoned on an urgent basis. Indrajit, with anger and dejection, entered my room to ask for my permission for another attack.

I could understand his frustration and impatience. When I was young, I used to be even more impatient and quick-tempered than he was.

After much deliberation, we decided to send Indrajit again, but this time with more destructive and powerful weapons.

This time, Indrajit agreed to call voice-ignited highly destructive weapons he possessed. To turn the tide in favor of Lanka, he had to get into deep meditation to initiate their launch.

Vibhishan, who already knew about the probable attack from Lanka, rather a fiercer one this time, sent his spies to keep a tab on our plans.

Our negligence and blind trust in our security and intelligence befooled us. His spy infiltrated into Lanka and somehow got to know about Indrajit's plan of ultimate destruction. We did not have even the slightest hint that everything had already been disclosed to our enemy.

The next day Indrajit left for Nikumbhila cave, the only place where he used to go for penance and meditation. No one, not even me, ever got to know about the Deity or God he worshipped in that cave. Whether that cave possessed any deity or it was just a place, aloof and unapproachable. Once in every *Amavasya*, he visited that cave, alone or sometimes with one or two soldiers, but he never let the world know of the mystery behind his visits.

*Every great warrior hides some mystery behind his greatness...
Maybe that was his mystery or the reason behind his greatness.*

His most trusted soldiers who were assigned to guard the entrance of the cave accompanied him. He went inside, unaware and clueless. Bereft of any weapons or Astra-Shastra, he immersed into deep meditation.

Vibhishan, Lakshman, and Hanuman, along with their small army of Vanaras, reached Nikumbhila. Hidden behind rocks and trees, they struck down the soldiers protecting the entrance. Indrajit went into a deep state of meditation. The state when you are detached from everything, every pleasure, every luxury... everything!

Lakshman ambled into the cave with his bow and arrow and carried a sword under his scarf. He went into the deep interiors of the cave and found my son reciting hymns. Vibhishan followed Lakshman into the cave while Hanuman stayed at the entrance.

Vibhishan, who was well apprised of the powers Indrajit would possess if he completed his veneration, asked Lakshman not to let that moment pass in vain.

"Vibhishan! The formidable one!

How can I kill him! He is unarmed!

This is against Rajdharma. I will never be able to forgive myself for that sin!" Lakshman said in a passive tone.

"Lakshman! The powerful one!

It is inapt to talk about *Dharma* -*Adharma* at this juncture.

Adharma done to eliminate evil is not forbidden. To kill evil is the path to heaven.

Do not feel guilty in raising your arms against Indrajit!

Think about Sita! Think about Ram! About the people of Lanka who have longed for justice for ages!

In the absence of your elder Ram, I, the eldest one, command you to shoot Indrastra at Indrajit," Vibhishan ordered Lakshman.

Lakshman already knew if Indrajit completed his meditation, it would be impossible to defeat him in battle. His weapons would be impossible to challenge, invincible to be neutralized.

"Raise your bow, Dear Lakshman! Let's finish this once and for all!" Vibhishan reiterated.

Lakshman activated Indrastra with hymns. Indrajit, completely lost in his meditation, did not realize the duo's presence and continued with his prayers. Lakshman, without further delay, launched Indrastra at him, producing blinding glare from the Astra. The dazzle was so intense that it awakened Indrajit from his meditation. Before he could react, the Astra had already beheaded him, gushing out unabating streams of blood, his body wriggling in that pool of blood.

"You Coward!

You Traitor!" Indrajit murmured just before he closed his eyes.

Vibhishan and Lakshman, both knew who was who!

The coward and The traitor!

It was one of the biggest shocks and roundabouts in the fate of Lanka and the life of its ruler. Now, I was alone with all of my commanders that I relied upon, with the Kith and Kin, the backbones of Lanka, dead!

Another excruciating blow to me was the killing of Indrajit.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Avoid lengthy conversations & socialization with fools, flatterers, devious & perpetually miserable companions.

Such people exhaust your mental energy without making you feel the same.

Beware of such people! Especially in your corporate surroundings!



Chapter R. 23

*I had already lost my empire,
The empire that I gave my whole life to,
My own blood, people I grew up with, my prestige, ego, and...
My sense of mind!*

Mandodari locked herself up in her room, only to make me realize the gloom those 83 days of battle had brought to Lanka. My mother, Kaikesi, who already knew that it would be me she might lose the next, came to me pleading for the 'impossible'.

