

RAMA'S INITIATION

The new assembly hall, Dasaratha's latest pride, was crowded all day with visiting dignitaries, royal emissaries, and citizens coming in with representations or appeals for justice. The King was always accessible, and fulfilled his duties as the ruler of Kosala without grudging the hours spent in public service.

On a certain afternoon, messengers at the gate came running in to announce, "Sage Viswamithra." When the message was relayed to the King, he got up and hurried forward to receive the visitor. Viswamithra, once a king, a conqueror, and a dreaded name until he renounced his kingly role and chose to become a sage (which he accomplished through severe austerities), combined in himself the sage's eminence and the king's authority and was quick tempered and positive. Dasaratha led him to a proper seat and said, "This is a day of glory for us; your gracious presence is most welcome. You must have come from afar. Would you first rest?"

"No need," the sage replied simply. He had complete mastery over his bodily needs through inner discipline and austerities, and was above the effects of heat, cold, hunger, fatigue, and even decrepitude. The King later asked politely, "Is there anything I can do?" Viswamithra looked steadily at the King and answered, "Yes. I am here to ask of you a favour. I wish to perform, before the next full moon, a yagna at Sidhasrama. Doubtless you know where it is?"

"I have passed that sacred ground beyond the Ganges many times."

The sage interrupted. "But there are creatures hovering about waiting to disturb every holy undertaking there, who must be overcome in the same manner as one has to conquer the fivefold evils⁴ within before one can realize holiness. Those evil creatures are endowed with immeasurable powers of destruction. But it is our duty to pursue our aims undeterred. The yagna I propose to perform will strengthen the beneficial forces of this world, and please the gods above."

"It is my duty to protect your sublime effort. Tell me when, and I will be there."

The sage said, "No need to disturb your august self. Send your son Rama with me, and he will help me. He can."

"Rama!" cried the King, surprised, "When I am here to serve you." Viswamithra's temper was already stirring. "I know your greatness," he said, cutting the King short. "But I want Rama to go with me. If you are not willing, you may say so."

The air became suddenly tense. The assembly, the ministers and officials, watched in solemn silence. The King looked miserable. "Rama is still a child, still learning the art and practising the use of arms." His

sentences never seemed to conclude, but trailed away as he tried to explain. "He is a boy, a child, he is too young and tender to contend with demons."

"But I know Rama," was all that Viswamithra said in reply.

"I can send you an army, or myself lead an army to guard your performance. What can a stripling like Rama do against those terrible forces ... ? I will help you just as I helped Indra once when he was harassed and deprived of his kingdom."

Viswamithra ignored his speech and rose to leave. "If you cannot send Rama, I need none else." He started to move down the passage. The King was too stricken to move. When Viswamithra had gone half way, he realized that the visitor was leaving unceremoniously and was not even shown the courtesy of being escorted to the door. Vasishtha, the King's priest and guide, whispered to Dasaratha, "Follow him and call him back," and hurried forward even before the King could grasp what he was saying. He almost ran as Viswamithra had reached the end of the hall and, blocking his way, said, "The King is coming; please don't go. He did not mean ..."

A wry smile played on Viswamithra's face as he said without any trace of bitterness, "Why are you or anyone agitated? I came here for a purpose; it has failed; no reason to prolong my stay."

"Oh, eminent one, you were yourself a king once."

"What has that to do with us now?" asked Viswamithra, rather irked, since he hated all reference to his secular past and wanted always to be known as a Brahma Rishi.

Vasishtha answered mildly, "Only to remind you of an ordinary man's feelings, especially a man like Dasaratha who had been childless and had to pray hard for an issue...."

"Well, it may be so, great one; I still say that I came on a mission and wish to leave, since it has failed."

"It has not failed," said Vasishtha, and just then the King came up to join them in the passage; the assembly was on its feet.

Dasaratha made a deep obeisance and said, "Comeback to your seat, Your Holiness."

"For what purpose, Your Majesty?" Viswamithra asked.

"Easier to talk seated ..."

"I don't believe in any talk," said Viswamithra; but Vasishtha pleaded with him until he returned to his seat.

When they were all seated again, Vasishtha addressed the King: "There must be a divine purpose working through this seer, who may know but will not explain. It is a privilege that Rama's help should be sought. Do not bar his way. Let him go with the sage."

"When, oh when?" the King asked anxiously.

