

RAMAYANA

Translated by Robert Biggs

PART VI

YUDDHA-KĀṆḌA

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With love, respect and saxophones
— *Sourcebits Family*

RĀMA THANKS HANUMĀN

Hearing what Hanumān said, Lord Rāma was very pleased and replied: “A very great deed has been accomplished by Hanumān, which could not have been done even in thought by anyone else on the surface of the earth. In fact, I do not see anyone other than Garuḍa, Vāyu and Hanumān who can cross the wide ocean. After courageously penetrating the city of Lāṅkā, which cannot be stormed by gods, demons, yakṣas, gandharvas, nāgas, or rākṣasas and which is fully protected by Rāvaṇa, who could come out alive? Who can enter that unassailable city well-defended by rākṣasas, unless he has the valor and strength of Hanumān? Hanumān has performed a great task for Sugrīva by employing his valorous strength in that way.

“They say that when entrusted with a difficult task the foremost of servants does even more than required of him. A servant is considered mediocre who, when entrusted with a task, only does that much, even though capable of doing more. The lowest servant is one who, when entrusted with a task, does not do it, even though capable. When directed by King Sugrīva to search for Sītā, Hanumān has performed extra work. This was not belittling to Hanumān and was very pleasing to Sugrīva. By Hanumān’s discovery of Sītā, I, the mighty Lakṣmaṇa and the entire Raghu Dynasty have been saved in accordance with righteousness. It pains My soul, wretched that I am, that I am unable to repay Hanumān appropriately for the pleasing news he has brought. This embrace, which is all that I have at this time, I offer to the great soul Hanumān”

Having said this, Rāma, whose bodily limbs were thrilled, embraced the self-accomplished Hanumān, who had returned from completing his mission. After thinking for a while, Rāma again spoke as Sugrīva, the lord of the monkeys, listened: “The search for Sītā was properly executed. But when I consider the obstacle of the ocean, My mind again becomes shattered. How indeed will these assembled monkeys cross over the vast ocean to its

southern shore? Since even Sītā has mentioned the difficulty of crossing the ocean, how will the monkeys accomplish this?”

After saying this to Hanumān, Rāma, who was bewildered by anxiety, became very pensive.

SUGRĪVA ENCOURAGES RĀMA

The glorious Sugrīva spoke the following heartening words to Rāma, who was overwhelmed with anxiety: “Why are You lamenting like an ordinary person? Do not be like this. Give up Your sorrow as an ungrateful person would ignore the goodwill of others. Besides, I do not see any reason for Your sorrow, O descendant of the Raghu Dynasty, for we have gathered information about the location of Sītā and the residence of the enemy. O Rāma, You are wise, conversant with all fields of knowledge, intelligent and learned. As would a self-realized soul, give up this lowly mentality which will obstruct Your mission. After jumping across the ocean infested with crocodiles, we shall scale the ramparts of Laṅkā and slaughter Your enemy. All the affairs of a person who is uninspired, miserable and bewildered by grief are ruined and he meets with misfortune. These monkey leaders are heroic and capable in every way. They are willing to enter fire in order to please You. I can understand this from their apparent joy and from my own strong reasoning. You should act in such a way that after killing Your enemy, I can recover Sītā. You should somehow or other construct a bridge across the ocean so that we can reach the city of Laṅkā. After we have reached the city of Laṅkā perched on the top of Trikūṭa Mountain, consider Rāvaṇa dead as soon as we see him. Without building a bridge over the formidable ocean which is the abode of Varuṇa, the city of Laṅkā cannot even be assailed by the armies of the gods and demons. As soon as a bridge is built to reach the vicinity of Laṅkā, my army will cross and be victorious, for these warriors are heroic in combat.

“As such, enough of this bewilderment, for grieving takes away the nobility of a man in this world! You should resort to bravery, which is what a real man would do. That will bring one success very quickly. At this time You should be courageous, so wise that You are and possessing great vigor. Grief for something lost or destroyed completely ruins all the purposes of great souls and heroes like Yourself. Besides, You are capable of defeating Your enemy with assistants like me, for You are the foremost of the wise and

expert in all fields of learning. I do not see anyone in all the three worlds who can stand before You on the battlefield when You are holding a bow. Entrusted in the hands of us monkeys, Your mission will not be foiled. Before long, You will cross the unchanging ocean and see Sītā.

“Therefore, enough of grieving and resort to anger, O monarch! Disheartened warriors are listless, while everyone fears an angry warrior. In our company, try to think of the way to cross the dreadful ocean, which is the lord of all rivers. Once my army has crossed the ocean to Laṅkā, consider victory ours. These heroic monkeys capable of changing their forms as they please will surely smash those enemies in combat with a shower of stones and tree trunks. If I can somehow or other cross the ocean, I shall consider Rāvaṇa already slain in battle, O destroyer of enemies. Anyway, what is the use of talking so much? You will be completely successful. Besides, I perceive various good omens and my mind is elated.”

HANUMĀN DESCRIBES LAṆKĀ TO RĀMA

After hearing Sugrīva's entreaty, which was reasonable and conducive to the highest good, Lord Rāma accepted it and said to Hanumān: "I am able to cross the ocean by dint of My austerities, by building a bridge or by drying up the ocean. Tell Me how many fortifications there are in Laṅkā. I want to know everything so that I can picture it in My mind. You have personally seen the extent of the army, how the entranceways have been fortified, how the city is being guarded, and also all the residences of the rākṣasas. Tell Me everything factually, for you are very expert in every way."

Hearing what Rāma said, Hanumān, who was the best of speakers, replied to Him as follows: "Listen! I shall describe everything about how the city of Laṅkā is fortified, how it is guarded by troops, how the rākṣasas are dedicated to Rāvaṇa, the supreme opulence of Laṅkā won by Rāvaṇa's might, the dreadfulness of the ocean, the divisions of the military forces, and the strength of their horses, chariots, elephants and other means of conveyance."

Having spoken in that way, Hanumān proceeded to describe everything in detail: "The city of Laṅkā is jubilant and is crowded with elephants in rut. The great metropolis is full of chariots and is thronged with hordes of rākṣasas. The city has four tall and broad gates that have doors fortified with strong iron bars. Enormous and powerful catapults that discharge spears and stones are located at the entranceways and can repel any belligerent army that arrives there. The rākṣasa warriors have stashed at the gates hundreds of iron clubs with razor-sharp edges and spikes, which they manufactured themselves. The city is surrounded by a high wall of gold which is difficult to scale and is studded with gems, coral, vaidurya stones and pearls. All the way around the city is a formidable moat full of icy water. It is extremely inauspicious, unfathomable, infested with crocodiles and teeming with fish.

“At the entranceways are four very big drawbridges crossing the moats. These are fortified with war machines and lined with many large buildings for the troops stationed there. On the arrival of enemy forces, the drawbridges are defended with the war machines and the enemy repulsed into the moat on all sides. The principal drawbridge at the northern gate is unshakable, sturdy, retractable, solidly constructed and beautified with many gold columns and platforms. O Rāma, the belligerent Rāvaṇa is in complete control of himself; he is very attentive and alert when reviewing his troops. Moreover, Laṅkā is impenetrable, difficult to assail even for demigods and terrifying. It has four barriers: the moat around it, the jungle outside, the mountain upon which it sits and its protective wall. Because it is at such a great distance on the other side of the ocean without any divisions, it is difficult to invade by boat. Built on a mountain peak, the city of Laṅkā is difficult to reach and is like a city of the gods. It is full of horses and elephants and is most difficult to conquer. The evil Rāvaṇa’s city of Laṅkā is outfitted with moats, hand weapons and different kinds of war machines.

“Ten thousand formidable rākṣasas carrying spears and battle-axes are stationed at the eastern gate. One million rākṣasas who are outstanding fighters are stationed at the southern gate with a fourfold army of foot soldiers, cavalry, elephants and chariots. Ten million rākṣasas bearing swords and shields and skilled in the use of all weapons stand guard at the western gate of the city. One hundred million rākṣasas born in noble families are mounted on chariots and horses at the northern gate. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of rākṣasas skilled in the black arts and difficult to overcome are stationed at the central garrison. They number two million five hundred thousand.

“I have already destroyed the drawbridges and filled in the moats with debris. I set the city of Laṅkā on fire, demolished its protective ramparts and annihilated part of its army of rākṣasas. Let us cross the ocean by whatever means. Then You can consider the city of Laṅkā already destroyed by us monkeys. Aṅgada, Dvivida, Mainda, Jāmbavān, Panasa, Nala, and the commander-in-chief Nīla are sufficient to accomplish this task. What is the need of the rest of the army? Crossing the ocean to Rāvaṇa’s great metropolis, they will destroy the city with its mansions, walls, archways

and moats, as well as its mountain peak and forests, and bring back Sītā. Order them to do this immediately, or else muster the entire army. Be ready to march at an opportune time.”

THE MONKEY ARMY MARCHES SOUTHWARD

When glorious Rāma heard what Hanumān said, He replied as follows: “I shall immediately destroy the city of Laṅkā belonging to the terrible rākṣasa which you have just spoken about. I promise you this. O Sugrīva, agree to leave at this time, for the sun is at high noon and is the proper time for achieving victory. That rākṣasa may have carried off Sītā to his own home, but he will not be able to live much longer. When Sītā hears about My march toward Laṅkā, She will regain Her hope of survival, just as a person near death from having drunk poison regains his health by drinking the elixir of immortality. Today the asterism Uttarā-phalgunī is in the ascendent, while tomorrow the moon will be in conjunction with the asterism Hasta. Therefore, O Sugrīva, let us depart, accompanied by all the troops. From the different omens which I perceive and which are also appearing on My body, I can understand that I shall slay Rāvaṇa and bring back Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka. The twitching of the upper lid of My right eye indicates that My victory has arrived.”

After being properly honored by Sugriva and Lakṣmaṇa, righteous Rāma, who was expert in politics, continued speaking as follows: Let Nīla, surrounded by one hundred thousand swift monkeys, lead an army to examine the route. O General Nīla, lead the army quickly along a path abounding in fruits, roots and honey, and with cool forests with drinking water. Wicked rākṣasas might pollute the roots, fruits and water along the path. Be ever-vigilant and protect these things from them. Jumping all about, the forest-dwelling monkeys should find the enemy forces hiding in the forests, ravines and other wild areas that are difficult to reach. Whatever soldiers are not up to this undertaking should be left here. Only those troops which are endowed with prowess should be employed for this formidable venture.

“Let hundreds and thousands of lion-like monkeys, who are extremely strong, lead ahead the onerous army resembling the swelling sea. Let the mountain-like Gaja, the mighty Gavaya and Gavākṣa go ahead, as does a proud bull among cows. Let Rṣabha, a leader of monkeys, sally forth, protecting the right flank of the monkey army. Let the impetuous Gandhamādana, who is as difficult to assail as an elephant bull in rut, go along the left flank of the monkey army. Climbing on to Hanumān’s shoulders as Indra mounts his elephant Airāvata, I shall go down the middle of the army, gladdening the masses of soldiers. Let Lakṣmaṇa, who is like death personified, go forth mounted on Aṅgada, as Kuvera, the treasurer of the gods and lord of yakṣas, rides his elephant Sārvabhauma. Let these three: Jāmbavān, the might king of bears, as well as Suśeṇa and Vegadarśī, guard the rear.”

Hearing Rāma’s command, Sugrīva, the leader of the monkey army, gave detailed instructions to the monkeys. Emerging from caves and mountain peaks, the mighty monkey hordes immediately jumped forward. After being honored by Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa, the righteous soul Rāma headed south with His army. As Rāma travelled, He was surrounded by hundreds, hundreds of thousands and millions of tawny-colored monkeys. That vast army of monkeys followed Him as He proceeded. Protected by Sugrīva, they all felt joyful and jubilant. As the monkeys headed in a southerly direction, some of the monkeys jumped ahead, others jumped to the sides and some of them howled, roared or bellowed. They were fragrant honey and fruits along the way and they carried in their raised hands huge trees with boughs of blossoming flowers. The proud monkeys would suddenly lift and throw each other. Some of them would jump up and come flying down on top of the other monkeys. In the presence of Śrī Rāma the monkeys shouted: “We must kill Rāvaṇa and all the night-stalkers!”

Going ahead with many monkeys, Rṣabha, Nīla and the valiant Kumuda cleared the path. In the midst of the army, Sugrīva, the vanquisher of enemies, accompanied by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, was surrounded by many fearsome soldiers. Surrounded by tens of millions of monkeys, Śatabali controlled and protected the whole army single-handed. Accompanied by hundreds of millions of monkeys, Kesarī and Panasa protected one flank of

the army, and Gaja and Arka, accompanied by many other monkeys, protected the other. Surrounded by many bears, Suṣeṇa and Jāmbavān placed Sugrīva before them and protected the rear. The commander-in-chief, Nīla, who was leading the forces forward, kept the army in check. The warriors Darīmukha, Prajañgha and Jambha went about urging the monkeys on.

Thus the tigers among monkeys, being proud of their strength, proceeded. They caught sight of Sahya, the best of mountains, surrounded by hundreds of other mountains, as well as lakes with beautiful lotus flowers and excellent ponds. Knowing the instructions of Rāma, whose anger was frightful, the great monkey army avoided the vicinities of towns and also the inhabited countryside as if afraid. As they advanced, they made a tumultuous sound like the thundering of the ocean. Urged forward like prized steeds, the stalwart heroes speedily jumped forward to the side of Lord Rāma. Being carried on the shoulders of Sugrīva and Aṅgada, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa looked very beautiful, like the Sun and Moon conjoined with Venus and Jupiter. Being honored by Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa and accompanied by the army, the righteous Rāma headed in a southerly direction. Riding on the back of Aṅgada, Lakṣmaṇa, who was successful, knowledgeable and perspicuous, spoke the following sweet words to Rāma:

“Right after killing Rāvaṇa and recovering the abducted princess Sītā, You will return accomplished of purpose to Ayodhyā, which will also have its purpose accomplished thereby. I see in the sky and on the land good omens indicating Your success, O Rāma! A pleasant, gentle breeze is blowing in the direction to which the army is proceeding. These birds and beasts are making their respective sounds without interruption. All the directions are serene and the sun is shining clearly. The planet Venus is shining behind You. The constellation Orsis, as well as the seven great sages who preside over it, are all circumambulating around the brilliantly shining pole star. A star presided over by Our ancestor Trīśaṅku and another presided over by his spiritual master Vaśīṣṭha are shining before Us. The two stars called Viśākhā, which are very dear to our forefathers of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty, are shining clearly without any hindrance from malevolent planets. The constellation Mūla, which presides over rākṣasas is afflicted by the touching of the tail of a smoky comet. And all this has taken place for the destruction of the

rākṣasas. The asterism ruling over those close to death is afflicted by a star ruling over death. The bodies of water are clear and the forests are abounding in fruits. Fragrant breezes are blowing gently and the trees are bearing flowers according to the season. O Lord, the phalanxes of the monkey army are shining very brightly, like the army of the gods when they did battle against the demon Tāraka. Observing this carefully, You should be pleased.”

Thus spoke Lakṣmaṇa, who was happy from having encouraged His brother Rāma.

Covering the whole earth, the vast army advanced. The dreadful dust raised by the claws of the monkeys’ hands and feet covered the earth, blocking out the light of the sun. Like a continuous line of clouds covering the sky, the monkeys headed for the southern region with its mountains, forests and sky. While the army crossed rivers, the waters would flow in reverse for many yojanas. The army crossed placid lakes, heavily forested mountains, level plains and forests bearing fruits under their boughs. The huge army covered the whole earth as it advanced. Because their prowess had waxed for the purpose of Rāma’s mission, all the monkeys were pleased in mind and moved as swiftly as the wind. Showing joy, valor and exceptional strength to one another, they did things indicating their pride born of youthful enthusiasm along the way.

Some of them ran along, while others jumped. Some of them howled enthusiastically, while others made a snapping sound by whipping their tails or a pounding sound by stamping their feet on the ground. Climbing up mountain peaks, they stretched out their arms and broke off trees and boulders. Some of them let out loud bellows, while others roared like lions. Others snapped numerous vines with the thrust of their hind legs. While yawning and stretching their limbs, some monkeys toyed with boulders and tree trunks. At the time, the earth was covered with thousands, hundreds of thousands, indeed with millions of dreadful monkeys. The monkey army traversed the earth both day and night. The monkeys felt joyful and elated, well-protected as they were by King Sugrīva. They all proceeded quickly because they were eager for battle. Desiring the recovery of Princess Sītā, they did not tarry anywhere for more than a moment.

Then they reached Sahya Mountain, which is thickly forested with many kinds of trees, and scaled it. Seeing wonderful forests, rivers and waterfalls on the Sahya and Malaya Mountains, Rāma continued His march. The monkeys broke down campaka, tilaka, mango, aśoka, sinduvāra, tiniśa and karavīra trees. They also broke down añkola, karañja, plakṣa, nyagrodha, jambū, amlakī and kadamba trees. Shaken by the wind stirred up by the monkeys advance, the various charming forests perched on rocky crests covered the monkeys with flowers. A breeze pleasing to the touch and cooling due to contact with sandalwood trees was blowing through the forests, carrying the scent of apiary honey. Being adorned with minerals, Sahya, the king of mountains, shone very brightly. The dust from those minerals which was raised by the force of the wind completely covered the great monkey army. In full bloom on the shelf-land of mountains, the ketakī and sinduvāra trees, and the vāsantī vines were fascinating. The mādhavī vines were bursting with fragrance and jasmine shrubs were in flower. The ciribīlva, madhūka, vañjula, bakula, rañjaka, tilaka and nāga trees were also blossoming. Mango, pāṭaka, kovidāra, muculinda, arjuna, śiṃśapā, kuṭaja, hintāla, tiniśa, cūrṇa, nīpa, blue aśoka, sarala, añkola, and padmaka trees were also in bloom. All these trees were shaken by the advance of the monkeys, who were pleased by their flowers. There were charming ponds and lakes on that mountain, which were frequented by ruddy geese, ducks and cranes, and crowded with other water fowl, and were regularly visited by boars and deer. On all sides of the reservoirs could be seen bears, hyenas, lions, terrifying tigers, and many dreadful and vicious elephants. The lakes on that mountain looked very beautiful with fully blossoming blue lotuses, water lilies, and other kinds of water flowers. Many kinds of birds were singing sweetly on the peaks of the mountain.

After bathing and drinking the waters, the monkeys amused themselves in the water by splashing each other. Having climbed the mountain, the monkeys forcefully gathered up the nectar-sweet fruits, flowers and roots of the trees there. Intoxicated with pride, the tawny monkeys drank honey from hanging combs that weighed sixty-four pounds and then happily went on their way. The stalwart monkeys smashed down trees, dragged their vines, knocked off mountain peaks and then marched on. Other proud monkeys collected honey from the trees and roared. Other monkeys took shelter of the trees and others jumped about. Completely

covered by those monkeys, the earth looked as if it were covered with fields of ripe grain.

When the mighty-armed Rāma, whose eyes were like the petals of a reddish lotus flower, reached the tree-covered Mount Mahendra, He ascended it. From the top He could see the ocean swarming with fish and tortoises. After crossing Sahya Mountain and the great Malaya mountain range, they eventually reached the ocean, which was making an alarming noise. Coming down from the mountain, the charming Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, and Sugrīva, quickly reached an excellent forest along the seashore. When they reached the broad seashore, whose rocks' bases were washed with sudden splashes of water, Rāma said:

“O Sugrīva, we have now reached the ocean! Here I am now faced with the same problem as confronted Me before. Beyond this place lies the vast and shoreless ocean, which is the ultimate destination of all rivers, and it cannot be crossed without some device. Therefore, let us camp here so that we can come to a decision on how the monkey army can cross to the other side of the ocean.”

In this way, the mighty Rāma, who was wasted by the abduction of Sītā, ordered the encampment of the troops when they had reached the seashore. He continued: “O Sugrīva, let the army camp on the shore itself. The time has now arrived for us to discuss how to cross the ocean. Do not let anyone abandon their squadron to go somewhere else. It should be known that there could be some covert danger for us, so let the valiant monkeys go on guard around the army.”

After hearing Rāma's command, Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa had the army set up camp on the tree-covered beach. Camped nearby the ocean, the army shone brightly like a second ocean whose waters were the color of pale honey. Desirous of crossing over the great ocean, the monkeys went down to the forest along the beach and set up camp there. The din raised by the monkeys setting up camp could be heard drowning out the roaring of the ocean. Being protected by Sugrīva and devoted to the cause of Lord Rāma, the huge army set up camp in three divisions: vānaras (short-tailed monkeys), lāṅgulīs (long-tailed monkeys) and bears. Having reached the ocean and seeing it buffeted by the wind, the monkey army was delighted.

The troop leaders sat looking at the ocean. Its opposite shore was far away, and was unbounded and frequented by hordes of rākṣasas. It was infested with fearsome crocodiles and alligators. It became dreadful to look upon when the night fell at the end of the day. It seemed to be laughing because of its foam, and dancing because of its billowing waves. When the moon rose, it became covered with multiple reflections of the moon. The ocean seemed to be grinding sandalwood paste due to the foam being churned up by its waves. The moon seemed to be taking that sandalwood paste and smearing himself with it. It was infested with huge alligators as swift as the wind, as well as gigantic whales and other even larger aquatics. It was swarming with sea serpents that had jewels shining on their heads so that the ocean resembled the residence of Varuṇa. It was crowded with gigantic creatures and many different submarine mountains. It had excellent fortresses, such as Laṅkā, that were difficult to access, and it was unfathomable and a refuge for the asuras. Sharks and marine snakes entered into the volumes of water which swelled up as waves and then sank due to the driving force of the wind.

The shining ocean seemed to be sprinkled with sparks of fire. It appeared very dreadful due to being inhabited by huge snakes, and because of being an abode for the asuras, reaching down to the depths of Pātālaloka, the netherworld. In fact, the ocean looked like the sky, and the sky looked exactly like the ocean. Thus no distinction could be seen between the ocean and the sky. They both looked similar in that the sky was glimmering with stars and the ocean with jewels. As the sky was crowded with clouds, the ocean was crowded with rows of waves. Smashing into each other, the waves of the majestic ocean raised a sound like the pounding of big kettle drums. The excited monkeys saw the ocean, whose waters were noisy due to the sound of colliding jewels tossed by the wind. The ocean was infested with angry sea monsters who jumped up out of the water. The monkeys saw the ocean pummeled by the wind and tossed into the air, so that by its waves the ocean seemed to be jumping up. They were amazed to see how the ocean was roaring because of its thrashing waves and how it was tumultuous.

RĀMA REMEMBERS SĪTĀ AND LAMENTS

Nīla made the army camp comfortably on the northern shore, and it guarding itself appropriately with complete vigilance. The two monkeys Mainda and Dvidida both patrolled all around the army to protect it. After the army had set up camp on the seashore, Rāma glanced at Lakṣmaṇa at His side and said to Him:

“They say that as time passes, so does sorrow. But because of My not seeing My darling, My sorrow increases day after day. My sorrow is not because My darling is far away, or that She has been abducted. The reason I am in anguish is that Her life is slowly transpiring. O wind, go to where My beloved is. After touching Her, touch Me. The touching of My limbs by you will be like the contact of sight with the moon. The words “O My lord!” which My darling called out to Me as She was being kidnapped are resting in My heart and burning all the limbs of My body like a caustic poison. My body is being burnt day and night by the fire of love fed with the fuel of separation from Her and blazing brightly due to thoughts of Her. Diving into the ocean, I shall lie there sleeping without You, O son of Sumitrā! There is no way that flaming love could burn Me while I lie sleeping in the water. That the lovely Sītā and I are both on the earth together is enough for Me. Desirous as I am of finding Her, I am able to survive. As a field of grain without water is able to survive due to contact with a field of grain with water, I survive because I hear that She is still alive.”

“When shall I, after slaying My enemies, be able to see the lovely Sītā, whose eyes are like the petals of a lotus flower and who is like the goddess of fortune Herself? When shall I, slightly lifting up Her lotus-like face, kiss Her charming red lips as a diseased person drinks medicinal elixir? When will Her two close, raised and trembling breasts, which resemble the fruits of the palmyra tree, press against Me as I embrace Her? Surely that virtuous, dark-eyed lady in the midst of rākṣasas, although having Me as Her protector, cannot find any protection, as if She were an abandoned woman.

How does the daughter of King Janaka, My beloved, the daughter-in-law of King Daśaratha, lie down in the midst of rākṣasas? When will Sītā rise up and destroy the rākṣasas who are so difficult to assault, even as the crescent moon in autumn drives away the dark-blue rain clouds? Surely Sītā, who is by nature slim, must be even thinner due to sorrow and not eating as a result of Her situation. When shall I take back Sītā and drive away Her mental anguish by shooting arrows into Rāvaṇa’s chest? When will the virtuous Sītā, who is like the daughter of a god, being full of longing for Me, shed tears of joy while clinging to My neck? When shall I finally cast away this horrible sorrow caused by separation from Sītā, as one would discard a dirty garment?”

As the wise Rāma was lamenting in this way, the sun, whose rays had been diminished by the ending of the day, set below the horizon. After being comforted by Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma, who was disturbed by sorrow, performed His evening religious duties while thinking of the lotus-eyed Sītā.

RĀVAṆA CONSULTS WITH HIS RĀKṢASAS

Seeing the ghastly and terrifying deed accomplished by the glorious Hanumān in Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa addressed all the rākṣasas, looking downwards slightly due to shame:

“The city of Laṅkā, which was difficult to assail, was penetrated and assaulted by Hanumān, a mere monkey, who also discovered Sītā. The building serving as a place of worship has been desecrated, outstanding rākṣasas have been slain, and the entire city of Laṅkā has been destroyed by Hanumān. What should I do? Bless you all. What is the best thing for me to do next? Please tell us what we are capable of or what, once we begin it, can be fully accomplished. The noble and wise say that victory is dependent on good counsel. Therefore, I seek counsel against Rāma, O you mighty ones! There are three kinds of people in this world: the best, the lowest and the intermediate. I here in describe their good and bad qualities.

“The first class person is he whose counsel has the following characteristics: he performs his actions after consulting with friends who are capable of decisions, with relatives who have the same interest or with superiors, and having undertaken a task, he then depends on destiny. The intermediate person is one who ponders his own interests, singly fixes his mind on his duty and single-handedly executes his activities. The lowest of men is he who fails to take into consideration the faults and positive points of an action, giving up his dependence on providence. While saying “I shall do it” he neglects his duty.

“As people are always either first class, second class or third class, so also is advice offered by these three classes. Counsel is first class in which the counselors are unanimous because of confirmation by scriptural evidence. Counsel is second class in which the counselors reach unanimity only after examining many different points of view. Counsel is third class in

which there is a great deal of discussion of conflicting views and in which even after coming to a conclusion there is no good result.

“As such, O most intelligent of men, determine a course of action which is both well-thought out and correct. I think this is what I should do. Surrounded by thousands of valiant monkeys, Rāma is advancing towards the city of Laṅkā to besiege us. It is very clear that by His power Rāma will easily cross the ocean with His younger brother and accompanying army. By His prowess He will dry up the ocean or do something else. Since the monkey army is already on its way to besiege our city, give me advice beneficial to this city and its army.”

THE RĀKṢASAS REASSURE RĀVAṆA

After Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, had requested them in this way, the mighty rākṣasas joined their palms and addressed him, even though they were not familiar with the enemy's strength, had no political experience and were less intelligent. They said: "O king, we have a really huge army armed with iron bars, javelins, swords, pikes and lances. Why are you becoming despondent? When you entered Bhogavatī, the capital of Pātāla, you vanquished all the nāgas. Waging a great battle, you subdued Kuvera, the treasurer of the gods, who resides on Mount Kailāsa surrounded by many yakṣas. Because of your anger, you utterly defeated in combat the very mighty Kuvera, a guardian of the world, though he was depending on the friendship of Lord Śiva. After throwing the yakṣa hordes into disarray, slaying many of them and taking others as prisoners, you confiscated this aerial vehicle named Puṣpaka from the peak of Mount Kailāsa. Out of fear of you, Maya, the lord of the dānavas, sought your friendship, giving you his daughter named Mandodarī as your wife, O best of rākṣasas. Another lord of the dānavas named Madhu, who was proud of his valor and difficult to assault, and who was the beloved husband of your sister Kumbhīnāsī, was subjugated by you.

"O mighty-armed one, after descending to Rasātala, you defeated and brought under control the serpents Vāsuki, Takṣaka, Śaṅkha and Jai. After one year of pitched battle, You defeated the dānavas, who were undefeatable, strong, fierce and who possessed boons against defeat. By dint of your strength you subdued them, O crusher of enemies, and thereby acquired many magical skills. After defeating all the guardians of the world in battle, you went to the realm of the gods and defeated Indra.

"O big-armed one, you defeated the valorous and powerful sons of Varuṇa in battle along with their army of four divisions: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephants. You plunged into the ocean constituting Yama's realm. In that ocean, the lord of death's rod of punishment was like a giant

alligator, it was graced with a huge śālmālī tree whose thorns were as hard as steel, the noose of time was like a billowing wave, and it was fraught with the serpent followers of Yama. By diving into the ocean of Yama's army, you scored a great victory and repulsed Yama, the lord of death. By your intense fighting all of them were driven away.

“Previously the earth was full of many heroic kṣatrīyas who were as big as trees and equal in valor to Lord Indra. Rāma is not equal to them on the battlefield in respect to valor, qualities and spirit. O king, even though they were difficult to defeat, you obliterated them at once. Otherwise, remain at ease, O great king! Why bother yourself? This mighty Indrajit will annihilate the monkeys single-handed. After performing a particular sacrifice to please Lord Śiva, Indrajit received a boon that is very rare in this world. He assailed the army of the gods, which was like an ocean. Its javelins and spears were like its fish. The entrails of the disemboweled were like the seaweed. The elephants were like the sea-turtles. Its horses were like swarms of frogs. The eleven Rudras and the twelve ādityas were like alligators. The forty-nine Maruts and the eight Vasus were like snakes. Its chariots, horses and elephants were its volume of water. And the foot soldiers were its great sandy beach. Indrajit captured Indra and incarcerated him in Laṅkā. O king, Indra, who is respected by all the gods, was freed by the order of Lord Brahmā and returned to his abode in the heavenly planets. Therefore, O great king, dispatch your son to destroy Rāma and the monkey army before they cross the ocean. Since this calamity is caused by ordinary beings such as humans and monkeys, it does not concern you, O king. You should not let it disturb your mind. You will doubtlessly kill Rāma.”

THE RĀKṢASAS VOW TO KILL RĀMA

Thereafter, the valiant rākṣasa named Prahasta, who resembled a dark-blue cloud and was the commander-in-chief, spoke with joined palms as follows: “The gods, dānavas, gandharvas, piśācas, birds and serpents cannot overcome you in battle, what to speak of humans. We were all tricked by Hanumān because we were unsuspecting and not alert. As long as I am living, that monkey will not get away alive. I can rid the whole earth bound by oceans and adorned with mountains and forests of monkeys. Just give me the command! O night-stalker, I shall certainly protect you from the monkeys. No sorrow occasioned by your crime will approach you.”

Then another rākṣasa named Durmukha, who was highly enraged, spoke up: “Certainly this outrage against us does not merit brushing off. Besides, this attack by a monkey is an affront to the city, the royal palace and to the glorious lord of the rākṣasas. Leaving this very moment, I shall repulse the monkeys, even if they have resorted to the dreadful depths of the ocean, heaven itself, or Rasātala.”

Then the mighty Vajradamstra, who was extremely furious, spoke as he clenched his gruesome club, which was stained with flesh and blood: “Why should we bother ourselves with the miserable and beggarly Hanumān while Rāma, who is difficult to assault, is there accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva? Today I shall return after having slain Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva with my club and having thrown the monkey army into disarray. Listen further to what I have to say, if you wish, O king, for he who is resourceful is able to conquer his enemies if he is attentive. O lord of the rākṣasas, assuming human forms, thousands of horrible-looking rākṣasa warriors should approach Rāma with complete determination and say to Him: ‘We have been sent by Your younger brother Bharata.’ Ordering His army to pick up camp, He will shortly sally forth. Carrying pikes, javelins, clubs, bows and arrows, and swords, we should reach there quickly. Positioning our battalions in the sky, we will attack the monkey army with a

tremendous volley of stones and weapons, dispatching them to the abode of Yama, the lord of death. If Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa fall for this, we will deprive Them of their lives by deceit.”

Extremely infuriated, Nikumbha, the valiant and mighty son of Kumbhakarṇa, spoke to Rāvaṇa, who caused people to wail: “All of you can stay here with His Royal Highness. I shall single-handedly kill Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān and all the other monkeys!”

Then a rākṣasa named Vajrahanu, who was just like a mountain, spoke as follows as he licked his lips with his tongue because of anger: “You can all perform your duties without any further anxiety. I shall myself devour the entire monkey army. Enjoy yourselves confidently! Drink wine without any unease! Single-handed I shall slay Sugrīva, along with Lakṣmaṇa, Aṅgada, Hanumān and all the other monkeys.”

VIBHĪṢAṆA ADDRESSES THE RĀKṢASAS

At that time Nikumbha, Rambhasa, the mighty Sūryaśatru, Suptaghna, Yājñakopa, Mahāpārśva, Mahodara, the unconquerable Agniketu, Raśmiketū, Rāvaṇa's mighty son Indrajit, Prahasta, Virūpākṣa, Vajradanṣṭra, Dhūmrākṣa, Atikāya and Durmukha were clutching iron clubs, sharp spears, pikes, serrated spears, javelins, axes, broad and sharp swords and bows and arrows. They were all so angry that they were glowing like fire. Jumping up suddenly, they said to Rāvaṇa: "Today we shall kill Rāma, Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa, as well as that miserable Hanumān who laid waste to Laṅkā!"

Restraining them all as they clutched their weapons, Vibhīṣaṇa requested them to take their seats and then spoke as follows with joined palms: "My dear brother, the wise have stated the occasions on which, when the three expedients for achieving a goal have failed, one can resort to a display of prowess. Valorous deeds which have been first tested and then performed according to scriptural injunction are successful against those who are inattentive, those who are crossed by fate and those who have already been attacked. Why do you want to attack Rāma, when He is fully alert, possesses the power of those intent on conquest, is not unnecessarily inclined to anger and very difficult to defeat? Who can imagine the difficult deed performed by Hanumān after jumping across the formidable ocean which is the destination of all rivers? O night-stalkers, Rāma's valorous troops are inestimable. One should never summarily underestimate one's enemies. Besides, what offense has Rāma committed when it is you who abducted His glorious wife from Janasthāna? If you bring up the case of Khara, he was slain in battle by Rāma because of his excesses. Living beings must protect their own lives according to their means. The abduction of another's wife is destructive to that sinner's glory, reduces his life span, negates the attainment of material amenities and it produces dire consequences in the next life. If Sītā was abducted for the previously mentioned reason, then She should be given back, for She will prove to be a great peril for us. What is the use of doing something which has strife as its

goal? It does not at all behoove us to strike up purposeless enmity with the valorous and righteous Rāma. Sītā should be given back to Him. Give Sītā back to Him before He shatters with His arrows the city of Laṅkā, along with its elephants, horses and treasures of jewels. Give Sītā back to Him before the vast, formidable and difficult to counteract army of monkeys lays siege to Laṅkā. If you do not return Rāma's own wife to Him, the city of Laṅkā along with all of the heroic rākṣasas will be destroyed. I entreat you because you are my relative. Heed my words. I am giving you salutary advice. Give Sītā back to Rāma. Give Sītā back to the son of King Daśaratha before he fires for your slaughter His new-tipped sharp and unfailing arrows which shine like the rays of the autumn sun. Please give up anger, which destroys happiness and virtue. Pursue virtue which increases joy and fame. Be satisfied so that we may live with our sons and relatives. Give Sītā back to Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha.”

Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas rejected everything that Vibhīṣaṇa said and entered his own palace.

VIBHĪṢAṆA PLEADS WITH RĀVAṆA

When morning had arrived, Vibhīṣaṇa, whose actions were formidable and who had ascertained the truth about pious merit and material gain, entered the palace of the lord of rākṣasas. It resembled a group of mountain crags and was as lofty as the peak of a mountain. It was divided into many large chambers and was inhabited by great personalities. It was superintended by wise and devoted chamberlains and was fully protected on all sides by rākṣasas. The air in the palace was stirring due to the heavy breathing of elephants in rut. It resounded with the tumultuous blowing of conchshells and the beating of drums. It was crowded with young women and its main roads were noisy with the chatter of passersby. Its turrets were plated with sheets of smelted gold and the whole city was adorned with the best of jewels. It looked like the abode of the gandharvas or of the maruts. It had such an abundance of jewels that it resembled a residence of nāgas.

The glorious Vibhīṣaṇa heard those who were learned in the Vedas reciting prayers for an auspicious day for the king and for his victory. The mighty Vibhīṣaṇa saw brāhmaṇas learned in mantras performing worship with pots of yogurt, clarified butter and unbroken grains of rice. As rākṣasas offered respect to Vibhīṣaṇa, he likewise offered respect to his older brother Rāvaṇa, who was sitting on a self-effulgent throne. Having gone through the required formalities, Vibhīṣaṇa, who was learned in social etiquette, went to a gilded seat indicated by the glance of the king. In confidence, Vibhīṣaṇa spoke the following beneficial and logical words to the great Rāvaṇa in the presence of his ministers. Being an expert speaker, he tried to pacify his elder brother by pleasing him with words spoken according to time, place and circumstance:

“Even since Sītā was brought here, we have been seeing bad omens. The sacrificial fire emits sparks, its flames produce smoke, and the initial lighting of the fire is smoky. The fire does not even flare up when oblations

of clarified butter are poured into it with the recitation of mantras. Reptiles have been seen in kitchens and fire sanctuaries and in the places where brāhmaṇas study. And ants have been found in the things to be offered as oblations in fire sacrifices. The cows' milk has dried up and ichor no longer flows from the temples of bull elephants. Even though pleased with fresh green grass to eat, the horses neigh dolefully. O king, asses, camels and mules are shedding tears, their hair standing on end. They do not return to their normal condition even after being treated with proper medicines. Flocks of gross crows are cawing in all directions. They have been seen alighting in masse on the tops of spires and domes. Flocks of vultures are hovering over the city. Drawing near the city, she-jackals howl ominously at sunrise and sunset. At the gates of the city can be heard the loud howls of packs of carnivorous beasts, as well as peals of thunder.

“Therefore, since this evil action is about to come to fruition, it is advisable that you atone for your misdeed by returning Sītā to Rāma. That is what I would like. Even if this request was made out of illusion or greed, you should not find fault with me, O monarch! Everyone, all the rākṣasas and rākṣasīs in the city and the palace, recognizes the error of your having kidnapped Sītā. Although all of your advisors have refrained from mentioning this to you, certainly I must say what I have seen and heard. After considering what I have said, you should do what is necessary.”

In this way, in the midst of Rāvaṇa's ministers, Vibhīṣaṇa offered him this good advice. Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa's entreaty, which was beneficial, meaningful, gentle and logical, and capable of benefiting one in the past, present and future, Rāvaṇa, who was burning with fever due to passion, replied in the following way:

“I see no cause of fear. Rāma will under no circumstance get back Sītā. How could Rāma stand before me in battle, even with the help of Indra and the gods?”

When Rāvaṇa, the destroyer of heavenly armies, finished saying this, he dismissed his younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa, who had just spoken the truth.

RĀVAṆA CONSULTS WITH HIS MINISTERS

Rāvaṇa, who was infatuated with Sītā, had grown thin due to the disrespect shown him by his friends and relatives who considered him a sinner because of the heinous deed he had committed. The time for negotiations having elapsed, Rāvaṇa, who was completely overwhelmed with lust and absorbed in thoughts of Sītā, thought that it was time to consult with his advisors and well-wishers. Approaching a large chariot encrusted with gems and coral and covered with a latticework of gold that was hitched with well-trained horses, he climbed on it. Sitting on that fine chariot, which thundered like a big cloud, Rāvaṇa, the best of the rākṣasas, drove to the assembly hall. Rākṣasa warriors carrying swords and shields and all kinds of other weapons marched ahead of the lord of the rākṣasas. At that time, rākṣasas wearing all kinds of strange apparel and ornaments accompanied Rāvaṇa on the sides and behind. Skilled chariot warriors riding chariots, fine elephants in rut and lively steeds speedily followed Rāvaṇa. Some of them held maces, iron bars, spears, iron clubs, axes or spikes. Then came the loud thundering of thousands of drums. As Rāvaṇa approached the assembly hall, there was a tumultuous sound of conchshells being blown. When his chariot reached the royal highway, the felloes of the chariot wheels suddenly made a very loud rumbling noise.

A spotless white parasol held over Rāvaṇa's head shone like the full moon. On his left and right sides were yak tail whisks with golden hair and clear crystal handles. Standing on the ground with joined palms, all the rākṣasas bowed their heads and saluted Rāvaṇa seated on his chariot. Being praised by the rākṣasas with shouts of victory and blessings, the illustrious Rāvaṇa, who could conquer any enemy, reached the beautifully constructed assembly hall. The assembly hall expertly built by Viśvakarmā was plated

with gold and silver. Its interior was inlaid with sparkling crystal and was spread with carpets with gold brocade. Six hundred witches always guarded the assembly hall. Rāvaṇa entered the assembly hall with his body shining very brightly. Rāvaṇa sat upon his excellent throne which was made of vaidurya gem, upholstered with deer pelts and equipped with comfortable cushions. Then he quickly ordered fleet-footed messengers: “Immediately bring the rākṣasas here! I know we have to carry out a challenging task.”

Hearing this command, the rākṣasas fanned out through the city of Lāṅkā, entering every residence, pleasure house, bedroom and garden to fearlessly summon the rākṣasas. Some rode on shining chariots, others on proud horses, others on elephants, while others proceeded on foot. Crowded with lines of chariots, elephants and horses running in lines, the city looked like the sky adorned with lines of birds in flight.

Leaving their mounts and conveyances of all sorts, they entered the assembly hall on foot, as lions might enter a mountain cave. Touching the king’s feet, and being greeted in response by the king, they sat down on seats, mats or on the carpets spread over the floor. Gathered in the assembly hall by the king’s order, they took their seats according to status around that lord of the rākṣasas. Gathered there in that shimmering golden hall in order to come to a happy conclusion were outstanding ministers who were wise in making decisions, qualified advisors who were knowledgeable about everything and saw things with wisdom, as well as many hundreds of warriors.

Then, riding a brilliant chariot with its various parts covered with gold and drawn by fine steeds, the great soul Vibhīṣaṇa arrived in the assembly presided over by Rāvaṇa. Because he was younger than Rāvaṇa, he announced himself by name and bowed to his elder brother’s feet. Śuka and Prahasta also did exactly the same. Rāvaṇa thereupon offered them appropriate seats according to their rank. The rākṣasas in that assembly were adorned with many different kinds of gold ornaments and gems, and wore fine garments. The sweet fragrance of sandalwood and aloewood smeared upon their bodies and of the flower garlands which they wore spread in all directions. Those who were present in the assembly did not make noise, nor

did they speak a lie or talk out of order. They were all very successful and possessed terrible prowess. They started at the face of their leader. In that assembly of mighty wielders of weapons, Rāvaṇa shone like Indra with thunderbolt in hand standing in the midst of the Vasus.

RĀVAṆA ORDERS THE DEFENSE OF LANKĀ

After inspecting the entire assembly, Rāvaṇa, who was always victorious in battle, commanded Prahasta, the commander-in-chief of the army: “O General! You should issue special orders that trained warriors comprising four divisions should protect the city.” The obedient Prahasta, desiring to carry out the king’s command, stationed the entire army outside and inside the city. After engaging the whole army in the defense of the city, Prahasta again came and sat before the king, saying: “Your army which is as powerful as You has been stationed both inside and outside the city. So, without any further mental distraction, do what you intend to.” Hearing what Prahasta, a well-wisher of the kingdom, said, Rāvaṇa, desirous of his own happiness, spoke up in the midst of his supporters:

“You should know how to act in situations that are pleasant or unpleasant, enjoyable or miserable, productive or unproductive, beneficial or unbeneficial when duty, personal enjoyment and material gain are at stake. All of my undertakings which you have always taken up, were done so under consultation, and thus they were never futile. As Indra is accompanied by the moon, planets, asterisms and maruts, so let me achieve extensive wealth in your company! I was actually about to inform you all about what I had done, but because of Kumbhakarṇa’s slumber, I did not bring it up. The mighty Kumbhakarṇa, the greatest of those wielding weapons, who was fast asleep for six months, has now woken up. Moreover Sītā, the cherished consort of Rāma, has been brought here from the Daṇḍakā Forest, a region frequented by rākṣasas. That woman of leisure movement does not wish to get into my bed, and there is no other woman in all the three worlds who attracts me as Sītā does. She has a slender waist, broad hips and a face like the autumn moon. The gentle lady resembles a statue made of gold or an illusion conjured up by the magician Maya Danava. When I see the reddish soles of Her soft and perfectly-shaped feet with their coppery toenails, lust

flares up inside me. Seeing Her who resembles the flames sprung up from a fire fed oblations of clarified butter, who is as effulgent as the sun, who has a raised nose, a beautiful and unblemished face and charming eyes, I am no longer independent but am fallen under the sway of passion. I have been bewildered by lust, which is equal in both anger and joy, makes one pale and is always present in sorrow and grief.

“Expecting the arrival of Her husband Rāma, that lovely woman with broad eyes requested from me a time period of one year to make up her mind to submit to me. I granted Her that agreeable request. I am always exhausted by lust, like a horse that has travelled a great distance. Besides, how could a bunch of monkeys or even the two sons of King Daśaratha, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, cross the unassailable ocean which is teeming with huge aquatic creatures? On the other hand, a single monkey perpetrated a great outrage against us. It is very difficult to ascertain the means to achieve one’s goal. Therefore let everyone speak according to their opinion. There is no reason to fear a human being, yet let us ponder the situation carefully. Some time ago I was victorious in a battle between the gods and demons when you were at my side, and you are similarly standing with me at this time. After discovering the whereabouts of Sītā by Hanumān’s having crossed the sea, the two princes, placing Sugrīva before Them, have reached the shore on the other side of the ocean. You should deliberate among yourselves and consider a suitable course of action so that Sītā does not have to be returned and the two sons of King Daśaratha can be slain. I do not see anyone else in the world who is capable of crossing the ocean with monkeys, except Rāma. Yet victory will surely be mine.”

Hearing the lust-smitten Rāvaṇa’s ranting, Kumbhakarna became angry and spoke the following words: “As the Yamunā River first falls to earth at the mountain peak of Yamunotrī, so also should you have sought good advice as soon as you had brought Sītā here from the Rāma’s hermitage. O great king, all of this which you have done is unworthy of you. You should have consulted with us from the very beginning of this deed. A king who discharges his royal duties with deliberation, having come to a conclusion after proper consultation, never has to regret. Activities carried out without the proper means and which are contradictory are fruitless, like oblations offered into an impure fire. One who wants to perform activities

later that should be performed earlier, or who wants to perform activities earlier that should be performed later does not know what is proper and what is improper. While some notice the superior strength of an enemy who acts hastily, others look for their weakness, as swans search for an opening in the Krauñca Mountains in order to pass through. You have begun this great undertaking without proper deliberation. Fortunately Rāma did not kill you, as poisoned food kills the one who ingests it. Therefore, O sinless one, by killing your enemies, I shall neutralize the unworthy action which you began without me. I shall obliterate your enemies, O monarch, whether they be Indra and Sūrya, Agni and Vāyu, or Kuvera and Varuṇa. Even Indra would be frightened by me with a body as big as a mountain, holding a huge iron club, showing my sharp teeth and roaring. Before Rāma can even strike me with a second arrow, I shall drink His blood. As such, be confident. By killing Rāma, I shall try to bring you a victory worthy of joy. After kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, I shall devour all the leaders of the monkey hordes. Enjoy love-making! Drink superb wines! Perform activities for your own benefit without any anxiety! After I have killed Rāma and He has gone to the abode of death, Sītā will soon submit to you.”

RĀVAṆA REFRAINS FROM VIOLATING SĪTĀ

Thinking about Rāvaṇa's anger for a while, the mighty Mahāpārśva joined his palms together and spoke as follows: "He is certainly a fool who, after penetrating a forest infested with ferocious beasts and snakes and finding honey there, does not drink it. Who could subjugate you, a lord, O crusher of enemies? Stepping on the heads of your enemies, enjoy with Sītā! Use force like a rooster, O mighty one! Overpowering Her repeatedly, ravish Her! Enjoy Her! After achieving your desired goal, what danger can befall you? You will overcome all difficulties, whether present or yet to come.

Accompanied by us, Kumbhakarna and the exceedingly mighty Indrajit are capable of repelling even Indra armed with his thunderbolt. Rejecting gifts, conciliation and the sowing of dissention, which are means used by the clever, I prefer to use force to achieve our goals. By the strength of our weapons we shall reduce to submission all your enemies that come here, O mighty one! Of this there is no doubt."

Rāvaṇa replied: "Listen, O Mahāpārśva, to a certain secret of mine regarding an incident which occurred a long time ago, and what result I reaped from it. Once I happened to see the celestial damsel Puñjikasthālā shining like a flame in the sky as she was on her way to the abode of Lord Brahmā. Overpowering her, I stripped her of her clothes and enjoyed her. Thereafter she reached Lord Brahmā's abode, shaking like the stalk of a lotus flower. The great soul Lord Brahmā learned exactly what happened, I assume. Becoming highly enraged, he spoke the following words to me: 'From henceforth if you happen to violate any other woman, your head will split into hundreds of pieces. Of this there is no doubt.' Out of fear of that curse, I do not forcefully place Sītā on my lovely bed.

"My fury is like the ocean, my speed is like the wind. Surely Rāma does not know this, since He is attacking me. Who would want to provoke me, like a lion sleeping in a mountain cave or death personified sitting

angrily? Rāma has not seen the arrows like snakes with forked-tongues shot from my bow in combat, therefore He is marching against me. I shall quickly burn Rāma with hundreds of arrows as hard as thunderbolts shot from my bow, as one would torment an elephant with firebrands. Surrounding His army with my huge army, I shall shatter His army, as the rising sun disperses the glimmer of the stars. I cannot be defeated by the thousand-eyed Indra, nor by Varuṇa. Moreover, I won this city of Laṅkā, which was formerly ruled by Kuvera, by the strength of my arms.”

VIBHĪṢAṆA PLEADS WITH RĀVAṆA TO RETURN SĪTĀ

Hearing Rāvaṇa's boasting and Kumbhakarṇa's bellowing, Vibhīṣaṇa directed the following salutary entreaty to Rāvaṇa: "Who has tied to your neck this snake in the form of Sītā, whose bosom is its coils, whose thoughts are its poison, whose sweet smiles are its sharp fangs, and whose five fingers are its five hoods? Give Sītā back to Rāma before the monkeys, who are as big as mountains and have sharp teeth and claws as weapons, invade Laṅkā. Give Sītā back to Rāma before He shoots arrows as hard as thunderbolts and as swift as the wind that strike the heads of the outstanding rākṣasas. Neither Kumbhakarṇa and Indrajit, nor Mahāparśva and Mahodara, nor Nikumbha and Kumbha, nor even Atikāya are able to stand up to Rāma in combat. Rāma will not spare your life even if you were protected by the sun-god and the maruts, were seated in the lap of Indra or Yamarāja, the lord of death, or whether you entered the sky or the nether region."

When Prahasta heard what Vibhīṣaṇa said, he spoke as follows: "We do not know of any cause of fear from the gods or demons at any time. Nor is there any danger from yakṣas, gandharvas and nāgas on the battlefield, nor from birds and reptiles. How then could Rāma, the son of a mortal king ever be a cause of danger to us?"

Hearing Prahasta's baneful remarks, Vibhīṣaṇa, desiring the welfare of the king and having intelligence that could penetrate the attainment of virtue, material gain and enjoyment, then spoke the following highly significant words: "O Prahasta, the action which the king, Mahodara, Kumbhakarṇa and you propose to take against Rāma cannot be accomplished, just as a person with impious intelligence cannot enter heaven. It is no more possible for you, myself or even all the rākṣasas to kill Rāma, who is expert at achieving His goals, than it is to cross the great ocean without a boat. Even the gods can become bewildered when facing

Rāma, who considers righteousness as most important, who is a great chariot warrior, who is a royal descendant of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty, and who is capable of achieving all His tasks. The sharp arrows with vulture feathers fastened to them discharged by Rāma have not yet struck and penetrated your body. That is why you are boasting, O Prahasta! The sharp and life-depriving arrows shot by Rāma have not yet struck and pierced your body, O Prahasta! That is why you are boasting. Neither Rāvaṇa, nor the mighty Triśirā, nor Kumbhakarṇa's son, Nikumbha, nor Indrajit, nor you are capable of standing up to Rāma, who is like Indra in combat.

“Neither Devāntaka, Narāntaka, Atikāya, the gigantic Atiratha nor Akampana, who is as big as a mountain, is able to stand up to Rāma in combat. Indeed, this king, being addicted to evil addictions, harsh by nature and inconsiderate in actions, has you as his friends who are no better than enemies, serving him for the destruction of the rākṣasas. Free the king by forcefully extricating him from the grips of a fearsome and mighty snake with a thousand hoods! The king's well-wishers whose desires have been completely fulfilled by the king, should protect him, surrounding him on all sides and even grabbing him by the hair, as concerned persons surround someone possessed by evil and powerful spirits. Rāvaṇa should be jointly protect by you, for he is about to be submerged by an ocean in the shape of Rāma, whose waters are His excellent qualities, and sink down to the nether region in the shape of Rāma. Giving my opinion, I speak these words which are completely beneficial to the city of Lāṅkā with its rākṣasas and to the king with his friends and relatives: ‘Return Sītā to Prince Rāma!’ A counselor is one who offers proper advice beneficial to his master after intelligently ascertaining the strength of the enemy and of his master, as well as by considering the enemy's steadiness, decrease or increase.”

INDRAJIT REBUKES VIBHĪṢAṆA

Hearing what was spoken by Vibhīṣaṇa, who was equal in wisdom to Bṛhaspati, Indrajit, the leader of the rākṣasa hordes, spoke as follows: “O youngest uncle, why should you utter such useless words as if greatly afraid? Even one not born in our family would not speak or do such a thing. My youngest uncle Vibhīṣaṇa is the only one in this family who has no courage, virility, prowess, fortitude, heroism or spirit. What are these two human princes? Even the least significant of the rākṣasas among us can kill Them! Why then do you try to frighten us, O coward? Why, I myself knocked to the ground Indra, ruler of the gods and lord of the three worlds! Stricken with fear, the entire host of demigods fled in all directions. I even overpowered Airāvata and extracted his tusks so that he fell to the ground bellowing loudly, thereby frightening all the demigod warriors. How is it that I, who have courageously crushed the pride of the demigods and brought grief to the daityas, am unable to defeat two ordinary human princes?”

When Vibhīṣaṇa, the very best of weapon-wielders, heard the statement made by the extremely mighty and formidable Indrajit, he spoke the following important words: “My lad, being a child whose intelligence is not yet mature, you cannot make sound decisions. Therefore you have spoken so much meaningless prattle for your own destruction. O Indrajit, although you speak of yourself as Rāvaṇa’s son, you are an enemy in the guise of a friend, for although hearing of his impending destruction at the hands of Rāma, you are agreeing with him out of illusion. You certainly deserve to be killed and are very evil-minded also. And he who brought you, a mere child, here in the midst of counselors, also deserves to die. You are ignorant, dull, uncultured, harsh, less intelligent, wicked-minded, and talk like a child, O Indrajit! Who can withstand the flaming arrows shot by Rāma in combat, when these shine like Lord Brahmā’s rod of chastisement, Yamarāja, the Lord of death’s rod of chastisement, or even like death itself? Offering Rāma wealth, jewels, ornaments, garments, beautifully sparkling gems and Lady Sītā, let us live here free from sorrow!”

RĀVAṆA CHIDES VIBHĪṢAṆA

Compelled by destiny, Rāvaṇa directed the following harsh words to Vibhīṣaṇa, who had offered him good advice: “Better to live with someone who is openly an enemy or an angry poisonous snake than with someone who claims to be a friend but serves the enemy. O rākṣasa, I know the character of relatives in all the worlds. They rejoice in the misfortune of their kinfolk. Relatives always despise their predominant relative, even though he is engaged in his duties and is wise and pious. And if he is heroic, they try to belittle him. Feeling enlivened by each other’s misfortunes, they are malicious, schemers, cruel and dangerous. In the past I heard some elephants in a lotus pond utter these verses when they saw humans coming toward them with nooses in their hands. Listen as I repeat them: ‘Neither fire, nor weapons, nor snares frighten us. But our own kind who are cruel and self-motivated are a danger to us. They will indicate the means of capturing us, of this there is no doubt. Of all dangers, we consider the danger occasioned by our relatives as being the greatest.’

“In cows one finds wealth, and in relatives—danger, in women—fickleness, and in brāhmaṇas—austerity. Therefore, my dear brother, you are not happy that I am honored by the whole world, have achieved vast opulence and have set my foot on the heads of my enemies. As drops of water do not moisten a lotus leaf, affection does not affect an unworthy relative. As the earth is not moistened by rain from thundering clouds in autumn, unworthy relatives are not softened by affection. As a honeybee does not stay long in a flower even though she drinks its nectar eagerly, so also are you and other useless relatives who do not appreciate the affection bestowed upon them. As a honeybee cannot find any nectar in the flower of kāśa grass, one cannot find satisfaction in unworthy relatives. As a freshly bathed elephant uses its trunk to throw dust on its on body, so is affection directed to unworthy relatives. If anyone else had spoken such words, he would cease living this very moment. Be you damned, O disgrace of our dynasty!”

After being rebuked with these harsh words, the right-speaking Vibhiṣaṇa, holding a mace in his hands, rose up into the air, accompanied by his four rākṣasa councilors. Hovering in the air, the furious Vibhiṣaṇa then spoke the following words to his brother Rāvaṇa: “O king, you are bewildered. You may speak to me however you wish. Because you are my eldest brother, you are worthy of the same respect as our father. Yet you are not situated on the path of righteousness. I therefore cannot tolerate your harsh words, even though you are my eldest brother. O Rāvaṇa, those who have no self-control and are under the sway of destiny do not accept the good advice of a well-wisher. It is always easy to find persons who will speak what is pleasing, O king. However, it is hard to find someone who will speak or listen to unpleasant words that are beneficial. Seeing you bound by the noose of time, which takes away the life of all beings, I could not ignore you like a house on fire. I did not want to see you killed by Rāma’s sharp arrows, which are decorated with gold and shining like flames of fire. Men who are heroic, mighty and skilled in the use of weapons fall in battle like dams of sand when they are seized by death. Being my eldest brother, forgive what I said, desiring as I do your welfare. Do whatever you must to protect yourself and this city with its rākṣasas. May everything be well with you! May you be happy without my presence! As I, your well-wisher, tried to restrain you, you did not appreciate my advice, O night-stalker. At the time of death those whose lives have expired do not usually heed advice offered by well-wishers.”

VIBHĪṢAṆA SEEKS THE SHELTER OF RĀMA

After addressing a sharp retort to Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa reached the place where Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were in less than an hour. The monkey leaders on the ground saw hovering in the sky Vibhīṣaṇa, who resembled Mount Meru or a bolt of flashing lightning. His four attendants also possessed formidable prowess, were bearing all kinds of weapons and were attired in an excellent manner. Vibhīṣaṇa resembled a mountain or a cloud, and was equal to Indra in splendor. He was bearing the best of weapons and was wearing dazzling ornaments. Seeing Vibhīṣaṇa accompanied by four rākṣasas, the wise Sugrīva standing in the midst of his fellow monkeys began thinking. After reflecting for a while, he addressed the following cogent words to all the monkeys, the foremost of whom was Hanumān:

“Armed with all kinds of weapons and accompanied by four other rākṣasas, this rākṣasa is surely coming to kill us.” Hearing what Sugrīva said, those fine monkeys picked up sāla trees and boulders and spoke as follows: “O king, immediately order us to attack these wicked fellows so that when killed, they fall down on the ground, weaklings that they are.” Talking among themselves as they reached the seashore, they stopped while still in the air. While standing in the sky, Vibhīṣaṇa gazed at Sugrīva and spoke to him with a loud, deep voice: “There is an evil-acting rākṣasa named Rāvaṇa, who is the lord of the rākṣasas. I am his youngest brother known as Vibhīṣaṇa. Sītā was abducted from Janasthāna and Jaṭāyu was slain. Now the poor and helpless Sītā is being detained and guarded by rākṣasīs. Again and again I entreated Rāvaṇa with various logical arguments to return Sītā to Rāma. Compelled by destiny, Rāvaṇa would not heed my good advice, any more than a person about to die would bother taking medicine. After being harshly rebuked and treated like a slave, I left my wife and children to take shelter of Lord Rāma.

Please immediately inform the great soul Rāma, who can give shelter to the whole world, that I, Vibhīṣaṇa, have arrived.”

When the swift-footed Sugrīva heard what Vibhīṣaṇa said, he at once went to Lord Rāma and angrily said: “Rāvaṇa’s youngest brother Vibhīṣaṇa has come and, along with four other rākṣasas, wants to take shelter of You. O crusher of foes, You should be careful to take counsel, deploy troops, use the four expedients and engage spies for the welfare of the monkeys and the subjugation of Your enemies. One should not trust rākṣasas, for they can move about invisible, assume any form they wish, and are audacious and cunning. He may be a spy from Rāvaṇa, lord of the rākṣasas. Joining our ranks, he might sow dissension among us. Or, clever as he is, after staying with us and discovering our weaknesses, he might attack us.

“Enforcements sent by allies, forest dwellers, hereditary servants or hired servants—all of these can be accepted, but not those sent by an enemy. He is a rākṣasa by birth and a brother of the enemy, my lord! The enemy has arrived in our midst. Why should we trust him? Know that Vibhīṣaṇa has been sent by Rāvaṇa. I think we should arrest him, O best of those who are forbearing. This rākṣasa has come here under the instruction of Rāvaṇa with the crooked intention of attacking You while concealing himself through an illusion once he has gained Your trust. Indeed, a member of the enemy ranks has come unexpectedly. When he gets the chance he will kill us, as an owl would kill crows. Vibhīṣaṇa should be killed along with his counselors by some severe means, for he is a brother of the merciless Rāvaṇa.”

After the eloquent Sugrīva, being irritated, spoke in this way, he remained silent. Thereafter the mighty Rāma spoke as follows to the monkeys, chief of whom was Hanumān, who was standing nearby: “You have just heard Sugrīva’s very sensible advice regarding Vibhīṣaṇa. It is always desirable for those who are intelligent and capable of sound judgement to seek the welfare of their well-wishers having difficulty performing some activity.”

After being petitioned in this way, the monkeys, who were lively and eager to please Rāma, each expressed their own opinions:

“There is nothing that You do not know, O descendant of the Raghu Dynasty! Out of Your good-naturedness, You consult us, honoring us who are Your very selves. Indeed, You are unfailing in vows, valiant, virtuous, endowed with lasting prowess, circumspect, mindful of favors done and have offered Yourself to Your friends. Therefore, let Your counselors who are all intelligent and capable give their opinions one after another.”

After this was said, the wise monkey Āṅgada first of all offered this advice as a means of testing Vibhīṣaṇa: “Having just come from the enemy camp, Vibhīṣaṇa should not be trusted immediately but should be examined in every way. Those with a rascal’s intelligence go about concealing their motives and strike when they discover one’s weaknesses. That could prove to be a great disaster. One should make a decision only after ascertaining the pros and cons. If it is advantageous, it should be adopted, if disadvantageous, rejected. O king, if it is greatly detrimental to accept him, then let him be outright rejected. But if it is found that there are many advantages to having him, let him be accepted.”

After full deliberation, the monkey Śarabha offered the following reasonable advice: “O tiger among men, let a spy be immediately dispatched to observe him. After examining Vibhīṣaṇa through spies with discerning intelligence, he can be accepted as he merits.”

Then the perspicacious Jāmbavān, who was enlightened with scriptural wisdom, gave the following advice that had many good qualities and no faults: “Vibhīṣaṇa has come from the sinful Rāvaṇa, our sworn enemy, without regard to time and place. Therefore we have every reason to be suspicious about him.”

Then Mainda, who was expert in determining what was right and wrong and in speaking, offered the following excellent and reasonable counsel: “Vibhīṣaṇa is in fact Rāvaṇa’s youngest brother. Let him be systematically interrogated in a gentle manner. After genuinely discovering

by use of intelligence what his mentality is—whether he is hostile or not—
You can do as You like.”

Then the foremost of counselors, Hanumān, who had thoroughly mastered the scriptures, offered the following perfect, meaningful, sweet and succinct advice: “Even Bṛhaspati would not be able to surpass any of you in speaking, for you are most intelligent, capable and skilled in elocution. O king, because of the importance of this matter, I shall speak only what is necessary, not because of argumentativeness, competitiveness, conceitedness or talkativeness. I see a defect in the advice proffered by Your counselors concerning the means of determining whether it is advantageous or not to accept Vibhīṣaṇa, for such an action is not possible at the moment. His capacity cannot be determined without giving him some responsibility, and to give him a responsibility so quickly also strikes me as faulty. The advice which Your counselors gave about deploying spies is not practical, for it would serve no purpose. Regarding the statement that Vibhīṣaṇa has come here without regard for time and place, I would like to make known my opinion how this is not so. Please listen. This is in fact the proper time and place for Vibhīṣaṇa to come to us. He has left a scoundrel for a pious person, finding many faults in Rāvaṇa and many good qualities in You. Seeing Rāvaṇa’s depravity and Your prowess, his arrival here is judicious and befitting his intelligence.

“Regarding the proposal that Vibhīṣaṇa be interrogated by undisclosed spies, I have my own thought out opinion. When being interrogated in such circumstances, an intelligent person would at once become suspicious. When one who came in friendship sees that he is being interrogated for no reason, he could change his mind. Nor can one discover the intentions of an enemy so quickly, O king. You should carefully discover his real intentions through his various statements. Even as he speaks, there is no indication of evil intent in him. His face is also pleasant, Therefore there is no doubt in my mind. A cheater does not come calm and with a mind free from apprehension. Neither is Vibhīṣaṇa’s speech grammatically faulty. Therefore there is no doubt in this connection. Even when concealing their intentions, persons cannot completely hide them, for their faces inevitably reveal their inner intentions. Vibhīṣaṇa’s action was in accordance to time and place, O best of those who know when to act. An action

properly performed by the right person quickly becomes successful. After considering Your plan to invade Lañkā and Rāvaṇa's deceitfulness, and hearing about how You slew Vālī and had Sugrīva crowned king, Vibhīṣaṇa, who sought sovereignty, has deliberately come here. Taking all this into consideration, it seems advisable to accept him in our midst. I have spoken according to my ability regarding this rākṣasa's sincerity. Having heard it, O most wise one, You should make the final decision."

RĀMA DECIDES TO ACCEPT VIBHĪṢAṆA

Delighted to hear from Hanumān what He also believed, Rāma, who was difficult to assault and learned in all the sciences, replied as follows: “I also wish to say something about Vibhīṣaṇa. I want you, who are devoted to My welfare, to hear all of this. I can never refuse someone who comes in friendship. Even if there is some defect in him, the saintly would not consider his acceptance blameworthy.”

Repeating Rāma’s statement and contemplating it, Sugrīva made the following brilliant remark: “What does it matter whether he is evil or not? He is a night-stalker! If he can abandon his own brother when he is in such difficulty, who is there that he could not abandon?”

Hearing Sugrīva’s remark and looking all around, Lord Rāma, whose prowess was unfailing, slightly smiled and said to Lakṣmaṇa, who possessed saintly qualities: “Unless one has studied scripture and served one’s superiors, it is not possible to speak as Sugrīva has. I find something very subtle in Vibhīṣaṇa which is found in all rulers and obvious to everyone. It is said that one’s own kinsmen and the ruler of other lands are enemies that will attack in difficult times. That is why he has come here. Those who are faultless consider their own kinsmen as well-wishers. But kings usually suspect their relatives, even when these are exemplary. Regarding your mention of the disadvantage of accepting someone from the enemy camp, I shall reply in accordance with scripture. Please listen. We are not his relatives, and he is desirous of sovereignty. Rākṣasas can also sometimes be quite learned. Therefore we should accept Vibhīṣaṇa. When Vibhīṣaṇa and his ministers are accepted by us, they will be free from anxiety and feel overjoyed. The fact that they made such a loud appeal for protection shows that the rākṣasas are afraid of each other, hence they will become divided. Therefore we should accept Vibhīṣaṇa. My dear Sugrīva, not all brothers are like Bharata, not all a father’s sons are like Me, nor are all friends like you.”

When spoken to in this way by Rāma, Sugrīva got up with Lakṣmaṇa and made the following humble request: “Know that this night-stalker has been sent by Rāvaṇa. I think that we should arrest him, O best of those who are clement. Motivated by a secret agenda, this rākṣasa has come here to strike You, me or also Lakṣmaṇa after he has gained our confidence. Therefore, O strong prince, he should be killed along with his ministers. For Vibhīṣaṇa is in fact the brother of the heartless Rāvaṇa.”

Then the eloquent Sugrīva, who was the leader of the monkey army, remained silent. After thinking about what Sugrīva said, Rāma addressed the following brilliant reply to Sugrīva: “Whether he is wicked or not, what slightest harm can this night-stalker ever do to Me? If I wish, I can even kill the piśācas, dānavas, yakṣas and rākṣasas on this earth with just the tip of My finger, O king of monkeys hordes! It is said that when a hunter took shelter of a dove, it offered its enemy hospitality including its own flesh. The dove accepted the hunter even though he came after previously capturing the dove’s mate. If a dove could be like that, O best of monkeys, how much more befitting for a person like Me! Listen to a collection of holy verses sung in the past by the truthful and eminently wise Kāṇḍu, son of the sage Kaṇva:

“For the sake of mercifulness one should not kill an enemy who has come with joined palms seeking shelter. One who is self-controlled should be prepared to give up his own life to protect an enemy who comes for protection from his own enemies, whether he be distressed or proud. If out of fear, illusion or desire one fails to give protection according to one’s ability, that sin is despised by the whole world. If a refugee dies before one who could have offered protection, that unprotected refugee takes away all his merit.’

“In this way, a great sin is incurred by failing to give protection in such circumstances. Such negligence prevents one from reaching heaven, brings infamy and destroys one’s strength and vitality. I shall follow Kāṇḍu’s excellent advice, which is positive, righteous, glorious and conducive to the attainment of heaven. I shall protect from all living beings anyone who seeks protection, surrendering to Me saying, “I am Yours.” This is My vow. Bring him here, O Sugrīva. I grant him protection, whether he be Vibhīṣaṇa, or even Rāvaṇa himself.”

Filled with affection upon hearing Rāma's statement, Sugrīva replied as follows: "It is no wonder that You, a knower of righteousness, have spoken so nobly when You are virtuous and situated on the path of piety. My inner sense also knows Vibhīṣaṇa's innocence. Both You and Hanumān have already examined him by recourse to inference and facial expression. Therefore, immediately accepting the highly intelligent Vibhīṣaṇa as one of our equals, let him enjoy our friendship, O descendant of the Raghu Dynasty!"

When Rāma heard Sugrīva's proposal, He quickly arranged for a meeting with Vibhīṣaṇa, just as Indra met with Garuḍa.

VIBHĪṢAṆA RECEIVED BY RĀMA

After asylum was granted by Rāma, the wise Vibhīṣaṇa bowed humbly and, gazing at the earth, joyfully descended from the sky to the ground in the company of his devoted followers. Then the righteous Vibhīṣaṇa and his four rākṣasa attendants threw themselves on the ground before Rāma's feet. Then Vibhīṣaṇa addressed Rāma with words that were righteous, reasonable, opportune and delightful: "I am Rāvaṇa's youngest brother, and, having been disparaged by him, I seek shelter of You who can give shelter to all living beings. I have abandoned my residence in Laṅkā, my friends and my wealth. My sovereignty, livelihood and happiness are now dependent on You."

Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa's supplication, Rāma spoke to him, consoling him and apparently drinking him with His eyes: "Please tell Me in truth the strengths and weakness of the rākṣasas." When requested in this way by Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa began to reveal Rāvaṇa's strength:

"Because of a boon granted by Lord Brahmā, O prince, Rāvaṇa cannot be killed by any living being, including gandharvas, serpents and birds. My most valorous elder brother, Kumbhakarṇa, who is younger than Rāvaṇa, is equal to Indra in battle. Rāvaṇa's commander-in-chief is Prahasta, of whom You might have heard and who defeated Kuvera's commander-in-chief, Maṇibhadra, on Mount Kailāsa. Wearing gloves of iguana skin and impenetrable armor in combat, while standing with bow in hand, Indrajit makes himself invisible. Having propitiated the fire-god, he can make himself invisible and kill his enemies arrayed in phalanxes for combat. The rākṣasas Mahodara, Mahāpārśva and Akampana, who are equal to the protectors of the world, are commanders in his army. One billion rākṣasas capable of assuming any form and subsisting on flesh and blood inhabit the city of Laṅkā. Accompanied by them, Rāvaṇa attacked the rulers of the worlds. The great Rāvaṇa defeated them along with the demigods."

Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa's report and thinking about it for a while, Rāma replied as follows: "O Vibhīṣaṇa, of course I know about Rāvaṇa's exploits which you have described in detail. After killing Rāvaṇa along with Prahasta and his sons, I shall crown you king. I promise you this. Even if Rāvaṇa hides in Rasātala, Pātāla or the abode of Lord Brahmā, he will not escape from Me alive. I swear by My three brothers that I shall not return to Ayodhyā without killing Rāvaṇa along with his sons and relatives in combat."

When the virtuous Vibhīṣaṇa heard Rāma's vow, he bowed his head and began replying as follows: "As far as I am able I shall assist You in breaking through the rākṣasa forces, storming Laṅkā and destroying the rākṣasas."

Embracing Vibhīṣaṇa as he spoke, Rāma joyfully said to Lakṣmaṇa: "Now that I am pleased with the sagacious Vibhīṣaṇa, bring water from the ocean and with it immediately consecrate him as king of the rākṣasas." On the order of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa then consecrated Vibhīṣaṇa in the midst of the monkey leaders. Seeing this sudden display of mercy by Rāma, the monkeys shouted for joy and hailed Rāma with the words: "Very good! Very good!"

Then Sugrīva and Hanumān asked Vibhīṣaṇa: "How can we cross the imperturbable ocean with this army of very energetic monkeys? By what means should we approach the ocean so that we can cross it quickly with our troops?" Questioned in this way, Vibhīṣaṇa replied as follows: "Prince Rāma should take shelter of the presiding deity of the ocean. The excavation of this vast ocean was caused by King Sagara. Since Rāma is his descendant, the ocean ought to help Him."

Receiving this advice from Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva went to where Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were. Sugrīva then began explaining to Them what Vibhīṣaṇa had said concerning Rāma's approaching the presiding deity of the ocean. The advice was appealing to Rāma, who by nature was virtuous. In order to honor Sugrīva, Rāma spoke to him and Lakṣmaṇa as follows: "Vibhīṣaṇa's counsel is very pleasing to Me, O Lakṣmaṇa. Sugrīva is very learned and You are expert at giving advice. After considering the matter carefully, both of you may tell Me what pleases you."

When commanded in this way, Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa replied as follows: “Why would we not be pleased with the humble advice given by Vibhīṣaṇa, O tiger among men? Unless we span this formidable ocean with a bridge, Laṅkā will remain inaccessible for even Indra, what to speak of the other gods and demons. Let the valiant Vibhīṣaṇa’s sound advice be carried out. What is the use of wasting time? Appeal to the ocean so that we can reach with our army the city protected by Rāvaṇa.”

When requested in this way, Rāma promptly sat on top of kuśa grass spread on the shore of the ocean, like a sacred fire placed on a sacrificial altar.

RĀVAṆA DISPATCHES ŚUKA AS A SPY

Approaching the army which was fully protected by Sugrīva, a valorous rākṣasa name Śārdūla, who was a spy for the wicked Rāvaṇa, watched it set up camp. Seeing how the army was unassailable from any side, Śārdūla speedily returned to Laṅkā and informed Rāvaṇa as follows: “This mass of monkeys and bears approaching Laṅkā is as deep and immeasurable as a second ocean. The two sons of King Daśaratha, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, bearing the very best of weapons, are coming to get Sītā. Having reached the seashore, they have set up camp there, O splendid one. The army covers a distance of ten yojanas in all directions. You should find out about the actual situation as soon as possible, O great king. You should immediately send spies to watch them. Then you can either persuade them with gifts, mollify them through conciliation, or sow dissension among them.”

Rāvaṇa immediately became disturbed when he heard Śārdūla’s report and thereafter said to the dutiful Śuka: “Go right now and boldly tell King Sugrīva in a gentle and excellent voice as I command you: ‘Born in a dynasty of great kings, you are the son of Rkṣarāja and possess extraordinary strength. I have never done anything for or against you. Nonetheless I consider you like my brother, O lord of the monkeys. Even if I did kidnap the wise prince’s wife, of what concern is that to you, Sugrīva? Go back to Kiṣkindhā. There is no way that monkeys can reach this city of Laṅkā. Even the gods and gandharvas cannot capture it, what to speak of monkeys and humans.’”

Commanded in this way by Rāvaṇa, the night-stalker Śuka became a bird and at once flew up into the sky. Flying high above, he crossed the ocean and while hovering in the air, delivered the message to Sugrīva. As Śuka finished delivering the message, monkeys jumped up into the sky and caught him. They then began pounding him with their fists, trying to tear his wings off. Thus the night-stalker was violently punished by all the monkeys. After catching him, they quickly dragged him down out of the sky to the

ground. While Śuka was being beaten by the monkeys, he spoke as follows: “Messengers should not be killed, O descendant of Kakutstha! Please restrain the monkeys! An envoy who rejects his master’s message and presents his own opinion is not a messenger and deserves to be killed.”

Hearing Śuka’s plea, Rāma addressed the monkey leaders as they beat him, saying: “Do not harm him!” As soon as he was released, the rākṣasa quickly flew up into the sky and again addressed himself to Sugrīva: “What should I tell Rāvaṇa, who causes people to scream, O mighty and intrepid Sugrīva?” When addressed in this way, the foremost of monkeys Sugrīva, who was not short of energy, gave the following faultless message to Rāvaṇa’s spy Śuka:

“O Rāvaṇa, you are neither my friend, nor my benefactor. You are not dear to me, nor do you deserve any kindness from me. You are Rāma’s enemy and therefore deserve to be killed along with your relatives, as was Vālī. I shall kill you along with your sons and family relations, O lord of the night-stalkers. Coming with a great army, I shall reduce all of Laṅkā to ashes. O fool, you cannot escape Rāma even if you are protected by the gods or even Indra himself. Whether you make yourself invisible, flee along the path of the sun, hide in the depths of Pātāla or take shelter of the lotus feet of Lord Śiva, Rāma will kill you along with your sons. I do not see any piśāca, rākṣasa, gandharva or asura in all the three worlds who is capable of protecting you. What is your greatness, for you killed Jaṭāyu, the king of vultures, only after he was overtaken by old age! And why did you not abduct the broad-eyed Sītā in the presence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa? And after seizing Her, why did you not foresee the present calamity? Obviously you do not know that the supremely mighty and magnanimous Rāma, who cannot even be overcome by the gods, is going to take away your life.”

Then Vālī’s son Aṅgada also declared: “O king, this fellow is not a messenger. He seems to me to be a spy. While here he has surely appraised the entire strength of your army. Arrest him! Do not let him return to Laṅkā! That is what appeals to me.” When commanded in this way by their king, Sugrīva, the monkeys captured and bound the rākṣasa, who was wailing helplessly. Being fiercely beaten by the monkeys, Śuka called out to the

magnanimous Rāma: “My wings are being violently torn off and my eyes are being poked out! If I lose my life, You will take on all the sins which I have committed since the night that I was born until the night when I die!”
When Rāma heard this lament, He did not allow the monkeys to kill the rākṣasa, saying: “Set him free! He has come as a messenger.”

RĀMA SHOOTS ARROWS INTO THE OCEAN

Spreading kuśa grass on the shore of the ocean, Rāma lay down facing east toward the ocean with His palms joined respectfully. He used His arms, which resembled the coils of a snake and which were decorated with golden ornaments, as a pillow. They were adorned with bands of gold encrusted with gems and pearls and had been massaged many times by the hands of notable women. Previously they had been smeared with paste of sandalwood and aloewood, because of which they used to shine like the newly risen sun. When He used to lie on His bed, those same upper arms were further beautified by the head of Lady Sītā. They resembled the coils of the famous snake Takṣaka when it sports in the Ganges River. They increased the grief of their enemies on the battlefield and were delightful for Rāma's friends and well-wishers. They were long and were the support of the earth bounded by oceans. Their skin had become toughened by the constant striking of the bow string while firing arrows holding the bow in the left hand. His arms resembled large iron clubs and had given away thousands of cows in charity. Making up His mind that either He would cross the ocean or that He would slay the deity of the ocean, Rāma lay down on the seashore according to scriptural directions, completely controlling His body, speech and mind.