She asked me to surrender.

Her tears have always made me weak and fragile as they were doing it now.

I got used to the tears of agony in her eyes since my childhood. Initially, her misery would hurt me, but with time, it became my strength, and it gave me the reason to survive, to be the king of Lanka, to rule over the whole world. Once I became the king of Lanka, I made sure I destroyed every reason that made her weak, defiled her dignity, or brought pains to her.

She had already known about her fate when my Mātāmaha Sumali sent the marriage proposal to my father, Sage Vishrava, one of the greatest sages and a renowned scientist of Aryavrata.

After Sumali was defeated in the battle with Devas and discarded from Lanka, he never wanted to give a life that he had suffered to my mother or her children. He knew, only Vishrava's descendants could let Asuras hope to regain their long lost glory and Lanka. Sumali waited for the moment my father finally agreed to marry my mother.

She was one of the most beautiful Asuras of the *Hethines tribe*.

Much more beautiful than most of the Apsaras or celestials. Vishrava could not resist his desire to marry her and got consent from his first wife, *Devvarnini*, to marry her and have kids with her. Devvarnini was my stepmother, daughter of Rishi Bhardwaj, and mother of my stepbrother Kubera.

Before my invasion and reign over Lanka, Devas' financial treasurer was Kubera. He was always against the second marriage of Vishrava, as it would ruin his relations with Devas. He already knew that the progenies of Kaikesi would become a threat to his professed fortune and Lanka.

"Aah! I pity him!"

Devas won Lanka from my paternal grandfather Bali and appointed Kubera as its treasurer. I was not even born at that time. He was the caretaker of all of the trades that *Aryavrata* had with other countries. He was only concerned about his Lanka, its throne and fortune he had earned by whichever way possible.

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The stigma of being an Asura always haunted my mother. People hurled insensitive remarks at her for being an Asura. Sumali knew it was destined to happen, as my father was a Brahmin who belonged to the most revered classes of that time.

He was already aware of the resistance, and pressure others would put on Vishrava to annul their marriage and abandon her and her kids.

I respected him for his courage, supporting us through thick and thin and giving me everything necessary to be a great son, a warrior, a Vedic scholar, a scientist, a musician, a king, and a fanatic of Lord Shiva.

I have lived the life of both – a *Brahmin* and an *Asura* – so who would know the pains and luxuries of both sides better than I. It had always inspired me to establish my vision, become an indomitable ruler, and for that, I had to build my own empire, my own dominance!

I got so overwhelmed with my blinding vision that, for me, the difference between just and unjust, moral and immoral began to diminish.

Despite having everything best in the world – Lanka, warriors, my family, luxuries, money, power...everything, I was now alone...and drained.

I, along with my siblings, was raised in a small hermitage of my father. Along with other disciples of his, I was taught Vedas, culture,

yagya practices, medical science, and many other aspects that my father was renowned for.

Since my childhood, my obsession for perfection and power destroyed my innate ability to make decisions calmly. Aggression had become my weapon and my identity. By the time I could realize the repercussions of it, I had already attained youth and had become the king of Lanka. Day by day, my obsession with power magnified that blurred the meaning of integrity and patience for me.

To divert myself from everyday agony, I developed an interest in music, Vedas, gained knowledge in the armory, medical science, politics, and administration. I wholly dedicated myself to Lord Shiva, to the extent of obsession. I was devoted to him...to the extent of insanity.

As years passed by, those agonies were making me stronger, my efforts and dedication were making me invincible. With every tick of the time, I made sure that I was getting powerful, uncompromising, undefeatable, and omnipotent.

From the eyes of society,

If I was a scholar, a well-learned Vedagya, a musician, a scientist, an astrologer- it was because of Vishrava, my father.

If I was an asura, an unyielding brat, an aggressive king, a stigma to my family, an insensitive rogue- it was due to my mother, Kaikesi, an Asura .

When this derision went on for long, I realized, with time, that the opinions of society mattered the least to me. My hatred was not innate; it was the product of constant nagging and denial of our existence, the Asuras. The sacrifices my mother made weighed more into making me what I became than anything else.

With time, I was getting obsessed with Lanka. My obsession did not end even when I became the wealthiest, the fiercest king in the world. Day by day, my fortune was mushrooming, and thus my hunger for more of it. I equaled wealth with power & dominance. The Devas were wealthy, and hence they had it all- Power, fame, dominance, and formidable status.