“Now,” said Viswamithra. The King looked woebegone and desperate, and the sage relented enough to utter a word of comfort. “You cannot count on the physical proximity of someone you love, all the time. A seed that sprouts at the foot of its parent tree remains stunted until it is transplanted. Rama will be in my care, and he will be quite well. But ultimately, he will leave me too. Every human being, when the time comes, has to depart and seek his fulfilment in his own way.”

“Sidhasrama is far away ... ?” began the King.

“I’ll ease his path for him, no need for a chariot to take us there,” said Viswamithra reading his mind.

“Rama has never been separated from his brother Lakshmana. May he also go with him?” pleaded the King, and he looked relieved when he heard Viswamithra say, “Yes, I will look after both, though their mission will be to look after me. Let them get ready to follow me; let them select their favourite weapons and prepare to leave.”

Dasaratha, with the look of one delivering hostages into the hand of an enemy, turned to his minister and said, “Fetch my sons.”

Following the footsteps of their master like his shadows, Rama and Lakshmana went past the limits of the city and reached the Sarayu River, which bounded the capital on the north. When night fell, they rested at a wooded grove and at dawn crossed the river. When the sun came over the mountain peak, they reached a pleasant grove over which hung, like a canopy, fragrant smoke from numerous sacrificial fires. Viswamithra explained to Rama, “This is where God Shiva meditated once upon a time and reduced to ashes the god of love when he attempted to spoil his meditation. From time immemorial saints praying to Shiva come here to perform their sacrifices, and the pall of smoke you notice is from their sacrificial fires.”

A group of hermits emerged from their seclusion, received Viswamithra, and invited him and his two disciples to stay with them for the night. Viswamithra resumed his journey at dawn and reached a desert region at midday. The mere expression “desert” hardly conveys the absolute aridity of this land. Under a relentless sun, all vegetation had dried and turned to dust, stone and rock crumbled into powdery sand, which lay in vast dunes, stretching away to the horizon. Here every inch was scorched and dry and hot beyond imagination. The ground was cracked and split, exposing enormous fissures everywhere. The distinction between dawn, noon, and evening did not exist here, as the sun seemed to stay overhead and burn the earth without moving. Bleached bones lay where animals had perished, including those of monstrous serpents with jaws open in deadly thirst; into these enormous jaws had rushed (says the poet) elephants desperately seeking shade, all dead and fossilized, the serpent and the elephant alike. Heat haze rose

and singed the very heavens. While traversing this ground, Viswamithra noticed the bewilderment and distress on the faces of the young men, and transmitted to them mentally two mantras (called “Bala” and “Adi-Bala”). When they meditated on and recited these incantations, the arid atmosphere was transformed for the rest of their passage and they felt as if they were wading through a cool stream with a southern summer breeze blowing in their faces. Rama, ever curious to know the country he was passing through, asked, “Why is this land so terrible? Why does it seem accursed?”

“You will learn the answer if you listen to this story—of a woman fierce, ruthless, eating and digesting all living creatures, possessing the strength of a thousand mad elephants.

THATAKA’S STORY

The woman I speak of was the daughter of Suketha, a yaksha, a demigod of great valour, might, and purity. She was beautiful and full of wild energy. When she grew up she was married to a chieftain named Sunda. Two sons were

born to them—Mareecha and Subahu—who were endowed with enormous supernatural powers in addition to physical strength; and in their conceit and exuberance they laid waste their surroundings. Their father, delighted at their pranks and infected by their mood, joined in their activities. He pulled out ancient trees by their roots and flung them about, and he slaughtered all creatures that came his way. This depredation came to the notice of the great savant Agasthya (the diminutive saint who once, when certain demoniac beings hid themselves at the bottom of the sea and Indra appealed for his help to track them, had sipped off the waters of the ocean). Agasthya had his hermitage in this forest, and when he noticed the destruction around, he cursed the perpetrator of this deed and Sunda fell dead. When his wife learnt of his death, she and her sons stormed in, roaring revenge on the saint. He met their challenge by cursing them. “Since you are destroyers of life, may you become asuras and dwell in the nether worlds.” (Till now they had been demigods. Now they were degraded to demonhood.) The three at once underwent a transformation; their features and stature became forbidding, and their natures changed to match. The sons left to seek the company of super demons. The mother was left alone and lives on here, breathing fire and wishing everything ill. Nothing flourishes here; only heat and sand remain. She is a scorcher. She carries a trident with spikes; a cobra entwined on her arm is her armlet. The name of this fearsome creature is Thataka. Just as the presence of a little loba (meanness) dries up and disfigures a whole

human personality, so does the presence of this monster turn into desert a region which was once fertile. In her restlessness she constantly harasses the hermits at their prayers; she gobbles up anything that moves and sends it down her entrails.