Three nights passed as Rāma lay on the kuśa grass spread on the ground strictly observing His vow. While lying in that way, Rāma, who was fond of piety and knowledgeable about polity, waited for the deity of the ocean to appear. Although properly worshiped by Rāma, the negligent ocean did not show its personal form. Becoming angry with the ocean, the edges of Rāma's eyes turned red and he spoke as follows to Lakṣmaṇa, who was standing nearby:

“How vain the ocean is, for it does not show itself to Me. When the qualities of the pious—calmness, tolerance, sincerity and pleasant speech—are directed toward those who lack these, they are considered the result of

impotence. The world respects a person who praises himself, is wicked, merciless, repulses others away and uses the rod of chastisement under all circumstances. O Lakṣmaṇa, in this world one cannot gain fame, popularity or victory in battle by means of conciliation. See this ocean covered on all sides by alligators split open by My arrows! Watch Me cut into pieces the bodies of snakes, fish and the trunks of sea elephants living here! By waging an intense war against the ocean with its conchshells, mother-of-pearl, fish and crocodiles, I shall soon dry it up. This great ocean considers Me impotent because I am forbearing. Forget forbearance to such a person! Because of My passivity, the ocean does not care to show its own personal form to Me. Lakṣmaṇa, bring Me My bow and My arrows like poisonous snakes. I shall dry up the ocean so that the monkeys can continue on to Laṅkā. Irritated as I am, I shall now confound the imperturbable ocean, which, though tossed by thousands of waves, remains fixed within the limits of its shores. With My arrows I shall make the ocean abandon its boundaries and shall convulse the ocean with its multitude of great dānavas.”

Shining like the conflagration at the end of the world, His eyes dilated from anger, He held his bow and assumed a stance of invincibility. Bending His formidable bow, He made the earth tremble with its twang as He shot arrows, as Indra would hurl thunderbolts. His arrows blazing with fierceness entered the ocean water, terrifying the sea serpents. The great rush of the ocean water with its fish and alligators was very dreadful and was accompanied by lashing winds. All of a sudden the ocean was covered with enormous sequential billows, strewn with conchshells and abalone shells, and was shrouded in smoke. Snakes with glowing mouths and eyes, and dānavas who were extremely energetic and resided in Pātālaloka, became bewildered. The ocean’s waves, which were as high as the Vindhya and Mandara Mountains, rose up by the thousands, bearing alligators and crocodiles. With its many waves churned up and its serpents, rākṣasas and huge alligators expelled, the ocean roared loudly.

As Rāma was stretching His immeasurable bow and breathing hard, Lakṣmaṇa rushed toward Him, grabbed the bow and said: “Stop! Stop! Your goal will surely be achieved today without doing this to the ocean, for You are the greatest of heroes. Persons like You do not come under the influence

of anger. As such, find some other noble and lasting way of crossing the ocean.”

RĀMA FORCES THE OCEAN TO BE BRIDGED

Thereafter Rāma, the best of the Raghu Dynasty, directed the following ominous threat to the ocean: “O ocean, I shall now dry you up along with the subterranean nether region! A great expanse of sand will appear when your water and its creatures have been dried up by My arrows. After doing this to you with a shower of arrows shot from My bow, the monkeys will cross you on foot. O ocean, being a mere repository of water, you are not aware of My severity or prowess. You shall therefore surely suffer at My hands.”

Placing on His fine bow an arrow that resembled Lord Brahmā’s rod of chastisement, Rāma invested it with a brahmāstra and pulled the bowstring back. When Rāma pulled the bowstring back so suddenly, heaven and earth seemed to wail and mountains shook. The whole world became enveloped in darkness and all directions became obscured. All the lakes and rivers also suddenly became agitated. The sun, moon and asterisms moved from north to south instead of from east to west. Moreover, the sky was barely illumined by the rays of the sun, being covered by darkness. The sky was then lit up by hundreds of falling stars. Battalions of celestial wind-gods blew violently in the sky. Repeatedly blowing away the clouds, the winds mangled trees. They thus broke off rocky pinnacles and smashed mountain peaks. In the sky, masses of clouds came together, thundering loudly and hurling tremendous bolts of fiery lightning. Visible beings bellowed like thunder, while invisible ones uttered fearful cries. Frightened and confused, they lay on the ground trembling. Some of them were aghast and could not move. Due to the force of Rāma’s weapon, the ocean along with its water, waves, serpents and rākṣasas all at once surged turbulently and overflowed its shore by a distance of one yojana. Rāma, the slayer of enemies, did not retreat from the ocean, even though it had overflowed its boundaries.

Then the presiding deity of the waters personally came out from midst of the ocean, like the sun rising from behind Mount Meru. Accompanied by snakes with blazing mouths, the god of the ocean, adorned with golden ornaments, looked like a polished vaidurya gem. He was wearing red garments and a red flower garland. His eyes were like the petals of a lotus flower and on his head he bore a garland of all kinds of celestial flowers. He wore shimmering ornaments of gold inlaid with the finest precious gems produced by the ocean itself. He looked like Mount Himavān covered with various minerals. On his broad chest he wore a strand of pearls with a lustrous gem in the middle which shone like a kaustubha gem. Masses of waves tossed about him and he was surrounded by blackish-blue clouds. He was accompanied by the personifications of the Ganges, Sindhu and other prominent rivers. The oceans alligators were being tossed up and its serpents and rākṣasas were bewildered.

The presiding deity of the ocean said: “Earth, water, fire, air and ether remain the same by their natures, obeying the eternal law. My nature is also that I am fathomless and uncrossable by swimming. Allowing someone to swim across me would be a deviation from my nature. Yet I shall say the following. Neither from desire, greed, nor fear, O prince, can I allow my waters filled with crocodiles and alligators to solidify. I shall, however, make an arrangement so that You can cross me. Thus I shall bear Your army. The alligators will not attack while the army is crossing. I shall appropriately arrange a place for the monkeys to cross.”

Then Rāma said: “Listen to Me, O ocean. Where should I shoot this mighty and unfailing arrow?” Hearing Rāma’s question and looking at the arrow, the ocean, who was exceptionally energetic, replied as follows: “To my north there is a very pious region called Drumakulya, which is as famous as You. There many sinful marauders called ābhīras, who are fierce-looking and wicked, drink my waters. I cannot tolerate the contact of those scoundrels of sinful deeds with my waters. You can allow this exceptional arrow to take effect there.”

Hearing this suggestion, Rāma shot the outstanding flaming arrow as directed by the ocean. The region where the arrow which shone like lightning fell became known as Marukāntāra. When pierced by that arrow, the earth shrieked. Thereafter from that cleft in the ground sprang forth

water from Rasātala. That cleft became a well and came to be known as Vraṇa. The water gushing out of that well is as salty as the sea. A dreadful sound was produced by the cleaving of the earth. The striking of Rāma's arrow dried up the water in that part of the ocean and thus that region became known throughout the three worlds as Marukāntāra. Having dried up that rift in the ocean, the wise Rāma, whose prowess was like that of the immortal gods, bestowed the following boon upon the region of Maru:

“Let this land have abundant succulent fruits and roots, honey, milk and varieties of highly fragrant herbs. Due to the boon granted by Rāma, the land of Maru acquired many opulences and became an auspicious region.

After the rift in the ocean had been dried up, the ocean spoke as follows: “O dear Rāma, the son of Viśvakarmā known by the name Nala has been given a boon by his father and is very affectionate to You. Let that monkey full of enthusiasm build a bridge over me. I shall hold it up. He is just like his father in construction skill.”

When the personality of the ocean finished speak, he vanished. Then Nala sprang up on his feet and spoke the following words to the mighty Rāma: “Since I have inherited the skills of my father, I shall build a bridge across the wide ocean. What the ocean said was true. In my opinion punishment is the best means of dealing with ungrateful people. Forget about forbearance, conciliation or gifts! Out of fear of punishment this formidable ocean has granted Rāma the right of passage over the sea out of a desire to see Him construct a bridge. Viśvakarmā granted my mother a boon on Mount Mandara that she would bear a son exactly like him. I am his son, sprung from his loins, and am similar to him in skill. I was reminded of this matter by the ocean. He has spoken the truth. I could not mention my talents unless questioned by someone. I am in fact capable of constructing a bridge over the ocean. Therefore let the outstanding monkeys immediately gather the materials for constructing a bridge.”

Commanded by Rāma, hundreds and thousands of monkeys bounded all about into the thick jungle. Those stalwart leaders of the monkey hordes pulled up boulders and trees and dragged them to the seashore. Those monkeys filled the ocean with varieties of trees, such as sāla, aśvakaṇṇa, dhava, bamboo, kuṭāja, arjuna, palmyra, tilaka, tiniśa, bilva,

saptaparṇa, blooming kaṇikāra, mango and aśoka. Lifting up the trees with roots intact or without roots at all as if they were flags in honor of Indra, the monkeys threw them into the ocean. From here and there they brought together trees such as tāla, pomegranate, coconut, vibhītaka, kaṛīra, bakula and nīmba. Digging up boulders that were as big as elephants and even chunks of mountains, the gigantic monkeys transported them in various conveyances. The ocean water was thrown into the sky by the hurled boulders, and then fell down again. The hurled boulders fell all about, stirring up the ocean. Taking ropes, some monkeys bound the stones together. In this way Nala constructed in the midst of the sea a bridge that was one hundred yojanas long. The bridge was constructed with the help of hundreds and thousands of monkeys who were capable of awesome deeds. Some monkeys held sticks for directing the workers, while other monkeys gathered the building materials. Under Rāma's command, hundreds and thousands of monkeys who resembled clouds or mountains constructed the bridge using reeds and lumber. They also used flowering trees in the construction. Grabbing huge boulders and mountain peaks and running about, they looked like dānavas. A great tumult was raised by the boulders and mountain peaks being thrown into the ocean.

The first day the fast-working and elated monkeys, who resembled elephants in size, breached fourteen yojanas with their construction. The second day they breached twenty yojanas. Again, the bridge was extended another twenty one yojanas on the third day by the speedy monkeys. On the fourth day the monkeys reached up to twenty-two yojanas. On the fifth day the lively monkeys extended the bridge another twenty-three yojanas right up to Mount Suvēla on the other side of the ocean. Thus did Nala, the glorious and mighty son of Viśvakarmā, construct a bridge across the ocean, for he was as skilled as his father. The splendid bridge which Nala constructed across the ocean looked beautiful, like the Milky Way across the sky. Then gods, gandharvas, siddhas, and great sages came and hovered in the sky, eager as they were to see the wonder.

The gods and gandharvas gazed at Nala's bridge which was one hundred yojanas long and very difficult to construct. Taking short and long leaps and roaring, the monkeys beheld that inconceivable, marvelous and thrilling bridge which no one else could have attempted. All living entities

looked at that bridge across the ocean. Even as they were constructing the bridge across the ocean, many millions of powerful monkeys reached the opposite shore. The broad, well-built, magnificent, well-paved and solidly joined bridge looked very beautiful, like a part in the hair of the ocean. Then Vibhīṣaṇa and his counselors stood on the shore of the ocean with clubs in hand to repulse the enemy. Sugrīva then said to Rāma: “Get on Hanumān’s back and let Lakṣmaṇa get on Aṅgada’s back. This ocean is very wide indeed, O prince. These two monkeys capable of flying through the sky will carry You.”

Accompanied by Sugrīva, the glorious Rāma bearing a bow, proceeded with Lakṣmaṇa before the army. Some monkeys strode in the middle, while others strode along the sides. Some jumped into the water, while others marched on the bridge’s thoroughfare. Others sprang into the sky, flying like eagles. Crossing to the opposite shore, the monkey army drowned out the roar of the ocean with the din which it raised. After the army had crossed Nala’s bridge, King Sugrīva had them set up camp on the opposite shore which abounded in edible roots, fruits and water. Seeing the amazing and difficult feat achieved by Rāma, the siddhas, caraṇas and great sages just then approached Rāma and consecrated Him with various auspicious waters individually. They then glorified Rāma, who was respected by kings, uttering auspicious pronouncements: “Conquer Your enemies, O king! Rule over the earth with its ocean for endless years!”

RĀMA INFORMS LAKṢMAṆA OF INAUSPICIOUS OMENS

Perceiving inauspicious omens and embracing Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma, who was knowledgeable about omens, spoke as follows: “We should camp in an area with fresh water and forests with abundant fruits, and then arrange the troops in battle array, O Lakṣmaṇa. I see an imminent formidable danger which indicates worldwide destruction and the slaughter of bears, monkeys and rākṣasas. Dusty winds are blowing, the earth is trembling, mountain peaks are quivering and big trees are falling over. Brutal clouds resembling carnivorous beasts are mercilessly showering rain mixed with drops of blood. The twilight, which resembles red sandalwood paste, is very ominous. A blazing ball of fire is falling from the sun. All about ferocious birds and beasts are facing the sun and wailing pitifully, causing great fear.

“Bereft of light even at night, the moon is producing heat. Having a black and red halo, it has risen as if to announce the destruction of the world. A thin, reddish, inauspicious halo is seen around the sun, and on that spotless sun is a blue spot. Look! The stars obscured by a thick cloud of dust seem to be announcing the destruction of the worlds. Crows, hawks and dastardly vultures are swooping down, and she-jackals are emitting inauspicious howls that are extremely frightful. It seems the earth will be covered with rocks, spears and swords hurled by monkeys and rākṣasas and muddied with flesh and blood. We should at once march with all the monkeys toward the difficult to storm city of Laṅkā which is well-protected by Rāvaṇa.”

Having spoken in this way, Rāma, the crusher of enemies in combat, lead the troops towards Laṅkā. Accompanied by Vibhīṣaṇa and Sugrīva, all the distinguished monkeys sallied forth, roaring for the destruction of their resolute enemies. Rāma was delighted by the actions and intentions of those valiant and chivalrous monkeys who were bent on pleasing Him.

ŚUKA INFORMS RĀVAṆA OF RĀMA'S MILITARY STRENGTH

Arrayed in battle format by King Sugrīva, that army of monkeys looked as beautiful as the star-spangled autumn sky illuminated by a full moon. Being trampled by the mass of troops that was as glorious as the ocean, the earth was frightened and shuddered. The forest-dwelling monkeys then heard a hair-raising tumult of kettle drums and mṛdaṅga drums and boisterous shouts inside Laṅkā. The monkey troop leaders were very pleased by hearing that sound. Unable to hold themselves back, they responded by roaring even louder. Then the rākṣasas heard the monkeys' roaring, which was like the thundering of rain-filled clouds in the sky.

Seeing Laṅkā decorated with multi-colored flags and banners, Rāma thought of Sitā out of mental affliction: "Here is that lady whose eyes resemble those of a fawn, detained by Rāvaṇa, as the star rohiṇī is overwhelmed by the reddish planet Mars." Heaving deep and heated sighs and glancing at Lakṣmaṇa,

the warrior spoke words conducive to His own benefit at that time: "O Lakṣmaṇa, see on the summit of that mountain the elevated city of Laṅkā apparently scraping the sky and which seems to have been created from the mind of Viśvakarmā! Previously this city was constructed with numerous multi-storied buildings. It resembled the abode of Lord Viṣṇu covered with white clouds. Laṅkā is beautified with flowering groves that vie with the heavenly garden Citrathata. They resonate with the sweet songs of birds and provide all kinds of nice fruits and flowers. Just see how the pleasant breeze shakes the boughs of trees crowded with cuckoos, birds in heat and hidden bumblebees." Thus did Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, speak to Lakṣmaṇa. Dividing the army, they camped there according to the recommendations of military writings.

Rāma commanded the monkey army: “The valiant undefeatable Aṅgada should take his troops out of the army and take up a position with Nīla at the center of the formation. Surrounded by his monkey troops, R̥ṣabha should remain stationed on the right flank of the army. Gandhamādana, who is like an elephant in rut, should station himself on the left flank of the monkey army. Accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa, I shall take up a position at the head of the army. Let the three principle leaders of monkeys and bears—Jāmbavān, Suṣeṇa and Vegadarśi—protect the belly of this formation. Let Sugrīva protect the hips and loins on all sides, as the effulgent Varuṇa protects the western direction.”

Well-arrayed in a huge formation and protected by eminent monkeys, the army looked very beautiful, like a mass of clouds. Grabbing mountain peaks and huge trees, the monkeys proceeded toward Laṅkā, keen as they were to destroy it in combat. All the monkeys vowed: “We shall destroy this city of Laṅkā using mountain peaks or our bare fists!” Then the mighty Rāma said to Sugrīva: “The troops are properly arrayed. Set that fellow Śuka free.” When Sugrīva heard Rāma’s command, he released the messenger Śuka. Having been harassed by the monkeys and then released on Rāma’s order, Śuka, who was completely terrified, fled to Rāvaṇa. Seeing him, Rāvaṇa laughed heartily and said: “How did you fasten on these wings? They look as if they have been clipped. I hope you did not fall into the power of those whimsical monkeys.” After being provoked in this way by Rāvaṇa, the terrified Śuka replied as follows:

“Standing in the sky over the northern shore of the ocean, I delivered your message fearlessly, trying to reassure the monkeys with a gentle voice. As soon as the angry monkeys caught sight of me, they jumped up, grabbed me furiously, began beating me with their hands and tried to tear my wings off. One cannot negotiate with them, nor did I have a chance to question them. By nature those monkeys are irascible and violent, O lord of the rākṣasas! Accompanied by Sugrīva, Rāma, the slayer of Virādha, Kabandha and Khara, has come for Sītā. Rāma constructed a bridge across the salt ocean, crossed it, belittled the rākṣasas and is standing with a bow in His hands. Thousands of battalions of monkey and bear hordes resembling mountains or clouds are covering the earth. There is no possibility of a peace

treaty between the rākṣasa army and Sugrīva's army, anymore than it is between the gods and demons. Before they reach the outer defense wall, let them be dealt with in one of two ways: let Sītā be returned to Rāma immediately, or attack them in combat."

Hearing Śuka's suggestion, Rāvaṇa, his eyes red due to anger and glaring as if he would burn Śuka to ashes, replied as follows: "I shall not return Sītā under any circumstance, even if the gods, gandharvas, and demons were to attack me, and not even out of fear of the whole world! When will my arrows race toward Rāma, as intoxicated bees rush toward a flowering tree in springtime? When will blazing arrows shot from my bow burn His blood-drenched body, like an elephant tortured with firebrands? Surrounded by a huge army, I shall eclipse His army, as the sun diminishes the light of all other luminaries. My impetuosity is like the ocean and my strength is like the wind. Rāma does not know this and therefore He wishes to fight with me. Rāma has not seen on a battle field resting in my quiver the arrows which are like venomous serpents, therefore He wishes to fight with me. He has never before known my prowess in combat. Nor does He know my vīṇā-like bow which I pluck using the heads of arrows, nor the tumult raised by my bowstring, the frightful music of anguish caused by those arrows, or the loud whine caused by their steel shafts in flight. I cannot even be defeated by Indra, nor by Varuṇa himself, nor by Yamarāja with his fiery arrows, nor by Kuvera in combat."

RĀVAṆA SENDS ŚUKA AND SĀRAṆA TO SPY ON RĀMA'S ARMY

Once Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, had crossed the ocean with His army of monkeys, Rāvaṇa said to his ministers, Śuka and Sāraṇa: “Rāma has accomplished something unprecedented in that He spanned the ocean with a bridge and the monkey army has crossed. I could never have believed that a bridge could be built across the ocean. Anyway, now we must ascertain the strength of the monkey army. Entering their ranks undetected, you should ascertain the following facts: The size of the army, its strength, who its principle monkeys are, who are the advisors highly esteemed by Rāma and Sugrīva, which monkeys march in the fore of their army, who are their heroes, how they managed to build a bridge across the ocean, how they are camped, as well as Rāma's and Lakṣmaṇa's resolve, prowess and weapons. Also find out who the commander-in-chief of the monkeys is and then come back quickly.”

Assuming the form of monkeys when commanded in this way, Śuka and Sāraṇa entered the ranks of the monkey army. At that time, Śuka and Sāraṇa could not figure out how to count the monkey army, for the number of monkeys was inconceivable and caused one's hair to stand on end. It was camped on mountain peaks, around waterfalls, in caves, along the seashore, and also in forests and gardens. The army either had already crossed the ocean, was in the process of crossing the ocean or was preparing to cross the ocean. Roaring loudly, the army had either set up camp, or was preparing to. The two night-stalkers gazed upon that imperturbable ocean of an army. Vibhīṣaṇa, who possessed special potency, was able to see through the disguise of Śuka and Sāraṇa. Capturing them, he said to Rāma: “Here are Śuka and Sāraṇa, two counselors of Rāvaṇa, who have come from Laṅkā as spies, O conqueror of enemy cities!”

Joining their palms, the two rākṣasas, who were frightened to see Rāma and feeling hopeless about surviving, spoke as follows: “Dear sir, we two have come here, being sent by Rāvaṇa, to discover the exact strength of Your army.” Hearing what they said, Rāma laughed and spoke the following words which were beneficial for all living beings: “If you have seen the exact strength of Our army and have observed us, and if you have accomplished your mission as instructed, then you may go as you please. However, if there is something which you have not yet investigated, you should go and see it again. Vibhīṣaṇa will show you everything in detail. You have no need of fearing for your lives just because you have been arrested. Because you have laid aside your weapons, have been taken captive, and are envoys, you are not deserving of death. O monkeys, set these two night-stalkers who came as spies free, even though they are always seeking some means of dividing our ranks. O rākṣasas, when you return to the great city of Laṅkā, give Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, the following message which I shall now speak:

“Show Me with your army the strength with which you kidnapped Sītā. Tomorrow you will see the city of Laṅkā with its protective walls and arches, as well as its army of rākṣasas, destroyed by My arrows. Tomorrow at day break I shall release My dreadful anger against you and your army, as Indra hurls his thunderbolt at the demons.”

When instructed in this way, the two rākṣasas hailed Rāma with the words “Victory to You!” Returning to Laṅkā, Śuka and Sāraṇa reported to Rāvaṇa as follows: “On seeing that Vibhīṣaṇa had taken us captive to kill us, Rāma, whose mind is devoted to piety, had us set free. Since these four best of persons—Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa and Sugrīva—who are as brave as the protectors of the worlds, skilled in archery and unyielding in prowess are assembled in one place, they are capable of uprooting the city of Laṅkā with its walls and archways, even without the help of the other monkeys. Surely one who possesses the body and weapons which Rāma does could single-handedly destroy the city of Laṅkā, even as the other three stand by. Protected as it is by Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva, that army has become uncheckable even for all the gods and demons. That army of determined monkeys consists of warriors who are eager to fight. Enough of antagonism! Make peace with them. Return Sītā to Rāma!”

RĀVAṆA OBSERVES RĀMA'S ARMY FROM HIS ROOFTOP

Upon hearing Sāraṇa's truthful and courageous entreaty, Rāvaṇa replied as follows: "Even if the gods, gandharvas and dānavas were to attack me, I would not give Sītā back, not even out of fear of the entire world! Because you have been tortured and harassed by the monkeys, O gentle one, you think it wise to presently return Sītā. But who, indeed, is capable of defeating me in battle?" Uttering this brusque declaration, Rāvaṇa climbed to the top of his snow-white palace, which had the height of many palmyra trees, in order to see the enemy army. Surveying the ocean, mountains and forests in the company of those two spies, the infuriated Rāvaṇa saw the surface of the earth completely covered with monkeys. Looking at that great army of monkeys which was unlimited and unstoppable, King Rāvaṇa inquired from Sāraṇa as follows: "Which of these are the principal monkeys? Which ones are heroes and which ones are most powerful? Which ones march in the fore of this multitude of spirited monkeys? Which ones are Sugrīva's advisors and which ones are the commanders of troop commanders? What is the power of these monkeys. Please tell me, Sāraṇa."

Hearing Rāvaṇa's inquiry, Sāraṇa began indicating which ones were the outstanding monkeys: "That monkey who is standing there roaring toward Laṅkā, who is surrounded by one hundred thousand commanders of monkey hordes, whose powerful voice shakes the entire city of Laṅkā with its walls, archways, mountains, forests and groves and who has taken up a position at the head of the army of the great soul Sugrīva—he is the valiant commander known by the name Nīla. That valorous monkey who is stretching his arms as he walks on the ground with his hind feet, who, while facing Laṅkā is grimacing fiercely due to anger, who resembles a mountain peak in size and the filaments of a lotus flower in complexion, who is lashing his tail due to excitement, the sound of which is echoing in all ten directions—he is the crown prince named Aṅgada, who was crowned by Sugriva. He is

challenging you to combat. He is the worthy son of Vālī and very dear to Sugrīva. He is as eager to display his valor for the cause of Rāma as Varuṇa is for Indra. It was all Aṅgada's plan by which the swift Hanumān, a well-wisher of Rāma, was able to find Sītā. Taking many battalions with him, this lord of monkeys is marching forward to crush you.

“Behind Aṅgada stands heroic Nala surrounded by a mighty army on the battlefield. He is the one who built the bridge. He wants to crush Laṅkā with his army. He is followed by those formidable and irate monkeys from the sandalwood forest who possess violent prowess and number ten billion eight hundred thousand that are stiffening their limbs, roaring like lions, bellowing, standing up on their hind feet, and grimacing angrily.

“That wise, silvery monkey of terrible prowess is the heroic Śveta, well-known throughout the three worlds. He approaches Sugrīva, dashes off to divide up the troops, thereby pleasing them greatly, and then returns.

“On the bank of the Gomatī River is a mountain called Saṁrocana, which is covered with many different varieties of trees. Here is the monkey leader named Kumuda who previously used to wander about on that charming mountain, ruling over his kingdom there.

“That monkey who is being followed by hundreds and thousands of monkeys and whose tail hair is long, reddish, yellowish, whitish and terrible-looking, is Caṇḍa, who is anxious to fight. He also wants to destroy Laṅkā with his army.

“The one who is tawny, with long hair, and who looks like a lion, who dwells on the Vindhya, Kṛṣṇagiri, Sahya and Sudarśana Mountains, is the commander named Rambha. Ten million three hundred thousand monkeys who are formidable, violent and fierce are following him to destroy Laṅkā with their strength.

“Look! The one who is stretching his ears and constantly grimacing, who is not afraid of death and does not follow behind an army, who is looking to the side and lashing his tail, who roars like a lion and resides on the charming Sālveya Mountain, is the commander named Śarabha, who

possesses tremendous strength. Under him are one hundred and forty thousand commanders of monkey troops called vihāras, who are very powerful.

“That monkey covering the sky like a cloud, standing there in the midst of monkey heroes like Indra amongst the gods, whose roar is like the booming of kettledrums, who can be heard roaring among the monkeys eager for combat, who resides on the excellent Pāriyātra Mountain and who is very difficult to overcome in combat, is Panasa. He is served by five hundred thousand commanders with their own separate battalions.

“The one who is standing there like another ocean, beautifying the formidable army stationed on the seashore as it jumps up and down, is the commander Vinata. He resembles Dardura mountain and drinks the waters of the Veṇa River. He is followed by six hundred thousand monkey soldiers.

“The monkey named Krodhana is beckoning you to fight. He is in charge of valiant and powerful commanders who have different divisions under them.

“That splendid monkey who is nourishing his body, who is a pale color, who is proud of his strength, who is facing you angrily, considering all the other monkeys as inferior, is known by the name Gavaya. Seven hundred thousand monkeys are at his command and he wishes to destroy Laṅkā with his army. These are the foremost of the commanders of monkey troops, which are innumerable, formidable and heroic. They have different divisions under their command.”

SĀRAṆA DESCRIBES OTHER COMMANDERS TO RĀVAṆA

Sāraṇa continued describing the monkey commanders to Rāvaṇa: “As you look, I shall describe to you the commanders who are valorous on behalf of Rāma and who do not care whether they live. That monkey whose tail has long, glossy hair which is reddish, yellow, brown and white and which is being thrown about and dragged on the ground, that is indeed Hara. His actions are frightful. Lifting up trees and boulders, hundreds and thousands of monkeys commanders who are servants of Sugrīva follow him closely.

“Those warriors whom you see standing about like huge black clouds, who are as dark as black collyrium, whose prowess in combat is unfailing, who cannot be counted any more than the sand in the ocean, much less named, and who live on mountains, on plains and along rivers, are ferocious bears advancing toward you. O king, the fierce-eyed and dreadful-looking warrior standing in their midst and surrounded on all sides by bears, as Parjanya is by clouds, is known by the name Dhūmra. He dwells on Rkṣavān, the best of mountains, and drinks the water of the Narmadā River. He is the lord of all the bears.

“Then there is Dhūmra’s younger brother, who, though similar in appearance, surpasses him in prowess. Just see how he resembles a mountain! His name is Jāmbavān and he is the commander of many troop commanders. He is very peaceful, devoted to his superiors and impetuous in war. In the war between the gods and demons, the wise Jāmbavān rendered great assistance to Lord Indra and thereupon received many boons. His troops are like rākṣasas and piśācas in ferocity. They are shaggy-haired and energetic, roaming about in large numbers. Climbing the peaks of mountains, they hurl gigantic boulders as big as clouds and do not fear death.

“This lord of monkeys, who is a commander of troop commanders, and at whom all the monkeys stand gazing, even when he angrily jumps or stands still, is named Rambha. Accompanied by his army he serves Lord Indra.

“The monkey who, while moving, can touch with his flanks a mountain one yojana away, who can reach something one yojana high with his body, whose form is bigger than any four-footed beast, is known as Sannādana, the grandfather of the monkeys. Once he challenged Lord Indra in combat, but was not defeated. Such is that commander of troop commanders.

“This glorious and best of monkeys, whose prowess as he marches for combat is equal to that of Indra, who was engendered by the fire-god through a gandharva maiden in order to help the gods in a conflict between them and the demons, is named Krathana. He is always boastful in war, enjoys himself residing on Mount Kailāsa, which is frequented by Kinnaras and on which also resides Rāvaṇa’s half-brother Kuvera sitting under a Jambu tree. Standing firm, he is surround by hundreds of millions of monkeys and desires to destroy Laṅkā with his army.

“This commander who is roaring and uprooting trees, remembering the enmity between elephants and monkeys, roams along the Ganges River, blocking the passage of elephant herd leaders, terrifying them. Taking shelter of Mount Uśīrabīja along the Ganges and residing in mountain caves, and now on Mount Mandara, this is the irresistible Pramāthī, a leader of monkey troops, who rivals Lord Indra in heaven. One hundred million extremely strong roaring monkeys proud of their courage follow him. He alone is their leader, whom you see there like a cloud propelled by wind, as well as his furious army of swift monkeys which is raising a reddish cloud of dust being scattered all about by the wind.

“Here are black-faced Golāṅgula monkeys with long tails. They are formidable and extremely powerful, and number ten million. Having witnessed the construction of the bridge, they are surrounding their commander named Gavākṣa, who is also a Golāṅgula, and are roaring fiercely for the destruction of Laṅkā.

“That outstanding troop commander is named Kesarī. He enjoys himself on the charming Mount Sumeru, the best of mountains, whose trees bear all desirable fruits in all seasons and are swarming with honeybees. That mountain is as splendrous as the sun and the sun circumambulated it clockwise. Because of its birds and beasts, it appears golden. The great sages who reside there never forsake its slopes. Its trees, which can fulfill all desires, produce highly prized honey.

“There are sixty thousand beautiful mountains which are made of gold. In their midst stands the foremost of them—Sāvaṇṇi-Meru, as you do among the rākṣasas. On the last of those mountains dwell monkeys that are brown, white, reddish and yellow like honey. They have sharp teeth, claws as weapons, four fangs like lions and are as dangerous to approach as tigers. They are all like fire or like venomous snakes with blazing mouths. Their long tails are raised and they look like elephants in rut. They look like big mountains and are thundering like clouds. They have round yellowish eyes and are creating a dreadful sound as they march. They are all standing as if they would destroy your city of Laṅkā as soon as they look at it.

“O king, there in their midst stands the brave leader known in this world by the name Śatabali. He is wise and desirous of victory, worshiping the sun-god every day for that purpose. He also wishes to destroy the city of Laṅkā with his army. Courageous, strong and intrepid, he is dependent on his own strength. He would not spare even his own life in order to please Rāma. Then there are Gaja, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Nala and Nīla. Each of them is surrounded by one hundred million warriors. Similarly, there are other outstanding monkeys who inhabit the Vindhya Mountains. Those swift-moving monkeys cannot be counted because of their quantity. All of them are extremely powerful, O king. All of them have bodies like big mountains and can flatten the earth in a second, shattering its mountains and scattering them on the ground.”

ŚUKA DESCRIBES THE MONKEY COMMANDERS

When Sāraṇa finished speaking and was silent, Śuka began speaking to Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas: “These monkeys whom you see standing like elephants in rut, banyan trees on the banks of the Ganges, or sāla trees in the Himalaya Mountains, are unbearable, strong, and can change their appearance as they wish, O king. They are like daityas and dānavas and have the same prowess in battle as the gods. There are many billions of these monkeys, who are allies of Sugrīva. They reside at Kiṣkindhā, were engendered by gods and gandharvas, and can change their form at will.

“The two monkeys whom you see standing there, who resemble each other and look like gods, are Mainda and Dvidida. No one is equal to them in battle. With Brahmā’s permission, they drank the nectar of immortality. These two wish to destroy the city of Laṅkā.

“The monkey whom you see over there resembling an elephant in rut and who could stir up the ocean is the one who came to Laṅkā looking for Sītā. Just see the outstanding son of Kesarī who is said to be engendered by the wind-god. He is known as Hanumān, who previously jumped across the ocean. He can assume any form as he pleases. He is endowed with strength and beauty and his movement cannot be impeded any more than the mighty wind.

“When he was but a child and was hungry, he saw the sun and decided to eat it in order to assuage his hunger. He jumped into the sky a distance of three thousand yojanas, proud as he was of his strength. Unable to reach the sun, which is inaccessible even for gods, sages and rākṣasas, he fell down to the eastern mountain. Falling down on a rock, his jaw (hanu) was slightly fractured. After it healed and was solid, he became known as Hanumān. I learned about this monkey from the other monkeys with whom

I had contact. His strength, beauty and glory are indescribable. He wants to single-handedly destroy Laṅkā with his strength.

“Furthermore, this warrior Rāma, who is swarthy, whose eyes are like the petals of a lotus flower, who is a great chariot fighter from the Ikṣvāku Dynasty, whose bravery is well-known in the world, whose virtue never wavers, who never transgresses righteousness, who knows how to use the brahmāstra weapon, who is the best of the knowers of the Vedas, who can split open the sky with His arrows, or even tear open the earth, whose anger is like that of the lord of death, whose prowess is like that of Indra’s, whose consort, Sītā, you abducted from Janasthāna, is advancing toward you.

“Standing on Rāma’s right side is the one named Lakṣmaṇa, who is radiant as refined gold. He has a broad chest, reddish eyes and dark, curly hair. He is devoted to His brother’s pleasure and welfare. He is skilled in politics and warfare, and is the most expert wielder of all kinds of weapons. He is unforgiving to His enemies, difficult to overcome, victorious, valorous and strong. He has always been Rāma’s right arm, an external manifestation of Rāma’s own life force. He is willing to risk his life for Rāma’s purpose. He also wishes to annihilate all the rākṣasas in combat.

“The one who is standing on the left side of Rāma and is surrounded by rākṣasas is in fact Vibhīṣaṇa. Having been crowned king of Laṅkā by the glorious Rāma, he is infuriated and is marching toward you for an encounter.

“Sugrīva, whom you see standing in the middle like an immovable mountain, is the lord of all the monkey chieftains. He has immeasurable energy and outshines all the other monkeys in glory, fame, intelligence, strength and pedigree, as do the Himalaya Mountains. He resides with his principal ministers at Kiṣkindhā, a mountain cave thickly crowded with trees and difficult to reach because of the mountains. Around his neck he wears a necklace of gold which is desired by men and gods. It is engraved with one hundred lotus flowers and the image of Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune. This chain, the consort Tārā, and sovereignty over the monkeys was granted to him by Rāma after the former killed Vālī.

“The wise have given the following numerical divisions. A lakṣa is one hundred thousand. One hundred thousand multiplied by one hundred is a koṭi. A lakṣa of koṭis is a śaṅku. A lakṣa of śaṅkus is a mahāśaṅku. A lakṣa of mahāśaṅkus is a vṛnda. A lakṣa of vṛndas is a mahāvṛnda. A lakṣa of mahāvṛndas is a padma. A lakṣa of padmas is a mahāpadma. A lakṣa of mahāpadmas is a kharva. A lakṣa of kharvas is a mahākharva. A lakṣa of mahākharvas is a samudra. A lakṣa of samudras is an ogha. A lakṣa of oghas is a mahaugha. According to these calculations, Sugrīva is surrounded by monkeys in the following configurations: one thousand koṭis, one hundred śaṅkus, one thousand mahāśaṅkus, one hundred vṛndas, one thousand mahāvṛndas, one hundred padmas, one thousand mahāpadmas, one hundred kharvas, one hundred samudras, one hundred mahaughas, and one hundred koṭis of mahaugas. He is also accompanied by Vibhiṣaṇa and his followers. That ruler of monkeys Sugrīva is following you to fight with you and is surrounded by his huge army. O king, observing this army which is approaching like a blazing comet, a tremendous effort should be made to ensure your victory and that no inconvenience is caused by the enemy.”

RĀVAṆA SENDS ŚĀRDULA TO SPY

Rāvaṇa's heart was a little disturbed and he became angry when he saw all the persons pointed out by Śuka: the monkey troop commanders, the courageous Lakṣmaṇa standing on the right side of Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa standing nearby Rāma, Sugrīva, the ruler of all the monkeys, whose prowess for dreadful, the mighty Aṅgada, son of Vālī, the valiant Hanumān, Jāmbavān who was difficult to defeat, as well as Suṣeṇa, Kumuda, Nīla, Nala, Gaja, Gavākṣa, Śarabha, Mainda and Dvivida. Then Rāvaṇa reprimanded the two warriors—Śuka and Sāraṇa—when they finished speaking. His voice quavering from anger, he spoke irately and harshly to the two rākṣasas, who stood with their heads bowed:

“It is not at all proper that dependent ministers should utter unpalatable words in the presence of a king who has the power to give punishment or rewards. What is proper for you to praise enemies who are advancing toward us to fight? Your service to teachers, parents and elders was fruitless because you did not learn that essence of political wisdom which must be observed. Even if you did learn it, you did not remember it. Instead you are bearing a burden of ignorance. It is only by good luck that I have been able to maintain sovereignty despite the association of ministers as foolish as you two. Were you not haunted with the fear of death when you spoke such insolent words to me, your lord, whose tongue can bestow good or bad fortune? Although some trees in a forest may remain standing after a fire, no wrong-doer can escape punishment at the hands of a ruler. I would certainly have killed these two sinful wretches who praise my enemies, if my anger had not been mitigated by the service they rendered me in the past. Get out of my palace! Vanish from my presence! I do not wish to kill you because I remember the service you have rendered. Even so, you two are as good as dead, ungrateful as you are and lacking affection for me.”

Staring at him as he spoke to them in that way, the two humiliated ministers exclaimed, “Victory to you!” and withdrew. Rāvaṇa then said to the

rākṣasa Mahodara, who was standing nearby: “Immediately bring me some spies!” The night-stalker Mahodara at once summoned spies. Quickly arriving in obedience to the king’s command, the spies stood waiting with joined palms while encouraging the king with shouts of “Victory!” Then Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, spoke to those spies who were trustworthy, heroic, determined and fearless: “Leave here to discover the plans of Rāma and those who are His close advisors drawn to Him out of affection. After finding out everything about Him—what time He goes to bed, what time He wakes up and what He intends to do today—report to me here. Wise monarchs can easily repel attacking enemies about whom everything has been learned through spies.”

Saying, “So be it!” and choosing Śārdūla as their leader, the excited spies circumambulated Rāvaṇa. After doing so, they went where Rāma was with Lakṣmaṇa. Approaching Mount Suvēla in disguise, they saw Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa. Seeing that army, they became overwhelmed with fear. Meanwhile, they were discovered by the righteous rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa, lord of the rākṣasas. Suddenly standing there, Vibhīṣaṇa reprimanded them. Only Śārdūla was arrested because he was the most sinful rākṣasa. The other rākṣasas were released by the merciful Rāma, and even as Śārdūla was being beaten by the monkeys, Rāma released him also. Harried by the audacious and swift monkeys, the rākṣasas returned to Laṅkā panting and stunned. Coming before the ten-headed Rāvaṇa, the spies who were habituated to wandering outside, announced that Rāma’s army was camped in the vicinity of Mount Suvēla.

ŚĀRDULA INFORMS RĀVAṆA ABOUT THE MONKEY ARMY

The spies then proceeded to inform Rāvaṇa about Rāma's having camped with his unflinching army on Mount Suvela. When Rāvaṇa heard from his spies how the mighty Rāma had reached the precincts of Lāṅkā, he was slightly annoyed and said to Śārdūla: "O night-stalker, you look a little pale and somber. I hope you were not caught by our ireful enemies." When questioned thus, Śārdūla, who was overwhelmed with fear, softly replied: "O king, no one can spy on those monkeys, for they are courageous, strong and completely protected by Rāma, the descendant of the Raghu Dynasty. One cannot talk to them, nor even question them, for their ways of access are guarded on all sides by monkeys as big as mountains. I barely penetrated their ranks and began to spy when I was detected by Vibhīṣaṇa's rākṣasa ministers, who then forced me to march around in various ways. I was terribly thrashed from all sides with knees, fists, teeth and palms by the intolerant monkeys and forcefully dragged about their camp. Then they took me to an assembly presided over by Rāma. My whole body was injured and bleed and my senses were wavering. As the monkeys beat me, I begged for clemency with joined palms, and was unexpectedly spared by Rāma, who said: 'Let him live!' Having filled the ocean with chunks of mountains, Rāma has reached the gates of Lāṅkā and is standing there armed with weapons. After arraying His troops in the form of an eagle, surrounding Himself with monkeys, and setting me free, He is advancing toward Lāṅkā. Before He reaches the walls of the city you should do one of two things: either return Sītā immediately or attack them."

When Rāvaṇa heard that, he thought about it for a while, then he spoke the following weighty words to Śārdūla: "Even if the gods, gandharvas and dānavas were to wage war against me, I would not return Sītā, not even out of fear of the whole world." Then Rāvaṇa, who possessed tremendous strength, continued speaking: "O rākṣasa, you have spied on the army.

Which monkeys are stalwart heroes? What are those inapproachable monkeys like? What is their strength? Whose sons and grandsons are they? Tell me factually. After knowing their strengths and weaknesses, I shall make a relevant decision. Indeed, one who wishes to fight needs to make such calculations.”

When questioned in this way, Śārdūla, the foremost of spies, replied to Rāvaṇa: “First of all, O king, there is the son of R̥kṣarāja known as Sugriva, who is very difficult to defeat. And here is the son of Gadgada, known by the name Jāmbavān. Here is another son of Gadgada, known as Dhūmra. There is the son of Bṛhaspati, known by the name Kesari. His son Hanumān single-handedly caused a holocaust of rākṣasas. And there is the valiant son of Dharma, the righteous Suṣeṇa. Then there is the calm monkey Dadhimukha, engendered by Soma. There are Sumukha, Durmukha and Vedadarśi. Surely they were created in the image of death by Lord Brahmā. There is Nīla, the commander-in-chief himself, born as the son of the fire-god. And there is son of the wind-god, widely known as Hanumān. The youthful Aṅgada is the grandson of Lord Indra and is powerful and difficult to overcome. Mainda and Dvividā are the two sons of the Aśvinī-kumāras. Then there are Gaja, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Śarabha and Gandhamādāna, who are the five sons of the sun-god and are like all-destructive time. Moreover, there are one hundred million monkeys who are heroic, eager for battle, glorious and engendered by the gods. I am unable to describe the rest.”

“There is Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha. His fine body is like that of a lion, and He is the one who killed Dūṣaṇa, Khara and Trīśirā. There is no one who can match Him in prowess, for He killed Virādha and Kabandha and is like the lord of death himself. No human being in this world can describe the qualities of Rāma, who slew as many as there were rākṣasas living at Janasthāna. And here is righteous Lakṣmaṇa, who is like the greatest of all elephants. Even Indra could not survive if he came in the way of Lakṣmaṇa’s arrows. Here are Śveta and Jyotirmukha, sons of the sun-god. Then there is Hemakūṭa, son of Varuṇa. The fine monkey Nala is the valorous son of Viśvakarmā. Then there is Durdhara, the gallant and impetuous son of Vasu. Also there is your younger brother Vibhiṣaṇa, the best of the rākṣasas. Having been promised the city of Laṅkā by Rāma,

Vibhīṣaṇa is devoted to His welfare. Thus have I concluded describing the entire monkey army camped at Mount Suvela. Now it is up to you to do what remains to be done.”

RĀVAṆA FRIGHTENS SĪTĀ WITH RĀMA'S HEAD

Spies returning to Laṅkā informed Rāvaṇa that Rāma's unrepulsable army had set up camp at Mount Suvēla. When Rāvaṇa heard from his spies that Rāma had reached Laṅkā, he felt a little distraught and said to his ministers: "Let all my counselors come here immediately! Now is the time for us to seek advice, O rākṣasas!" When his counselors heard his command, they promptly came. Then he began to confer with his rākṣasas counselors. After discussing with them for some time and then dismissing them, he entered his own residential quarters. Taking with him the mighty Vidyujjihva, who was skilled in deceptive tricks of illusion, Rāvaṇa went in to where Sītā was. Rāvaṇa said to Vidyujjihva: "The two of us shall deceive Sītā with an illusory trick. O night-stalker, you should come before me, carrying an illusory head of Rāma, along with His bow and an arrow."

When commanded in this way, Vidyujjihva said: "So be it!" He then showed Rāvaṇa his skillfully performed trick of deception. Rāvaṇa was very pleased with him and gifted him a valuable ornament. Longing to see Sītā, the mighty lord of the rākṣasas entered the aśoka grove. Then Rāvaṇa, the younger brother of Kuvera, saw the wretched princess of Mithilā. Although She did not deserve to suffer, She was sitting on the ground of the aśoka grove drowning in sorrow with Her head hanging down. She was constantly thinking of Her husband and was being served by hideous rākṣasīs close by. Approaching Her, Rāvaṇa happily mentioned his name and spoke the following arrogant words to Sītā:

"O blessed lady, that husband of Yours, who killed Khara and because of whom You have been disrespectful to me as I have been coaxing You, has been slain in combat. Your roots have been shorn off and Your pride crushed by Me! O Sītā, by Your own misfortune You will become my wife. Give up Your present mentality, O foolish woman! What will You do with

Your dead husband? Become the mistress of all my wives. You have very little pious merit, for Your goal has not been achieved, O fool who thinks Herself wise! Listen to the horrible way in which Your husband was killed, just as Vṛtrāsura was by Indra.

“Surrounded by a huge army gathered by Sugrīva, Rāma duly crossed the ocean to kill me, so they say. As the sun was about to set, He set up camp with His great army on the northern coast of the ocean. Going at midnight to the army, which was fast asleep due to exhaustion from travelling, my spies reconnoitered it. In the night, my huge army lead by Prahasta slaughtered the army where Rāma was camped with Lakṣmaṇa. Repeatedly lifting up scimitars, iron bars, discuses, javelins, rods, huge weapons, bundles of arrows, spears, sparkling maces bristling with spikes, billets, iron clubs, lances, and cudgels, the rākṣasas hurled them at the monkeys.

“Then, as Rāma was lying asleep, the violent Prahasta chopped His head off with a big sword. He effortlessly captured Vibhīṣaṇa, while Lakṣmaṇa and the monkey troops fled in all directions. The monkey chieftain Sugrīva had his neck broken. Hanumān is lying with his jaw smashed. As Jāmbavān jumped up, he was hit in the knees by many scimitars and cut down like a tree. Mainda and Dvidida were both soaked in blood, breathing hard and moaning, having been stabbed in the stomach with swords. Slit open like a ripe jackfruit, Panasa is lying on the ground gasping for air. Having been pierced by many steel arrows, Darīmukha is lying in a glen. The once valorous Kumuda is shrieking, having been struck down by arrows. When the rākṣasas reached Aṅgada, they pierced him with many arrows from all sides. He is now lying on the ground vomiting blood.

“As they were sleeping, other monkeys were crushed to death by elephants and contingents of chariots, as clouds are decimated by the force of the wind. Like big elephants being pursued by lions, the monkeys fled in fear while being struck from behind by the rākṣasas. Some jumped into the ocean, while others leapt into the sky. Imitating the ways of monkeys, the bears climbed up trees. Many more yellow-eyed monkeys were slain by the rākṣasas on the seashore, on mountains and in forests. Thus my army annihilated Your husband along with His forces. His blood-drenched and dusty head has been brought here.”

Then Rāvaṇa said to a rākṣasī who was within hearing range of Sītā: “Please bring the ruthless Vidyujjihva, who has personally brought Rāma’s head from the battlefield.” When Vidyujjihva came, he stood before Rāvaṇa, bowing his head out of respect as he held Rāma’s head and bow. King Rāvaṇa said to Vidyujjihva, who had a long tongue: “Immediately put Rāma’s head in front of Sītā! Let the unfortunate wretch see the final condition of Her husband.” When ordered in that way, the rākṣasa placed the handsome head near Sītā and quickly vanished. Then Rāvaṇa threw down Rāma’s huge and resplendent bow, saying: “Here is Your Rāma’s bow with its string which was brought here by Prahasta after slaughtering that human last night.” Throwing it on the ground where Vidyujjihva had placed the head, Rāvaṇa then said to Sītā: “Submit to me!”

SĪTĀ WAILS AT THE SIGHT OF RĀMA'S HEAD

Upon seeing that head and excellent bow, remembering the alliance of Rāma with Sugrīva as mentioned by Hanumān, and noticing the resemblance of the eyes, face, complexion, hair, curls and crest-jewel to those of Her husband, Sītā became overwhelmed and cried like a female osprey. She condemned Kaikeyī in the following words: “Be satisfied, Kaikeyī! The delight of His family is dead. Habituated as you are to quarreling, you have destroy His entire dynasty. I wonder what offense Rāma committed against Kaikeyī that He was exiled to the forest with Me after giving Him tree bark cloth to wear?” Trembling as She said this, the austere princess fell on the ground like a banana tree when cut down. Regaining consciousness after a while and gaining control of Her, She began to lament as follows as She sat near the head:

“I am finished, O You who were devoted to a heroic vow! Because of Your final situation, I have become a widow. It is said that the death of the husband before the wife is a catastrophe. You, a man of virtuous actions, have left before Me, a woman engaged in acts of piety! Even You who were intent on rescuing Me have met with great misfortune, sunken into an ocean of sorrow and been slain. My mother-in-law Kausalyā has been separated from You, even though she was so fond of You, as a cow is separated from her calf. Astrologers predicted that You would have a long life. Their prediction has proven wrong because You had a short life, O descendant of the Raghu Dynasty! Or, even though You were very wise, You lost Your intelligence, just as time, which is the cause of everything, puts an end to all living beings. How did You meet with an unforeseen death when You were learned in the science of polity, conversant with the means of warding off calamities and skilled in doing so? Snatching You away from Me and tightly embracing You, the cruel and merciless darkness of death has taken You away!

“Having abandoned Me, O best of men, You are lying here embracing the earth as if she were very dear. Here is Your bow adorned with gold filigree which was so dear to Me and which I always used to worship with fragrant sandalwood paste and flower garlands. You must have been reunited with Your father, King Daśaratha, and all Your other forefathers in heaven. Now You can see Your own virtuous dynasty of royal sages who by their meritorious deeds shine like stars in heaven. Why do You not look at Me, O king! Why do You not answer Me, who was won by You in My youth as Your companion? Remember Your promise when You accepted My hand in marriage that You would practice virtue and take Me with You when You went to heaven. After taking Me with You to the forest, why have You left this world for the next, abandoning Me? That body of Yours which was deserving of the finest accouterments and which I used to embrace is surely being dragged around by carnivorous beasts. Why are You not having a proper cremation ceremony when You have previously performed elaborate sacrifices, such as agniṣṭoma, in which You satisfied the priests with proper remuneration? Of the three of Us who went into exile, Your grief-stricken mother Kausalyā will only see Lakṣmaṇa return. When she inquires from Him about You, He will surely tell her how the rākṣasas attacked Your ally Sugrīva’s army at night and killed You. When she learns that You were killed while asleep and that I am being held captive in Rāvaṇa’s palace, she will not be able to survive due to her heart being broken. After crossing the ocean for the sake of my unworthy self, the sinless and courageous Prince Rāma was killed in the hoofprint of a calf. Rāma married Me out of ignorance, for I am the disgrace of My family. The wife has caused the death of Rāma, the virtuous son of King Daśaratha. Surely in a previous birth I obstructed a marriage so that now I, though wed to one who was hospitable to all, am grieving here. O Rāvaṇa, please let me throw Myself over Rāma’s body. Perform the highly virtuous act of uniting a wife with her husband. Join My head with His, My body with His. O Rāvaṇa, I shall follow the path tread by My husband.”

Thus did the broad-eyed Sītā lament, burning as She was with sorrow, looking at Her husband’s head and bow. While Sītā was lamenting in this way, a rākṣasa approached his master Rāvaṇa with joined palms. Greeting Rāvaṇa with the words, “Victory to you, O noble one!” and

pleasing him, the rākṣasa informed him that the commander-in-chief Prahasta had arrived, saying: “Accompanied by all the ministers, Prahasta seeks your audience. I have been sent by him who is eager to see you, my lord! Surely there is some urgent matter to be taken care of, O king distinguished by the characteristics of royalty. Please give them audience.”

When Rāvaṇa heard this, he left the aśoka grove to see his counselors. Having learned about Rāma’s prowess and deciding what course of action to take in consultation with his counselors, Rāvaṇa prepared to act. As soon as Rāvaṇa left, the illusory head and bow disappeared. In consultation with his ministers whose prowess was dreadful, Rāvaṇa reached a conclusion regarding what course of action to take against Rāma. Rāvaṇa spoke the following opportune words to the troop commanders who were his well-wishers and who stood nearby: “Immediately summon before me all the troops with the sound of kettledrums being beaten with sticks. Do not divulge the reason for summoning the forces.” Accepting his command with the words “So be it!” the messengers at once assembled a huge army and informed their bellicose lord that the army was waiting.

SARAMĀ ASSURES SĪTĀ THAT RĀMA IS ALIVE

Seeing Sītā bewildered, a certain rākṣasī name Saramā, who was full of love for Sītā, approached her dear friend. The sweet-speaking Saramā then consoled Sītā, who was in great anxiety and completely perplexed due to Rāvaṇa's illusory trick. Having been instructed by Rāvaṇa, Saramā was guarding Sītā. Because she was caring for Sītā and was compassionate and resolute, Sītā had made friends with her. Saramā saw that Sītā was mentally deranged and sitting up after rolling in the dust like a mare.

Out of feelings of friendship, Saramā tried to comfort Sītā, saying: "Cheer up, O princess of Videha! Do not let Your mind be disturbed! Out of friendship with You, I heard everything that Rāvaṇa said to You and what You replied to him. For Your sake, O broad-eyed lady, I was hiding in a solitary bush without any fear of Rāvaṇa. Indeed, my life is not that dear to me. I was able to fully ascertain why Rāvaṇa became irritated and left. It is not possible to kill Rāma, a knower of the self, while He sleeps. It is not possible to kill that tiger among men under any circumstance. Moreover, the monkeys, being accustomed to fighting with trees, could not have been killed while sleeping, protected as they are by Rāma, as the gods are by Indra.

"Having long round arms, a broad chest, beautiful limbs, the glorious and dynamic archer Rāma is famous in this world for being righteous. With His younger brother Lakṣmaṇa, He is always capable of protecting Himself and others. He is well-born, is learned in the practice of politics, is the slayer of hostile armies, possesses inconceivable strength and manliness and is the vanquisher of enemies. O Sītā, that glorious Rāma has not been killed! This was just an act of deception by the wicked Rāvaṇa, whose intelligence is perverse and who is hostile to all living beings. Your sorrow is now past and all good fortune awaits You. The goddess of fortune

Lakṣmī will serve You and something good will happen to You. Listen! After crossing the ocean with an army of monkeys, Rāma has set up camp on the northern shore of Laṅkā. I have seen Rāma, who achieves all His goals, along with Lakṣmaṇa. He is being protected by the army present there on the seashore. Indeed, the swift-footed rākṣasas which Rāvaṇa dispatched have returned with the news that Rāma has crossed the ocean. Hearing this news, O broad-eyed lady, Rāvaṇa is consulting right now with all of his advisors.”

While talking with Sītā, Saramā heard the frightful sound of the army making preparations for war. Hearing the rumbling of kettledrums being beaten with sticks, she sweetly said to Sītā: “O timid woman, now the dreadful kettledrums are being beaten! Hear that deep and frightful sound like the thundering of clouds! Elephants in rut are being outfitted and horses are being hitched to chariots. Thousands of horsemen can be seen carrying spears in their hands. Ready for combat, foot soldiers are running here and there. The main roads are crowded with amazing-looking soldiers who are rushing and roaring like torrents of water entering the ocean. See the luster of polished weapons, shields and coats of mail shimmering with many colors like the brilliance of a fire burning a forest during a hot spell. See the rush of chariots, horses, elephants and rākṣasas who are thrilled and brisk following the lord of rākṣasas. Hear the tolling of bells and the rumbling of chariots! Hear the neighing of horses accompanying the blasts of horns! This tumult of preparations for war is being generated by the rākṣasas as they follow their lord with upraised weapons. Good fortune which will mitigate Your sorrow awaits You, while a hair-raising danger is approaching the rākṣasas.

“The lotus-eyed Rāma, who is unconquerable, who has conquered anger and whose prowess is inconceivable, will kill Rāvaṇa in combat. Having done so, Your husband will take You back. In the company of Lakṣmaṇa, Your husband will show His prowess against the rākṣasas, as Indra did to his enemies with the assistance of Viṣṇu. Once the enemies are slain, I will shortly thereafter see You seated on Rāma’s lap with all Your goals accomplished. When You are reunited with Him, He will embrace You to His broad chest and You will shed tears of joy, O Sītā. Before long, O lady, Rāma will unknot Your single braid of hair, which has grown long and matted after many months, now reaching Your buttocks. Seeing His face

which resembles a full moon, You will be free from grief, as a female snake casts off her slough. Very soon Rāma will kill Rāvaṇa in combat. Then He will enjoy happiness in the company of You, His beloved. Being reunited with that righteous hero, You will enjoy just as the earth produces bounteous grains when drenched with plentiful rains. Now take shelter of the sun-god, who while circumambulating Mount Meru, moves quickly like a horse, for he is the source of all living things.”

SARAMĀ DISCLOSES RĀVAṆA'S PLANS TO SĪTĀ

Thus Sītā, who had been bewildered by Rāvaṇa's words and was consequently suffering, was gladdened by Saramā, as the parched earth is by a rain cloud. Wishing to do some good for her friend Sītā, Saramā, who knew when to act and who always smiled before speaking, said: "I am able to go to where Rāma is, deliver Him a message from You, inform Him of Your well-being and return unseen, O dark-eyed one! Neither the wind nor Garuḍa can follow me when I course through the sky without any support." Sītā then replied to Saramā with the following sweet and gentle words:

"You can ascend into the sky or into the subterranean nether region. Understand what duty you have to perform now for Me. If you are willing to do what is pleasing to Me and are of firm resolve, then I wish to know what Rāvaṇa is planning to do. Rāvaṇa, who makes his enemies shriek, is cruel and a mighty master of illusion. The wicked scoundrel bewildered Me in the same way as the consumption of alcoholic beverages. He is having Me threatened all the time, and occasionally terrified also, and has Me constantly guarded by the most hideous rākṣasīs. I am disturbed and apprehensive and My mind is not at ease. Because of that fear, I am in anxiety, even though I am staying in this aśoka grove. Whatever he discusses or decides, inform Me about it fully. That would be most kind thing for Me."

Saramā then wiped the tears from Sītā's face and said: "If this is what You wish, then I shall go, O daughter of King Janaka! Finding out what his plans are, I shall return." Saying this, Saramā went near Rāvaṇa and overheard him discussing with his ministers. After understanding what Rāvaṇa's plans were, she hurried back to the charming aśoka grove. When Saramā entered the grove, she saw Sītā waiting for her, like the goddess of fortune without a lotus flower. Embracing Saramā, Sītā kindly offered Her

own seat, saying: “Sit here comfortably and tell Me in detail what the cruel and wicked Rāvaṇa has decided.”

When requested in this way by Sītā, Saramā repeated what Rāvaṇa had discussed with his ministers: “O Sītā, Rāvaṇa’s mother, Kaikasī, advised him to set You free. A very sympathetic and elderly rākṣasa also did the same. They said: ‘After offering the prince appropriate honor, return Sītā to Him. The amazing feat which He accomplished at Janasthāna should serve as a sufficient warning to you. What ordinary mortal could jump across the ocean, find Sītā and slaughter so many rākṣasas in combat as Hanumān did?’ Even though advised in this way by elderly counselors and his own mother, Rāvaṇa could not bear releasing You, anymore than a miser could his wealth.

“O Sītā, Rāvaṇa is not willing to give You up unless killed in battle. Such is the decision of that merciless rākṣasa solidified by consultation with his ministers. Because of his infatuation with death, he has made this decision. Because of fear, he cannot release You until the destruction of all the rākṣasas and himself in combat. After slaying Rāvaṇa with sharp arrows in an encounter, Rāma will take You back to Ayodhyā, O dark-eyed lady!”

Meanwhile, there was heard the din of all the monkey forces accompanied by the sound of kettledrums and conchshells. Hearing the tumult raised by the monkey army, Rāvaṇa’s servants in Laṅkā lost their energy and became morose. Because of the error of their king, they could not expect any good fortune.

MĀLYAVĀN URGES RĀVAṆA TO MAKE PEACE

Hearing the beating of drums mixed with the blowing of conchshells, Rāma, the conqueror of enemy cities, sallied forth. Reflecting for a while when he heard that uproar, Rāvaṇa then looked at his ministers and spoke to them, causing the chamber hall to resound. Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas and scourge of the world, spoke as follows: “I have heard from you about Rāma’s having crossed the ocean, as well as about His prowess and great strength. I also know you whose prowess is unfailing in battle stood staring at each other silently when you learned of Rāma’s prowess.”

Upon hearing what Rāvaṇa said, a rākṣasa named Mālyavān, who was his maternal grandfather and exceedingly wise, directed the following words to Rāvaṇa: “O king, that monarch who is learned in all subjects and follows the path of discretion rules for a long time and subdues his enemies. Making peace or contending with enemies as the time demands and strengthening his own party, he enjoys tremendous power. One who is losing power or is equally matched should make peace. He should under no circumstance underestimate his enemy and should wage war if he is in a position of strength. As such, O Rāvaṇa, I think it best that we make peace with Rāma. Return Sītā, for whose sake you are being attacked, back to Rāma. All the celestial sages and gandharvas wish Him victory. Do not confront Him but make peace with Him. Indeed, the great Lord Brahmā created but two classes of beings: the divine and the demoniac who are respectively devoted to virtue and vice. On the side of the great-souled immortals there is righteousness, and on the side of the demons and rākṣasas there is unrighteousness. When Kṛtayuga begins, righteousness eclipses unrighteousness. But during Kaliyuga unrighteousness eclipses righteousness. While wandering the worlds, you obliterated righteousness. Because you took up unrighteousness, our enemies are in a stronger

position. Augmented by this error, this serpent of unrighteousness will surely devour us, and righteousness will advance the position of the gods.

“Attached to sense gratification and doing whatever you please, you have greatly harassed the sages who are just like fire. Their power is difficult to overcome, like a blazing fire. Having purified themselves through the practice of austerities, they are dedicated to the attainment of virtue. Those twice-born ones worship by performing the important sacrifices, and offer oblations into the sacred fire according to scriptural directions and recite the Vedas. After subduing the rākṣasas, the sages chant the transcendental hymns of the Vedas, which causes the rākṣasas to flee in all directions, like rain clouds during the dry season. The smoke rising from the sacrificial fires of the effulgent sages is enveloping the ten directions and reducing the strength of the rākṣasas. The austerities which the sages of firm vows are practicing in all the different holy places is tormenting the rākṣasas. You received a boon by which you could not be killed by gods, dānavas or yakṣas. Yet now mighty humans, monkeys, bears and long-tailed apes have come here with a big army, roaring and full of ferocity.

“Seeing many different kinds of dreadful evil omens, I foresee the destruction of all the rākṣasas. Grim clouds arousing fear are thundering fiercely and showering hot blood all over Laṅkā. The beasts of burden are shedding tears. The directions, being dim and covered with dust, are not very clear as they used to be. Jackals and vultures are emitting fearful cries. Having entered the city of Laṅkā, they are constantly gathering together in groups. In our dreams dark-blue women with yellow teeth are laughing after looting our homes and vilifying us. Dogs devour the offerings made to the various domestic deities. Cows are giving birth to donkeys, and mongooses are giving birth to rats. Cats are mating with leopards, pigs with dogs, and kinnaras with rākṣasas and human beings. Impelled by destiny, doves with white and red feet are flying about, foreboding the annihilation of the rākṣasas. The household myna birds are squawking, being attacked by other inimical birds in the same cages, and are collapsing when vanquished. All kinds of birds and beasts are howling at the sun. Death personified, who is terrifying, ghastly, shaven-headed and swarthy, is watching our homes at every moment. These and other evil omens are arising.

“We consider Rāma to be Lord Viṣṇu in a human form. That descendent of the Raghu Dynasty whose prowess is steadfast is no ordinary human being, for He built a most amazing bridge across the ocean. O Rāvaṇa, you should make peace with Prince Rāma. Having learned about His superhuman activities and taking that into consideration, do what is good for our future.”

After saying this and examining Rāvaṇa’s mind, the mighty Mālyavān, who was the most courageous of all the ministers, glared at Rāvaṇa and remained silent.

RĀVAṆA DERIDES MĀLYAVĀN

The wicked ten-headed Rāvaṇa, being under the influence of time, could not tolerate the salutary advice spoken by Mālyavān. Knitting the eyebrows on his forehead and rolling his eyes out of anger, Rāvaṇa said the following to Mālyavān: “What harsh and noxious statement have I not heard coming from your mouth which you considered good advice and which was beneficial to the enemy? Why do you consider Rāma powerful, when He is a miserable human being living as a hermit, has taken shelter of monkeys and was exiled by his father to the forest? And why do you consider me deficient when I am the lord of the rākṣasas, the terror of the gods and possessor of all prowess? I fear you have spoken such harsh words to me because of enmity with me, a warrior, or because you have sided with the enemy or was instigated by them to do so. Indeed, what learned person would speak harshly to a ruler still holding power unless he was induced to do so.

“And, since I have already abducted Sītā, who is like the goddess of fortune without a lotus, why should I return Her out of fear of Rāma? In a few days you will see Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and millions of monkeys all slain by me. When even the gods will not stand up to me in a duel, who is there that I should fear in battle? I would rather break into two than bow to someone else! This is my inherent fault. It is very difficult to change one’s nature. Even if Rāma has somehow or other spanned the ocean with a bridge, what is so amazing about it that you are all frightened? Although He has crossed the ocean with an army of monkeys, I promise you that He will not return alive.”

Embarrassed to see Rāvaṇa eager for war and angered by what he said, Mālyavān did not reply. Extolling the king with wishes for his victory as was customary and receiving permission to leave, Mālyavān went to his own residence.

Having consulted with his ministers and reflected on their advice, Rāvaṇa made arrangements for the defense of Laṅkā. He posted the rākṣasa Prahasta at the eastern gate, Mahāpārśva and Mahodara at the southern gate, his eldest son Indrajit, an expert illusionist who was surrounded by many rākṣasas, at the western gate, and Śuka and Sāraṇa at the northern gate. Then he told his counselors that he would personally go to the northern gate. He positioned the rākṣasa Virūpākṣa along with many other rākṣasas at the central military station. Having made these arrangements in the city of Laṅkā, Rāvaṇa considered that he had already accomplished his goals due to the influence of time. After issuing orders for the defense of the city, he dismissed his ministers. Being cheered with shouts of “Victory!” he entered his spacious and opulent residential quarters.

VIBHĪṢAṆA REVEALS RĀVAṆA'S DEFENSE PLANS

Reaching the enemy territory and gathering together, Rāma, Sugrīva, Hanumān, Jāmbavān, Vibhīṣaṇa, Aṅgada, Lakṣmaṇa, Śaraḥa, Suṣeṇa, Mainda, Dvividā, Gaja, Gavākṣa, Kumuda, Nala and Panasa said to one another: “Here can be seen the city of Laṅkā, which is protected by Rāvaṇa. It is even very difficult for the immortal gods, demons, celestial serpents and gandharvas to conquer it, for Rāvaṇa always resides there. Let us hold council to determine how to be successful in our mission.” As they were speaking, Vibhīṣaṇa made the following sophisticated statement full of meaning: “My ministers, Anala, Panasa, Sampāti and Pramati have gone to Laṅkā and returned. Assuming the form of birds, they penetrated the enemy ranks and have returned after seeing the military arrangements that were made. O Rāma, listen as I factually explain all the defensive measures taken by the wicked Rāvaṇa. Prahasta has gone to the eastern gate with a military division and taken up a position there, while Mahāpārśva and Mahodara are stationed at the southern gate. Indrajit is at the western gate, surrounded by many rākṣasas bearing spears, swords, bows, javelins and clubs in their hands. Surrounded by many thousands of extremely agitated rākṣasas with weapons in their hands, Rāvaṇa himself has taken up a position at the northern gate. Virūpākṣa is stationed at the central military post with a large division of rākṣasas armed with spears, swords and bows. Having carefully observed all of these military fortifications in the city of Laṅkā, all my ministers immediately returned here. There are ten thousand elephants, ten thousand chariots, twenty thousand horses and over ten million rākṣasas. These night-stalkers are valiant, strong, cruel in combat and always dear to Rāvaṇa. O king, a division of one million soldiers ready for combat is following each of those rākṣasas.”

After informing them of this news concerning Laṅkā brought by his ministers, Vibhīṣaṇa presented his ministers before Rāma and had them explain everything. Desiring to please Rāma, whose eyes are like the petals of a lotus flower, Rāvaṇa's younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa said:

“When Rāvaṇa attacked Kuvera, six million rākṣasas who were equal to Rāvaṇa in prowess, virility, energy, great courage and pride sallied forth. Do not feel depressed or angered by this report. I am not trying to scare You but to anger You, for You can subdue even gods with Your valor. By arraying this monkey army in the same configuration that Rāvaṇa has done, You will crush Rāvaṇa who is surrounded by a fourfold army.”

After Vibhīṣaṇa spoke in this way, Rāma gave the following orders for attacking the enemy: “Going to the eastern gate and surrounded by many monkeys, Nīla should fight with Prahasta. Surrounded by a large army, Aṅgada, the son of Vālī, should besiege Mahāpārśva at the southern gate. Surrounded by many monkeys, Hanumān, whose physical strength is immeasurable, should press the western gate and force his way inside. Pressing against the northern gate of the city with Lakṣmaṇa, I shall enter and reach Rāvaṇa, who is fond of oppressing daityas, dānavas, sages and great souls, who is strengthened by boons conferred by Lord Brahmā, who wanders throughout all the worlds persecuting all living beings and who is there with an army, for I am determined to kill him. Let the mighty Sugrīva, the powerful Jāmbavān and Vibhīṣaṇa take on the centrally located military garrison. No monkey should assume a human form during the fighting. Let the simian form be the distinguishing feature of our forces during combat. In that way we will know who belongs to our army. Only we seven shall fight the enemies in a human form. I and my powerful brother Lakṣmaṇa shall be two, and Vibhīṣaṇa and his four ministers shall be the other five.”

Having spoken to Vibhīṣaṇa in this way in order to assure success and noticing the beautiful slopes of Mount Suvela, Lord Rāma decided to climb up the mountain peak. Covering the whole earth with His great army, the great soul Rāma, having decided to destroy the enemy, happily departed for the city of Laṅkā.

RĀMA SURVEYS LAṆKĀ FROM MOUNT SUVELA

Deciding to climb Mount Suvela, Rāma spoke the following sweet words to Sugrīva and to the devoted night-stalker Vibhīṣaṇa, who knew what was right, was expert in giving counsel and in carrying out tasks: “Let us all climb this majestic Mount Suvela covered with hundreds of minerals. We shall spend the night on it. From there we shall survey Laṅkā, the abode of that wicked rākṣasa who kidnapped My wife for his own destruction. As soon as I hear the name of that lowest of rākṣasas, anger arrises in Me toward him who did not understand virtue, conduct or family lineage, but perpetrated such a reproachful deed because of his lowly rākṣasa intelligence. Because of his offense I shall see the slaughter of the rākṣasas. Under the influence of destiny, an individual commits a sin, but because of his vile misdeed, his entire race will perish.”

Talking angrily about Rāvaṇa in this way, Rāma scaled Mount Suvela, which has lovely peaks, in order to stay there. Lifting His bow with an arrow, Lakṣmaṇa, who was alert and found of demonstrating His great prowess, followed from behind. Following Him came Sugrīva along with his counselors, as well as Vibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān, Aṅgada, Nīla, Mainda, Dvidida, Gaja, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Śarabha, Gandhamādana, Panasa, Kumuda, Hara, Rambha, Jāmbavān, Suṣeṇa, Rṣabha, Durmukha, and Śatabali. These and other speedy monkeys who could move at the speed of the wind and used to wander in the mountains, scaled Mount Suvela by the hundreds, reaching the place where Rāma was.

Scaling the mountain from all sides in a short time, they beheld the city of Laṅkā apparently hanging in the air. The monkey troop leaders saw the beautiful city of Laṅkā with fine gates and splendid walls. It was crowded with rākṣasas. Then those best of monkeys saw on top of that wall another

wall formed by rows of dark-blue rākṣasas. Seeing that the rākṣasas were eager to fight, the monkeys raised a loud hullabaloo as Rāma watched. Reddened by the twilight, the sun set and the night, illuminated by a full moon, ensued. Honored by Vibhīṣaṇa after greeting him, and accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and surrounded by the commanders of many troop leaders, Rāma remained comfortably on Mount Suvela.

THE MONKEYS REACH THE OUTSKIRTS OF LAṆKĀ

After passing the night on Mount Suvela, the monkey leaders surveyed the forests and groves surrounding Laṅkā. They were amazed to find them level and placid, charming, broad, extensive and pleasing to see. The city of Laṅkā looked very beautiful, because its forests were crowded with campaka, aśoka, bakula, sāla and palmyra trees, it was covered with groves of tamāla trees and was surrounded by rows of nāgakeśara trees. It also had blossoming hintāla, arjuna, kadamba, and saptapaṇṇa trees, as well as tilaka, karṇikāra and pāṭala trees whose boughs were blooming. Its trees were entangled with creepers, and had many kinds of flowers, as well as plants with tender, reddish shoots, green meadows and strips of beautiful blue forests. The trees bore flowers and fruits that were fragrant and very enjoyable, as if they were ornaments for human beings. Resembling the Caitraratha Garden of Kuvera and the Nandana Garden of Lord Indra, Laṅkā's forests swarming with honeybees were lovely and fascinating in all seasons. The forests with their waterfalls were beautified by natyūhas, koyaṣṭhis, herons and dancing peacocks, and cuckoos could be heard calling out there.

Then the valiant and joyful monkeys who could assume any form at will entered those forests and gardens teeming with birds in heat, bumblebees and cuckoos. It resounded with the music of buzzing bees and birds, and the cries of ospreys, koṇālakas and cranes. As the mighty monkey warriors were entering those forests, a breeze as soft as breath and scented by contact with flowers blew. Leaving the army with Sugrīva's permission, other troop leaders went directly to Laṅkā festooned with flags, frightening the birds, deer and elephants and shaking Laṅkā with their roars. They trampled down the earth with their feet in their mad rush. The dust from their footsteps rose suddenly. Frightened by that uproar, bears, lions, buffaloes, elephants, deer and birds fled in all directions.

There was a lofty peak of Trikūṭa Mountain which touched the sky. It was covered on all sides by flowers and was as shiny as gold. It extended a distance of one hundred yojanas. It was spotless, charming to see, smooth, splendid, great, difficult to reach even for birds, difficult to scale even with the mind, what to speak of the actions of men. The city of Laṅkā ruled by Rāvaṇa was situated on this peak. The city was ten yojanas wide and one hundred and seven and a half yojanas long. It looked beautiful with its tall gates resembling white clouds and its gold and silver walls. With its palaces and mansions, it looked like the sky at the end of the hot season covered with clouds, like the place where Lord Viṣṇu placed His second step. In that city was a palace adorned with one thousand pillars. It looked like Mount Kailāsa and seemed to be scraping the sky. Rāvaṇa's palace, which was always guarded by one hundred fully armed rākṣasas, was the chief ornament of the city.

Accompanied by the monkeys, the glorious Rāma gazed at Rāvaṇa's city, which was fascinating, abounding in gold, beautified by its surrounding mountains, sparkling with different kinds of minerals, resonating with the singing of birds, frequented by many kinds of deer, enhanced by many varieties of flowers, and inhabited by all kinds of rākṣasas. The valorous Rāma was amazed to see the city crowded with big mansions and resembling a heavenly abode of the gods. Accompanied by His big army, Rāma gazed at that city full of valuables and creative objects, adorned with rows of palaces and its gates mounted with war machines.

SUGRĪVA JUMPS FROM MOUNT SUVELA TO ATTACK RĀVAṆA

Then Rāma, accompanied by Sugrīva and the monkey troops, ascended to the upper portion of Mount Suvela, which had a circumference of two yojanas. Staying there for some time and surveying all directions, Rāma spotted Laṅkā, which was built by Viśvakarmā on a lovely peak of Trikūṭa Mountain and was beautified by charming groves. Then He saw Rāvaṇa standing on top of one of the city's gates. He was difficult to approach and was being fanned with white yak tail whisks and shaded with a brilliant victory parasol. His body was smeared with red sandalwood paste and was adorned with red ornaments. He resembled a dark-blue cloud and was wearing garments embroidered with gold. On his chest he bore scars from wounds inflicted by Indra's elephant, Airāvata. His cloth was as red as the blood of a hare and resembled a mass of clouds lit up with sunshine at sunset.

As soon as Sugrīva saw Rāvaṇa, he immediately got up, even as Rāma and the monkey chieftains watched. Possessing impetuosity occasioned by anger, as well as courage and strength, he jumped from the mountain top and sped all the way to the city gate. Standing there for a moment while gazing at Rāvaṇa fearlessly and considering him less significant than a blade of grass, Sugrīva spoke the following harsh words: "O rākṣasa, I am a friend of Rāma, the lord of the world, and His servant. I shall not spare you this moment, for I possess the strength of that king."

After saying this, Sugrīva suddenly jumped on him, grabbed his crown and threw it on the ground. When the night-stalker saw that Sugrīva was coming with great speed, he spoke as follows: "You had a beautiful neck as long as I did not see you. Now I will deprive you of your neck!"

Getting up, Rāvaṇa grabbed Sugrīva with his hands and threw him on the ground. Bouncing back up like a ball, the monkey grabbed hold of

Rāvaṇa and threw him on the ground. Because of their struggling with each other, their bodies were covered with sweat, drenched with blood from scratching each other with their nails. While interlocked in combat, they looked like a śālmālī and kiṃśuka tree intertwined. The ruler of the rākṣasas and the ruler of the monkeys, both being very strong, gave each other an unbearable fight with punches, slaps, blows with the arms and jabs with the fingers.

After fighting intensely for a long time in the middle of the gate's flat roof, repeatedly throwing each other up and pressing each other, they became stuck on the roof of the gate by the action of their feet. Pressing against each other, they fell into a ditch between the walls, their bodies still clinging to each other. Lying on the ground and breathing deeply for a while, they sprang to their feet. They repeated embraced and held each other in arm locks. Having mastered the art of wrestling and being very strong, they moved about using various wrestling techniques. Squeezing each other and ascertaining each other's strength, they fought like an adolescent tiger and lion or like two young elephants and then fell on the ground at the same time. After struggling with each other and throwing each other down, they fought with each other using many different techniques. Because they were both skilled in wrestling and were very strong, they did not tire out very quickly. Keeping each other at bay with their fine arms which looked like the trunks of elephants, they struggled for a long time, moving about in a circle. Approaching each other for attack, they repeatedly growled like cats hungry for food.

Sugrīva and Rāvaṇa, being expert in wrestling, contended with each other. Sometimes they circled each other or took up different defensive stances. Sometimes they moved in a curve like the urine of an ox or made forward or backward lunges. Sometimes they moved to the side or at an angle. Sometimes they avoided their opponent's blows, struck out at the other, or ran around him. Sometimes they paced about or jumped toward their opponent like a frog. Sometimes they contended with each other by retreating, turning sideways, rushing bent down or with a foot raised to kick. Sometimes they stretched out their arms to grab their opponent, or threw they arms down to do the same.