The whole world was spellbound and, at the same time, envious of the progress that Lanka had made within a few years.

Later, I married Mandodari, a woman of integrity, who always supported me through thick and thin. Daughter of Maya, the chief engineer of Lanka and a good friend of Sumali. She inevitably stood by me even at the time when I headed for the crusade to mark Lanka's presence everywhere in the world.

Now, the king of Lanka does not have the courage to face Mandodari, mother Kaikesi, people of Lanka who had lost their sons, brothers, and fathers in this bloody war.

I cannot accept this reality. Ravana was born to win, not to die this way. Howsoever broken I am, I cannot accept defeat. I can never beg down.

This is who I am.

This is Ravana.

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Mandodari and Mother Kaikesi entered my room. Although she looked a bit low, she blessed me with her caressing love.

Mandodari hugged me.

Her tears wetted my shoulder. Her warmth was asking me to stay put.

"You, the queen of Lanka! Must not shed tears in vain. Those are precious!

It is the moment of pride that all of your sons were the martyred leaders of our Lanka... who died for the defense of their own country.

Save you valor, your tears for the moment I kill those Raghu's sons and massacre the vanara army," I said and hugged her.

"Mother! You are the strength of Lanka. It got its existence, its purpose because of you!

How do I believe that my eyes are seeing you sad and dejected!

Maa! Your blessings were a boon for me, always! I can conquer millions of warriors if you stand beside me," I said with a heavy heart.

Before they could utter anything, I touched her feet and left the room without facing any of them.

My tears venerated her feet and hers- my crown.

I directly went to meet Guru Sukracharya to get his blessings and his advice on the plan of attack. I went straight to the place where I used to train myself and practice weapons. I performed daily rituals, offered oblations to Rudra, and set off with my practice.

Mandodari desired to visit our main Shiva temple, The *Ketheeswaram temple*, to pray for my victory. She went inside the temple without escort guards. She was offering the oblations when suddenly Angada showed up from nowhere. As soon as she realized his presence, he asked her not to scream or ask for help.

She kept quiet...not because she was afraid, but she already knew Angada and his mother, Tara, since he was a small child.

Mandodari asked for his sudden indecorous appearance. Angada, forgetting his limits, hurled insulting remarks at her. He blamed her for the miseries Ram and his army faced and uttered offensive words for me. She objected, asked him to go away, and stop bothering her.

He crossed his limits of impudence and, in a sudden fit of rage, grabbed her hand inappropriately. Mandodari, with her left hand, quickly unsheathed the knife tied loosely to her stole and made a deep cut on his upper arm. She lost her control, abused him for his indecency, and screamed for help. Before the guards could enter the shrine, Angada had already run away, shedding a trail of blood on the floor.

While I was still practicing weapons inside our arsenal, she entered hurriedly, weeping, sobbing, and explained to me the entire incident of shamelessness and impudence of Angada. I was angry and, at the same time, surprised at how could Vali, a vanara of high morals, give birth to that wicked rouge.

I was silent...lost in my thoughts.

Mandodari noticed my silence and cursed me for my inaction.

"It seems it does not even matter to you!

Your wife is violated!

Do you hear me!

That brazen vanara has violated your wife," she screamed, crying incessantly.

The entire glimpse of me abducting Sita ran through my mind's eyes. Sita's screams. Her pain, her moans of despair...everything, I was able to hear clearly.

I hugged Mandodari and assured revenge for her insult. Angada had made another wound at my already maimed body, triggered my already inflamed emotions.

"Those vanaras would not be spared now. They will see what real destruction means!

Neither Vishnu nor Ram would be able to protect them," I uttered.

I kissed her forehead, picked my *Chandrasasa*, and headed towards Lanka Durbar to get everyone ready for the sally. I addressed all of my remaining leaders, army personnel, and infantry. All the commanders at all ranks were summoned in the forecourt.

As everyone gathered in the frontage, I went onto the stoop to address the gathering before we forayed against the enemy.

...the last address of my life to my Countrymen!

"My fellow citizens! Today, I speak in front of you, not as your King, not as your leader.

I speak to you as your companion, who has spent his whole life in the service of his country, his Lanka.

This Lanka, like a mother, has nurtured us, making us capable of challenging the indomitable kings, unconquerable Devas, unassailable Yakshas, Daityas, Nagas, and whatnot.