Touching the bow slung on his shoulder, Rama asked, "Where is she to be found?"

Before Viswamithra could answer, she arrived, the ground rocking under her feet and a storm preceding her. She loomed over them with her eyes spitting fire, her fangs bared, her lips parted revealing a cavernous mouth; and her brows twitching in rage. She raised her trident and roared, "In this my kingdom, I have crushed out the minutest womb of life and you have been sent down so that I may not remain hungry."

Rama hesitated; for all her evil, she was still a woman. How could he kill her? Reading his thoughts, Viswamithra said, "You shall not consider her a woman at all. Such a monster must receive no consideration. Her strength, ruthlessness, appearance, rule her out of that category. Formerly God Vishnu himself killed Kyathi, the wife of Brigu, who harboured the asuras fleeing his wrath, when she refused to yield them. Mandorai, a woman bent upon destroying all the worlds, was vanquished by Indra and he earned the gratitude of humanity. These are but two instances. A woman of demoniac tendencies loses all consideration to be treated as a woman. This Thataka is more dreadful than Yama, the god of death, who takes a life only when the time is ripe. But this monster, at the very scent of a living creature, craves to kill and eat. Do not picture her as a woman at all. You must rid this world of her. It is your duty."

Rama said, "I will carry out your wish."

Thataka threw her three-pronged spear at Rama. As it came flaming, Rama strung his bow and sent an arrow which broke it into fragments. Next she raised a hail of stone sunder which to crush her adversaries. Rama sent up his arrows, which shielded them from the attack. Finally Rama's arrow pierced her throat and ended her career; thereby also inaugurating Rama's life's mission of destroying evil and demonry in this world. The gods assembled in the sky and expressed their joy and relief and enjoined Viswamithra, "Oh, adept and master of weapons, impart without any reserve all your knowledge and powers to this lad. He is a saviour." Viswamithra obeyed this injunction and taught Rama all the esoteric techniques in weaponry. Thereafter the presiding deities of various weapons, asthras, appeared before Rama submissively and declared, "Now we are yours; command us night or day."

When they reached a mist-covered wood on a mountain, Viswamithra told another story.

MAHABALI'S STORY

This is consecrated ground where Vishnu once sat in meditation. (Although Rama was Vishnu, his human incarnation made him unaware of his identity at the moment.) While Vishnu was thus engaged, Mahabali seized the earth and heaven and brought them under his subjection. He celebrated his victory by performing a great yagna, and used this occasion to invite and honour all learned men. All the gods who had suffered in their encounter with Mahabali arrived in a body at the spot where Vishnu was in meditation and begged him to help them regain their kingdoms. In response to their appeals, Vishnu took birth in a brahmin family as a person of tiny proportions; within this diminutive personality was packed a great deal of power and learning. Mahabali was quick to sense his greatness when this dwarfish man presented himself at the palace gate. Mahabali received the visitor warmly and respectfully.

The visitor said, "I have come from afar after hearing of your greatness. My ambition in life has been to have a glimpse of one who is renowned alike for his valour and generosity. Now, after meeting you, I have attained my life's ambition. Achievements such as yours cannot be measured. When a poor man like me has a glimpse of your divinity, a part of it comes to me also."

"Oh great one, do not praise me," Mahabali replied. "I am after all a fighter and conqueror—base qualities when compared to the learning and special attainments of one like you. I am not easily led by appearances. I can know how great you must be. I shall be happy if you will accept a gift in return for the honour you have done in visiting me."

"I want nothing. I need no gift other than your goodwill."

"No, please don't go, ask for something, mention anything you want. It will please me to grant it."

"If you insist, then give me a piece of land."

"Yes, choose it wherever you like."

"Not more than what would be measured in three strides of my feet ..."

Bali laughed, looked him up and down, and said, "Is that all?"

"Yes."