Finally, Rāvaṇa prepared to utilize his illusory power. Realizing that he was about to do that, Sugrīva, who was eager for victory and free from fatigue, jumped up into the sky. Baffled by Sugrīva's move, Rāvaṇa remained where he was. Having exhausted Rāvaṇa in combat and crossed the broad sky, Sugrīva returned to Rāma standing in the midst of the monkey forces. After accomplishing a difficult task, that son of the sun-god who was as swift as the wind had happily returned to the monkey army, giving martial delight to Rāma as the monkeys worshiped him.

THE MONKEYS REACH THE CITY GATES

Seeing the signs of combat on Sugrīva's body, Rāma embraced him and said: "You acted very rashly without consulting with Me. Monarchs do not act in such a rash way. You put Me, this army and Vibhīṣaṇa into danger by this rash and perilous action. Never do such a thing again, O warrior! If anything had happened to you, I would have had nothing to do with Sītā, Bharata, Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna, or even My own body, O destroyer of enemies. Even though I know your virility, being equal to Lord Indra, before you had returned I had decided that after slaying Rāvaṇa in combat and destroying his sons, army and chariots, installing Vibhīṣaṇa on the throne of Laṅkā and Bharata on the throne of Ayodhyā, I would give up My body."

Sugrīva replied to Rāma in this way: "Seeing Rāvaṇa, who had abducted Your wife, and knowing my own prowess, how could I restrain myself?" Rāma thanked Sugrīva when he had spoken in this way and then spoke the following fortuitous words to Lakṣmaṇa:

"We should camp in an area with fresh water and forests with abundant fruits, and then arrange the troops in battle array, O Lakṣmaṇa. I see an imminent formidable danger which indicates worldwide destruction and the slaughter of bears, monkeys and rākṣasas. Fierce winds are blowing, the earth is trembling, mountain peaks are quivering and the four elephants that hold up the earth are bellowing. Brutal clouds resembling carnivorous beasts are mercilessly showering rain mixed with drops of blood. The twilight, which resembles red sandalwood paste, is very ominous. A blazing ball of fire is falling from the sun. All about ferocious birds and beasts are facing the sun and wailing pitifully, causing great fear.

"Bereft of light even at night, the moon is producing heat. Having a black and red halo, it has risen as if to announce the destruction of the world. A thin, reddish, inauspicious halo is seen around the sun, and on that spotless sun is a blue spot. Look! The stars obscured by a thick cloud of dust

seem to be announcing the destruction of the worlds. Crows, hawks and dastardly vultures are swooping down, and she-jackals are emitting inauspicious howls that are extremely frightful. It seems the earth will be covered with rocks, spears and swords hurled by monkeys and rākṣasas and muddied with flesh and blood. We should at once march with all the monkeys toward the difficult to storm city of Laṅkā which is well-protected by Rāvaṇa.”

While speaking to Lakṣmaṇa in this way, the mighty Rāma quickly descended from the mountain peak. After coming down from the mountain, the virtuous Rāma reviewed His army which was extremely difficult for enemies to attack. When Rāma finished mobilizing the great monkey army with Sugrīva’s assistance, Rāma, who knew auspicious times for achieving success, ordered the army to depart at such a time. At an auspicious time the big-armed prince, bearing a bow, marched ahead toward the city of Laṅkā surrounded by a large army. He was followed by Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān, Jāmbavān, Nala, Nīla and Lakṣmaṇa. Covering the earth, that huge army of bears and forest monkeys followed behind Rāma. Resembling elephants and capable of warding off the enemy, the monkeys marched along, carrying hundreds of mountain peaks and mature trees. In a short time the two brothers—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, the crushers of foes—reached Rāvaṇa’s charming city of Laṅkā, which was adorned with flags and garlands of flowers and was beautified with gardens and groves. It was difficult to capture because of its amazing defensive walls and arches. Under orders from Rāma, the monkeys took up their positions, besieged the city and then entered it, although it was even difficult to be overpowered by the gods.

Accompanied by His younger brother Lakṣmaṇa and wielding His bow, Rāma blocked the northern gate of the city, which was as high as a mountain peak, and protected His army. Upon reaching the northern gate where Rāvaṇa was stationed, Rāma camped nearby the city controlled by Rāvaṇa. No one other than Rāma was capable of protecting the army besieging that treacherous gate which was being overseen by Rāvaṇa, as the ocean is by Varuṇa. Grim rākṣasas armed with weapons who terrified the weak guarded the gate on all sides, as the dānavas protect Pātāla. Rāma saw

different kinds of weapons arranged systematically, as well as coats of mail and armor.

Reaching the eastern gate, the valiant commander-in-chief Nīla took up a position there with Mainda and Dvidida. The very mighty Aṅgada took on the southern gate accompanied by Ṛṣabha, Gavākṣa, Gaja and Gavaya. Joined by Pramāthi, Praghasa and other warriors, the mighty monkey Hanumān, guarded the western gate. Accompanied by stalwart monkeys who were like Garuḍa or the wind-god, Sugrīva took up a position near the central military garrison. Three hundred and sixty million outstanding monkey troop leaders pressuring that garrison where Sugrīva was. By the order of Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa took Vibhīṣaṇa and stationed millions of monkeys at each gate. Accompanied by Jāmbavān and a huge army, Suśeṇa also took up a position near the central garrison, but not far from Rāma.

Holding tree trunks and mountain peaks, those stalwart among monkeys with teeth like those of tigers waited excitedly for battle. All of them had their tails raised in an odd way and were armed with teeth and claws. Their bodies looked strange because of the different postures they had assumed for attack and they were distorting their faces by grimacing. Some monkeys were as strong as ten elephants, some were as strong as one hundred elephants, while others were as strong as one thousand elephants. Some of the troop commanders were as strong as millions upon millions of elephants, and others were one hundred times stronger than that. Still others had immeasurable strength. The gathering there of monkeys soldiers, which resembled a swarm of locusts, was wonderful and amazing. The sky was completely filled with monkeys proceeding toward Laṅkā and the ground was completely covered by monkeys besieging the city. One hundred divisions having one million bears and monkeys marched against the gates of Laṅkā, while others attacked from everywhere else.

Trikūṭa Mountain, upon which the city was situated, was completely surrounded on all sides by monkeys, while ten million monkeys roamed all around the outskirts of the city to reconnoiter the positioning of troops. Surrounded on all sides by mighty monkeys bearing tree trunks in their hands, it was even difficult for the wind to enter the city of Laṅkā. Suddenly the rākṣasas were bewildered by cloud-like monkeys who were equal to Indra

in prowess. Even as the monkey troops were approaching, there arose from there midst a tumult like the roaring of the ocean when it overflows its shores. That great noise shook the city of Laṅkā with its walls, arches, hills, groves and gardens. It was difficult for all the gods and demons to assault that army because it was protected by Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva.

When Rāma had set His army in battle array to annihilate the rākṣasas, He repeatedly consulted with His advisors and reached a decision. Eager to do what was next and knowing how to employ the four expedients against the enemy, Rāma, who remembered the duty of kings and acted in accordance with Vibhīṣaṇa's opinion, summoned Aṅgada and said: "Giving up fear and anxiety, jump into the city of Laṅkā and deliver My message to the ten-headed Rāvaṇa, who has lost his good fortune, sovereignty and intelligence because of his desire to die. Tell him:

'O night-stalker, the sins which you arrogantly committed out of illusion against the sages, gods, gandharvas, nāgas, yakṣas and kings will now bear fruit. O rākṣasa, surely the arrogance born from the boon which you received from Lord Brahmā is now vanquished. Wielding the rod of chastisement and decimated by the abduction of My wife, I, your punisher, am stationed at the gates of your city. By engaging in combat with Me, you will achieve that destination of all the gods, great sages and royal sages, O rākṣasa. Show Me that power by which you abducted Sītā after diverting Me with a trick.

'I shall rid this world of rākṣasas with My sharp arrows if you do not accept Me as the actual protector of Sītā coming to retrieve Her. The virtuous Vibhīṣaṇa, the best of rākṣasas, has come here. The glorious rākṣasa will surely achieve sovereignty over Laṅkā without any obstacle. Certainly you cannot enjoy sovereignty by unrighteousness even a moment longer because you, a sinner, have not realized the self and are advised by fools. Being determined and heroic, fight with Me in battle! When My arrows silence you on the battlefield, you will become purified. Once you enter the range of My sight, you will not survive even if you flee to all the three worlds as a bird. I tell you this for your own good. Perform your own funeral rite now. Take one last look at Laṅkā. Your life is now dependent on Me."

When instructed in this way by Rāma, Aṅgada, who was like the personification of fire, jumped into the sky and left. Crossing in a moment the ramparts of Laṅkā to Rāvaṇa's palace, the glorious Aṅgada saw Rāvaṇa sitting undisturbed with his ministers. Landing not far from Rāvaṇa, Aṅgada, who was wearing golden ornaments, stood there like a blazing fire. After introducing himself, he delivered to Rāvaṇa and his ministers Rāma's completely perfect message, without adding or subtracting anything.

He said: "I am the messenger of Rāma, king of Kosala, who is never tired by action. My name is Aṅgada, the son of Vālī. Perhaps you might have heard of me. Rāma, the son of Kausalyā, gives you the following message: 'Be a man, O heartless one! Come out and fight! I shall kill you along with your ministers, sons, relatives and kinfolk. When you have been killed, all the three worlds will be free from disturbance. I shall uproot you, an enemy of the gods, dānavas, yakṣas, gandharvas, nāgas and rākṣasas and a thorn in the side of the sages. If you do not return Sītā after begging Her forgiveness, when you are killed, sovereignty will belong to Vibhīṣaṇa.'"

While Aṅgada was delivering this message, Rāvaṇa became furious. Under the influence of anger he ordered his guards: "Grab this evil-minded monkey and kill him immediately!" Hearing Rāvaṇa's order, four formidable night-stalkers grabbed Aṅgada, who splendor was like a blazing fire. In order to show his strength in the assembly of those practitioners of black arts, Aṅgada allowed himself to be seized. Then like a flock of birds, he jumped onto the roof of the palace, which was like a mountain, dragging the rākṣasas clinging to his arms. Badly shaken by the speed of the jump, all four rākṣasas fell to the ground as Rāvaṇa watched. Then the mighty Aṅgada trampled the dome of Rāvaṇa's palace, which was as high as a mountain. When Sugrīva did so, the dome split into hundreds of pieces, just as Indra once shattered the Himalaya Mountains with his thunderbolt. After smashing the palace dome, declaring his name and roaring loudly, he leapt into the sky. Mortifying the rākṣasas and delighting all the monkeys, Aṅgada returned to Rāma's side standing among the monkeys. On the other hand, Rāvaṇa became very angry over the destruction of his palace. Foreseeing his own destruction, he began sighing heavily.

Surrounded by many monkeys who were roaring jubilantly, Rāma, being eager to destroy His enemy, pressed forward to fight. The monkey Suṣeṇa, who was very courageous and like a mountain peak, was standing there surrounded by so many monkeys who could change their form at will. Controlling all four gates under Sugrīva's orders, he wandered about unassailable, like the moon among the stars. The rākṣasas were amazed to see the city of Laṅkā surrounded by one hundred akṣauhiṇīs of monkeys which reached all the way to the ocean. Some of them became frightened, while others who enjoyed war felt enlivened. The entire area between the defense walls and the moat was covered by monkeys. To the dejected rākṣasas it seemed as if the defense walls were made of monkeys. Terrified, the rākṣasas cried out loudly. When that alarming tumult started, Rāvaṇa's warriors grabbed sizable weapons and came running like the wind that blows at the end of the world.

RĀVAṆA INFORMED ABOUT THE SIEGE OF LAṆKĀ

Thereafter the rākṣasas went to Rāvaṇa's palace and informed him that the city was being besieged by Rāma and the monkeys. Becoming angry when he heard that the city was under siege, the night-stalker doubled the protective measures of the city and climbed up to the roof of his palace. He saw the city of Laṅkā with its hills, forests and groves besieged on all sides by innumerable monkey hordes eager to fight. Seeing that the earth looked brownish because of the monkeys that covered it, Rāvaṇa began thinking about how to exterminate them. After thinking for some time and coming to a firm conclusion, Rāvaṇa glared at Rāma and the monkey troops with squinting eyes. Feeling delighted, Rāma dashed forward with His army and saw Laṅkā well-guarded on all sides by rākṣasas. While seeing Laṅkā decorated with flags and banners, Rāma suddenly became saddened with thoughts of Sītā. He thought: "Here Sītā, whose eyes are like a fawn's, is suffering on account of Me, pained, emaciated and lying on the ground." Constantly thinking of Sītā, who was being tormented by rākṣasas, the virtuous Rāma quickly ordered the monkeys to slaughter the enemy. When Rāma gave that command, the monkeys, who were competing with each other to reach the city, roared like lions. All the monkey troop commanders made the following resolution: "Let us smash this city of Laṅkā with either mountain peaks or with our own fists!" Lifting mountain peaks and huge boulders, and uprooting different kinds of trees, the monkey troop commanders waited.

In order to carry out Rāma's dear mission, the army began to scale the walls of Laṅkā in different places as Rāvaṇa watched. Carrying sāla trees and mountain peaks, the golden-colored monkeys with coppery faces who had surrendered their lives for Rāma's purpose, progressed toward Laṅkā. The monkeys demolished the upper reaches of innumerable defense walls and arches, using trees, mountain peaks and their fists. The monkeys filled

the moats of clear water with sand, mountain peaks, grass and logs. The troop commanders then scaled Laṅkā's walls followed by troops of thousands of monkeys, millions of monkeys and hundreds of millions of monkeys. The monkeys toppled the golden arches. After leveling the gateways which resembled peaks of Mount Kailāsa, the monkeys, who resembled gigantic elephants, rushed toward the city of Laṅkā, jumping, leaping and roaring. The monkeys dashed toward the city walls shouting: "Victory to Rāma, who has tremendous strength, and to Lakṣmaṇa, who is most powerful! Victory to King Sugrīva, who is being protected by Lord Rāma!"

Storming the defense walls, the commanders Vīrabāhu, Subāhu, Nala and Panasa took up positions on them. Meanwhile, they had the soldiers set up camp there. Surrounded by one hundred million monkeys, Kumuda besieged the eastern gate. Surrounded by other monkeys, Praghosa and the mighty Panasa took up positions to help Kumuda. Surrounded by two hundred million monkeys, Śatabali reached the southern gate and besieged it. Surrounded by millions and millions of monkeys, Suśeṇa, the father of Tārā, reached the western gate and besieged it. Accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva, Rāma reached the northern gate and besieged it.

Surrounded by ten million monkeys, the gigantic golāṅgūla monkey Gavākṣa, who looked frightful, took up a position next to Rāma. Accompanied by ten million dreadfully furious bears, Dhūmra, the annihilator of enemies, took up a position next to Rāma. Clad in armor and accompanied by his ministers, the valiant Vibhīṣaṇa took up a position there with club in hand. Rushing from all sides, Gaja, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Śarabha and Gandhamādana protected the monkey army.

With a hand surcharged with anger, Rāvaṇa ordered all of his troops to sally forth. When they heard Rāvaṇa's command, the night-stalkers suddenly began roaring in a terrifying manner. Everywhere the rākṣasas pounded their kettledrums, which were as silvery as the moon, beating them with golden sticks. Hundreds of thousands of gruesome rākṣasas blew conchshells with the wind of their mouths. Wearing bright armor and holding conchshells in their dark blue hands, the rākṣasas looked like storm

clouds adorned with lightning and herons. Urged by Rāvaṇa, the rākṣasa soldiers rushed out like waves at a time when the ocean swells.

Then the monkey army emitted a roar on all sides, filling the Malaya Mountain with its peaks and caves. The blasts of conchshells, beating of drums, the lion-like roaring of monkey warriors, accompanied by the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the rumbling of chariot wheels and the shouting of rākṣasas made the earth, sky and ocean reverberate.

Meanwhile, a horrible conflict broke out between the rākṣasas and monkeys, just as had happened previously between the gods and the demons. Showing off their courage, the rākṣasas attacked all the monkeys with flaming clubs, as well as with spears, javelins and axes. The impetuous big-bodied monkeys counterattacked the rākṣasas, hitting them with trees and mountain peaks, as well as with their claws and fangs. The monkeys shouted: “Victory to King Sugrīva!” And the rākṣasas shouted: “Victory to Rāvaṇa!” and then declared their own names. Standing on the walls, formidable rākṣasas pierced the monkeys who were on the ground with a type of javelin called bhindipāla, as well as with spears. Becoming furious, the monkeys who were on the ground jumped up into the air, grabbed those rākṣasas on the walls with their arms and dragged them down. That tumultuous conflict between the rākṣasas and the monkeys was totally amazing and left the ground muddied with flesh and blood.

RĀMA KILLS DURDHARṢA, MITRAGHNA, AGNIKETU AND YAJÑAKOPANA

As they were fighting, a terrible anger against the enemy army arose between the great monkeys and the rākṣasas. The rākṣasas rode horses and elephants with gold trappings and chariots as bright as fire. The rākṣasas of terrifying deeds wore fascinating armor sparkling like the sun. Desiring the victory of

Rāvaṇa, they sallied forth, causing the ten directions to resound. Desiring the victory of Rāma, the huge monkey army also rushed toward the army of rākṣasas.

Meanwhile, duels occurred between the monkeys and the rākṣasas, each side rushing toward the other. The mighty rākṣasa Indrajit fought with Aṅgada, the son of Vālī, as Andhaka had fought against Śiva. Sampāti, who was always difficult to overcome in combat, fought with Prajañgha, while the monkey Hanumān began fighting with Jambumālī. The highly infuriated Vibhīṣaṇa fought in battle with the deftly swift Śatrughna. The mighty Gaja fought with the rākṣasa Tapanā, and the dynamic Nīla fought with Nikumbha. Sugrīva, the lord of monkeys, closed ranks with Pragasena. The glorious Lakṣmaṇa closed ranks in combat with Virūpākṣa. The rākṣasa Agniketu, who was difficult to defeat, as well as Raśmīketu, Suptaghna and Yajñakopa, closed ranks with Rāma. Vajramuṣṭi fought with Mainda and Aśaniprabha with Dvivida. Thus these two outstanding monkeys fought with very formidable rākṣasas. The valiant and sinister rākṣasa Pratapana, who was difficult to subdue in battle, fought with Nala, who was fierce in combat. The monkey who was the great powerful son of Dharma known as Suśeṇa fought with Vidyunmālī. After fighting with many rākṣasas, other fierce monkeys also began fighting duels with rākṣasas.

At that time there was a tumultuous and hair-raising battle between the rākṣasas and the valiant monkeys, who each desired victory for their side. The blood flowing from the bodies of monkeys and bears, was strewn with duckweed in the form of their hair and carried away logs in the form of bodies. The furious Indrajit struck the valiant Aṅgada with his mace, as Indra used to strike his enemies with his thunderbolt. Grabbing Indrajit's mace, the agile Aṅgada struck his golden chariot, along with its horses and driver. Wounded by three arrows shot by Prajaṅgha, Sampāti killed Prajaṅgha with an aśvakarṇa tree at the fore of battle. Riding on a chariot on the battlefield, the rabid Jambumālī pierced Hanumān in the chest with a spear from his chariot. Jumping onto Jambumālī's chariot, Hanumān, son of the wind-god, killed him with a sudden trust of his hand. The grisly Pratapana roared as he ran toward Nala. Having his limbs wounded by the swift-handed rākṣasa's sharp arrows, Nala suddenly gouged out Pratapana's eyes.

Using a saptaparṇa tree, Sugrīva quickly killed Praghasa, who looked as if he was devouring the monkey army. Agniketu, Raśmiketū, Supaghna and Yajñakopa struck Rāma with arrows. Infuriated by this, Rāma cut off the four rākṣasas' heads on the battlefield with four awful arrows that were like flames of fire. When struck by Mainda's fist on the battlefield, Vajramuṣṭi fell to the ground with his chariot and horses, as if he had fallen from the roof of a watchtower. With sharp arrows, Nikumbha pierced Nīla, who was as dark as a pile of collyrium, as the sun pierces a cloud with its rays. The quick-handed night-stalker Nikumbha stuck Nīla again with one hundred arrows and laughed. Grabbing a wheel from Nikumbha's chariot, Nīla knocked off Nikumbha's head and his charioteer's head on the battlefield, as Viṣṇu does to His adversaries. Moreover, Dvividā, whose impact was as hard as a diamond or a thunderbolt, struck Aśaniprabha with a mountain peak as all the rākṣasas watched. Using arrows like bolts of lightning, Aśaniprabha struck the monkey leader Dvividā, who was accustomed to attacking his enemies with trees. Highly enraged because his body was wounded by arrows, Dvividā used a sāla tree to annihilate Aśaniprabha, along with his chariot and horses.

Riding a chariot, Vidyunmālī hit Suśeṇa with gilded arrows and roared repeatedly. Seeing him riding a chariot, Suśeṇa promptly knocked

over Vidyunmālī's chariot with a large mountain peak. Quickly jumping down from his chariot, the agile Vidyunmālī stood on the ground holding a mace. Angry as he was, Suṣeṇa picked up a very big boulder and ran toward the night-stalker. As Suṣeṇa was running toward him, Vidyunmālī immediately struck him in the chest with his mace. Unfazed by the blow of the mace, Suṣeṇa quietly threw the boulder at Vidyunmālī's chest in that great conflict. The impact of that boulder crushed Vidyunmālī's chest so that he fell lifeless on the ground, so it is said.

Thus the heroic night-stalkers were crushed in duels with the valiant monkeys, as the demons were defeated by the gods. The battlefield looked ghastly. It was strewn with spears, maces, javelins, lances, arrows, shattered chariots, horses, elephants, dead monkeys and rākṣasas, wheels, axles and broken yokes fallen on the ground. Packs of jackals were wandering about. In that tumultuous battle, which was like a conflict between the gods and demons, the headless corpses of monkeys and rākṣasas were scattered everywhere. Maddened by the smell of blood will being attacked by the monkeys and eager for nightfall, the night-stalkers started fighting again.

ANĠADA DEFEATS INDRAJIT

As the monkeys and rākṣasas were still fighting, the sun set and night fell, which took away the lives of many. Then a nocturnal battle began between the formidable monkeys and rākṣasas, they being bound by enmity and desirous of victory. The monkeys asked their adversaries: “Are you a rākṣasa?” And the rākṣasas asked their adversaries: “Are you a monkey?” According to the reply they attacked one another in the dreadful darkness of the battlefield. In that mass of soldiers could be heard a tumultuous sound of shouting: “Kill him!” “Cut him down!” “Tear him apart!” “Why do you run away?” Wearing golden armor, the rākṣasas could clearly be seen in that darkness, like mountains illuminated by glowing herbs. Completely enraged, the impetuous rākṣasas assaulted the monkeys in the darkness and devoured them. Extremely angered by this, the monkeys jumped up and tore with their sharp teeth the horses with gold trappings and flags that looked like poisonous snakes. The mighty monkeys bewildered the rākṣasa army. Exploding with anger, the monkeys dragged the elephants and their riders, the flags and festoons, and the chariots, tearing at them with their teeth.

With Their arrows that were like poisonous snakes, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa killed the main rākṣasas, whether they were visible or invisible. The dust trampled by the hooves of horses and thrown up by the wheels of chariots blocked the ears and eyes of the combatants. As the hair-raising battle went on, ghastly streams carrying masses of blood flowed on the ground. Then there was an amazing sound of different kinds of drums mixed with the sound of conchshells and chariot wheels. There also arose a frightening roar of injured rākṣasas and monkeys. With the outstanding monkeys lying injured by spears, lances and axes and with slaughtered rākṣasas as big as mountains, the battlefield, on which an offering of flowers in the form of weapons had been made, was difficult to recognize or approach, and was muddy from the flow of blood. Like the night that ensues

at the time of universal dissolution, that grim night, which was destructive for both monkeys and rākṣasas, was difficult to endure for all living beings.

In that ominous darkness, the excited rākṣasas then attacked Rāma with a shower of arrows. The roaring of the rākṣasas as they ran madly toward Rāma was like the roaring of the seven oceans at the end of the world. In the twinkling of an eye Rāma struck six stalwart night-stalkers with six arrows that were like flames of fire. They were: Yamaśātru, who was difficult to overcome, Mahāpārśva, Mahodara, the gigantic Vajradamṣṭra and both Śuka and Sāraṇa. With their vital parts pierced by Rāma's multitude of arrows, those rākṣasas sneaked away from the battle, and thus their lives were saved. In the twinkling of an eye Rāma, the great chariot warrior, lit up all the directions with arrows like flames of fire. The other rākṣasa warriors who stood before Rāma also perished like moths entering a fire.

With golden-feathered arrows falling everywhere, the night was bright, like an autumn night light up by fireflies. The frightful night became even more so because of the roaring of rākṣasas and the beating of drums. Trikūṭa Mountain, which had many caves, echoed that noise as if replying to someone's call. The gigantic golāṅgūla monkeys, who were as dark as night, squeezed the night-stalkers to death with their arms so that their cadavers were eaten by scavengers.

Very soon Aṅgada, who had come to kill the enemy in combat, wounded Indrajit, his charioteer and his horses. Abandoning his chariot because the horses and charioteer had been slain and feeling extremely exhausted, Indrajit vanished from sight. All the gods and sages and the two princes—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa—were highly pleased by Sugrīva's deed, and they praised him accordingly. All living beings knew Indrajit's power in battle, therefore they were pleased to see that he had been overcome. Gratified to see the enemy defeated, the monkeys, including Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa, shouted: "Well done! Well done!"

Defeated in combat by Aṅgada, whose actions were formidable, Indrajit became terribly enraged. Beside himself with anger, Indrajit, the sinful son of Rāvaṇa, who was exhausted from fighting and had made himself

invisible, shot sharp arrows as bright as lightning bolts while unseen. In that attack, the furious Indrajit struck all of Rāma's and Lakṣmaṇa's limbs with dangerous arrows transformed into snakes. Remaining invisible to all living beings by his power of deception, the night-stalker, who was a treacherous fighter, bewildered Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and bound Them with a tangle of arrows. Then the monkeys saw the two princes suddenly struck down by Indrajit's arrows with forms as angry venomous serpents. When the wicked Indrajit was unable to bind Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in his visible form, he employed an illusory trick to do so.

INDRAJIT BINDS RĀMA AND LAKṢMAṆA WITH SERPENT ARROWS

Desiring to learn where Indrajit had gone, the glorious Prince Rāma commanded ten monkeys to do so. Rāma sent the two sons of Suṣeṇa, Nīla, Aṅgada, Śarabha, Dvidida, Hanumān Sānuprastha, Rṣabha and Rṣabhaskandha. With a great thrill they uprooted formidable trees and jumped into the sky, searching for Indrajit in all directions. Knowing the use of all kinds of weapons, Indrajit obstructed the rapid movement of those monkeys with a supremely powerful brahmāstra weapon. Even though pierced and cut by those steel arrows, the swift monkeys could not locate him in the darkness, like the sun covered by a cloud. Indrajit, who was victorious in battle, repeatedly pierced every part of Rāma's and Lakṣmaṇa's bodies with arrows.

Both Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were pierced all over Their bodies by the angry Indrajit using snakes transformed into arrows. Blood flowed profusely from Their wounds. They looked like two kiṁśuka trees in bloom. Then, while remaining invisible, Indrajit, who was like a mass of black collyrium and whose eyes were red with anger, spoke as follows to the two brothers: "Even Indra, the lord of heaven, cannot see me or even approach me when I am fighting while invisible, what to speak of You two! With my mind overwhelmed with ire, I dispatch You two descendents of the Raghu Dynasty, who are bound by a mesh of arrows with buzzard feathers, to the abode of Yama, lord of death!"

Speaking in this way, Indrajit began piercing with sharp arrows the bodies of the two righteous brothers—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa—and then rejoiced and roared. Stretching his huge bow, he shot more sharp gruesome arrows. Sinking sharp arrows into the vital parts of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, he roared again and again. Bound by that mesh of arrows in the fore of the battlefield, in the twinkling of an eye the two princes were even unable to

look up. With all the parts of Their bodies pierced by arrows, They began to tremble, like a flag whose ropes had come unfastened. Shaking and enfeebled because of having Their vital organs pierced, the two heroes, rulers of the earth, fell on the ground, although They were wielders of mighty bows.

Lying on a hero's bed of arrows, drenched in blood and all Their limbs restrained by arrows, They were extremely disturbed. There was not one space on Their bodies the breadth of a finger that was not pierced; there was no part of Their bodies that was not pierced, from the tips of Their fingers onward. Struck down by that cruel rākṣasa who could change his form at will, the two princes bled profusely, like two springs pouring forth water. First Rāma fell, having all His vital parts pierced by arrows shot by Indrajit, who had previously defeated Lord Indra. Indrajit pierced Rāma with the following kinds of speedy, golden-feathered arrows which fell unimpeded like dust: nārāchas, ardhanārāchas, bhallas, añjalikas, vatsadantas, siṃhadantas, and kṣuras. Lying on a hero's bed of arrows, Rāma dropped His bow, His hand having lost the ability to grip.

Seeing Rāma, the best of men, lying at a distance of an arrow, Lakṣmaṇa became hopeless about His own life. Seeing His brother, whose eyes were like the petals of a lotus flower, who gave shelter to all and who rejoiced in battle, fallen on the ground, He became saddened. The monkeys also became grief-stricken when they saw Rāma in that condition. Pained as they were, they wailed grievously, their eyes filled with tears. The monkeys who had gathered there with Hanumān surrounded the two princes lying on a bed of arrows and became extremely despondent.

INDRAJIT RETURNS TO LAṆKĀ, BELIEVING RĀMA DEAD

Upon returning from searching heaven and earth for Indrajit, the monkeys found the two brothers—Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa—covered with arrows. Indrajit left after accomplishing that deed, as Indra does after showering rains. Shortly thereafter Vibhīṣaṇa arrived there with Sugrīva. Nīla, Mainda, Suṣeṇa, Kumuda, Aṅgada and Hanumān began grieving for the two descendents of the Raghu Dynasty, who were lying motionless on a bed of arrows, breathing softly, bleeding profusely and pierced all over Their bodies with arrows. All the monkeys and Vibhīṣaṇa were greatly disturbed to see the two princes caught in a mesh of arrows. Fallen on the ground, They were hissing like snakes and unconscious. Their prowess had been made feeble. All Their limbs were drenched with blood. They looked like two golden flags as They reclined on a hero's bed, practically motionless. Their eyes welled with tears, though surrounded by Their own troop leaders. After searching the sky and all directions, the monkeys were unable to find Indrajit, who had hidden himself through a trick of illusion during the fight.

When looking around, however, Vibhīṣaṇa, being a rākṣasa also, was able to see his nephew Indrajit standing there veiled by his illusory power. Indrajit's deeds were incomparable and he had no match in combat. Vibhīṣaṇa, who possessed glory, power and prowess, was able to see Indrajit, who had made himself invisible due to a boon he had received from Lord Brahmā. Overjoyed to see the two princess lying there, Indrajit proclaimed his deed, thereby delighting all the rākṣasas: "The two mighty brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who killed Duṣaṇa and Khara, have been wasted by my arrows. Even all the gods and demons and hosts of sages cannot free Them from that mesh of arrows. I have eliminated this useless fellow for whose sake my father was obsessed and worried, being unable to touch his bed or enjoy his wives the whole night, for whose sake the whole of Laṅkā was shedding tears like rivers and who was eating away at the roots of everyone.

All of the valorous deeds of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, as well as of all the monkeys, have been rendered fruitless, like autumn rain clouds.

After speaking in this way to all the rākṣasas who were looking at him, Indrajit also began hitting all the monkey commanders with arrows. He hit Nīla with nine arrows, and Mainda and Dvidida with three arrows each. Holding his mighty bow, he pierced Jāmbavān in the chest with one arrow and shot ten arrows at the swift Hanumān. Indrajit, who was impetuous in battle, struck Gavākṣa and Śarabha with two arrows each. Indrajit pierced both Gavākṣa and Aṅgada with many arrows. After hitting all of those stalwart monkeys with arrows like flames of fire, that mighty and courageous son of Rāvaṇa roared. Having injured the monkeys with a volley of arrows and terrified the monkey troops, Indrajit laughed and spoke as follows: “O rākṣasas, just see these two brothers bound in a formidable mesh of arrows in the fore of the battlefield.” When the rākṣasas, who were treacherous fighters, heard this, they were highly amazed and pleased by the deed which he had accomplished. They raised a tremendous commotion, like a thunder cloud. Thinking that Indrajit had slain Rāma, they offered him respect. When Indrajit saw Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lying on the ground without moving or breathing, he thought that the two brothers were dead. The victorious Indrajit jubilantly entered the city of Laṅkā, bringing delight to all the demoniac rākṣasas.

Seeing the bodies and limbs of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa covered with arrows, Sugrīva became overwhelmed with fear. Vibhīṣaṇa then spoke to the morose Sugrīva, whose face was wet with tears and whose eyes were perplexed with sorrow: “Sugrīva! Enough of this fear! Restrain your tears! Battles are like this. Victory is never certain. If we have any pious merit left, O warrior, then the two mighty princes will shake of Their swoon. O monkey, compose yourself and instill confidence in me, forlorn as I am. Those who are devoted to truth and righteousness are not perturbed by fear of death.”

After saying this, Vibhīṣaṇa took some water, consecrated it with a prayer, moistened his hand with it and wiped Sugrīva’s beautiful eyes. After cleaning the wise Sugrīva’s face, Vibhīṣaṇa spoke the following words which

were not affected by bewilderment occasioned by the circumstances: “O lord of monkeys, now is not the time to give way to weakness. Excessive emotions at this time will lead to death. Therefore, giving up this weakness of heart, which can ruin all endeavors, think about the well-being of the troops that are dedicated to Rāma. Or, have Rāma protected for as long as He is unconscious. When They regain consciousness, the two descendents of Kakutstha will dispel our fear. This is nothing for Rāma, nor is He going to die, for Their splendor does not abandon Them, as it does when one is about to die. Therefore, be confident and regain your strength while I reassure all the forces. With eyes wide with fear, the monkeys are spreading from ear to ear the rumor that Rāma is dead. When they see me running about enlivening the troops, let the monkeys abandon their fear, as one would an already used flower garland.”

After restoring Sugrīva to confidence, the rākṣasa ruler Vibhīṣaṇa reassured the monkey army, which was retreating.

In the meantime, the great sorcerer Indrajit entered the city of Laṅkā, surrounded by all of the rākṣasa soldiers, and approached his father. When he reached his father, he greeted him with joined palms and relayed to him the good news about the slaughter of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Rāvaṇa was overjoyed to hear that his two enemies had been slain. He jumped up and hugged his son in the midst of the rākṣasas. Smelling his son’s head, he inquired with great delight about what had happened. Indrajit informed him how he had left the two princes unconscious and powerless in a mesh of arrows. Rāvaṇa’s mind was overwhelmed with a surge of happiness when he heard Indrajit’s report. Rāvaṇa gave up his anxiety over Rāma and praised his son with words of exultation.

SĪTĀ TAKEN TO SEE RĀMA

After Indrajit had accomplished his purpose and reentered the city of Laṅkā, the monkeys Hanumān, Aṅgada, Nīla, Suśeṇa, Kumuda, Nala, Gaja, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Śarabha, Gandhamādana, Jāmbavān, Rṣabha, Skandha, Rambha, Śatabali and Pṛthu arrayed their forces into battle formation. Grabbing trees, they surrounded Rāma and protected Him from all sides. Looking in all directions, sideways as well as upward, the monkeys thought that rākṣasas were coming even when the grass moved.

After dismissing his son, the elated Rāvaṇa summoned the rākṣasīs who were guarding Sītā. Those rākṣasīs, including Trijaṭā, came as per the order of the king. Rāvaṇa joyfully said to the rākṣasīs: “Tell Sītā that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have been killed by Indrajit. Putting Her in the Puṣpaka airship, show Her the corpses of the two princes on the battlefield. That husband because of whose protection She would not submit to me has been killed along with His brother at the fore of battle. She will now give up Her fear of me, along with Her consternation and Her hope of being rescued. Adorned with all kinds of jewelry, She will wait upon me. When She returns to the aśoka grove after seeing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa fallen under the sway of death on the battlefield, finding no other shelter, She Herself will then seek me.”

When the rākṣasīs heard Rāvaṇa’s instructions, they replied: “So be it!” and went to where the Puṣpaka aerial vehicle was. Taking the Puṣpaka vehicle as instructed by Rāvaṇa, the rākṣasīs flew it to the aśoka grove where Sītā was. Taking Sītā, who was overwhelmed with grief on hearing about the death of Her husband, the rākṣasīs helped Her climb into the aerial vehicle. Once Sītā and Trijaṭā were in the Puṣpaka, the rākṣasīs departed to show Her Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Thus Rāvaṇa made Sītā fly over the city of Laṅkā, which was decorated with rows of flags and banners. The jubilant Rāvaṇa

also had it proclaimed throughout the city of Laṅkā that Indrajit had killed Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in combat. Flying in the aerial vehicle with Trijaṭā, Sītā saw that the whole monkey army was devastated. She also saw that the flesh-eating rākṣasas were overjoyed and that the monkeys were grief-stricken as they stood around Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa.

Then Sītā saw Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lying on a bed of arrows, unconscious and pierced by arrows. Their armor was broken and Their bows cast aside. Their bodies were completely covered with arrows so that they looked like a bundle of arrows on the ground. When Sītā saw the two brothers lying there on a bed of arrows, like the two sons of the fire-god sitting on a pile of reeds, grief-stricken, She lamented piteously. Seeing Her husband and Lakṣmaṇa lying in the dust, the dark-eyed Sītā whose limbs were faultless began crying. When Sītā saw the two brothers who were as powerful as the sons of gods, and concluding that They were dead, She, being afflicted with tears and sorrow, spoke the following words.

TRIJAṬĀ ASSURES SĪTĀ THAT RĀMA WILL SURVIVE

When Sītā, who was emaciated from grief, saw Her mighty husband struck down, She wailed piteously: “The wise men who predicted by My physiognomy that I would have children and would never be widowed have become liars today by Rāma’s death. The wise men who said that I would be the queen of a performer of sacrifices and the wife of a performer of elaborate and lengthy soma sacrifices have become liars today by Rāma’s death. The wise brāhmaṇa astrologers who predicted within the range of My hearing that I would be happy have become liars today by Rāma’s death. The wise men who said that I would be the wife of a valiant monarch and fortunate have become liars today by Rāma’s death.

“In fact, on the soles of My feet I have the mark of a lotus flower by which the wives of monarchs are consecrated with sovereignty along with their husbands. I do not see on My body those ill marks by which unfortunate women become widows, yet My auspicious marks have been rendered void. The various auspicious marks on women, though said to be unfailing in their effect, are today proven false by the death of Rāma. My hair is fine, straight and blackish. My eyebrows are not joined. I have round, hairless shanks and My teeth have no spaces between them. My temples, eyes, hands, feet, ankles and thighs are evenly shaped. My fingers are all smooth and even with round nails. My breasts are tight and raised and their nipples are depressed. My navel is sunken and its surround area is raised. My sides and bosom are fleshy. My complexion is shiny like a gem and the hairs on My body are soft. They said that I had the auspicious characteristic of being able to touch the ground with twelve parts: the ten toes and the two soles of My feet. Those who know about the auspicious marks of ladies said that My hands and feet were rosy, adorned with the mark of a barley corn, without any space between the fingers and toes, and that I had a gentle smile. Brāhmaṇas skilled in astrology said that I would be consecrated with sovereignty along with My husband. All of that has been rendered false.

“After searching Janasthāna, finding information about Me and crossing the imperturbable ocean, the two brothers have been slain by Indrajit, who is no more than the hoofprint of a cow. Surely Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa knew the use of the weapons of Varuṇa, Agni, Indra, Vāyu, as well as the brahma-śira weapon. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who were equal to Indra and the protectors of My helpless self, were killed on the battlefield by Indrajit, who made himself invisible by a trick of deception. After coming within the path of Rāma’s vision on the battlefield, no enemy could return alive, even if he were as fast as the mind. There is no burden too heavy for destiny and death is very difficult to defeat in that Rāma and His brother are lying dead on the battlefield. I do not grieve so much for Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, nor for Myself, nor for My own mother, as I do for My unfortunate mother-in-law Kausalyā. She is always thinking about when she will see Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Myself return from the forest after completing Our vow.”

The rākṣasī Trijaṭā then said to Sītā as She cried: “Do not despair, O goddess! Your husband is alive. I will tell You important reasons why Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa must be still living. When their leader is killed in combat, the faces of the soldiers never look consternated with rage, nor overjoyed. If those two princes were dead, this celestial airship called Puṣpaka would not carry You, a widow. When its leader is killed, an army loses its enthusiasm and energy, wandering about on the battlefield like a boat without a helmsman. Unbewildered and undisturbed, this army is guarding the two descendents of Kakutstha, whom I have affectionately declared to be alive.

“Be completely reassured by the joyful indications and see that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are alive. I am telling You this out of affection. I have never before spoken a lie, nor am I doing so now, O princess of Mithilā. Because of Your character and merry disposition, You have penetrated my mind. These two princes cannot be defeated in battle even by the gods and demons led by Indra. After seeing these things, I have notified You. O Sītā, just see this great wonder! Although the two princes have been struck down by arrows and are unconscious, Their bodily splendor has not left Them. Usually one sees a major transformation on the faces of those whose have died. Give up sorrow, grief and bewilderment on account of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa! It is not possible that They are not living at this time.”

When Sītā heard Trijaṭā words, She replied with joined palms: “Let it be so!” After sending back the airship Puṣpaka, which was as swift as the mind, Trijaṭā brought the miserable Sītā back into Laṅkā. After descending from the airship with Trijaṭā, Sītā was forced by the rākṣasīs to enter the aśoka grove. Having entered Rāvaṇa’s pleasure ground which abounded in trees, Sītā thought about the condition of the two princes She had just seen, and became greatly despondent.

RĀMA REGAINS CONSCIOUSNESS

All those outstanding and physically powerful monkeys headed by Sugrīva were overwhelmed with grief and stood surrounding Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who were lying there drenched in blood, breathing like snakes and bound by a formidable mesh of arrows. Meanwhile, because of His fortitude and courage, despite being pinned down by arrows, the manly Rāma regained consciousness. Seeing that His brother was soaked with blood, tightly restrained by arrows and looking very dejected, Rāma lamented out of distress: “What purpose can I accomplish by regaining Sītā or even by My own life when I now see My brother lying defeated in combat? If I searched in this mortal world, I could find a woman equal to Sītā, but I could never find anyone as skilled in battle or as helpful as Lakṣmaṇa. I shall give up My life as the monkeys watch if Lakṣmaṇa passes away. What shall I tell Kausalyā, and what Kaikeyī? If I return without Lakṣmaṇa, how shall I console Sumitrā, who longs for the sight of her son, when she trembles and wails like a female osprey on learning of the death of her son? How shall I tell Śatrughna and the glorious Bharata that although He accompanied Me to the forest, I have returned without Him? I would not be able to bear the criticism heaped on Me by Mother Sumitrā. I shall now give up this body, for I do not care to live. Cursed am I that for My sake, an ignoble performer of wicked deeds, Lakṣmaṇa is lying lifeless on a bed of arrows!

“O Lakṣmaṇa, You always comforted Me when I was depressed. Because You have given up Your life, You cannot speak to Me, though I am distressed. You are now lying down dead on the same field of battle on which You killed many rākṣasas today. Lying on a bed of arrows, soaked with blood and turned into a mass of arrows, You look like the setting sun. Because Your vital organs have been pierced by arrows, You are unable to speak right now. Although You cannot speak, the redness in Your eyes tells everything. As the splendid Lakṣmaṇa followed Me to the forest, so too shall I follow Him to the abode of the lord of death. He who always loved His relatives and was

always devoted to Me has today reached this condition because of My ignoble misdeeds. I do not ever remember hearing Him uttering an unpleasant or harsh word when He was very angry. Because Lakṣmaṇa could shoot five hundred arrows at a time, he was better than Kārtavīrya. He who could destroy Indra's different weapons and deserved to lie on a befitting couch is lying dead on the ground.

Since My babbling that I would make Vibhīṣaṇa king of the rākṣasas has been proven false, it will undoubtedly burn Me. O Sugrīva, you should leave this place this very moment. Knowing that you are without Me, Rāvaṇa will overcome you. Placing Aṅgada before you, along with your army and entourage, including Nīla and Nala, go back across the ocean. Certainly very great deeds difficult for anyone else were performed on the battlefield by Aṅgada, Mainda and Dvidida. Kesarī and Sampāti fought terribly in combat. A great battle was waged on My account by Gavaya, Gavākṣa, Śarabha, Gaja, and others who willingly gave up their lives. O Sugrīva, no one can overcome destiny. Whatever My friend or ally could have done for Me, you have done, wary as you are of foregoing your duty. You have played the role of an ally, O best of monkeys! With My permission you may all go wherever you wish.”

All the red-eyed monkeys who heard this lamentation shed tears from their eyes. After settling all the troops, Vibhīṣaṇa, with a mace in his hand, hurried to where Rāma was. Seeing Vibhīṣaṇa, who looked like a pile of black eye cosmetic, rushing there, all the monkeys thought that he was Indrajit and ran away.

GARUḌA RELEASES RĀMA AND LAKṢMAṆA

Then the mighty Sugrīva said: “Why is this army distraught like a boat in a stormy sea?” Aṅgada, the son of Vālī, replied: “Don’t you see the two sons of King Daśaratha, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, lying on a bed of arrows, Their bodies completely pierced by arrows and drenched in blood?” Sugrīva then said to his nephew Aṅgada: “I do not think that the troops have fled for no reason. There must be some danger. Their faces distressed and eyes wide with fear, the monkeys have abandoned their weapons and are fleeing in all directions. They are not embarrassed by being seen doing this, nor do they look backwards. In fact, they are shoving each other out of the way and jumping over those who have fallen.”

Meanwhile, the valiant Vibhīṣaṇa arrived bearing a mace and saluted Sugrīva and Rāma with exhortations to victory. Seeing Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva said to Jāmbavān, who was standing nearby: “Vibhīṣaṇa has arrived. Seeing him, the terrified monkeys are running away, suspecting that he is Indrajit. Quickly calm those terrified monkeys who have fled in many directions and inform them that it is Vibhīṣaṇa who has come.”

After calming the monkeys who were fleeing, Jāmbavān brought them back. Hearing what Jāmbavān said, the monkeys gave up their fear and seeing Vibhīṣaṇa, they all returned. The righteous Vibhīṣaṇa felt very distressed to see the bodies of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa covered with arrows. Vibhīṣaṇa moistened his hand with water and wiped Their eyes. Pained by sorrow, he cried and lamented: “These two powerful and valorous princes fond of fighting have been put into this situation by rākṣasas who fight deceitfully. The two princes who fought fairly have been tricked by my wicked nephew because of his insidious rākṣasa mentality. Pierced by many arrows and drenched in blood, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are asleep on the ground like two porcupines. These two exceptional men, upon whom I was

depending to be crowned king of Laṅkā, have fallen into the sleep which leads to the death of the body. Since my desire for sovereignty is finished, I am as good as dead. Having fulfilled his vow of not returning Sītā, our enemy Rāvaṇa has attained his desire.”

Sugrīva then embraced Vibhīṣaṇa, who was lamenting, and reassured him with the following words: “You will achieve sovereignty over Laṅkā, O knower of duty! There is no doubt about it. Even with Indrajit, Rāvaṇa will not be able to achieve his goal in this lifetime. Shaking off Their swoon and riding on the back of Garuḍa, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will kill Rāvaṇa and his hordes on the battlefield.”

After consoling the rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva said to his father-in-law, Suśeṇa: “Accompanied by heroic monkey troops, take Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to Kiṣkindhā as soon as They have regained consciousness. After killing Rāvaṇa along with his sons and relatives, I shall bring back Sītā, as Indra retrieved his lost wealth.”

When Suśeṇa heard Sugrīva’s instructions, he said: “A long time ago I witnessed an amazing, major battle between the gods and demons. Making themselves invisible, the demons repeatedly injured the demigods, even though the latter were skilled in hitting their mark and using other weapons. Although the demigods were wounded, unconscious and practically dead, their preceptor Bṛhaspati revived them with the recitation of prayers and the use of herbal medicines. Let some monkeys headed by Sampāti and Panasa quickly go the ocean of milk and bring back those medicinal herbs. The monkeys know the two great mountain herbs—sañjīvanī and viśalyā. From the ocean of milk, out of which the nectar of immortality was churned, rise two mountains named Candra and Droṇa. The two important herbs are found there. Those two mountains were placed in that ocean by the gods. O king, let Hanumān go there.”

Shortly thereafter a wind came up, along with clouds and lightning, which stirred up the water in the ocean and shook the mountains. With their branches broken by the flapping of wings, big trees all over the island fell roots and all into the water of the salty ocean. The hooded snakes that

inhabited that island became frightened and all the sea creatures hurriedly entered the ocean. Then, in a moment, all the monkeys saw the mighty Garuḍa, son of Vinatā, shining like fire. As soon as the powerful snakes turned into arrows that were pinning down Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa saw that Garuḍa had arrived, they fled away. Touching the two descendents of Kakutstha and greeting Them, Garuḍa wiped Their moon-like faces with his hands. When touched by Garuḍa, Their wounds healed and Their bodies became lustrous and smooth. Their energy, prowess, strength, splendor and enthusiasm were doubled.

Lifting up the two princes, who were just like Indra, the exceedingly powerful Garuḍa happily embraced Them. Then Rāma said to Garuḍa: “By your mercy We have very quickly passed over the great danger caused by Indrajit and have been made strong. My heart rejoices on meeting you as it does on meeting My father, King Daśaratha, or My grandfather, King Aja. Having physical beauty and wearing brilliant garments, celestial ornaments, a flower garland and sandalwood paste, who are you?”

The overjoyed Garuḍa, king of birds, replied to Rāma, whose eyes were wide with delight: “O descendent of Kakutstha, I am Your dear friend Garuḍa, the external manifestation of Your own life breath, come here to help You. Even if mighty asuras, dānavas, or even the gods with the gandharvas headed by Indra came here, they would not be able to undo these formidable bonds fashioned by the cruel Indrajit by means of black magic. The snakes which bound You were the sons of Kadrū who were turned into arrows by Indrajit’s magical power. O Rāma, You, who are unfailing in prowess, and Your brother Lakṣmaṇa, who defeats His enemy in combat, are fortunate indeed! Hearing the news about what had happened to You two, I immediately rushed here out of affection for You and to preserve that friendship. Now You have been released from this most formidable entanglement of arrows, but You should always be very alert. The rākṣasas by nature all fight very treacherously, whereas straightforwardness is the strength of pure-hearted warriors like Yourselves. As such, by this particular analogy, You should never trust the rākṣasas on a battlefield, for they are always deceitful.”

After saying this and embracing Rāma warmly, he began to bid Rāma farewell: “My dear friend Rāma, I wish to take leave of You, the knower of what is right, who are fond even of Your enemies. I shall now leave contentedly. Nor is there anything amazing about Our friendship, O descendent of the Raghu Dynasty. When You have fulfilled Your duty on the battlefield, O warrior, You will recognize our friendship. After killing with arrows all Your male enemies in Laṅkā, except for the adolescent and aged, You will surely recover Sītā.”

When Garuḍa finished speaking in this way and had freed Rāma from His physical disability in the midst of the monkeys, the fine-feathered Garuḍa circumambulated Rāma, embraced Him and flew swiftly into the sky just like the wind. Seeing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa released from Indrajit’s spell, the monkey troop leaders roared like lions and lashed their tails. Then they beat kettledrums and mṛdaṅga drums, blew conchshells and began jumping about joyfully as previously. Uprooting trees, hundreds of thousands of monkeys stood waving them menacingly. Emitting loud howls which frightened the night-stalkers, the monkeys eager for combat reached the gates of Laṅkā. From the commanders of monkeys arose a most frightful tumult which was like the ominous thundering of clouds at midnight at the end of the hot season.

RĀVAṆA INFORMED OF RĀMA'S RECOVERY

In the company of rākṣasas, Rāvaṇa heard the tumultuous sound of the immensely energetic monkeys as they roared. When Rāvaṇa heard that deep, joyful and thunderous uproar, he spoke as follows in the midst of his counselors: “From the way in which the multitude of jubilant monkeys is roaring like thunder clouds, it is obvious that they are ecstatic. There is no doubt about this. Thus even the salt ocean has been stirred up. Although Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lie bound by sharp arrows, this loud outcry produces in me a certain doubt.”

After saying this to his counselors, Rāvaṇa spoke the following to those rākṣasas who were standing nearby: “Find out why all those monkeys are rejoicing when it is a time for them to be lamenting!” When commanded in this way, the rākṣasas scaled the defense walls and saw the monkey army protected by the great soul Sugrīva. All the rākṣasas became disturbed upon seeing that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were free from the formidable entanglement of arrows and fully recovered. Descending from the wall, all those rākṣasas being frightened at heart and pale, returned to Rāvaṇa. With miserable expressions on their faces, the rākṣasas, who were expert in speaking, told Rāvaṇa all about the bad news: “The two brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, whom Indrajit bound with a network of arrows which pinned down Their arms, are seen on the battlefield free from that bondage like lordly elephants who have broken their fetters.”

When Rāvaṇa heard this report, his face lost its color and he became overwhelmed with anxiety. He said to himself: “Indrajit firmly bound in battle my enemies with formidable arrows received as a boon and resembling snakes as bright as the sun. If Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa could free Themselves after being bound by those weapons, then I think that my entire

army is in danger. Surely my arrows, which are as bright as fire and which I used to take the lives of my enemies in combat, are now useless.”

Saying this and hissing like a snake, the furious Rāvaṇa gave the following order to the rākṣasa named Dhūmrākṣa: “Go with a large army of rākṣasas to destroy Rāma and the monkeys, O rākṣasa of terrible valor!” When commanded in this way, Dhūmrākṣa circumambulated the crafty Rāvaṇa and left the palace at once. Coming out of the palace gate, Dhūmrākṣa said to the commander-in-chief of the army: “Quickly get the army ready! What is the use of delaying for one eager to fight?” On hearing this, the commander-in-chief hurriedly mobilized the army as commanded by Rāvaṇa.

Pacing about Dhūmrākṣa, those excited night-stalkers whose forms were hideous and who wore belts with bells, roared loudly. Armed with many different kinds of weapons, such as spears, clubs, maces, lances, iron cudgels, iron bars, slings, nooses and axes, the rākṣasas sallied forth. Wearing armor, coming out like dangerous tigers, other rākṣasas rode on chariots adorned with gold filigree and fluttering flags, others on asses with different kinds of heads, very swift horses or elephants madden with ichor.

Dhūmrākṣa, whose voice was like a donkey’s, rode a heavenly chariot drawn by asses with gold harnesses. The asses which pulled his chariot had the heads of wolves and lions. Surrounded by rākṣasas, the mighty Dhūmrākṣa laughed as he exited the western gate where Hanumān was stationed. As the frightful-looking rākṣasa sallied forth on his fine chariot drawn by asses, ferocious birds flying in the sky tried to block his passage and an exceedingly dreadful vulture alighted on top of his chariot, so it is said. A group of scavenger birds landed together on the tip of his flagpole. A headless body drenched with blood fall on the ground. The corpse thrown in front of Dhūmrākṣa lay there moaning. Lord Indra showered down blood and the earth shook. The wind blew in contrary ways, producing a clamor like thunder. Covered as they were by darkness, the directions were not discernible. Seeing these ominous omens presaging danger, Dhūmrākṣa became perturbed. All the rākṣasas marching in front of him became bewildered. Then, as the direful Dhūmrākṣa, surrounded by a

multitude of night-stalkers, came out of the city eager for battle, he saw the vast army consisting of many monkeys protected by Lord Rāma.

HANUMĀN SLAYS DHŪMRĀKṢA

When the elated monkeys who were eager for battle saw that the terribly valorous rākṣasa Dhūmrākṣa had sallied forth, they howled loudly. A tumultuous battle broke out between the monkeys and the rākṣasas, one side attacking the other with trees, and the other with spears and clubs. The rākṣasas cut down formidable monkeys on all sides, and the monkeys leveled the rākṣasas with trees. The enraged rākṣasas pierced the monkeys with sharp, straight-flying arrows guided with buzzard feathers. Being torn asunder by the rākṣasas' frightful clubs, spears and mallets, the mighty monkeys, whose indignation over their losses had produced such enthusiasm, performed acts of bravery. With their limbs lacerated by arrows and their bodies split open by spears, the monkey troop commanders grabbed trees and boulders. With frightful impetuosity, the monkeys crushed the rākṣasas here and there with boulders and roared loudly, declaring their names. The battle fought by the monkeys and rākṣasas with boulders and different kinds of many-branched trees was shocking and amazing.

Some rākṣasas were crushed by the victorious monkeys; some of the blood-thirsty rākṣasas vomited blood. Some had their sides torn open, while others were smashed together by trees. Some were pulverized by boulders; others were torn to pieces by fangs. With their flags broken, their swords knocked out of their hands and their chariots destroyed, some of the night-stalkers felt despondent. The surface of the earth was covered with huge elephants whose riders had been crushed with mountain peaks thrown by the monkeys. The rākṣasas' faces were badly cut by the claws of fiercely intrepid monkeys who were precipitously jumping about. With looks of depression, dishevelled hair and faint from the smell of blood, they collapsed onto the ground. Other rākṣasas who were highly enraged and courageous hit the monkeys with the palms of their hands, which were as hard as diamonds. Although the rākṣasas were capable of knocking down their

enemies due to their impetuosity, the monkeys, who were even more impetuous, knocked them down with their fists, feet and teeth, as well as trees. Seeing his own army fleeing, the rākṣasa Dhūmrākṣa angrily created havoc among the bellicose monkeys.

Wounded by lances, some monkeys began bleeding. When struck with mallets, others fell on the ground. Some were crushed with iron bars, others were lacerated by javelins. Fatally wounded by spears, some stumbled and died. When struck, some of the monkeys fell covered with blood on the ground. When defeated by the furious rākṣasas, some monkeys fled from the battlefield. Some of the monkeys were lying on the ground with their hearts torn open; others were cut open with tridents and disemboweled. That great battle between the monkeys and rākṣasas was most horrible because it involved the employment of so many kinds of weapons, including trees and boulders. The battle resembled a concert with the twang of bowstrings for its sweet-sounding string instruments, the muffled grunts and sighs as its percussion instruments and the trumpeting of elephants as its vocal accompaniment.

Holding his bow, Dhūmrākṣa laughed as he dispersed the monkeys in all directions with a shower of arrows. Angered upon seeing how Dhūmrākṣa was confounding the monkey army by his attack, Hanumān grabbed hold of a large boulder and turned toward him. With his eyes twice as red due to anger, Hanumān hurled the boulder at Dhūmrākṣa's chariot. When he saw the rock approaching, Dhūmrākṣa picked up his mace and quickly jumped down from the chariot. He deftly took a stance on the ground. After smashing the chariot with its wheels, pole, horses, flag and bow, the boulder fell to the ground. Having smashed the chariot, Hanumān began annihilating the rākṣasas with trees having branches and boughs. As soon as their heads were smashed, they became drenched with blood. Others who were crushed by trees fell down on the ground. After driving away the rākṣasa army, Hanumān, the son of the wind-god, ran toward Dhūmrākṣa with a mountain peak. When Dhūmrākṣa saw Hanumān approaching, he lifted up his mace and roared as he ran toward Hanumān. Out of wrath Dhūmrākṣa hit Hanumān on the head with a mace studded with many iron spikes. The monkey, who had the strength of the wind-god,

was not affected by the violent impact of the mace. When the boulder hurled by Hanumān hit Dhūmrākṣa on the top of the head, all his limbs were paralyzed by the impact and he suddenly fell on the ground like a shattered mountain. Seeing Dhūmrākṣa killed, the surviving rākṣasas became frightened and went back into the city of Laṅkā while being attacked by the monkeys. After slaying his enemies and causing streams of blood to flow, and being exhausted from the encounter, Hanumān was gratified by the praises given by the monkeys.

VAJRADAṂṢṬRA ATTACKS THE MONKEYS

Hearing that Dhūmrākṣa had been killed, Rāvaṇa fumed with rage and hissed like a snake. Heaving a long, hot sigh provoke by anger, Rāvaṇa spoke to the cruel and powerful rākṣasa Vajradamṣṭra: “Go, O warrior! Leave at once with rākṣasas and kill Rāma, along with Sugrīva and the monkeys!” Saying, “So be it,” himself being a practitioner of black magic and a chief of rākṣasas, he speedily departed with many soldiers. Vajradamṣṭra was accompanied by many elephants, horses, asses and camels. He was composed in mind and was followed by many chariots sporting flags and banners. Nicely adorned with beautiful armlets and a crown and wearing armor, he hurriedly set forth with a bow. Circumambulating the effulgent chariot, which was elaborated with smelted gold and decorated with flags, the general boarded it.

Foot soldiers sallied forth bearing all kinds of weapons, such as double-edged swords, strange iron clubs, polished clubs, slings, bows, javelins, spears, swords, discuses, maces and sharp axes. Dressed in attractive attire, the outstanding rākṣasas looked brilliant. Courageous elephants madden with ichor came out, looking like mountains. The elephants’ riders carried iron clubs and goads in their hands and were expert in fighting. Other powerful beasts of burden that had exceptional qualities were mounted by valorous warriors. That army of rākṣasas on the march looked beautiful, like clouds accompanied by lightning during the monsoon season. The rākṣasas came out of the southern gate, where Aṅgada was stationed. There were inauspicious omens as they were coming out. Bright meteors fell from the cloudless sky. Appalling she-jackals howled and vomited flames of fire. Grim creatures presaged the destruction of the rākṣasas, while the pitiful warriors stumbled as they marched forward. Seeing these omens, Vajradamṣṭra resorted to his own fortitude and, eager for battle, sallied forth. When the monkeys saw the rākṣasas approaching quickly, they roared so loudly that it filled all directions.

There then occurred a tumultuous encounter of the monkeys with the rākṣasas, both of whom were formidable, of frightful appearance and desirous of killing the others. Rushing towards each other with great enthusiasm, they fell on the ground with their bodies and necks slit and their limbs drenched with blood. Approaching each other, some of the warriors, who had arms like iron clubs and who never retreated from the battlefield, hurled every imaginable weapon. A loud, heart-rending sound could be heard from the trees, boulders and weapons being used. The tumultuous sound of chariot wheels, bowstrings, conchshells, kettledrums and mṛdaṅga drums arose on the battlefield. Having abandoned their weapons, some warriors fought hand to hand with slaps, kicks, punches, jabs with the knees and striking with trees. Some rākṣasas had their bodies smashed, while others were crushed with boulders by monkeys maddened by the conflict. Vajradamṣṭra terrified the monkeys with his multitude of arrows, traversed the battlefield, like death personified with noose in hand for the destruction of the world. Completely enraged, the mighty rākṣasas, who were armed with many kinds of weapons, slaughtered the monkey soldiers on the field of battle. With his anger increased two-fold, Aṅgada began annihilating with determination all the rākṣasas, like the fire at the end of the world. His eyes red with anger, the heroic Aṅgada, who was equal to Indra in prowess, lifted up a tree and exterminated the rākṣasas hordes, as a lion does to smaller animals. Killed by Aṅgada, the treacherous rākṣasas whose heads were crushed fell like cut trees. Covered with chariots, colorful flags, swift steeds, and the bodies of monkeys and rākṣasas, as well as pools of blood, the earth looked very scary. Decorated with necklaces, armlets, garments and weapons, the ground of the battlefield shone brightly, like an autumn evening. Because of Aṅgada's impetuosity, the great rākṣasa army was shaken, like a cloud by a wind.

ANĠADA SLAYS VAJRADAṂṢṬRA

Vajradamṣṭra was infuriated by the destruction of his army and the display of strength by Aṅgada. Stretching his formidable bow, which was like Indra's thunderbolt, he assaulted the monkey troops with a volley of arrows. Then the principal rākṣasas warriors, mounted on chariots and bearing all kinds of weapons, fought fiercely in that conflict. All the most valorous of those stalwart monkeys fought with boulders in their hands, gathering on all sides. In that fight, the rākṣasas repeatedly hurled thousands of weapons at the monkeys. The foremost of monkey warriors, who were like mad elephants, heaved mountain peaks, boulders and trees at the rākṣasas. A fierce battle raged between the heroic fighters of monkeys and rākṣasas who never retreated from battle.

Some had their heads slit open, others had their hands and feet cut off. Monkeys and rākṣasas were lying all over the ground, which was crowded with buzzards, vultures, crows and jackals. Headless bodies jumped up, terrifying the timid. Cadavers with severed hands, arms, heads and slashed trunks were lying on the ground. Monkeys and also rākṣasas fell on the ground. Then, as Vajradamṣṭra watched, the entire army of night-stalkers was divided as it was being attacked by the monkey forces. When Vajradamṣṭra saw this, his eyes became red with anger and, with bow in hand, he entered the monkey army, terrifying his enemies. He slaughtered the monkey soldiers with straight-shooting arrows tipped with buzzard feathers, piercing as many as five, seven, eight or nine monkeys at a time. The outraged and glorious Vajradamṣṭra pierced the monkeys. Terror-stricken and wounded by arrows, the monkey hordes ran to Aṅgada, as all creatures turn to the Lord of creation for protection.

When Aṅgada saw that the monkey troops were crushed, Aṅgada angrily glared at Vajradamṣṭra, as the latter was also doing at Aṅgada. Vajradamṣṭra and Aṅgada both fought with each other furiously, striding

about like a lion and a mad elephant. Then the powerful Vajradamṣṭra hit Aṅgada in his vital areas with one hundred thousand arrows that were like flames of fire. With all his limbs drenched with blood, Aṅgada threw a tree at Vajradamṣṭra. Seeing it flying toward him, the unfazed Vajradamṣṭra tore it to pieces, after which it fell down. When Aṅgada saw Vajradamṣṭra's prowess, he grabbed a huge boulder, hurled it and roared. Seeing this, Vajradamṣṭra jumped down from his chariot and stood on the ground with a mace in his hands without seeming disturbed. The boulder which Aṅgada threw landed in the midst of the battlefield, crushing the chariot with its wheels, pole and horses. Grabbing another boulder adorned with trees, the monkey threw it on Vajradamṣṭra's head. Vomiting blood and fainting, Vajradamṣṭra remaining unconscious for some time, clutching his mace and breathing deeply. When the night-stalker regained consciousness, he was infuriated and struck Aṅgada, who was standing there, in the chest with a mace. Abandoning his mace, he then began fighting with his fists. The monkey and the rākṣasa both struck each other. The two valiant fighters, like Mars and Mercury, became exhausted from each other's blows and began vomiting blood. Then the stalwart monkey Aṅgada, who was extremely heroic, pulled up a tree with many flowers and fruits and stood there holding it. Vajradamṣṭra then grabbed a shield made from the hide of a bull and a long, shiny sword adorned with a string of bells and covered in a leather sheath.

The furious monkey and rākṣasa paced around in a circle, striking each other mercilessly because of their desire for victory. While the blood flowed from their wounds, they looked beautiful, like blossoming kiṁśuka trees. As they fought, they became exhausted and fell to the ground on their knees. In the twinkling of an eye, Aṅgada stood up, with eyes glowing like a snake struck with a stick. With his spotless sharpened sword, the mighty Aṅgada chopped off Vajradamṣṭra's big head. When his beautiful head was cut off with its eyes rolling due to anger, it and his blood-drenched body fell on the ground in two separate pieces. Seeing Vajradamṣṭra killed, the rākṣasas were bewildered with fear. Terrified, they fled back to the city of Laṅkā as they were being attacked by the monkeys. They looked despondent and miserable, with their heads hanging down somewhat out of shame. After

slaying Vajradamṣṭra, Aṅgada felt delighted as he was being honored in the midst of the monkey army, like Indra surrounded by the residents of heaven.

AKAMPANA AND OTHER RĀKṢASAS ATTACK THE MONKEYS

When Rāvaṇa heard that Aṅgada had killed Vajradanīṣṭra, he said to his commander-in-chief, who was standing nearby with joined palms: “Have invincible rākṣasas with fearsome courage sally forth immediately with Akampana, who is expert in the use of all kinds of weapons, leading them. He is the chastiser of his enemies, the protector of his own forces, a leader and the finest of warriors. He always desires what is beneficial to me and is always fond of battle. He will defeat Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva. He will also undoubtedly slaughter the other dreadful monkeys.” Accepting Rāvaṇa’s command, the commander-in-chief, who was brisk and lively, then dispatched his army.

Urged by the commander-in-chief, the foremost of rākṣasas, who had ugly eyes, hideous appearances and many kinds of weapons, rushed out. Mounting his large chariot adorned with smelted gold, Akampana, whose complexion was like a dark cloud and whose voice sounded like a thundering cloud, sallied forth surrounded by frightening rākṣasas. He could not be shaken even in a major conflict with the gods. Therefore he was called Akampana, or unshaking. His splendor was like the sun. Even as he was proceeding, being excited and eager to fight, his left eye twitched and the horses pulling his chariot suddenly became depressed. His face turned pale and his voice choked up. At a time when it should have been a nice day, it became cloudy and excessively windy. All the birds and beasts emitted harsh, frightening cries. Paying no attention to those omens, Akampana, whose shoulders were as broad as a lion’s and whose prowess was like that of a tiger, sallied forth onto the battlefield. As Akampana rushed out with the other rākṣasas, there arose a great clamor that unsettled the ocean. The sound terrified the huge monkey army. A dreadful battle ensued between the monkeys and rākṣasas, who were ready to fight with trees and boulders, having dedicated their lives to Rāma or Rāvaṇa respectively. All the warriors

were very strong and just like mountains. A loud tumult could be heard on the battlefield as the monkeys and rākṣasas growled and fought with each other angrily, impetuous as they were.

A most terrible cloud of pale dust obscuring all ten directions was raised by the monkeys and rākṣasas. Covered with white dust like a white sheet flapping in the wind, no one on the battlefield could see anyone else. Neither a flag, banner, shield, horse, weapon or chariot could be seen because of that dust. Although the loud sound of warriors shouting and running toward each other could be heard, their forms could not be seen. In that darkness on the battlefield, the infuriated monkeys themselves killed monkeys and rākṣasas likewise killed rākṣasas.

Killing both their enemies and their own, the monkeys and rākṣasas drenched the earth with blood, making it muddy. Moistened with blood, the dust settled down. The ground was completely covered with corpses. The monkeys and rākṣasas quickly and forcefully struck each other with trees, spears, maces, pikes, boulders, iron bars and clubs. Fighting with their iron-hard arms, the fearsome monkeys attacked the rākṣasas on the battlefield. Wielding menacing pikes and clubs, the furious rākṣasas killed monkeys.

Akampana, the general of that army of rākṣasas, cheered them on in their barbarous actions. Assaulting the rākṣasas, the monkeys also crushed them with huge trees and rocks and courageously snatched away their weapons. Meanwhile, the valiant monkeys Kumuda, Nala, Mainda and Dvividā displayed extreme impetuosity because of their anger. These stalwart monkeys crushed all the fully-armed rākṣasas on the front line of battle as if it were a game.

HANUMĀN KILLS AKAMPANA

Akampana became furious on the battlefield when he saw the monkeys performing such great deeds. Beside himself with anger, he shook his sword and spoke as follows to his charioteer: “Quickly drive the chariot over there, for these monkeys are killing so many rākṣasas in combat. The anger of those powerful monkeys is frightful and they are standing before me with trees and boulders as weapons. I really do want to kill them who boast of their battle skills. They are crushing the entire rākṣasa army.”

Riding his chariot drawn by swift steeds, Akampana attacked the monkeys with volleys of arrows from a distance. The monkeys could not maintain their position, what to speak of fight on the battlefield. Injured by Akampana’s arrows, they all fled. See that his kinfolk were succumbing to death from the onslaught of Akampana’s arrows, the mighty Hanumān approached Akampana directly. When all the principal monkeys saw Hanumān, they joyfully rallied around him on the field of combat. Seeing Hanumān standing firmly, those stalwart monkeys regained their strength and took shelter of the mighty Hanumān.

Akampana showered arrows on Hanumān, who was standing there like a mountain, as Lord Indra showers down rain. Paying no attention to the arrows striking his body, Hanumān set his mind on killing Akampana. Laughing loudly, the glorious Hanumān rushed toward the rākṣasa, causing the earth to shake. As Hanumān roared, his form blazing with glory became difficult to overcome, just like a blazing fire. Finding himself without a weapon, Hanumān at once angrily pulled up a mountain peak.

Holding that rock in his hand and spinning it around, Hanumān roared. Then he ran toward the rākṣasa chieftain, Akampana, as Indra did to Namuci in the past. When Akampana saw that mountain peak approaching him from a distance, he tore it to pieces with big arrows having crescent-shaped heads. Hanumān became overwhelmed with anger when he saw how

the rākṣasa shattered the mountain peak in the sky with arrows. Because of his anger and pride, Hanumān approached an aśvakarṇa tree and quickly pulled it up.

Grabbing that aśvakarṇa tree with a thick trunk and holding it firmly, Hanumān brandished it on the battlefield with great delight. Running with great speed and knocking down trees as he did so, Hanumān dug up the earth with his feet. Hanumān destroyed elephants and chariots with their riders, as well as rākṣasa foot soldiers. Seeing Hanumān taking their lives with a tree like death personified, the rākṣasas ran away. When the valorous Akampana saw the furious Hanumān terrifying the rākṣasas and approaching, he became disturbed and roared.

Akampana pierced Hanumān with fourteen sharp arrows that tore his body. Transfixed with steel arrows and sharp spears, Hanumān looked like a mountain overgrown with trees. The gigantic monkey shone beautifully like a blossoming aśoka tree or a smokeless fire. Pulling up another tree in a hurry, Hanumān struck the rākṣasa Akampana in the head with it. When struck in that way by the angry monkey, Akampana fell down and died.

When the rākṣasas saw Akampana lying dead on the ground, they all became unsettled, like trees during an earthquake. Abandoning their weapons, those defeated rākṣasas ran panic-stricken to Laṅkā while being pursued by the monkeys. Defeated, bewildered, humiliated and disheveled, they fled with all their limbs dripping sweat due to fear. Trampling one another in their anxiety, they entered the city of Laṅkā, constantly looking back in fear.

After the rākṣasas had entered the city of Laṅkā, all the mighty monkeys assembled and offered their respects to Hanumān. Feeling very encouraged, Hanumān thanked all those courageous monkeys according to their rank. Intoxicated by their victory, the monkeys roared with all their might and dragged the still living rākṣasas around on the battlefield. Having met and slaughtered the rākṣasas, the great monkey Hanumān enjoyed the glory of a hero, as Viṣṇu did when He killed on the front line of battle demons who were the destroyers of their enemies. At that time, hordes of

demigods, Rāma Himself, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa offered their respects to Hanumān.

PRAHASTA ATTACKS THE MONKEYS

Rāvaṇa was enraged to hear of Akampana's death. With his face slightly miserable, he looked at his counselors. Thinking for a while, he consulted with counselors. Then Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, proceeded during the forenoon to the city of Lāṅkā to inspect all the garrisons. The king saw that the city with its flags, banners and garlands of flowers was well protected on all sides by its garrisons. Seeing that the city was under siege, Rāvaṇa spoke to Prahasta, who was skilled in combat and interested in his own welfare at that time: "I do not see any other fighter who can deliver this city, which is besieged and under pressure. Either you, my commander-in-chief, or I or Kumbhakarṇa, or Indrajit, or Nikumbha can carry this burden. Therefore, immediately take command of a battalion of soldiers and head for where all the monkeys are to conquer them. The monkeys, who are fickle and undisciplined will not be able to bear your roar, as elephants cannot bear the roar of a lion. When the army has fled, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa will be helpless and will be under your control. Better a certain death in battle than an uncertain death otherwise. Tell me what you think is good for us, regardless of whether it is palatable or not."

Commanded in this way by Rāvaṇa, Prahasta replied to him, as Uśanā would reply to Bali. "O king, we discussed this topic previously with expert counselors and there was disagreement among us upon seeing each others viewpoints. I concluded that it would be better for us to return Sītā. Failure to do so would mean going to war. That is what has happened to us. I have always been honored by you with gifts, respect and gentle words. How could I not strive for your benefit when it is time? I would not spare my life, wife, children or wealth for you. Just see how I sacrifice my life for your sake on the battlefield!"

After speaking in this way to his master, Prahasta instructed his troop commanders who were standing in front of him: "Assemble a huge army of rākṣasas in front of me right away! Let carnivorous birds be satisfied

today with the flesh of monkeys slain on the battlefield by the force of my arrows.” Hearing this, the army commanders mustered an army at Rāvaṇa’s palace. In an hour’s time, the city of Laṅkā was crowded with rākṣasa warriors who were fearsome and armed with many kinds of weapons. A fragrant breeze bearing the scent of clarified butter blew on the rākṣasas who were offering prostrated respects to brāhmaṇas who were offering oblations into the sacred fire. Accepting various kinds of flower garlands consecrated with mantras, the rākṣasas then put on battle gear. Upon seeing their king, Rāvaṇa, the rākṣasas, clutching bows and dressed in armor, surrounded Prahasta.

Taking leave of Rāvaṇa and ordering a disquieting drum roll, Prahasta mounted his chariot, which was supplied with all the necessary equipment, drawn by swift steeds and driven by an expert charioteer. The chariot thundered like a big rain cloud. It was as shiny as the sun and moon. Its flag bore the image of a snake and it was difficult to overcome. It was protected by bumpers and was beautifully crafted. It was adorned with golden lattice-work and seemed to smile by its beauty. Sitting on that chariot, Prahasta, who had received land-grants from Rāvaṇa, at once sallied forth from the city of Laṅkā, surrounded by a large army.

As Prahasta departed there was heard a drum roll sounding like thunder, loud blasts from trumpets that seemed to fill the earth and the blowing of conchshells. Howling frightfully, huge rākṣasas with hideous appearances sallied forth ahead of Prahasta. His four ministers—Narāntaka, Kumbhahanu, Mahānāda and Samunnata—also sallied forth, surrounding him. Prahasta exited the eastern gate surrounded by a huge army of very formidable rākṣasas in battle array, thus resembling a herd of elephants. Surrounded by that vast army which resembled an ocean, Prahasta looked like Yamarāja, the lord of death as he marched forward angrily.

As a tumult was raised by musical instruments and the roaring of rākṣasas, all the living beings in Laṅkā began howling and shrieking. Flying into the sky, birds subsisting on flesh and blood circled counter-clockwise around the chariot of Prahasta. She-jackals were vomiting flames of fire and howling frightfully. Meteors fell from the sky and the wind blew fiercely.

Pressing against each other, the planets failed to shine. Making a sound like asses, clouds showered down blood over Prahasta's chariot and drenched those who were marching in front of him. A squawking vulture landed on the top of his flagpole, facing southward. Stretching and flapping both its wings, it took away all of Prahasta's power. His charioteer kept dropping his whip. That rare splendor and glory which Prahasta exhibited while coming out of the city was lost in a moment when his horses stumbled on level ground.

Even as Prahasta, whose manly qualities in combat were well-known, was coming out, the monkeys armed with all kinds of weapons pressed forward. The monkeys raised a tumultuous clamor as they pulled up trees and grabbed hold of heavy boulders. The great sound of roaring *rākṣasas* and howling monkeys could be heard. Both armies were exhilarated. Being impetuous, capable and desirous of each other's death, they challenged each other verbally. Then, just as a moth enters a fire to die, the foolish Prahasta, in order to gain victory, forced his way into Sugrīva's monkey forces, whose impetuosity had increased.

NĪLA KILLS PRAHASTA

When Rāma saw that Prahasta was coming out of the city ready to fight, He smiled and said to Vibhīṣaṇa: “Who is that impetuous giant coming this way surrounded by a great army? What is his strength and manliness like? Tell Me about this courageous night-stalker, O strong-armed one!” Hearing Rāma’s question, Vibhīṣaṇa replied: “This rākṣasa is the commander-in-chief named Prahasta. He is surround by one third of Rāvaṇa’s military forces in Laṅkā. He is very powerful, heroic and knowledgable about weapons. His prowess is well-known.”