Today, together, we stand here, swollen with pride, because of the support from each Asura of Lanka. We have lost most of our protectors who always stood by us in the event of any tragedy, be it any foreign invasion or a natural one.

Now the time has come to honor them... For reverence of our martyred kith and kin.

Raise your weapons! My countrymen!

Raise it for your Lanka!

Jai Rudra! Har Har Mahadev! "I delivered with conviction, not authority.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- In the Organizations, it is assumed that process improvement, efficiency enhancement, and decision-making are restricted to and directed by upper management!

Let us understand the difference-

Employees, who work on the ground, know in & out of the processes, the loopholes, the loose ends, and all of the hidden dots that connect all the work. They know the inefficiencies present in the processes.

However, the absence of their involvement in decision making never let those inefficiencies be clearly visible.

Leaders look at the final picture, the red signs & percentage changes!

Unless these two sides exchange the tables, from time to time, the organizations will suffer same diarrhea from time to time!



Chapter R. 24

Realize the flow of the river before it is flooded.

Conches were blown from both the sides to set off the battle. I ordered my army to launch an attack with a deafening war cry. It seemed like wolves and vultures were desperately waiting to feed on the sundered limbs, broken ribs, and flesh of the dead.

Birds and Eagles chirped at the loudest of their voices to inform the enemy of the approaching massacre.

All my commanders launched their monstrous weapons. Ram's army had already anticipated the probable attack and was ready with their weapons and shields.

I had vowed to kill Angada first, to punish him for his insolence towards Mandodari.

Ram launched a multitude of arrows, leaving the bodies of thousands of Asuras severed. In return, I ordered my commanders and army to launch their arrows and target them with ballistic missiles. That was to inflict damages to the vanara army through simultaneous attacks killing lakhs of vanaras within a few moments.

I forged ahead in my chariot towards Angada. I challenged him to goad him into battle with me, hurled insulting remarks about his father, Vali. Listening to my tirade of abusive words, he roared my name in disgust and flung multiple spears at me. Without knowing whom he was fighting with, he launched maces, cudgels, even arrows at me. I kept laughing at his amateurish fighting skills, striking down all of his weapons one by one.

"Enough! You little Angada. Let me finish you for once and for all so that you never dare to cross your limits with daughters of Lanka.

Behold, Angada!" I roared and launched Manavastra at him.

The Astra hit him on his chest, leaving him unconscious, throwing him thousands of miles away from the battlefield.

Sugriva, who was indulged in a fight with our Asura commander, noticed that brutal attack on his nephew. While riding his horse, he

ordered a group of soldiers to attend to wounded Angada and rushed towards me with his cudgel and *Flammard* sword.

I also mounted a horse and galloped towards Sugriva with my Chandrahassa. We were rushing towards each other fiercely, creating noticeable waves in air. With flammard in his right hand, he was all ready to pierce his sword through my chest unless he realized a dart hitting his neck, creating a deep cut. I had already aimed iron darts at his neck while we were at an approachable distance. Unaware of my next move, he kept riding towards me and got hurt by the bunch of darts I hurled at him. The pace of his horse gradually decreased, making him unconscious as he was profusely losing blood.

I turned around and headed towards the center of the field, where vanaras were creating havoc and injured many of our commanders. I beheaded hundreds of vanaras. There was blood and dismantled limbs scattered all over the field, with wounded warriors groaning in pain. Once I reached the center, I launched *Twashtha* Astra at them, creating delusions among them. Maddened by the spell created by the Astra, vanaras' vision got blurred, making it easier for the Asura army to kill them.

Looking at the immense destruction caused by Asura, Vibhishan intimated Ram and Lakshman about it. Lakshman, with his bow, fired a multitude of arrows, killing thousands of Asuras instantly.

I noticed how Vibhishan, the traitor, informed Lakshman about our activities and was constantly feeding them with required actions against asuras.

My bosom burned with rage when I saw him standing in his chariot, killing the fellows he grew up with.

I hurled darts at him incessantly, which were checked midway by the arrows from Lakshman. Without any delay, I further cast Javelins and maces at Vibhishan, which were again diverted by Lakshman's arrows. One of the javelins hit his shoulder, making him stumble onto the ground.