"I shall now ...," began Mahabali, but before he could complete his sentence, his guru Sukracharya interrupted to warn, "King, do not be rash. The small figure you see is a deception: he is minute, but this microcosm ..."

"Oh, stop! I know my responsibility. To give while one can is the right time, and to prevent a gift is an unholy act, unworthy of you. He who is selfish is never worse than the one who stays the hand that is about to give. Don't stop me," he said; and poured out a little water from a vessel

on the upturned palm of the little man to seal his promise. (It is found in some texts that at this moment Sukracharya assumed the size of a bee and flew into the spout of the vessel in order to block the flow of water and thus prevent the oath being given. The dwarf, sensing this, took a sharp dharba grass and thrust it in to clear the obstruction and it pricked the eye of Sukracharya, who thereafter came to be known as the one-eyed savant.) Pouring this oblation of water, Bali said to the little man, "Now measure and take your three steps of earth."

The moment the water fell on his hand, this person, who was a figure of fun even to his parents till then, assumed a majestic stature spanning the earth and the sky. With the first step he measured the entire earth, with the second he covered the heavens. No more space was left in the whole universe, and he asked Mahabali, "Where shall I place the third step?"

Mahabali, overawed, knelt, bowed, and said, "Here on my head, if no other space is available." Vishnu raised his foot, placed it on Mahabali's head, and pressed him down to the netherworld. "You may stay there," he said, and thus disposed of the tormentor of the worlds. Concluding the story, Viswamithra announced, "This is the end of our journey for the time being. Here I will perform the sacrifices under your protection."

In due course Viswamithra gathered a good company of saints and made preparations for the yagna, Rama and Lakshmana guarding the ground. Meanwhile the asuras assembled in the skies above the holy ground, ready to disrupt the yagna. The demons were armed with a variety of deadly weapons; they shrieked and howled and attempted in other ways to create confusion. They flung boiling water and offal on the holy ground; uttered menaces, curses, and blasphemies; tore out huge rocks and flung them down; and set in force terrifying magical disturbances.

The saints looked distraught. Rama advised the sages, "Do not feel disturbed. Proceed with your prayers."

Lakshmana said to Rama, "I will deal with them." He shot at them, while Rama sent up his arrows and created an umbrella to shield the sacrificial fire from being defiled by the asuras' blood. Subahu and Mareecha, the sons of Thataka thought this their best chance to avenge the death of their mother and aimed their attack at Rama, whose first shot carried Mareecha far out and threw him into the sea; the second one eliminated Subahu. The demons who had gathered with such zest withdrew in panic.

The sacrifice was successfully accomplished. Viswamithra declared, "Rama, you alone could help me in this task. This was performed not for my personal satisfaction, but for the good of humanity itself."

Rama asked, "What next?"

Viswamithra said, "You have accomplished much now. There is a great deal yet ahead of you," hinting at the tasks that Rama would have to fulfil in this incarnation. "For the present let us proceed towards Mithila City, where a great yagna is to be performed by King Janaka, and where many others will be arriving; you may enjoy this diversion." Although he suggested this step as a sort of relaxation for Rama, he knew by foresight that it was but the beginning of a great series of events in which Rama's future would be involved.

At the end of a day's journeying, they arrived at a valley where the Ganges was flowing. "There you see," said Viswamithra, "the river Ganga, the holiest river in the world, starting from the Himalayas, running her course through mountains and valleys and across several kingdoms. Today she flows along peacefully, but at the beginning ... Now listen to her story."

GANGA'S STORY

Every inch of ground on earth, as you may have realized by now, has a divine association. Mother Earth has been there since the beginning of creation, being one of the five primeval elements. She has seen countless pairs of feet running about on thousands of aims and pursuits, both evil and good, and will continue until Time ("Kala") swallows and digests everything. Even after the participants have vanished, every inch of earth still retains the impress of all that has gone before. We attain a full understanding only when we are aware of the divine and other associations of every piece of ground we tread on. Otherwise it would be like the passage of a blind man through illuminated halls and gardens. That is the reason why I have explained to you the story of every place we have passed through. You see that river now. It is Ganga flowing along the valley, coming down from the Himalayas, carrying within her the essence of rare herbs and elements found on her way. She courses through many a kingdom, and every inch of the ground she touches becomes holy; Ganga cleanses and transforms; the dying person with a sip of that water or with the ashes of his bones dissolved therein attains salvation. Now you find the river serene and beautiful. But Ganga had to be tamed and controlled before she could touch this earth; her story involves the fate of your ancestors, very early ones.