The huge army of extremely mighty monkeys saw the terrible and gigantic Prahasta, who roared as he came out. His prowess was formidable and was surrounded by rākṣasas. The monkeys raised a loud cry and howled at Prahasta. As they rushed toward the monkeys for victory, the rākṣasas wielded all kinds of brightly shining weapons, such as swords, javelins, double-edged swords, pikes, arrows, hammers, maces, iron bars, spears, axes and different kinds of bows. Eager to fight, the monkeys grabbed flowering trees, mountain peaks and huge boulders. A major conflict broke out between them as they met and showered each other with boulders and arrows. In that battle many rākṣasas killed many stalwart monkeys, and many monkeys likewise killed many rākṣasas. Some monkeys were killed with pikes, while other were killed with discuses. Some were smashed with iron bars, while others were hacked to death with axes. Deprived of their life breath, some fell down on the ground, while others were struck down by arrows with their hearts split open. Sliced in two by swords, some tumbled to the ground. Other monkeys had their sides slit open by heroic rākṣasas. The furious monkey also crushed rākṣasas against the earth’s surface in many places with trees and mountain crags. Repeatedly struck with palms and fists that were as hard as thunderbolts, the rākṣasas vomited blood from their mouths, for their faces and eyes were smashed. A tumultuous clamor arose among the monkeys and rākṣasas as they cried out in distress or roared like

lions. The angry monkeys and rākṣasas, devoted to the path of heroism, grimaced menacingly and performed great deeds without fear.

Narāntaka, Kumbhahanu, Mahānāda and Samunnata—these four ministers of Prahasta slaughtered monkeys. Of these four who were rapidly killing monkeys, Dvidida killed Narāntaka with a mountain peak. Jumping to his feet with a big tree, the monkey Durmukha killed the quick-handed Samunnata. Seizing a large boulder, Jāmbavān angrily hurled it at the Mahānāda's chest. Kumbhahanu was met by Tāra, who then took away his life in combat with a huge tree. Unable to tolerate these deeds, Prahasta, who was riding his chariot while holding his bow, wrought a dreadful slaughter of monkeys.

From both armies arose a clamor that was like the thundering of a great turbid ocean. Enraged in combat, the tall rākṣasa Prahasta afflicted the monkeys in that great battle with a volley of arrows. Strewn with the bodies of monkeys and rākṣasas, the earth seemed to be covered with dreadful mountains. With pools of blood everywhere, the earth looked as if it were blanketed with palaśa flowers during spring. The rākṣasas and monkeys crossed the battlefield, which was like a river, as elephants would cross a lotus pond covered with pollen. The heaps of slain warriors were the banks. Broken weapons were its large trees. The streams of blood were its current of water which was flowing towards the ocean of death. The livers and spleens were its mud. The scattered entrails were its duckweed. Severed heads and bodies were its fish. Severed fingers were its grass. The vultures which crowded it were its swans and it was frequented buzzards who were its cranes. The fat of bodies was the foam which covered it. The moan of the wounded was its murmur. That river was difficult to cross for cowards, who would wait until after the monsoon when the rivers are calm and frequented by swans and cranes.

Then Nīla saw Prahasta shooting volleys of arrows and slaughtering monkeys with rapidity as he sat on his chariot. As such, Nīla began to massacre the rākṣasa army, as a storm wind would blow away a large mass of clouds in the sky. Seeing that Nīla was rushing toward him, Prahasta also rushed toward Nīla while riding his chariot that was as brilliant as the sun. Stretching his fine bow in that great conflict, Prahasta began firing arrows at

Nīla. When the arrows reached Nīla, they pierced right through him and quickly entered the earth like angry snakes. After being wounded in this way by sharp arrows that were like flames of fire, Nīla pulled up a tree and struck Prahasta, who was running toward him.

Prahasta roared as soon as he was hit and began showering arrows on the leader of the monkey army. Unable to stop that volley of arrows fired by the inimical and wicked Prahasta, Nīla closed his eyes and accepted them. As a bull would tolerate the sudden downpour of rain in autumn, so did Nīla tolerate with closed eyes the unbearable shower of arrows released by Prahasta. Angered by that shower of arrows, Nīla killed Prahasta's horses with a large sāla tree. With his mind overwhelmed with rage, Nīla then suddenly broke the wicked Prahasta's bow and roared again and again. Having lost his bow, Prahasta grabbed a formidable club and jumped down from the chariot.

Both leaders, who were impetuous and inimical toward each other, stood drenched with blood like two wounded elephants in rut. Tearing at each other with their sharp teeth, they looked and acted like an elephant and a lion. Both heroes had won victories through their prowess. They never retreated from the battlefield and sought glory like that won by Vṛtra and Indra. Thereafter, Prahasta struck his club against Nīla's forehead, which then began to bleed. With all of his limbs dripping with blood, Nīla grabbed hold of a huge tree and angrily threw it against Prahasta's chest. Unfazed by the impact, Prahasta seized a large club and madly dashed toward the mighty Nīla.

Seeing the rākṣasa approaching with terrible impetuosity, Nīla, who was also very impetuous, picked up a big boulder. Nīla quickly hurled the boulder at the head of Prahasta, who aspired combat and fought with clubs. The gruesome boulder hurled by Nīla smashed Prahasta's head into many pieces. When his life, splendor, strength and consciousness were gone, he suddenly fell on the ground, like a tree cut down at its roots. Blood gushed from his crushed head like a stream flowing from a mountain spring.

After Nīla killed Prahasta, the great and indescribable rākṣasa army became morose and retreated to Laṅkā, so it is said. Since their commander-

in-chief had been killed, they could not maintain their position, anymore than water that reaches a broken dam. Having lost their commander-in-chief and success in their endeavors, the rākṣasas became stunned and speechless as they proceeded to Rāvaṇa's palace. Floundering in an ocean of intense grief, they practically became unconscious. On the other hand, when the victorious Nīla again met with Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa while being praised for his great feat, he appeared very ecstatic.

RĀVAṆA CONFRONTS RĀMA ON THE BATTLEFIELD AND FLEES

After the commander-in-chief Prahasta had been killed in an encounter with Nīla, Rāvaṇa's army equipped with frightful weapons and resembling an ocean ran away. Approaching Rāvaṇa, the survivors told him how Prahasta had been killed by Nīla, the sun of Agni. The lord of the rākṣasas became furious when he heard their report. Tormented by anger and overwhelmed with grief, Rāvaṇa addressed the leaders of the rākṣasa troops, as Indra would the celestial troops: "Do not underestimate an enemy who could kill my commander-in-chief, along with his followers and elephants, even though he was capable of annihilating Indra's army. I shall therefore without hesitation personally go to that awesome front line of battle in order to annihilate my enemies and gain victory. Today I shall burn up Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and that monkey army with the volleys of my arrows, as one would burn a forest with firebrands. I shall this day satisfy the earth with the blood of monkeys."

Then Rāvaṇa, the enemy of Indra, mounted his splendid chariot, which shone like fire and was drawn by exceptional horses. The chariot was sparkling because of its golden body. Rāvaṇa departed while being honored with the sound of conchshells, the beating of drums, the slapping of arms, growls, lion-like roars and exhortations to good luck. Surrounded by flesh-eaters who looked like mountains or clouds and whose eyes glowed like fire, that ruler of the rākṣasas looked like Rudra, master of the immortals, surrounded by ghosts. Suddenly coming out of the city, Rāvaṇa saw that terrible army of monkeys ready to attack, with trees and boulders in their hands and thundering like the ocean or a cloud.

When the glorious Rāma, whose arms resembled snakes, saw that most furious army of rākṣasas, he said to Vibhīṣaṇa, the best of those who wield weapons: "Whose is this unshakable army of fearless soldiers and

elephants like Mount Mahendra come bearing innumerable flags, banners and parasols, as well as spears, swords and pikes and other weapons?”

Hearing Rāma’s inquiry, Vibhīṣaṇa, who was equal to Indra in virility, described to Rāma the mighty rākṣasas with uncommon strength: “There is the gigantic rākṣasa known as Akampana, whose reddish face resembles the newly risen sun. He is coming on the back of an elephant and is causing the elephant to sway its head. That rākṣasa riding on a chariot with a standard bearing the image of a lion who is brandishing a bow as splendid as Indra’s is Indrajit. Showing his horrible fangs, he looks like an elephant. He has become very great due to the boon he received from Lord Brahmā. That rākṣasa over there riding a chariot and who looks like one of the Vindhya mountains or Mount Mahendra is named Atikāya. He is an outstanding chariot warrior and archer. He is stretching his unequaled bow and his body has grown exceedingly large. That great warrior over there whose eyes are as red as the sunrise is named Mahodara. His voice sounds like peals from a large bell and he roars coarsely like an elephant.

“The person riding a horse wearing golden trappings and who looks like a mountain covered with a cloud reflecting the sunset is Piśāca. Lifting up a spear enveloped in brilliance, he is as impetuous as a thunderbolt. That rākṣasa holding a sharp pike which shines like lightning and who is himself as quick as a thunderbolt is the famous Triśirā. He is riding a stately bull as brilliant as the moon. There comes Kumbha, who resembles a cloud. He has a broad, muscular and handsome chest. His ensign is Vāsuki, the lord of snakes. He is shaking his arms and brandishing a bow. And the one over there who is armed with a resplendent iron club encrusted with gold and diamonds is Nikumbha. He is the foremost of rākṣasa soldiers and his deeds are amazing and ominous.

“Moreover, that tall warrior over there who is riding a chariot with a flag and is bearing many bows, swords and arrows is Narāntaka. He is as bright as fire and fights with mountain peaks. Over there is standing Rāvaṇa the lord of the rākṣasas, surrounded by ghosts with different scary forms with rolling eyes and heads of tigers, camels, elephants, deer and horses, just as is Lord Śiva. He shatters the pride of the gods. He is shaded by a white parasol with slender ribs which shines like the moon. That lord of the

rākṣasas is wearing a crown and swinging earrings. His fearsome form resembles the Himalaya or Vindhya Mountains. He has smashed the pride of Indra and Yamarāja and is shining like the sun.”

Then Rāma, the crusher of His enemies, replied as follows to Vibhīṣaṇa: “Oh! Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas is shining with immense splendor. It is difficult to look at him because of his rays, just like the sun. I cannot actually see his form because it is covered with brilliance. The bodies of gods and dānavas could not be as brilliant as his body. The warriors are all just like mountains. They fight with mountains and are wielding blazing weapons. Surrounded by glowing ghosts of frightful appearance, that king of rākṣasas looks like death personified surrounded by fearsome-looking devils. Luckily this sinful wretch has now crossed the path of My sight. Today I shall vent My anger over Sītā’s abduction.”

When Rāma finished speaking, He lifted His bow and, with Lakṣmaṇa standing at His side as His follower, He pulled out an excellent arrow. Then the great Rāvaṇa said to the mighty rākṣasas: “Station yourselves at the gates of the city, as well as at the entrances of buildings along the main streets, remaining calm and fearless. When the monkeys learn that I have come here with you, they might consider this a good time to attack. Storming the empty city all together, they could suddenly overrun it.”

After dismissing his counselors and other rākṣasas, Rāvaṇa began parting the sea of monkeys as a gigantic whale would part the waters of the deep ocean. When Sugrīva saw that Rāvaṇa was suddenly approaching on the battlefield with a shining bow and arrows, he lifted up a mountain peak and rushed toward him. Sugrīva hurled that mountain peak covered with many trees at the night-stalker. Seeing it coming towards him, Rāvaṇa shattered it with arrows having golden shafts. Once the mountain covered with full-sized trees had been knocked to the ground and shattered into pieces, Rāvaṇa fixed an arrow that looked like a deadly snake to his bow. Grasping that arrow which was equal to the wind in speed, as brilliant as a sparkling fire and as fleet as Indra’s thunderbolt, he shot it angrily to kill Sugrīva.

Reaching Sugrīva, the arrow, which was like Indra's thunderbolt, pierced his effulgent body, just as Skandha pierced Krauñca Mountain with a terrible spear. Deprived of consciousness by the arrow, Sugrīva fell moaning on the ground. Seeing him fallen on the ground, those practitioners of the black arts bellowed jubilantly. Lifting up boulders, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Suṣeṇa, Ṛṣabha, Jyotirmukha and the gigantic Nala rushed toward Rāvaṇa. With hundreds of sharp arrows, Rāvaṇa counteracted the impact of those boulders. He also pierced those monkey leaders with volleys of arrows having bright golden shafts. When pierced by Rāvaṇa's arrows, those monkey leaders with awesome bodies fell on the ground. After that, Rāvaṇa proceeded to cover that tough monkey army with a network of arrows. When pierced and knocked down by those terrifying arrows, the monkeys shrieked. Afflicted by Rāvaṇa's arrows, the monkeys sought the shelter of Rāma, who was fit to give shelter.

Grabbing His bow, the great Rāma suddenly set forth. As He did so, Lakṣmaṇa approached Him with joined palms and spoke the following exceedingly valuable words: "O noble one, I am indeed capable of destroying that wicked fellow. I shall certainly kill him. Please grant Me permission for this, O mighty one!" Rāma, whose prowess was unfailing, replied as follows: "Go, Lakṣmaṇa, and exert Yourself in combat! Rāvaṇa is in fact very courageous and displays amazing prowess in battle. No doubt when he is angry even all the three worlds cannot withstand him. Find out what his weakness is and be aware of your own weakness also. Stay alert and defend Yourself with your bow, as well as with Your eyes."

Lakṣmaṇa accepted this advice and embraced Rāma, then offered Him respects and salutations, after which he departed for battle. Lakṣmaṇa saw Rāvaṇa, whose arms resembled the trunks of elephants, lifting up his dreadful and resplendent bow as he covered the monkeys with showers of arrows, thereby tearing their bodies to pieces. Seeing Rāvaṇa, the dynamic Hanumān blocked his volley of arrows and rushed toward him. Upon reaching the chariot, Hanumān raised his right arm and menaced him, saying: "You received a boon from Lord Brahmā by which you cannot be killed by gods, demons, gandharvas and yakṣas, but monkeys are a source of

danger for you. My raised right hand with five fingers will expel the life from your body, where it has remained for a long time.”

Rāvaṇa eyes became inflamed with rage when he heard Hanumān’s challenge, and he replied as follows: “Hit me right now without any fear and earn yourself lasting fame! Then I shall destroy you, exposing the limits of your prowess.” Hanumān, the son of the wind-god, then retorted: “Remember your son Akṣa, whom I previously killed!” When spoken to in this way by Hanumān, Rāvaṇa hit Hanumān in the chest with a trust of his palm. Rāvaṇa’s smack left Hanumān reeling for a while, then he recovered his steadiness and stood firmly. Angered by the assault, Hanumān struck the enemy of the gods with his bare hand. The impact of Hanumān’s punch left Rāvaṇa shaken, like a mountain by an earthquake. Seeing how Hanumān slugged Rāvaṇa, the monkeys, sages, perfected ones, gods and asuras too shouted for joy.

Taking a deep breath, Rāvaṇa, who was most energetic, said: “Very good, O monkey! You are an enemy who is worthy of my praise for your valor.” Although praised in this way by Rāvaṇa, Hanumān replied: “Cursed is my valor because you are still living, Rāvaṇa!” Hit me just once, you fool! Why do you talk so much? My fist will then dispatch you to the court of Yamarāja, the lord of death.” Rāvaṇa’s ire blazed up because of Hanumān’s threat. Strongly clenching his right fist, Rāvaṇa forcefully brought it down on the chest of the intrepid Hanumān. When struck in the chest, Hanumān reeled continuously. Seeing that the mighty Hanumān was befuddled, the impulsive Rāvaṇa quickly drove his chariot toward Nīla.

With his dreaded arrows that were like snakes and able to pierce the vital parts of enemies, Rāvaṇa began harassing Nīla, the commander-in-chief of the monkey army. Hard pressed by the volley of arrows, Nīla lifted up a mountain peak with one hand and hurled it at the lord of the rākṣasas. Meanwhile, Hanumān regained full consciousness. Looking at Rāvaṇa, who was now engaged in direct combat with Nīla, Hanumān, who wanted to fight with Rāvaṇa, angrily said: “It is not proper to assault one who is being attacked by someone else.” At that time, Rāvaṇa hit the mountain crag with seven sharp-pointed arrows, thereby shattering it and knocking it down, so

it is said. Seeing how the mountain crag had been shattered, Nīla was burning with anger, like the fire at the end of the world. Nīla began hurling aśvakarṇa, sāla, blossoming mango trees, as well as other varieties of trees, during his encounter with Rāvaṇa. When Rāvaṇa saw the trees approaching, he cut them to pieces and showered Nīla with a savage rain of arrows. Making himself very small when assailed by that shower of arrows, like a mountain pelted by a rain cloud, Nīla then jumped on top of Rāvaṇa flagpole. Seeing Nīla perched on the top of his flagpole, Rāvaṇa burned with rage and Nīla thereupon roared loudly.

Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān were amazed to see Nīla perched on the top of Rāvaṇa's flagpole, then on the tip of his bow and on the peak of his crown. Dumbfounded too by the monkey's agility, Rāvaṇa withdrew an astonishing brilliant fire missile. When the monkeys saw how Nīla's agility had flabbergasted Rāvaṇa, they shouted for joy. Hearing their shouts, Rāvaṇa fumed. With his mind confused, he did not know what to do. Holding that arrow charged with the potency of the fire-god, Rāvaṇa stared at Nīla perched on the end of the flagpole. The spirited Rāvaṇa said: "O monkey, you possess agility and tremendous power for deception. Now save your life if you are able to! Although you are performing numerous deeds worthy of yourself, when I shoot you with this arrow charged with mystic potency, it will deprive you of the life which you are trying to preserve."

Rāvaṇa then charged the arrow with the mystic weapon and shot it at Nīla. When the arrow charged with a mystic fire weapon struck Nīla in the chest, it burnt him all over and knocked him down on the ground. By dint of his father's and his own greatness, he only fell to the ground, but did not lose his life. Seeing that Nīla was unconscious, Rāvaṇa, who was eager for battle, rushed toward Lakṣmaṇa in his chariot, which thundered like a storm cloud. After warding off others, Rāvaṇa reached Lakṣmaṇa and stood in the middle of the battlefield, beaming as he stretched his bow. As Rāvaṇa was doing so, Lakṣmaṇa, undiminished in courage, spoke as follows: "Now you may know Me, O lord of the night-stalkers! You do not have to fight monkeys any longer." When Rāvaṇa heard this rebuke and the twang of Lakṣmaṇa's bow, he drew closer to Lakṣmaṇa and angrily replied: "Luckily You have crossed the path of my eyes. You have reached the end of Your life

because of Your perverted intelligence. Being harrowed at this time by the volleys of my arrows, You will go to the world of the dead.”

Unabashed, Lakṣmaṇa replied to Rāvaṇa, who was growling and showing his sharp fangs: “O king, those who are truly great do not boast, as you are doing, O greatest of sinners! I know your valor, strength, greatness and prowess, O lord of the rākṣasas. I am standing firm, with bow and arrows in hand. Come on! What is the use of bragging?” Enraged by being addressed in that way, Rāvaṇa shot seven arrows with fine feathers. Lakṣmaṇa tore them to bits with His gilded sharp-pointed arrows. When the lord of Laṅkā saw those arrows so suddenly cut to pieces like serpents with slashed hoods, he went into a rage and shot more sharp arrows. Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Rāma, likewise released a fierce shower of arrows from His bow. Using His various arrows, such as kṣuras, ardhačandras, karṇis and bhallas, Lakṣmaṇa shattered Rāvaṇa’s arrows and remained unperturbed. Seeing how all his arrows were ineffective, he was amazed by Lakṣmaṇa’s dexterity and again shot more sharp arrows. Placing sharpened arrows with the formidable impetuosity of Indra’s thunderbolts, Lakṣmaṇa also shot them in order to annihilate Rāvaṇa.

That lord of the rākṣasas, however, shattered those arrows and then stuck Lakṣmaṇa in the forehead with an arrow charmed with a weapon granted to him by Lord Brahmā and which was as brilliant as the conflagration of universal destruction. When struck by Rāvaṇa’s arrow, Lakṣmaṇa was reeling and could barely hold His bow. Regaining consciousness with difficulty, Lakṣmaṇa demolished Rāvaṇa’s bow. Then He hit Rāvaṇa with three sharpened arrows. Injured by those arrows, Rāvaṇa staggered and with difficult regained his senses. Rāvaṇa was drenched with blood from his arrow wounds and his limbs were splattered with fat. That enemy of the gods possessed fearsome energy. He grabbed a spear which had been given to him by Lord Brahmā and stood on the battlefield. Then Rāvaṇa deftly hurled that spear at Lakṣmaṇa. It was shining like a smoky fire and was a cause of terror for the monkeys on the battlefield.

Lakṣmaṇa hit the javelin in flight with weapons and arrows that were like flaming fires. Even so, the javelin penetrated Lakṣmaṇa's chest. Gravely injured by the javelin, He lay on the ground burning with pain. Approaching Lakṣmaṇa suddenly as He was fainting, Rāvaṇa caught Him forcefully with his arms. Even though Rāvaṇa was able to lift the Himalaya, Mandara and Meru mountains or all the three worlds along with the immortal gods, he was unable to hold up Lakṣmaṇa. Although wounded in the middle of His chest by a javelin, Lakṣmaṇa remembered that He was an inconceivable part of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu. Therefore, though clutching Lakṣmaṇa between his arms, which were capable of depriving the dānavas of their pride, Rāvaṇa was unable to lift Him.

Infuriated, Hanumān thereafter charged toward Rāvaṇa and angrily hit Rāvaṇa in the chest with his fist, which was just like a thunderbolt. From the impact of that blow, Rāvaṇa fell on his knees, fainted and collapsed. Blood flowed profusely from his mouths, eyes and ears. Spinning around, he sank down unconscious in his chariot. Having passed out, he was unaware of where he was. When the monkeys, sages, gods and asuras too saw that Rāvaṇa, whose prowess was alarming, was lying on the battlefield unconscious, they shouted joyfully. Hanumān thereupon picked up the wounded Lakṣmaṇa in his arms and carried Him to where Rāma was. Because of Hanumān's friendship and supreme devotion to Lakṣmaṇa, the latter, though unmovable for His enemies, became light for Hanumān. Abandoning Lakṣmaṇa, who had been defeated in combat, the javelin returned to its place inside of Rāvaṇa's chariot.

When Rāvaṇa regained consciousness while the battle raged on, possessing tremendous energy, he grabbed sharp arrows and a bow. Remembering that He was an inconceivable part of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, Lakṣmaṇa returned to full awareness and healed His wounds. Seeing that the great monkey army's mighty heroes had been struck down in combat, Rāma dashed toward Rāvaṇa. At that time, Hanumān approached Him and said: "You should attack the rākṣasa while seated on my shoulders, just as Lord Viṣṇu subdued the Madhu demon while riding on Garuḍa." Hearing what Hanumān said, Rāma immediately climbed on Hanumān's back. Lord Rāma,

of royal descent, saw Rāvaṇa riding his chariot on the battlefield. As soon as He saw him, Rāma furiously ran toward him, as Viṣṇu angrily rushed toward Bali with His discus. Rāma plucked His bowstring, making a sharp sound like a clap of thunder and spoke the following words with a deep voice, so it is said:

“Stand still! Stand still! After committing an action so displeasing to Me, where can you go to be free? Even if you flee to Indra, Yama, Sūrya, Lord Brahmā, Lord Śiva or in any of the ten directions, you will not be able to escape My hands at this time! That Lakṣmaṇa who was brought to Me unconscious from injuries sustained in battle by your javelin will today be the cause of death for you, your sons and grandsons. I, your enemy, killed the fourteen thousand rākṣasas armed with excellent weapons who lived at Janasthāna.”

When Rāvaṇa heard what Rāma said, he remembered his former enmity with Him. He therefore violently hit Hanumān, who was carrying Rāma, with arrows blazing like the conflagration at the end of the world. As Hanumān was being struck with arrows shot by the rākṣasa on the battlefield, his natural vigor increased more and more.

Rāma was angered by seeing that Hanumān was being wounded by Rāvaṇa. Approaching Rāvaṇa’s chariot, Rāma used His sharp arrows to splinter it, along with its wheels, horses, flag, canopy, banner, driver, spears, pikes and swords. Then with an arrow that was like a thunderbolt, Rāma struck Rāvaṇa, the enemy of the gods, in the center of his broad, handsome chest, as Indra would strike Mount Meru with a thunderbolt. Although he was never disturbed by the impact of Lord Indra’s thunderbolt, when Rāma’s arrow struck him, he felt great pain and became faint, dropping his bow. Seeing Rāvaṇa staggering, Rāma took a blazing arrow tipped with a blade shaped like a crescent moon. Shooting that arrow as bright as the sun, He suddenly cut off the crest of Rāvaṇa’s crown.

Rāvaṇa looked like a snake deprived of its poison. His splendor had diminished like the sun without its light. His glory had abandoned him and his crown had been severed. Rāma then said to him: “You have accomplished a great and terrible deed, and have killed my outstanding warriors.

Understanding that you are exhausted and in the clutches of death, I shall not take your life with My arrows. You may leave. I know you are suffering from the fighting. Go back to Laṅkā, O king of the night-stalkers. After resting you can come out on your chariot with a bow. Then you will see My strength.”

After being spoken to in this way, Rāvaṇa hurriedly entered the city of Laṅkā. His pride had been smashed, his bow had been broken, his horses and charioteer had been slain, he had been wounded by arrows, and His crown had been severed. When Rāvaṇa, the enemy of both the gods and dānavas, had departed, Rāma went with Lakṣmaṇa to the fore of the battlefield and withdrew the arrows from the bodies of the monkeys. The gods, asuras, ghosts, guardians of the directions and oceans, sages, celestial serpents and even the creatures of the land and sea were overjoyed when that enemy of the gods was defeated.

THE RĀKṢASAS WAKE KUMBHAKARṆA

Rāvaṇa entered the city of Laṅkā, stricken with fear of Rāma's arrows. With his pride crushed, his mind became disturbed. As an elephant is overcome by a lion, or a snake by Garuḍa, so Rāvaṇa had been defeated by the great soul Rāma. Remember Rāma's arrows, which shone like flashing lightning and resembled a brahma-daṇḍa, Rāvaṇa felt distraught. Sitting down on his resplendent golden throne, he gazed at the assembled rākṣasas and said:

“All the severe austerity that I performed was certainly useless, for I, who am equal to Indra, have been defeated by a human being. Now Lord Brahmā's grim warning comes to mind: ‘Know that humans will be a cause of danger for you!’ I sought exemption from death at the hands of gods, dānavas, gandharvas, yakṣas, rākṣasas and serpents. I did not ask for protection from humans. I think that this human Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, is the selfsame human mentioned by King Anaraṇya of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty who cursed me a long time ago with the words: ‘O lowest of rākṣasas, in my dynasty will be born a man who will destroy you, your sons, your ministers, your army, and your horses and charioteer on the battlefield.’

“I was also cursed by Vedavatī when I was violating Her in the past. She is the selfsame blessed Sītā born as the daughter of King Janaka. The words of the sages are never false. Now I have received the result of what Umā, Nandīśvara, Rambhā and Varuṇa's daughter said. Understanding the situation, you all should strive to conquer the enemy. Let rākṣasas take up positions on the main roads and on the tops of gates. Wake up Kumbhakarṇa, who can destroy the pride of the gods and dānavas, but who is sleeping most profoundly due to a curse pronounced by Lord Brahmā.”

Aware of how he had been defeated in combat and that Prahasta, the commander-in-chief, had been slain, Rāma gave the following orders to

the frightening rākṣasa army: “Make an effort to guard the gates and climb up on the defense walls! Wake up the slumbering Kumbhakarṇa, who is sleeping comfortably, his consciousness being impaired. That rākṣasa sleeps for six, seven, eight or nine months at a time. He fell asleep nine days ago after I consulted with him. Immediately wake that mighty Kumbhakarṇa. That best of all the rākṣasas will surely kill the monkeys and those two princes in combat in no time. That rākṣasa, Kumbhakarṇa, who is foremost in combat and addicted to coarse pleasures, is always lying unconscious. When Kumbhakarṇa has been roused, my anguish for having been vanquished by Rāma in this terrible conflict will cease. Even though Kumbhakarṇa is equal to Indra in strength, of what good is he to me if he cannot assist me in this terrible conflict?”

Hearing Rāvaṇa’s instructions, the rākṣasas proceeded to Kumbhakarṇa’s palace, though they were extremely bewildered about how to wake him. Bringing perfumes, flower garlands and large quantities of food, the rākṣasas, who feasted on flesh and blood, left in a hurry. They entered through the gigantic entranceway of Kumbhakarṇa’s residence, which was one yojana wide on every side. His charming residence was cavernous, with breezes carrying the fragrance of flowers and perfumes. The mighty rākṣasas were pushed back when Kumbhakarṇa exhaled. Struggling to maintain their position, they forced their way inside the cavern.

When those devils entered that charming cavern, which was inlaid with precious gems and gold, they saw the dreaded Kumbhakarṇa lying down. They then began trying to wake up Kumbhakarṇa, whose profound sleep was unnatural and who looked like a shattered mountain. His body was covered with hair standing up. As he slept, he snored, emitting a hissing sound like a snake and pushing everyone backwards. As he was lying on a bed with his limbs stretched out, the odor of fat and blood emanated from his appalling nostrils and his mouth as wide as Pātāla. His body was adorned with bands of gold and on his head he wore a crown which shone like the sun.

The rākṣasas then placed a huge pile of animal bodies that was like Mount Meru in front of Kumbhakarṇa as an offering. There they piled up

deer, buffaloes and pigs as an incredible mound of food. Then those enemies of the gods placed pots of blood and all kinds of meats in front of Kumbhakarṇa. They smeared his body with a superb paste of sandalwood and caused him to smell the fragrance of celestial garlands and perfumes. Then they wafted him with the fragrant smoke of incense and glorified him. Thereafter those practitioners of black arts began roaring everywhere very loudly like thunderclouds. With their cheeks bulging, they blew on conchshells that resembled full moons and simultaneously raised a tumult, irritated as they were. They slapped their own limbs, shook his body and made such a loud noise in order to wake him. Hearing the sound of conchshells, drums, slapping, shouting and lion-like roars, birds fled in all directions and then sudden fell down.

When that loud commotion failed to waken Kumbhakarṇa from his sleep, the rākṣasas grabbed mallets, maces and clubs. They then began striking the chest of Kumbhakarṇa, who was lying fast asleep on the ground, with mountain peaks, maces, clubs, mallets, tree trunks and fists. However, when Kumbhakarṇa would exhale, the rākṣasas were unable to stand before him. With their waist sashes and belts tightened, the astounding rākṣasas beat mṛdaṅga drums, small paṇava drums, booming bherī drums and blew fat-bowled conchshells as well. Ten thousand rākṣasas were surrounding him at the same time, trying to wake him. Although they were hitting him and making noise, he did not wake up. When they were unable to waken him, they tried with even greater ferocity. They beat horses, camels, asses and elephants with sticks, whips and goads and sounded drums and conchshells with all their might. They struck his limbs as hard as they could with big tree trunks lashed together, as well as with mallets and clubs. The entire city of Laṅkā with all of its forests was filled with that clamor. Yet Kumbhakarṇa did not wake up. Then they simultaneously beat one thousand kettledrums with golden sticks all around him.

However, when the excessively slumbering rākṣasa did not wake up because of a cursed he had received from Lord Brahmā, the night-stalkers became very angry. Overcome by wrath, some rākṣasas of disconcerting mettle attempted with their strength to rouse him. Some beat kettledrums furiously, while others shouted. Some pulled on his hair, while others bit his

ears. Other poured hundreds of pots of water into his ears. But Kumbhakarṇa, who had sunken into a deep sleep, did not stir. Some soldiers who had clubs studded with spikes beat him on the head, chest and limbs. Others lashed him with cat'-o-nine-tails having spiked iron balls at their ends. Although being beaten in this way, the giant rākṣasa did not wake up. They then stampeded one thousand elephants over his body. Feeling this, Kumbhakarṇa thereupon woke up. He did not feel the heavy blows of mountain peaks and trees. Because of the interruption of his slumber, he was feeling stricken with hunger. Yawning, he suddenly got up. Stretching his arms, which were long like snakes and bulging like mountains, and which had defeated strong-bodied adversaries, he opened his mouth and yawned. As he did so, his mouth looked like the entrance to hell, an underwater fire, or the sun rising from behind a mountain peak. As that brawny rākṣasa yawned, he regained full awareness. He exhaled breath from his mouth, like a wind blowing from a mountain. As Kumbhakarṇa got up, he looked like death personified ready to devour all beings at the end of the age. His big eyes, which were as bright as fire or lightning, looked like two big glowing planets.

After this, the rākṣasas showed him all the abundant and variegated foodstuffs. The mighty rākṣasa devoured the pigs and buffaloes. Feeling ravenous, he devoured flesh, and feeling thirsty, he drank the blood. That enemy of Indra then guzzled down pots of fat and wine. When he felt satiated, the night-stalkers approached him from all sides and bowed their heads respectfully. With sleepy eyes and blurred vision, he looked all around at the night-stalkers. Kumbhakarṇa reassured the rākṣasas and then asked:

“Why did you wake me up? I hope the king is all right and that there is no imminent danger. Or else, there is certainly some tremendous danger from our enemies and therefore you have hastily woken me. I shall this day eliminate Rāvaṇa's fear. I shall smash Mount Mahendra or even cool down fire. Surely he would not wake me for some insignificant reason. Tell me exactly why you woke me up.”

One of Rāvaṇa's ministers named Yūpākṣa joined his palms and replied to Kumbhakarṇa, who was speaking angrily: “There will never be any danger for us from the gods. O prince, we are afflicted with danger from a

human being. We have never been faced with this kind of danger from the daityas and dānavas, as from this human being. Monkeys as large as mountains have laid siege to Laṅkā and a tumultuous danger is facing us from Rāma, who is enraged because of the abduction of Sītā. Previously this great metropolis was burned by a single monkey, and he also killed Prince Akṣa, along with his followers and elephant. Even Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas and scourge of the gods was released from combat and sent away by Rāma, who is as brilliant as the sun. Our king was placed in a predicament which even the gods, daityas and dānavas could not accomplish, and when his life was in doubt, Rāma released him.”

When Kumbhakarṇa heard about his brother’s defeat in battle, his eyes began rolling from anger and he replied to Yūpākṣa as follows: “O Yūpākṣa, I shall today see Rāvaṇa only after defeating Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and the monkey army in combat. I shall feast the rākṣasas with the flesh and blood of monkeys, and I myself shall drink the blood of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa!” Hearing Kumbhakarṇa’s proud boasting, which was flawed by excessive anger, the outstanding rākṣasa warrior named Mahodara joined his palms and said: “After hearing Rāvaṇa’s instructions and learning their strengths and weakness, you can conquer the enemy in battle, O mighty one!” Hearing Mahodara’s advice, Kumbhakarṇa, who was surrounded by rākṣasas, began getting ready to leave.

Having woken the repugnant and baneful Kumbhakarṇa, the rākṣasas hurried back to the ten-headed Rāvaṇa’s palace. Approaching him as he sat upon an exquisite throne, they all said to him with joined palms: “Your brother Kumbhakarṇa is awake. Now what should he do? Should he leave for the battleground, or do you wish to see him here? Delighted, Rāvaṇa replied to the rākṣasas, who were standing nearby: “I wish to see him here. Offer him the proper hospitality.” Acquiescing to the command, they returned to Kumbhakarṇa and relayed to him Rāvaṇa’s message: “The king wishes to see you, O best of all the rākṣasas. Set your mind on going, and thereby gladden your brother.”

When Kumbhakarṇa heard his brother’s instruction, he said, “So be it!” and got up from his bed. He felt delighted to wash his face and bathe.

Being thirsty, he ordered that a drink be quickly brought to enhance his strength. Under Rāvaṇa's command, they hurriedly brought liquor and foodstuffs of different kinds. After drinking two thousand pots of liquor, Kumbhakarṇa felt a little excited and intoxicated. Having renewed energy and strength, he started to leave. Kumbhakarṇa was furious, like Yamarāja, the lord of death. Proceeding to his brother's palace while surrounded by rākṣasa soldiers, Kumbhakarṇa shook the earth with his footsteps.

Illuminating the royal highway with the effulgence of his body, as the sun illuminates the earth with its rays, Kumbhakarṇa proceeded, surrounded by rākṣasas with joined palms, like Indra would to Lord Brahmā's abode. When the monkeys and their commanders who were outside the city suddenly saw Kumbhakarṇa walking along the main avenue of Laṅkā, looking like a mountain peak and immeasurable in size, they became frightened. Some of them ran to Rāma for shelter. Some of them became so disturbed that they fell over. Some panicked and fled in all directions. Some were terror-stricken and lay down on the ground. Kumbhakarṇa was as big as a mountain peak and was wearing a crown. He seemed to be touching the sun with his bodily effulgence. The monkeys were terrified to see this amazing giant and fled here and there.

RĀMA INFORMED ABOUT KUMBHAKARṆA

Picking up His bow, the valiant Rāma saw the giant Kumbhakarṇa wearing a crown. He saw how that best of the rākṣasas was walking. Because of the size of his body, he looked like Lord Nārāyaṇa who in the past crossed the sky with his footstep. Kumbhakarṇa resembled a rain cloud and was wearing golden ornaments. Seeing him, the monkey army again fled. Seeing the monkey army fleeing and the rākṣasa increasing in size, Rāma was amazed and asked Vibhīṣaṇa: “Who is that person resembling a mountain, wearing a crown and having reddish eyes? That warrior looks like a cloud torn by lightning inside the city of Laṅkā. That giant looks like a solitary comet descended to earth and seeing him, all the monkeys are fleeing here and there. Tell me about that giant. Is he a rākṣasa or an asura? I have never seen such a creature before.”

When questioned in this way by Prince Rāma, the wise Vibhīṣaṇa replied in the following way: “He is the glorious Kumbhakarṇa, son of Viśravā. He has defeated Indra and Yamarāja. There is no other rākṣasa equal to him in size. He has defeated in combat thousands of gods, dānavas, yakṣas, nāgas, flesh-eating rākṣasas, gandharvas, vidyādharas and kinnaras. Unable to kill him as he stood there with glaring eyes and a pike in his hands, the residents of the heavenly planets thought that he was death personified. By his very nature he is powerful, whereas the other rākṣasas leaders have achieved their power through boons.

“This giant, when he was just a hunger-stricken baby, devoured many thousands of living beings. Terrified of being eaten by him, the living entities took shelter of Lord Indra and informed him about what was happening. Becoming angry with Kumbhakarṇa, Indra hit him with a sharp thunderbolt. When hit by that thunderbolt, Kumbhakarṇa teetered and

roared loudly because of anger. When the living entities, who were already frightened, heard Kumbhakarṇa's roaring, they became even more fearful. Kumbhakarṇa pulled out one of the elephant Airāvata's tusks as Indra was riding it. Then he struck Indra in the chest with it. Indra was agonizing due to the impact of the tusk. Thereafter the gods, great sages and dānavas suddenly became despondent. Accompanied by those beings, Indra went to Lord Brahmā's abode and informed him about the wickedness of Kumbhakarṇa, and that he devoured living entities, attacked the gods, destroyed hermitages and repeatedly abducted other men's wives. They said: 'If he continues eating living entities at this rate, the world will become desolate in a short time.'

"When Lord Brahmā heard this, he invoked the rākṣasas and saw Kumbhakara in their midst, so it is said. Lord Brahmā became frightened when he saw Kumbhakarṇa. After regaining his confidence, Lord Brahmā said to Kumbhakarṇa: 'Surely you have been created by Viśravā in order to destroy the world. Therefore, from hence forth you shall remain in a death-like sleep.' Being cursed by Lord Brahmā, Kumbhakarṇa fell down in front of Rāvaṇa. Extremely disturbed by this, Rāvaṇa then said to Lord Brahmā: 'One should not cut down a tree capable of yielding gold when it is just bearing fruit. It is not proper for you to curse your own grandson in this way, O grandsire. Yet your words are undoubtedly never false. Fix a time when he must sleep and when he can wake.' Hearing Rāvaṇa's request, Lord Brahmā replied: 'He will sleep for six months and be awake for one day. Wandering the earth for one day with his mouth wide open, he will hungrily devour the worlds like a swollen fire.'

"Because his difficulty and fear of Your prowess, Rāvaṇa has just woken Kumbhakarṇa. Having come out of his residence and being highly enraged, Kumbhakarṇa is running about devouring the monkeys. Now that the monkeys have seen Kumbhakarṇa, they are running away. How can the monkeys counteract him on the battlefield? Let all the monkeys be told that he is just a tall-standing machine. Hearing this, the monkeys will then become fearless."

Upon hearing Vibhīṣaṇa's intelligent and cheerful explanation, Rāma said to the commander-in-chief, Nīla: "Go and put all the troops in battle array! Occupying the city gates, main streets and bridges, let the monkeys get mountain peaks and trees, and armed with them, be ready to fight." When instructed in this way by Lord Rāma, Nīla gave the proper commands to the monkey army. Taking mountain peaks, Gavākṣa, Śarabha, Hanumān and Aṅgada went to the city gates. When the courageous monkeys heard Rāma's instructions, being desirous of victory, they beat the enemy soldiers outside the city with trees. Carrying boulders and uplifted trees, that fierce army of monkeys looked like a enormous mass of clouds resting on a mountain.

RĀVAṆA WARNS KUMBHAKARṆA ABOUT RĀMA

That tiger among rākṣasas was disoriented from sleep and intoxication as he walked along the main thoroughfare which shone with splendor. Surrounded by thousands of rākṣasas, the invincible Kumbhakarṇa was showered with flowers thrown by people in buildings as he passed. At last he saw Rāvaṇa's lovely palace, which was adorned with golden lattices and looked as brilliant as the sun. As the sun entered a mass of clouds, Kumbhakarṇa entered Rāvaṇa's palace where he saw in the distance his older brother Rāvaṇa sitting on a throne, as Indra would behold Lord Brahmā seated on his lotus throne. As he was proceeding to Rāvaṇa's residence surrounded by hordes of rākṣasas, he made the earth tremble with the pounding of his feet. Entering his brother's palace and coming inside the chamber hall, he saw his elder brother disturbed and sitting in the Puṣpaka airship.

Rāvaṇa immediately got up when he saw that Kumbhakarṇa had arrived and, feeling delighted, he brought him to his side. The exceptionally mighty Kumbhakarṇa then bowed down to the feet of his brother, who was sitting on a couch, and said: "What do you want me to do?" Getting up from his seat, Rāvaṇa cheerfully embraced him and greeted him. Kumbhakarṇa took his seat on a beautiful heavenly throne. After sitting there, his eyes red with anger, he asked Rāvaṇa: "O king, why did you wake me up? Tell me whom you fear or who is going to die."

With his eyes rolling due to anger, Rāvaṇa addressed his younger brother: "Quite some time has passed since you went to sleep. Because you were asleep, you were not aware of the danger that Rāma posed to me. Having crossed the ocean, this glorious and mighty son of King Daśaratha is cutting us down at our roots. Just see how after crossing a bridge, He has turned the forests and gardens of Laṅkā into an ocean of monkeys! And

these same monkeys have killed many prominent rākṣasas in combat. I do not see how we will ever defeat the monkeys in battle, nor have they ever been defeated in battle before. This indeed is the danger which has arisen. Protect us at this time, O mighty one! Destroy them today. That is the reason why you have been woken. Taking pity on me, whose resources are all exhausted, protect me and this city of Lāṅkā with its remaining children and elderly!

“Accomplish a difficult feat for my sake. Indeed, I have never previously made such a request to my brothers, O crusher of foes. I have affection for you and great respect. Many times you defeated the gods and asuras in combat when you were on the opposing side. As such, accomplish these valorous deeds, O you whose prowess is frightful. There is no one among all living beings who is as powerful as you. Perform this action which is so highly pleasing and beneficial to me because of your love for me, O you who are fond of your relatives and of battle. As a great wind would drive away an autumn cloud, torment the enemy army with your might!”

KUMBHAKARṆA REPRIMANDS RĀVAṆA

When Kumbhakarṇa heard Rāvaṇa's plea, he laughed and said: "Distrusting your well-wishers, you have now reaped the same disaster which we foresaw when we had our consultative meeting. Surely the fruit of your sinful deed has come quickly, as a sinner falls down to hell. First of all, you did not think carefully before doing this. Nor did you think about the consequences because of your pride of your prowess. One who is proud of his power, not knowing what should be done and what should not be done, does what should be done later, earlier, and what should be done earlier, later. As are actions performed at inhibitory times, actions performed without regard to time and place are fruitless, like oblations offered into an unconsecrated fire.

"One who consults with his ministers regarding the five aspects of the three expedients is on the right path. A king who wishes to perform his duty should understand it in consultation with his ministers and by remembering his well-wishers. O lord of the rākṣasas, a person should seek at the proper time virtue, material gain or enjoyment, either singly or all three of them or any two of them. Not knowing which is the best of these three, the extensive studies of a king or one in a position like a king become useless.

"A king who after consulting with ministers gives gifts, reconciles opponents, causes dissension among adversaries, exhibits prowess, does all of the above, performs the right action at the right time, and pursues virtue, gain and enjoyment at the appropriate time never has any difficulty in this world. A king should act only after consulting with ministers who make a living by their intelligence and know the reality of things. Persons with the intelligence of animals who are seated with actual ministers wish to give their opinions even though they do not know the import of the scriptures. The advice of such persons ignorant of scripture, who are ignorant of the science of material success and yet desire vast wealth, should not be followed. Those who out of pride present unwholesome advice as if it were

wholesome should definitely be excluded from a consultation because they would impede it.

“Often in this world ministers in collusion with shrewd enemies induce their ruler to perform wrong actions in order to destroy him. A ruler should recognize when ministers have been won over by the enemy by their advice in consultative sessions. Adversaries discover the weakness of a king who is fickle and rushes precipitously into actions, just as birds find the passage through the Krauñca Mountain. A king who underestimates the enemy and does not protect himself meets with adversity and is dragged down from his position. The most beneficial advice for us is that given previously by your dear consort Mandodarī and your younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa. But, do as you wish!”

When Rāvaṇa heard Kumbhakarṇa’s tirade, he frowned and angrily replied: “Why are you instructing me like a respectable elder or teacher? Why are you tiring your tongue in this way? Let the necessary be done! It is useless to repeat at this time the advice which I did not accept earlier because of confusion, delusion or over-dependence on my own strength. Let us find out what is most appropriate for the present time. The wise do not lament for what has passed, for what has passed is gone. Nullify with your prowess the error sprung from my misdeed, if you actually love me, or if you know your own prowess, or if you believe in your heart that this goal of mine is worth achieving. A friend is one who comes to help a distressed person whose fortune is at risk. A relative is one who can help those who have strayed off course.”

Recognizing by Rāvaṇa’s grave and harsh words that he was furious, Kumbhakarṇa slowly spoke the following gentle words in order to console him: “Listen, O king, to my words! What is the use of giving way to anguish? You should give up your anger and calm down. You should entertain such thoughts in your head while I am living, O king. I shall destroy him who is causing you anxiety. I must, however, give you good advice in all circumstances because of my kinship to you and my brotherly affection for you.

“Now see how I shall annihilate the enemy in combat out of brotherly affection! Now see the monkeys fleeing when I kill Rāma and His brother on the front line of battle. Now be happy when you see me bring Rāma’s severed head. And let Sītā be distressed. Now let all those rākṣasas of Laṅkā whose relatives have been killed have the great satisfaction of seeing Rāma killed. Now I shall dry the tears from the eyes of those who are stricken with grief from the death of their relatives when I destroy the enemy in battle. Now see the mountain-like Sugrīva bathed in blood on the battlefield like a cloud illuminated by the sun.

“Why are you always in anxiety, O sinless one, when these rākṣasas and I are reassuring you that we shall slay Rāma? Indeed, Rāma could only kill you after first killing me. Even so, I do not become despondent, O monarch. As such, command me this very moment, O chastiser of enemies! You do not need to look for anyone else to do the task, O you who are unequalled in battle. I shall annihilate your powerful enemies, whether they be Indra, Yamarāja, Agni or Vāyu. I shall fight with them whether they are Kuvera or Varuṇa, for my body is as big as a mountain and I am carrying a very sharp spear. Surely even Indra would be afraid of me when I roar and show my sharp teeth. Or else, after throwing aside my weapons, I shall crush the enemy into the ground. No one can stand before me and survive. I shall use neither spears, clubs, swords or sharp arrows. In my rage, I shall kill Rāma with my bare hands, even if He is accompanied by Indra. If Rāma is able to bear the impact of my fists, then the volleys of my arrows will drink His blood. Why are you overwhelmed with anxiety when I am here? I am ready to sally forth to destroy your enemy. Give up your terrible fear of Rāma. I shall kill Him on the battleground. I shall kill Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, the mighty Sugrīva and Hanumān, who killed many rākṣasas and set Laṅkā on fire. Once the battle begins I shall devour the monkeys. I wish to bestow upon you uncommon and great glory.

“And if there is any danger from Indra or from Lord Brahmā, O king, I shall destroy it, as the sun does the darkness of night. Even the gods will lie on the ground when I am angry. I shall subdue Yamarāja, the god of death, and I shall devour Agni, the god of fire. I shall knock Sūrya, the sun-god, down to the ground, along with the stars. I shall kill Indra. I shall drink the ocean. I shall pulverize the mountains. I shall rend the earth. Let all the

living entities whom I am going to devour today see the prowess of Kumbhakarṇa, who sleeps for long periods of time! If all these three worlds were offered to me as food, they would not satisfy me. By slaying Rāma I bring you a happiness that will bring you more happiness. After disposing of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, I shall eat all the prominent leaders of the monkey troops. Enjoy yourself now, O king, and drink wine! Abandon your sorrow and perform your duties. When I dispatch Rāma to the abode of the lord of death, Sītā will submit to you.”

MAHODARA SUGGESTS A TRICK

Mahodara, a gigantic and mighty rākṣasa with huge arms, heard Kumbhakarṇa's boasting and said: "O Kumbhakarṇa, although you were born in a noble dynasty, you are insolent and have a crass intellect. You cannot understand what should be done in all circumstances. It is not that the king does not know what should be done and what should not be done. You are arrogant because of your puerility and just want to talk. Rāvaṇa knows how to execute things according to time and place and he knows his own gain, maintenance and loss, as well as those of his enemy. What intelligent person would attempt to achieve what cannot be achieved by persons with ordinary intellect who have not served their superiors? You do not have the capacity to understand virtue, gain and enjoyment because you say that they are located in different individuals.

"Moreover, action is in fact the basis of all goals. And, in this regard, the fruit of sinful actions is good. Virtue and material gain can lead to final beatitude or to sense enjoyment. From the omission of a rule come unrighteousness and error. A person reaps the fruit of actions in this world and in the next. But one who is devoted to fruitive activities can gain sense enjoyment here and now. As such, the king's attempt to achieve his heart's desire is in our opinion and action worth achieving. What is wrong with doing that which is an act of boldness against the enemy?

"As far as your reasoning about going all alone to confront the enemy, I shall tell you what is wrong with that. How will you single-handedly kill Rāma, when He previously slaughtered exceedingly mighty rākṣasas at Janasthāna? Do you not see living in this city at the present those terrified rākṣasas who were previously defeated by Him at Janasthāna? You want to waken the angered Rāma, who is like a sleeping snake. Who would want to encounter Rāma, who is unbearable like death. He is always blazing with glory and anger and is difficult to approach. This entire army would be in danger upon confronting Him. My dear younger brother, for these reasons I

do not at all like the idea of your going alone. What destitute person would try to subdue a person with great assets and ready to give up his life, as if he were an ordinary person? Why do you wish to contend with Him who is equal to Lord Indra and the sun-god and who has no equal among human beings?”

After saying this to the angry Kumbhakarṇa, Mahodara spoke as follows to Rāvaṇa in the midst of the other rākṣasas: “Since you already have Sītā, why do you hesitate? As soon as you desire, Sītā will submit to you. I have discovered a way to bringing Her around. Listen, O lord of the rākṣasas. Consider whether it is acceptable to you. Announce that Dvijihva, Saṁhrādī, Kumbhakarṇa, Vitardana and I—these five rākṣasas—are going off to kill Rāma. When we go out, we shall give battle to Rāma with all our strength. If we conquer the enemy, we will not need to take recourse to any other means for accomplishing our goals. But if our enemy survives the conflict and we do too, then we shall undertake the plan which we have devised. With our bodies drenched with blood from having our bodies torn by arrows marked with the name of Rāma, we shall return from the battlefield. We shall grab your feet and say: ‘We have devoured Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Please fulfill our desire.’ Then have it proclaimed through the city from the back of an elephant that Rāma has been killed along with Lakṣmaṇa and His army. Seemingly being pleased, you should give gifts of gold, enjoyable objects, servants and all kinds of desirable things to your servants. Then bestow garlands, garments and unguents on the heroes, abundant drinks to the warriors, and you yourself should drink joyfully. When the rumor has been heard everywhere that Rāma and His well-wishers have been eaten by the rākṣasas, approach Sītā in private and console Her, tempting Her with gifts of wealth, grains and desirable gems.

“O king, Sītā will become even more grief stricken by this trick. Though having no love for you, She will submit to You because She has no protector. Believing that Her handsome husband is dead, She will submit to you out of despair and female frailty. Since She was raised in comfort and is now grief-stricken, when She realizes that Her happiness depends on you, She will completely submit to you. This is my best conjecture. As soon as you see Rāma, you will definitely be in danger. Do not be eager for combat. The attainment of great happiness awaits you here without fighting. O king,

defeating his enemy without a battle, a great monarch enjoys for a long time fame, pious merit, opulence and glory without facing any danger or suffering any military losses.”

KUMBHAKARṆA SALLIES FORTH TO FIGHT

After Mahodara finished speaking, Kumbhakarṇa rebuked him and then said to his brother Rāvaṇa: “As I am, I shall indeed eliminate your terrible fear by killing that wicked Rāma. Free from enemies, you will be happy. Warriors do not roar in vain, like clouds that do not give rain. Just see how I shall roar on the battlefield. Warriors do not seek to glorify themselves, yet they perform difficult tasks without displaying them. O Mahodara, your advice would always appeal to members of the ruling caste who are cowards, less intelligent and who consider themselves wise, even as you spoke it. All activities have always been ruined by people like you who are unmanly in combat, yet speaking sweetly as you follow the king. Only the king is left in Laṅkā, whose treasury is depleted and whose army is destroyed. Enemies disguised as friends have approached the king. Now I sally forth into the battlefield to conquer the enemy, thereby correcting the unwise action you have committed.”

Laughing, Rāvaṇa replied to Kumbhakarṇa as follows: “This Mahodara is undoubtedly very afraid of Rāma. Surely he does not like war, my dear younger brother. There is no one equal to you in friendship and strength. O Kumbhakarṇa, sally forth for victory and the destruction of the enemy! I woke you from your sleep for the destruction of my enemies, for this is a very important time for the rākṣasas, O crusher of foes. Taking a spear, go like death personified with a noose in your hand. Devour the monkeys and the two princes as bright as the sun. Just by seeing your form the monkeys will flee and Rāma’s and Lakṣmaṇa’s hearts will shatter.”

After talking to Kumbhakarṇa in this way, the mighty Rāvaṇa felt rejuvenated. Aware of Kumbhakarṇa’s power and knowing his prowess, the king beamed with delight, like a spotless moon. Kumbhakarṇa thereafter joyfully sallied forth. Having received these instructions from the king, he

was ready to fight. Kumbhakarṇa hastily grabbed a sharp solid steel spear that was decorated with smelted gold. It was just like Indra's thunderbolt, and just as heavy, and was capable of destroying the gods, dānavas, gandharvas, yakṣas, nāgas. From it hung a garland of red flowers. It was very shiny and was emitting flames by itself.

Taking that long spear stained with the blood of enemies, Kumbhakarṇa spoke as follows to Rāvaṇa: "I shall go alone. Let my army stay here. Being hungry and irritated, I shall now devour the monkeys." When Rāvaṇa heard this, he said: "Go with soldiers armed with spears and clubs, for the monkey warriors are huge and determined. They will destroy with their teeth anyone who is alone or distracted. Therefore go with a battalion of soldiers. Being in that way difficult to defeat, destroy all the enemies who are antagonistic to the rākṣasas."

Getting up from his throne, Rāvaṇa placed around Kumbhakarṇa's neck a gold necklace inlaid with gems. He also adorned Kumbhakarṇa with armbands, rings, valuable jewelry and a pearl necklace that shone like the moon. He placed shimmering, fragrant flower garlands on Kumbhakarṇa, and fixed a pair of swinging earrings on his ears. Adorned with gold armbands, bracelets and chokers, Kumbhakarṇa, who had large ears, looked like a sacrificial fire being fed oblations of clarified butter. Wearing a dark-blue waist sash, he looked like Mount Mandara surrounded by Vāsuki at the time when nectar was churned from the ocean of milk. Kumbhakarṇa donned a suit of armor that was impenetrable and capable of withstanding heavy blows. It was as bright as lightning and shone with its own splendor. In that way he looked like the Western Mountain covered by evening clouds. With all his limbs decorated and spear in hand, the rākṣasa looked like Lord Nārāyaṇa ready to span the world with three steps.

Kumbhakarṇa embraced his brother Rāvaṇa and then circumambulated him. After bowing his head to him, he departed. Rāvaṇa dispatched him with blessings for success and praise. Kumbhakarṇa departed to the sound of conchshells and drums, and was accompanied by well-armed soldiers. Tall warriors riding elephants, horses and chariots rumbling like clouds followed that best of fighters. Accompanying the mighty

Kumbhakarṇa, other rākṣasas rode serpents, camels, asses, lions, elephants, deer and birds. As that enemy of the gods and demons was leaving, he was showered with flowers. A parasol was held over his head. He was carrying a sharp spear in his hand. He was excited by liquor and maddened by the smell of blood. Many strong footsoldiers with fearsome eyes were following with weapons in their hands as they roared. They had red eyes and were many arm spans tall. They looked just like piles of collyrium. They were carrying spears, swords, sharp axes, hand javelins, iron bars, clubs, maces, huge trunks of tāla trees and unbearable slings.

Taking on another dreadful appearance that was frightening to see, the mighty and vigorous Kumbhakarṇa rushed forward. Kumbhakarṇa was one hundred bows wide and six hundred bows tall. He was fierce, with eyes as big as cart wheels. He was mountainous in size and looked like a burnt mountain. His mouth was huge. Having arranged the rākṣasas in battle array, he laughingly said: “Enraged as I am, I shall now systematically consume the monkey troops and their leaders, just as a fire would a moth. The forest-dwelling monkeys have surely never offended me before. Their species has been a decoration for the city gardens for people like us. However, Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, is the reason the city is under siege. When He is killed, then the rest will also be killed. Therefore I shall slay Him on the battleground.”

As Kumbhakarṇa was speaking in this way, the rākṣasas raised an extremely frightful uproar, causing the ocean to apparently tremble. As Kumbhakarṇa rushed forward, fearful omens appeared on all sides. Clouds the color of asses appeared accompanied by falling stars and lightning bolts. And the earth along with its oceans and forests shook. Hideous she-jacksals were howling with mouths filled with flames and birds were circling counter-clockwise overhead. A vulture actually landed on the end of his spear as he was walking along the road. His left eye twitched and his left arm quivered. A flaming meteor then fell with an alarming crash. The sun also lost its brilliance and no pleasant breezes blew.

Unperturbed by the ominous hair-raising omens, Kumbhakarṇa sallied forth, propelled as he was by the force of destiny. After crossing the defense wall by stepping over it, the mountainous rākṣasa surveyed the

amazing monkey army, which looked like a mass of clouds. When the monkeys saw that best of rākṣasas, who looked like a mountain, they fled in all directions, like clouds scattered by the wind. Seeing the monkey army dispersing like a mass of clouds, Kumbhakarṇa repeatedly roared like a thundering cloud. As soon as the monkeys heard that terrible roaring, which sounded like thunder in the sky, they fell on the ground like śāla trees cut down at their roots. Wielding a large iron bar, Kumbhakarṇa proceeded forward, frightening the monkey hordes, like Lord Śiva bearing his rod of chastisement at the end of the world.

KUMBHAKARṆA DISPERSES THE MONKEYS

Stepping over the defense wall, the gigantic Kumbhakarṇa speedily departed, emitting a loud roar that reverberated over the ocean, shook mountains and subdued thunderbolts. When the monkeys saw that the fierce-eyed Kumbhakarṇa, who could not be killed by Indra, Yamarāja or Varuṇa, was coming, they ran away. Seeing that the monkeys were fleeing, Sugrīva said to Nala, Nīla, Gavākṣa and Kumuda: “Forgetting your heroic deeds and noble ancestry, where are you fleeing like ordinary panic-stricken monkeys? Enough, my dear friends! Please come back! Why are you trying to protect your lives? Surely this rākṣasa is not fit to fight with us. He is just a big scarecrow. By our prowess we shall kill this big rākṣasa scarecrow. Please come back!”

With great difficulty the monkeys were consoled and began gathering here and there. Grabbing tree trunks, the monkeys headed for the battlefield. The furious monkeys, who looked like elephants in rut, returned and attacked Kumbhakarṇa with boulders, mountain peaks and trees with flowering boughs. Though being struck, Kumbhakarṇa did not waver. When the boulders hit his arms, they shattered, and the flowering trees splintered and fell to the ground. Angered by this, Kumbhakarṇa began annihilating the monkey army, as a wild fire consumes forests. Like felled trees with reddish blossoms, many prominent monkeys were lying on the ground with their bodies drenched with blood. Jumping and running, the monkeys did not look back. Some of them fell into the ocean, while others remained soaring in the sky. When massacred by the rākṣasa in sport, the monkey warriors fled by the same path by which they had crossed the ocean. They fled down toward the plains, their faces pale from fear. The bears climbed trees and some hid on mountains. Some of them drowned in the ocean, and others hid in caves. Some fell down, and some were unable to stand up properly. Some

had fallen on the ground, and others were lying on the ground pretending that they were dead.

Seeing the monkeys demoralized, Aṅgada said: “Stay here! We shall fight! Come back, monkeys! I see no shelter for you in your defeat, even if you search the whole earth. Come back! Why are you trying to protect your lives? If you run away abandoning your weapons, your wives will laugh at you. That would surely be death for those accustomed to a comfortable life. Since you are born in large, noble families, why are you fleeing like ordinary panic-stricken monkeys? You are certainly ignoble, for out of fear you are abandoning your prowess and fleeing. Where are the boasts you made in assembles? Where are your helpful actions accompanied by tall talk? It is said: ‘Cursed is a coward who lives after being censured.’ Follow the path of the virtuous! Give up your fear! If in the course of our short lives we have to lie dead on the ground, we shall then achieve the abode of Lord Brahmā, which is not possible for bad warriors. If we kill the enemy on the field of battle, we shall achieve glory. If we are killed, O monkeys, we shall enjoy the opulence of Brahmā’s abode. Once Kumbhakarṇa sees Rāma, he will not escape alive, no more than would a mouth approaching a blazing fire. Although we are distinguished warriors, if we protect our lives by fleeing, because we are many being driven away by one, we shall lose our glory.”

The fleeing monkeys replied to Aṅgada, even as he was speaking, with the following words which were repulsive to the brave: “The rākṣasa Kumbhakarṇa has massacred us. It is not the time to stay. We are going, for life is very dear to us.” Having said this, all the monkeys troop leaders scattered in all directions upon seeing the monstrous rākṣasa with hideous eyes. The fleeing monkeys were reassured by Aṅgada through various arguments, and thus they returned. Restored to high spirits by the intelligent Aṅgada, the monkey troop leaders were all waiting for instructions. R̥ṣabha, Śarabha, Mainda, Dhūmra, Nīla, Kumuda, Suśeṇa, Gavākṣa, Rambha, Tāra, Dvidida, Panasa and Hanumān marched off quickly to the battlefield.

RĀMA KILLS KUMBHAKARṆA

All the huge-bodied monkeys became resolute and returned after they heard Aṅgada's rallying words. Reminded of their past deeds of valor and reassured by Aṅgada's words, they again exhibited valor. After returning, regaining confidence and being prepared to die, the monkeys carried out a fierce battle. Raising up big trees and mountain peaks, the huge monkeys now rushed swiftly toward Kumbhakarṇa. Raising his mace, the furious Kumbhakarṇa hit and struck down the enemy on all sides. Eight thousand seven hundred monkeys hit by Kumbhakarṇa were lying scattered on the ground. Gathering within his arms six, eight, ten, twenty or even thirty monkeys, he ran about devouring them, as Garuḍa devours serpents. Reassured with difficulty and gathering from here and there, the monkeys seized trees and boulders and stood firmly on the front line of battle. Pulling up a mountain, Dvividā, who resembled a low-hanging cloud, ran toward Kumbhakarṇa, who resembled a mountain peak. Dvividā hurled the mountain at Kumbhakarṇa. The mountain missed Kumbhakarṇa and fell on his army. The mountain crushed horses, elephants and chariots. Another mountain peak crushed other rākṣasas. By the impact of those boulders, the broad battlefield was strewn with dead horses and charioteers and wet with the blood of rākṣasas. Roaring ferociously, chariot warriors quickly severed the heads of monkeys with arrows that were like death personified. Uprooting big trees, the monkeys began crushing the chariots, horses, elephants, camels and rākṣasas. Hovering in the air, Hanumān showered mountain peaks, boulders and various kinds of trees on Kumbhakarṇa's head. Kumbhakarṇa shattered the mountain peaks and smashed the shower of trees with his spear.

Grasping his sharp spear, Kumbhakarṇa then rushed toward the dreadful monkey army. Holding a mountain peak, Hanumān stood before Kumbhakarṇa as he rushed forward. Angered by the attack, Hanumān violently struck Kumbhakarṇa, whose body was as formidable as a mountain.

Overtaken by that blow, Kumbhakarṇa's body was wet with blood and fat, and he became disturbed. Brandishing his spear that gleamed like lightning, Kumbhakarṇa struck Hanumān in the chest, as Skandha struck the Krauñca Mountains with his spear. When struck in the chest by the spear, Hanumān was vexed. Vomiting blood, he roared on the battlefield, like the thundering of clouds at the end of the age. The rākṣasas were overjoyed to see Hanumān in agony and immediately began roaring. The monkeys, who were disturbed and terrified of Kumbhakarṇa, fled from the battlefield.

After consoling his army, Nīla hurled a mountain peak at the clever Kumbhakarṇa. Seeing it coming, Kumbhakarṇa struck it with his fist. When struck by his fist, the mountain peak shattered, producing sparks and flames, and then fell to the ground. Five outstanding monkeys—Rṣabha, Śarabha, Nīla, Gavākṣa and Gandhamādana—attacked Kumbhakarṇa. These extremely powerful monkeys struck the gigantic Kumbhakarṇa on all sides with boulders, trees, feet, fists and palms. To Kumbhakarṇa the blows felt like gentle taps: he felt no pain. Then he embraced the impetuous Rṣabha with his arms. After being squeezed in Kumbhakarṇa's arms, Rṣabha fell down with blood flowing from his mouth. Kumbhakarṇa struck Śarabha with his fist, Nīla with his knee and Gavākṣa with his palm. Then he violently kicked Gandhamādana with his foot. Bathed in blood and agonized by the blows given by Kumbhakarṇa, they fainted on the ground, like felled kiṁśuka trees.

When those prominent monkeys had fallen, thousands of monkeys rushed toward Kumbhakarṇa. Jumping and climbing on him, those monkeys also began biting him. They attacked him with their claws, teeth, fists and arms. Covered with thousands of monkeys, that tiger among rākṣasas looked like a mountain forested with trees. Grabbing them with his arms, the agitated Kumbhakarṇa began eating them, as Garuḍa devours snakes. When thrown into Kumbhakarṇa's mouth, which was like the entrance to hell, the monkeys escaped through his nostrils and ears. While devouring the monkeys, the highly infuriated rākṣasa crushed them all. Drenching the earth with flesh and blood, the rākṣasa wandered among the monkey soldiers, like the fire that flares up for universal destruction. Standing on the

battlefield with a spear in his hand, Kumbhakarṇa looked like Lord Indra holding his thunderbolt, or like death personified holding a noose. As a fire would consume a dry forest during a drought, even so did Kumbhakarṇa devour the monkey soldiers.

As they were being slaughtered, the horrified monkeys, who had lost many troops, began howling in strange ways. Greatly disturbed and bewildered while being killed in large numbers by Kumbhakarṇa, the monkeys went to Rāma for shelter. Seeing the monkeys defeated, Aṅgada, the son of Vālī, grabbed a mountain peak and speedily ran toward Kumbhakarṇa. Roaring constantly, Aṅgada frightened all the rākṣasas who were following behind Kumbhakarṇa. Then he flung the mountain peak at Kumbhakarṇa's head. When hit in the head, Kumbhakarṇa became very angry. The intolerant rākṣasa thereafter quickly ran toward Aṅgada. Roaring loudly and terrifying all the monkeys, Kumbhakarṇa angrily threw a spear at Aṅgada. The mighty Aṅgada, who was skilled in combat, adroitly avoided the approaching spear. Jumping up forcefully, Aṅgada shoved Kumbhakarṇa in the chest. When hit in this way, Kumbhakarṇa fainted. Regaining consciousness, Kumbhakarṇa made a fist and hit Aṅgada with the back of his hand, knocking him down unconscious.

After Aṅgada had fallen unconscious on the ground, Kumbhakarṇa grabbed his spear again and ran toward Sugrīva. When the valorous Sugrīva saw that Kumbhakarṇa was approaching, he jumped up. Seizing a mountain peak and brandishing it, he rushed toward Kumbhakarṇa. Seeing that monkey also approaching, Kumbhakarṇa stood facing Sugrīva and stretched out his limbs. When Sugrīva saw Kumbhakarṇa standing there devouring monkeys with his blood-stained arms, he said: "You have accomplished a difficult task by striking down warriors, devouring troops and achieving great glory. Leave the monkey army alone! Why are you bothering with ordinary soldiers? See if you can bear the sudden impact of this mountain, O rākṣasa!" Hearing Sugrīva's words full of courage and fortitude, Kumbhakarṇa replied: "You are Lord Brahmā's grandson and a son of Rkṣarāja, and you possess fortitude and manliness. Therefore you are roaring, O monkey!"

As soon as Sugrīva heard what Kumbhakarṇa said, he balanced the mountain peak, which resembled a thunderbolt, and suddenly hurled it, striking him in the chest. The mountain peak shattered in a moment on Kumbhakarṇa's chest. The monkeys immediately became despondent and the rākṣasas roared jubilantly. After being hit by that mountain peak, Kumbhakarṇa angrily stretched open his mouth and roared. Brandishing his spear, which flashed like lightning, Kumbhakarṇa threw it at Sugrīva, the ruler of the monkeys and bears in order to kill him. Hanumān quickly jumped up and seized that spear and broke it forcefully. Placing the huge and exceedingly heavy iron spear on his knee, Hanumān joyfully broke it again. When the monkeys saw that Hanumān had broken the spear, they joyfully rushed up roaring from everywhere. On the other hand, the rākṣasa became frightened and downcast. Seeing the spear broken, the monkeys roared jubilantly and praised Hanumān.

That giant lord of rākṣasas became furious when he saw his spear broken. Breaking off a peak from the Malaya Mountain near Laṅkā, Kumbhakarṇa approached Sugrīva and hit him with it. When struck with that mountain peak, Sugrīva fell unconscious on the battleground. Those practitioners of black arts were overjoyed to see Sugrīva fallen and roared jubilantly. Then Kumbhakarṇa picked up Sugrīva, whose prowess was amazing, and carried him away, as a cloud is driven by a strong wind. After getting Sugrīva, Kumbhakarṇa, who resembled Mount Meru, departed from there. As Kumbhakarṇa headed for the city of Laṅkā, he was praised by the rākṣasas. He heard the cries of the residents of the heavenly planets who were bewildered by the capture of Sugrīva. Having captured Sugrīva, that enemy of Lord Indra thought that after killing him it would be easy to kill the entire monkey army along with Rāma.

Seeing that the monkey army was scattered and Sugrīva captured, Hanumān thought: "Now that Sugrīva is captured, what should I do? I shall do whatever is best for me to do. Making myself as big as a mountain, I shall kill the rākṣasa. When I have killed Kumbhakarṇa in combat, his body crushed by my fists, and Sugrīva has been freed, then all the monkeys can be rejoice. Or else, Sugrīva will free himself, even if captured by the gods, asuras or nāgas. Struck with a mountain crag by Kumbhakarṇa, I think Sugrīva is

not yet conscious. After regaining consciousness in a while, Sugrīva will do what is good for himself and for the monkeys in this conflict. Sugrīva would be greatly displeased if I were to rescue him. His reputation would be lost forever. I shall therefore wait for some time so that he can exhibit his prowess by freeing himself. Until then I shall reassure the monkey army.” Thinking in this way, Hanumān calmed the great army of monkeys.

Carrying Sugrīva, who was now trembling, Kumbhakarṇa entered the city of Laṅkā. He was welcomed with showers of exquisite flowers from the many-storied mansions and gateways of houses along the main road. Because of the shower of fried grains and scented water and the coolness along the royal highway, Sugrīva gradually regained consciousness. After coming to and gazing at the city’s royal highway while in the arms of Kumbhakarṇa, Sugrīva thought: “How indeed can I, a captive, retaliate at this time? I shall do so in such a way that will be pleasing and beneficial to the monkeys.” Making this decision, he tore off Kumbhakarṇa’s ears with his fingernails, bit off his nose with his teeth and split open his sides with his toenails. Kumbhakarṇa was consumed with rage when deprived of his ears and nose and slashed by Sugrīva. The bloodied Kumbhakarṇa threw Sugrīva violently on the ground. While being rubbed into the ground by Kumbhakarṇa and assaulted by rākṣasas, Sugrīva bounced into the sky like a rubber ball and rejoined Rāma. Deprived of his ears and nose and drenched with blood, Kumbhakarṇa looked like a mountain wet with springs. The hideous-looking giant rākṣasa once again decided to face his enemies for combat. Vomiting blood in indignation, he looked like a rain cloud at sunset.

Since Sugrīva had escaped, Kumbhakarṇa once more rushed out furiously for battle. Realizing that he had no weapon, he grabbed a formidable mallet. Suddenly coming out of the city, Kumbhakarṇa, who had extraordinary vigor, began devouring the formidable army of monkeys on the battlefield, as the raging fire at the end of the age consumes all living entities. Bewildered as he was and hungry for flesh and blood, Kumbhakarṇa entered the ranks of the monkey army and started devouring rākṣasas, monkeys, goblins and bears. He devoured the prominent monkeys just as death takes away all beings at the end of the age. Grabbing with one hand, one, two, three or more monkeys and rākṣasas, Kumbhakarṇa hastily tossed

them into his mouth. Blood and fat dribbled from his mouth as he ate. Meanwhile the monkeys were attacking him with mountain peaks. While Kumbhakarṇa was devouring the monkeys, the survivors fled to Rāma for shelter. Raging mad, Kumbhakarṇa ran about devouring monkeys. Embracing seven, eight, twenty, thirty or even hundreds of monkeys, he ran about devouring them everywhere. With his body splattered with fat, blood and marrow and strings of tangled entrails hanging from the stubs of his ears, he released a shower of spears, like the waxing of death before the end of the age.

At that time, Lakṣmaṇa, the crusher of hostile forces and defeater of enemy cities, began fighting furiously in combat. Lakṣmaṇa shot seven arrows into Kumbhakarṇa's body. Harassed in this way, Kumbhakarṇa obstructed Lakṣmaṇa's arrows with his own. Then Lakṣmaṇa covered Kumbhakarṇa's sparkling golden armor with arrows, as the wind would rend an evening cloud. Completely covered with golden arrows, the rākṣasa looked like the sun shining through clouds. Then that dreadful rākṣasa, whose voice sounded like a thundering cloud, spoke as follows to Lakṣmaṇa:

“You have exhibited valor while fighting fearlessly with me, who have previously defeated the lord of death in combat without any difficulty. One who can even so much as stand before me, the rival of death eager for combat, is worthy of honor, what to speak of one who actually gives me battle. Even Indra mounted on his elephant Airāvata and surrounded by all the immortals never previously stood before me on the battlefield. Pleased by Your acts of valor, O Lakṣmaṇa, even though You are but a boy, I dismiss you, for I wish to meet Rāma. Although I am pleased with Your valor, strength and enthusiasm in combat, yet I want to kill Rāma in combat, for when He is killed, all others will also easily be killed. After slaying Rāma here, I shall force the others to stay on the battlefield and I will attack them with my destructive army.”

Hearing these boasts, Lakṣmaṇa laughed and belittled the rākṣasa with the following words: “Your assertion that after acquiring prowess you have become unbearable for the gods headed by Indra is true. There is no other warrior like you. I Myself have witnessed your valor today. Here stands

Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, like an immovable mountain.” Passing by Lakṣmaṇa Kumbhakarṇa rushed toward Rāma, causing the earth to tremble.

Using the mystic weapon presided over by Śiva, Rāma shot pointed arrows into Kumbhakarṇa’s heart. When wounded by Rāma, Kumbhakarṇa suddenly lunged toward Rāma, as flames interspersed with sparks leapt from his mouth. Angry as he was, Kumbhakarṇa roared as he rushed forward, dispersing the monkeys on the battlefield. The arrows fitted with peacock feathers sunk into Kumbhakarṇa’s chest. Kumbhakarṇa let go of his mace, dropping it on the ground. All his other weapons were also scattered on the ground. When the rākṣasa realized that he was unarmed, he created great havoc with his fists and hands. Because his limbs were pierced with arrows, he was losing blood, like a mountain with gushing springs. In extreme exasperation, he ran about devouring monkeys, rākṣasas and bears.

Seizing a mountain peak, the mighty rākṣasa hurled it at Rāma. Using His bow, Rāma split that mountain peak while it was yet flying through the air with seven straight-shooting arrows. Then the virtuous Rāma burst the mountain peak with golden arrows. As that crag, which was shining like a peak of Mount Meru, fell down, two hundred monkeys were crushed. At that time, the righteous Lakṣmaṇa, who was thinking of different ways to kill Kumbhakarṇa, said to Rāma: “O prince, madden by the smell of blood, this rākṣasa cannot distinguish between the monkeys and the rākṣasas and is eating both his enemies and his own kind. Let the troop leaders and prominent monkeys climb up on him, clinging to him on all sides. Under their weight, this evil-minded rākṣasa will no longer be able to move about on the ground to kill the other monkeys.”

When the mighty monkeys heard this suggestion, they joyfully climbed on Kumbhakarṇa. Angered by their climbing him, he violently shook them off, as an unruly elephant might shake off her riders. Seeing this, and considering the rākṣasa enraged, Rāma grabbed His bow and ran precipitously toward him. Rāma eyes were so red that it looked as if You would burn His enemy to ashes by a mere glance. Rāma dashed toward His enemy, bringing delight to all the monkey troop leaders, who were afflicted by Kumbhakarṇa’s strength. Carrying His strung bow, which resembled a

serpent and was shining beautifully, Rāma encouraged the monkeys and rushed off with an excellent quiver full of arrows slung over His shoulder. Surrounded by the monkey hordes who were most difficult to defeat and followed by Lakṣmaṇa, the valiant Rāma proceeded head.

Rāma saw the gigantic Kumbhakarṇa, who was wearing a crown. He was drenched with blood and had red eyes. Surrounded by rākṣasas, he was looking for monkeys, pursuing them like a rabid elephant. Wearing golden armbands, he looked like the Vindhya or Mandara mountains. He was spitting blood from his mouth, like a high cloud pouring down rain. With his tongue he was licking the corners of his mouth, which were wet with blood. He was literally crushing the monkey army into the ground, like Yamarāja at the end of the age. Seeing that best of rākṣasas, who was shining like a flame of fire, Rāma stretched His bow. Enraged by the twang of Rāma's bow and unable to bear it, Kumbhakarṇa rushed toward Rāma.

Then Rāma, whose arms resembled the body of the celestial serpent Vāsuki, spoke as follows to Kumbhakarṇa, who was rushing like a cloud driven by a wind: "Come on, O lord of rākṣasas! Do not be despondent! I am standing here gripping My bow! Know Me to be the destroy of the rākṣasa race. You will shortly be deprived of your life." Understanding that He was Rāma, Kumbhakarṇa laughed in an unusual manner and then rushed forward angrily, dispersing the monkeys on the battleground. Rending the hearts of all the monkey soldiers with his weird and eerie laughter that resounded like a thunder cloud, Kumbhakarṇa said to Rāma: "I should not be considered like Virādha, Kabandha, Khara, Vālī, or Mārīca. Kumbhakarṇa has come! See my huge dreaded mallet made of solid steel! With it I have previously conquered the gods and dānavas. You should not underestimate me because I have been deprived of my ears and nose. I do not feel the slightest pain from the loss of my ears and nose. Show Your prowess on my limbs, O descendent of Ikṣvāku! After seeing Your manliness and prowess, I shall then devour You!"

When Rāma heard Kumbhakarṇa's boasting, He shot plumed arrows at him. Kumbhakarṇa was not disturbed or pained by the blow of those arrows which flew with the speed of lightning. The same arrows which

cut through the seven sāla trees and killed Vālī did not cause any discomfort to Kumbhakarṇa's body. Kumbhakarṇa's body drank those arrows, as the earth would drink up showers of rain. Brandishing his club with impetuosity, he obstructed the onrush of Rāma's arrows. Waving with fearful speed his club, which terrified the great army of the gods, he repulsed the monkey army. Taking an arrow charged with the mystic weapon of Vāyu, Rāma shot it at the night-stalker, tearing off his arm holding the mace. When his arm was severed, he roared tumultuously. That severed arm with its mace fell on the monkey army, killing a battalion of soldiers.