Frustrated with the trouble caused by Lakshman, I ignited a missile and hurled it at him. The missile got split into multiple minor missiles hitting the ground at various spots. Thousands of vanaras turned to ashes in a moment. Lakshman targeted the core of the missile heading

towards him with arrows. His arrows reduced its intensity, and it hit a huge rock lying near him. It exploded, creating a cloud of immense energy and dust. The explosion did not kill him but gave him some severe burns.

Ram, while fighting with other commanders in the north, looked at his wounded brother and screamed at the top of his voice,

“Ravana! If you are brave enough, fight with me!

Leave my brother alone!

Let’s make it a battle of equals.”

The moment had come when we both had to face each other.

We both were infuriated because of our own individual reasons.

That moment reminded me of Anaranya’s curse...

The past was leaving a trail of gruesome glimpses in my already agitated mind.

Being the sole survivor of Lanka, now the fate of Lanka and its survivors were dependent on me. I recited the name of Lord Rudra in my mind multiple times. His name has always brimmed me with immense energy and internal strength.

I galloped towards Ram with my Chandrahasa sword. Ram embraced his longsword and rushed towards me, producing a wailing cry. The deafening clanks produced by the striking swords could be noticed many Yojanas away. I hit his shoulder with the pommel of my sword, grasped him by his neck. He quickly knocked in my stomach with his elbow that threw me off him. I leaped on him with more strength and attacked his chest. He bent down on his knees and defended the blow very strategically. We kept on fighting with swords, spears, maces until exhaustion. After a while, I realized that it would not be easier to defeat Ram in sword combat. I quickly released myself from his clutches and kicked him on his chest to throw him away. I mounted a horse standing near me and swiftly moved away to maintain sufficient distance from him.

I launched a salvo of continuous arrows at Ram. He, in turn, did not counter with his arrows. Instead, he avoided or nullified the arrows with his iron shield. The arrows were relatively less destructive as I fired them at him to explore his strength and his combat abilities in archery.

<https://rb.gy/zxhwdo>

<https://t.me/indianmythologybooks>

That assured me of the fact that he was not an ordinary warrior.

Ram, on the other hand, propelled highly destructive arrows at me and simultaneously launched a missile at the Asura army. To counter his attack, I released an equally destructive arrow to neutralize his efforts.

Hidden somewhere in phrases.....

- Reward beyond expectation, support, and promote people who lead any initiatives, are determined towards its implementation and passionately execute it.

Do whatever it takes to retain, train & upskill them!

- Promotions are those silent battles that create a lot of noise once the battle is over!

To win this battle- Deliver far more & far better than what you are expected to deliver. You must learn to say 'No' to the deliverables that are outside your allocated boundaries and be positive, extremely positive!

Why is it necessary to fight for your promotions? (If you are eligible & deserve it!)

When someone is promoted, the range of his responsibilities increases. The wider the range is, the better it is (you can never escape responsibilities. If you avoid it in your work, destiny has other ways to increase responsibilities in your life).

Your network gets wider and probably, a more experienced and mature network. You get more opportunities for making independent decisions; you become an influencer and have better reach to other verticals or departments of your organization.

You feel a greater sense of responsibility; you get bigger & higher impact goals that enhance your capacity to deliver under pressure.

You learn to maintain your demeanor even at the time of adversities!



Chapter R. 25

*Death is inevitable. Death is permanent.
Fear no one but death!*

Vibhishan, who was not seen on the field for quite some time suddenly, approached Ram. The distance between Ram and me was enough to notice his actions but not enough to predict his aim or his eye movements. I saw Vibhishan instructing him something with the movements of his hands. I could not decipher his intentions with his gestures. Confused and alerted, I launched another arrow at Ram, hitting the shed of his chariot.

Ram nocked an arrow given by Lord Brahma, on his bow and aimed at me. With quite unclear movements of his eyes, I misunderstood his tricks. I anticipated *Brahmastra* approaching me towards my chest, and I nocked *Brahmadanda Astra* to neutralize it midway. To my surprise, before *Brahmastra* could be neutralized, it swerved its path and directly hit my abdomen through the small hole in my armor. The energy released was so immense that it instantly paralyzed my lower body.

Now I realized what those gestures of Vibhishan insinuated!

There was a small hole at the lower end of all of the armors produced in Lanka. That hole was designed to help warriors tighten their outer robe. It was small enough to be noticed by any warrior but not small enough to be missed by a skilled Maharathi.

Even if it went unnoticed by Ram, Vibhishan did apprise him of that flaw, rendering the battle in favor of Ram.