Sakara, one of your ancestors, ruled the earth with great distinction at one time. He had numerous sons, all valorous and devoted to their father. At the proper time in his career, he planned to perform a very important sacrifice—the "Horse Sacrifice."

In preparation for this ceremony a resplendent horse fully caparisoned and decorated is set free and trots along at will through the frontiers of many kingdoms, and every country that lets the horse pass through is considered to have accepted the suzerainty of the horse's owner. But if at any point anyone attempts to hold up the horse, it is taken as a challenge and causes a war; the original owner of the horse attacks the country where the horse is held and sets it free again, and again and again until it gets through and returns home. Then all the countries through which it has passed become vassals of the king, and the king celebrates his victory with the great "Horse Sacrifice" which makes him supreme lord of the earth. Those who embark on such a plan are confident of victory and could eventually aspire to extend their empire and challenge Indra himself. Hence Indra and all the gods are very watchful and nervous whenever a sacrifice is planned, and do their best to defeat it.

When Sakara's horse started out Indra abducted it and kept it out of view in the deepest world underground, behind Sage Kapila, who had

earlier sought this seclusion far away from the earth for his spiritual practices. When it became known that the horse was lost underground, Sakara's sons started digging wide and deep and went down into the bowels of the earth. They found their horse tethered behind the man in meditation; they seized the horse and tormented the saint, assuming that he had stolen it; whereupon the saint with an angry glare reduced them to ashes. One of the party survived this expedition, a grandson of the emperor; he apologized to the sage and came home and helped the old king to complete his "Horse Sacrifice." Later, King Sakara renounced the world in favour of his grandson, whose son was Bhagiratha, responsible for bringing the Ganges down to earth.

When Bhagiratha grew up and learnt of the fate of his ancestors, he made it his mission in life to help them attain salvation, instead of leaving their spirits dangling in mid-air without proper disposal of their remains. He prayed intensely for ten thousand years to Brahma, the creator, who advised him to seek the help of Shiva to bring down Ganga from high heaven and to wash their bones in the holy water. He prayed to Shiva for ten thousand years and he appeared and promised to grant his wishes if he could somehow persuade Ganga to descend. And then he prayed to Ganga for five thousand years. Ganga appeared to him in the guise of an elegant little girl and said, "Shiva has promised you his help, no doubt, but if Ganga descends in her full force, the earth will not bear it; nothing can ever bear the force of her descent. Shiva agreed to help you—but find out what his intentions are. Pray to him again."

After further meditations, by Bhagiratha, Shiva again appeared and said to him, "Let Ganga come down, I will help you. I will see that no drop of that water is wasted or allowed to trouble anyone." This was developing into a series of challenges between Shiva and Ganga, and Bhagiratha began to feel that he was being tossed between challenging gods. But undaunted (his name is a byword for indefatigable effort), he had prayed for thirty thousand years in all, undergoing severe austerities—such as living on dry fallen leaves, then on air, then on sun's rays, and in the last stages he gave up even these and survived on practically nothing, conscious of nothing but his own purpose and faith in his cause.

At the end of Bhagiratha's penance, Ganga, whose origin was in the far-off world of Brahma, the creator, started her descent in a roaring deluge. As promised, Shiva appeared on the scene just when the deluge was about to hit and pulverize the earth. Shiva took his stance, planted his feet firmly, arms akimbo, and received the impact of the descent on his head, and the threatened deluge just vanished into his tangled, matted locks. For all the uproar and conceit that Ganga had displayed this was a tame end—so tame and quiet indeed that Bhagiratha began to feel uneasy. It seemed as if this was the end of Ganga and that all his prayers

and penances had produced nothing in the end. Shiva understood his fears and let a trickle out of his hair which Bhagiratha led on carefully and anxiously underground over his ancestors' ashes and helped their souls attain salvation. Thus Bhagiratha helped not only his ancestors, but all mankind, as the Ganges bears a countless number of holy shrines on its banks, and nourishes millions of acres of land and people along its course. The pit dug by Sakara's sons while searching for their horse also filled up and became the oceans of today.