The monkeys who had survived being crushed or killed, but had been squeezed and were therefore despondent, stood on the sidelines and watched that frightful encounter between Prince Rāma and Kumbhakarṇa. With his arm severed by that weapon, he looked like a big mountain whose peaks had been cut off with a gigantic sword. Kumbhakarṇa then pulled up a palmyra tree with his other arm and ran toward Rāma. Firing an arrow adorned with gold and charmed with the weapon of Indra, Rāma cut off Kumbhakarṇa's upraised arm, which looked like a big snake. When severed, Kumbhakarṇa's arm fell thrashing to the ground like a mountain, crushing trees, boulders, rocks, monkeys and rākṣasas. Seeing that despite having both arms severed Kumbhakarṇa was rushing toward Him, Rāma took two arrows with sharp crescent-shaped heads and cut off the rākṣasa's feet.

When the feet fell, they caused the directions, the intermediate directions, the mountains and their caves, the great ocean and the armies of monkeys and rākṣasas to resound. Stretching open his mouth, which glowed like an underwater fire, the rākṣasa, though deprived of arms and legs, howled and rushed toward Rāma, like an eclipse attacking the moon in the sky. Rāma filled his mouth with golden-shafted sharp arrows. Having his mouth filled, he could not speak. Moaning with difficulty, he fainted. Then Rāma took a sharp arrow fitted with fine feathers that shone like the sun. The arrow looked like Lord Brahmā's or Yamarāja's rod of chastisement. It was destructive to enemies and as swift as the wind. It was charged with the mystic weapon of Lord Indra. Rāma shoot that arrow, which was like a beautiful golden bolt of lightning and as brilliant as the blazing sun. That arrow as swift as Indra's thunderbolt was directed at the night-stalker.

Lighting up the ten directions with its effulgence, the arrows discharged by Rāma's arm flew with great speed. It was frightening to see and resembled a smokeless fire. That arrow cut off Kumbhakarṇa's head, which had rounded teeth and lovely swinging earrings, just as Indra previously cut off Vṛtrāsura's head. Kumbhakarṇa's huge head with its earrings looked like the moon in the mid sky when the constellation Punarvasu has risen at the end of night. Severed by Rāma's arrow, the rākṣasa's head, which resembled a mountain, fell inside the city, destroying the houses and gateways along the royal highway, as well as the defense wall. As Kumbhakarṇa's body toppled, millions of monkeys fled in all directions. The giant rākṣasa, who looked like a Himalaya mountain, then fell into the ocean. There it crushed big alligators, fish and sea serpents, and then entered into the earth.

When Kumbhakarṇa, the enemy of the brāhmaṇas and gods, was killed in combat, the earth and all the mountains shook and the gods raised a tumultuous shout of joy. Then the celestial sages, great sages, celestial serpents, gods, ghosts, birds, guhyakas, yakṣas, and gandharvas were overjoyed by Rāma's prowess. Greatly pained by the slaughter of Kumbhakarṇa, Rāvaṇa's relatives bellowed like elephants when they saw Rāma. After killing Kumbhakarṇa in combat, Rāma shone in the midst of the monkey army, like the sun when dispelling the darkness of the heavens after escaping from the mouth of an eclipse. Many jubilant monkeys with faces beaming like fully opened lotus flowers were honoring Lord Rāma, who had fulfilled their desire by slaying a formidable enemy. Kumbhakarṇa, the crusher of the celestial armies, had never before been defeated in battle. Rāma was therefore ecstatic after killing him, like Indra after defeating the great demon Vṛtra.

RĀVAṆA LAMENTS KUMBHAKARṆA'S DEATH

When the rākṣasas saw that great Rāma had slain Kumbhakarṇa, they reported the matter to Rāvaṇa: “O king, your brother Kumbhakarṇa scattered the monkey army and devoured monkeys. For some time he exhibited his prowess, like death personified. Tormented by Rāma’s arrows, he has met with death. Quelled by Rāma’s strength, his dreadful-looking cadaver is half-submerged in the ocean. Shorn of his limbs and head, he looks like a tree scorched by a fire. His head is blocking the city gate and has had its ears and nose cut off, bleeding profusely.”

Tormented with grief to hear that the mighty Kumbhakarṇa had been slain in battle, Rāvaṇa fainted and collapsed. Rāvaṇa’s sons, Devāntaka, Narāntaka and Triśirā were stricken with grief and wailed when they heard of their uncle’s death. Mahodara and Mahāpārśva, were afflicted with sorrow when they heard of their brother’s death. Then, with difficulty Rāvaṇa regained consciousness. Miserable because of Kumbhakarṇa death, Rāvaṇa began lamenting in bewilderment:

“Alas, heroic Kumbhakarṇa! O crusher of enemies! You have surely abandoned me by the force of destiny and gone to the abode of death. Having tormented the enemy forces and abandoned me, where are you going all alone without extracting the thorn from the side of me and my relatives? Now I surely cannot survive since my right arm, under whose shelter I feared neither gods nor demons, has fallen. How was Rāma able to kill such a warrior who could crush the pride of the gods and dānavas, and who was like the fire of universal devastation? How is it that you, whom even lightning could not injure, are afflicted by Rāma’s arrows and lying asleep on the surface of the earth? Hovering in the sky, the host of gods accompanied by sages are rejoicing after seeing you killed in combat. Overjoyed by the

present opportunity, the monkeys will surely scale the gates of Lankā, though difficult to do.

“Of what use is a kingdom to me, and what shall I do with Sītā? Deprived of Kumbhakarṇa, I have no desire to live. If I do not kill Rāma, the murderer of my brother, in combat, then certainly my death would be better, not this useless life. I shall now go to where my younger brother Kumbhakarṇa is. Sending away my other brothers, I cannot bear to live for another moment. Seeing me, who previously flaunted them, the gods will indeed laugh. O Kumbhakarṇa, how will I defeat Indra when you are death? This has happened because I did not accept Vibhīṣaṇa good advice due to my ignorance. Since the death of Kumbhakarṇa and Prahasta, Vibhīṣaṇa’s dire warning is embarrassing me. Because of expelling the virtuous and glorious Vibhīṣaṇa, this reaction has come which is causing me grief.”

Thus, when the ten-headed Rāvaṇa learned of his brother Kumbhakarṇa’s death, he lamented miserably and became manifoldly distressed in mind.

RĀVAṆA'S SONS AND BROTHERS SALLY FORTH

Hearing the evil Rāvaṇa lamenting in this way, the grief-stricken Triśirā said: “It is true that our younger brother has been slain. But, O king, decent people do not lament as you are. Surely you can conquer all the three worlds, O master! Therefore, why do you allow yourself to lament like a common person? You still have the spear given by Lord Brahmā, your armor, arrows, bow and your chariot drawn by one thousand donkeys that sounds like a thunder cloud. You have more than once killed gods and dānavas with a single weapon. Therefore you should be able to kill Rāma when you are armed with all of your weapons. Just stay here, O great king. I shall go out onto the battlefield to exterminate your enemies, as Garuḍa would to snakes. Struck down this day by me on the battlefield, Rāma will die as did Śambara when killed by Indra, or Naraka by Lord Viṣṇu.”

After hearing Triśirā's statement, Rāvaṇa, impelled as he was by destiny, felt himself reborn. Devāntaka, Narāntaka and Atikāya also became eager for combat when they heard what Triśirā said. Then the valiant sons of Rāvaṇa, who were equal in prowess to Indra began each shouting all at once: “I shall kill the enemy!” “No, I shall do it!”

All were able to fly in the sky. All were skilled in deceptive tricks. All were capable of crushing the pride of the residents of the heavenly planets. All were wild in combat. All possessed tremendous strength. All enjoyed wide fame. All had never been seen to be conquered by the gods accompanied by gandharvas, kinnaras and gigantic celestial serpents on a battlefield. All were heroic and skilled in the use of mystic weapons. All were expert in warfare. All had received the best education and all had received boons.

Surrounded by his sons, who were equal to the sun in splendor and capable of crushing the power and glory of the enemy, Rāvaṇa looked just

like Lord Indra surrounded by the immortals capable of destroying the pride of great dānavas. Rāvaṇa embraced his sons, decorated them with fine ornaments, conferred blessings upon them and sent them off to the battlefield. He also sent along his two brothers: Mahāpārśva and Mahodara to defend the princes. After taking leave of Rāvaṇa, who caused all people to wail, those giants circumambulated him clockwise and departed. Anointing themselves with all kinds of medicinal herbs and fragrant perfumes, the mighty rākṣasas, eager for battle, set for under the impulse of destiny. They were six: Trīśīrā, Atikāya, Devāntaka, Narāntaka, Mahodara and Mahāpārśva.

Thereafter Mahodara mounted an elephant named Sudarśana that looked like a dark-blue cloud and which belonged to the same species as Indra's elephant Airāvata. Sitting on the elephant and armed with all kinds of weapons, he shone like the sun on the top of the western mountain. Rāvaṇa's son Trīśīrā mounted a fine chariot drawn by excellent steeds and equipped with all kinds of weapons. Seated on the chariot and holding a bow, he shone brightly like a rain cloud accompanied by lightning, falling stars sunbeams and a rainbow. Wearing a crown on each of his three heads, Trīśīrā looked like Mount Himavān, the lord of the Himalaya Mountains, with three golden peaks.

Then Atikāya, the best of all archers and a son of Rāvaṇa, mounted his fine chariot. His chariot had good wheels, axles, horses, hitching-pole, a sparkling quiver and bow, as well as spears, swords and clubs studded with iron spikes. With his golden crown and ornaments, Atikāya looked like Mount Meru shining with its own splendor. Riding in his chariot and surrounded by other rākṣasas, that prince shone like Indra surrounded by the immortal gods. Narāntaka mounted a horse that resembled Uchchaiśravā, the horse of Indra. It had gold trappings and was as swift as the mind. Holding a spear that resembled a shooting star, Narāntaka looked like Skandha, the war god, riding on his peacock carrier with spear in hand.

Grabbing his iron club adorned with gold, he looked like Lord Viṣṇu holding Mount Mandara ready to churn the ocean of milk. Grabbing a mace, Mahāpārśva, who was most vigorous, shone like Kuvera holding a mace on the battlefield. Those rākṣasas sallied forth as did the gods from Amarāvati. Big rākṣasas armed with the best of weapons followed then on elephants,

horses and chariots rumbling like storm clouds. The gigantic princes shone like the sun. Because of the brilliance of their crowns, they looked like planets shining in the sky. The gleaming row of weapons in their hands resembled a row of white swans in the autumn sky. Deciding to die or defeat their enemies, the warriors sallied forth in order to have an encounter.

As they sallied forth, the giants, who were madden for combat, roared and discharged arrows. The earth trembled because of their roaring and slapping of arms. Because of the lion-like roars of the rākṣasas, the sky seemed to be thundering. As those joyful rākṣasas came out of the city, they saw the monkey army with uplifted boulders and trees. The monkeys also saw the rākṣasa army, which consisted of elephants, horses and chariots adorned with tinkling bells. It was like a blue storm cloud and was approaching with raised weapons.

Seeing that the army of dazzling rākṣasas had arrived and finally having an opportunity to attack, the monkeys raised up huge boulders and roared again and again. Unable to bear the roars of the rākṣasas, the monkeys roared back at them. When the rākṣasa hordes heard the jubilant roars of the monkey troop leaders, they could not stand it and roared even more fiercely. Entering the midst of the rākṣasa army carried raised boulders, the monkey troop leaders looked mountains with peaks. Some monkeys jumped into the sky armed with trees and boulders and some marauded on the ground holding trees with huge trunks, raging against the rākṣasa forces. Thereafter a fearsome battle ensued between the monkeys and the rākṣasas.

While being impeded by volleys of arrows, the direful monkeys hurled an unparalleled shower of trees, boulders and rocks. Both the monkeys and rākṣasas roared like lions on the battlefield. Infuriated, the monkeys crushed the rākṣasa devil-worshipers clad in armor with boulders, killing them on the battleground. Furious in combat, some monkeys killed rākṣasas clad in armor who wearing different kinds of ornaments. Jumping up unexpectedly, some monkeys butchered those valiant practitioners of the black arts who were riding chariots, elephants and horses. Their bodies crushed all over by mountain peaks and their eyes bulging from fist blows, the rākṣasas staggered, howled and fell. The rākṣasas also hit the monkeys

with pikes, mallets, swords, lances and spears. Assaulting each other and desiring to defeat each other, the monkeys' and rākṣasas' limbs were stained with the blood of their enemies. In a short time the ground was covered with boulders and swords thrown by the combatants and drenched with blood. The whole area was crowded with rākṣasas the size of mountains who had been wounded and scattered about in pieces.

Being dispersed by the rākṣasas, the monkeys, whose stones had been shattered, once again put up an amazing fight with their limbs. The rākṣasas hit monkeys with other monkeys, and the monkeys also hit the rākṣasas with other rākṣasas. Snatching the boulders from the monkeys, the rākṣasas hit the monkeys with them. Similarly, the monkeys grabbed the weapons from the rākṣasas and assaulted them. On the battlefield, the rākṣasas and monkeys struck each other with mountain peaks and slashed each other with weapons, roaring like lions. With their shields and armor smashed by the monkeys, the rākṣasas bled profusely, like trees exuding sap. During the battle, some monkeys knocked down a chariot with chariot, a horse with a horse, and an elephant with an elephant. The rākṣasas shattered the trees and boulders of the monkeys by shooting arrows with sharp heads shaped like a horseshoe, heads shaped like a crescent and heads shaped like a spear.

It was difficult to walk on the ground because of the scattered mountain peaks, shattered trees and cadavers of slain monkeys and rākṣasas. Reaching the battlefield and abandoning fear, all those monkeys, whose demeanor exhibited pride and excitement, fought the rākṣasas with different kinds of weapons. While the tumultuous battle was raging on, the monkeys were elated, the rākṣasas were perishing and the great sages and hordes of demigods were cheering. Then Narāntaka, riding a horse as swift as the wind, grasped a sharp spear and entered the dreadful monkey army, like a fish entering the great ocean. That valiant rākṣasa pierced seven hundred monkeys single-handed with his shining spear. In a moment that enemy of Indra massacred the monkey soldiers. The vidyādhara and great sages saw the giant riding on the back of a horse among the monkey troops. They saw in his wake a mire of flesh and blood and fallen monkeys covering the ground.

Just as the monkeys were thinking of displaying their prowess, Nārāntaka left, cleaving a passage through the monkeys. Raising his blazing lance on the battlefield, Nārāntaka decimated the monkeys, as a fire would consume forests. As soon as they were hit by Nārāntaka's lance, the monkeys fell down like a mountain struck by lightning. Roaming about in all directions, the mighty Nārāntaka completely crushed the monkeys to the ground, like the wind during the monsoon season. Terrified, the monkey warriors could not flee, stand up or move. Nārāntaka pierced them all as they jumped, stood still or ran. Struck down by that lance, which looked like death personified and was as bright as the sun, the monkeys fell down on the ground. The monkeys could not bear the impact of that lance, which was like a thunderbolt, and therefore they wailed loudly. The bodies of the falling monkeys resembled mountain peaks felled by thunderbolts.

When the monkeys regained their confidence, having previously been assaulted by Kumbhakarṇa, they now approached Sugrīva. Looking around, Sugrīva saw that the monkey troops were fleeing in all directions in fear of Nārāntaka. He then saw Nārāntaka riding a horse and approaching with his lance. Seeing this, Sugrīva said to Aṅgada: "Immediately go and take the life of that rākṣasa warrior riding a horse who is unsettling the monkey army!" Hearing his master's command, Aṅgada rushed out of his army, like the sun coming out of a cloud. Adorned with gold armbands, Aṅgada sparkled like a mountain with deposits of minerals.

Approaching Nārāntaka, Aṅgada, who was unarmed except for his claws and teeth, spoke as follows: "Stop! Why are you bothering with these ordinary monkeys? Throw your spear, whose blow is like a thunderbolt, against my chest!" Nārāntaka became furious when he heard what Aṅgada said. Biting his lips with his teeth and hissing like a snake, the irate Nārāntaka faced Aṅgada. Brandishing his blazing lance, he suddenly hurled it at Aṅgada. When the spear hit Aṅgada's chest, which was as hard as a diamond, it broke into pieces and fell to the ground. Seeing that lance broken like the coils of a serpent slashed by Garuḍa, Aṅgada raised his hand and violently struck the head of Nārāntaka's horse. The horse's feet sunk into the ground, its eyes bulged out and its tongue protruded from its mouth. With its head crushed by the blow from Aṅgada's hand, the horse fell

on the ground. Seeing that his horse had been killed, Narāntaka became furious. Raising his fist, Narāntaka struck Aṅgada in the head.

After Aṅgada's head had been struck, hot blood flowed profusely. He felt a constant burning sensation and fainted. When he regained consciousness, he was surprised. Clenching his fist, which was like death and had the impact of a mountain, Aṅgada struck it against Narāntaka's chest. Aṅgada's fist split open Narāntaka's chest, causing him to sink into the ground and staining his limbs with blood. Spewing blood from his mouth, he fell on the ground, like a mountain felled by a thunderbolt. When Narāntaka, who was foremost in valor, was killed in combat by Aṅgada, there arose a great cry of rejoicing from the monkeys and from the residents of heaven watching from the sky. Aṅgada performed a difficult act of valor pleasing to the mind of Rāma and which even surprised the latter. Then Aṅgada, who was capable of frightful deeds, again became eager for battle.

DEVĀNTAKA, TRIŚIRĀ, MAHODARA AND MAHĀPĀRŚVA KILLED

Devāntaka, Triśirā and Mahodara cried when they saw that Narāntaka had been killed. Mounted on a huge elephant, Mahodara rushed toward the valiant Aṅgada. Grabbing a formidable club tipped with iron spikes, Devāntaka, who was pained by his brother's death, dashed toward Aṅgada. Riding a chariot as brilliant as the sun and drawn by fine steeds, Triśirā also charged at Aṅgada. Being rushed by the three rākṣasa leaders who were capable of crushing the pride of the gods, Aṅgada pulled up a tree with big branches. Aṅgada suddenly hurled that big tree at Devāntaka, as Indra would his blazing thunderbolt.

Triśirā shattered the tree with his arrows that resembled venomous snakes. Seeing the tree shattered, Aṅgada jumped up. That foremost of monkeys then showered trees and boulders. Enraged, Triśirā shattered them with his sharpened arrows. Mahodara also shattered those trees with his club, while Triśirā rushed upon Aṅgada while shooting arrows. Pursuing Aṅgada on an elephant, Mahodara angrily struck him in the chest with his club, which was like a thunderbolt. The agile Devāntaka approached Aṅgada, struck him with his club and retreated. Although assailed by all three outstanding rākṣasas at the same time, Aṅgada did not feel distressed.

Exhibiting tremendous impetuosity, the invincible Aṅgada darted toward Mahodara's elephant and smacked it with his palm. Due to the impact of Aṅgada's hand, the elephant's eyes felled out and it died. Pulling out one of the elephant's tusks, Aṅgada charged toward Devāntaka and stuck him in combat. Perplexed like a tree shaken by the wind, the glorious rākṣasa shed profuse blood the color of red lacquer. Breathing with difficulty, Devāntaka brandished his iron-spiked club and struck Aṅgada. Although struck with that club and knocked on the ground, Aṅgada jumped back up.

As Aṅgada was jumping up, Triśirā hit him with three dreadful straight-shooting arrows on the forehead, so it is said. Seeing Aṅgada surrounded by the three outstanding rākṣasas, Hanumān and Nīla stepped in. Nīla thereupon hurled a mountain peak at Triśirā, the latter, however, shattered it with sharp arrows. With all of its boulders and slabs of rock riven by hundreds of arrows, the mountain peak gave off sparks and flames and then fell down. Overjoyed to see the mountain shattered, Devāntaka rushed with his club toward Hanumān. As Devāntaka was approaching, Hanumān jumped up and struck him on the head with his fist, which was as hard as a thunderbolt.

The mighty son of the wind-god struck Devāntaka on the head again. By his roaring, Hanumān made the rākṣasas tremble. When Hanumān's fist smashed Devāntaka's head, his teeth, eyes and tongue bulged out and suddenly fell death on the ground. After that enemy of the gods was killed in combat, the furious Triśirā showered dreadful sharp arrows against Nīla's chest. As the sun climbs Mount Mandara, Mahodara again mounted a large elephant. Mahodara showered a rain of arrows on Nīla, like a cloud with lightning, a halo of light and a rainbow showering rain on a mountain. Because of the shower of arrows, Nīla's limbs were wounded. He thereafter found he could not move his limbs, having been rendered stationary by the mighty rākṣasa.

After regaining full consciousness, Nīla lifted up a crag with a thicket of trees. Jumping up, Nīla forcefully whacked it on Devāntaka's head. Crushed by the impact of the crag, Devāntaka lost consciousness and fell dead on the ground, along with his elephant. Infuriated to see his uncle killed, Triśirā grabbed a bow and pierced Hanumān with sharp arrows. Angered by this, Hanumān hurled a mountain peak. The mighty Triśirā shattered it into many pieces with his sharp arrows. Seeing that the mountain had failed, Hanumān hurled a shower of trees at Rāvaṇa's son, Triśirā. The glorious Triśirā splintered those trees with his sharp arrows and roared.

Jumping up, Hanumān angrily slashed Triśirā's horse with his claws, as a lion would claw an elephant. Grabbing his spear, like death on the eve of destruction, Triśirā hurled it at Hanumān. Catching that spear as it shot

through the sky like a meteor, Hanumān broke it and roared. When the monkey hordes saw that Hanumān had broken that dreadful spear, they roared jubilantly like a rain cloud. Grabbing his sword, Triśirā poked it into Hanumān's chest. Wounded by that thrust of the sword, Hanumān hit Triśirā on the chest with his hand.

Although very mighty, when hit in that way, Triśirā dropped his sword and fell unconscious on the ground. Hanumān snatched the sword as Triśirā was falling, and then roared, striking fear into the hearts of all the rākṣasas. Unable to tolerate that roaring, the night-stalker again jumped up and struck Hanumān with his fist. Enraged by this, Hanumān caught Triśirā by his three heads bearing crowns. Hanumān wrathfully severed all three heads bearing crowns and earrings with the sharp sword, just as Indra cut off the three heads of Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvaṣṭā. Triśirā heads, which had huge ears, eyes and noses, fell on the ground like stars fallen from the sun's orbit. Their eyes were glowing like fire.

When Hanumān killed Triśirā, the enemy of the gods, the monkeys roared, the earth shook and the rākṣasas fled in all directions. Seeing that Triśirā, Mahodara, Devāntaka and Narāntaka, who were difficult to defeat, had all been slain, Mahāpārśva became furious. He seized a huge blazing club made of solid steel and plated with gold. It was smeared with the blood of enemies, covered with the foam of flesh and blood. It was shining with splendor like a blazing fire and was decorated with a garland of red flowers. It was the cause of fear for elephants supporting the cardinal points. Wrathfully grabbing the club, which shone like the fire of universal destruction at the end of the age, Mahāpārśva dispersed the monkeys.

The mighty monkey Rṣabha jumped up and faced Rāvaṇa's younger brother, Mahāpārśva. Infuriated to see him standing there, Mahāpārśva struck the monkey in the chest with his club, which was like a thunderbolt. When hit in that way, Rṣabha shuddered, and, having his chest split, he bled profusely. Regaining consciousness after a long time, Rṣabha stared with quivering lips at Mahāpārśva. Rapidly approaching the rākṣasa, Rṣabha clenched his fist and abruptly struck him on the chest. Like a tree cut down at its roots, Mahāpārśva suddenly fell on the ground, his body drenched in

blood. Grabbing hold of that rākṣasa's club, which was like Yamarāja's rod of chastisement, Rṣabha roared.

For some time it seemed as if Mahāpārśva was dead. Regaining his strength, the rākṣasa, whose complexion was like an evening cloud, suddenly jumped up to his feet and struck the monkey. Lying unconscious on the ground for a while, Rṣabha regained consciousness and jumped up. Brandish the rākṣasa's own club, Rṣabha struck him in combat. Reaching the chest of that rākṣasa who was an enemy of the gods, sacrifices and brāhmaṇas, that frightful club split it. The rākṣasa thereupon bled, as the streams in the Himalaya Mountains flow with minerals. Mahāpārśva rushed speedily for the club which the gigantic Rṣabha held in his hand. Clutching that club and brandishing it again and again, Rṣabha struck the rākṣasa on the front line of battle. When hit with his own club, Mahāpārśva's eyes and teeth were knocked out and he fell on the ground like a mountain struck by a thunderbolt. When that rākṣasa fell unconscious and lifeless on the ground, with his eyes smashed, the rākṣasa army fled. When Rāvaṇa's brother was killed, the rākṣasa army abandoned their weapons and fled for their lives, like the ocean overflowing its shore.

LAṢMAṆA SLAYS ATIKĀYA

Atikāya saw that the hair-raising tumult from the monkeys was distressing his own army. He also saw that his brothers, Mahodara and Mahāpārśva, who were equal to Indra in prowess, had been killed, as were his uncles. Therefore he became most angry. He was highly vigorous and had received a boon from Lord Brahmā. He was as big as a mountain on the battlefield and could crush the pride of the gods. Mounting his chariot that shone like a mass of one thousand suns, that enemy of Indra rushed toward the monkeys. Wearing a crown and polished earrings, Atikāya twanged his bowstring, proclaimed his name and roared loudly. By his lion-like roar, the declaration of his name and the twanging of his bow, he terrified the monkeys.

When they saw the size of his body, the monkeys thought that it was Kumbhakarna come back to life. Panic-stricken, all the monkeys took shelter of each other. Seeing his form, which resembled Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as Trivikrama in size, out of fear the monkey warriors fled in all directions. As Atikāya approached, the monkeys became bewildered and went to take shelter of Rāma on the battleground. Then Rāma saw Atikāya from a distance. He was seated in a chariot. He was as big as a mountain, was holding a bow and was roaring like the clouds at the time of universal dissolution. Rāma was amazed to see Atikāya. Calming the monkeys, He said to Vibhīṣaṇa:

“Who is that archer as big as a mountain with eyes like a lion? He is seated on a huge chariot drawn by one thousand horses. Surrounded by sharp pikes and blazing spears, he looks like Lord Śiva surrounded by ghosts. Surrounded by the lances shining like flames of fire in his chariot, he looks like a cloud encircled by lightning. The bows backed with gold beautify his chariot on all sides like a rainbow. The prominent rākṣasa, is advancing in his chariot, which is as brilliant as the sun and which is illuminating the battlefield. His flag bears the image of Rāhu and he is illuminating the ten directions with his arrows that are like rays of the sun. This three-fold

bending bow adorned with gold whose twang resembles a clap of thunder is shining.

“This huge chariot with its flag, banner, yoke-pole and four drivers is rumbling like a thunder cloud. In the chariot are twenty quivers, ten fearsome bows, and eight bowstrings that are golden and beige. On the sides of the chariot hang two shining swords that are ten cubits long with hilts that are four cubits long. He is wearing a garland of red flowers and is somber. He is as big as a mountain and of dark complexion. His big mouth is like all-devouring death. He resembles the sun covered by a cloud. Because of his two arms adorned with golden bands, he is beaming like two peaks of the Himalaya Mountains. With his two earrings, his dreadful face shines like the full moon accompanied by the two stars of the constellation Punarvasu. Tell Me who this best of rākṣasas is. Just by seeing him, the monkeys are fleeing terror-stricken in all directions.”

When questioned by the energetic Prince Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa replied as follows: “The ten-headed Rāvaṇa, the younger brother of Kuvera, is most powerful and capable of despicable deeds. He had a son who is valorous and equal to Rāvaṇa himself in strength. He served his elders, mastered the scriptures and is the most skilled in the use of all weapons. He is respected as a rider of horses and elephants, a wielder of swords and bows, a politician skilled in sowing dissention, making peace and giving bribes and as an advisor. He is known as Atikāya, the son of Rāvaṇa’s consort Dhānyamālīnī. Resting on his arm, the city of Laṅkā is fearless.

“This wise rākṣasa propitiated Lord Brahmā with austerities. In this way, he received mystic weapons with which he conquered his enemies. Lord Brahmā granted him immunity from death at the hands of gods and demons, as well as his suit of celestial armor and this chariot as brilliant as the sun. He has conquered hundreds of dānavas, protected the rākṣasas and annihilated the yakṣas. With his arrows, he obstructed in combat Indra’s thunderbolt and restrained Varuṇa’s noose in his own hand. This is the mighty Atikāya, the best of rākṣasas. He is Rāvaṇa’s clever son who can crush the pride of the gods and dānavas.”

Entering the monkey ranks, Atikāya twanged his bow and roared again and again. Seeing that frightening rākṣasa seated on a chariot, the prominent monkeys rushed toward him. Kumuda, Dvīda, Mainda, Nīla and Śarabha charged toward him at the same time with trees and mountain peaks. Skilled as he was in the use of weapons, Atikāya shattered the trees and mountain peaks with gilded arrows. The night-stalker then pierced all the monkeys who were facing him on the battlefield with arrows of solid steel. Tormented by the shower of arrows, the monkeys' limbs were wounded and they were defeated. They were unable to counteract Atikāya in that great conflict. The rākṣasa terrified the monkey army, as an angry lion proud of its youth would terrify a herd of deer.

That lord of rākṣasas would not strike anyone among the monkey troops who was not fighting. Rushing upon Rāma, who was armed with a bow and quiver, Atikāya proudly spoke the following words: "While seated in my chariot with bow and arrows in hand, I shall not fight with ordinary persons. Let one who has the energy and the resolution give me battle here right now!" When Lakṣmaṇa, the slayer of enemies, heard him speaking in this way, He became furious. Unable to tolerate it, Lakṣmaṇa ran forward and grabbed Atikāya's bow disdainfully. Angrily jumping up, Lakṣmaṇa pulled an arrow from His quiver and pulled His bow back full length before Atikāya. The startling twang of Lakṣmaṇa's bowstring filled the whole earth, the sky, the ocean and all directions, frightening the rākṣasas. Rāvaṇa's son, Atikāya, was amazed by the frightful twang of Lakṣmaṇa's bow. Angered to see how Lakṣmaṇa had jumped into action, Atikāya selected a sharp arrow and said:

"O Lakṣmaṇa, You are just a boy inexperienced in exhibiting prowess! Go away! Why do You wish to fight with me, when I am equal to death personified? Not even the Himalaya Mountains, the sky or the earth can bear the force of the arrows shot by my arms. Do You wish to awaken the dormant fire of universal devastation? Throw away Your bow and go back! Do not lose Your life by confronting me! Or else, if out of stubbornness You do not wish to go back, then stay! After giving up Your life You will go to the abode of the lord of death. See my sharp arrows capable of crushing the pride of my enemies! They are like Lord Śiva's trident adorned

with smelted gold. This serpentine arrow will drink Your blood, as an angry lion would the blood of an elephant!”

After saying this, Atikāya placed an arrow on his bow. When Prince Lakṣmaṇa heard Atikāya’s indignant and boastful words, He became enraged and gave the following poignant reply: “You cannot claim to be great by mere words, nor do people become good by bragging. O evil one, show your strength while I am standing with bow and arrow in hand! Prove yourself with actions. You should not boast. It is said that only one who possess prowess is a hero. You are sitting in a chariot and are armed with all kinds of weapons, as well as your bow. Therefore, display your prowess with either your arrows or your weapons. Then I shall knock your head off with My sharp arrows, as the wind knocks down ripened fruits from the palmyra tree in due time. Now My gilded arrows will drink the blood flowing from the wounds which they will inflict on your limbs. Neither should you underestimate Me, thinking that I am a boy. Whether I am a boy or an adult, know Me to be death personified on the battlefield! Lord Viṣṇu traversed the three worlds while He was just a boy.”

Upon hearing Lakṣmaṇa’s logical and highly truthful reply, Atikāya became quite angry and seized a fine arrow. The gods, great sages, vidyādharas, daityas, guhyakas and ghosts came to watch the fight. Placing an arrow on his bow, Atikāya angrily shot it at Lakṣmaṇa, seemingly drawing in the surrounding space. Lakṣmaṇa split that approaching arrow with His own arrow tipped with a crescent-shaped head that flew like a venomous snake. Angered to see his arrow shattered like a cobra with its hood slashed, Atikāya placed five arrows to his bow. That night-stalker shot those arrows at Lakṣmaṇa, but the latter split them with sharp arrows before they could reach Him.

After destroying those arrows, Lakṣmaṇa seized a sharp arrow that seemed to be blazing. Placing it on His super-excellent bow, Lakṣmaṇa pulled back the string and released it with full force. With that straight arrow propelled by the release of the bowstring, Lakṣmaṇa struck Atikāya in the forehead. Sunken into the fierce rākṣasa’s forehead and stained with blood, that arrow looked like a snake biting a mountain. Tormented by Lakṣmaṇa’s arrow, the rākṣasa trembled, like the gate of the city of Tripura

when struck by Lord Śiva's arrow. Atikāya was breathing deeply and thinking about what to do. Then he said: "Very good! By shooting that arrow You have proven Yourself an enemy worthy of me!" As he spoke, he opened his mouth wide. Controlling his arms, he sat upon the chariot and continued forward.

Atikāya grabbed one, three, five and seven arrows, placed them on his bow, pulled it back and shot them. Those golden-plumed arrows shot from the rākṣasa's bow were like death personified and seemed to set the sky on fire. Undisturbed, Lakṣmaṇa cut off the flood of arrows shot by the rākṣasa with His own many sharp arrows. Seeing his arrows cut down on the battlefield, Atikāya seethed and grabbed a sharp arrow. Placing it on his bow, he suddenly released it. With it he hit Lakṣmaṇa in the middle of the chest as He was approaching. When struck in the chest by Atikāya's arrow, Lakṣmaṇa began bleeding profusely, like an elephant in rut discharging ichor from its temples. The mighty Lakṣmaṇa then quickly extracted the arrow from His own chest and grabbed a sharp arrow and charge it with a mystic weapon. He charged that arrow with the weapon of Agni. The arrow then blazed on Lakṣmaṇa's bow. Atikāya charged a serpentine arrow plumed with golden feathers with a fearsome weapon. Lakṣmaṇa shot at Atikāya the flaming arrow charged with a dreadful weapon, which was like death's rod of chastisement. When Arikāya saw that arrow charged with a weapon of the fire-god, he fired a fearsome arrow charged with a weapon of the sun-god. Both arrows with flaming heads struck each other in the sky, like two angry snakes. They burnt each other and then fell to the ground. The two arrows did not shine brightly on the ground because they had ceased blazing and had been reduced to ashes.

Atikāya out of anger shot an arrow charged with a weapon of Tvaṣṭā, the architect of the gods. The valiant Lakṣmaṇa then shot a weapon of Indra. Angered to see his arrow knocked down by Lakṣmaṇa, Atikāya charged an arrow with the weapon of Yama, the lord of death. The night-stalker then shot the arrow at Lakṣmaṇa. Using a weapon of the wind-god, Lakṣmaṇa destroyed it. Lakṣmaṇa then showered Rāvaṇa's son with arrows, as a cloud would release showers of rain. When those arrows reached Atikāya, they struck his armor fashioned with diamonds and shattered,

falling suddenly on the ground. Seeing that the arrows were ineffective, the glorious Lakṣmaṇa showered Atikāya with one thousand arrows.

Though covered with showers of arrows, the mighty rākṣasa, whose armor was impenetrable, was not at all disturbed. He shot an arrow like a poisonous snake at Lakṣmaṇa. When pierced by that arrow in a vital area, Lakṣmaṇa actually fainted for a while, so it is said. Regaining consciousness, Lakṣmaṇa tore off the flag from Atikāya's chariot with a shower of arrows and killed the driver and the horses with four exceptional arrows. Undisturbed, Lakṣmaṇa shot some special arrows to slay the rākṣasa. Lakṣmaṇa, however, was unable to injure the rākṣasa in combat.

The wind-god approached Lakṣmaṇa and said: "This rākṣasa has received a boon from Lord Brahmā and is wearing an impenetrable suit of armor. As such, pierce him with the mystic weapon of Lord Brahmā, for he cannot be killed in any other way. No other weapon can kill him because of his powerful armor." After hearing this advice tendered by the wind-god, Lakṣmaṇa at once placed the frightful brahmāstra weapon on His bow. While Lakṣmaṇa was applying that mystic weapon to a sharp arrow, the directions, the sun, the moon, the great planets, the vault of heaven and the earth shook. When Lakṣmaṇa finished charging that sharp arrow with the brahmāstra weapon, He placed it on His bow and shot it at Rāvaṇa's son.

Then Atikāya saw the arrow shot by Lakṣmaṇa. It was approaching with the terrible speed of the wind. It had beautiful feathers like Garuḍa and was encrusted with valuable diamonds. Watching it, Atikāya suddenly hit it with innumerable sharp arrows. Nonetheless, that arrow, possessing the speed of Garuḍa, headed precipitously toward Atikāya. Seeing that approaching blazing arrow resembling death, Atikāya continuously hit it with spears, javelins, clubs, axes, pikes and arrows. Neutralizing those weapons with amazing shapes, the blazing arrow struck Atikāya's head adorned with a crown, severing it. When cut off by Lakṣmaṇa's arrow, the head fell abruptly on the ground like a peak of the Himalaya Mountains.

All the night-stalkers who had not been killed were distraught to see Atikāya lying on the ground with his ornaments and garments scattered.

With morose faces, the miserable rākṣasas, who were exhausted from being assaulted, all of a sudden began wailing very loudly. Once their leader had been killed, the rākṣasas, feeling helpless, hurriedly fled from there, running straight for the city. The masses of monkeys were exuberant, their faces appearing like blooming lotus flowers, now that their dreadful adversary had been slain, and they glorified Lakṣmaṇa, who had given them what they desired. After slaying the exceptionally powerful Atikāya in combat and being cheered by the monkeys, the jubilant Lakṣmaṇa quickly went to His brother Rāma.

RĀVAṆA FEELS UNSAFE FROM RĀMA

When Rāvaṇa heard that Atikāya had been killed by Lakṣmaṇa, he became very anxious and said: “The supremely intolerant Dhūmrākṣa, Akampana, the best of wielders of weapons, Prahasta and even Kumbhakarṇa—these powerful warriors eager for combat and conquerors of enemy armies have been conquered by their enemies. Those valiant rākṣasas with gigantic bodies, though skilled in the use of many kinds of weapons, have been slain along with their armies by Rāma, who is never wearied by action. Many other heroic giants have also been struck down. Those two brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, were earlier bound by my son Indrajit, whose strength and prowess is well known, with dreadful arrows given by Lord Brahmā. They freed Themselves from that bond, which was impossible for all the gods, demons, yakṣas, gandharvas and nāgas, by means of some power or deceptive trick which I am not familiar with. Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa escaped from captivity. All those brave rākṣasa warriors who sallied forth under my command were killed in battle by the extremely powerful monkeys.

I do not see anyone who can annihilate Rāma, along with Lakṣmaṇa, the monkey army, the valiant Sugrīva and Vibhīṣaṇa in combat. Oh, how very powerful is Rāma! And how great is the power of his weapons! On confronting His prowess the rākṣasas met their end. I think that the valorous Rāma is the all-good Lord Nārāyaṇa. Out of fear of Him, indeed, the city of Laṅkā has its gates and arches sealed. Remaining ever vigilant, guard this city with its garrisons, and guard the aśoka grove where Sītā is. Whenever someone enters or leaves, we should know about it always. Wherever there are garrisons, those coming and going should be checked again and again. Surrounded by your own troops, remain stationed everywhere!

“O night-stalkers, you should observe the locations of those monkeys all the time, whether it is dusk or midnight or even sunrise. You

should never overlook the monkeys. You should see whether the enemy army is stirring, advancing or staying put.”

Hearing Rāvaṇa’s command, all those mighty rākṣasas carried it out to completion. After instructing them in this way, the miserable Rāvaṇa entered his own palace, carrying the thorn of anger in his side. The fire of wrath having been lit, that mighty lord of the night-stalkers brooded over the death of his son, sighing repeatedly.

INDRAJIT SHOOTS A BRAHMĀSTRA AT RĀMA AND LAKṢMAṆA

Those rākṣasas who survived hastily reported to Rāvaṇa that Devāntaka, Triśīrā, Atikāya and others had been killed. Hearing this sudden message of death, the king's eyes filled with tears. Thinking about the death of his sons and the horrible slaughter of his brothers, the king became very contemplative. When Indrajit saw how his father was miserable and drowning in an ocean of grief, he spoke the following words: "O lord of the rākṣasas, you should not despair while Indrajit is alive! Indeed, no one is able to survive when struck by my arrows in combat. Today see Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lying dead on the ground, Their bodies pierced, scattered and completely covered by my arrows! Hear my vow strengthened by great determination, manliness and destiny: I shall this very day overcome Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with my arrows which are always effective! Today Indra, Yamarāja, Viṣṇu, Rudra, the sādhyas, Agni, Candra and Sūrya will witness my immeasurable prowess as they did the formidable prowess of Viṣṇu in the sacrificial arena of Mahārāja Bali!"

After saying this and taking leave of Rāvaṇa, the enemy of Indra, Indrajit mounted the chariot which was as swift as the wind, drawn by asses and equipped with weapons. Sitting down in the chariot, the glorious Indrajit, the crusher of enemies, suddenly departed for the battlefield. Extremely excited, many powerful rākṣasas carrying excellent bows followed the great prince. Some rākṣasas rode on elephants, some on fine steeds, tigers, scorpions, cats, asses, camels, snakes, boars, lions, jackals as big as hills, crows, swans and peacocks. They bore lances, sharp swords, axes, maces, firearms, mallets, bludgeons, cat'-o-nine-tails and iron bars. Indrajit quickly proceeded to the battleground to the loud accompaniment of drums and conchshells. Covered with a parasol as white as a conchshell or the moon, that crusher of enemies looked like the night sky with a full moon.

That best of archers was being fanned with lovely cāmara whisks adorned with gold handles.

Seeing his son leaving with a large army, the glorious Rāvaṇa said: “O son, you have no rival in combat. You even conquered Lord Indra. Why would you not be able to kill Rāma, a human being and therefore defeatable?” The prince accepted the king’s blessings. Then Laṅkā shone with Indrajit, whose splendor was like the sun. Indrajit’s valor was matchless and he shone like the sun in the sky. When he reached the battlefield, he stationed the rākṣasas all around his chariot.

Then Indrajit worshiped the god of fire according to scriptural regulations with the recitation of excellent hymns. After propitiating the god of fire with an offering of parched grains, which was preceded by offerings of flower garlands and sandalwood paste, Indrajit offered oblations of clarified butter. The area around the sacrifice was strewn with weapons instead of reeds. Wood from the bibhītaka tree were used as fuel. The robes worn by the attendees were red and the sacrificial utensils were made of iron. Indrajit grabbed a living black goat by the neck. After the goat was thrown in all at once, a smokeless fire sprang up from the fuel, displaying signs indicative of victory. The deity of fire rose up out of the fire, shining like molten gold. Inclining to the right, he personally accepted that offering.

Indrajit, who was skilled in the use of all weapons, invoked the brahmāstra weapon of Lord Brahmā. He also recited an incantation to protect his bow, chariot and other things. While he was invoking weapons and offering oblations into the sacrificial fire, the sky with the sun, planets, moon and stars became frightened. After offering oblations in the fire, Indrajit, who was splendorous like fire and equal to Indra in might, made himself, along with his bow, arrows, sword, chariot, horses and chariot, invisible in the sky. Thereupon, the rākṣasa army, which was crowded with horses and chariots and beautified with flag and banners, sallied forth roaring and eager to fight. In the encounter which ensued the rākṣasas struck the monkeys with many different sharp and speedy arrows, as well as with lances and goads. Watching the night-stalkers, Indrajit said: “Be enlivened and fight to kill the monkeys!”

Roaring in anticipation of victory, all the rākṣasas thereafter showered the monkeys with dreadful volleys of arrows. Surrounded by rākṣasas, Indrajit began annihilating the monkeys on the battlefield with his broad-tipped arrows, steel arrows, maces and clubs, so it is said. As Indrajit was assailing the monkeys, the latter suddenly showered him with boulders and trees. The mighty Indrajit, whose possessed immense vigor, then became quite angry and began tearing the monkeys' bodies to pieces. Infuriated, Indrajit pierced with a single arrow, five, seven and nine monkeys on the field of battle, giving great pleasure to the rākṣasas. Indrajit, who was most difficult to defeat, massacred the monkeys in combat with resplendent arrows adorned with gold.

Tormented by those arrows, the monkeys, whose limbs were injured and goals hampered, fell like great demons slain by the gods. Furious as they were, the fine monkeys rushed onto the battlefield toward Indrajit, who was glowing like the sun as he shot his fearsome arrows. With their bodies slashed and drenched with blood and their minds disturbed, all the monkeys fled. Having performed deeds of valor on behalf of Rāma, the monkeys who had dedicated their lives to Rāma roared and did not abandon the battleground but stayed there armed with boulders. Taking positions on the front line of battle, the monkeys showered Indrajit with trees, mountain peaks and boulders. Indrajit, who was victorious in combat, deflected that deadly shower of trees and boulders.

The rākṣasa then began to split the monkey troops on the field of battle with fiery arrows that were like poisonous snakes. After piercing Gandhamādana with eighteen arrows, Indrajit hit Nala, who was standing at a distance, with nine arrows. Then he hit Mainda in his vital parts with seven arrows and Gaja with five. He then hit Jāmbavān with ten and Nīla with thirty. With an arrow charged with a dreadful boon he had received, Indrajit rendered Sugrīva, Rṣabha, Aṅgada and Dvidida unconscious. Enraged like the fire of universal destruction, he also tormented other prominent monkeys with his many arrows. With his speedy arrows as brilliant as the sun, he put the monkey army into confusion on the battlefield. Once more that mighty son of Rāvaṇa looked with great delight at the monkey army tortured by his shower of arrows. Discharging a shower of arrows and a dreadful shower of weapons, Indrajit crushed the monkey army on all sides.

Leaving the space above the rākṣasa army and proceeding to a location above the monkey army, Indrajit, who was invisible, showered them with terrible volleys of arrows, like a dark-blue cloud pouring down rain. As victims of Indrajit's deceptive trick, the monkeys' bodies were slashed by his arrows and they fell howling on the battleground, like great mountains struck by Indra's thunderbolt. They could only see sharp-pointed arrows showering down on the monkey troops. They could not, however, see the rākṣasa, who had made himself invisible by his magical power. Then that gigantic lord of rākṣasas covered all directions with volleys of sharp arrows as bright as sun beams and destroyed the monkeys leaders. He showered the monkey army with pikes, swords and axes that shone like blazing fire spewing flames and sparks.

When struck by Indrajit's arrows, the monkey troop leaders looked like kimśuka trees in bloom. Stumbling toward each other, the monkeys howled loudly and fell down. Struck by arrows while looking up toward the sky, some monkeys grabbed each other and fell on the ground. Using lances, pikes and arrows charmed with mystic incantations, Indrajit pierced the prominent monkeys, such as Hanumān, Sugrīva, Aṅgada, Gandhamādana, Jāmbavān, Suṣeṇa, Vegadarśī, Mainda, Dvīda, Nīla, Gavākṣa, Gavaya, Kesarī, Harilomā, Vidyuddamṣṭra, Sūryānana, Jyotirmukha, Dadhimukha, Pāvākākṣa, Nala and Kumuda. Having wounded the monkey troop leaders with his maces and golden arrows, Indrajit showered Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa with volleys of arrows as bright as sun beams. Unaffected by the shower of arrows, as if it were just a shower of rain, Rāma, who was exhibiting the most incredible splendor, looked at Lakṣmaṇa and said:

“Resorting to a brahmāstra weapon and striking down many monkey soldiers, Indrajit is now tormenting Us with his sharp arrows. Since Indrajit has received a boon from Lord Brahmā, he therefore has great determination. Making his horrible form invisible, he stands with raised weapons. How then can he be killed? I know that Lord Brahmā is inconceivable and that he is the origin of this particular weapon. As such, endure this shower of arrows with Me right now. This rākṣasa is in fact covering all directions with a shower of arrows. What is more, Sugrīva's entire army, whose outstanding warriors have fallen, no longer looks very

well. If Indrajit finds Us fallen on the ground unconscious and bereft of anger and joy, he will surely leave the battleground and return to Laṅkā to receive accolades for his exceptional prowess in combat.”

After that, the two princes allowed Themselves to be seriously injured by Indrajit’s weapons. Having caused the two princes difficulty, that leader of rākṣasas roared jubilantly. When Indrajit finished afflicting the enemy, he suddenly entered the city of Laṅkā which was under the protection of Rāvaṇa. As he was being praised by the practitioners of the black arts, Indrajit joyfully told everything to his father.

HANUMĀN BRINGS HERBS TO REVIVE THE ARMY

The monkey army leaders were bewildered when the two princes had fainted on the battlefield. Nor could Sugrīva, Nīla, Aṅgada or Jāmbavān do anything. Then Vibhīṣaṇa reassured all the monkey soldiers of Sugrīva by speaking the following unparalleled words: “Do not be afraid! This is not a time to worry. Although the two princes appear to be helpless and afflicted, They are doing so out of deference to the weapon of Lord Brahmā attached to the weapons discharged by Indrajit. The weapon given to Indrajit by Lord Brahmā cannot be counteracted. Respecting that, the two princes have allowed Themselves to be struck down. Therefore, why be despondent at this time?”

Hearing what Vibhīṣaṇa said and respecting the weapon, Hanumān spoke as follows: “Let us restore whatever monkeys are still breathing after having been struck by that weapon.” Carrying torches in their hands, Vibhīṣaṇa and Hanumān wandered around the battlefield together at night. The two warriors saw the ground covered with huge monkeys whose tails, hands, feet and heads had been severed, who were bleeding profusely and urinating, as well as shining weapons that had been dropped. Vibhīṣaṇa and Hanumān saw that Sugrīva, Aṅgada, Nīla, Śarabha, Gandhamādana, Jāmbavān, Suṣeṇa, Vegadarśī, Mainda, Nala, Jyotirmukha and Dvividā had been struck down in battle. By the end of the evening, sixty-seven hundred million monkeys were injured by the weapon presided over by Lord Brahmā.

Seeing the army stricken with arrows like a frightful ocean, Hanumān and Vibhīṣaṇa began looking for Jāmbavān. They finally found Jāmbavān, who was naturally worn out from age. His body was covered with hundreds of arrows and he looked like a dying fire. Approaching him, Vibhīṣaṇa said: “O noble one, I hope your life is not finished by these sharp arrows!” Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa’s voice and speaking with difficulty, Jāmbavān

said: “O Vibhīṣaṇa, I recognize you by your voice. Because my body is pierced by sharp arrows, I cannot see you with my eyes. Is that best of monkeys, Hanumān, son of the wind, still alive anywhere?”

Hearing Jāmbavān’s inquiry, Vibhīṣaṇa said: “Why do you ask about Hanumān while ignoring the two sons of King Daśaratha? You have not shown the same supreme affection for King Sugrīva, Aṅgada or Rāma as you have for Hanumān.” Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa’s remark, Jāmbavān replied: “Listen, O tiger among rākṣasas, why I ask about Hanumān. If he is still living, our destroyed army will survive. If Hanumān is dead, though we are alive, we are dead. My dear child, if Hanumān, who is just like the wind-god, is still alive, then we have a chance of surviving.”

Approaching the elderly bear and clasping his feet, Hanumān greeted him with humility. Hearing Hanumān’s words, Jāmbavān considered himself reborn. Then the glorious Jāmbavān said to Hanumān: “Come, O best of monkeys! You have to save the monkeys. No one else has the prowess you do. You are the true friend of the monkeys. Now is the time for you to exhibit your prowess. I see no one else who can do it. Gladden the heroic warriors among the troops of monkeys and bears. Also heal Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa who are injured.

“Going a long distance over the ocean, you should approach Mount Himavān in the Himalaya Mountains. From there you will see the golden and lofty Rṣabha Mountain, and from it you will be able to see the peak of Mount Kailāsa. Between those two peaks you will see a mountain glowing with unequalled splendor and covered with medicinal herbs. On its summit you will find four glowing herbs illuminating the directions: mṛtasañjīvanī, which is able to revive the dead, viśalyakaraṇī, which heals all wounds, suvarṇakaraṇī, which restores one’s complexion, and sandhānī, which rejoins severed limbs or reknits broken bones. Get all those herbs and quickly come back, O Hanumān! After restoring the monkeys’ lives, reassure them.”

After hearing Jāmbavān’s instructions, Hanumān became full of tremendous power, like the ocean surging with the force of waves. Hanumān stood on the summit of Trikūṭa Mountain and pressed his feet down. Thus he looked like a second mountain. When pressed down by Hanumān’s feet,

the mountain sank. It could no longer support its own weight because of the excessive pressure. Because of the force of Hanumān's feet, some trees fell over and others burst into flames, and the mountain's peaks crumbled. While being pressed down, the mountain began to reel so that the monkeys were unable to stand. Panic-stricken, the city of Lāṅkā appeared to be dancing at night, its gateways shaking and its dwellings and entranceways collapsing. Pressing the mountain down, Hanumān caused the earth with its oceans to tremble.

Hanumān then jumped to the Malaya Mountain, which was like Mount Meru or Mount Mandara and which had springs. It was covered with trees and vines, blossoming lotus flowers and lilies and frequented by demigods and gandharvas, vidyādhara, celestial damsels and many hermits. It was four hundred and ten yojanas high. It had many herds of deer and many beautiful caves. Growing in size like a cloud, Hanumān confounded all the yakṣas, gandharvas and kinnaras present there. Pressing his feet down and opening his mouth, which shone like an underwater fire, Hanumān roared fiercely, terrifying the night-stalkers. When the rākṣasas in Lāṅkā heard Hanumān's roars, they were unable to move at all.

Offering respects to the ocean, Hanumān made up his mind to perform a great task on behalf of Lord Rāma. Raising his serpentine tail, depressing his back, pressing back his ears and opening his blazing mouth, Hanumān jumped into the sky with tremendous speed. He dragged behind him clumps of trees, boulders and rocks, as well as ordinary monkeys. Raised up by the force of his arms and legs, they fell into the water when their speed diminished. Stretching his arms which resembled snakes, Hanumān, who was equal to Garuḍa in prowess, headed for Himavān, the greatest of mountains, seemingly drawing behind him all the directions. Gazing down at the ocean, whose waters and sea creatures were swirling around, Hanumān sped along like the discus released from Lord Viṣṇu's finger. As Hanumān, who was equal to his father in speed, proceeded rapidly, he observed mountains, flocks of birds, lakes, rivers, ponds, great cities and prosperous regions. Hanumān, who was never exhausted, flew quickly along the course of the sun, causing all directions to resound.

As he was remembering Jāmbavān's directions, all of a sudden Hanumān saw Mount Himavān. It had many flowing springs and numerous caves and waterfalls. Its peaks were of charming appearance and shone brightly like white clouds. It was covered with different kinds of trees. Reaching that highest of mountains with golden peaks, he saw large, holy hermitages inhabited by many divine sages. There he saw the silvery residence of Lord Brahmā, the abode of Lord Indra, the place from whence Lord Śiva shot an arrow at Tripura, the abode of Lord Hayagrīva, the place where Lord Śiva activated the brahma-śiras weapon and the abode of the servants of Yamarāja. He also saw the abode of Agni, the abode of Kuvera, the place where the sun had been tied down by Viśvakarmā, the abode of Lord Śiva's bow and the navel of the earth. He also saw Kailāsa, the abode of the dreadful Lord Śiva, the snowy rock upon which Lord Śiva practiced austerities, Lord Śiva's bull Nandī, and the lofty golden mountain called R̥ṣabha, upon which grew all kinds of medicinal herbs and which was glowing because of their presence.

Hanumān was amazed to see that mountain which was shining like a mass of fires. Jumping to that mountain rich in vegetation, Hanumān began looking for the herbs. Searching for millions of yojanas, Hanumān wandered about on that mountain. Seeing that someone had come looking for them, they all made themselves invisible. Not finding them, Hanumān became vexed and roared very loudly. Unable to bear the situation, Hanumān, whose eyes were as red as fire, spoke the following words: "What is the use of this resolve if you are not compassionate to Lord Rāma? Just watch as I now shatter you to pieces with my huge arms, O great mountain!"

Grabbing hold of that mountain peak, which possessed thousands of mineral deposits, trees and elephants, Hanumān suddenly broke it off, shattering its summit and causing fires on its plateaus. Pulling it up and terrifying the worlds with their gods and demons, the monkey jumped into the sky and quickly flew away with the frightful speed of Garuḍa as numerous celestial beings praised him. Carrying that mountain peak and reaching the upper region of the sky, Hanumān, who was near the sun, looked like a reflection of the sun. Flying through the sky with that mountain, Hanumān looked like Lord Viṣṇu holding His flaming discus with a thousand edges.

Seeing him, the monkeys roared loudly, and seeing them, he also roared jubilantly. Hearing their roars, the rākṣasas in Laṅkā produced even more dreadful roars. Hanumān then landed on Trikūṭa Mountain in the midst of the monkey army. Bowing his head to those fine monkeys, Hanumān then embraced Vibhīṣaṇa. By smelling the fragrance of the powerful herbs, the two human princes, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, were immediately healed and the heroic monkeys stood up. Even those monkeys who had been killed were completely healed of their wounds in a moment by the fragrance of those herbs, as those who are asleep wake up at the end of night. From the time that the monkeys and rākṣasas started fighting in Laṅkā, the rākṣasas, under orders of Rāvaṇa, had thrown their dead into the ocean so that the monkeys would not know how many had been killed. Thereafter the son of the wind-god hurriedly carried the mountain back to the Himalaya Mountains and returned to Lord Rāma.

THE MONKEYS BURN LAṆKĀ

In order to make know what should be done next, the glorious Sugrīva spoke the following words to Hanumān: “Since Kumbhakarṇa and Rāvaṇa’s sons have been killed, Rāvaṇa can no longer put up any defense. As such, taking blazing torches, all the swift and mighty monkeys should immediately storm the city of Laṅkā.”

The sun having set, those stalwart monkeys headed straight towards Laṅkā during that dreadful night. Attacked from all sides by monkeys with torches in their hands, the rākṣasas who were guarding the gates suddenly ran away. The jubilant monkeys set fire to the gateways, rooftops, streets, alleys and palaces. The fire burnt thousands of buildings, so that palaces the size of mountains collapsed on the ground. Aloewood, costly sandalwood, pearls, shiny gems, diamonds and coral were incinerated. Linen, beautiful silks, wool, gold ornaments and weapons were also being burnt.

The raging fire destroyed many different kinds of buildings, the saddles and trappings of horses, the chain mail worn by elephants, the decorations for chariots, coats of armor for warriors, leather padding for elephants and horses, swords, bows, bowstrings, arrows, lances, goads, spears, blankets and rugs made from animal hair, tiger skins, musk perfume, palaces inlaid with pearls and gems, and stockpiles of all kinds of weapons. The fire also destroyed all kinds of picturesque dwellings. The fire burnt tens of thousands of houses of the rākṣasas, who were very attached to their homes. Wearing coats of gilded armor encrusted with gems and garlands of flowers, the rākṣasas were trying to protect their homes. Some had eyes quivering from drinking liquor, walking slowly due to intoxication. Some were dressing with the assistance of their wives. They were furious at their enemies. Some were carrying maces and pikes in their hands, others were eating and drinking. Some were sound asleep with their loved ones in opulent beds. Others were running around panic-stricken with their sons as the conflagration flared up again and again.

The fire consumed huge mansions that were solidly built, luxurious and spacious. These were in the shape of full moons or crescent moons and were lofty. They had latticed windows and were supplied with furniture throughout. They were inlaid with gems and coral and appeared to touch the sun. They resounded with the cries of herons and peacocks, the playing of *vīnās* and the jingling of ornaments. They looked like mountains. Enveloped with flames, the arches looked like a mass of clouds girt by lightning. Enveloped with flames, the houses shone like mountain peaks covered with forest fires. Being burnt while sleeping in their mansions, lovely women abandoned their ornaments and cried out in distress. The houses engulfed in flames collapsed like mountain peaks struck by Lord Indra's thunderbolt. As they burned, they shone from a distance like the peaks of the Himalaya Mountains burning on all sides.

With its rooftops burning at night, *Laṅkā* looked as if it were adorned with *kiṁśuka* trees. With its elephants set free by their keepers and its horses also, *Laṅkā* looked like the ocean swarming with alligators at the end of the world. Seeing a horse set free, an elephant became frightened and ran. The freed horse saw the frightened elephant and also became frightened, turning back. The reflection of the burning city on the ocean made it look as if the water was red. An hour after the monkeys had set fire to the city, it looked like the earth engulfed in fire at the horrible end of the world. The loud shrieks of women enveloped by smoke and burnt by fire could be heard at a distance of one hundred *yojanas*. Eager for battle, the monkeys would unexpectedly assault those *rākṣasas* who rushed out of the city with badly burnt bodies. The shouts of the monkeys and the wails of the *rākṣasas* caused all directions, including the ocean and earth, to resound.

Their wounds healed and unbewildered, the two great princes, *Rāma* and *Lakṣmaṇa*, grabbed Their excellent bows. Then *Rāma* drew back His excellent bow and produced a tumultuous twang which terrorized the *rākṣasas*. While stretching His bow, *Rāma* looked like the Supreme Lord stretching His bow comprised of the Vedas. The twang of *Rāma*'s bowstring could be heard above the shouts of the monkeys and the wails of the *rākṣasas*. The three sounds—the monkeys shouts, the *rākṣasas*'s wails and the twang of *Rāma*'s bowstring—filled the ten directions. The arrows

released from Rāma's bow caused the main city gateway, which resembled a peak of Mount Kailāsa, to collapse.

Seeing Rāma's arrows falling on the mansions and houses, the rākṣasas lost their enthusiasm to fight. As the rākṣasas were getting ready to attack and roaring, night fell on them like the night of universal dissolution. The great Sugrīva ordered the monkey leaders: "Monkeys, attack the nearest gate and start fighting! Anyone of you who leaves the battleground to escape fighting should be apprehended and killed for disobeying the royal command!" When those prominent monkeys took up positions at the gate with bright blazing torches in their hands, Rāvaṇa became furious. He threw all the ten directions into confusion when he grimaced and looked like the personified wrath manifested in the limbs of Lord Rudra.

In his anger, he sent out Kumbhakarṇa's two sons, Kumbha and Nikumbha, along with many other rākṣasas. Under the command of Rāvaṇa, Yūpākṣa, Śoṇitākṣa, Prajaṅgha and Kampana sallied forth with the two sons of Kumbhakarṇa. Roaring like a lion, he further ordered those rākṣasas as follows: "Go this very minute!" Exhorted by him, the rākṣasas sallied forth from Laṅkā with their shining weapons, roaring again and again. The rākṣasas lit up the sky with their personal splendor and that of their jewels, and the monkeys did the same with their firebrands. The light of the moon and stars and the shimmer of the ornaments illuminated the sky. The light of the moon, ornaments and planets thoroughly lit up the troops of the monkeys and rākṣasas. The ocean with its waves shone even brighter with the light reflected on its waters by the flames of half-burnt houses.

That rākṣasa army had terrible prowess and courage. It was adorned with flags and banners. It had fearsome horses, chariots and elephants, and was crowded with different kinds of foot soldiers. The warriors carried shining pikes, maces, swords, spears, lances and bows. It looked eery with its shining weapons and resounded with the tinkling of decorative bells. The warriors' arms bore various golden ornaments. They were brandishing axes, waving huge weapons and fixing arrows to bows. The air was perfumed with the scent of sandalwood paste, flower garlands and wine. The army was crowded with formidable warriors and rumbled like huge clouds.

Seeing that rākṣasa army had arrived, the monkey army marched forward to meet it and roared very loudly. Dashing forward impetuously, the rākṣasa army directed itself toward the hostile monkey army, like a moth rushing into a fire. By brandishing iron clubs and thunderbolts, the army shone even more brightly. The frenzied monkeys who were eager to fight then rushed upon the night-stalkers, hitting them with trees, boulders and fists. As the monkeys were approaching, they were knocked down by the sharp arrows of the rākṣasas. With their heads smashed in, their ears bitten off and their limbs broken by the blows of boulders, the rākṣasas wandered about.

Even so, other fearsome-looking night-stalkers hacked at the monkeys from all sides with sharp swords. One combatant struck another as the latter was striking still another. Another combatant threw down an opponent who was throwing down another opponent. Another combatant rebuked an opponent who was rebuking another opponent. Another combatant bit an opponent who was biting another opponent. One said: “Fight me! Then the opponent began fighting with him. Then another would interrupt saying: “I shall fight with you! Why do you bother yourself? Just wait!” Thus did the warriors talk to each other. Thereafter a most frightful battle ensued between the monkeys and rākṣasas. Weapons were dodged, weapons dislodged armor, lances were raised and fists, pikes, swords and spears were employed. The rākṣasas killed seven to ten monkeys at a time. Similarly, the monkeys killed seven to ten rākṣasas at a time. Blocking the rākṣasa army, whose hair and clothes were disheveled and whose armor and flags had fallen, the monkeys surrounded them.

DEATH OF KAMPANA, PRAJAṄGHA, YŪPĀKṢA, AND KUMBHA

As that chaotic massacre of warriors raged on, the battle-eager Aṅgada assaulted the valiant Kampana. Challenging Aṅgada, Kampana first violently struck him out of anger with a club so that Aṅgada staggered. Regaining consciousness, Aṅgada hurled a mountain peak. Wounded by the blow, Kampana fell dead on the ground. Seeing Kampana slain in combat, Ṣoṇitākṣa fearlessly sped in his chariot toward Aṅgada. He quickly struck Aṅgada with sharp arrows like the fire of universal destruction, slashing his body. The mighty Aṅgada's body was pierced by arrows with heads that were shaped like straight-edge razors, crescents, the teeth of calves, the feathers of buzzards, double-sided ears, long blades and the leaves of the karavīra tree. The valorous Aṅgada then forcefully crushed Kampana's chariot, dreadful bow and arrows.

Ṣoṇitākṣa then immediately picked up his sword and shield. Nimble as he was, he jumped down from the chariot without hesitation. Jumping forward quickly, Aṅgada grabbed hold of him, wrested the sword from his hand and roared. Aṅgada then dug the sword into Kampana's left shoulder and cut him diagonally, like a sacred thread. Holding that big sword and roaring loudly again and again, Aṅgada ran toward the other enemies on the front line of battle. Accompanied by Prajaṅgha, Yūpākṣa then angrily drove his chariot toward the mighty Aṅgada. Recovering from his injury, Ṣoṇitākṣa grabbed an iron mace and ran after Aṅgada from behind. Accompanied by Yūpākṣa, Prajaṅgha furiously rushed upon Aṅgada. Situated between those two warriors—Ṣoṇitākṣa and Prajaṅgha—Aṅgada looked like the full moon between the two stars of the Viśākhā asterism. In order to protect Aṅgada, Mainda and Dvidida took up positions at Aṅgada's sides to display their prowess. Wielding swords, arrows and maces, giant rākṣasas furiously assaulted the monkeys from all sides.

The three monkey leaders engaged in a hair-raising conflict with the stalwart rākṣasas. Taking trees, the monkeys continuously hurled them during the fight. The mighty Prajaṅgha cut those trees to pieces with his sword. As the fight raged on, the monkeys hurled trees and boulders at the chariots and horses. Yūpākṣa counteracted them with volleys of arrows. The valiant Ṣṇitākṣa smashed the trees hurled by Mainda and Dvividā in mid flight with his mace. Raising his huge sword which could cut vital parts of the enemy, Prajaṅgha hurriedly rushed toward Aṅgada. Seeing that he had come, the exceedingly strong Aṅgada hit him with an aśvakarṇa tree. He then struck his fist on Prajaṅgha's arm holding a sword. Under the impact of the blow, Prajaṅgha fell on the ground.

When Prajaṅgha saw that his sword, which resembled a club in shape, had fallen on the ground, he clenched his fist, which was like a thunderbolt. Ṣṇitākṣa hit Aṅgada in the forehead, and the latter staggered for a while. Regaining consciousness, the spirited Aṅgada swung his fist and knocked Prajaṅgha's head off his body. With his eyes filled with tears to see his uncle slain in battle, Yūpākṣa quickly got down from his chariot and grabbed a sword because his arrows were exhausted. When Dvividā saw Yūpākṣa fast approaching, he punched him in the chest angrily and caught him forcefully. Seeing his brother captured, Ṣṇitākṣa struck Dvividā in the chest with his club. The mighty Dvividā reeled when struck in that way. However, when Ṣṇitākṣa again raised his club, Dvividā took it away.

In the meantime, Mainda came to Dvividā and whacked Yūpākṣa in the chest with his hand. The adroit Ṣṇitākṣa and Yūpākṣa both gave battle to the two monkeys with violent pulling and shoving. Dvividā slashed Ṣṇitākṣa's face with his claws, and threw him on the ground. The enraged Mainda squeezed Yūpākṣa in his arms until the latter fell down dead on the ground. Distressed by the slaughter of his principal warriors, the rākṣasa army turned toward where Kumbha was. As that army approached with haste, Kumbha reassured it. Seeing the rākṣasa army whose great warriors had fallen, and taking advantage of an opportunity, the energetic Kumbha performed a deed difficult to accomplish on the battleground. Seizing his bow, that best of archers with full concentrate released arrows like poisonous

snakes that tore the flesh of their targets. When fitted with an arrow, that bow shone beautifully like a second bow of Indra illuminated by the brightness of lightning and the elephant Airāvata. Pulling a golden-shafted arrow all the way back to his ear, he hit Dvividā with it. When suddenly struck by that arrow, Dvividā fainted, fell over and trembled with his legs spread.

Seeing his brother defeated in that fight, Maindā grabbed a huge boulder and charged with haste. Maindā hurled the boulder at the rākṣasa. Kumbhā, however, shattered it with five sharpened arrows. Fitting another arrow with a fine head, the mighty Kumbhā struck the Maindā in the chest. Struck in a vital area by that arrow, Maindā fainted and fell on the ground. When Aṅgada saw that his two powerful uncles had been wasted, Aṅgada rushed head long toward Kumbhā, who was standing with his bow raised. Kumbhā pierced Aṅgada with five steel arrows as he was approaching, and with three other sharp arrows, as one would torment an elephant with a goad. The valorous Kumbhā pierced Aṅgada with many arrows.

Although thorough pierced by sharp steel arrows plated with gold, Aṅgada did not waver. It is said that he showered rocks and trees on Kumbhā's head. Kumbhā again tore them all to pieces. Seeing Aṅgada approaching, Kumbhā pierced him in the brow with two arrows, as one would torment an elephant with firebrands. The blood flowing from Aṅgada's eyebrows covered his eyes. Using one hand to keep the blood out of his eyes, Aṅgada used the other to grab a sāla tree. Pressing it to his chest with one hand, he bent it slightly with its branches and broke it. As all the rākṣasas were watching, he threw it violently, so that it resembled Lord Indra's banner. Kumbhā demolished it with seven sharp body-piercing arrows.

Seeing the great fighter Aṅgada fallen and sinking into an ocean of despondency, the monkey reported the matter to Lord Rāma. Hearing that Vālī's son was overwhelmed in combat, Rāma sent stalwart monkeys headed by Jāmbavān to rescue him. As soon as they heard Rāma's command, those tigers among monkeys furiously rushed toward Kumbhā, who stood there with his bow raised. Eager to protect Aṅgada, they rushed forward with

trees and boulders in their hands and eyes red with rage. Infuriated, Jāmbavān, Suṣeṇa and Vegadarśī charged upon the valorous son of Kumbhakarṇa.

Seeing those monkey leaders approaching, Kumbha stopped them with a volley of arrows, as one might obstruct a gush of water with a rock. When they came into the path of Kumbha's arrows, they were unable to approach him, as the ocean does not overflow its shore. When Sugrīva saw the monkey hordes afflicted by showers of arrows, he placed his nephew Aṅgada in the rear and rushed upon Kumbha on the field of battle, as an impetuous lion would pounce on an elephant wander on a mountain slope.

Pulling up many different kinds of huge trees, that gigantic monkey hurled them at the rākṣasa. With his sharp arrows, that glorious son of Kumbhakarṇa splintered that shower of trees, which covered the sky. Covered with sharp arrows shot by the sharpshooter Kumbha, those trees looked like the spiked balls on the ends of a cat-o-nine-tails. Sugrīva was not at all disturbed to see that shower of trees shattered by Kumbha. As he endured the striking of arrows, Sugrīva snatched away Kumbha's bow, which shone like a rainbow. Quickly jumping down from the chariot after performing a difficult task, Sugrīva angrily said to Kumbha, who was now like an elephant with broken tusks:

“O Kumbha, the prowess which propels your arrows is amazing! You possess dedication and power, as does Rāvaṇa. You are just like Prahlāda, Bali, Indra, Kuvera and Varuṇa. You alone have taken after your father, who was most powerful. You are the strong-armed crusher of enemies holding a pike whom the gods cannot overcome, any more than the sense can a self-controlled person. Exhibit your prowess, O wise one, and see my actions! Your uncle is able to withstand the gods and dānavas because of a boon, while Kumbhakarṇa was able to do so by his own prowess. You are equal to Indra in archery skill and equal to Rāvaṇa in might. As far as strength and valor, you are the greatest of rākṣasas in the world at this time. Let all living beings witness an amazing skirmish with me, as Indra did with the demon Śambara. Skilled as you are in the use of weapons, you have performed unmatched deeds, felling monkey warriors who possess fierce prowess. I

have not killed you for fear of reproach, for I see that you are exhausted from exerting yourself. Go rest! Then you will see my strength.”

Kumbha felt flattered by Sugrīva’s words that were also full of disdain. Therefore his ardor increased, like a fire fed oblations of clarified butter. Kumbha then grabbed both of Sugrīva’s arms. With their arms entangled, they heaved heavy sighs again and again like two maddened elephants. They rubbed against each other, spewing flames with smoke from their mouths due to exhaustion. The earth sank under the stamping of their feet and the ocean with its rolling waves shook.

Sugrīva then lifted Kumbha up and violently threw him into the ocean, showing him its bottom. Because of Kumbha’s fall, there arose a mass of water as high as the Vindhya or Mandara mountains which spread all around. Kumbha jumped up, threw Sugrīva down and angrily punched him in the chest with his fist, which was as hard as a thunderbolt. Sugrīva’s armor bust open and blood flowed out. The rākṣasa’s fist had violently struck against the bone cage of Sugrīva’s chest. Due to the impact of that punch, there shot forth a flame like the fire that shoots up from Mount Meru.

After being struck in the chest by Kumbha, the mighty Sugrīva clenched his fist, which was as hard as a thunderbolt. Sugrīva thrust his fist, which shone like the solar orb with thousands of rays, into Kumbha’s chest. Greatly afflicted by that blow, Kumbha became bewildered and collapsed like a fire whose flames had vanished. When struck by Sugrīva’s fist, the rākṣasa fell down like the red planet Mars falling out of the sky by the will of providence. As Kumbha’s body was falling, he resembled the form of the sun-god when overpowered by Lord Rudra. After Kumbha was killed in a duel with Sugrīva, the earth shook with its mountains and forests and the rākṣasas became extremely frightened.

HANUMĀN KILLS NIKUMBHA

Seeing his brother killed by Sugrīva, Nikumbha glared at the latter as if he would burn him to ashes with his anger. He grasped with his five fingers his dazzling steel club, which was decorated with a flower garland and resembled one of the peaks of Mount Mahendra. It was plated with gold and inlaid with diamonds and coral. It was dreadful, just like Yamarāja's rod of chastisement, and could dispelled the fear of the rākṣasas. Brandishing that weapon, which was as splendidous as Lord Indra's banner, Nikumbha opened his mouth wide and roared. With a golden necklace on his chest, golden bands on his arms, lovely earrings, flower garland and club, Nikumbha looked like a thundering cloud with lightning and a rainbow.

The conjunction of the seven winds burst when touched by the tip of Nikumbha's club, which glowed like a smokeless fire. The vault of heaven with the city of Alakā, the superb dwellings of the gandharvas, the hosts of stars and constellations and the planets including the moon seemed to be spinning around by the motion of Nikumbha's club. Nikumbha was very difficult to assail because he became like the flaring conflagration at the end of the age, with his ornaments and club as flames and his wrath as fuel. Neither the monkeys nor the rākṣasas were able to move due to fear. Expanding his chest, though, the mighty Hanumān stepped in front. The powerful rākṣasa, whose arms were like iron bars, crashed the club down on Hanumān's chest. As soon as the club hit Hanumān's chest, it forthwith shattered into hundreds of pieces, shining like hundreds of shooting stars in the sky.

Although struck by that club, Hanumān did not waver any more than does a mountain during an earthquake. When struck in that way, Hanumān clenched his fist with tremendous strength. Raising it, the spirited and spry monkey brutally slammed it into Nikumbha's chest. Under the impact of that fist, Nikumbha's armor burst and blood spurted out, like lightning leaping from clouds. Nikumbha thereafter staggered from the

blow. But when he regained full consciousness, he grabbed hold of the mighty Hanumān. When the inhabitants of Laṅkā saw that Nikumbha had seized Hanumān, they roared on the battlefield.

As the rākṣasa was carrying him away, Hanumān struck him with his solid fist. Freeing himself from the rākṣasa's grip, Hanumān jumped on the ground and quickly punched Nikumbha, knocking him down on the ground. After throwing him down, the dynamic Hanumān crushed him. Then he jumped up and fell down with full force on the rākṣasa's chest. Grabbing his head and twisting it, he tore it off as the rākṣasa was howling frightfully. After Hanumān killed the howling rākṣasa, there ensued a gruesome battle between Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, and Makarākṣa, who were both extremely angry. When Nikumbha's life had expired, the monkeys shouted for joy, which echoed in all directions. The earth seemed to shake, the sky seemed to fall and the rākṣasa army became overwhelmed with fear.

MAKARĀKṢA ASSAULTS LORD RĀMA

Rāvaṇa was beside himself with rage when he heard about the slaughter of Nikumbha and Kumbha and flared up like a fire. He thereafter commanded Makarākṣa, the broad-eyed son of Khara, as follows: “Go accompanied by an army under my order, my son, and kill Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and those monkeys!” When the night-stalker Makarākṣa, who considered himself heroic, heard Rāvaṇa’s order, he agreed. Bidding Rāvaṇa farewell and circumambulated clockwise around him, the mighty warrior left the brilliant palace in compliance with the command. Makarākṣa said to the commander-in-chief, who was nearby: “Have my chariot brought here right away and quickly mobilize the army!” Hearing this order, the commander-in-chief placed the chariot and army before Makarākṣa.

Circumambulating clockwise around the chariot and mounting it, the night-stalker urged the charioteer as follows: “Quickly drive the chariot!” Makarākṣa then commanded all those rākṣasas: “All of you rākṣasas should proceed before me, fighting fiercely! I have been commanded by Rāvaṇa, the king of the rākṣasas, to kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in combat. Today I shall kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, along with Sugrīva and the monkeys, with my arrows, O night-stalkers! As soon as the monkey army arrives, I shall destroy it by hurling pikes, as a fire would consume dry wood.” The rākṣasas were overjoyed to hear Makarākṣa’s boasts. The sober night-stalkers bearing weapons could change their form at will. They were cruel and fearsome. They had big fangs, yellowish eyes and disheveled hair. They were bellowing like elephants. The gigantic rākṣasas surrounded Makarākṣa as they sallied forth, causing the earth to tremble.

There then arose a great tumult from thousands of conchshells and drums being sounded on all sides accompanied by lion-like roars and slapping of arms. At that moment the long whip fell from the hand of Makarākṣa’s charioteer and his flag suddenly fell down by providence. The

horses hitched to the chariot lost their spirit, proceeding dolefully with faltering steps and tears in their eyes. As the grim and wicked Makarākṣa was departing, a very violent wind began to blow. Although they saw these ill omens, the rākṣasas, who were most valiant, ignored them and proceeded towards that place where Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were. Those night-stalkers had the complexion of clouds, elephants and buffaloes and had been wounded many times on the front line of battle by maces and swords. Skilled in war as they were, they moved about exclaiming: “I shall kill them!” “No, I shall kill them!”

LORD RĀMA KILLS MAKARĀKṢA

When the monkeys saw that Makarākṣa had come out, they all jumped up at once in battle array, eager as they were to fight. Then there ensued a tremendous and hair-raising battle between the monkeys and rākṣasas, like the one between the gods and dānavas. The monkeys and night-stalkers began crushing each other with trees and pikes, maces and clubs. The night-stalkers slaughtered the monkeys with their javelins, swords, maces, spears, lances, slings, nooses, mallets and sticks and shot arrows from everywhere. Wounded by Makarākṣa's arrows, all the monkeys became bewildered and frightened and ran away. When the rākṣasas saw the forest-dwelling monkeys fleeing, they roared jubilantly.