I lost control of my body and collapsed into my chariot like a fallen tree. I rolled over the chariot because of the sudden jerk produced by my weightless body and fell on the ground. I was losing my blood uncontrollably. The wounds created were so intense that it ruptured all of my abdominal veins.

It was a moment when all of my deeds, my whole childhood, my moments of laughter and sorrow, my entire life flashed through my half-

closed eyes .

More than the pain, I was overwhelmed with the feeling that my soul would finally have some rest.

I did not know how my karma would be judged whether it would lend my soul in heaven or hell but was satisfied that now, it would realize that eternal bliss.

I saw Vibhishan running towards me, mourning over my motionless body. He cursed and blamed himself for my agony, for the pain I was enduring on my deathbed. I asked him not to repent over his deeds, for his intentions were pure, his actions were noble. He did what he ought to, to fulfill his dharma, and I did what my dharma instructed me to do. I clasped his hands in mine and asked him to take care of mother, Kaikesi, and Mandodari.

“Vibhishan, my younger one! Do not grieve!

Your brother is a martyr who died protecting his motherland. Do not let those tears take that dignity away from me.

Keep your head high! Always! Like a king! Like your brother Ravana!

Give everything to mother Kaikesi and Mandodari that I ever failed to give in my whole life.

My life must be a lesson to you! It would help you sail through all odds of survival.

You promise me, Vibhishan, that you will never let the dignity of Lanka go in dearth!

You promise me!” I asked him to promise, with the same authority and dominance that I would possess when alive.

Vibhishan hugged me in his arms.

That feeling was sublime. I asked him to stay like that for some more time.

As I was losing my consciousness with every tick of time, Ram sent Lakshman to me. He revered me by joining his hands and sat beside my body, drenched in a pool of blood.

We immersed ourselves in deep conversations with each other until my soul departed my body. Vibhishan gently closed my eyes and sat there looking at lifeless Ravana, with his eyes wet, as if pleading me to say something to him.

“Har Har Mahadev!

Jai Ravana! Jai Dashnana!

Long live Dasagreeva Dashana!" echoed in surroundings.

Looking at my demised body that was once an unconquerable soul, my mother, and Mandodari scuttled towards me, wailing in grief. Mandodari came and sat beside me with her hair unkempt. Mother rested my head in her lap with tears in her eyes that were continuously falling on my forehead. She was numb, her silence urging me to wipe off her tears, her eyes yearning for a glimpse of her son. With her wet eyes and mourning voice, Mandodari asked me if such was the end, then why did I marry her.

She kept gazing at me for a while in anticipation of some response. She tightly pressed my shoulder with her hands, making deep dark blue marks on my cold-blooded body. Suddenly she burst into tears that resounded all over the palace, walls, and all corners of Lanka.



Chapter R. 26

Om Namah Shivay!

Sita was informed about the triumph of Ram over Lanka and was liberated from the confinement of Ashoka Vatika. Vibhishan was made the king of Lanka after the due performance of all the religious duties and obsequies to me.

Sita, having tears of joy, excited and full of beans, came running towards Ram. Finding Ram engrossed in his own thoughts, she suddenly stopped and pondered if all were fine.

Ram, with a grave voice, raised his right hand in the air and said,
“Sita!

You! The gentlelady!

Once *the queen of Ayodhya* ...has been touched by an outsider, a demon.

I cannot disregard the suspicion that would be raised on your character by the people of Ayodhya.

As per them, Ravana’s evil look has destroyed your sanctity”...

Sita, who was in a state of shock and disgust, shed tears profusely.

“My lord! The supreme one!

I am stunned and dejected by your hurtful words!

It surprises me that you are perturbed with what society thinks!

Where were those people when Ravana abducted me? Or even after I was left alone to fester in Lanka!

If it did not trouble them at that time, then why does it matter now?

It was just my unfortunate fate, not my desire to be touched by him.

I feel glummer now, after your words, than I was in Ashoka Vatika.

I am devastated!

My devotion to you now seems worthless to you!

It leaves no purpose for me to survive anymore!” Sita replied, with her eyes flooded with tears.

Hanuman, who was listening to that conversation for a long while, interjected and supported Sita during the argument. He, who was a true

devotee of Ram, apprised him of her days of despair in Lanka. Ram always believed in his devotion and loyalty. Hanuman lit the sacred fire, considered the most pious of all, in sanctum sanctorum and swore for her sanctity and her faith towards Ram.