They arrived within sight of Mithila City. While passing over slightly raised ground beside the walls of the fort, Rama noticed a shapeless slab of stone, half buried vertically in the ground; when he brushed past, the dust of his feet fell on it, and transformed it, that very instant, into a beautiful woman. As the woman did obeisance and stood aside respectfully, Viswamithra introduced her to Rama. "If you have heard of Sage Gautama, whose curse resulted in great Indra's body being studded with a thousand eyes, all over ... This lady was his wife, and her name is Ahalya." And he told Rama her story.

AHALYA'S STORY

Brahma once created, out of the ingredients of absolute beauty, a woman, and she was called Ahalya (which in the Sanskrit language means non-imperfection). God Indra, being the highest god among the gods, was attracted by her beauty and was convinced that he alone was worthy of claiming her hand. Brahma, noticing the conceit and presumptuousness of Indra, ignored him, sought out Sage Gautama, and left him in charge of the girl. She grew up in his custody, and when the time came the sage took her back to Brahma and handed her over to him. Brahma appreciated Gautama's purity of mind and heart (never once had any carnal thought crossed his mind), and said, "Marry her, she is fit to be your wife, or rather you alone deserve to be her husband." Accordingly, she was married, blessed by Brahma and other gods. Having spent her childhood with Gautama, Ahalya knew his needs and so proved a perfect wife, and they lived happily.

Indra, however, never got over his infatuation for Ahalya, and often came in different guises near to Gautama's ashram, waiting for every chance to gaze and feast on Ahalya's form and figure; he also watched the habits of the sage and noticed that the sage left his ashram at the dawn of each day and was away for a couple of hours at the river for his bath and prayers. Unable to bear the pangs of love any more, Indra decided to attain the woman of his heart by subterfuge. One day, hardly able to wait for the sage to leave at his usual hour, Indra assumed the

voice of a rooster, and woke up the sage, who, thinking that the morning had come, left for the river. Now Indra assumed the sage's form, entered the hut, and made love to Ahalya. She surrendered herself, but at some stage realized that the man enjoying her was an imposter; but she could do nothing about it. Gautama came back at this moment, having intuitively felt that something was wrong, and surprised the couple in bed. Ahalya stood aside filled with shame and remorse; Indra assumed the form of a cat (the most facile animal form for sneaking in or out) and tried to slip away. The sage looked from the cat to the woman and was not to be deceived. He arrested the cat where he was with these words:

"Cat, I know you; your obsession with the female is your undoing. May your body be covered with a thousand female marks, so that in all the worlds, people may understand what really goes on in your mind all the time." Hardly had these words left his lips when every inch of Indra's body displayed the female organ. There could be no greater shame for the proud and self-preening Indra.

After Indra slunk away, back to his world, Gautama looked at his wife and said, "You have sinned with your body. May that body harden into a shapeless piece of granite, just where you are... ." Now in desperation Ahalya implored, "A grave mistake has been committed. It is in the nature of noble souls to forgive the errors of lesser beings. Please ... I am already feeling a weight creeping up my feet. Do something ... please help me... ."

Now the sage felt sorry for her and said, "Your redemption will come when the son of Dasaratha, Rama, passes this way at some future date... ."

"When? Where?" she essayed to question, desperately, but before the words could leave her lips she had become a piece of stone.

Indra's predicament became a joke in all the worlds at first, but later proved noticeably tragic. He stayed in darkness and seclusion and could never appear before men or women. This caused much concern to all the gods, as his multifarious duties in various worlds remained suspended, and they went in a body to Brahma and requested him to intercede with Gautama. By this time, the sage's resentment had vanished. And he said in response to Brahma's appeal, "May the thousand additions to Indra's features become eyes." Indra thereafter came to be known as the "thousand-eyed god."

Viswamithra concluded the story and addressed Rama. "O great one, you are born to restore righteousness and virtue to mankind and eliminate all evil. At our yagna, I saw the power of your arms, and now I see the greatness of the touch of your feet."

Rama said to Ahalya, "May you seek and join your revered husband, and live in his service again. Let not your heart be burdened with what is past and gone."

On their way to Mithila, they stopped to rest at Gautama's hermitage, and Viswamithra told the sage, "Your wife is restored to her normal form, by the touch of Rama's feet. Go and take her back, her heart is purified through the ordeal she has undergone." All this accomplished, they moved on, leaving behind the scented groves and forest, and approached the battlemented gates of Mithila City.