While the monkeys were fleeing in all directions, Rāma stopped the rākṣasas with a shower of arrows. Seeing that the rākṣasas had been stopped, Makarākṣa was burning with rage and spoke the following words: "Wait, O Rāma! You will have to fight with me! I shall deprive You of Your life with the sharp arrows shot from my bow! Since the time You killed my father in the Daṇḍakā Forest, my wrath waxes when I think of Your nefarious deeds. O wicked Rāma, my limbs have been burning because I could not find You in the wilderness at that time. By good fortune I have found You here. I was searching for You, as a hungry lion tracks a lesser beast. By the force of my arrows you will this day go to the realm of the deceased and reside there with the warriors whom You killed. What is the use of talking so much about this? Listen, O Rāma, to my words! Let everyone see You and me on the battlefield. Let the battle begin with weapons, clubs, arms or any other means with which You have practiced."

Rāma laughed when He heard Makarākṣa's challenge and replied in the following way as the rākṣasa continued speaking: "Why do you brag so vainly, O rākṣasa? You have said so many unbecoming things. Victory cannot be won on the battlefield by words but by fighting. I killed fourteen

thousand rākṣasas, including your father, Triśirā and Dūṣaṇa in the Daṇḍakā Forest. Vultures, jackals and crows with sharp beaks and claws satisfied themselves with their flesh. Today they will do the same, O sinful wretch!”

When spoken to in this way by Rāma, Makarākṣa released volleys of arrows at Him. Rāma, however, splintered those arrows with a shower of arrows. Thus Makarākṣa’s golden arrows fell to the ground when splintered into thousands of pieces. When Makarākṣa and Rāma reached each other at close range, a strenuous fight took place. The sound of their hands on their bowstrings and of arrows being released resounded on the battlefield like two storm clouds in the sky. Gods, dānavas, gandharvas, kinnaras and celestial nāgas gathered in the sky to watch that amazing conflict. Although they pierced each other’s limbs, their strength doubled. Each one injured the other in combat and then the other returned it in kind. The rākṣasa shattered the arrows which Rāma shot, and Rāma shattered the arrows which the rākṣasa shot. All the directions and intermediate directions were covered by arrows. The earth itself was completely covered everywhere and could not be seen.

Angry as He was, Rāma split Makarākṣa’s bow during the fight. Rāma also pierced the charioteer with eight steel arrows. After spitting the chariot and killing the horses, Rāma knocked them down. Deprived of his chariot, the night-stalker Makarākṣa stood on the ground and grabbed his pike, which terrified all living beings and shone like the fire of destruction at the end of the age. Makarākṣa furiously hurled the huge blazing pike at Rāma. That dreadful pike had been given by Lord Rudra. It was difficult to grasp. It shone very brightly in the sky, like another weapon for universal destruction. Seeing it, all the gods were stricken with fear and fled in all directions. With four arrows, Rāma split that flaming pike as it was flying in mid air. When struck by Rāma’s arrows, the golden pike shattered into many pieces and disintegrated like a big meteor.

Seeing that pike destroyed by Rāma, who never tired in action, the living beings in the sky shouted out: “Well done! Well done!” When the night-stalker Makarākṣa saw that his pike was destroyed, he raised his fist and said to Rāma: “Wait! Stay where You are!” Seeing Makarākṣa advancing,

Rāma laughed and fitted an arrow with a mystic weapon of the fire-god on His bow. When struck by Rāma's weapon on the battlefield, the rākṣasa's heart split open, then he fell down right there and died. All the rākṣasas became stricken with fear of Rāma's arrows when they saw the slaughter of Makarākṣa, and therefore fled back to Laṅkā. The gods were glad to see the son of Khara killed by the force of Rāma's arrows and who now resembled a mountain shattered by thunderbolts.

INDRAJIT BATTLES WITH RĀMA AND LAKṢMAṆA

Rāvaṇa became overwhelmed with great anger when he heard that Makarākṣa was killed, and he ground his teeth together. Thinking about what to do in that circumstance, he angrily commanded his son Indrajit: “While making yourself invisible or visible, however it may be, kill the two heroic brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa! You are more powerful than Them in every respect. You have defeated in battle Indra, whose actions are unequaled. Why would you not be able to kill two human beings when you encounter them on the battlefield?”

Accepting his father’s command, Indrajit offered oblations into the sacred fire in the sacrificial arena according to the regulations. Even as he was offering oblations into the fire, rākṣasīs arrived there bringing red turbans for the priests. The handles of weapons served as the blades of grass, wood of the bibhītakā tree served as fuel, the robes worn by the attendees were red and the sacrificial utensils were made of iron. The area around the fire was strewn with weapons, such a lances. Indrajit grabbed a living black goat by the neck. After the goat was thrown in all at once, a smokeless fire sprang up from the fuel, displaying signs indicative of victory. The deity of fire rose up out of the fire, shining like molten gold. Inclining to the right, he personally accepted that offering. After offering oblations and satisfying the gods, dānavas, and rākṣasas, Indrajit mounted an excellent chariot and vanished from sight. Drawn by four horses and supplied with sharp arrows and a great bow, that fine chariot looked very beautiful. Covered with smelted gold, worked with the images of deer, full moons and crescent moons, the body of the chariot was shimmering. Indrajit’s standard, which was adorned with large rings of gold and vaidurya gems, it looked like a blazing fire. Indeed, protected by that chariot and by his brahmāstra weapon, the extremely powerful Indrajit was very difficult to overcome.

Coming out of the city and becoming invisible by offering oblations into the sacred fire with incantations, Indrajit said: "Today I shall bestow upon my father a great victory by killing those two princes who have spent their exile in the forest uselessly. After ridding the earth of monkeys and slaying Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, I shall bring the highest pleasure to my father." Saying this, he became invisible. Commanded by Rāvaṇa and equipped with a fierce bow and steel arrows, Indrajit angrily rushed onto the battlefield.

Indrajit saw the two valiant warriors, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, who looked like two three-headed snakes. Concluding that They were the persons he was looking for, he strung his bow and covered all directions with showers of arrows, as a cloud would pour down rain. While seated on his aerial chariot, the invisible Indrajit struck the two princes with sharp arrows as They stood on the battleground. When enveloped by Indrajit's arrows, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa placed arrows charged with divine weapons to Their bows. Though covering the sky with a maze of arrows charged with weapons as brilliant as the sun, They were not able to touch Indrajit with them. In fact, the glorious Indrajit created darkness with smoke, covering the sky, obscuring the directions as if they were covered with a dense fog. Although he was constantly moving about, no one could hear the sound of his hand on the bowstring, nor the clatter of his wheels and horses, nor could his form be seen.

In that intense darkness, Indrajit released an amazing shower of rocks and a shower of steel arrows. Enraged as he was, Indrajit seriously pierced all of Rāma's limbs with arrows as bright as the sun which he had received as a boon. While being hit with those steel arrows, like two mountains enduring rain showers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa released sharp golden-shafted arrows. When those arrows guided by buzzard feathers reached Indrajit in the sky, they pierced him and fell to the ground stained with blood. Shining due to the exceeding amount of arrows, the two princes knocked Indrajit's arrows down with innumerable arrows having crescent-shaped heads. The two sons of King Daśaratha directed Their arrows in the direction from whence They saw the arrows falling. Indrajit, who was deft at wielding weapons, drove about in his chariot piercing the two princes with sharp arrows.

Pierced by the well-made golden-shafted arrows, the two princes looked like two blossoming *kiṁśuka* trees. No one could see his form, rapid movement, bow or arrows. No one could know anything about him, like the sun when covered with clouds. When pierced by him on the battlefield, monkeys fell down dead by the hundreds. Angered by this, Lakṣmaṇa said to His brother: “I shall employ the *brahmāstra* weapon in order to kill all the *rākṣasas*.” Then Rāma gave Him the following advice: “You should not kill all the *rākṣasas* on the earth just to kill one of them. You should not kill anyone who is not fighting, who is hiding, who has surrendered with joined palms, who is fleeing or who is intoxicated. I shall try to kill *Indrajit*, O strong-armed one. We two together shall use very fast mystic weapons like venomous serpents. When the monkey troop leaders see *Indrajit*, who is a vile *rākṣasa* sorcerer hiding himself in his invisible chariot, they will kill him. Even if he enters the earth, the sky, the subterranean region or the vault of heaven and hides himself in that way, when burnt by My weapons, he will fall lifeless on the ground.”

After speaking in this way, Lord Rāma, who was surrounded by monkeys, began thinking about how to quickly kill the fierce *rākṣasa* *Indrajit*, whose deeds were quite cruel.

INDRAJIT KILLS AN ILLUSORY FORM OF SĪTĀ

Understanding the intention of that great soul Rāma, Indrajit withdrew and entered the city. When Indrajit remembered the slaughter of those agile rākṣasas, his eyes became as red as copper and he sallied forth again. Coming out of the western gate, Indrajit, a thorn in the side of the gods, was surrounded by rākṣasas. Seeing that the two brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were prepared for battle, Indrajit thereupon performed an act of deception. Placing an illusory form of Sītā on his chariot and surrounding himself with a big army, Indrajit intended to slay it. Deciding to deceive everyone by killing Sītā, the evil-minded Indrajit sallied forth to face the monkeys.

All the forest-dwelling monkeys became furious when they saw Indrajit coming out and they rushed toward him with rocks in their hands eager to fight. Grabbing a huge and inaccessible mountain peak, Hanumān went ahead of them. He saw in Indrajit's chariot the cheerless Sītā. She was wearing a single braid. She looked distressed and Her face was wane from fasting. She was wearing a worn out garment made from a single piece of cloth and had no ornaments. All the limbs of Rāma's beloved consort were smeared with dust. Gazing at Her for a while, he took Her to be Sītā, whom he had seen not long ago. Seeing the distressed and miserable woman in Indrajit's chariot and wondering what Indrajit's intentions were, Hanumān spoke to the monkeys and then rushed toward him with those stalwart monkeys.

Indrajit became outraged when he saw the monkey army and unsheathing his sword, pulled Sītā by the hair on Her head. Indrajit began hacking at the illusory form of Sītā, who was crying out for Rāma, as the monkeys watched. When Hanumān saw Her grabbed by the hair, he became distressed and tears flowed from his eyes. Seeing the dear and lovely consort of Rāma, he angrily addressed the following harsh words to Indrajit: "O evil one, you have grabbed Her by the hair for your own destruction! Although

descended from a line of brāhmaṇa sages, you took shelter of a rākṣasī womb. Cursed are you whose mind is capable of such sinful actions! O heartless, wicked, vile and sinful wretch, such an act is uncivilized. You have no compassion, O merciless one! Deprived of Her home, kingdom and husband Rāma, what harm has She done to you that you are killing Her? After killing Sītā, you will not live very long under any circumstance. When you give up your life, you will reach those worlds which are the destination for those who murder women and who are condemned by those who deserve to be killed by the people.”

Speaking in this way and surrounded by monkeys bearing weapons, Hanumān angrily ran toward Indrajit. As the monkey army was approaching, Indrajit intercepted it with an army of rākṣasas who were frightfully angry. Disturbing the monkey army with a volley of one thousand arrows, Indrajit said to Hanumān: “As you watch, I shall now kill Sītā, for whose sake Rāma, Sugrīva and you have come! After killing Her, I shall then kill Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, the ignoble Vibhīṣaṇa and you, O monkey. Your statement that women should not be killed is true, but one must do what is necessary to harass the enemy.”

After saying that, Indrajit personally killed the illusory Sītā with his sharp sword as She was wailing. After being cut diagonally from shoulder to waist, that beautiful lady with broad hips fell on the ground. After slaying Her, Indrajit said to Hanumān: “Behold Rāma’s beloved slain by me with a weapon! She is now slain. Your effort has been fruitless!” Mounting his chariot after killing Her, Indrajit was overjoyed and roared very loudly. The monkeys, who were stationed not far away, heard that roaring coming from Indrajit’s wide open mouth as he sat in his chariot. Indrajit felt very elated after slaying Sītā. Seeing him so happy, the monkeys became despondent and fled.

AFTER FIGHTING THE RĀKṢASAS, HANUMĀN RETURNS TO RĀMA

The monkeys fled in all directions as soon as they heard Indrajit's roar. Then Hanumān said to all those frightened monkeys with morose expressions on their faces: "Having lost your enthusiasm for battle, why are you fleeing with disconsolate faces? Where indeed has your courage gone? Follow behind me as I march ahead into the battlefield! It is not befitting that warriors of noble lineage should retreat." When the monkeys heard this admonishment from the wise Hanumān, they grabbed mountain peaks and trees with joyful minds. Surrounding Hanumān, those preeminent monkeys followed him into the battlefield and roaring as they rushed toward the rākṣasas.

Surrounded by those monkeys, Hanumān began wasting the enemy army like a blazing fire. That giant monkey annihilated the rākṣasas, like Yamarāja at the time of death. Overwhelmed with grief and exceeding anger, the monkey Hanumān hurled a huge boulder at Indrajit's chariot. As soon as the charioteer saw that the boulder was approaching, he drove the chariot off to a distance. Not reaching Indrajit's chariot, the boulder split the earth open and entered it, having been thrown in vain. As the boulder was falling, the rākṣasa army became distraught. A great many rākṣasas were crushed by the boulder when it fell.

Hundreds of forest-dwelling monkeys roared as they rushed toward Indrajit. They grabbed trees and mountain peaks as they did. The monkeys of fearsome prowess began hurling their trees and boulders at Indrajit on the field of battle. Releasing a shower of trees and arrows, the monkeys massacred their enemies and roared in various ways. When struck by the valiant monkeys, the rākṣasas struggled on the battlefield. Seeing the rākṣasa army afflicted by the monkeys, Indrajit angrily grabbed a weapon and ran toward the enemy. Surrounded by his army, he released volleys of arrows and killed those strong and courageous monkeys with pikes, thunderbolts, axes, lances and maces. The monkeys also killed his followers in combat.

Hanumān massacred the fearsome rākṣasas using śāla trees with fine trunks and boulders.

Restraining the enemy army, Hanumān spoke the following words to the monkeys: “Retreat! We need not conquer this army! That daughter of King Janaka for whom we fought, struggling hard and risking our lives, has been killed. Informing Rāma and Sugrīva of this, we shall do whatever they command.” After saying this and restraining all the monkeys, Hanumān gradually retreated with the army without any fear.

Seeing Hanumān retreating to where Rāma was, the wicked Indrajit headed for the shrine of Nikumbhilā in order to perform a sacrifice. When he arrived at the shrine, he offered oblations into the sacred fire. As the rākṣasa offered oblations into the fire in the sacrificial arena, the fire blazed up upon consuming the offerings of blood. The fierce fire, which shone like the setting sun, flared up when offered oblations of blood and was seen to be enveloped in flames. Indrajit, who was familiar with the procedures, systematically offered oblations of clarified butter for the welfare of the rākṣasas. Rākṣasas who knew how to act in major conflicts, stood there and watched.

RĀMA INFORMED OF SĪTĀ'S SUPPOSED DEATH

Hearing the great tumult raised by the encounter between the monkeys and rākṣasas, Rāma said to Jāmbavān: “My dear friend, from the great and frightful rattling of weapons, surely Hanumān must have performed some difficult deed. As such, go there immediately with you army and help that fighting monkey, O lord of bears.” Saying, “So be it!” Jāmbavān went with his army to the western gate where Hanumān was. There he saw Hanumān returning with the monkeys who had fought and were sighing out of sorrow.

Seeing that army of fearsome bears that resembled a dark-blue cloud and stopping it, Hanumān continued retreating. Quickly approaching Rāma with that army, Hanumān sadly spoke the following words: “While we who were fighting in combat were watching, Rāvaṇa’s son, Indrajit, killed Sītā as She wept. With a mind bewildered by seeing that, I have come to break the news to You.”

When Rāma heard this, He became overwhelmed with grief and fell on the ground like a tree cut down at the roots. Seeing Rāma lying on the ground like a fallen god, the monkeys jumped from everywhere towards Him. They sprinkled Him with water fragrant with the scent of lotuses and water lilies, as one would to a fire that had unexpectedly flared up and would not die down. Embracing Rāma with His arms, the grief-stricken Lakṣmaṇa spoke to Him the following logical words:

“O noble one, although You have conquered Your senses and are following the path of virtue, righteousness cannot protect You from difficulties and is therefore useless. It is seen that mobile and immobile beings enjoy happiness without recourse to righteousness. Therefore I do not believe that righteousness is the cause of happiness. As much as immobile creatures are evidently happy without practicing righteousness, so also are the mobile creatures. Therefore the assumption that righteousness

leads to happiness is not true, otherwise a just person like You would not be in difficulty. If unrighteousness had borne its effect, Rāvaṇa would have gone to hell, while You, who possess righteousness, would not suffer adversity. Since Rāvaṇa is free from difficulty and You are in difficulty, righteousness and unrighteousness have changed roles.

“If one achieved happiness by righteousness and unhappiness by unrighteousness, those who are unrighteous should be unhappy. Nor would those who find no pleasure in unrighteousness ever be deprived of happiness. The fruit of righteousness would accrue to those who practice righteousness. Since the assets of those engaged in unrighteousness increase and the assets of those engaged in righteousness diminish, therefore they are both useless. How can the unrighteousness of murderers destroy them when that unrighteousness itself, being the act of killing, ends with that act? Whom can that unrighteousness punish when it is only temporary? Or else, if one kills or is killed by a ritual, then destiny is tainted by that sinful action, not the performer.

“How can righteousness catch someone for punishment when righteousness itself does not know how to retaliate, is unmanifested and nonexistent? If such a thing as a good result existed, then you would have no ill fortune. Since You have suffered such misfortune, therefore it is unacceptable that good actions produce good results. If righteousness, being weak and feeble, needs strength, then such a powerless and ineffectual thing should not be pursued. Such is My opinion. If righteousness is dependent on strength, then give up righteousness and take up courage, depending on strength as You do on righteousness. And, if You say that You are upholding the righteousness of Your father’s promise, he lied to You about installing You as prince regent and was cruel to You by exiling You. Therefore, why are You bound by his promise to Kaikeyī?

If it were best to follow only righteousness or unrighteousness, then Lord Indra would not have performed a sacrifice after killing the hermit Viśvarūpa. Righteousness destroys enemies when it is combined with strength, which is unrighteousness. An intelligent person does all of this as he desires, O descendant of Kakutstha. My opinion is that this is righteousness. You cut the root of righteousness when You rejected

sovereignty. As streams flow from mountains, all undertakings proceed from assets gathered from different places and increased. All undertakings of a less intelligent person deprived of assets are interrupted, like small streams during a hot summer. If a person raised in comfort and who desires it gives up his assets, he commits a sin and something bad will result from that. Friends and relatives gather around one who possesses wealth. One who has wealth is a real man and truly wise. One who has wealth is valiant and intelligent. One who has wealth is most fortunate and most qualified. I have enumerated the faults of renouncing one's wealth. I do not understand the reasoning by which You gave up the kingdom. One who has wealth can achieve all the results of piety, sense enjoyment and economic gain. Wealth cannot be achieved by a penniless person who seeks it. Delight, enjoyment, pride, virtue, anger, peacefulness and self-control—all these are achieved through wealth, O king.

“Those riches which destroy those who have renounced worldly pleasure and are practicing austerities are not found in You, as the planets are not seen on a cloudy day. While You were in exile in obedience to Your father's command, Your wife who was dearer to You than Your own life was kidnapped by the rākṣasa Rāvaṇa. Today I shall dispel the great sorrow occasioned by Indrajit. Therefore, get up, O descendent of the Raghu Dynasty! Get up, O tiger among men! Why do You not recognize Your great intelligence and that You are Yourself the Supreme Soul? O sinless one, I have said this in order to please You. Outraged by the slaughter of Sītā, I shall completely destroy Laṅkā with its chariots, horses and elephants, along with Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas!”

VIBHĪṢAṆA EXPLAINS INDRAJIT'S TRICK

After settling the monkey troops in their camps while Lakṣmaṇa was consoling His brother, Vibhīṣaṇa arrived surrounded by his four valorous attendants wielding various weapons. They looked like mounds of black eye makeup and like the leaders of elephant herds. When Vibhīṣaṇa approached Lakṣmaṇa, he found Him panged by grief and the monkeys with their eyes brimming with tears. He also saw Rāma, the delight of the Raghu Dynasty, unconscious and lying in the lap of Lakṣmaṇa. Vibhīṣaṇa felt depressed due to mental anxiety when he saw Rāma stricken with grief. He therefore said: “What is this?” Looking Vibhīṣaṇa in the face, then in those of Sugrīva and the monkeys, Lakṣmaṇa softly spoke with tears in His eyes: “As soon as Rāma heard from Hanumān that Sītā had been killed by Indrajit, He fainted.” Restraining Lakṣmaṇa as He spoke, Vibhīṣaṇa made the following statement to Rāma, who was lying unconscious:

“I consider the sad news told by Hanumān to be as untrue as the drying up of the ocean. I know the wicked Rāvaṇa’s plan in regards to Sītā. He would never kill Her. Even though I, his well-wisher, requested him many times to return Sītā, he paid no attention. She cannot be seen by means of persuasion, gifts or the sowing of dissension, what to speak of war or any other means. After deceiving the monkeys, the rākṣasa Indrajit left. Know that it was only an illusory form of Sītā.

“When Indrajit goes to the sanctuary of Nikumbhilā today, he will offer oblations into a sacred fire and thereby become very difficult to overcome in battle, even for the gods headed by Indra. Surely this was just a ploy to avoid any hindrance to his sacrifice by the valorous monkeys. Therefore let us go there with an army before he can complete the sacrifice. Give up this baseless sorrow that is afflicting You. Seeing You distressed, the whole army is stricken with grief. Brave as You are and confident at heart, stay here and send Lakṣmaṇa with us who are going with the army.

“With His sharp arrows, Lakṣmaṇa will force Indrajit to stop the sacrifice. Then it will be possible to kill him. These piercing arrows fitted with feathers and as swift as birds will drink Indrajit’s blood like birds of prey. Therefore, O might-armed one, send the good-looking Lakṣmaṇa to kill Indrajit, as Indra would use his thunderbolt. It is not at all advisable to wait any more time in slaying the enemy. Send Lakṣmaṇa to destroy the enemy, as Indra would send his thunderbolt to destroy the enemy of the gods. Upon completing that sacrifice, Indrajit will become invisible in battle to both gods and demons. When he concludes the sacrifice and wishes to fight, there will be great danger even for the gods.”

LAKṢMAṆA SENT TO DESTROY THE SANCTUARY OF NIKUMBHILĀ

When the grief-stricken Rāma heard what Vibhīṣaṇa speak, He could not understand clearly what he said. Gathering up fortitude, Rāma spoke to Vibhīṣaṇa, who was seated in the midst of the monkeys: “O lord of the rākṣasas, I wish to hear what you said one more time. Tell Me what you were trying to say.” Hearing Rāma’s request, Vibhīṣaṇa, who was a skilled speaker, repeated that same statement:

“As commanded by You the garrisons have been mobilized. All the troops have been divided up and positioned all about and the troop leaders have been placed according to their ranks. Listen to what remains to be done, O mighty lord. When You are afflicted without any reason, we also feel pained at heart. Give up this grief and agony which are baseless. This anxiety should be given up because it delights the enemy. Let an effort be made and enthusiasm enkindled if Sītā is to be gained and the night-stalkers killed.

“Listen carefully to the good advice which I am going to give. Surrounded by a large army, Lakṣmaṇa should go to the sanctuary of Nikumbhilā to kill Indrajit in combat by shooting sharp arrows like venomous serpents from His fully stretched bow. As a result of austerities, Indrajit received as a boon from Lord Brahmā a mystic weapon called brahma-śīrās, as well as a chariot with horses that travel as he wishes. He has probably already reached the shrine of Nikumbhilā with his army. As soon as he completes that sacrifice, know us all as dead. Lord Brahmā has given the rākṣasa a boon in which his death has been ordained: ‘O Indrajit, that enemy who strikes you before you reach the shrine of Nikumbhilā, before you complete the sacrifice, or while you are stretching your bow will kill you.’ Therefore command Lakṣmaṇa to slay Indrajit. When he has been slain, You may know that Rāvaṇa and all his supporters are dead.”

Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa's advice, Rāma replied: "I know the illusory magic of that fearsome rākṣasa. The clever fellow knows how to deploy the brahmāstra weapon and is a great sorcerer. He once rendered all the gods headed by Varuṇa unconscious in battle. When he travels in the sky in his chariot, his movement cannot be detected anymore than the sun hidden behind clouds." Recognizing the magical power of the wicked rākṣasa, Rāma spoke the following words to the glorious Lakṣmaṇa: "Surrounded by all of Sugrīva's army, accompanied by monkey troop leaders such as Hanumān and Jāmbavān, the lord of the bears, kill that powerful sorcerer Indrajit, who is a son of Rāvaṇa! The great night-stalker Vibhīṣaṇa, who is familiar with Indrajit's tricks, will follow You with his ministers."

When Lakṣmaṇa heard Rāma's instructions, He grabbed another fine bow. Touching Rāma's feet, Lakṣmaṇa, who was clad in armor and equipped with a sword and arrows, and a bow in His left hand, spoke the following words: "Today the arrows shot from My bow will land in Laṅkā like swans landing on a lotus pond. When released from My bow, the arrows will pierce him and kill him." After saying this before His brother, the effulgent Lakṣmaṇa quickly departed because of His eagerness to kill Indrajit. After bowing before His brother's feet and circumambulating around Him clockwise, Lakṣmaṇa headed for the sanctuary of Nikumbhilā protected by Indrajit. Blessed with prayers for success by His older brother Rāma, Prince Lakṣmaṇa hurried off with Vibhīṣaṇa.

Hanumān with many thousands of monkeys and Vibhīṣaṇa with his ministers hurried after Lakṣmaṇa. Being quickly followed by a large army, Lakṣmaṇa saw Jāmbavān's army stationed along the way. After travelling a long distance, Lakṣmaṇa saw Rāvaṇa's army from a distance set up in battle array. Reaching the shrine of Nikumbhilā, Lakṣmaṇa stood with bow in hand to defeat the sorcerer Indrajit as per Lord Brahmā's benediction. Accompanied by Vibhīṣaṇa, the valiant Aṅgada and Hanumān, Lakṣmaṇa entered the enemy army, which was sparkling with spotless weapons, crowded with flags and big chariots and most frightening and of unequalled impetuosity, as one would enter darkness.

STORMING THE SANCTUARY OF NIKUMBHILĀ

In those circumstances, Vibhīṣaṇa gave to Lakṣmaṇa the following advice, which was detrimental to the enemy and beneficial to Him: “Let the rākṣasa army seen here be immediately attacked by the monkeys with boulders. O Lakṣmaṇa, try to destroy the great army. When Indrajit sees that it has been smashed, he will make himself visible here. Therefore, as long as this has not been accomplished, quickly assault the enemy, covering it with Your arrows that are like Lord Indra’s thunderbolts. O hero, kill the wicked Indrajit, an unrighteous sorcerer of cruel deeds and cause of terror for the world!”

Hearing Vibhīṣaṇa’s advice, Lakṣmaṇa showered volleys of arrows toward the son of Rāvaṇa. Bears and monkeys, who fought with trees, rushed together toward that assembled army. Anxious to slaughter the monkey army, the rākṣasas showered sharp arrows, swords, spears and javelins. The conflict between the monkeys and rākṣasas was tumultuous, resounding loudly throughout Laṅkā. The sky was covered with weapons of different shapes, sharp arrows, raised trees and formidable mountain peaks.

Directing their weapons toward the monkey chieftains, the rākṣasas with misshapened faces and arms caused great terror. The monkeys similarly struck down all the rākṣasas on the battleground with trees and mountain peaks. A great fear arose among the rākṣasas as they fought with the big-bodied and powerful bears and monkeys. Hearing that his army was being beaten by the enemy and was losing spirit, Indrajit got up from the ritual before it was completed. Emerging from the darkness of a grove of trees and angered by the disturbance, Indrajit mounted his chariot, which was hitched with horses and ready. Indrajit looked like a pile of black eye ointment. The bow he held was formidable. His mouth and eyes were reddish, and he looked as dreadful as death personified. As soon as they saw Indrajit seated on his chariot, the rākṣasa warriors, who were eager to fight with Lakṣmaṇa,

rallied around him. At that time, Hanumān uprooted a big tree. Hanumān obliterated that army of rākṣasas with many different trees, like the fire of universal destruction. As soon as they saw Hanumān perpetrating such a slaughter, thousands of rākṣasas covered him with arrows.

Approaching him from all sides, rākṣasas struck him with sharp pikes, swords, spears, javelins, sharp lances, iron bars, maces, hundreds of steel-spiked balls, steel hammers, formidable axes and slings, as well as punches and slaps that felt like bolts of lightning. Angered by this, Hanumān proceeded to massacre them.

Indrajit watched that best of monkeys, Hanumān, fearlessly crushing his enemies. He then spoke to his charioteer as follows: “Drive over there where that monkey is! If he is ignored, he will surely annihilate all us rākṣasas.” When commanded in that way, the charioteer drove the chariot bearing Indrajit to where Hanumān was. As Indrajit got closer, he showered the monkey’s head with arrows, swords, lances and axes. When Hanumān, the son of the wind-god, received those weapons on his head, he became greatly enraged and said: “O foolish Indrajit, if you are a warrior, then fight! Once you approach the son of the wind-god, you will not return alive! If you want to have a duel, then fight with me hand to hand! Survive my impetuosity, O ill-witted one, then you will be considered the best of rākṣasas!”

While Indrajit held up his bow to kill Hanumān, Vibhīṣaṇa pointed him out to Lakṣmaṇa: “The one seated in the chariot over there is Rāvaṇa’s son, Indrajit, who is trying to kill Hanumān. O Lakṣmaṇa, kill him with Your unequalled arrows capable of repulsing the enemy and taking away their life.” When spoken to in this way by Vibhīṣaṇa, the great soul Lakṣmaṇa stared at the invincible rākṣasa of frightful strength seated in the chariot.

ALTERCATION BETWEEN VIBHĪṢAṆA AND INDRAJIT

Taking Lakṣmaṇa by the hand after speaking to Him in that way, Vibhīṣaṇa gladly hurried off. Going not too far away, they entered the great forest. There Vibhīṣaṇa showed Lakṣmaṇa the place where Indrajit was performing the sacrifice. The glorious Vibhīṣaṇa showed Lakṣmaṇa a frightful-looking banyan tree that resembled a dark-blue storm cloud, saying: “After offering oblations to the spirits at this place, Indrajit proceeds to the battlefield. That rākṣasa then becomes invisible to all living beings and traps his enemies on the battleground with his fine arrows and then kills them. Using Your flaming arrows, destroy Indrajit, along with his chariot, horses and charioteer, before he reaches the banyan tree.”

Saying, “So be it!” Lakṣmaṇa took His stand there, twanging His wonderful bow. Then Indrajit came into view in his brilliant chariot bearing a flag. He was clad in armor and armed with a sword. The splendorous Lakṣmaṇa then said to Indrajit, a descendent of the sage Pulastya: “I challenge you to a match! Fight with me in an honest manner!” When spoken to in this way, Indrajit uttered the following harsh words when he saw that Vibhīṣaṇa was there:

“Born and raised in our race, you are my father’s brother. Why do you hate me, your nephew, O rākṣasa? You have no sense of relation, friendship, race, morality, brotherliness or virtue, O dimwit devoid of virtue! You are pitiable and deserve to be censured, for you have abandoned your own kind and are serving the enemy. With your weak intelligence you do not understand the great difference between these two: to live with one’s own people and to take shelter of others. Even if a stranger has all good qualities and a relative has none, the unqualified relative is preferable. A stranger is just a stranger. One who abandons his own people to serve the enemy is killed by the enemy after they eliminate his people. O night-stalker, such

ruthlessness to indicate my weakness and your audacity to bring Lakṣmaṇa here is only possible because you are a relative, O younger brother of Rāvaṇa!”

Chided in this way by his nephew, Vibhīṣaṇa replied as follows: “Why do you talk so rashly as if you do not know my character? Give up your harshness in lieu of my seniority, O impious son of Rāvaṇa! Although I was born in the family of rākṣasas who perform cruel deeds, my character is not that of a rākṣasa but that of the foremost quality of humans—the mode of goodness. I do not enjoy cruelty nor do I enjoy unrighteousness. But how could a brother expel his brother, even though having a dissimilar nature? By abandoning a person of sinful resolve whose conduct has swerved from righteousness, one achieves happiness, as when one shakes off a poisonous snake from one’s hand. It is said that one should reject the sinful fellow who is intent on seizing others’ property or in having intercourse with others’ wives as one would a burning building. To take others’ possessions, to have intercourse with others’ wives and to be suspicious about friends—these three faults lead to destruction.

“The horrible slaughter of great sages, war against all the gods, pride, anger, animosity and contrariness—these faults which destroy one’s life and power, are my brother’s qualities, covering his good qualities as a cloud covers a mountain. I abandoned my brother, your father, because of those faults. This city of Laṅkā will not last long, nor will you or your father. Proud, childish and ill-mannered, say whatever you wish to me, for you are already bound by the noose of death. This calamity has now overtaken you because of your harsh words to me. You will not be able to reach the banyan tree, O lowest or rākṣasas! After attacking Lakṣmaṇa, you will not be able to survive. Fight with Prince Lakṣmaṇa on the battlefield. When killed, you will go to the abode of death, thus accomplishing the goal of the gods. Display your fully developed strength so that your weapons are all depleted. However, when you come within the range of Lakṣmaṇa’s arrows, you will not come out alive with your army.”

ALTERCATION BETWEEN LAKṢMAṆA AND INDRAJIT

Indrajit became quite furious when he heard Vibhīṣaṇa's harsh retort and angrily rushed forward. Seated in his chariot, which was well decorated and drawn by black horses, he looked like death personified. He lifted his bow, whose proportions were huge, as well as his terrible arrows that could destroy enemies. Why holding his bow and sitting in his chariot, the mighty son of Rāvaṇa spied Lakṣmaṇa mounted on the back of Hanumān, looking like the shining sun on the horizon. Feeling enraged, Indrajit spoke to Lakṣmaṇa, along with Vibhīṣaṇa and the prominent monkeys: "Just see my prowess! Now you will sustain in combat a shower of arrows shot from my invincible bow, as a cloud pours down showers of rain. Today the arrows shot from my great bow will destroy your bodies, as fire would destroy a pile of cotton. Once you have all been pierced with my sharp arrows, as well as pikes, spears and lances, I shall send you to the abode of death. Who would dare stand before me while I am on the battlefield quickly releasing a shower of arrows from my hand? Formerly during a night battle I knocked Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa and Their principal warriors unconscious with my arrows that were equal to thunderbolts. You must have forgotten this or perhaps you are on your way to the abode of death, since you have come here angrily to fight with me like poisonous snakes."

Lakṣmaṇa was angered by Indrajit's boasts and replied to him as follows with a fearless expression: "O rākṣasa, you have proclaimed the conclusion of your undertaking, even though it is a difficult one. One who completes one's undertaking by action is indeed intelligent. O fool, you think that by merely speaking you have accomplished your goal, even though you lack the means to achieve that goal, which is a difficult one for anyone. The path which you have followed, to make yourself invisible on the battleground, is the path followed by thieves, not of heroes. Having come

within the range of your arrows, I stand here, O rākṣasa. Show your prowess! Why do you brag with so many words?”

Grabbing hold of his dreadful bow when spoken to in this way, Indrajit, who was always victorious in battle, shot sharp arrows. Those arrows flew with great speed and, reaching Lakṣmaṇa, fell like hissing snakes. The impetuous Indrajit pierced the handsome Lakṣmaṇa with those swift arrows during the encounter. With His limbs pierced by arrows and bathed in blood, the glorious Lakṣmaṇa shone like a smokeless fire. Thinking about his own feat, Indrajit approached Lakṣmaṇa, roared very loudly and spoke the following words:

“The sharp-pointed deadly arrows shot from my bow will today take Your life, O Lakṣmaṇa! Let packs of jackals, hawks and vultures land on You when I have knocked You down dead! The great fool Rāma will see His brother, who is a warrior in name only and always ignoble, slain by me today. He will find You lying on the ground with Your armor split open, Your bow tossed aside and Your head severed after I have killed You.”

As Indrajit was speaking, the ireful Lakṣmaṇa replied with the following harsh words full of logic and meaning: “Give up your strength of words, O foolish and evil-acting rākṣasa! Why do you talk like this? Accomplish something with suitable action! Why do you brag without accomplishing anything, O rākṣasa? Do what you said you would so that I can believe your boasts! Look, O eater of humans! I shall kill you without speaking harsh words, without slandering you and without bragging!”

When Lakṣmaṇa finished speaking, He pierced the rākṣasa’s chest with five tremendously speedy steel arrows drawn all the way back to His ear. The swift arrows resembled flaming serpents and they shone like sunbeams on the rākṣasa’s chest. Angered when struck by Lakṣmaṇa’s arrows, Indrajit pierced Lakṣmaṇa in return with three well-aimed arrows. The battle between Indrajit and Lakṣmaṇa, who were both eager to conquer each other, was fractious, tumultuous and extremely frightful. Both were valiant, powerful and distinguished by their prowess. Both were extremely difficult to defeat and equal in strength and courage. The two warriors

fought at that time like two planets in conflict in the sky. They were as difficult to overcome in battle as Indra and Vṛtrāsura. The two great warriors fought like lions. Standing firmly as they shot volleys of arrows, the two of them—the best of men and the best of rākṣasas—gladly fought with each other.

Fitting arrows to his bow and hissing like an angry snake, Lakṣmaṇa, the crusher of enemies, shot arrows at Indrajit. Turning pale in the face when he heard the twang of Lakṣmaṇa’s hand on the bowstring, Indrajit stared at Lakṣmaṇa. When Vibhīṣaṇa saw that Rāvaṇa’s son had turned pale in the face, he said to Lakṣmaṇa: “I see certain indications of weakness in Indrajit. Hurry, O strong-armed prince! He is already defeated. There is no doubt about it.” Fitting arrows that were like poisonous snakes to His bow, Lakṣmaṇa shot them at Indrajit. When struck by Lakṣmaṇa’s arrows, whose impact was like Indra’s thunderbolt, Indrajit was dazed for a while, with all his senses stunned.

Regaining consciousness and full use of his senses after a while, Indrajit saw the courageous Lakṣmaṇa standing on the battleground. With his eyes red from rage, he then advanced toward Lakṣmaṇa. When he reached Lakṣmaṇa, he again spoke harsh words to Him: “Do you not remember my prowess in that first encounter with me when, bound by me with Your brother, You writhed on the ground? Previously You two were knocked down unconscious on the battleground along with your foremost soldiers by my arrows that were like thunderbolts. I think You do not remember this or you obviously want to go to the abode of death because You are eager to defeat me. If You did not see my prowess in the first encounter, then I shall show You it now. Stay where You are right now!”

Indrajit then pierced Lakṣmaṇa with seven arrows and Hanumān with ten sharp-edged arrows. Becoming twice as angry, he pierced Vibhīṣaṇa with one hundred well-aimed arrows. When Lakṣmaṇa saw Indrajit’s feat, He thought nothing of it. Laughing, He said: “This is nothing.” Seizing dreadful arrows, Lakṣmaṇa, whose face was fearless, angrily shot them at Indrajit. Then Lakṣmaṇa said: “Warriors in combat do not fight like this, O night-stalker! Light and weak, these arrows are enjoyable for Me. Battle-

eager warriors do not fight like this.” Saying this, Lakṣmaṇa showered Indrajit with arrows. Shattered by those arrows, Indrajit’s heavy golden armor fell apart inside the chariot, like shooting stars in the sky. With his armor smashed by steel arrows, Indrajit was wounded and looked like the sun at dawn. Incensed by this, the fiercely intrepid Indrajit pierced Lakṣmaṇa with one thousand arrows in that conflict. Lakṣmaṇa’s strong golden armor was also smashed. The two crushers of enemies attacked and counterattacked each other. Repeatedly heaving deep breaths, the two fought fiercely on the battlefield, their limbs slashed by arrows and completely drenched with blood. For a very long time the two warriors skilled in battle tore each other with sharp arrows, courageous as they were and endowed with fearsome prowess. With their flags riven and their bodies covered with arrows, they bled profusely like mountain springs gushing hot water. The two warriors released a frightful shower of arrows and raised a dreadful clamor, like two dark-blue clouds. A very long time elapsed as they fought. They, however, did not desist from fighting nor experience any fatigue.

Both of them being most expert in the use of weapons, they displayed their weapons again and again, covering the sky with large and small arrows. Faultlessly shooting arrows with agility and gracefulness, the human and the rākṣasa fought fiercely and tumultuously. The sound of their hands on their bowstrings could each be heard distinctively. It shook people, just like a terrible storm. The clamor raised by those two combatants as they fought was like the most startling rumble of two storm clouds in the sky. Wounded by the gilded steel arrows, the two mighty and glorious warriors determined to achieve victory were bleeding profusely. After hitting their bodies, the golden-shafted arrows fell on the battleground covered with blood and entered into the earth. Other sharpened arrows clashed with weapons in the sky, shattering and splintering them.

The battle between the two warriors was terrible. The battle ground was covered with arrows and resembled a mass of kuśa grass strewn around two blazing fires at a sacrificial performance. The wounded bodies shone like a kiṁśuka and śālmālī tree in blossom and shorn of their leaves in the forest. Eager to conquer each other, Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit carried on a tumultuous and formidable struggle again and again. Although they struck each other in

combat, they did not become tired. With masses of arrows dug into their bodies, the two looked like mountains overgrown with trees. Wet with blood and covered with a multitude of arrows, their limbs shone like blazing fires. A very long time passed as they fought, yet they did not desist from fighting nor become exhausted. Then Vibhīṣaṇa arrived at the front line of battle in order to relieve Lakṣmaṇa's fatigue and to render Him a beneficial favor.

LAKṢMAṆA KILLS INDRAJIT'S CHARIOTEER

Seeing Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit struggling like two elephants eager to conquer each other, Vibhīṣaṇa took a position on the battlefield to watch them fight. Standing there, he pulled back his great bow and shot long and sharp-pointed arrows at the rākṣasas. Falling thickly, the arrows whose touch was like fire ripped apart the rākṣasas, as thunderbolts do to big mountains. Vibhīṣaṇa's assistants also chopped up the rākṣasas warriors in that combat with pikes, swords and sharp spears. Surrounded by rākṣasas, Vibhīṣaṇa looked like a bull elephant among its proud young. Vibhīṣaṇa encouraged the monkeys, who were fond of killing rākṣasas, by speaking the following opportune words:

“Before you stands the one who is Rāvaṇa's only support. This is what is left of his army. Why are you standing there, O monkey chieftains? Once this sinful rākṣasa is killed on the front line, the rest of his army, except for Rāvaṇa, is as good as dead. The following rākṣasas, who were powerful and heroic, have been slain: Prahasta, Nikumbha, Kumbhakarṇa, Kumbha, Dhūmrākṣa, Jambumālī, Mahāmālī, Tīkṣṇavega, Aśaniprabha, Suptaghna, Yajñakopa, Vajradamṣṭra, Samhrādī, Vikāṭa, Arighna, Tapanā, Manda, Praghāsa, Praghāsa, Prajaṅgha, Jaṅgha, Agniketu, Rāsmiketu, Vidyujjihva, Dvijihva, Sūryaśatru, Akampana, Supārśva, Cakramālī, Kampana, Devāntaka and Narāntaka.

“Having swum across an ocean by killing those many outstanding rākṣasas who were exceedingly powerful, let us quickly cross this small hoofprint of a cow. Only this much remains for you to conquer, O monkeys. All the rākṣasas who were proud of their strength were killed when they met you. It is not proper for me to bring about the slaughter of my nephew. Casting aside compassion, for the sake of Rāma I should kill my nephew.

Although I want to kill him, tears block my eyes. Therefore the strong-armed Lakṣmaṇa will eliminate him. O monkeys, gather together and kill the servants standing near him.”

Incited in this way by the illustrious Vibhīṣaṇa, the monkey leaders rejoiced and lashed their tails. Roaring again and again, they then howled in different ways, imitating the cries of peacocks when they see a cloud. Jāmbavān and all his troops began hitting the rākṣasas with rocks, as well as with their teeth and claws. Giving up their fear, the mighty rākṣasas armed with many kinds of weapons surrounded Jāmbavān, who was attacking them. Using arrows, sharp axes, spears, staffs and iron clubs, they attacked Jāmbavān, who was massacring the rākṣasa army. The alarming tumult which that encounter between the monkeys and rākṣasas raised was like that during the battle between the gods and demons. Lowering Lakṣmaṇa from his back, Hanumān himself angrily pulled up a sāla tree from a mountain and began slaughtering rākṣasas by the thousands.

Giving a tough fight to his uncle Vibhīṣaṇa, Indrajit, the destroyer of enemy warriors, rushed toward Lakṣmaṇa. Immersed in combat on the battlefield, Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit attacked each other with volleys of arrows. They covered each other with networks of arrows, as clouds cover the strong sun and moon at the end of the hot season. Because of the manual dexterity of the combatants, one could not see when they picked up a bow, when they held it in their fists, when they pulled out arrows from their quivers, when they selected them, when they fitted them to the bow and when they hit their target. Because the sky was completely covered with speeding arrows, no objects could be seen.

Reaching Indrajit, Lakṣmaṇa attacked him, and Indrajit also attacked Lakṣmaṇa. As they fought with each other, a gruesome situation developed. The showers of their sharp arrows seemingly covered the sky with darkness. Everything was enveloped in darkness and was most frightening. Because of those arrows falling by the hundreds, the directions and intermediate directions were covered by them. Everything was covered by darkness and appeared very scary. When the sun with its thousand rays set and everything was covered by darkness, large streams of masses of blood

began to flow by the thousands. Grisly carnivorous beasts emitted frightful cries with their voices. The wind did not blow at that time, nor did fire burn. The great sages murmured: “May all be well with the worlds! Feeling distressed, the gandharvas who were there fled with the cāraṇas.

Then Lakṣmaṇa pierced with four arrows the black horses with gold trappings hitched to Indrajit’s chariot. Then Lakṣmaṇa shot a wide-tipped arrow and a gilded one, both of which were like Indra’s thunderbolt. Those feathered arrows were shot with full force signaled by the twang of the Lakṣmaṇa’s hand on the bowstring. Because of Lakṣmaṇa’s dexterity, the arrows severed the head off of the body of Indrajit’s charioteer as he was moving. Once the charioteer was dead, Indrajit himself took up the task of conducting the chariot while wielding his bow. For the onlookers it was amazing to see him playing the role of a charioteer in that battle. Lakṣmaṇa pierced Indrajit while the latter was handling the horses and then shot arrows at the horses when Indrajit was using his bow. On those occasions, the fleet Lakṣmaṇa fearlessly tormented Indrajit with volleys of arrows as he moved about on the battlefield. Seeing his charioteer killed, Indrajit lost his enthusiasm to fight and became despondent.

Seeing dejection on Indrajit’s face, the monkey troop leaders became very excited and congratulated Lakṣmaṇa. Unable to hold themselves back, the four monkeys chieftains—Pramāthī, Rabhasa, Śarabha and Gandhamādana—manifested their impetuosity. Jumping up abruptly, they came down on Indrajit’s four fine steeds. When the horses were pressed down by those monkeys as big as mountains, blood clearly flowed from their mouths. Crushed and mangled, the horses collapsed lifeless on the ground. After killing Indrajit’s horses and smashing his big chariot, the monkeys quickly jumped back and stood at Lakṣmaṇa’s side. After his horses had been killed, Indrajit jumped down from his chariot and assailed Lakṣmaṇa with a shower of arrows. As Indrajit was moving about on foot, Lakṣmaṇa, who was equal to Indra, badly injured Indrajit with volleys of excellent sharp arrows.

LAKṢMAṆA SLAYS INDRAJIT

Standing on the ground because his horses had been killed, the angry Indrajit was burning with rancor. Eager to defeat each other, the two archers assailed each other with numerous arrows, like two wild bull elephants. Monkeys and rākṣasas kept running here and there killing each other, without forsaking their master in combat. Gladdening all the rākṣasas and praising them, Indrajit spoke the following words: “All directions are covered by thick darkness. Therefore it cannot be ascertained who is one’s own and who is an enemy. Fight with determination to bewilder the monkeys. I shall return to the battlefield on my chariot. Meanwhile, arrange things so that the monkeys do not attack me when I am entering the city.”

Afterwards, Indrajit elluded the monkeys and entered the city of Laṅkā in order to get himself another chariot. Indrajit had them prepared a beautiful chariot adorned with gold and supplied with spears, swords and arrows. It was hitched with excellent steeds and had a driver who knew the ways of horses and was a worthy advisor. Indrajit, who was always victorious in battle, then mounted the chariot. Surrounded by hordes of outstanding rākṣasas, Indrajit, the son of Mandodarī, sallied forth from the city, impelled by the force of destiny. Rushing out of the city in a bustle, he approached Lakṣmaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa in his chariot drawn by swift horses.

When Lakṣmaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa and the monkeys saw Indrajit riding a chariot, they were highly amazed at the latter’s agility. Infuriated, Indrajit struck down hundreds and thousands of monkey troop leaders on the battleground with volleys of arrows. Stretching his bow back until it formed a circle, Indrajit exhibited extreme agility in slaughtering the monkeys. As they were being slaughtered by Indrajit’s steel arrows, the monkeys sought the shelter of Lakṣmaṇa, as living entities seek the shelter of Lord Brahmā. Blazing with anger because of the battle, Lakṣmaṇa displayed His dexterity

by splitting Indrajit's bow. Seizing another bow, Indrajit hastily strung it. Lakṣmaṇa also split that bow with three arrows.

With five deadly arrows like poisonous snakes, Lakṣmaṇa pierced Indrajit's bosom. Passing through Indrajit's body, those arrows shot from Lakṣmaṇa's huge bow hit the ground like big red snakes. Vomiting blood from his mouth, Indrajit grabbed another fine bow, which was stronger than the others and had a sturdy string. Aiming at Lakṣmaṇa, Indrajit showered him with arrows with the utmost agility, as Lord Indra showers down rain. Undisturbed, Lakṣmaṇa blocked that difficult shower of arrows released by Indrajit. The calm Lakṣmaṇa then displayed to Indrajit His great prowess, which was indeed amazing.

Being highly enraged, Lakṣmaṇa pierced all the rākṣasas on the battlefield with three arrows each, exhibiting His fleetness with weapons, and struck Indrajit with volleys of arrows. Though seriously wounded by his mighty enemy, Indrajit speedily shot many arrows at Lakṣmaṇa. The righteous Lakṣmaṇa shattered those arrows before they arrived with His own sharp arrows, and with a broad-tipped arrow He severed the head of Indrajit's charioteer. Deprived of his charioteer, the horses continued drawing the chariot without becoming bewildered, and ran in circles as they approached. That was really amazing. Overwhelmed with intolerance, Lakṣmaṇa pierced Indrajit's horses with arrows, thus terrifying them on the battlefield. Unable to bear this deed, Indrajit pierced the incensed Lakṣmaṇa with ten arrows.

Those arrows, which were just like thunderbolts, broke when they hit against Lakṣmaṇa's golden armor. Thinking that Lakṣmaṇa's armor was impenetrable, the furious Indrajit exhibited his agility by shooting Him in the forehead with three arrows decked with fine plumes. With His forehead pierced by those three arrows, Lakṣmaṇa looked like a mountain with three peaks. Although wounded by the rākṣasa, Lakṣmaṇa immediately pierced Indrajit's face adorned with sparkling earrings with five arrows. The two warriors, Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit, who were both armed with big powerful bows, struck each other with arrows.

Drenched with blood, Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit shone on the battlefield like two blossoming kiṁśuka trees. When they met each other, set as their minds were on victory, they pierced their limbs with dreadful arrows. Enraged by the conflict, Indrajit then hit Vibhīṣaṇa in the face with three arrows. After piercing Vibhīṣaṇa with three iron-tipped arrows, Indrajit proceeded to pierce all the monkey troop leaders with one arrow each. Completely infuriated by that, the energetic Vibhīṣaṇa killed the wicked Indrajit's horses with a club. Now that his charioteer and horses had all been killed, Indrajit jumped down from the chariot and hurled a spear at his uncle.

Seeing the spear approaching, Lakṣmaṇa splintered it into ten pieces with his sharp arrows and knocked it to the ground. Furious with Indrajit, Vibhīṣaṇa shot five arrows whose impact was like a thunderbolt into his breast. After passing through his body, those golden-feathered arrows looked like big red snakes. Furious with his uncle, Indrajit grabbed a special arrow given by Yamarāja. Seeing Indrajit fitting that mighty arrow on his bow, Lakṣmaṇa took another arrow which he had received from Kuvera in a dream. That arrow was difficult to counteract and even unbearable for the gods and demons headed by Indra.

When stretched by their arms, which were like iron bludgeons, the excellent bows squeaked loudly like herons. When placed on the excellent bows and drawn back by the two warriors, the two arrows shone brightly with their splendor. Hitting each other violently head to head when released from their bows, the arrows lit up the sky. A frightful fire with smoke and sparks was produced by the impact of those dreadful arrows. Colliding with each other like large planets, the arrows burst into hundreds of pieces above the battlefield and fell to the earth. Seeing their arrows destroyed on the battlefield, Lakṣmaṇa and Indrajit were embarrassed and exasperated.

Burning with ire, Lakṣmaṇa took a mystic weapon of Varuṇa. The battle-trained Indrajit also released a weapon of Rudra, which rendered the wonderful weapon of Varuṇa ineffective. The passionate Indrajit then fitted a blazing weapon of the fire-god to his bow, as if he intended to annihilate the world. Lakṣmaṇa counteracted it with a weapon of the sun-god. Seeing

his weapon counteracted, Indrajit became outraged. He seized a formidable weapon of the asuras for destroy one's enemies. From his bow shot forth brilliant mallets, spears, fire weapons, maces, words and axes. That formidable weapon of the asuras could not be repelled even by all the living entities together and was able to destroy all other weapons. Seeing it, Lakṣmaṇa repelled it with the weapon of Lord Śiva as Maheśvara.

There then ensued between them an amazing, hair-raising battle. Living beings gathered in the sky above Lakṣmaṇa. During that battle between the monkeys and the rākṣasas which reverberated with terrifying screams, the sky became filled with many astonished beings. When Lord Indra placed before them, the sages, forefathers, gods, gandharvas, birds and serpents protected Lakṣmaṇa on the battlefield with prayers for victory. Then Lakṣmaṇa fitted another excellent arrow to His bow. Its impact was like blazing fire. It was capable of slaying Rāvaṇa's son. It was fitted with fine plumes and was perfectly straight. It was adorned with gold. It could destroy anyone's body. It was difficult to deflect, difficult to endure and a cause of fear for the rākṣasas. It was as deadly as a poisonous snake and was honored by the gods. With that arrow Lord Indra had previously defeated the dānavas during the war between the gods and demons.

Fitting an arrow charged with the invincible weapon of Indra and drawing it back all the way, Lakṣmaṇa invoked the following prayer for success: "If Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, is righteous, true to His promise and unequalled in prowess, let this arrow kill Indrajit." After saying this, He drew the arrow all the way back to His ear and shot the arrow charged with the mystic weapon of Indra at Indrajit. The weapon severed Indrajit's head, along with its helmet and dazzling earrings, from his body, and knocked it on the ground. When separated from his shoulders, Indrajit's big blood-drenched head looked like molten gold on the ground.

Once he was killed, Indrajit fell on the ground with his armor and helmet, dropping his bow. When all the monkeys and Vibhīṣaṇa saw that Indrajit had been killed, they started shouting for joy, as the gods did when Vṛtāsura was killed. Now in the heavens there arose loud cries of victory from the gods, great sages, gandharvas and apsarās. Realizing that Indrajit had been killed, the great rākṣasa army fled in all directions while being

slaughtered by the monkeys eager for victory. As they were being attacked by the monkeys, the rākṣasas threw down their weapons and ran straight for Laṅkā out of bewilderment. Frightened as they were, the rākṣasas abandoned their weapons—sharp spears, swords and axes—and fled in all directions by the hundreds.

Tormented by the monkeys and terror-stricken, some entered into Laṅkā. Some fell into the ocean and others took shelter on Trikūṭa Mountain. After they saw Indrajit lying slain on the battlefield, not a one of those thousands of rākṣasas could be seen. As sun beams do not stay once the sun sets, so those rākṣasas fled in all directions after Indrajit had been slain. Thrown down and lifeless, Indrajit was like a sun whose rays had cooled down or a fire that had gone out. With the death of Indrajit, the world had its suffering greatly assuaged and was overjoyed by the elimination of its enemy. Lord Indra also rejoiced along with all the great sages because of the death of that rākṣasa of sinful deeds.

In the heavens could be heard the sound of drums, the dancing of apsarās and the singing of gandharvas. They showered down flowers, for this was something amazing for them. The battleground became calm after the cruel rākṣasa had been killed. The waters and sky became clear. The gods and dānavas rejoiced over Indrajit's death because he had been a cause of fear to all the worlds. Feeling elated, the gods, gandharvas and dānavas said: "Let the brāhmaṇas move about without anxiety now that their difficulty has ceased." Overjoyed to see that foremost of rākṣasas killed in combat, the monkey troop leaders were exuberant.

Congratulating Lakṣmaṇa for His victory, Vibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān and Jāmbavān, the commander of the bear troops, they also praised Him. Taking this as an occasion for rejoicing, the monkeys howled, jumped and roared as they gathered around Lakṣmaṇa. Waging and lashing their tails, the monkeys shouted out the words: "Victory to Lakṣmaṇa!" Embracing one another, the joyful monkeys who possessed many different qualities began discussing the transcendental topics about Lord Rāma. Those monkeys, the dear friends of Lakṣmaṇa, were pleased to have witnessed His feat on the battlefield, which

was not easy to accomplish. The gods were enjoying supreme mental happiness from witnessing the destruction of Lord Indra's enemy.

RĀMA CONGRATULATES LAKṢMAṆA

Lakṣmaṇa, whose limbs were stained with blood, was jubilant after slaying His enemy on the field of battle. Taking Jāmbavān, Hanumān and all the other monkeys, Lakṣmaṇa quickly went to where Rāma and Sugrīva were, supporting Himself on the shoulders of Vibhīṣaṇa and Hanumān. Circumambulating clockwise around Rāma, He stood beside His brother, as Lord Vāmana stood beside Lord Indra. Calling out as he arrived, Vibhīṣaṇa informed the great soul Rāma about the terrible death of Indrajit. Vibhīṣaṇa with great satisfaction told Rāma about how the great Lakṣmaṇa had severed the head of Indrajit.

As soon as Rāma heard that Lakṣmaṇa had slain Indrajit, He experienced immeasurable joy and spoke the following words: “Well done, O Lakṣmaṇa! I am very pleased with the difficult task which You have accomplished. You have indeed gained victory by slaying Indrajit.” Smelling the head of Lakṣmaṇa, who had increased His glory, but was feeling shy, Rāma forcefully placed Him in His lap out of affection. Rāma embraced His wounded brother Lakṣmaṇa and gazed at Him tenderly again and again. Lakṣmaṇa was pained by His wounds and was having difficulty breathing. Rāma smelled Lakṣmaṇa’s head again and rapidly petted Him. Then that best of men spoke the following words to Lakṣmaṇa:

“You have accomplished a highly beneficial feat difficult for any one else. I consider Rāvaṇa already dead now that his son has been killed. I am victorious today because that wicked adversary has been slain. Fortunately You have cut off the merciless Rāvaṇa’s right arm in combat. Indeed, Indrajit was his mainstay. Vibhīṣaṇa and Hanumān have also both preformed great deeds on the battlefield. In three days and nights the enemy has somehow or other been killed. I am free from My enemy. Rāvaṇa will now surely sally forth. When he hears how his son was killed with a large phalanx of soldiers, he will surely come out with a huge array of soldiers. When, tormented by

the death of his son, that lord of rākṣasas sallies forth surrounded by a huge army, I shall kill him. Now that Indrajit has been killed in combat, with You as My protector, it will not be difficult to regain Sītā or the earth.”

After consoling His brother and hugging Him, Rāma joyfully spoke the following words to Suṣeṇa: “O most wise physician, treat Lakṣmaṇa in such a way that His wounds may be healed and health regained. Quickly heal the wounds of Lakṣmaṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa. Make an effort to restore the health of all the other bear and monkey warriors who have sustained arrow wounds.”

When requested in this way by the great soul Rāma, Suṣeṇa administered a potent herbal remedy to Lakṣmaṇa through the nostrils. As soon as Lakṣmaṇa smelled that medicine, the arrows dislodged from His flesh, the pain subsided and the wounds healed. By Rāma’s command, Suṣeṇa also treated Rāma’s friends, such as Vibhīṣaṇa, and all the other stalwart monkeys. After regaining His normal condition, having the arrows and His exhaustion removed, and His suffering extinguished, Lakṣmaṇa rejoiced. At that time, Rāma, Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, the valiant Jāmbavān and their troops rejoiced for quite some time when they saw that Lakṣmaṇa was healthy, active and happy. Rāma commended Lakṣmaṇa’s deed, which was so difficult to perform. The monkey leaders became happy when they heard that Lakṣmaṇa had slain Indrajit in combat.

RĀVAṆA ATTEMPTS TO KILL SĪTĀ

Having heard about or directly seen the death of Indrajit, Rāvaṇa's ministers hurriedly informed him of the matter: "O great king, your splendid son Indrajit has been killed in battle by Lakṣmaṇa accompanied by Vibhīṣaṇa as we watched. Meeting Lakṣmaṇa in a close encounter, your heroic son, who had never previously been defeated, was killed by Lakṣmaṇa. After satisfying Lakṣmaṇa with his arrows, Indrajit has gone to those highest worlds." Hearing about the ghastly and frightening death of his son Indrajit on the battleground, Rāvaṇa went into a long swoon. Regaining consciousness after a long time, the king, who was overwhelmed with grief over the death of his son, lamented pitifully as follows:

"Alas! O my dear child! O powerful leader of the rākṣasa army! Having conquered Indra, how have you now been subdued by Lakṣmaṇa? When angry you could surely pierce with your arrows even death personified or the peak of Mount Mandara, what to speak of Lakṣmaṇa. Today I hold Yamarāja, the lord of death, in high esteem in that he has subjected you to the influence of time, O strong-armed one! This is the path of good warriors even among all the hosts of immortals. One who dies for the cause of one's master attains heaven. When all the hosts of gods, protectors of the worlds and great sages hear that Indrajit has been slain, they will sleep comfortably without fear. With the singular absence of Indrajit, this entire earth with its forests and even the three worlds seem empty to me. Today I shall hear the cries of the rākṣasī ladies in the residential quarters of the palace, like the bellowing of female elephants in a mountain cave. Abandoning the post of prince regent, the city of Laṅkā, the rākṣasas, your mother, your wives and myself, where have you gone? Actually you should be here to perform my funeral rites when I go to the abode of death. O warrior, you are acting in a contrary way. While Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva are still living, where have you gone without extracting the thorn from my side?"

An intense anger born from his son's demise overcame Rāvaṇa as he was suffering while lamenting in that way. Indeed, sorrow over his son's death further inflamed Rāvaṇa, who was wrathful and fiery by nature, as the sunbeams increase the heat of the sun. With his knitted brow, he looked like the ocean full of crocodiles and large waves at the end of the age. As Rāvaṇa grimaced angrily, it seemed as if a smoky fire spewed forth from his mouth, as it did from the mouth of Vṛtrāsura. Tormented by the death of his son and overwhelmed with anger, Rāvaṇa decided to kill Sītā. Rāvaṇa's eyes, which were naturally red, began glowing frightfully due to the fire of anger. Rāvaṇa's appearance, which was formidable by nature, became unbearable due to the fire of anger, like the wrathful form of Lord Rudra. Tears fell from his eyes like blazing drops of oil falling from two burning lamps. The sound of his teeth grinding sounded like the friction produced by the dānavas when they churned the ocean of milk. Being as furious as the fire at the end of the world, in whatever direction he looked, the rākṣasas hid themselves out of fear. All the rākṣasas dared not approach him as he looked in all directions ready to devour all mobile and immobile entities like death.

Eager to rally the rākṣasas on the battlefield, the outraged Rāvaṇa said in their midst: "After practicing severe austerities for thousands of years, at their conclusion I satisfied Lord Brahmā. As the fruition of those austerities and because of Lord Brahmā's kindness, I will never be put in danger by gods or demons. The coat of armor which Lord Brahmā gave me, glimmering like the sun, could not be pierced in battles with the gods and demons by fists or thunderbolts. Who would dare face me today, even he be Indra, when I am seated in my chariot on the battlefield wearing this armor? Let that bow and arrows given to me by Lord Brahmā when I fought with the gods and demons be brought here now with the blowing of hundreds of trumpets for the slaughter of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on the battlefield."

Pained by the death of his son and overwhelmed with anger, the cruel Rāvaṇa thought things over and decided to kill Sītā. Glaring with copper-colored eyes and an appalling appearance at all the whimpering night-stalkers, he said: "In order to trick the monkeys, my dear son killed an image that resembled Sītā by his magical power. I shall make that a fact dear to me. I shall kill Sītā, who is devoted to a kṣatriya in name only."

After saying this to his ministers and pulling out his excellent sword as bright as a clear sky, he quickly raised it. Pained by the death of his son and bewildered in mind, Rāvaṇa rushed off with his sword accompanied by his wife Mahodārī and ministers to where Sītā was. Seeing him going, his ministers roared like lions. Embracing each other when they saw how angry Rāvaṇa was, they said: “Today the two brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, will tremble when They see Rāvaṇa. When angered, Rāvaṇa has defeated all the four protectors of the world. He has also struck down many other enemies in combat. Rāvaṇa has brought riches from all the three worlds and is enjoying them. Nor is there anyone on this earth equal to him in prowess and strength.”

As they were talking, the furious Rāvaṇa rushed toward Sītā in the aśoka grove. Even though his well-wishers tried to restrain him, he angrily rushed toward Sītā, as the planet Mars does toward the constellation Rohiṇī. While the blameless princess of Mithilā was being guarded by rākṣasīs, She saw angry Rāvaṇa coming with that excellent sword. Sītā became distressed to see him approaching with that sword, even though his friends were trying to restrain him.

Aggrieved and wailing, Sītā said: “From the way in which this angry fellow is rushing toward Me, that evil-minded one will probably try to kill Me as if I were unprotected, even though I do have a husband. So many times he requested Me to be his wife, even though I am devoted to My husband. Yet I rejected him very clearly. Evidently he has fallen prey to despair because of My not submitting to him. Overwhelmed by anger and delusion, he obviously intends to kill Me. Or else, this ignoble character has today struck down Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa on the battlefield on My account. Oh, woe is Me if the two princes were killed on My account! Or else, due to grief over his son’s death and being unable to kill Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, that sinful rākṣasa is going to kill Me.

“Vile as I am, I did not heed Hanumān’s advice. Had I left at that time on his back, I would not be grieving as I am now but would be resting in the lap of My husband. I think that Kausalyā’s heart will break when she, having only one son, hears that He has perished in battle. As she weeps, she

will remember His birth, childhood, youth, virtuous acts and beauty. After performing the obsequies of her dead son, she will become despondent and faint. She will surely enter the cremation fire or drown herself in water. How cursed to be the hunchback Mantharā of sinful resolve, on whose account Kausalyā will undergo such suffering!”

Meanwhile, seeing the destitute Sītā wailing in this way, like the star Rohiṇī fallen under the sway of Mars when away from the moon, an honorable, pure and intelligent minister named Supārśva spoke to Rāvaṇa as the other ministers were trying to restrain him: “How is it that you, the younger brother of Kuvera, wish to kill Sītā out of anger, casting aside all virtue? Ever since you completed your vows while engaged in Vedic studies, you have been devoted to your own occupational duties. Why, therefore, do you now think it fit to kill a woman? Look after the beautiful Sītā, O lord of the world. Vent your anger with us against Rāma on the battlefield. Getting yourself ready, today, which is the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight. March on to victory tomorrow, the new moon day, surrounded by your army. You being the clever chariot-warrior that you are, with sword in hand You will slay Rāma and win Sītā.”

Accepting the virtuous advice of his friend, the wicked Rāvaṇa returned to his palace again and proceeded to his council chamber surrounded by his well-wishers.

RĀMA SLAUGHTERS THE RĀKṢASA TROOPS

Entering the assembly hall, the miserable and grief-stricken king sat down on the main seat, snorting like an angry lion. Afflicted by his son's death, the mighty Rāvaṇa spoke as follows with joined palms to those army leaders: "All of you march with your armies of horses and elephants, chariots and foot soldiers! Surround Rāma on the battlefield, shower Him with arrows like clouds during the monsoon and kill Him!" Otherwise, I shall kill Him tomorrow as the world watches, after you have torn His limbs with sharp arrows in combat."

After receiving this command from Rāvaṇa, the rākṣasa commanders sallied forth in swift chariots, accompanied by their troops. They hurled deadly iron clubs, sharp lances, swords and axes at the monkeys. The monkeys hurled trees and boulders back at the rākṣasas. As sunrise approached, that terrifying battle between the monkeys and rākṣasas became tumultuous. The monkeys and rākṣasas then began striking their adversaries with dazzling clubs, spears, swords and axes as they fought. The shocking thing was that as the battle raged on, the dust raised by the fighting settled on the streams of blood from the monkeys and rākṣasas. With elephants and chariots as their banks, arrows for their fish, flags as trees and cadavers as logs, rivers of blood flowed.

Then all the monkeys, bathed in blood, jumped about on the battleground destroying flags, armor, chariots, horses and all kinds of weapons. With their sharp teeth and claws, the monkeys tore off the hair, ears, noses and bows of the rākṣasas. One hundred stalwart monkeys assailed every single rākṣasa on that battlefield, as birds rush towards a fruit-bearing tree. Then, using heavy maces, spears, swords and axes, the rākṣasas struck down those formidable monkeys. While being slaughtered by the rākṣasas, that great army of monkeys sought the shelter of Lord Rāma, who was worth

taking shelter of. Grabbing His bow and entering the rākṣasa army, Rāma then rained arrows down on them. The fierce rākṣasas dared not approach Rāma, who was burning them with His arrows while in their midst, as clouds dare not approach the sun in the sky.

Those night-stalkers saw during that conflict Rāma's most dreadful deeds, difficult to be performed by anyone else, only after He had already performed them. They were unable to see Rāma dispersing the great army or killing the great chariot warriors, any more than one can see the wind blowing in the forest. They saw the army rent and smashed, consumed and broken by Rāma's sharp arrows, but they could not see Rāma, who was fleet in action. They could not see Rāma striking their bodies, any more than one can see the living self experiencing the sense objects. Crying out: "Here is Rāma destroying the army of elephants!" "Here is Rāma destroying the chariot warriors!" "Here is Rāma destroying foot soldiers and horses with sharp arrows!" all the rākṣasas saw in their fellow rākṣasas some similarity with Rāma and therefore attacked each other.

Bewildered by Rāma's use of the ultimate weapon of the gandharvas, the rākṣasas could not see Him, even though He was consuming their army. The rākṣasas saw thousands of Rāmas during that great conflict, and then again, they saw just one Rāma. They could see the swaying ends of Rāma's golden bow, which resembled a twirling firebrand, but they could not see Him. Living beings saw Rāma as a discus that was annihilating the rākṣasas on the battlefield like the wheel of time. His body was the hub of the discus, His strength, its flames, His arrows, its spokes, His bow, its felly, the twang of His bowstring, its whirling sound, His energy, intelligence and other qualities, its effulgence, His divine weapons, its edge. Within an eighth of daytime, Rāma had destroyed single-handed with His fire-like arrows an army of rākṣasas capable of changing their forms at will. The army had consisted of ten thousand chariots as swift as the wind, eighteen thousand fleet elephants, fourteen thousand horses with riders, and a full two hundred thousand foot soldiers.

With their horses killed, their chariots destroyed and their flags broken, those night-stalkers who survived the massacre quietly retreated back to the city of Lankā. With the slaughtered elephants, foot soldiers and

horses, the battleground looked like the playground of the wrathful Rudra. Afterwards, gods, gandharvas, siddhas, and supermost sages offered Rāma their respects and shouted: “Well done! Well done!” Then Rāma said to Sugrīva, Vibhīṣaṇa, Hanumān, Jāmbavān, Mainda and Dvivida: “This divine power of weaponry exists in Me and in Lord Śiva.” The great Rāma was just like Lord Indra and was free from the exhaustion of deploying weapons. After He had annihilated the rākṣasa army, hosts of gods began praising Him jubilantly.

THE RĀKṢASĪS LAMENT

Rāma, who was unwearied by action, destroyed with His flaming arrows adorned with burnished gold the thousands of elephants and horses with riders, the thousands of chariots as bright as fire with flags, and the thousands of rākṣasa warriors wielding clubs and iron bludgeons and carrying bright flags whom Rāvaṇa had dispatched. The rākṣasas who survived the massacre, as well as those who were bewildered by hearing about it, gathered together overwhelmed with anxiety. Rākṣasīs who had lost their husbands, sons and relatives, gathered together and wailed because of the anguish they felt.

They lamented: “Why did that old and hideous Śūrpaṇakhā with a sunken belly approach Rāma, who is equal in beauty to Cupid, in the Daṇḍakā Forest? When that ugly woman who deserves to be killed saw that handsome young man who is most powerful and dedicated to the good of all, she became overwhelmed with lust. How could that unsightly rākṣasī devoid of good qualities fall in love with that handsome Rāma, who possesses abundant good qualities and uncommon vigor? Because of our bad luck, that wrinkled, gray-haired incompatible hag attempted a laughable misdeed blamable by the whole world. For the destruction of rākṣasas and that of Khara and Dūṣaṇa in particular she tried to profane Rāma. It was on account of her that Rāvaṇa initiated this great enmity with Rāma by abducting Sītā for his own destruction. The ten-headed Rāvaṇa will not be able to touch Sītā and he has established an unending enmity with Rāma.

“When Rāma saw that the rākṣasa Virādha was interested in Sītā, He slew him single-handed. That should have been sufficient evidence of His ability to defeat His enemies. His arrows destroyed fourteen thousand rākṣasas of terrible deeds in Janasthāna with His fire-like arrows. He struck down Khara and Dūṣaṇa with His arrows as bright as the sun. That should have been sufficient evidence. He also killed the blood-thirsty Kabandha,

whose arms were one yojana long, when he was roaring angrily. That should have been sufficient evidence. Rāma killed the mighty Vālī, the son of Lord Indra, who was like Mount Meru. That should have been sufficient evidence. After living in misery on Mount R̥ṣyamūka with all his desires frustrated, Sugrīva regained the royal throne. That should have been sufficient evidence.

“Rāvaṇa did not care for Vibhīṣaṇa’s reasonable advice, which was conducive to virtue and material gain, and was beneficial to all the rākṣasas. If Rāvaṇa had followed Vibhīṣaṇa’s advice, this city of Laṅkā would not be afflicted with sorrow and converted into a crematorium. Rāvaṇa has not understood Rāma’s greatness, even after hearing about Kumbhakarna’s death, the slaughter of the unassailable Atikāya by Lakṣmaṇa, and the death of his own dear son Indrajit. One can hear the rākṣasīs in every family wailing: “My son, my brother and my husband have been slain in battle!” Rāma has struck down thousands of chariots, horses, elephants and foot soldiers all over the battlefield. Either it is Rudra, or Viṣṇu or the great Indra who is slaughtering us in the guise of Rāma, or else it is death personified. Our eminent warriors having been killed by Rāma, we have lost all hope for life. Failing to see the end of our fear, we are lamenting.

“The valorous Rāvaṇa who had received a great boon, does not recognize this great danger which has arisen from the hand of Rāma. Neither gods, nor gandharvas, nor piśācas, nor rākṣasas will be able to protect him when Rāma attacks him in combat. Ill omens have been seen during every one of Rāvaṇa’s encounters with his enemy Rāma. They obviously indicate his destruction by Rāma. When Lord Brahmā was satisfied by Rāvaṇa, he granted him fearlessness from gods, dānavas and rākṣasas. But he did not ask for protection from human beings. Therefore I think that this human being Rāma is undoubtedly the cause of life-threatening danger for us rākṣasas and for Rāvaṇa.

“While being oppressed by the mighty Rāvaṇa on the strength of the boon he received for severe austerities, the gods worshiped Lord Brahmā. Pleased by their worship, Lord Brahmā in fact gave them the following assurance for their good: ‘Henceforth all the dānavas and rākṣasas will wander the three worlds in constant fear.’ All the gods headed by Indra

gathered together and then propitiated Lord Śiva, the destroyer of the three cities and he whose emblem is a bull. When pleased, Lord Śiva spoke the following words to the gods: 'For your benefit a woman will appear for the destruction of the rākṣasas.' This woman Sītā, being used by the gods, will consume us all, as hunger consumed the dānavas in the past. Because of the misconduct of the evil-minded Rāvaṇa, this terrible destruction accompanied by sorrow has arisen. Being threatened by Rāma as if by providence itself at the end of the age, we do not see anyone in this world who can give us shelter. There is no shelter for us who stand in great peril, any more than for she-elephants surrounded by a forest fire. The great Vibhīṣaṇa did something opportune by taking shelter of one whom he saw as a future cause of danger."

Tightly embracing one another with their arms, all the rākṣasīs became despondent. Stricken with intense fear, they began howling dreadfully.

RĀVAṆA ENTERS THE BATTLEFIELD

Rāvaṇa heard the piteous and plaintive wails of the rākṣasīs in every family of Laṅkā. Sighing for a long time and thinking deeply, Rāvaṇa became overwhelmed with anger and assumed a frightful appearance. Biting his lips with his teeth, his eyes shone red like fire and his form, like the fire of universal devastation, was unbearable for the rākṣasas. Rāvaṇa, speaking indistinctly because of anger, instructed the rākṣasas Mahodara, Mahāpārśva and Virūpākṣa, who were standing nearby, as if about to burn them with his eyes: “Immediately tell the troops to sally forth on my command!” Hearing his instructions, the rākṣasas were terror-stricken and rallied the other somber rākṣasas in accordance with the king’s command. Accepting the command, all the frightful-looking rākṣasas recited hymns for auspiciousness and headed straight for the battlefield. Offering respects to Rāvaṇa as was customary, those great chariot fighters stood there with joined palms wishing victory for their master. Laughing while filled with anger, Rāvaṇa said to Mahodara, Mahāpārśva and Virūpākṣa: “With the arrows shot from my bow, I shall today send Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the abode of death. With the death of my enemies, I shall avenge the death of Khara, Kumbhakarna, Prahasta and Indrajit. When covered with the network of my arrows, neither the sky, nor the directions, nor the heavens, nor even the oceans will be visible. With the volleys of my plumed arrows, I shall today systematically annihilate the monkey troops. While seated in my chariot as swift as the wind, I shall obliterate the monkey troops with the waves of my arrows sprung from the ocean of my bow. Like an elephant, I shall destroy the ponds of monkey troops whose soldiers are like the filaments of a lotus and whose faces are like blossoming lotuses.

“With their heads pierced by my arrows in combat, the monkey troop leaders will adorn the earth like lotus flowers with stems. With each arrow that I shoot while fighting, I shall pierce one hundred fierce monkey warriors armed with trees. I shall this day slaughter my enemy and wipe the

tears from the eyes of those whose brothers have been slain. I shall cover the battleground so thoroughly with scattered monkeys pierced by my arrows that it will require some effort to see the ground. Today I shall satisfy the crows, vultures and other carnivorous animals with the flesh of my enemies served on arrows. Have my chariot prepared immediately and bring me my bow right now! Let all the remaining night-stalkers follow me to the battlefield!"

Hearing Rāvaṇa's command, Mahāpārśva ordered the army generals who were standing there: "Quickly mobilize the army!" The generals then hurried around Laṅkā, urging the rākṣasas in every house to assemble. Thereafter dreadful-looking rākṣasas ran out roaring and wielding different kinds of weapons, such as swords, sharp spears, pikes, maces, clubs, picks, javelins, big mallets, staffs, different kinds of discuses, sharpened axes, slings and cat-o-nine-tails.

By Rāvaṇa's command, one general then brought the king's chariot drawn by eight swift horses and accompanied by a charioteer. Rāvaṇa, who was glowing with splendor, then mounted that formidable chariot. Sallying forth at that time surrounded by many rākṣasas, Rāvaṇa seemed to rend the earth with the greatness of his strength. When permitted by Rāvaṇa, Mahāpārśva, Mahodara and Virūpākṣa mounted their chariots. Roaring jubilantly and seemingly rending the earth, they set forth eager for victory. Surrounded by hordes of rākṣasas and appearing like the lord of death at the end of time, the magnificent Rāvaṇa sallied forth for battle. Riding his chariot drawn by swift steeds, Rāvaṇa sallied forth from the northern gate where Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were stationed.