Sita moved forward to the fire and swore for her eternal devotion towards Ram.

Vibhishan, with a persuasive voice, protected her character and defended her fidelity.

Ram was later convinced to restore Sita. He accepted her and then left for Ayodhya in my Pushpaka Vimana.

Vibhishan continued to reign Lanka and accepted Mandodari as his second wife. She again became the queen of Lanka.

ରାଜ୍ୟ

After Ram took over the throne, pushback from the citizens of Ayodhya about the acceptance of Sita by Ram started cropping up. They were not in the spirit to accept her as their queen.

Ram, grief-stricken and exasperated with the demeanor of citizens of Ayodhya, was on the verge of renouncing the Kingship of Ayodhya and all of his possessions. Later his responsibilities and Dharma towards his country required him to remain its patron, and he continued ruling as its king. However, societal pressure could not withhold pregnant Sita as Ayodhya's queen. She took shelter in the hermitage of Sage Valmiki after she was exiled from Ayodhya.

...The exile for a lifetime. For a sin that she never committed...

Now when I connect the dots, the picture still remains blur to me.

I can see a hazy figure of someone standing on a chariot, having a broad chest, claiming to be the real victor of this saga.

Let this figure be blurry. Let this figure take its own shape by the perception of the generations to come!

Glossary

Alkapuri - The city *Kubera* went to rule after Ravana defeated him.

Akshuhini - As per Ancient texts, one Akshauhini army consisted of 218,700 warriors.

Ashwamedha Yagya - A ritual where a King would release a horse to roam freely. It is considered a challenge to the King if someone dares to catch that Horse. To prove his sovereignty, the King would fight with the darer.

Astra - A weapon that is launched or thrown.

Bhimaseni - A duel technique that focuses on strength more than the strategies.

Bhrata - Brother.

Chakravarti Samrat - The universal ruler.

Durbar - Court.

Guru - A teacher or Mentor or Tutor.

Hanumati - A duel technique that focuses on strategies and techniques that need strength.

Jambuvanti - A duel technique that focuses on takedowns, hand locks and submissions.

Jarasandhi - A duel technique that focuses on breaking pivotal joints and limbs.

Maharathis - One of the levels or ranks given to the warriors based on their excellence in weaponry.

Mahashanku - The number equivalent to 10^{22} .

Manusmriti - Code of Conduct (*Dharma-shastra*) for Humans given by *Manu*, the first human incarnation on Earth.

Mata - Mother.

Mātāmahā - Maternal Grandfather.

Mātulah - Maternal uncle.

Maya - Illusion or sorcery.

Naraka - Hell. The abode of *Yama* , the god of Death.

Rajmata - Mother of the King.

Patala - Underworld or Netherworld.

Pitravyah - Paternal uncle.

Prajapati - The supreme creator and preserver of life.

Pushpak Vimana - A flying Machine used by Ravana.

Rajdharma - Code of ethics of a King/ruler.

Rasatal - One of the 14 Lokas(Worlds) described in Ancient texts.

Shastra - A weapon that is used by keeping it in hands.

Sanjivani booti - A magical herb.

Tapasya - Penance.

Trimurti - Refers to the Trinity gods- Brahma- the creator, Vishnu-the preserver, Shiva-the destroyer.

Vajra - One of the weapons possessed by God Indra.

Vanaras - Referred to as Monkeys in this book.

Vishwakarma - The God, known to be the architect of the whole universe.

Yagya - A way of worship or ritual performed in front of *Fire* , considered one of the sacred and essential elements of nature.

Yuvarajas - The crown prince to the throne.



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 **KAPWING**

They felt endangered, on the verge of extinction!
They wanted their dominance, their authority, their dignity back!

He was born to bring that long lost glory of Asuras. The king who preferred to be determined, who desired to be superior!
He was aware of his arrogance. He was aware of the hatred he was carrying in his heart!

Some 5000 years ago....

For what he earned was due to his sacrifices, his hard work, his pains, his scars, his silent screams.

He was not born in a cradle of gold. He was not the son of a king!
He was a poor Asura.

A self-made king, who paved the way for the corporates and businesses of the future!

What happened to such a great warrior, maestro, technologist, philosopher, the king of 'Raksha' culture, a loving father, husband, brother, and a devoted son.

The saga of a living genius, who died a tragic death!



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