At that time the sun lost its brilliance and the four directions were covered by darkness. Birds shrieked frightfully and the earth shook. It rained blood and the horses stumbled. A vulture landed on the top of Rāvaṇa's flagpole and she-jackals howled sinisterly. Rāvaṇa's left eye twitched and his left arm trembled. His face became pale and he lost his voice. As Rāvaṇa was proceeding to the battlefield, certain signs presaged his death there. A meteor fell from the sky accompanied by a sound like thunder. Vultures intermixed with crows shrieked. Undisturbed by these ill omens,

Rāvaṇa proceeded ahead toward his own destruction because of delusion occasioned by destiny.

At the sound of the chariots of the rākṣasas, the monkey army became alert for combat. A tumultuous conflict erupted between the monkeys and rākṣasas, who challenged each other angrily, eager as they were for conquest. The furious ten-headed Rāvaṇa massacred the monkey soldiers with his sharp arrows adorned with gold. Some monkeys were beheaded by Rāvaṇa, some had their heads pierced and others were shorn of their ears. Some were knocked down lifeless, some were slashed in their sides, some had their heads split open and some had their eyes gouged out. Wherever Rāvaṇa drove his chariot on the battlefield, with his eyes rolling due to anger, the monkey troop leaders were unable to withstand the force of his arrows.

SUGRĪVA KILLS VIRŪPĀKṢA

The ground was strewn with monkeys whose limbs had been severed by Rāvaṇa's arrows. The monkeys were unable to withstand even one of Rāvaṇa's arrows, any more than moths would be able to withstand a blazing fire. Tormented by those arrows, the monkeys fled, screaming like elephants burnt by flames. Rāvaṇa advanced on the battleground, slaughtering monkey soldiers with his arrows, as the wind disperses a big cloud. After quickly devastating the forest-dwelling monkeys, Rāvaṇa then rushed toward Rāma on the field of battle.

Seeing the monkeys defeated and driven from the battlefield, Sugrīva put Suṣeṇa in charge of the division and decided to enter into the fray. Having appointing a warrior equal to himself as his substitute, Sugrīva headed toward the enemy armed with a tree. Grabbing all kinds of huge boulders and trees, the monkey commanders followed behind him or at his sides. Sugrīva roared very loudly on the battlefield as he destroyed outstanding rākṣasas, as well as other ordinary ones. Sugrīva smashed gigantic rākṣasas as the wind at the end of the age knocks over full grown trees. He showered down boulders on the rākṣasa troops, as a cloud would shower flocks of birds in the forest with hail. When their heads were smashed by the shower of boulders released by Sugrīva, they fell down like shattered mountains.

While the rākṣasas were being vanquished on all sides by Sugrīva and were falling over howling, Virūpākṣa jumped down from his chariot, proclaiming his name. Grabbing a bow, he mounted the back of an elephant. After mounting the elephant, the mighty Virūpākṣa roared frightfully and rushed toward the monkeys. He rained formidable arrows on Sugrīva on the front line, and consolidated the rākṣasas, cheering them up. After being severely wounded by Virūpākṣa's arrows, Sugrīva roared wrathfully and set his mind on killing him. Pulling up a tree and jumping forward, Sugrīva

struck the huge elephant before him, upon which Virūpākṣa was seated. Overwhelmed by that blow, the elephant retreated to a distance of only one bow length, sank down and bellowed.

Virūpākṣa jumped down from his elephant, grabbed his bull-hide shield and sword, and charged toward Sugrīva, who was standing there as if to threaten him. Grabbing a huge boulder that looked like a cloud, the furious Sugrīva hurled it at Virūpākṣa. Seeing that boulder coming, Virūpākṣa jumped aside and then hit Sugrīva with his sword. Wounded by a stroke of the mighty rākṣasa's sword, Sugrīva lay on the ground for some time apparently unconscious. Jumping up suddenly and spinning his fist, Sugrīva brought it down on the rākṣasa's chest. Enraged by the wound occasioned by the blow of Sugrīva's fist, the night-stalker destroyed Sugrīva's armor with his sword. When Virūpākṣa kicked Sugrīva, the latter fell over. Jumping back up, he directed a punch at Virūpākṣa that sounded like thunder.

Virūpākṣa deftly dodged Sugrīva's punch and then struck him in the chest. After experiencing that blow from the rākṣasa, Sugrīva was looking for an opportunity to get him. Sugrīva then angrily brought his hand down on Virūpākṣa's temple. The impact of Sugrīva's hand was like Indra's thunderbolt. Virūpākṣa fell on the ground drenched with blood and bleeding from all his bodily apertures, like springs gushing with water. Sugrīva saw that Virūpākṣa was covered with foamy blood. Because of anger, his eyes were rolling and looked very ugly. The monkeys saw their enemy soaked with blood, thrashing about and rolling over from one side to the other as he howled piteously. Closely engaged on that battlefield, the army of monkeys and that of rākṣasas roared tremendously, like two oceans that had burst their shores. Seeing the mighty Virūpākṣa killed by King Sugrīva, the combined forces of monkeys and rākṣasas looked like the Ganges River overflowing.

SUGRĪVA KILLS MAHODARA

Killing each other in the great conflict, the two armies quickly became decimated, like two lakes in the hot season. Rāvaṇa became twice as angry because of the destruction of his own army and the slaughter of Virūpākṣa. He became very disturbed upon seeing the decimation of his army under the assault of the monkeys and the adversity of his own fate. Then he spoke as follows to Mahodara, who was standing beside him: “At the present time my hopes for victory rest on you. Exhibit your prowess today and destroy the enemy army! Now is the time for you to repay your master for having maintained you. Fight well!”

When commanded in this way, Mahodara accepted, then entered the enemy ranks, as a moth would dash into a fire. Emboldened by his master’s words, Mahodara used his own mighty energy to wreck havoc among the monkeys. Grabbing huge rocks and entering the enemy ranks, the highly courageous monkeys started slaughtering all the rākṣasas. Mahodara became furious and used his arrows adorned with gold to sever the hands, feet and thighs of monkeys in that battle. In this way, all the monkeys were terribly afflicted by the rākṣasas. Some of them fled in all directions, while others took shelter of Sugrīva.

Seeing the great army of monkeys devastated in combat, Sugrīva rushed toward Mahodara, who was nearby. Seizing a huge and formidable boulder that was like a mountain, that king of monkeys hurled it in order to kill Mahodara. When Mahodara suddenly saw that the boulder was approaching, Mahodara was not disturbed and shattered the boulder with arrows. Broken into thousands of pieces by the rākṣasa’s numerous arrows, the shattered boulder fell on the ground like a flock of frightened vultures. Sugrīva became furious when he saw the boulder smashed and so he pulled up a śāla tree and threw it at Mahodara. But Mahodara splintered it with arrows. Mahodara, the scourge of his enemies, lacerated Sugrīva’s body with arrows. Then Sugrīva saw an iron bludgeon fallen on the ground. Brandishing

that bludgeon and exhibiting his dexterity, Sugrīva killed the excellent horses pulling Mahodara's chariot.

Jumping down from that big chariot whose horses were dead, the raging Mahodara then grabbed a mace. Armed with a mace and an iron bludgeon, those two warriors approached each other, roaring like two bulls and resembling two clouds interlaced with lightning. Mahodara then flung his blazing mace, which was as resplendent as the sun, at Sugrīva. Seeing that most formidable mace approaching, Sugrīva, whose eyes had turned coppery-red due to anger, lifted his bludgeon. Sugrīva struck the mace with his bludgeon, knocking it to the ground. The force of the mace also knocked the bludgeon down. The ardent Sugrīva then picked up from the ground a dreadful steel club adorned all over with gold. Sugrīva raised it and hurled it, and the rākṣasa likewise hurled a mace. Colliding with each other, the weapons shattered and fell on the ground.

Once their weapons were destroyed, the two zealous warriors who resembled two blazing fires fought with each other using their fists. Roaring again and again, they punched each other. Drawing close, they knocked each other on the ground. They then quickly jumped up and started punching each other again. Unable to defeat each other, they shoved each other with their arms. While they were struggling fiercely, they became tired. Then the fleet rākṣasa grabbed a sword and shield that were not very far away. Sugrīva too, who was even more impetuous, grabbed a sword and shield that were fallen. With the limbs of their bodies seized with anger, they roared and charged toward each other with raised weapons, eager as they were for battle. They quickly circled about each other from left to right. They were both enraged and eager to conquer the other.

The evil-minded Mahodara, proud as he was of his valor, struck his sword against Sugrīva's coat of armor. As Mahodara was struggling to extract his sword from Sugrīva's armor, Sugrīva used his own sword to chop off Mahodara's head adorned with earrings. After seeing Mahodara's head severed and fallen on the ground, his army vanished from the battlefield. After killing Mahodara, Sugrīva roared jubilantly along with the other monkeys. Rāma became very pleased and the ten-headed Rāvaṇa became furious. The rākṣasas' faces were downcast and their minds distressed.

Stricken with fear, they fled in all directions. Sugrīva threw Mahodara's body down on the ground, like a part broken off from a big mountain. Sugrīva then stood there shining with glory, like the sun which is unassailable because of its rays. After gaining victory, Sugrīva stood there on the frontline of battle and gazed at the hordes of gods, siddhas and yakṣas, as well as the crowds of beings on the earth's surface who were all overwhelmed with joy.

ĀṄGADA KILLS MAHĀPĀRŚVA

After Mahodara had been killed, Mahāpārśva was staring at Sugrīva with eyes red from anger. With his arrows he then created a commotion among the ranks of Āṅgada's army. He severed the heads from the bodies of stalwart monkeys, as the wind would knock a fruit from its branch. With his arrows, he cut off the arms of some monkeys and slit open the sides of other monkeys. Tormented by the shower of Mahāpārśva's arrows, the monkeys' faces looked despondent and they all became bewildered. Seeing his army frightened and tormented by the rākṣasa, Āṅgada exhibited his impetuosity like the ocean on a full moon day. Grabbing an iron cudgel gleaming like sunbeams, Āṅgada threw it at Mahāpārśva. Stunned by the impact, Mahāpārśva and his charioteer fell unconscious from the chariot onto the ground.

Then the piqued Jāmbavān dashed out of his own troop, which resembled a cloud. Grabbing a huge stone as big as a mountain peak, he angrily killed the horses and then smashed the chariot of Mahāpārśva. When Mahāpārśva regained consciousness after a while, he once again pierced Āṅgada with many arrows and struck Jāmbavān in the chest with three arrows. He also hit Gavākṣa with many arrows. Seeing Gavākṣa and Jāmbavān wounded by arrows, Āṅgada angrily picked up a formidable iron bludgeon. Grasping it firmly, he brandished it fiercely with both hands, his eyes red from anger. Then he hurled that iron bludgeon, which was shining like the sun, in order to kill Mahāpārśva, who was standing at a distance.

Thrown violently by Āṅgada, that bludgeon knocked the bow and arrows from the hands of Mahāpārśva, and the helmet off from his head. Quickly approaching the rākṣasa, Āṅgada angrily punched him under the ear, which was adorned with an earring. Outraged by this, the splendid Mahāpārśva grabbed with his hand a tremendous axe. The rākṣasa angrily hurled that sharpened solid steel axe at Āṅgada's left shoulder blade. Āṅgada

in his anger dodged the axe. Aṅgada, who was equal to his father in prowess, clenched his fist hard as a thunderbolt. Knowing the vulnerable parts of the body, Aṅgada punched Mahāpārśva in the center of the chest over the heart. Because of the impact of that fist, the rākṣasa's heart burst open and he fell down dead on the battleground. After Mahāpārśva had been slain, the rākṣasa army became perplexed. Meanwhile, Rāvaṇa was beside himself with rage. A very loud roar rose up from among the monkeys, who were overjoyed. Then there arose a loud clamor, like that of the gods led by Indra, which seemed to shake the city of Lāṅkā with its rooftop patios and archways. Hearing the loud cheers of the residents of the heavenly planets and of the monkeys, Rāvaṇa, the enemy of Indra, became furious and faced the battlefield once more for an encounter.

ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RĀMA AND RĀVAṆA

Seeing that Mahodara, Mahāpārśva and Virūpākṣa had been killed, Rāvaṇa began seething with rage during the conflict. He urged on his charioteer and spoke to him as follows, so it is said: “By killing Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa I shall surely remove the sorrow caused by the slaughter of my ministers and the siege of Laṅkā. In combat I shall cut down the tree Rāma, who bears the fruit Sītā, whose branches are Sugrīva, Jāmbavān, Kumuda, Nala, Dvidida, Mainda, Aṅgada, Gandhamādana, Hanumān, Suśeṇa and all the other monkey troop leaders.”

Causing all ten directions to resound with the rattling of his chariot, that mighty chariot warrior sallied forth quickly and charged toward Rāma. Filled by that noise, the entire earth with its rivers, mountains and forests trembled, terrifying lions, deer and birds. Rāvaṇa employed a most ominous mystic weapon of darkness to devour all the monkeys, causing them to fall down everywhere about. Dust rose up from the ground as they ran defeated in all directions, for they could not tolerate the influence of that weapon presided over by Lord Brahmā himself. When Rāma saw the monkey troops being routed by the hundreds by Rāvaṇa’s arrows, He took up a sturdy position. After driving away the monkey army, Rāvaṇa, the best of rākṣasas, saw Rāma, the defeater of enemies, standing unconquered with His brother Lakṣmaṇa, as Viṣṇu stood with Indra. Rāma had broad eyes like the petals of a lotus flower and long arms. The bow which He held seemed to be scraping the sky.

When Rāma saw the defeated monkeys fleeing the battlefield and Rāvaṇa approaching, He joyfully grasped His bow in the middle. He then began bending the mighty bow, as if to He intended to split the world with it. The sound of Rāvaṇa’s volleys of arrows and of Rāma’s bowstring knocked over the rākṣasas by the hundreds. When Rāvaṇa came with the range of the

two princes' arrows, he resembled the planet Rāhu approaching the sun and moon. Desiring to engage with Rāvaṇa in that first encounter, Lakṣmaṇa released from His bow sharp arrows that were like flames of fire. As soon as Lakṣmaṇa released those arrows, the passionate Rāvaṇa intercepted them in mid-air with his own arrows. Displaying his manual dexterity, Rāvaṇa split Lakṣmaṇa's arrows, one with one, three with three and ten with ten.

Passing by Lakṣmaṇa, Rāvaṇa approached Rāma, who was standing firmly like a mountain on the battlefield. With his eyes red from anger, Rāvaṇa approached Rāma while showering Him with arrows. Seeing Rāvaṇa's showers of arrows approaching, Rāma quickly grabbed arrows with crescent-shaped heads from His quiver. With those broad-headed arrows, Rāma splintered Rāvaṇa's blazing arrows that resembled venomous serpents. Rāma and Rāvaṇa quickly showered each other with different kinds of sharp arrows. Shoving back each other with the force of their arrows and remaining undefeated, they described circles around each other from left to right with arrows.

All living beings were terrified as the two warriors, who resembled death and the lord of death, fought with each other shooting arrows. The sky was covered with different kinds of arrows, as it is by clouds interlaced with lightning during the monsoon. The sky appeared to have innumerable eye-holes due to being covered with showers of swift sharp arrows guided by vulture plumes. The two warriors covered the sky with intense darkness by their arrows, like two huge clouds arisen at sunset or even at sunrise. Seeking the death of each other, a great and inconceivable fight ensued between them, like the one between Indra and Vṛtra. Both had excellent bows, both were skilled in combat, both were expert in the use of weapons and both were outstanding in combat. Indeed, wherever they moved, volleys of arrows moved about like waves in the ocean impelled by wind.

Then Rāvaṇa, who caused people to cry, used his hands to shoot a wreath of steel arrows into Rāma's forehead. Rāma bore on His head that wreath released from Rāvaṇa's dreadful bow. It shone like a blue lotus flower and Rāma was undisturbed by it. Thereafter, angry as He was, Rāma took more arrows and charged them by reciting mantras. Taking His bow, He shot

those arrows without interruption at the lord of the rākṣasas. Falling on Rāvaṇa's impenetrable armor like a big cloud, those arrows did not cause him any distress. Rāma, who was expert in the use of all kinds of mystic weapons, at once struck Rāvaṇa in the forehead with a most excellent weapon. Rāma's arrows hissed like five-headed snakes as they entered the ground when deflected by Rāvaṇa.

Having obliterated Rāma's weapons, the raging Rāvaṇa activated a tremendously dangerous mystic weapon of the asuras. By it Rāvaṇa shot arrows with the heads of lions, tigers, buzzards, ruddy geese, vultures, falcons, jackals and wolves, as well as arrows with lions having gaping mouths and arrows with the heads of donkeys, boars, dogs, cocks, alligators and poisonous snakes. Hissing like an angry snake, Rāvaṇa used his magical power to shoot these and other sharp arrows at Rāma. Finding Himself overwhelmed by the weapon of the asuras, Rāma enthusiastically released a weapon of the fire-god. By it He produced many kinds of arrows, some as bright as fire, others with heads like the sun, full moon, crescent moon, comets, shooting stars, planets, constellations and lightning. When struck by Rāma's mighty weapons, Rāvaṇa's arrows vanished in thin air, but not before killing thousands of monkeys. Seeing Rāvaṇa's weapon destroyed by the tireless Rāma, the overjoyed monkeys gathered around Rāma and roared as they faced Sugrīva. After destroying that weapon propelled by Rāvaṇa's arms, Rāma felt exhilarated. The great monkey chieftains shouted for joy.

LAKṢMAṆA RENDERED UNCONSCIOUS BY RĀVAṆA

When Rāvaṇa's weapon was counteracted by Rāma, the lord of the rākṣasas became twice as angry. The splendorous Rāvaṇa then aimed at Rāma another mystic weapon which was presided over by Lord Rudra and produced by Maya Dānava. From Rāvaṇa's bow shot forth various kinds of weapons, such as flaming pikes, maces, clubs hard as thunderbolts, mallets, deceptive nooses and blazing thunderbolts. These flew like the wind that blows at the end of the age. The glorious Rāma, knowing the deployment of the best weapons, counteracted that mystic weapon with that of the gandharvas.

After the great soul Rāma had counteracted that weapon, Rāvaṇa, his eyes red as copper due to anger, employed the weapon of the sun-god. Then huge discuses as brilliant as the sun came out of Rāvaṇa's bow. As they rose up and fell down on all sides, they illuminated the sky like the sun, moon and planets. Rāma, however, shattered those discuses and other strange weapons on the frontline of battle with His volleys of arrows. Seeing that weapon counteracted, Rāvaṇa pierced Rāma with ten arrows in all His vital areas. The magnificent Rāma did not shudder even though He had been pierced by ten arrows shot from Rāvaṇa's mighty bow. Enraged by this Rāma, who was always victorious, pierced all of Rāvaṇa's limbs with many arrows.

In the meantime, Lakṣmaṇa, the destroyer of enemy warriors, became very angry and seized seven arrows. With those arrows, which were very swift and powerful, He tore to pieces Rāvaṇa's flag, which bore the image of a man's head. With a single arrow, Lakṣmaṇa cut off the head adorned with sparkling earrings of Rāvaṇa's charioteer. With five sharpened arrows, Lakṣmaṇa splintered Rāvaṇa's bow, which resembled the trunk of an elephant. Jumping forward, Vibhīṣaṇa too struck down with a mace Rāvaṇa's horses, which were the color of clouds and as big as mountains.

Quickly jumping down from the large chariot when the horses were killed, Rāvaṇa then raged severely against his younger brother. Rāvaṇa thereupon hurled at Vibhīṣaṇa a large flaming spear that was just like a thunderbolt. With three arrows Lakṣmaṇa destroyed it even before it reached Vibhīṣaṇa. A loud cheer rose up at that time from among the monkeys. Split into three pieces, the spear plated with gold fell down like a huge meteor spewing sparks from the heavens. Rāvaṇa then grabbed a big resplendent spear that was difficult to contend with even for death personified. Brandished savagely by the mighty and wicked Rāvaṇa, that spear glowed very brightly.

Meanwhile, the valiant Lakṣmaṇa quickly came to Vibhīṣaṇa, whose life was in danger. Stretching His bow, the valorous Lakṣmaṇa literally covered Rāvaṇa with volleys of arrows. When covered with the shower of Lakṣmaṇa's arrows, Rāvaṇa's prowess faltered and he did not feel like attacking. When Rāvaṇa saw his brother rescued by Lakṣmaṇa, he turned toward Lakṣmaṇa and said: "Because You saved the rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa, I am hurling this spear at You, proud as You are of Your strength! When propelled by my bludgeon-like arm, this spear will split Your heart and leave after taking away Your life!"

After saying this, Rāvaṇa hurled that spear at Lakṣmaṇa and roared. The spear was adorned with eight bells and made a loud sound. It was made by Maya Dānava with magical power and was capable of destroying the enemy. It was glowing with splendor. Flung with terrible impetuosity and making a sound like a clap of thunder, the spear flew toward Lakṣmaṇa on the frontline of battle. As the weapon approached Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma addressed it, saying: "Good luck to Lakṣmaṇa! May your attempt to kill Lakṣmaṇa be futile!" Thrown by the angry Rāvaṇa, that spear, which was like a poisonous snake, struck against Lakṣmaṇa's chest as He stood there fearlessly. Flying with great speed like the tongue of the serpent Vāsuki, the brilliant spear struck Lakṣmaṇa in His broad chest. Having been hurled with great force by Rāvaṇa, the spear dug deeply into Lakṣmaṇa, knocking Him on the ground.

Seeing Lakṣmaṇa in that condition, Rāma, who was standing nearby, became despondent because of brotherly affection, even though He was Himself very powerful. Reflecting for a while, Rāma's eyes welled with tears and He became as furious as the fire at the end of the world. Realizing that it was not the time to be despondent and gazing at Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma initiated a most tumultuous battle with great endeavor, having resolved to killed Rāvaṇa.

Then Rāma saw Lakṣmaṇa pierced by the spear on the battlefield and drenched with blood, resembling a mountain with a snake entering it. The monkeys were unable to extract the spear because it had been thrown with such force and because they were being tormented by the arrows Rāvaṇa was shooting. The spear had passed through Lakṣmaṇa and into the earth. Seething with anger, Rāma pulled out the perilous spear and broke it. As Rāma was pulling out that spear, Rāvaṇa shot arrows piercing the vital areas on all of Rāma's limbs. Unperturbed by those arrows, Rāma embraced Lakṣmaṇa and spoke to Hanumān and Sugrīva:

“Continue surrounding Lakṣmaṇa, O best of monkeys! The time long sought by Me to manifest My prowess has come. Let Me kill this sinful ten-headed rākṣasa. I desire that, as the cātaka bird desires to see rain clouds at the end of the hot season. I declare this vow to you all this very moment: the world will soon be rid of Rāvaṇa or Rāma. I lost My kingdom, was banished to the forest, wandered in the wilderness of Daṇḍakāraṇya and suffered the insult of Sītā being abducted by rākṣasas. The sorrow and affliction which I have endured is like hell. By killing Rāvaṇa in an encounter I shall dispose of all that today.

“That sinful rākṣasa on whose account I brought this monkey army here, installed Sugrīva as king after slaying Vālī and had a bridge built to cross the ocean has come within the range of My eye sight on this battlefield. After wandered within my sight, he does not deserve to live. Having crossed the path of my eyes, Rāvaṇa cannot survive any more than could one entering the sight of a snake whose mere glance is poisonous, or a snake spotted by Garuḍa. Sitting comfortably on mountain peaks, O monkeys, watch the struggle between Myself and Rāvaṇa. Let all the three

worlds, the gandharvas, gods, sages and cāraṇas witness the greatness of Rāma in the course of this combat. I shall today accomplish a feat which this world of mobile and immobile beings and even gods will discuss, including how the battle progressed, as long as the earth can support life.”

After saying this, Rāma steadily struck Rāvaṇa with sharp gilded arrows on the field of battle. Rāvaṇa likewise showered Rāma with blazing steel arrows and clubs, as a cloud would shower down torrents of rain on a mountain. As the excellent arrows shot by Rāma and Rāvaṇa struck each other, they created a tumultuous noise. Shattered into pieces, Rāma’s and Rāvaṇa’s blazing arrows fell from the sky to the earth’s surface. The constant loud twang of Rāma’s and Rāvaṇa’s bowstrings was amazing and terrified all living beings. Being covered all over with arrows and tormented by Rāma, Rāvaṇa fled out of fear, like a cloud propelled by a storm gale, as Rāma approached him.

LAKṢMAṆA REVIVED BY AN HERB FROM THE HIMALAYAS

Seeing Lakṣmaṇa soaked with blood from being felled by the mighty Rāvaṇa's spear and having given a fierce battle to the wicked Rāvaṇa, Rāma spoke to Suṣeṇa even as He continued shooting volleys of arrows: "Here is the valorous Lakṣmaṇa knocked on the ground by Rāvaṇa's strength and writhing like a snake, causing Me anguish. Seeing this warrior, who is dearer to Me than My own life, drenched with blood, My mind is disturbed and I do not have the energy to fight. If My handsome brother proud of war should die, what is the use of life or happiness to Me? My valor seems shy. My bow is slipping from My hand. I am dropping arrows and My vision is clouded by tears. My limbs are faltering like those who sleep. My sharp anxiety is increasing and I feel like dying when I see My brother struck down by the wicked Rāvaṇa, fatally wounded in His vital areas and agonized."

Seeing His younger brother, who was His own life air externalized, Rāma was stricken with sorrow and became absorbed in thoughts of grief. Seeing Lakṣmaṇa knocked down in the dust of the battlefield, Rāma became despondent and lamented as follows: "O hero, even victory will not seem very pleasing to Me. What delight will the moon bring one who has no sight? What is the use of fighting? What is the use of living? I have no need of war now that Lakṣmaṇa is lying dead on the frontline of battle. As Lakṣmaṇa followed Me when I went into exile in the forest, I shall likewise follow Him to the abode of death. Lakṣmaṇa who was always fond of His relatives and ever-devoted to Me, has come to this stage due to the rākṣasas who fight so treacherously. Wives can be found in different places, and relatives too, but I do not see any place where I can find a brother like Lakṣmaṇa.

“What gain shall I achieve by sovereignty without Lakṣmaṇa? What shall I say to Mother Sumitrā who is so fond of her son? I shall not be able to endure the reproach given by Sumitrā. And what indeed shall I say to Kausalyā and Kaikeyī? What shall I say to Bharata and the mighty Śatrughna when They ask Me how I returned alone after being accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa to the forest? It would be better to die here right now than to suffer the rebukes of My relatives. What misdeed did I perform in previous lives that My pious brother is lying dead before Me? O my brother! O best of men and foremost of warriors! O master! Why are You leaving Me and going by Yourself to the other world, even though I am lamenting? Why do You not speak to Me? Get up! Look! Why are You lying on the ground? Look at My wretched self with Your eyes! You have been My comforter whenever I wandered listlessly and was stricken with sorrow in the mountains and forests, O mighty-armed one!”

While Rāma’s senses were thus overwhelmed with grief, Suṣeṇa tried to console Him and spoke to Him the following words: “O tiger among men, give up this mentality which is causing You anguish, this anxiety which is causing You sorrow like arrows on the fore of battle. Lakṣmaṇa has not died, for His face has not changed nor has it turned dark. See how His face is effulgent and pleasant! The palms of His hands are like the petals of a lotus flower and His eyes are most pleasing. The appearance of those who have passed away is not like this, O monarch. Do not be despondent, O warrior. This conqueror of enemies is still alive. The repeatedly throbbing heart of Lakṣmaṇa lying asleep on the ground with relaxed limbs indicates that He is still alive, O warrior!”

After saying all this to Rāma, Suṣeṇa said to the great monkey Hanumān, who was standing nearby: “My dear friend, please quickly leave this place to Mount Mahodaya, which Jāmbavān previously told you about. From its southern slope bring back the following powerful healing herbs: viśālyakaraṇī, sāvarṇyakaraṇī, saṃjīvakaraṇī and the potent herb named sandhānī. Bring them so that we can restore the life of Lakṣmaṇa.”

When given this instruction, Hanumān jumped into the sky in route to the mountain bearing those herbs. The glorious Hanumān became thoughtful when he realized that he did not know those potent herbs. The

following idea occurred to the mighty Hanumān: “I shall bring the whole mountain peak back. By reason I know that it is on this peak that those healing herbs grow, for Suṣeṇa said so. If I return without bringing the herb viśalyakaraṇī to extract the spear, in the course of time there may be some further damage to Lakṣmaṇa, giving rise to a great calamity.”

Thinking in this way and moving quickly, the mighty Hanumān reached Mount Mahodaya. Shaking it three times, he broke off the peak of that excellent mountain that was covered with all kinds of flowering trees. Balanced in his hand, the mountain peak resembled a dark-blue rain cloud resting in the sky. Holding it carefully, he jumped into the sky. When Hanumān reached Suṣeṇa, he set the mountain peak down. Resting for a while, Hanumān said to Suṣeṇa: “Since I was not familiar with those herbs, here is the entire peak of that mountain which I have brought.”

As Hanumān was speaking, Suṣeṇa thanked him and gathered the herbs. All the monkeys were amazed to see Hanumān’s feat, which was difficult even for the gods. Crushing the herb, Suṣeṇa administered it to Lakṣmaṇa through the nostrils. When the impaled Lakṣmaṇa smelled the herb, He instantly became free from the spear and rose up from the ground healed of His wound. Seeing Lakṣmaṇa risen from the ground, the monkeys were overjoyed and offered their respects to Lakṣmaṇa, saying: “Very good! Very good!” Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa: “Come here! Come here!” and embraced Him to His bosom with eyes brimming with tears. After embracing Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma said to Him: “O warrior, by good fortune I am seeing You returned from the dead. There would have been no purpose in My living, or regaining Sītā, or achieving victory. What would have been the use of My life if You had died?”

Depressed by Rāma’s loose words, Lakṣmaṇa replied as follows: “Having vowed to slay Rāvaṇa and crown Vibhīṣaṇa as king, You should not talk as if You were a weak and powerless man. Those who speak the truth never break their promise, for the fulfillment of one’s promise is the sign of greatness. Moreover, it is not right for You to give into despair on My account, O sinless one. Fulfill Your promise by killing Rāvaṇa today. When Your enemy is subdued by Your arrows, he cannot survive, any more than

could an elephant caught by the sharp teeth of a roaring lion. I want that wicked fellow killed before the sun sets. If You wish to kill Rāvaṇa in combat, if You wish to fulfill Your promise, if You long for Sītā, then immediately do what I say.”

INDRA PRESENTS A CHARIOT TO RĀMA

Hearing Lakṣmaṇa's advice, Rāma took up His bow and fixed arrows to it. Then He shot those formidable arrows at Rāvaṇa in combat. Sitting in another chariot, Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, charged toward Rāma, as the planet Rāhu rushes upon the sun. While seated in his chariot, Rāvaṇa struck Rāma with arrows that were like thunderbolts, as a cloud would shower down rain on a big mountain. With full concentration, Rāma showered the ten-headed rākṣasa with gilded arrows shining like fire. The gods, gandharvas and kinnaras declared: "The fight between Rāma who is standing on the ground and Rāvaṇa who is seated in a chariot is not a fair match."

Then the glorious chariot of Lord Indra arrived, having a flag raised on a golden pole. Its body was beautifully wrought with gold. It was adorned with hundreds of tinkling bells. The chariot shone like the newly risen sun. The chariot's pole was made of vaidurya gem. The chariot was supplied with white cāmara whisks and was drawn by excellent green horses. It was covered with gold screens as bright as the sun. By the order of Lord Indra, his charioteer Mātali was seated in the chariot and had come down from the heavenly planets to where Rāma was.

Remaining seated in the chariot and bearing a whip, Mātali, the charioteer of Lord Indra, joined his palms together and said to Rāma: "O Rāma, this chariot has been given to You by Lord Indra for Your victory. You are most courageous, glorious and the destroyer of Your enemies. Here is Indra's great bow and his armor shining like fire. Here are his arrows as bright as the sun and his spotless auspicious spear. O warrior, mounting this chariot with me as the driver, kill the rākṣasa Rāvaṇa, as Indra killed the dānavas." Rāma, who was illuminating the worlds with His splendor, circumambulated the chariot, offered it respect and mounted it. Then an amazing and hair-raising battle took place between the large-armed Rāma and the rākṣasa Rāvaṇa.

Rāma, who was wise in the use of lethal weapons, destroyed Rāvaṇa's gāndharva and daiva weapons, by using the same ones. Highly enraged by this, the night-stalker shot a most deadly rākṣasa weapon. When the gilded arrows sprang from Rāvaṇa's bow, rushing toward Rāma, they became extremely poisonous snakes. With their blazing mouths wide open and vomiting blood, those frightening arrows sped straight for Rāma. All the directions were completely covered by those highly poisonous blazing serpents whose touch was like that of Vāsuki. Seeing those arrows approaching Him on the battlefield, Rāma employed the formidable and dangerous weapon of Garuḍa. When released from Rāma's bow, those golden-feathered arrows became golden eagles, the enemies of snakes, and flew about. Rāma's arrows, which had assumed the form of eagles, destroyed all those swift arrows in the shape of snakes. Angered by the annulment of his weapon, Rāvaṇa then showered Rāma with direful arrows. Afflicting Rāma with one thousand arrows, Rāvaṇa then struck Mātali with one hundred. With a single arrow, Rāvaṇa cut off the flag from Rāma's chariot. After felling the golden flag from the chariot, Rāvaṇa shot Indra's horses with a volley of arrows.

When the gods, gandharvas, cāraṇas, siddhas, dānavas and great sages saw that Rāma was afflicted, they became dejected. The monkey leaders and Vibhīṣaṇa became disturbed. When the planet Mars saw the moon of Rāma being eclipsed by Rāvaṇa, it attacked the star Rohiṇī, the dear consort of the moon, thus indicating misfortune for all living beings. With its misty waves tossing, the ocean seemed to be burning. It rose up very high at that time, as if it wanted to touch the sun. The sun became dim, grayish and harsh-looking. It could be seen with a headless body on its lap and a comet. The constellation Viśākhā presided over by Indra and Agni which is auspicious for the Ikṣvāku Dynasty was being attacked by the planet Mars. With his ten heads and twenty arms, and holding a bow, Rāvaṇa looked like Mount Maināka.

Being overcome by the ten-headed rākṣasa, Rāma was unable to place His arrows on His bow during the battle. Knitting His brow, His eyes turned red. He became highly enraged as if He would burn the rākṣasas to ashes with His eyes.

All living beings became frightened and the earth trembled upon seeing Rāma's angry face. Trikūṭa Mountain with its lions and tigers shook, its trees swaying. The ocean also became agitated. Emitting a harsh sound like the braying of asses, portentous clouds rumbled as they circled about everywhere in the sky. Seeing Rāma overwhelmed with wrath and observing ill omens, all living beings, including Rāvaṇa, became frightened. Seated in their aerial vehicles, the gods, gandharvas, nāgas, sages, dānavas, daityas, eagles and birds watched the battle between the two warriors as they fought with various kinds of weapons. That battle was like the dissolution of the world. All the gods and demons who had come to witness the great conflict were jubilant and shouted out encouragements with devotion as they watched. Dedicated to their party, the demons cried out to Rāvaṇa: "Victory to you!" The gods repeatedly shouted to Rāma: "Be victorious!"

In the meantime, the evil Rāvaṇa, angry as he was at Rāma and desiring to kill Him, touched a large projectile. The projectile was like a thunderbolt. It howled when thrown. It could destroy all enemies. It was frightful to see with its spikes like mountain peaks. Its sharp point resembled the smoky mass of fire that appears at the end of the age. It was extremely terrifying and unapproachable, even for death personified. It was frightening for all living beings because it could slice and pierce them. Burning with anger, Rāvaṇa seized that spear while surrounded by rākṣasa warriors who were heroic in combat. Raising the spear, the red-eyed gigantic Rāvaṇa roared violently due to anger, bringing great delight to his soldiers.

While holding that huge spear and roaring, the most valorous Rāvaṇa harshly spoke the following words to Rāma: "Raised out of anger, this spear as powerful as a thunderbolt will quickly take away the lives of You and Your brother! Today I shall quickly knock You down flat in front of the rākṣasa warriors whom You previously defeated. Wait a minute! I shall kill You with this spear, O Rāma!"

After saying this, that lord of the rākṣasas hurled the spear. When released from Rāvaṇa's hand, the spear shone in the air, enveloped as it was with lightning, and made a loud noise because of its eight bells. Seeing that dreadful blazing spear, the valiant Rāma stretched His bow and shot arrows. Using arrows, Rāma tried to stop the spear as it approached, as Indra would

try to extinguish the fire of universal destruction at the end of the age with rain. Rāvaṇa's huge spear burnt those arrows shot from Rāma's bow, as a fire would burn a moth. When Rāma saw His arrows pulverized and reduced to ashes in mid air by that spear, He expressed His anger. He then grabbed the spear sent by Indra through Mātali.

When lifted by the mighty Rāma, that sparkling spear, which rang loudly with its bells, illuminated the sky like a meteor at the end of the world. When hurled, that spear hit Rāvaṇa's spear, so it is said. Split by Rāma's spear, the other huge spear lost its splendor and fell down. Rāma then pierced Rāvaṇa's horses with sharp, swift arrows as hard as thunderbolts. The highly energetic Rāma then pierced Rāvaṇa in the chest with sharp arrows and struck him in the forehead with three arrows. With his whole body pierced by arrows and his limbs dripping with blood, Rāvaṇa looked like an aśoka tree in blossom. With all his limbs pierced by Rāma's arrows and his limbs drenched with blood, Rāvaṇa became exhausted in the midst of the army and felt extremely aggravated.

RĀMA REBUKES RĀVAṆA FOR LEAVING THE BATTLEFIELD

When greatly oppressed by the furious Rāma at that time, Rāvaṇa, who was proud of his military accomplishments, flew into a rage. Raising his bow, with eyes blazing due to anger, Rāvaṇa belabored Rāma in that great conflict. Rāvaṇa showered Rāma with thousands of arrows, as a cloud would fill a pond with torrential rains. Even though completely covered with arrows shot from Rāvaṇa's bow on the battlefield, Rāma, who was as steady as a mountain, did not waver. The courageous Rāma intercepted those arrows with volleys of His own arrows and bore them as if they were rays of sunlight. The quick-handed night-stalker then dug thousands of arrows into Rāma's breast.

Drenched with blood on the field of battle, Rāma looked like a big blossoming *kiṁśuka* tree in the forest. Angered by the impact of the arrows, Rāma, the descendent of *Kakutstha*, seized arrows that were as dazzling as the fire at the end of the world. Both Rāma and Rāvaṇa could not see each other at that time because the battlefield was obscured with darkness by the arrows. Although beside Himself with anger, Rāma laughed and spoke the following harsh words to Rāvaṇa:

“Because you abducted My wife from *Janasthāna* while She was unprotected, you are not brave, O vilest of *rākṣasas*! Because you have kidnapped from Me the unfortunate *Sītā* while She was in the great forest, you think that you are a hero. You are a hero among unprotected women and you dare to touch others' wives. Having performed a cowardly deed, you think that you are a hero. Having broken the bonds of morality, you are shameless. You are not fixed in good qualities. Out of pride you have grasped death itself and are thinking that you are a hero. You, a hero, the half-brother of *Kuvera* and endowed with strength, have performed a great, glorious and praiseworthy deed. Reap this very moment the great fruit of

that blameworthy and pernicious deed perpetrated out of pride. Although you consider yourself a hero, you felt no shame when you carried away Sītā like a thief. If you had forcibly touched Sītā in My presence, you would have then met your brother Khara when struck by My arrows. By My good fortune you have come within the range of My vision, O dullard. Now I shall send you to the abode of the dead with sharp arrows. Let carnivorous creatures drag around in the dust of the battlefield your head adorned with earrings severed by my arrows. O Rāvaṇa, after you have been thrown on the ground, let vultures swoop down on your chest and drink the blood gushing from the wound made by My arrow. Let scavenger birds tear out your entrails today, when you are pierced and knocked down dead by My arrows.”

After saying this, Rāma, the destroyer of enemies, covered Rāvaṇa, who was standing nearby, with a shower of arrows. Desiring the destruction of His enemies, Rāma’s virility, strength and pleasure in battle, as well as the strength of His weapons, became doubled. All the mystic weapons manifested themselves before Rāma, who was knowledgeable about their deployment. Out of excitement the ardent Rāma’s hands became even more fleet. Recognizing these auspicious signs in Himself, Rāma, the exterminator of rākṣasas, began striking Rāvaṇa with increased vehemence. While being hit by the volleys of stones from the monkeys and the showers of arrows from Rāma, Rāvaṇa became bewildered at heart. At this time Rāvaṇa could no longer take up weapons, draw his bow, or oppose Rāma’s prowess. While arrows and different weapons were being discharged by Rāma for his death, the time for Rāvaṇa’s death seemed imminent. Seeing him in that condition, the charioteer slowly and calmly drove the chariot out of the battle area.

RĀVAṆA REPRIMANDS HIS CHARIOTEER AND RETURNS TO THE BATTLE

Compelled by the force of destiny, Rāvaṇa, who was extremely angry and red in the eyes, spoke as follows to his charioteer, due to delusion: “Disdaining me, O fool, you act according to your own intelligence, thinking that I am deprived of valor, strength and manliness, or am cowardly, impotent, unenergetic, deprived of my magical powers and abandoned by my mystic weapons. Why did you remove this chariot of mine from the battlefield in view of the enemy, embarrassing me without ascertaining my desire? O ignoble one, you have destroyed my glory earned after a long time, my valor, energy and the faith which people have in me. While my enemy, whose prowess is well-known and who was eager for a display of valor, was watching, you made a fool of me, who was desirous of fighting. If out of delusion you fail to drive this chariot, my suspicion that you are influenced by the enemy will prove true. The deed you have done is surely not that of a well-wishing friend. It befits an enemy. If you have lived with me long enough and remember the benefits received from me, quickly drive the chariot back until the enemy does not approach me.”

When spoken to in this harsh manner by Rāvaṇa, the chariot, who was concerned about Rāvaṇa’s well-being, spoken the following kind and courteous words: “I was neither afraid nor bewildered, nor was I influenced by the enemy. I was not negligent, disloyal, nor forgetful of your favors. I performed an act unpleasing to you as something beneficial to you. With a mind devoted to affection, I wanted to do you some service and protect your glory. O great king, acting like a petty and ignoble person, you should not hold me, devoted as I am to your welfare, guilty in this matter. Listen, I will tell you why I brought your chariot back, as the force of a river is pushed back by a maritime tide. I noticed your exhaustion from combat. In fact, O warrior, you had no happiness or eagerness for fighting. The horses drawing the chariot were also exhausted. They were miserable and suffering heat exhaustion, like cows pelted with rain.

“Furthermore, if the omens appearing before us prove true, I see misfortune for us. The charioteer must ascertain the time and place, good and bad omens, facial expressions, depression, liveliness and exhaustion of the chariot warrior. He must know the rises and depressions of the earth, as well as its level and rugged areas, the time suitable for combat and the visible weak points of the enemy. When to advance and when to pull back, when to hold one’s own and when to retreat—all this should be known by a charioteer. I did this deed because of your exhaustion and that of the horses and to relieve that terrible fatigue. I did not remove the chariot whimsically, O lord. I did so out of affection for my master. Command me according to the facts, O crusher of enemies. With a mind free from debts, I shall do whatever you say.”

Satisfied with the charioteer’s explanation, Rāvaṇa thanked him fully and, desiring combat, spoke to him as follows: “O charioteer, quickly drive this chariot toward Rāma. Rāvaṇa will not retreat from the battleground until he has killed his enemies.” When Rāvaṇa finished saying this, he gave a valuable shiny ornament for the hand to the charioteer sitting there. Hearing Rāvaṇa’s instruction, the charioteer returned to the battlefield. Compelled by Rāvaṇa’s order, the charioteer drove the horses forward so that Rāvaṇa’s huge chariot was on the battleground before Rāma in a moment.

RĀMA RECITES A HYMN TO THE SUN

The sage Agastya saw Rāma standing on the battlefield absorbed in thought and exhausted from fighting, with Rāvaṇa facing Him ready to fight. Approaching Rāma with the demigods who had come to watch the conflict, the blessed sage Agastya said: “O Rāma! O Rāma! O strong-armed one! Hear this eternal secret by which You will conquer all Your enemies in battle, my dear prince. The chanting of this eternal and most holy hymn called āditya-hṛdaya destroys all enemies. It brings victory. It is the most auspicious of all auspicious things. It destroys all sins. It allays all anxiety and sorrow and is the most efficacious means to prolong one’s life.

“Worship the splendorous sun, the ruler of the worlds clothed in rays and risen on the horizon. He is honored by all the gods and demons and illuminates the world. He is indeed the embodiment of all the gods. He is resplendent. By his rays he creates and maintains the hordes of gods and demons and their worlds. He is Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Skanda, Prajāpati, Indra, Kuvera, time, Yamarāja, Soma, Varuṇa, the forefathers, the Vasus, the sādhyas, the Aśvins, the Maruts, Manu, Vāyu, Agni, the creatures, life, the controller of the seasons, the brilliant one, the son of Aditi, the vivifier, the sun, the courser in the sky, the nourisher, the splendorous one, the golden one, the golden seed and the maker of the day.

“He has seven dark green horses hitched to his chariot. He has thousands of rays. He destroys darkness. He is Śambhu, Tvaṣṭā, Mārtaṇḍa, Amśumān, Hiranya-garbha, the source of heat during the winter, the effulgent sun, the womb of fire, the son of Aditi, the conchshell, the destroyer of cold, lord of the sky, the splitter of darkness, the pervader of the Rg, Yajur and Sāma Vedas, the giver of heavy showers of rain, the friend, the swift courser along his own path, the warmer, the orb, death itself, yellowish, warming all, all-knowing, most splendid, red and the source of all existence. He is the lord of the asterisms, the planets and the stars. He is the

source of everything. Of splendor, he is the splendid one. I offer my prostrated respects to him who has twelve forms.

“The hymn is as follows:

namaḥ pūrvāya giraye

paścimāyādraye namaḥ

jyotir gaṇānām pataye

dinādhipataye namaḥ

jayāya jaya-bhadrāya

hary-aśvāya namo namaḥ

namo namaḥ sahasrāṁśo

ādityāya namo namaḥ

nama ugrāya vīrāya

sāraṅgāya namo namaḥ

namaḥ padma-prabodhāya

pracaṇḍāya namo 'stu te

brahmeśānācyuteśāya

sūrāyāditya-varcase

bhāsvate sarva-bhakṣāya

raudrāya vapuṣe namaḥ

tamoghnāya himaghnāya

śatrughnāyāmitātmane

kṛtaghnaghnāya devāya

jyotiṣāṁ pataye namaḥ

tapta-cāmīkarābhāya

haraye, viśva-karmaṇe

namas tamo 'bhinighnāya

rucaye loka-sākṣiṇe

“I offer my respects to you who are the eastern mountain and the western mountain, the lord of the hosts of luminaries and the lord of the day. I offer my respects to you who are victory, the giver of victory and the owner of the green horses. I offer my respects to you who have a thousand rays, the son of Aditi. I offer my respects to you who are fearsome, valiant and speckled. I offer my respects to you who are the awakener of the lotus, the fierce one. I offer my respects to you who are the lord of Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu, the resplendent sun itself, effulgent all-illuminating and having a fierce body. I offer my respects to you who are the destroyer of darkness, the destroyer of ice, the destroyer of enemies, the unlimited Soul, the destroyer of the ungrateful, the lord of all lights. I offer my respects to you who are as brilliant as molten gold, fire itself, the creator of this universe. I offer my respects to you who are the destroyer of darkness, the shining one, the witness of the world.’

“That lord certainly creates, maintains and destroys whatever exists. By his rays he heats and showers down rain. He is the one who remains awake when the living beings have fallen asleep. He is the oblations offered in the sacrificial fire and the fruit enjoyed by those who perform sacrifice. He is all the gods, the sacrifices and the fruit of sacrifices. He is the Supreme Lord of all the activities in all the worlds. The person who glorifies him when in difficulties or danger never comes to grief, O Rāma. Worship that God of gods, the Lord of the world with concentration. By chanting this hymn three times, one will be victorious in battles. This very moment You will kill Rāvaṇa, O strong-armed one.”

Having said this, Agastya left the same way he had come. When Rāma heard this advice, His sorrow immediately vanished. Controlling Himself, he maintained the feeling of delight in His mind. Rāma sipped water three times with appropriate prayers to purify Himself and then experienced great pleasure by reciting the hymn while looking at the sun. Grabbing His bow and staring at Rāvaṇa, the valiant Rāma joyfully proceeded to the battlefield to achieve victory. He became determined to kill Rāvaṇa with all His effort. Pleased to see Rāma offering prayers and understanding that Rāvaṇa would soon be killed, the sun-god, who was in the midst of hosts of gods, said to Rāma: “Hurry!”

OMENS INDICATING RĀVAṆA'S DEATH

Excited, Rāvaṇa's charioteer drove the chariot capable of crushing enemy armies forward. It resembled a magical city of the gandharvas. It bore a lofty flag. It was drawn by steeds with excellent qualities and gold trappings. The chariot was full of weapons of war and decorated with rows of pennants. The chariot seemed to be swallowing space as it moved and made the earth resound. It was the cause of destruction for the enemy army and a cause of joy for one's own army. The charioteer quickly conducted Rāvaṇa's chariot. Rāma saw Rāvaṇa's chariot approaching suddenly and rattling. The chariot was drawn by blackish steeds and had an ominous lustre. It was shining in space like an aerial ship bathed with sun rays. It was covered with a multitude of pennants that shone like lightning and looked resplendent like a rainbow. It resembled a storm cloud that was showering down arrows instead of rain.

Seeing the enemy's chariot approaching like a cloud and rumbling like a mountain burst into pieces by a thunderbolt, Rāma stretched His bow with force until it formed a half-moon and said to Indra's charioteer Mātali: From the way in which Rāvaṇa is rushing from left to right once again, it appears that he has set his mind on killing himself in combat. Therefore, be alert and draw near to the enemy's chariot. I want to destroy it as the wind would destroy a rising cloud. Drive this chariot swiftly, without confusion or bewilderment, with a concentrated mind and vision, and full control of the reins. To be sure, you do not need to be instructed, being Indra's charioteer. Desirous as I am of fighting and focused on that, I merely remind you, not instruct you." Extremely pleased by Rāma's words, Mātali, the outstanding charioteer of the gods, drove the chariot. Passing Rāvaṇa's large chariot on the right, the dust raised by the wheels covered Rāvaṇa. With his copper-red eyes wide open due to anger, Rāvaṇa struck Rāma, who was facing his chariot, with arrows. Joining anger to patience when provoked in this way, Rāma grabbed hold of Indra's high-impact bow and swift arrows that

sparkled like sunbeams. Then a great conflict broke out between the two warriors who were facing each other like two proud lions eager to kill each other.

Then gods, gandharvas, siddhas and great sages gathered to watch the duel, anxious as they were for Rāvaṇa's death. At that time ominous hair-raising omens appeared, presaging the death of Rāvaṇa and the success of Rāma. The god of rain showered down blood over Rāvaṇa's chariot. Violent whirlwinds blew from left to right. In the sky a huge flock of vultures hovered; wherever the chariot went, they hurried after. Laṅkā was light up with the colors of sunset, like a red hibiscus flower, even though it was daytime, and the region around the city seemed to glow. Huge meteors fell with a loud crash, foreboding ill for Rāvaṇa, so that the rākṣasas became despondent.

Wherever Rāvaṇa went, the ground shook, and the arms of the rākṣasas seemed to be restrained when they tried to hit. The sunbeams shining before Rāvaṇa were coppery, yellow, white and dark, like the metallic ores on a mountain. Seeing Rāvaṇa's angry face, she-jackals followed by vultures vomited flames from their mouths and howled in an inauspicious manner. The wind blew in a way unfavorable to Rāvaṇa, raising clouds of dust over the battlefield and dimming Rāvaṇa's vision. Without the presence of any clouds, startling bolts of lightning fell everywhere with unbearable crashes of thunder. The cardinal directions and the intermediate directions were shrouded in darkness, and because of a shower of dust, the sky became obscured.

Quarrelling with each other fiercely, frightened mynah birds shrieked and fell by the hundreds on top of the chariot. With sparks flying off from their thighs and tears pouring down from their eyes, the horses were simultaneously producing fire and water. Many such ominous omens appeared, foreboding the destruction of Rāvaṇa. Auspicious omens indicating Rāma's victory appeared all about. Seeing the good omens heralding His victory, Rāma felt extremely delighted and considered Rāvaṇa already dead. Because Rāma was knowledgeable about omens, He was

overjoyed and supremely ecstatic to see good omens on His own body, and exhibited even greater prowess in combat.

FIERCE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN RĀMA AND RĀVAṆA

A savage and protracted duel ensued between Rāma and Rāvaṇa, which terrified everyone in the world. At that time, the rākṣasa army and the huge army of monkeys stood motionless, holding their weapons. With distracted minds, everyone was completely amazed to see a mighty human and a rākṣasa contending with each other. Eagerly holding different types of weapons in their hands, they stood in amazement watching the battle and did not attack each other. With astonished eyes, the rākṣasas stared at Rāvaṇa and the monkeys at Rāma, so that they looked like a painting. After seeing those omens, Rāma and Rāvaṇa, who were fixed in wrath, made up their minds and fought fearlessly. Rāma, who knew that He would win, and Rāvaṇa, who knew that he would die, displayed all their prowess during that fight.

Then, due to anger, Rāvaṇa fixed arrows to his bow and shot them directly at the flag fluttering on Rāma's chariot. The arrows did not reach the flag, but struck against the flagpole and fell on the ground. Infuriated by this, Rāma stretched His bow and set His mind to return kind for kind. Rāma aimed at Rāvaṇa's flag and shot a sharpened arrow, which was like a big unbearable snake glowing with its own splendor. The arrow shot by Rāma tore off Rāvaṇa's flag and hit the earth. When torn from Rāvaṇa's chariot, the flag fell down on the ground.

Seeing that his flag had been destroyed, Rāvaṇa was seething with rage as if he were on fire. Possessed by anger, he showered torrents of arrows. Rāvaṇa pierced Rāma's horses with blazing arrows. The divine horses did not stagger or reel. They were as composed as if they had been struck with the stems of lotus flowers. When Rāvaṇa saw that the horses were not affected, he became angry and released another shower of arrows, as well as maces, iron rods, discuses, clubs, mountain peaks, trees, pikes and axes. He

released that shower of weapons, however, by means of magical power. That tumultuous, frightening, horrible and deafening shower of numerous arrows fell everywhere on the monkey army, except where Rāma's chariot was. Rāvaṇa completely covered the sky with arrows. Untired in mind or effort, Rāvaṇa shot thousands of arrows, having lost the will to live.

Seeing Rāvaṇa making a big effort on the battlefield, Rāma placed sharpened arrows on His bow with a faint laugh and shot them by the hundreds and thousands. When Rāvaṇa saw those arrows, he covered the sky with his own. The brilliant shower of arrows released by those two looked like a second effulgent heaven fashioned from arrows. No arrow missed its mark, none failed to penetrate, none was unsuccessful. Colliding with each other, the arrows shot by Rāma and Rāvaṇa on the battlefield fell on the ground. Fighting without interruption, they shot arrows to the right and to the left, covering the sky so as not to leave even a breathing place. Attacking each other blow for blow, Rāma hit Rāvaṇa's horses and Rāvaṇa hit Rāma's horses.

The two incensed warriors engaged in a pitched battle. The hair-raising and tumultuous fight lasted almost an hour. All living beings watched with astonishment as Rāma and Rāvaṇa fought on the battlefield. As they assaulted each other, they became extremely aggravated and charged toward each other. As they fought in this way, their magnificent chariots assumed a grim appearance. The two charioteers displayed their driving skills by steering the chariots in circles and straight forward, or by lurching forward and then retreating. As Rāma maimed Rāvaṇa and Rāvaṇa maimed Rāma, the charioteers exhibited their speediness in going forwards and backwards. Those two magnificent chariots wandered the battlefield firing volleys of arrows, like two clouds pouring down rain. Showing off different kinds of movement on the battleground, the two chariots again stood facing each other. As the two chariots stood there, their hitching poles touched, as did their flags and the mouths of their horses.

With four sharp arrows shot from His bow, Rāma repulsed Rāvaṇa's four spirited horses. Angered by that, the night-stalker shot sharpened arrows at Rāma, the descendent of the Raghu Dynasty. Although wounded by the powerful Rāvaṇa, Rāma showed no sign of pain, nor did He become

disturbed. The ten-headed Rāvaṇa then shot arrows making a sound like thunder at Indra's charioteer. When the forceful arrows fell on Mātali's body, they did not cause the least confusion or distress. Although not bothered by the assault on Himself, Rāma was angered by the assault on Mātali and made His enemy desist with a volley of arrows. Rāma shot twenty, thirty, sixty, hundreds and thousands of arrows at the enemy's chariot.

Seething in his chariot, Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, counteracted Rāma with a shower of maces and clubs on the battlefield. Then the tumultuous and hair-raising conflict resumed. The noise made by the maces, clubs and iron bludgeons, as well as by the feathered arrows, agitated the seven oceans. All the serpents and dānavas inhabiting the nether regions under the agitated oceans were disturbed. The whole earth with its mountains, forests and groves shook. The sun became dim and the wind did not blow. Thereafter all the gods, gandharvas, siddhas, topmost sages, kinnaras and nāgas became anxious and said: "May all be well with the cows and brāhmaṇas! May the worlds endure perpetually! May Rāma be victorious in battle with Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas!" After saying this prayer, the gods accompanied by hosts of sages watched the vicious and hair-raising fight between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Crowds of gandharvas and apsarās watched that unparalleled battle. When they saw it, they said that as the sky is its own equal and the ocean its own too, that battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa was only equal to itself.

Placing on His bow an arrow that was like a poisonous snake, the wrathful Rāma, who increased the glory of the Raghu Dynasty, cut off Rāvaṇa's splendid head, which was adorned with shimmering earrings. All the three worlds saw that head fallen on the ground. Another head exactly like the previous sprouted up out of Rāvaṇa's body. The fleet-handed Rāma quickly cut off that second head with His arrows. As soon as that head had been severed, another head came into view, but that one was also severed by Rāma's arrows that were like thunderbolts. In that way, one hundred heads that were equally brilliant were cut off, yet Rāvaṇa's death remained unrealized. Rāma, who was knowledgeable about all kinds of weapons and possessed a sufficient stock of arrows, began thinking: "These arrows were effective in slaughtering Mārīca, Khara and Dūṣaṇa. With them I disposed

of Virādha in the Krauñca Grove and Kabandha in the Daṇḍakā Forest. With them I pierced the seven śāla trees and mountains, slew Vālī and agitated the ocean. All of these arrows of Mine were trustworthy. Why, then, are the ineffective against Rāvaṇa?”

While He was thinking in this way, He was not distracted in fighting and directed a shower of arrows at Rāvaṇa’s chest. From his chariot, the angry Rāvaṇa also counteracted Rāma with a shower of maces and clubs. Then a great, tumultuous and hair-raising battle took place on the land, in the sky, as well as on mountain peaks. While the gods, dānavas, yakṣas, piśācas, nāgas and rākṣasas watched that great fight, which lasted the whole day and night. The battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa did not stop at day or night, nor for an hour or a moment. Seeing that Rāma could not defeat Rāvaṇa in that engagement, Indra’s outstanding charioteer spoke to Rāma as He was fighting.

RĀMA KILLS RĀVAṆA

Mātali then reminded Rāma of the following: “Why are You acting like Rāvaṇa, as if You did not know what to do? Deploy the brahmāstra weapon to kill him, O lord! The time for his destruction which was foretold by the gods has now arrived.” After being reminded by these words of Mātali, Rāma grabbed a blazing arrow that hissed like a snake.

The blessed sage Agastya had given Rāma that huge and formidable arrow received from Lord Brahmā which never missed its target. Lord Brahmā, whose strength was immeasurable, had fashioned it in the past for Lord Indra, who was eager to conquer the three worlds. The wind-god presided over its feathers, the fire-god and sun-god over its head. Its shaft consisted of space and Mount Mandara and Mount Meru presided over its weight. Fitted with beautiful feathers and adorned with gold, its body shone very brightly. It had been created from the splendor of all the elements and was as brilliant as the sun. It resembled the smoky fire of universal devastation and was like a blazing venomous serpent. It could quickly pierce crowds of men, elephants and horses or shatter gates, iron bars or mountain peaks. Smearred with the blood and fat of its many victims, it looked very ghastly. It was as hard as a thunderbolt and extremely noisy. It could disperse all kinds of armies. It was daunting, terrifying everyone. It hissed like a snake. That dire arrow was like death personified in battle and always provided food to the buzzards, vultures, cranes, jackals and rākṣasas. It was a source of delight for the monkey chieftains and the scourge of the rākṣasas. It was fitted with various pretty eagle feathers.

After charging that tremendous arrow with a mystic hymn in accordance with the regulations laid out in the Vedas, the mighty Rāma placed it on His bow. It could destroy the fear of all the worlds, as well as of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty. It took away the glory of enemies and was delightful to oneself. While Rāma was fitting that paramount arrow to His bow, all living beings became frightened and the earth trembled. Angry as He was and

enthusiastic, Rāma drew His bow all the way back and shot that arrow capable of piercing vital parts at Rāvaṇa. As difficult to repulse as the thunderbolt thrown by Indra and as incapable of warding off as death itself, Rāma shot it at Rāvaṇa's breast.

As soon as that dynamic arrow, which could put an end to a body, was shot, it pierced the heart of the wicked Rāvaṇa. Taking Rāvaṇa's life away with its impact, the blood-stained arrow entered the earth. Soaked with blood from having killed Rāvaṇa, that arrow reentered Rāma's quiver like a servant who had finished his task. As Rāvaṇa was being deprived of his life airs, his bow and arrow fell from his hands. When Rāvaṇa died, the splendorous Nairṛti, the deity presiding over the southwest and protector of the rākṣasas, fell off of his chariot onto the ground, as Vṛtra did when killed by Indra's thunderbolt. Seeing Rāvaṇa fallen on the ground, the surviving night-stalkers became frightened without their lord and fled in all directions. Armed with trees, the monkeys roared as they fell upon the rākṣasas. Having seen Rāvaṇa killed, the monkeys felt very triumphant. Tormented by the jubilant monkeys, the rākṣasas fled out of fear back to Lankā. Because their protector had departed, their pitiful faces were streaming with tears. Overjoyed and exultant, the monkeys shouted out very loudly, proclaiming the victory of Rāma and the death of Rāvaṇa.

At that time, the happy sound of drums being beaten by the residents of the heavenly planets filled the sky. A pleasant breeze carrying celestial fragrances blew there. A fascinating shower of rare flowers fell from the heavens to the earth, sprinkling down on Rāma's chariot. In the heavens could be heard the distinct words: "Well done! Well done!" combined with praises of Rāma uttered by the majestic gods. Now that the monstrous Rāvaṇa, the terror of all the worlds, had been killed, the gods along with the cāraṇas became extremely overjoyed. Glad to have killed that foremost of rākṣasas, Rāma then fulfilled the wishes of Sugrīva, Aṅgada and Vibhīṣaṇa. Thereafter the hosts of gods became peaceful, the directions—clear, the sky—spotless. The earth ceased shaking, the wind began blowing and the sun shone steadily. Gathering together, Sugrīva, Aṅgada, Vibhīṣaṇa and Lakṣmaṇa too, along with all their friends, were thrilled by Rāma's victory and offered him the customary respect on that battlefield. Having killed His enemy and

fulfilled His vow, Rāma stood on the battlefield surrounded by His people and army. Rāma, the source of delight for the kings of the Raghu Dynasty, resembled illustrious Indra surrounded by the hosts of celestials.

VIBHĪṢAṆA LAMENTS THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER

When Vibhīṣaṇa saw his elder brother lying dead on the battleground, he began lamenting due to his mind's being overwhelmed with grief: "O renowned and valiant warrior! You are clever and skilled in politics. Since you are accustomed to lying on an exquisite couch, why are you lying dead on the ground? Having thrown about your big arms adorned with bands, they are now still. Your crown as brilliant as the sun has been knocked off and is shaking slightly. O Warrior, that which I previously warned you about has occurred because, being overwhelmed with lust and delusion, you did not like that advice. This calamity has occurred because out of pride Prahasta, Indrajit, Kumbhakarṇa, Atikāya, Narāntaka and others did not think much of my advice. O best of those who wield weapons, now that you are dead on the ground, the boundary of those practicing self-restraint is gone, along with the personification of virtue. The repository of strength has vanished, along with the refuge of the dexterous warriors. The sun has fallen on the ground. The moon is overcome by darkness. Fire does not flicker with flames. Determination has no energy. Now that Rāvaṇa, the tiger among rākṣasas, is lying in the dust of the battleground as if asleep, what is left for the people who have lost their strength?

"With firmness as its foliage, endurance as its exquisite blossom, austerity for its strength and valor for its firm root, the great tree of the king of the rākṣasas has been felled on the battlefield by the wind of Rāma. With ardor as its tusks, the family line as its backbone, anger as its legs and kindness as its trunk, the mad elephant of Rāvaṇa is sleeping on the ground, his body having been seized by the lion of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty. With prowess and enthusiasm for its jumping flames, sighs for its smoke and his own strength for its heat, the blazing fire of this rākṣasa has been extinguished on the battleground by the rain cloud of Rāma. With rākṣasas as his tail, hump and horns, lasciviousness as his ears and eyes, this bull of

the rākṣasas, who vied with an elephant in rut and could defeat all enemies, has been overpowered and slain by the tiger of Lord Rāma.

As the grief-stricken Vibhīṣaṇa was speaking these reasoned words which revealed his strong view of the situation, Rāma said to him: “Rāvaṇa was not killed in combat because he lacked energy, for he possessed fierce prowess, very exalted enthusiasm and fearlessness. Those warriors who are killed on the battlefield seeking achievement do not need to be mourned, as long as they are fixed in their duties as kṣatriyas. This is not the occasion for grieving over one who has met with death when he had terrified the three worlds, including Lord Indra. No one has ever previously been exclusively victorious in combat. A warrior is either killed by his enemies or kills them in an encounter. Such indeed is the destiny proclaimed by the ancients as befitting a kṣatriya. A kṣatriya killed in battle does not need to be mourned. Such is the conclusion of scripture. Therefore, remembering this conclusion and sticking to truth without grieving, consider what needs to be done at this time.”

After Rāma finished speaking, the grief-stricken Vibhīṣaṇa said to Him something that was beneficial to his brother: “This rākṣasa, who was never defeated by all the gods, not even by Indra, has been vanquished when he met You on the battlefield, as the ocean does when it reaches the shore. He gave charity to those who were due respect. He enjoyed royal pleasures and maintained his dependents. He bestowed wealth upon his friends and enmity upon his adversaries. He offered sacrifice in sacred fires, performed severe austerities, thoroughly mastered the Vedas, and accomplished deeds of exceptional valor. By Your mercy I wish to perform the funeral rites for my deceased brother.” After being addressed with these pathetic words by Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāma instructed him to perform those funeral rites which direct the deceased to heaven. Rāma said: “Animosities end at death. Our purpose has been achieved. Let his final sacrament be performed. He is as much Mine as he is yours.”

RĀVAṆA'S CONSORTS LAMENT

Rāvaṇa's wives were emaciated by grief when they heard that Rāvaṇa had been killed by the great soul Rāma, and rushed out of their residential quarters. Though servants were trying to hold them back, they rolled in the dust on the ground, with disheveled hair, stricken as they were with grief, like cows whose calves had died. They came out of the northern gate accompanied by rākṣasas and entered the grim battlefield in search of their dead husband. Crying out: "O royal prince! O my lord!" they ran all over that area which was strewn with headless bodies and muddied with blood. Bellowing like female elephants, with their eyes overflowing with tears and being overwhelmed with grief for their husband, they looked like elephants whose herd leader had died. Then they saw the gigantic body of Rāvaṇa lying dead on the ground. He was most valorous and splendorous, and resembled a mass of blue eye cosmetic.

Seeing their husband lying down in the dust of the battlefield, they hurriedly threw themselves on his limbs, like cut forest vines. Embracing him out of great regard, one wailed, one grasped his feet, and another hung on to his neck. One threw up her arms and rolled on the ground. Another one fainted as soon as she saw the face of her deceased husband. Placing his head in her lap, one cried as she looked at his face, bathing his face with tears, as dew would cover a lotus flower. Afflicted to see their husband lying dead on the ground, the ladies wailed in many ways because of grief and exclaimed:

"Here on the battleground lies the corpse of he who terrified Lord Indra and Yamarāja, who deprived Kuvera, king of the yakṣas, of his aerial ship Puṣpaka, who instilled fear into the hearts of the great gods, gandharvas and sages. He who had no fear of gods, demons or serpents has met with this calamity at the hands of a human being. Here lies dead a warrior who could not be killed by gods, dānavas or rākṣasas, but who has been killed by a human who walks on the ground. Rāvaṇa has been consigned to death like

an impotent person by a mortal, though he could not be killed by gods, yakṣas or demons.”

Speaking in this way, the aggrieved women began wailing. Stricken with grief, they continued wailing again and again: “You abducted Sītā for your own destruction, ignoring the good advice which your well-wishers always gave you. Rākṣasas have been killed, you yourself and we too have been felled all at the same time. Although your dear brother Vibhīṣaṇa was giving you good advice, out of delusion you treated him harshly because of your desire for self-destruction, which has now been seen. If you had returned Sītā to Rāma, we would not have suffered this horrible misfortune which has destroyed our root. In fact, your brother Vibhīṣaṇa would have had his desire fulfilled, Rāma would have become a friend, none of us would be widows and our enemies would not have their desire satisfied. Out of your mercilessness, you forcibly kept Sītā restrained, thus we three—the rākṣasas, you and ourselves—have been equally destroyed. O best of rākṣasas, surely your acting according to your desire was not sufficient to cause your death. Destiny makes everyone act. One who is killed by destiny dies. This destruction of monkeys, rākṣasas and yourself has taken place under the influence of destiny. Once in motion, the force of destiny cannot be obstructed by wealth, desire, prowess or command.”

Lamenting in this way like female ospreys, the eyes of Rāvaṇa’s aggrieved consorts overflowed with tears.

MANDODARĪ'S LAMENT AND RĀVAṆA'S CREMATION

Among the many consorts of Rāvaṇa who were wailing there, the seniormost and dearest sat there in misery staring at her husband. Seeing that her husband had been slain by the unwearied Rāma, Mandodarī, stricken with anguish, said: "O younger brother of Kuvera, it is certain that even Indra is afraid to stand before you when you are angry. In fact, great sages, illustrious gandharvas and cāraṇas fled in all directions out of fear of your. O king, how is it that you are not ashamed that you were defeated in combat by Rāma, a mere human? How did a human inhabiting the forest kill you, who were undefeatable and enjoyed glory for having overcome all the three worlds with your prowess? It does not make sense that you who lived in a region devoid of humans and being capable of assuming any form at will should be destroyed by Rāma in battle. Since you were fully armed on the frontline of battle, I do not believe your defeat by Rāma was His doing. As soon as Rāma slew your brother Khara at Janasthāna while surrounded by many rākṣasas, it was obvious he was no human being. When by dint of his prowess Hanumān penetrated the city of Laṅkā, which was even difficult for the gods, we became very anxious. When the formidable monkeys constructed a bridge over the ocean, at that very time my heart doubted that Rāma was a mortal. Or else, employing some inconceivable magic to kill you, death personified came in the form of Rāma. Or else it was Indra who overcame you, O mighty one. But what ability did Indra even have to look at you on a battlefield, when you are most powerful, valorous, energetic and the enemy of the gods?

"Obviously He is the greatest of yogīs, the eternal Supersoul, the beginning, middle and final resting place, the greatest of the great, above all darkness, the maintainer, Lord Viṣṇu, who holds a conchshell, disc and club, whose chest is adorned with the mark of Śrīvatsa, who is always fortunate and invincible, who is constant and firm, whose prowess is always successful,

and who has assumed a human form. He is surrounded by all the gods who have assumed the form of monkeys. He is the lord of all the worlds who has descended for the welfare of the worlds. He has conquered you, the enemy of the gods, a source of fear, while you were surrounded by your rākṣasas supporters. In the past, after conquering your senses, you conquered the three worlds. Remembering that enmity, your senses have now conquered you.

“This result has come because you did not heed my advice when I told you not to strike up enmity with Rāma. For no reason you became obsessed with Sītā for the destruction of your sovereignty, as well as that of your body and people. You committed such an offence against Sītā, who is worthy of respect. She is superior to Arundhatī and Rohiṇī in devotion to Her husband, you fool! She is more forbearing than the earth and more gracious than Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune. By abducting through deceit the lovely Sītā, whose every limb is faultless, while She was all alone in the forest, you have brought misfortune upon yourself and us. Having failed to realize your wish for union with Sītā, you have surely been burnt by the asceticism of that woman so devoted to Her husband. It was only because all the gods, including Agni, were terrified of you that you were not burnt to ashes the very moment you assaulted the shapely Sītā. When the time has come, the doer certainly reaps the terrible result of his sinful deeds. Of this there is no doubt. The doer of good reaps a good result and the doer of sin reaps an evil one. While Vibhīṣaṇa has achieved happiness, you have achieved such evil.

“There are other young ladies much more beautiful than Sītā in your harem. Fallen under the sway of Cupid, however, you did not recognize this because of infatuation. Death does not touch any living entity without a reason. Sītā in particular is the reason for your death. You brought Sītā from far away, though She would be the cause of your death. Free from sorrow, Sītā will now enjoy with Rāma. However, I, whose piety was meagre, have fallen into a horrible ocean of sorrow. Enjoying with you on Mount Kailāsa, Mount Mandara and Mount Meru, in Citraratha Garden, and in all of the gardens of the gods, I travelled about in your comfortable airship whose splendor was unequalled. Thus I visited different lands dressed in fine clothes and flower garlands. Because of your death I have been deprived of sense

enjoyment. Although I am the same, I have become as if someone else.
Cursed be the temporary fortune of kings!

“Alas, O king, your face no longer shines as it did with its youthful eyebrows, fine skin, raised nose, reddish lips, sparkling earrings and crown shining like a mountain peak, although it used to vie with the moon, lotus and sun in radiance, beauty and sheen! Your eyes used to roll due to intoxication in the drinking halls. Your neck was adorned with different kinds of flower garlands. Your head was charming and illumined by a sweet smile when you spoke. Pierced by Rāma’s arrows, it is red with dripping blood. Its fat and brains are scattered and it is covered with the dust raised by chariots.

“Alas! By my misfortune, I have reached the last stage of life which brings widowhood, something which I had never thought about before. I was very proud because the king of the dānavas was my father, the lord of the rākṣasas was my husband and the defeater of Indrajit was my son. My protectors were able to crush their proud enemies. They were cruel, famous for their strength and bravery and had no cause of fear, such was my firm belief. How did this unforeseen disaster befall you at the hands of a human being, when you had such powers, O bull among the rākṣasas?

“Today your body, which was glossy like a blue sapphire and as large as a mountain, has been pierced by many arrows. It was adorned with armlets, necklaces of vaidurya gems and pearls, and also flower garlands. It looked more charming during pleasure pastimes and shone brightly on battlefields. It shone with its ornaments, like a cloud accompanied by lightning. It is very difficult for me to touch that body again and I cannot embrace it. With its inner flesh pierced with arrows, your body looks like a bristling porcupine. Its vital parts are completely pierced and its tendons are cut. Though swarthy, it is red with blood and is lying on the ground like a mountain shattered by a thunderbolt. Alas, this dream is actually real. How could you be killed by Rāma?

“You were death for even death. How could you come under the sway of death? My husband enjoyed the three worlds and was a cause of great disturbance for them. He defeated the guardians of the world and lifted up Lord Śiva along with Mount Kailāsa. He manifested his prowess by

subduing the proud, tormenting the world and torturing the pious. On the strength of his might, he spoke boastfully before his enemies. He protected his own party and dependents and slay those who perpetrated terrible deeds. He annihilated thousands of dānavas and yakṣas. He subdued the nivātakavacas in battle, interrupted many sacrifices and protected his own people. He broke the laws of morality and employed magical weapons in combat. He kidnapped the virgin daughters of gods, demons and humans from here and there. He brought sorrow to the wives of his enemies and was the leader of his own people. He protected this island of Laṅkā and performed many terrible deeds. He gave us sense enjoyment and was the best chariot warrior. Seeing my husband endowed with such greatness, I am so stiff that despite being widowed, I maintain this body.

“Since you are accustomed to lying on opulent beds, O lord of the rākṣasas, why are you sleeping here on the ground covered with dust? I was hard hit when my son Indrajit was killed by Lakṣmaṇa in an encounter. But today I am completely devastated. Deprived of my relatives, my protector and sense enjoyments, I shall grieve for endless years. O king, you have departed on a long and difficult journey. Take me with you. Stricken as I am with grief, I shall not survive without you. Why have you left me here in misery? I want to go with you. Why do you not talk to me, being miserable, bereaved and forlorn? Why are you not angry to see me come out of the city unveiled and on foot, my lord? O lover, just see your wives whose veils of shyness have fallen off! Why are you not angry to see them all come outside? This forlorn playmate of yours is lamenting. Why do you not comfort her or treat her with respect?

“O king, you have fallen under the sway of your enemy because you were cursed by those many ladies whom you widowed. They were noble women devoted to their husbands, dedicated to virtue, and engaged in the service of their superiors. They were afflicted with great grief. That curse invoked by those whom you mistreated has now come true. The saying “the tears of women dedicated to their husbands do not fall on the ground in vain” has prove true in your case. Indeed, when you had conquered the world by your might, how did you, who were so proud of your heroism, do such a dastardly thing as stealing someone else’s wife? Sidetracking Rāma with the trick of a deer, and Lakṣmaṇa too, you

kidnapped Sītā. I do not ever remember seeing you display such cowardice on the battlefield! Due to a turn of fate, that cowardice that was seen in you while you were kidnapping Sītā was surely an indication of your future adversity. My brother-in-law Vibhīṣaṇa knows matters relating to the past and future and is conversant with the present. Seeing you abducting Sītā, Vibhīṣaṇa reflected and then sighed uncontrollably. He spoke the truth when he said: “The destruction of the rākṣasa leaders is now imminent.” This great calamity sprung from desire and anger and accompanied by attachment which you perpetrated has destroyed your wealth. This great sin has destroyed our root. You have deprived the whole rākṣasa race of its protector. You who were famous for strength and valor do not deserve to be mourned by me, but because of my feminine nature, my mind is inclined toward pity. Taking merit and demerit, you have gone to your destination. I am just mourning for myself, stricken as I am with grief because of your death. You did not heed the entirely good advice of your friends and well-wishers, as well as of your brothers, O Rāvaṇa. You did not follow Vibhīṣaṇa’s advice, which was logical, meaningful, beneficial, reassuring and in accordance with etiquette. Intoxicated by your strength, you did not heed the advice of Mārīca, Kumbhakarna or my father, Maya Dānava. This is the result of that.

“You look very beautiful like a dark-blue cloud. You are wearing yellow silk garments and sparkling armlets. Why are you lying on the ground covered with blood with your limbs thrown out? Why do you not answer me when I am so sad, as if you were asleep. Why do you not answer me, when I am the granddaughter of a valiant, experienced sorcerer who never retreated from battle? Get up! Get up! Why are you lying down when freshly insulted? Already the sun’s rays have entered the city of Laṅkā today. That iron bludgeon which you used to crush your enemies in battle has been splintered into thousands of pieces by arrows. It was as brilliant as the sun. It was just like Lord Indra’s thunderbolt and you always used to worship it. It killed many enemies on the battleground and was adorned with a mesh of gold. Why are you lying on the battleground as if embracing a dear woman? And why do you not wish to reply to me, as if I were some unpleasant woman? Cursed be my heart which does not break into thousands of pieces since you passed away, even though grief-stricken!”

While lamenting in this way with her eyes shedding tears and her heart moistened with affection, Mandodarī fell into a swoon. Overwhelmed with grief, she fell unconscious on Rāvaṇa's chest. She shone like a flash of lightning on a rain cloud reddened by sunset. Lifting her up from there, her anguished co-wives, who were weeping uncontrollably, consoled her in the following way: "Our dear lady, do you not know that the situation of the worlds is not permanent? The wealth of kings becomes inconstant when there is a change in his situation. When there is a change in a king's situation, his wealth becomes transitory."

While being consoled in this way, Mandodarī wailed loudly, bathing her breasts and spotless face with tears. In the meantime, Rāma said to Vibhīṣaṇa: "Let your brother's funeral rites be performed and the womenfolk comforted."

Then, after reflecting a moment, Vibhīṣaṇa spoke the following humble and virtuous words: "Rāvaṇa rejected good conduct and vows. He was cruel, merciless and deceitful. I cannot perform the funeral rites for one who violated the wives of other men. Dedicated to all that was evil, he was my enemy in the guise of a brother. Rāvaṇa does not merit my respect, even though he deserves it due to seniority. People in this world will no doubt say that I am heartless, O Rāma. But when they hear about all of his bad qualities, they will then say that I did well."

Rāma, the foremost of those who uphold righteousness, was pleased to hear this. Being expert in speaking, Rāma spoke the following words to Vibhīṣaṇa: "I must do something good for you because it was with your help that I achieved victory. O lord of the rākṣasas, I have to tell you what is proper. Of course this night-stalker was unrighteous and deceitful, but he was also always ardent, powerful and courageous in battles. It is said that even all the gods headed by Indra were unable to conquer him. Rāvaṇa was a great person endowed with strength, even though he made people wail. Hostilities end at death. We have accomplished our purpose. Let his funeral rites be performed. He is as much Mine as he is yours. He deserves to be cremated by you as soon as possible, out of duty and in accordance with the regulations. You will enjoy a good reputation."

Hearing what Rāma said, Vibhīṣaṇa hurried. Thus he performed proper funeral rites for Rāvaṇa. In accordance with Vedic principles, they piled up sandalwood logs, padmaka wood and the fragrant uśīra roots and covered the pyre with the hides of black antelopes. The king's final rites were being performed in accordance with the Vedas. They performed Rāvaṇa's obsequial rites very nicely. Constructing a sacrificial altar at the appropriate place to the south of the pyre, they consecrated a fire. Then they all poured a full ladle of clarified butter mixed with yogurt onto the pyre. They placed a small wooden cart on his feet and a mortar on his thighs. Putting in place all the wooden bowls and the upper and lower pieces of araṇi wood for igniting fires, they put a wooden pestle at its appropriate spot. In accordance with the scriptures and the directions of great sages, Rāvaṇa's rākṣasas sacrificed a goat there and afterwards spread over the king a sheet daubed with clarified butter. With forlorn faces, Vibhīṣaṇa's assistants covered Rāvaṇa's body with perfumes, flower garlands and various pieces of cloth. They also poured parched grains over him as tears streamed down their faces.

Vibhīṣaṇa lit the funeral pyre according to the rules. Afterwards, while wearing wet clothes from bathing, he offered water mixed with sesame seeds and kuśa grass to the spirit of his deceased brother. Consoling the ladies again and again, he requested them to return to the city, after which they all returned. When all the rākṣasīs had entered the city, Vibhīṣaṇa approached Rāma and stood humbly at His side. Having killed His enemy, Rāma, along with His army, Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa, also felt elated, as Indra did after slaying Vṛtrāsura.

CORONATION OF VIBHĪṢAṆA

After seeing the slaughter of Rāvaṇa, the gods, gandharvas and dānavas departed in their own aerial vehicles, discussing the good tidings. Discussing the horrible slaughter of Rāvaṇa, Rāma's prowess, the fine battle put up by the monkeys, Sugrīva's counsel, the devotion and valor of Hanumān and Lakṣmaṇa, the faithfulness of Sītā to Her husband and the heroism of Hanumān, those blessed ones left the same way that they had come. Giving permission for that brilliant chariot sent by Indra to leave, Rāma bid adieu to Mātali. When permitted by Rāma, Mātali, the charioteer of Indra, mounted the celestial chariot and flew into the sky itself. When that best of charioteers had ascended to heaven with his chariot, the overjoyed Rāma embraced Sugrīva. After embracing Sugrīva, being urged by Lakṣmaṇa, Rāma headed for the army camp while being honored by the monkey hordes.

Then Rāma said to the honest Lakṣmaṇa, who was shining with splendor and standing nearby: "My dear brother, please crown Vibhīṣaṇa king of Laṅkā, for he is fond of Me, devoted to Me and does good things for Me. This is my greatest wish, that I should see Rāvaṇa's younger brother Vibhīṣaṇa crowned king of Laṅkā." After being instructed in that way by the great Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa replied: "So be it!" With great satisfaction He took the golden jar. Delivering that jar into the hands of monkey chieftains, He instructed those who were as swift as thought and very powerful to fetch water from the ocean. After departing quickly, those eminent monkeys returned bringing water from the ocean. Taking one pot, Lakṣmaṇa sat Vibhīṣaṇa on a great throne. With that jar Lakṣmaṇa then consecrated Vibhīṣaṇa as king among the rākṣasas of Laṅkā by the order of Lord Rāma. Surrounded by hordes of well-wishers, the righteous Lakṣmaṇa sprinkled the pure Vibhīṣaṇa in accordance with scriptural rules. Vibhīṣaṇa's ministers and those rākṣasas who were devoted to him were pleased to see him consecrated as lord of the rākṣasas of Laṅkā.

After receiving that great kingdom given to him by Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa consoled his subjects and then went to see Rāma. Now the joyous night-stalkers who dwelt in the city brought Vibhīṣaṇa whole grains, round sweetmeats, puffed grains, as well as flowers. Accepting them, the valiant Vibhīṣaṇa offered all those auspicious items to Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa. Seeing that Vibhīṣaṇa had accomplished his goals, Rāma accepted all that as His own sweet will.

Then Rāma spoke the following words to Hanumān, who resembled a mountain and who was bowing nearby with joined palms: “Taking permission from the great king Vibhīṣaṇa, my dear Hanumān, enter the city of Laṅkā and ask Sītā about Her well-being. O best of speakers, inform Her of the well-being of Myself, Lakṣmaṇa and Sugrīva, and that Rāvaṇa has been killed in battle. Give Sītā this good news, O monkey lord. After getting a message from Her, you should return.”

HANUMĀN DELIVERS RĀMA'S MESSAGE TO SĪTĀ

When Hanumān, son of the wind-god, had been instructed in that way, he entered the city while being honored by night-stalkers. Entering Rāvaṇa's great residential palace, Hanumān found Sītā seated at the foot of a tree. She was unbathed, surrounded by rākṣasīs and joyless, like the star Rohiṇī affected by a malevolent planet. Approaching Her and greeting Her, Hanumān stood motionless, bowing with humility. Seeing that the mighty Hanumān had arrived, Lady Sītā remained silent at the time. After looking and recognizing him, though, She then became very delighted. Noticing Her placid face, Hanumān began relaying the entire message from Rāma:

“O Princess of Videha, Rāma is well, as are Sugrīva and Lakṣmaṇa. Now that He has killed His enemy, He inquires about Your well-being. O lady, the valiant Rāma killed Rāvaṇa with the help of Lakṣmaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa and the monkeys. I deliver this good news to You, O lady, and I shall further please You. O You who know what is righteousness, fortunately You are alive, otherwise our victory would have been useless. By the strength of your faithfulness to Your husband, we achieved victory in battle. O Sītā, be at ease and free from anxiety, for the enemy Rāvaṇa is dead and Laṅkā has been subjugated. Here is Rāma's message: ‘After being sleepless for a long time and determined to regain You, I built a bridge over the ocean and fulfilled My promise. You do not need to be in anxiety any longer while staying in the palace of Rāvaṇa, for the dominion of Laṅkā has been bestowed upon Vibhīṣaṇa. Therefore, be at ease. You are in Your own home. In fact, the jubilant Vibhīṣaṇa is coming, eager as he is to see You.’”

When spoken to in this way, Sītā, whose face shone like the moon, was tongue-tied due to joy and could not speak at all. Therefore that best of monkeys spoke to Sītā, who was not answering: “What indeed are You thinking of, O lady? Why do You not answer me?” When addressed in that

way by Hanumān, Sītā replied with a voice choked up by joy: “When I heard this good news about the victory of My husband, I was overjoyed and left speechless for a while. After thinking, I do not see any suitably pleasing words to speak to you who have just brought Me such good news, nor do I find a suitable gift for you anywhere in this world. Neither gold, silver, different kinds of gems, nor sovereignty over the three worlds can equal what you have said.”

After being spoken to in that way, Hanumān stood in front of Sītā with joined palms and joyfully replied: “Such words are only possible for You, O sinless lady, for You are devoted to what is pleasing and beneficial to Your husband and are always desirous of His victory. These pithy words spoken by You are also pleasing and superior to a mass of different kinds of jewels or sovereignty over the gods. Seeing Rāma victorious and well-situated after slaying His enemy, I have achieved the fruit of sovereignty over the gods and so forth.

Hearing Hanumān say that, Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, spoke to him words that were even more complimentary: “You alone are able to speak words endowed with exceptional characteristics, adorned with the qualities of sweetness and enhanced by intelligence endowed with the eight excellences. You are a praiseworthy and most pious son of the wind. No doubt strength, courage, knowledge of scripture, potency, prowess, utmost skill, spirit, forbearance, firmness, steadiness and humility—these and many other good qualities are found in you alone.”

Standing unaffected before Sītā with joined palms, Hanumān humbly spoke to Her once more out of joy: “If You permit me, I wish to kill all these rākṣasīs who were intimidating You in the past. While You were suffering in the aśoka grove, I heard these cruel and hideous rākṣasīs of terrible behavior and even more terrible eyes speak harshly to You a number of times on the orders of Rāvaṇa. I wish to kill these cruel, deformed and atrocious rākṣasīs with different kinds of blows. I wish to kill these rākṣasīs who spoke offensively to You and abused You by striking them with my fists, feet, long arms, shanks and knees, as well as by damaging their teeth, biting off their ears and noses and pulling out their hair. Please grant me this boon.

By striking them in this way, I shall kill these grotesque rākṣasīs who threatened You in the past, O illustrious woman.”

The forlorn Sītā, who was very fond of the distressed, thought for a while when addressed in that way by Hanumān and then said to him: “O best of monkeys, who would get angry with obedient maid-servants dependent on their king and acting under his orders? My present misfortune is due to some fault which I committed in the past. That is why all of this has happened to Me, for one reaps the fruits of one’s own actions. Do not speak like that, O strong-armed one. Such indeed is fate, the ultimate destiny. This was predestined for Me because of a combination of circumstances. I pardon the abuse of Rāvaṇa’s maid-servants, soft-hearted as I am in this regards. The rākṣasīs threatened Me because they had been ordered to do so by Rāvaṇa. Now that he is dead, they no longer threaten Me, O son of the wind-god.

“There is an old saying in accordance with virtue that was uttered by a bear in the presence of a tiger. Hear it from Me, O monkey!

na paraḥ pāpam ādatte

pareṣāṁ pāpa-karmaṇām

samayo rakṣitavyas tu

santaiś cāritra-bhūṣaṇaiḥ

‘A superior person does not take note of the sins of those who have committed an offense. The practice of not seeking revenge should be maintained by those saintly persons adorned with good qualities.’

“O monkey, a noble person should be compassionate to the sinners and the pious, and even to those deserving death. No one can avoid not doing something wrong. Nothing bad should be done not even to those cruel persons who enjoy harming others and are engaged in sinful acts.”

After receiving this admonishment from Sītā, the faultless wife of Lord Rāma, Hanumān expertly replied as follows: “You are the worthy and

lawfully wedded wife of Rāma and are endowed with all good qualities. Give me a message in reply, O lady, and I shall return to where Rāma is.” To this, the daughter of King Janaka replied: “I want to see My husband who is fond of His devotees.” When Hanumān heard Sītā’s request, he pleased Her by speaking the following words: “You will see Rāma’s, whose face is like a full moon, His friends alive and His enemies dead, as well as Lakṣmaṇa, as Śacī would see Indra, the lord of the gods.” After saying this to the princess, who was beaming like the goddess of fortune, the glorious Hanumān went to where Rāma was.

SĪTĀ BROUGHT BEFORE RĀMA

After greeting Rāma, the best of archers, whose eyes were shaped just like the petals of a lotus flower, the highly intelligent Hanumān said: “You should now see that grief-stricken lady, for whose sake the endeavor which is now fructified was undertaken. Sītā is overwhelmed with sadness and Her eyes are full of tears. Having heard of Your victory, that Princess of Mithilā longs to see You. Trusting me because of our former acquaintance, She said with bewildered eyes that She wanted to see Her husband.”

When Rāma, the foremost upholder of righteousness, heard these words spoken by Hanumān, He at once became pensive for a while and shed tears profusely. Exhaling a long hot breath while looking at the ground, He said to Vibhīṣaṇa, who was standing nearby: “After Sītā has bathed Her head, anointed Herself with divine cosmetics and adorned Herself with sparkling ornaments, bring Her here without further delay.” When commanded in this way, Vibhīṣaṇa hurriedly entered the residential quarters and informed Sītā of his arrival through the palace women. When Vibhīṣaṇa saw the highly fortunate Sītā, he bowed to Her with his hands joined over his head and said: “O Princess of Videha, after anointing Yourself with heavenly cosmetics and adorning Yourself with sparkling ornaments, please mount this chariot. Bless you! Your husband wishes to see You.” To this, Sītā replied: “O lord of the rākṣasas, I wish to see My husband without bathing.” Hearing Her reply, Vibhīṣaṇa responded: “You should do exactly as Your husband has requested You to do.”

Hearing his remark, the chaste Sītā, who was devoted to Her husband and worshiped Him like a god, said: “All right.” Then, after Sītā’s head was bathed and She had been dressed with costly clothes and valuable ornaments by young women, Vibhīṣaṇa had Her sit in a shiny palanquin covered with exquisite cloth guarded by many rākṣasas and brought Her to Rāma. When Vibhīṣaṇa arrived, he realized that Rāma was still absorbed in thought. Bowing low, he joyfully informed Rāma that Sītā had come.

Hearing that Sītā, who had dwelt for a long time in Rāvaṇa's home, had arrived, Rāma became angry, joyful and forlorn. Distressed by the thought that Sītā had come in a chariot, Rāma sadly said to Vibhīṣaṇa: "O lord of the rākṣasas, you are always engaged in securing victory for Me. Let Sītā approach me as soon as possible."

When Vibhīṣaṇa heard Rāma's command, knowing what was right to do, he quickly dispersed the crowd that had gathered. Rākṣasas wearing jackets and turbans and bearing rattling sticks in their hands moved all about, dispersing the warriors. While being driven away en masse, all the bears, monkeys and rākṣasas stood off at a distant. Even as they were being driven away, a loud sound rose up, like the roar of the ocean lashed by a gale wind. Seeing the disturbed people being dispersed on all sides, Rāma stopped it out of consideration for those being dispersed and in anger at those who were dispersing them. Seemingly burning the dispersers with His eyes, the highly intelligent Rāma angrily said to Vibhīṣaṇa the following reproachful words: "Why do you disregard Me by annoying these people? Stop this annoyance! These people are My own. Neither buildings, nor clothes, nor protective walls, nor royal honors constitute a covering veil for a woman. The appearance of women in public is not a fault during calamities, difficulties, battles, svayamvara ceremonies, sacrifices or marriages. Sītā is in a predicament and beset with difficulty. There is nothing wrong with Her being in public, especially in My presence."

When instructed in this way by Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa became thoughtful. Then he humbly brought Sītā before Rāma. Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva and Hanumān became greatly disturbed when they heard how Rāma spoke to Vibhīṣaṇa. By His stern gestures lacking regard for His wife, they concluded that Rāma was displeased with Sītā. Retracting all Her bodily limbs out of shyness as She followed behind Vibhīṣaṇa, Sītā approached Her husband. Sītā, who considered Her husband as good as God, gazed at the charming face of Her husband with astonishment, joy and affection. Gazing on Her husband's face, which was lovely like a full moon and which She had not seen for a long time, Her mind became free from fatigue and Her face shone like a spotless moon.

RĀMA DISMISSES SĪTĀ

Looking intently at Sītā, who stood bowing at His side out of shyness, Rāma began expressing the feelings in His heart: “O blessed lady, You stand here regained by Me after killing My enemy on the battlefield. I have done whatever should have been done by human effort. I have reached the end of My indignation. The offence has been expunged. I have simultaneously obliterated the disrespect and the enemy. Today My manliness has been seen. Today My effort has become fruitful. Today I have fulfilled My vow. Today I am master of Myself again. I, a human being, have righted the wrong ordained by destiny by which You were abducted by a fickle-minded rākṣasa while You were alone. What is the use of prowess, however great, of a less-intelligent fellow who does not expunge an insult with his own might? The praiseworthy deed of Hanumān whereby he jumped across the ocean and destroyed Laṅkā has borne fruit today. The exertion of Sugrīva, who with his army displayed prowess on the battlefield and gave good advice, has today borne fruit. The exertion of Vibhīṣaṇa, who rejected his faulty brother and came to Me personally, has today also borne fruit.”

After hearing Rāma speak these words, Sītā, whose eyes resembled those of a deer, was bathed in tears. As Rāma looked at His beloved nearby, His anger became even greater. He shone like a fire into which a great quantity of clarified butter had been poured. Wrinkling his eyebrows and looking sideways, He spoke in the midst of the monkeys and rākṣasas:

“I did whatever was possible for a human being to expunge the offence committed against Me. I did this by killing Rāvaṇa, desirous as I was of vindicating My honor. Although You are difficult for ordinary living beings to approach, I have won You back, purified as I am by austerities, just as the sage Agastya conquered the southern region. Let it be known that I did not carry out this war effort with the help of My valorous friends for Your sake. Bless You. I did so in order to protect My good conduct and wipe away the criticism coming from all sides and the insinuations against my famous

dynasty. Standing before Me, though Your character is in doubt, You are very displeasing to me, like light to one with sore eyes. Therefore, You may now go wherever You wish, O daughter of King Janaka. Here are the ten directions, O good lady. I have no other use of You.

“What real man born in a noble family would take back a wife who had stayed in the house of another man, just because she was affectionate to him? How could I, who boast of My great lineage, take You back, when You were held in Rāvaṇa’s lap and scrutinized with wicked glances? I have accomplished the purpose for Your rescue. I have no more attachment for You. You may go as You wish. I have spoken this way just now after making up My mind. Set Your mind as You wish on Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata, Śatrughna, Sugrīva or the rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa, or do whatever pleases Your mind. O Sītā, after beholding Your divine and captivating beauty, Rāvaṇa could not have restrained himself very long while You were staying in his home.”

Being accustomed to hearing pleasing things from Her husband, when the proud lady heard these unpleasant words, She shed tears and cried loudly for a long time. She then resembled a forest creeper pulled down by the trunk of an elephant.

SĪTĀ'S TRIAL BY FIRE

After hearing these harsh and hair-raising words spoken by Rāma, Sītā became greatly distraught. Hearing Her husband's terrible accusations for the first time in a large gathering, the Princess of Mithilā became bowed with shame. As if pierced by those arrow-like words, She drew Her limbs within Herself and shed profuse tears. Then, wiping Her tear-stained face, She slowly spoke to Her husband with a choked-up voice:

“Why do you address Me with such jarring, rough and unbecoming words, O valiant one, as a common man would a common woman? I am not as You think, O strong-armed one. Trust Me! I swear by My own character! Because of the conduct of certain women, You are doubtful about women as a whole. If You were just testing Me, then give up this doubt! When I came into contact with Rāvaṇa's body, I was helpless, My lord. It was not My choice to do that. Destiny is to blame in that regards. What is under My control, My heart, that always abides in You. Being unprotected as I was, what was I to do with My limbs when they were under the control of someone else? If You could not know Me after growing up intimately with Me and living with Me, then I am completely finished.

“When the great hero Hanumān was sent to find Me, why did You not reject Me while I was still in the city of Lāṅkā, O king? I would have given up My life right in front of Hanumān as soon as I would have heard that You had rejected Me. Then You would not have undertaken this useless enterprise, putting Your life in danger, nor would Your friends have undergone such unnecessary difficulty. Moreover, You, O tiger among kings, like a little man prone to fits of anger, have given singular importance to the general nature of women. I am known as the daughter of King Janaka not because I took birth from him, but because I came out of the ground itself at the sacrificial arena. Neither did You give much importance to My conduct, O You who know what is good conduct. Neither did You consider

as valid the fact that You accepted My hand in matrimony in Our youth. You have turned Your back on all My devotion and good disposition.”

While speaking in this way with a voice choked up with tears, Sītā said to Lakṣmaṇa, who was disheartened and absorbed in thought: “O son of Sumitrā, prepare for Me a pyre, the only remedy for this calamity! Agonized by these false rumors, I cannot bear living. I shall enter a blazing fire, the only course left for Me now that I have been rejected in a public gathering by My husband who is not pleased with My qualities.” When requested in this way by Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, who was overwhelmed with indignation, looked at Rāma. Recognizing Rāma’s mental pleasure displayed by His physical appearance, the valiant Lakṣmaṇa raised a pyre in accordance with Rāma’s wish. While Rāma stood with His head hanging down, Sītā circumambulated Him and approached the blazing fire. Bowing down respectfully to the gods and brāhmaṇas, Sītā joined Her palms, approached the fire and said:

“As My heart never turns away from Rāma, may the god of fire, the witness of the world, protect Me on all sides. Since Rāma considers Me polluted, even though My character is pure, may the god of fire, the witness of the world, protect Me on all sides. In as much as I have never been unfaithful to Rāma by action, thoughts or words, let the god of fire protect Me. Since the sun-god, the wind, the directions, the moon, the day, the twilights, the night, the earth and others know that I am endowed with good qualities, may the god of fire protect Me.”

After saying this, Sītā circumambulated the fire respectfully and then entered into the blazing flames with an undisturbed mind. The large crowd there with children and elderly people saw the Princess of Mithilā enter the fire. Adorned with sparkling god ornaments, She shone like freshly melted gold. In the presence of everyone, She threw Herself into the blazing fire. Then all living beings saw the highly fortunate Sītā, who was glowing like a golden altar, enter into the fire. All the women screamed when they saw Her falling into the fire, like an unbroken stream of clarified butter offered with mantras into a sacred fire. All the three worlds of gods, gandharvas and dānavas saw Her falling into the fire, like a goddess cursed to fall from heaven to hell. As She was entering the fire, from the rākṣasas and monkeys rose a loud cry of shock that was really strange.

LORD BRAHMĀ REVEALS RĀMA'S DIVINITY

When the virtuous Rāma heard these cries of the people, He reflected for some time, His mind being agitated and His eyes filled with tears. Gathering together and reaching the city of Laṅkā in their aerial vehicles that some like the sun, Kuvera, Yamarāja, the forefathers, Indra, the lord of the gods, Varuṇa, the lord of the waters, the three-eyed Śiva whose emblem is a bull and Lord Brahmā, the creator of everything and best of those who know the Vedas, approached Rāma. Raising up their long arms adorned with ornaments, the best of the residents of heaven said to Rāma, who was standing with joined palms:

“Since You are the creator of the whole world and the best of those who are learned, O Lord, why do You ignore Sītā while She is fallen in a blazing fire? Why do You not recognize Yourself to be the foremost of the many gods? Among the eight Vasus, You were formerly the Prajāpati Ṛtadhāmā, who was the creator of the three worlds and their undisputed lord. Among the Rudras, You are the eighth called Mahādeva and among sādhyas You are the fifth called Vīryavān. The two Aśvinī-kumāras are Your ears and the sun and moon are Your eyes. You are seen as the beginning, middle and end, O scorcher of enemies. Yet You ignore Sītā as an ordinary man would do.”

After being spoken to in this way by the protectors of the world, Rāma, the Lord of the world and foremost of those who uphold righteous, replied to the gods: “I consider Myself a human being named Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha. Let Lord Brahmā say who I am and where I came from.”

Then Lord Brahmā said to Rāma, the descendent of Kakutstha: “Listen to my true words, O He whose prowess never fails. You are Lord Nārāyaṇa, all-mighty God Himself who wields a discus. You are Lord Varāha with a single tusk, the conqueror of Your past and future enemies. You are

the imperishable Absolute, the truth which resides in the middle and end, O descendent of the Raghu Dynasty. You are the supreme righteousness of the worlds, the four-armed Viṣvaksena. You are the wielder of the bow Sārṅga, the Lord of the senses, the puruṣa and the supreme person. You are the invincible Lord Viṣṇu wielding a sword, as well as the mighty Lord Kṛṣṇa. You are Skandha, commander-in-chief of the gods, and also the village leader. You are intelligence, strength, forbearance and self-control. You are the origin and destination. You are Upendra, the younger brother of Lord Indra, and Madhusūdana, the slayer of the Madhu demon.

“You are the creator of Lord Indra, the great Lord. You are Lord Viṣṇu, known as Padmanābha because His navel is shaped like a lotus flower. You put an end to Your enemies in battle. The great and holy sages say that You are a refuge worth taking shelter of. In the form of the Vedas, You are a bull with one hundred heads and one thousand horns. You are the original creator of the three worlds and the independent Lord. You are the support and progenitor of the siddhas and sādhyas. You are sacrifice and the syllable vaṣaṭ for offering sacrifice. You are the mystic syllable om̐ and the highest of the high. People do not know who You are or that You are the origin and reservoir. You are found in all living beings, within the cows and brāhmaṇas too. You are in all directions, in the sky, in the mountains and in the rivers. You are the glorious one who has thousands of feet, heads and eyes.

“You maintain all living beings, the earth and all mountains. At the end of the world You are seen on a great serpent in the water. You are maintaining the three worlds, along with the gods, gandharvas and dānavas. I am Your heart, O Rāma, and the goddess Sarasvatī is Your tongue. The gods created by Lord Brahmā are the hairs on Your limbs, O Lord. When You close Your eyes, it is considered night, and when You open them, it is daytime. Your thoughts become the Vedas. This world could not exist without You. The whole world is Your body, and the earth is Your steadiness. Fire is Your anger, the moon—Your grace. You bear the mark of Śrīvatsa on Your chest. Previously You crossed the three worlds with three steps. After binding the dreadful Bali, You made Lord Indra king. Sītā is Lakṣmī and You are Viṣṇu. You are God, Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of all created beings.

“For the destruction of Rāvaṇa, You entered a human form in this world. You have accomplished our purpose, O best upholder of righteousness. You have slain Rāvaṇa. Return to Your heavenly abode happily. Your valor is unfailing and Your heroic exploits are never useless. Audience with You is unfailing, and so also is Your praise. Those who are devoted to You will be successful in this world. Those who are devoted to You, the primeval Supreme Person, achieve their desires in this world and the next.”

Those who chant this divine hymn composed by Lord Brahmā and recite this ancient story will never have any difficulty.

AGNI DELIVERS SĪTĀ TO RĀMA

As soon as Brahmā finished saying these auspicious words, Agni came out of the fire carrying Sītā. Rising up in a personal form, Agni picked up Sītā and left the pyre. Sītā was as brilliant as the newly risen sun. She was wearing ornaments of smelted gold and red garments. The locks of hair on Her head were tinged with blue. Even though She had entered the fire, Her attire was unaffected. Carrying the blameless Sītā in his arms, Agni returned Her to Rāma exactly as She was before.

Then the god of fire, the witness of the world, said to Rāma: “Here is Your wife Sītā. There is no sin in Her. This lovely woman of excellent conduct has never forsaken You by words, mind, intelligence or eyes. This forlorn yet chaste lady was abducted by the haughty Rāvaṇa while She was alone in the forest and unprotected in Your absence. Though detained in Rāvaṇa’s residential quarters and guarded by horrible rākṣasīs of wicked thoughts, She remained devoted to You with Her mind fixed on You. The Princess of Mithilā never thought about that rākṣasa, even when tempted and threatened in various ways, for Her mind was absorbed in thoughts of You. As such, accept the sinless Sītā, for Her character is pure. I command You not to say anything further.”

The righteous Rāma was pleased in mind to hear this. Thinking for a while, His eyes became flooded with tears of joy. Then the splendid Rāma, who was determined, a performer of great deeds, the foremost of the gods and chief upholder of righteousness, replied as follows: “Certainly Sītā needed this purificatory ritual for the eyes of the world because She had been staying for a long time in Rāvaṇa’s private residence. People would say that I was indeed childish and lusty if I had not proven Her chastity. I also know Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, whose heart is solely attached to Me and whose mind always dwells on Me. In order to convince the three worlds of Her purity, I, the very foundation of truth, ignored Her even as She entered the fire. Rāvaṇa could not violate this broad-eyed lady, protected as

She is by Her own potency, any more than the great ocean can surpass its shore. The wicked Rāvaṇa could not lay hands on Sītā even in thought. She was inapproachable for him, like a blazing flame of fire. This chaste lady could not give way to weakness in Rāvaṇa's personal residence, for She is nondifferent from Me, as sunlight is to the sun. Sītā, the daughter of King Janaka, is completely pure in all the three worlds. I could no more renounce Her than could a self-controlled person his fame. Surely I must obey the good advice given by you affectionate protectors of the word."

After this, when the victorious and illustrious Rāma was reunited with His beloved, He experienced joy while being praised for the activities He had performed.

THE SPIRIT OF KING DAŚARATHA APPEARS

When Lord Śiva heard the beautiful statement made by Rāma, he then spoke words that were more beautiful: “O lotus-eyed one, Your arms are very great, and so is Your chest. You are the scorcher of Your enemies. Luckily You have performed this deed, O foremost of those who uphold righteousness. Fortunately, O Rāma, You have eliminated in battle the fear occasioned by Rāvaṇa, which was covering the whole world with a dreaded gloom. When You have done the following things: comforted Your forlorn brother Bharata and Your glorious mother Kausalyā, seen Kaikeyī and Lakṣmaṇa’s mother, Sumitrā, ruled over Ayodhyā, delighted Your well-wishers, established Your dynasty in the lineage of the Ikṣvākus, achieved unparalleled fame by performing a horse sacrifice and given wealth to the brāhmaṇas, You can ascend to heaven. Here is Your father, King Daśaratha seated in an aerial vehicle, O descendent of Kakutstha. He was Your most glorious senior in this mortal world. Delivered by You, his son, he has gone to the world of Lord Indra. You and Your brother Lakṣmaṇa should greet him.”

When Rāma heard this, He and Lakṣmaṇa bowed to Their father, who was on the upper deck of an airship. With His brother Lakṣmaṇa, Lord Rāma gazed upon His father, who was shining with his own glory and wearing spotless garments. While seated in the airship, King Daśaratha was overwhelmed with joy to see his son, who was dearer to him than his own life. Placing Rāma in his lap and embracing Him with his arms, the monarch, who was seated on a great throne, spoke the following words:

“O Rāma, I swear to You that without You, I do not think much of heaven or the honor given me by all the excellent gods. I am now experiencing the topmost pleasure seeing that You have killed Your enemy, are satisfied in mind and have fulfilled the period of exile in the forest. The

words Kaikeyī spoke to exile You are still in my heart. Seeing You well and embracing You with Lakṣmaṇa, I am now free from sorrow, as the sun is free from mist. I have been delivered by You, a great and noble son, as the brāhmaṇa Kahola was by his son Aṣṭavakra. My dear son, now I know that You are the Lord of the gods, the Supreme Person, come here to annihilate Rāvaṇa.

“Kausalyā has certainly accomplished her goal in that she will have the pleasure of seeing You returned home from the forest, O crusher of enemies. Those men who will see You returned to the city of Ayodhyā and consecrated on the throne as king will certainly be accomplished in purpose. I would like to see You reunited with Bharata, who is devoted, strong, pure and practicing righteousness. My dear son, You have spent fourteen years in exile in the forest with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa for my pleasure. The term of exile has expired, My promise has been fulfilled, and Rāvaṇa has been slain in combat for the pleasure of the gods. You have performed a laudable feat and gained fame. Installed as king, may you attain a long life with Your brothers!”

After the king finished speaking, Rāma replied with joined palms: “Be merciful to Kaikeyī and Bharata, O knower of what is right. Do not let that terrible curse befall Kaikeyī and Her son when you said that you were rejecting her and her son.” Agreeing to Rāma’s request and embracing Lakṣmaṇa, who stood with joined palms, the great king again spoke as follows to Lakṣmaṇa: “By serving Rāma with devotion along with Sītā, Princess of Videha, You have pleased me greatly and earned for Yourself the fruit of virtue. By pleasing Rāma, You will achieve piety and wide fame in this world, and also the highest glory and heaven. Serve Rāma. Bless You, O delight of Sumitrā! Rāma is always engaged in the welfare of the whole world. Offering their respects to the great Rāma, the three worlds with Indra, siddhas and great sages worship Him as the Supreme Person. My dear son, Rāma is said to be the unmanifest imperishable Absolute esteemed by the Vedas and the heart and secret of all the gods. You have achieved the purpose of practicing virtue and also extensive fame by serving Rāma as well as Sītā with devotion.”

After speaking in this way to Lakṣmaṇa, the virtuous king then addressed the following eloquent words to the Princess of Videha: “You

should not harbor any resentment because of this public rejection of You. Rāma actually did this for Your own vindication, for He desires Your welfare. No doubt You do not need to be instructed about how to serve Your husband. Nevertheless, I must say that He is Your supreme worshipable deity.”

When King Daśaratha finished instructing the two princes and Sītā, he departed for Indraloka in the airship.

LORD INDRA REVIVES ALL THE DEAD MONKEYS

Lord Indra, the tamer of the demon Pāka, was very happy after King Daśaratha departed and spoke to Rāma, who was standing with joined palms: “To see You is never futile for us, O best of men. We are delighted. Therefore say whatever pleases Your mind.” After being addressed in this way Rāma replied as follows with joined palms, accompanied by His brother Lakṣmaṇa and His wife Sītā:

“If You indeed find pleasure in Me, O lord of the gods, then I shall speak. Make Me a promise, O best of speakers. May all those monkeys who went to the abode of death while performing acts of valor on My behalf regain their lives and rise up! All those monkeys who were separated from their children and wives for My sake, let them be reunited with them and not consigned to death. By your grace I chose that they be reunited. I wish to see all those bears and long-tailed monkeys healthy, healed of their wounds and endowed with strength and energy. Let there be flowers, roots and fruits even out of season and let the rivers be clear wherever the monkeys live.”

When Lord Indra heard Rāma’s request, he gave the following pleasant reply: “My dear Rāma, the boon which You have requested is very difficult to fulfill. No previous promise of mine has ever been false, therefore this will come to pass. Those monkeys who were killed in combat by the rākṣasas will rise up, including the many bears and long-tailed monkeys who had their heads cut off. The monkeys will rise up, healthy, healed of their wounds and restored with strength and energy, just as when sleeping persons wake up. Overjoyed, they will all be reunited with their friends, relatives, kinfolk and associates. The trees will be dotted with flowers and laden with fruit, and the rivers will have sufficient water, O wielder of a mighty bow.”

With all their limbs healed of their former wounds, all the eminent monkeys got up as if from sleep. All the monkeys were amazed, asking: “What is this?” All those monkeys thanked Rāma. Seeing that Rāma had accomplished His purpose, those best of gods all spoke to Him and Lakṣmaṇa with delight as they offered praise: “Leave this place for Ayodhyā and send away the monkeys! Console this austere and devoted Princess of Mithilā. See Your brother Bharata who is practicing vows out of grief for You, as well as the great Śatrughna and all Your mothers. Go get Yourself consecrated king and please the citizens.”

After speaking to Rāma in this way and giving Him and Lakṣmaṇa advice, Lord Indra departed with the gods in their airship as brilliant as the sun. Offering respects with Lakṣmaṇa to all those preeminent gods, Rāma then ordered the army to set up camp. Then the illustrious and elated soldiers of that great army protected by Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa shone brightly with splendor on all sides, like a night illuminated by the cooling rays of the moon.

RĀMA PREPARES TO RETURN TO AYODHYĀ

When Rāma had woken comfortably from the previous night's rest, Vibhīṣaṇa wished Him victory with joined palms and said: "Different kinds of baths, cosmetics, garments, ornaments, sandalwood paste and celestial flower garlands are ready. These women with eyes like lotuses are expert in decorating. They are at Your service to bath You as required, O descendent of the Raghu Dynasty."

When addressed in this way, Rāma replied to Vibhīṣaṇa: "Invite the monkeys headed by Sugrīva to bathe. The mighty-armed Prince Bharata, who is the shelter of truth and righteous. Though deserving of comforts, He is suffering on My account. Without Bharata, who is practicing virtue, I do not think much of bathing, garments and ornaments. Find out how we can quickly return to the city of Ayodhyā, for the path to Ayodhyā is very difficult to walk."

After hearing this request, Vibhīṣaṇa replied as follows: "O prince, I shall get You to the capital in one day. Bless You! There is an excellent airship as bright as the sun called Puṣpaka. It belongs to my half-brother Kuvera and was confiscated by the powerful Rāvaṇa after defeating the former in combat. It goes where one wishes. I have kept it here for You. That airship which resembles a cloud is waiting now. With this vehicle You will reach Ayodhyā without any difficulty. If You find favor with me and remember my good qualities, and if You harbor friendship for me, then stay here for some time, O wise one, along with Your brother Lakṣmaṇa and Your wife Sītā. When You have been entertained with all kinds of delights, You may go, O Rāma. In the meantime, please accept with Your army and host of friends my hospitality arranged with affection. I seek this favor out of affection and great respect and with feelings of friendship. I am Your servant. I am not ordering You."

When spoken to in this way, Rāma replied to Vibhīṣaṇa, as all the rākṣasas and monkeys listened: “I am honored by you, O valiant warrior, by your fine counsel, by your whole-hearted efforts and by your utmost friendliness. I dare not give in to your request, O lord of the rākṣasas. Yet My mind is in a hurry to see My brother Bharata. When He came to Citrakūṭa to bring Me back to Ayodhyā, imploring Me with a bowed head, I did not heed him. I also long to see Kausalyā, Sumitrā, the illustrious Kaikeyī, My friend Guha, the citizens of Ayodhyā and the inhabitants of the outlying region. Grant Me permission to leave. My dear Vibhīṣaṇa, I have been honored by you. There is no need to be angry. I beg you, O friend.”

Thereafter Vibhīṣaṇa hastily summoned the airship. It was as brilliant as the sun. Its parts were adorned with gold. I had platforms made of vaidurya gems. It had many upper compartments and shone all over with silver. It was nicely decorated with pale yellow flags and pennants. It had golden chambers adorned with gold lotuses. It was hung with strings of small bells and had screens inlaid with pearls. There were strands of bells hanging all about that made a sweet sound. It resembled Mount Meru and was manufactured by Viśvakarmā, It was graced with spacious compartments adorned with peals and silver. Their floors were inlaid with sparkling crystals. They had expensive seats inlaid with vaidurya gems and upholstered with costly cloth, and were supplied with great treasures. It could not be assaulted and was as swift as the mind. Announcing that it was ready, Vibhīṣaṇa stood before Rāma.

RĀMA AND COMPANY DEPART FOR AYODHYĀ

Vibhīṣaṇa stood not far away and spoke to Rāma, after he had brought the flower-decked Puṣpaka airship. With joined palms Vibhīṣaṇa humbly and respectfully said to Lord Rāma: “What should I do?” After thinking, the glorious Rāma replied to him as Lakṣmaṇa listened, speaking the following words full of affection:

“Let all the forest-dwelling monkeys and bears who put up a tremendous effort be honored with different kinds of jewels and wealth, O Vibhīṣaṇa! You have obtained Laṅkā with the help of these monkeys who never retreated from battle and who were glad to fight at the risk of their own lives. All of these forest-dwellers have accomplished their tasks. Reward their work with gifts of wealth and jewels. When honored and gratified by you in this way, the monkey troop leaders will be happy and grateful. Then everyone will consider you detached, prosperous, kind and self-controlled. An army becomes agitated and rejects on the battlefield a king who is devoid of all those qualities which invoke affection and who causes unnecessary slaughter.”

When instructed in this way by Rāma, Vibhīṣaṇa honored everyone by distributing jewels and wealth. Seeing the monkey troop leaders rewarded with jewels and wealth and hugging the bashful Sītā to His chest, Rāma then ascended the excellent airship along with His brother Lakṣmaṇa, a valiant archer. Offering respect to all the monkeys and in particular to the valorous Sugrīva while standing in the airship, Rāma spoke the following words:

“O foremost of monkeys, you have done an act of friendship. With My permission, you may all go as you wish. O Sugrīva, out of fear of unrighteousness, you have done whatever an affectionate and helpful friend would do. Return to Kiṣkindhā right away surrounded by your army. O

Vibhīṣaṇa, reside in the kingdom of Lāṅkā which has been conferred on you by Me. Not even the residents of heaven headed by Indra will be able to attack you. I shall head for Ayodhyā, the capital of My father. I wish to bid you all farewell and take leave of you.”

When the monkeys and Vibhīṣaṇa heard this, they all replied with joined palms: “We wish to go to Ayodhyā. Take us all with You! With delight we shall roam about the forest and gardens there. After seeing You anointed in the coronation ceremony and greeting Kausalyā, we shall return to our own homes very soon.”

After Rāma was addressed in this way by the monkeys and Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāma said to them: “I and My relatives shall experience the highest possible pleasure if I return to Ayodhyā accompanied by all of you. O Sugrīva, immediately get in the airship along with the monkeys. O Vibhīṣaṇa, get on board with your ministers.”

Sugrīva happily boarded the dazzling Puṣpaka airship with the monkeys, as did Vibhīṣaṇa and his ministers. Once they were all seated in Kuvera’s extraordinary conveyance, Rāma gave permission and it took off into the sky. Traveling in that airship, which was adorned with the resplendent image of a swan, Rāma felt pleased and honored like Kuvera himself. All those monkeys, bears and mighty rākṣasas took their seats comfortable without obstructing anyone else.

RĀMA POINTS OUT TO SĪTĀ THE DIFFERENT REGIONS

Permitted by Rāma, the excellent airship, which was as large as a cloud, made a loud woosh as it took off. Casting His glance all around, Rāma then spoke to Sītā, whose face shone like the moon:

“O Princess of Videha, just see the city of Laṅkā built by Viśvakarmā on the top of Trikūṭa Mountain, which resembles Mount Kailāsa. See the battlefield muddied with flesh and blood where a great slaughter of monkeys and rākṣasas took place. Here lies Rāvaṇa, lord of the rākṣasas, who was given boons and was therefore very harmful. I slew Rāvaṇa for Your sake, O broad-eyed lady. Here is where Kumbhakarṇa was killed, and the night-stalker Prahasta. Here is where the monkey Hanumān killed Dhūmrākṣa. Here is where the great Suśeṇa killed Vidyunmālī. Here is where Lakṣmaṇa killed Rāvaṇa’s son Indrajit in combat. Here is where Aṅgada killed the rākṣasa named Vikāṭa, Sugrīva killed Virūpākṣa, Ṛṣabha killed Mahāpārśva and Nīla killed Mahodara. Hanumān also killed Akampana and other powerful rākṣasas.

Here did Rāvaṇa’s consort Mandodarī surrounded by one thousand prominent co-wives lament. Here, O lovely lady, is seen the place where We crossed the ocean. Here is the bridge built over the salt ocean under My command. Though difficult to execute, it was constructed by Nala on account of You, O broad-eyed one. O Sītā, just see the imperturbable ocean with is the abode of Varuṇa. It is boundless, roaring and filled with conchshells and mother-of-pearl. See the golden Mount Maināka, which has a core of gold. It rose up, splitting the ocean, in order to offer Hanumān a rest. Here is the shore of the ocean upon which Our army camped before crossing. Here is that ford of the ocean which will be known and honored by the three worlds as “Setubandha.” It is a very holy place capable of destroying great sins. Here is where the king of the rākṣasas Vibhiṣaṇa came

to Us. Here is seen the charming city of Kiṣkindhā with its lovely forest, and where I killed Vālī.”

Upon seeing the city of Kiṣkindhā formerly protected by Vālī, Sītā, who was agitated by affection, spoke the following humble words: “O king, I would like to accompany You to the capital Ayodhyā surrounded by Sugrīva’s wives headed by Tārā and these other monkey lord’s wives.” Hearing Sītā’s request, Rāma replied to Her: “So be it!” When the airship reached Kiṣkindhā and stopped, Rāma looked at Sugrīva and said: “O tiger among monkeys, tell all these eminent monkeys that they should accompany Sītā to Ayodhyā with their wives, and you should do likewise with your wives, O mighty one. Hurry, Sugrīva! We are going!”

Instructed in this way by Rāma, Sugrīva, accompanied by all the glorious monkey leaders, at once entered his residential quarters. Seeing Tārā, he said: “My dear, by the sweet will of Sītā, Rāma has given permission for you to accompany us with the wives of the other monkeys. Please hurry up! Taking the wives of the monkeys, we shall proceed to Ayodhyā and show you all of King Daśaratha’s wives.” Hearing Sugrīva’s instruction, Tārā, whose every limb was lovely, summoned all the monkey wives and said: “Sugrīva’s has given us permission to accompany all the monkeys, thus you will do me a favor by letting me see Ayodhyā. We shall also see Rāma’s entrance into Ayodhyā surrounded by the citizens of the region, as well as the opulence of all of King Daśaratha’s wives.”

With the permission of Queen Tārā, all the wives of the monkeys decorated themselves appropriately and circumambulated the airship and boarded it with the desire to see Sītā. When Rāma saw that the airship had soon taken off with the monkeys’ wives aboard, He said to Sītā while They were in the vicinity of R̥ṣyamūka Mountain:

“Behold R̥ṣyamūka Mountain, the best of mountains with veins of gold and other metals, resembling a cloud interspersed with lightning. Here I met the lord of monkeys, Sugrīva, and made a pact with him for the slaughter of Vālī. Here is seen Lake Pampā with clumps of lotuses and lovely forests, where I lamented in great anxiety due to separation from You. On the bank of this lake I met Śabarī, who was engaged in the practice of virtue.

And here is where I killed the demon Kabandha, whose arms were one yojana long. There You can see in Janasthāna that splendidous tree under which a great battle took place between the merciless Rāvaṇa and the great soul Jaṭāyu on Your behalf. Janasthāna is also where I killed Khara, Dūṣaṇa and the most valiant Triśirā with straight-shooting arrows.

“Here is the site of Our hermitage, O lovely lady, and the charming leaf hut from whence You were forcibly abducted by the lord of the rākṣasas, Rāvaṇa. Here is the charming Godāvarī River, whose clean waters are pleasant. Here is seen the hermitage of the sage Agastya surrounded by banana trees. This shining hermitage belongs to the great soul Sutīkṣṇa. Here is seen the large hermitage of the sage Śarabhaṅga, where the thousand-eyed Lord Indra had come. At this place I killed the giant demon Virādha. O slender-waisted lady, here are seen those ascetics at the hermitage directed by Atri, who is as brilliant as the sun. Here You met his austere wife engaged in practicing virtue.

“There shine Mount Citrakūṭa, where Bharata came to seek My favor. Here is seen the charming Yamunā River bordered by beautiful groves of trees. Here, O Princess of Mithilā, is seen the hermitage of the glorious Bharadvāja. Here is seen the holy Ganges River which flows through the three worlds. Its banks are crowded with many kinds of birds and trees in full bloom. Here is Śrīgerapura, where My friend Guha lives. Here is the Sarayu River lined with sacrificial posts. On its banks are forests of hundreds of kinds of trees in full bloom. Here, O Sītā, is My father’s capital Ayodhyā. O Princess of Videha, offer respects to Ayodhyā, now that You have returned.”

Thereafter all the monkeys and rākṣasas along with Vibhīṣaṇa jumped up with excitement to see the city.

RĀMA MEETS THE SAGE BHARADVĀJA

Reaching the hermitage of Bharadvāja on the fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Āśvin (September) when the fourteen years of exile were completed, the disciplined Rāma offered His respects to the sages. After offering respect to the sage Bharadvāja, whose wealth was his asceticism, Rāma inquired from: “Have you heard, O blessed one, whether there is sufficient food in the city and lack of disease? I hope Bharata is busy and that My mothers are still living.”

When questioned in this way by Rāma, the great sage Bharadvāja happily replied with a smile: “All is well at Your home. Covered with dirt and wearing matted hair, Bharata is waiting for You, keeping Your wooden sandals before Him. Formerly, I felt very sad to see You entering the great wilderness on foot with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā. You were dressed in bark cloth and had lost Your kingdom. You were intent on practicing virtue alone. You had given up everything in order to carry out Your father’s request. You had renounced all enjoyment, like an immortal god fallen from heaven. You were set to carry out Kaikeyī’s demands by eating only forest roots and fruits. Seeing that You have now accomplished Your task, defeated Your enemies and are accompanied by your friends and relatives, I am experiencing great pleasure. I know all about the happiness and distress which You underwent in abundance while residing at Janasthāna, O descendent of the Raghu Dynasty. While You were engaged in the welfare of the brāhmaṇas and protecting all the ascetics, Your blameless wife was abducted by Rāvaṇa.

“The appearance of Mārīca, the abduction of Sītā, the appearance of Kabandha, Your going to Lake Pampā, where You struck up friendship with Sugrīva and killed Vālī, the quest for Sītā and Hanumān’s deeds, the discovery of Sītā, Nala’s construction of a bridge, how Laṅkā was burned, the joy of the monkey troop leaders over the death of Indrajit, how Rāvaṇa, who was proud of his strength, was annihilated in combat, along with his sons, relatives, ministers, army and beast of burden, how You met with the

gods after slaying that rākṣasa who was a thorn in the side of the gods, and how the gods offered You blessings—all this is know to me by my austerities, O lover of righteousness. And besides, my disciples who go to the city inform me about the happenings. On this occasion I too offer You a boon. Please accept this water to wash Your hands. You will go to Ayodhyā tomorrow.”

Accepting the proposal with a bowed head, the prince gladly requested the following boon: “O blessed one, let all the trees along the way leading to Ayodhyā flow with honey and bear many different kinds of sweet and fragrant fruits even out of season. As soon as the sage consented by saying “So be it!” all the trees around there became just like the trees growing in the heavenly planets. Baren trees suddenly bore fruits, and flowerless one bore flowers. In the interest of the travellers, everywhere around for three yojanas the trees that were withered became covered with leaves and flowed with honey. Feeing delighted, monkeys by the thousands consumed as they wished many divine fruits, enjoying like those who had reached heaven.

HANUMĀN INFORMS BHARATA OF RĀMA'S RETURN

While looking at Ayodhyā, Rāma reflected a bit and said to Hanumān: “Find out if the people in the royal palace are well. When you reach Śṛṅgaverapura, tell the forest-dweller Guha, ruler of the Niṣādas, on My behalf that I am well. When he hears that I am well, healthy and free from anxiety, He will be very pleased. He is my friend, as good as Myself. Being pleased, Guha, the ruler of the Niṣādas, will show you the way to Ayodhyā and offer you news about Bharata. You should tell Bharata about My well-being in My name. Tell Him that I have accomplished My goal with My wife and Lakṣmaṇa. Tell Him about the abduction of Sītā by the mighty Rāvaṇa, how I talked with Sugrīva and killed Vālī on the battlefield, the search for Sītā, and how you found Her after jumping across the great and boundless ocean. Also tell Him how I approached the ocean and the ocean appeared before Me personally, how I had a bridge built and how Rāvaṇa was killed, how Indra, Brahmā and Varuṇa granted Me boons and how I met My father by the grace of Lord Śiva. Also tell Him that I have arrived along with Vibhīṣaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, and Sugrīva, the ruler of the monkeys. Tell Him: ‘Having killed hordes of enemies, Rāma has achieved the greatest glory. Having accomplished His goals, He is arriving with his friends and army.’

“You should carefully note all of Bharata’s reactions and gestures by the color of His face, the look in His eyes and how He talks. Indeed, whose mind would not be attracted to an ancestral kingdom abounding in all desirable things and crowded with elephants, horses and chariots? If by contact with it, the glorious Bharata desires the kingdom for Himself, let Him rule the entire earth. Ascertaining His mind and resolve, you should return quickly before we have gone far.”

When commanded in this way, Hanumān, the son of the wind-god, assumed a human form and hurried off to Ayodhyā. Hanumān jumped

forward with great speed like Garuḍa trying to catch an exceptional snake. Jumping across the sky, which is the lovely abode of birds, he reached the formidable confluence of the Ganges and Yamunā Rivers. After reaching Śṛṅgaverapura and meeting Guha, Hanumān joyfully spoke the following sweet words: “Your friend Rāma, the descendent of Kakutstha, along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa, inquires about your well-being. After spending the night of the fifth day of the waxing moon of the month of āśvina at the hermitage of the Bharadvāja, you will today see Rāma when He leaves with the permission of the sage.”

The spirited Hanumān, without hesitation, jumped into the air, his hair raised due to exhilaration. He saw the bathing place sacred to Lord Paraśurāma, as well as the rivers Vālukinī, Vārūthī, Gomatī and the formidable forest of śāla trees. He then saw many thousands of citizens of the kingdom of Kosala and the outlying prosperous regions. Having proceeded with haste over a long distance, that best of monkeys reached the blossoming trees growing near Nandigrāma. The trees were just like those that grow in Lord Indra’s Nandana Garden or in Kuvera’s Citraratha Garden. They were frequented by well-dressed women accompanied by their sons or grandsons.

At a distance of one krośa from Ayodhyā he saw the forlorn Bharata. He was dressed in tree bark cloth and the skin of a black antelope. He was emaciated and residing in a hermitage. His hair was matted and His limbs were dirty from not bathing. He was stricken with anguish over His brother’s difficulty. He was eating only fruits and roots. Was self-controlled, austere and observant of acts of piety. His matted hair was piled up on top of His head and He wore cloth made from the bark of trees and deer skins. He was self-restrained and self-realized. He had the effulgence of a brāhmaṇa sage. Before Him He kept Rāma’s sandals for ruling over the earth. He was protecting the four social orders from all danger and was attended by His ministers, as well as by holy priests and wise army generals clad in saffron robes. Indeed, seeing the prince dress in tree bark cloth and the skin of a black antelope, the citizens of Ayodhyā, being lovers of piety, never cared to enjoy. With joined palms, Hanumān spoke to that prince familiar with righteousness and who resembled righteousness itself bound in a body:

“That descendent of Kakutstha who was living in the Daṇḍakā Forest wearing tree bark cloth and matted hair for whose sake You are lamenting, has inquired about Your welfare. I bring You good news. Abandon Your dreadful grief! Within one hour You will be reunited with Your brother Rāma. Having killed Rāvaṇa and regained Sītā, Rāma is arriving with His friends and troops. The splendid Lakṣmaṇa is coming. The illustrious Sītā is also coming along with Rāma, as Śacī would come accompanied by Lord Indra.”

When spoken to in that way by Hanumān, Bharata suddenly fainted from delight and fell over. Then, after regaining consciousness and getting up a moment later, Bharata inquired from Hanumān, who had brought Him good news: “Embracing Hanumān unexpectedly, the glorious Bharata bathed him with profuse tear drops born of joy and not of grief: “Whether you are a god or a human being, you have come here out of compassion. To you who have brought Me such good news I give one hundred thousand cows and one hundred excellent villages. I shall also give you as wives sixteen well-behaved virgins born in good families, adorned with gold earrings and all kinds of ornaments, as well as golden complexions, beautiful noses and thighs, and faces shining like the moon.”

Hearing from that best of monkeys about Prince Rāma’s miraculous return, Bharata was overjoyed by the desire to see Rāma and therefore happily said the following words.

HANUMĀN RELATES RĀMA'S EXPLOITS TO BHARATA

Bharata said: “To be sure, I am hearing some good news about My Lord who went to the great wilderness many years ago. Oh, how true the popular say appears to me, that bliss comes to a living person even after one hundred years. How, in what place and under what circumstances did Rāma and the monkeys meet? Please tell Me the truth, as I ask it.”

When requested in this way, Hanumān, who was sitting on a kuśa grass mat, retold all of Rāma's exploits in the forest:

“You know all about how Your mother was given two boons, how Rāma was exiled, how King Daśaratha died out of grief for his son, how You were quickly brought back from Rājagṛha by messengers, how You did not care for sovereignty when You entered Ayodhyā, how You went to Mount Citrakūṭa and pleaded with Your brother, who followed the path of righteousness, how Rāma stood by the word of His father, rejecting the kingdom, and how You accepted His sandals and returned. O mighty-armed one, now hear from me what happened when You returned.

“After You had left, the forest seemd to be lamenting and the birds and beasts were disturbed. Then Rāma entered into the extensive, scary and desolate Daṇḍakā Forest, which was trampled down by elephants and teeming with lions, tigers and deer. As They were going deep into the forest, there appeared before Them the mighty demon Virādha roaring very loudly. Disposing of him as he roared loudly, rushing upon Them with outstretched arms and lowered head, They threw him into a pit as he bellowed like an elephant. After accomplishing that difficult task, the two brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa reached the charming hermitage of the sage Śarabhaṅga at twilight.

“After Śarabhaṅga ascended to heaven, Rāma, whose prowess never fails, bid all the ascetics farewell and departed for Janasthāna. Afterwards, the rākṣasī named Śūrpaṅakhā arrived where Rāma was. Thereafter, the mighty Lakṣmaṇa, being instructed by Rāma, jumped up, grabbed His sword and cut off her ears and nose. While residing there, the great Rāma killed fourteen thousand rākṣasas of fierce deeds. When the rākṣasas approached Rāma on the frontline of battle, they were totally annihilated in a quarter of daylight. Rāma killed in combat the mighty and valorous rākṣasas dwelling in the forest of Daṇḍakāraṇya who obstructed the asceticism of the sages. Not only that, but Khara was also killed in battle. After killing Dūṣaṇa first, Rāma then killed Triśirā.

“Anguished by that, the childish Śūrpaṅakhā thereafter went to Rāvaṇa. Assuming the form of a deer made of gems, a formidable rākṣasa named Mārīca, a follower of Rāvaṇa, enticed Sītā. Seeing the deer, Sītā said to Rāma, ‘Capture it! Our hermitage will be fascinating and lovely with it.’ Then, with bow in hand, Rāma ran after than deer. He killed it while it was running with an arrow having curved joints. While Rāma was chasing the deer and Lakṣmaṇa had also left, Rāvaṇa entered the hermitage. He quickly grabbed Sītā, as the planet Mars would assault the star Rohiṇī, afterwhich he slew the vulture Jatāyu in battle as he was trying to protect Sītā. Grabbing Sītā suddenly, the rākṣasa departed.

“Perched on the top of a mountain, some peculiar-looking monkeys who resembled mountains watched with amazement as Rāvaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas passed by holding Sītā. Then the airship Puṣpaka, which was as fast as the mind, quickly arrived. Boarding it with Sītā the mighty Rāvaṇa entered the city of Laṅkā. Bringing Sītā into a huge and beautiful mansion surrounded with a gold wall, Rāvaṇa tried to pacify Her with words. Considering his words as less than a straw, Sītā remained in the aśoka grove ignoring that foremost of rākṣasas.

“After killing the deer in the forest, Rāma returned. When Rāma returned, He saw the vulture, who was a dear friend of His father, killed and thereafter felt very distressed. Searching for Sītā, Rāma wandering with

Lakṣmaṇa along the Godāvārī River and in the areas forested with blossoming trees. In the great wilderness They came upon a rākṣasa named Kabandha. From him Rāma, whose prowess never fails, received word about how to find Sītā. Proceeding to R̥ṣyamūka Mountain, Rāma met with Sugrīva. They had a meeting of hearts through affection. Sugrīva had been disenfranchised by his elder brother Vālī in the past. From talking together, a strong affection developed between them. After killing the gigantic and mighty Vālī in combat, Rāma bestowed by the strength of His arms sovereignty upon Sugrīva. Then Sugrīva consolidated his control over the kingdom along with all the monkeys.

“Sugrīva promised Rāma to initiate a search for the princess. One hundred million monkeys were engaged and sent by the great lord of the monkeys, Sugrīva, in all directions. A long time passed while we were suffering great sorrow in the Vindhya Mountains. However, the vulture Jaṭāyu’s valiant brother named Sampāti informed us that Sītā was staying in Rāvaṇa’s palace. I dispelled the sorrow which afflicted my relatives by resorting to my own energy and jumping one hundred yojanas across the ocean. There I saw Sītā sheltered in an aśoka grove. She was dressed in a silk garment, was dirty, joyless and firm in Her vow. After meeting that faultless lady and asking Her thoroughly about everything, I gave Her a ring engraved with Rāma’s name as a token of My bonafides. After receiving a jewel from Her head as a token, I returned accomplished of purpose.

“When we returned to Rāma, I presented that gleaming jewel as a token to Him. Upon hearing about Sītā, Rāma regained the desire to live, like a diseased person on the verge of death who has drunk the nectar of immortality. Putting forth an effort, He set His mind on the destruction of Laṅkā, as the fire at the end of the world attempts to destroy all living beings. When Rāma reached the seashore, He had Nala build a bridge. By means of that bridge the army of monkeys crossed the ocean. The monkey Nīla killed Prahasta, Rāma killed Kumbhakarṇa, Lakṣmaṇa killed Rāvaṇa’s son Indrajit, and Rāma Himself killed Rāvaṇa. Then Lord Indra came, accompanied by Yamarāja and Varuṇa, as well as Lord Śiva, Lord Brahmā, King Daśaratha and great sages to offer Rāma boons. After receiving the boons from the gods, Rāma was very pleased. Along with the monkeys who

had gathered there, He went to Kiṣkindhā in the airship Puṣpaka.

Tomorrow, when the moon is in conjunction with the asterism Puṣya, You will be able to see Rāma without any hindrance after He reaches the Ganges. At present He is staying with the sage Bharadvāja.”

Upon hearing the sweet words spoken by Hanumān, Bharata was delighted. With joined palms, He spoke the following words with a delighted mind: “After a very long time, My desire has been fulfilled.”

PREPARATIONS FOR RĀMA'S RETURN

Upon hearing the most blissful news, Bharata, the slayer of enemy warriors, gave the following orders to the delighted Śatrughna: "Let pure people perform worship of the gods at all the shrines in the city with fragrant sandalwood paste, flower garlands and instrumental music. Let bards learned in the ancient tales, all the minstrels, all the musicians skilled in playing instruments and groups of courtesans all sally forth to see the moon-like face of Rāma."

Hearing Bharata's instructions, Śatrughna engaged many thousands of hired laborers: "Level the low and uneven places from here all the way to Nandigrāma. But leave the temple sites alone. Sprinkle the ground thoroughly with ice-cold water. Then let others strew it all over with puffed grains and flowers. Decorate the streets of this very best of cities with flags. Until sunrise, decorate the buildings with garlands made with golden flowers or with five different colors of flowers. Tie them in loops or stretch them out in strands. Let hundreds of men see that the royal highway is not blocked."

When they heard Śatrughna's instructions, the ministers Dhṛṣṭi, Jayanta, Vijaya, Siddhārtha, Arthasādhaka, Aśoka, Mantrapāla and Sumantra were pleased and left, followed by thousands of elephants in rut that were nicely decorated and bearing flags. Other great warriors rode on bull and female elephants with golden girths, on horseback or in chariots. Warriors went forth surrounded by thousands of the best horses and thousands of foot soldiers carrying spears, javelins, nooses, flags and pennants. When all of King Daśaratha's wives had boarded vehicles, with Kausalyā and Sumitrā placed in front, they departed. Accompanied by Kaikeyī, they all arrived at Nandigrāma. In fact, the whole city came to Nandigrāma.

The earth shook with the braying of horses and asses, the rumbling of chariots, and the uproar of conchshells and drums. Placing Rāma's worshipable sandals on His head and bringing along a parasol decorated with

white flower garlands, the great soul Bharata went ahead with His ministers to meet Rāma. He was surrounded by His ministers, twice-born brāhmaṇas, leaders of guilds and merchants carrying flower garlands and round sweetmeats in their hands. Although Bharata was emaciated from fasting and morose, wearing only tree bark cloth and the skin of a black antelope, when He heard that His brother was returning, He was overjoyed even before that arrival.

Looking around, Bharata spoke the following words to Hanumān, son of the wind: “I hope that you are not displaying the fickleness of monkeys, for I do not see the noble Rāma, the scorcher of enemies. Nor can be seen the monkeys who can change their form.” After Bharata said this, Hanumān replied, making the truth of the matter known:

“One can hear the dreadful roar of forest-dwelling monkeys and bears overjoyed to reach flowering trees flowing with honey, abounding in fruit and resounding with the buzzing of bumblebees by the grace of the sage Bharadvāja. In fact, a boon was conferred upon You by Lord Indra when You visited Rāma with Your army at Citrakūṭa. I think the monkey army must be crossing the Gomatī River. See the cloud of dust rising over there in the grove of śāla trees! I think the monkeys must be shaking that charming grove of śāla trees. There in the distance can be seen an airship shining like the moon. It is the celestial airship Puṣpaka created by the mind of Viśvakarmā through his spiritual powers, and has been requisitioned by the great Rāma after killing Rāvaṇa and his relatives. That airship as bright as the rising sun is carrying Rāma. This divine airship which is as fast as the mind belongs to Kuvera by the grace of Lord Brahmā. In that airship the two brothers, Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa are with Sītā, along with the spirited Sugrīva and the rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa.”

Then a loud shout of joy touching the sky rose up from the women, children and elderly: “Here comes Rāma!” Getting down from their chariots, elephants and horses and standing on the ground, the people looked at Rāma in the airship like a moon in the sky. With joined palms, Bharata became overjoyed. Facing Rāma, He worshiped Him appropriately with water for washing the hands, feet, and so forth. Bharata’s older brother Rāma, whose eyes were quite broad, shone in that airship created from the

mind of Viśvakarmā, like Lord Indra among the immortals. Bowing down, Bharata saluted His brother Rāma, who was in the front of the airship, as one would salute the sun on Mount Meru. When permitted by Rāma, the unparalleled airship adorned with the image of a swan, came down to the earth. Delighted to climb onto the airship, Bharata approached Rāma and greeted Him once again. Rising up from His seat when He saw Bharata after such a long time, Rāma joyfully embraced Bharata to His chest.

Approaching Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā, He announced Himself to Them by uttering His name. Bharata also embraced Sugrīva, Jāmbavān, Aṅgada, Mainda, Dvīda, Nīla and Rṣabha. Then He embraced Suṣeṇa, Nala, Gavākṣa, Gandhamādana, Śarabha and Panasa. Having assumed human forms, the monkeys then inquired from Bharata about his welfare.

Embracing Sugrīva, the best of monkeys, Prince Bharata, the best of the virtuous, said: “You are a fifth brother for Us four. A friend is born from goodwill, whereas an enemy is distinguished by malevolence. Bharata then spoke the following gratifying words to Vibhīṣaṇa: “Luckily a very difficult task was accomplished with your help.” After greeting Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, Śatrughna then bowed humbly to the feet of Sītā.

Approaching His mother, who had grown pale and wane due to grief, Rāma bowed down and touched her feet, thereby greatly pleasing her mind. After greeting Sumitrā and the illustrious Kaikeyī, Rāma then approached all the other mothers and the family priest Vasiṣṭha.

With joined palms, all the citizens of Ayodhyā said to Rāma: “Welcome, O He who increases the bliss of Kausalyā!” Lord Rāma saw thousands of joined palms that resembled blossoming lotus flowers. Taking Rāma’s sandals, Bharata put them on Lord Rāma’s feet. Then Bharata said to Rāma with joined palms: “Here is Your whole kingdom entrusted to Me and returned by Me to You. Today My birth has become successful and My desire is fulfilled in that I see You, the king, returned to Ayodhyā. Please examine Your treasury, treasure house, palace and army. By My exertion, I have increased everything ten-fold.” Seeing Bharata, who was full of brotherly affection, speak in that way, the monkeys and Vibhasana shed tears.

Placing Bharata on His lap out of joy, Rāma then flew in the airship with his army to Bharata's hermitage. When they arrived, Rāma got down from the front of the airship and stood on the ground. Then He said to the exceptional airship: "I give you permission to carry the demigod Kuvera. You may go!" When permitted by Kuvera, the airship headed toward the north and proceeded to Kuvera's abode. Propelled by the order of Rāma, the celestial airship Puṣpaka, which had been seized by Rāvaṇa, went with all speed back to Kuvera. As Rāma sat on a splendid throne next to Vasiṣṭha, His family priest and personal friend, He clasped Vasiṣṭha's feet, as Indra, lord of the immortals, would to his priest Bṛhaspati.

RĀMA'S RETURN TO AYODHYĀ AND CORONATION

Placing His joined palms on His head, Bharata spoke as follows to His elder brother, whose prowess never failed: “This kingdom was given to Me, which greatly satisfied My mother. I return it to You just as You gave it to Me. I cannot bear the heavy weight, any more than could a young bull carry all alone what a strong bull can. I consider this hole in the shape of administration to be very difficult to seal, like a dam leaking when breached by a strong current of water. As a donkey cannot follow the trot of a horse, or a crow the flight of a swan, so I cannot follow in Your footsteps.

“Suppose one planted a tree in a house and it grew to a huge size with a thick trunk and broad branches, becoming thereby difficult to climb. Now if it were to dry up after blooming and the planter were to climb it, the planter would not realize the purpose for which he had planted it. This is an analogy. You can understand the meaning, that this would be the case if You, the master, did not rule over Us, Your servants. Let the world see You blazing with effulgence like the noon-day sun when You are consecrated as king today. May You fall asleep and wake up to the sounds of musical instruments, gold anklebells and sweet singing. Dedicate Yourself to ruling this world as long as the constellations revolve and the earth exists.”

After hearing Bharata's words, Rāma, the conqueror of enemy cities, accepted the request and sat upon a beautiful seat. At Śatrughna's command, expert barbers who were nimble-handed surrounded Rāma. First Bharata bathed, as did the mighty Lakṣmaṇa, Sugrīva, the ruler of the monkeys, and Vibhīṣaṇa, the ruler of the rākṣasas. Rāma had His matted hair disentangled, then He was bathed, adorned with gorgeous flower garlands and sandalwood paste, and dressed in costly garments, so that He was blazing with glory. Thus Śatrughna, the promoter of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty, had Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa properly adorned. All of King Daśaratha's noble-minded wives personally dressed up Sītā in a fascinating manner. Then Kausalyā, who

was very affectionate to Her son, merrily adorned all the wives of the monkeys.

At the command of Śatrughna, the charioteer named Sumantra yoked horses to a chariot that was beautiful in every part, and then came. When the strong-armed Rāma saw the chariot parked and shining like the spotless disc of the sun, He got on board. Looking as splendid as Lord Indra with their sparkling earrings and shimmering clothes after bathing, Sugrīva and Hanumān started walking. Adorned with all kinds of jewelry and beautiful earrings, Sugrīva's wives and Sītā set forth, eager as they were to see the city of Ayodhyā.

Back in Ayodhyā, King Daśaratha's ministers placed the family priest Vasiṣṭha before them and discussed in a practical way the upcoming coronation. With cool heads, Aśoka, Vijaya and Siddhārtha discussed among themselves how to enhance Rāma's status and increase the prosperity of the city. Then they instructed their servants: "You should carry out all the preparations for Rāma's coronation in an auspicious manner." After giving these instructions, the ministers and family priest quickly left the city with their minds set on seeing Rāma.

Sitting in a chariot, as Lord Indra would in his chariot drawn by green horses, Rāma set out for the fabulous city of Ayodhyā. Bharata took the reins, Śatrughna held the parasol and Lakṣmaṇa fanned His head. Standing on the other side, Vibhīṣaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, held a white hair-whisk as bright as the moon. The sweet sound could be heard of Rāma's being praised by hosts of sages, gods and the maruts in the sky.

Sugrīva thereupon rode an elephant named Śatruñjaya that was as big as a mountain. Assuming human forms and attired with all kinds of ornaments, the monkeys rode on nine thousand elephants. Welcomed with the blasts of conchshells and the beating of drums, Rāma, the tiger among men, passed through the city lined with mansions. The people could see Rāma, an outstanding chariot warrior, riding in a chariot and shining due to His bodily effulgence. Before Him proceeded an advance party. After Rāma wished them well, the people returned the favor to Rāma and followed Him. Surrounded by His ministers, as well as by brāhmaṇas and the ordinary

people, Rāma shone with splendor like the moon with stars. He drove in the midst of musicians, who were accompanying Him while holding drums and cymbals in their hands and joyfully singing auspicious songs. Cows, virgins, brāhmaṇas, and people carrying round sweetmeats in their hands or containers of unbroken rice mixed with turmeric powder proceeded ahead of Rāma.

Rāma informed His ministers about His alliance with Sugrīva, the capability of Hanumān and the deeds of the monkeys. The residents of the city of Ayodhyā were amazed to hear about the deeds of the monkeys and the strength of the rākṣasas. Then Rāma told His ministers about His meeting with Vibhīṣaṇa. After explaining all this, the splendorous Rāma, who was accompanied by the monkeys, entered Ayodhyā, which was crowded with happy and well-fed people. The citizens raised pennants on every house. Then Rāma reached the charming palace of His father, in which the descendents of the Ikṣvāku Dynasty dwelt.

After entering His father's palace and greeting Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī, Prince Rāma sweetly spoke the following benevolent words to the Bharata, the best of those practicing virtue: "Offer to Sugrīva My great palace inlaid with pearls and vaidurya gems and an attached aśoka garden." When Bharata heard this instruction, He took Sugrīva by the hand and entered the palace. Taking oil lamps and coverlets for the couches, the servants ordered by Śatrughna hurriedly entered.

Rāma's younger brother Bharata said to Sugrīva: "O lord, send couriers to fetch water for Rāma's coronation!" Sugrīva at once gave four golden pots studded with all kinds of gems to four monkey chieftains and said: "Act in such a way so that you are waiting at sunrise with pots filled with water from the four oceans." When ordered in this way, the huge monkeys, who resembled elephants, jumped into the air like swift-flying eagles. Jāmbavān, Hanumān Gavaya and Rṣabha shortly thereafter brought back the pots full of water. Five hundred monkeys brought pots of water from five hundred rivers. The energetic Jāmbavān brought a gem-encrusted pot filled with water from the eastern ocean. Rṣabha quickly brought a pot smeared with red sandalwood paste that was filled with water from the southern ocean. Gavaya brought cool water from the great western ocean in

a large pot studded with gems. And Hanumān, who was like both Garuḍa and the wind in prowess and endowed with all good qualities, quickly brought water from the northern ocean.

Seeing that the water had been brought by those fine monkeys, Śatrughna and His ministers delivered it to the family priest Vasiṣṭha for Rāma's coronation ceremony. Accompanied by brāhmaṇas, the elderly and ritually pure Vasiṣṭha had Rāma and Sītā sit on a throne made with gems. Vasiṣṭha, Vāmadeva, Jābālī, Kāśyapa, Kātyāyana, Suyajña, Gautama and Vijaya bathed Rāma with pleasant scented water, as the Vasus did to Lord Indra. He was showered by sages, brāhmaṇas, virgins, ministers, overjoyed warriors and merchants. Then the four gods who protect the world, as well as all the gods hovering in the sky, showered Rāma with water infused with a special blend of herbs called sarvāuśadhi.

There was a dazzling crown fashioned by Lord Brahmā that was used in the past for the coronation of Manu and was worn by all the kings in that line for their coronation. Later Rāma, who was dressed in costly garments and different kinds of jewelry, was properly consecrated with that crown by the great Vasiṣṭha and other sages on a sparkling throne made of many gems in a bright assembly hall adorned with gold. Śatrughna held a beautiful white parasol and Sugriva, the ruler of the monkeys, a white hair-whisk. Vibhīṣaṇa, the lord of the rākṣasas, held another hair-whisk that was as bright as the moon.

Under the direction of Lord Indra, Vāyu presented a shining golden garland of one hundred lotuses to Rāma. Under Indra's direction, Vāyu presented a necklace of pearls interspersed with gems to Rāma. Under Indra's direction, gandharvas sang and apsarās danced during the coronation of the honorable Rāma. The earth was covered with ripe crops, trees bore fruits, and flowers emitted their fragrance during the festivities of Rāma's coronation.

On that occasion, Rāma, the best of men, gave away in charity one hundred thousand horses and milking cows and one hundred bulls to the brāhmaṇas. Rāma also gave away many kinds of expensive garments and ornaments. King Rāma gave to Sugriva a gold garland decorated with jewels

that was as brilliant as the sun. To Aṅgada, Rāma gave a pair of armbands made from sparkling vaidurya gems that were adorned with diamonds. Rāma gave Sītā the pearl necklace given by Vāyu, which was interspersed with exquisite jewels and as brilliant as moonbeams. He also gave Her a pair of spotless shimmering robes and beautiful ornaments.

Taking into consideration his service, Sītā decided to give a gift to Hanumān. Taking off Her necklace, the delight of King Janaka repeatedly looked at all the monkeys and Her husband. Looking at Her, Rāma, who know how to read other's minds by their expressions, said the following: "O blessed lady, give the necklace to whomever You are pleased with." The dark-eyed lady then gave the necklace to the son of the wind-god, for he always possessed the qualities of energy, steadiness, fame, dexterity, competence, modesty, prudence, manliness, prowess and intelligence. With that necklace, Hanumān shone like a mountain with a white cloud resembling the golden brilliance of the moon.

All the elderly monkeys and others who were outstanding among them were honored with valuable ornaments as they deserved. Vibhīṣaṇa, Sugrīva, Hanumān, Jāmbavān and all the other outstanding monkeys were honored by Rāma with many desirable gifts and jewels as they deserved. Delighted in mind, they all returned home as they had come. Then, examining the quality of all the remaining gifts, Lord Rāma gave them to Dvidida, Mainda and Nīla. After seeing the coronation ceremony, those eminent monkeys were given permission to leave by Lord Rāma, and they thereupon returned to Kiṣkindhā. After Sugrīva witnessed Rāma's coronation, he was honored by Rāma and then entered his city of Kiṣkindhā. Having inherited the kingdom of Laṅkā, the righteous Vibhīṣaṇa left for the city of Laṅkā along with the rākṣasas.

Ruling over His whole kingdom after having slain His enemies, Rāma earned great fame for Himself. Rāma was most munificent and ruled with extreme pleasure. Lord Rāma, who loved righteousness, said to Lakṣmaṇa: "O knower of what is duty, assist Me in ruling over this earth which was formerly protected by kings with an army. Bear the burden of Prince Regent and carry the responsibilities of Our forefathers as I am doing." When Lakṣmaṇa did not accept even when repeatedly requested by

Rāma with all His heart, Rāma entrusted the position to the great soul Bharata and installed Him as Prince Regent over the earth.

Lord Rāma performed the puṇḍarīka, aśvamedha and vājapeya sacrifices several times, along with other kinds of sacrifice. Rāma ruled the earth for eleven thousand years, during which time He performed one hundred aśvamedha sacrifices with excellent horses and abundant remunerations. With Lakṣmaṇa as His follower, Rāma, whose arms reached His knees and was very energetic, ruled the earth. With His friends, relatives and kinfolk, the righteous Rāma, who had achieved an unparalleled kingdom, performed many kinds of sacrifice.

While Rāma ruled over the earth, no one suffered widowhood, nor was there any danger from snakes or beasts of prey, nor fear arising from disease. The world became free from thieves, and no one met with disaster. The elderly did not have to perform funerals for their children. Everyone was happy. Everyone was devoted to righteousness. Looking to Rāma, people did not harm one another. As long as Rāma ruled the kingdom, people lived for one thousand years, had thousands of sons and were free from disease and anxiety. As long as Rāma ruled the kingdom, the citizens were talking about Rāma, Rāma and only Rāma. Indeed, the earth became conscious of nothing but Rāma. The trees there were always firmly rooted and always bore fruits and flowers. Clouds poured down rain at the appropriate times and delightful breezes blew. The brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and śūdras were free from greed and engaged in their own duties. While Rāma ruled, the citizens were devoted to piety and did not tell lies. Everyone had auspicious characteristics and everyone was engaged in religious activities. With His brothers, the glorious Rāma ruled for eleven thousand years.

One who listens regularly to this ancient epic composed in the past by the sage Vālmīki becomes free from sin in this world. It bestows piety, fame, longevity and victory to kings. One who listens to the narration about the coronation of Rāma achieves sons if one desires sons and wealth if one seeks wealth. A king conquers the earth and subdues his enemies. As Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī had living sons in Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Bharata, so women who hear this story will be blessed with sons and grandsons. One who listens to this Rāmāyaṇa, and particularly about Rāma's

victory, will enjoy a long life. One who, having conquered anger, listens with faith to this epic composed in the past by Vālmīki, overcomes all difficulties.

Those who listen to this epic composed in the past by Vālmīki will be reunited with their relatives at the end of their absence from home and will enjoy with them. They will receive from Rāma all the boons which they seek. All the gods are pleased with one who listens to this epic. All obstacles are removed from a house in which a copy of this epic is kept. By listening to it, a king will conquer the earth, a traveler will fare well and pregnant women will bear fine sons. One who worships and reads this ancient history becomes free from all sins and attains a long life. With bowed heads, the kṣatriyas should listen to this Rāmāyaṇa every day from twice-born brāhmaṇas, thus they will achieve opulence and sons without a doubt. Rāma is ever-pleased with one who hears or reads the entire Rāmāyaṇa regularly, for Rāma is the eternal Lord Viṣṇu. Rāma, the best of the Raghu Dynasty, is directly the primeval Godhead Lord Nārāyaṇa, and Lakṣmaṇa is said to be Ananta-śeṣa.

By listening to this auspicious epic full of great import, one's family waxes with an increase in wealth, food grains, outstanding women and ultimate happiness, as well as the achievement of all one's goals in this world. Thus is this ancient historical narrative. Blessings upon you! Repeat it with faith. May Lord Viṣṇu's greatness increase! By accepting and listening to this story, all the gods become satisfied. By listening to the Rāmāyaṇa, all the forefathers are satisfied. Those who copy with devotion this composition by the sage Vālmīki about Lord Rāma will achieve residence in heaven.