



Discourse of HH Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji

ADHYATMA RAMAYANA

July 10 - August 10, 2021

Mysore

Compiled by Parimala Eshwarla

Adhyatma Ramayana

HH Sri Ganapathy Sachchidananda Swamiji started Adhyatma Ramayana on July 10, 2021.

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Day 1, July 10 2021

Adhyatma Ramayana is Rama's story but it does not fill the person with sadness. It brims with supreme knowledge (Jnana). Great Maharishis prefer this Ramayana to Valmiki Ramayana. As this delves into Rama's story from the spiritual angle, the physical attributes and character of Rama, Sita and others have been described differently from Valmiki Ramayana. It is a fantastic composition.

*Śuklām bharadarama viśnum śaśi varṇam chaturbhujam
Prasannam vadanam dhyāyet sarva vighnopa śantayēt*

It is customary to offer worship to Ganesha before beginning any task as He will dispel all obstacles in the way and render the task successful. Let us pray to Him to bless us to listen to Adhyatma Ramayana. Let us pray that our spiritual journey moves on successfully without any obstacles.

*Caritham Raghunāthasya śatakoti pravistharam
Ekikamakśaram pumsām mahāpāthaka nāśanam*

(This is a very famous prayer. It clearly brings out the importance of reading the story of Rama. It is a mantra).

Meaning: The story of Rama is as vast as 100 crore shlokas. Each and every word in it has the power to destroy the worst sins (maha patakas).

In Valmiki Ramayana there are 24000 verses. To everyone Rama and Sita are very dear. After listening to Valmiki's Ramayana, many great Maharishis were inspired to write the Ramayana in their own language, style and based on their experience. Based on their feelings and taste (rasas), they have re-written Ramayana without changing the basic story. For this reason, there are many Ramayanas in the world.

Adhyatma Ramayana, Āscarya Ramayana, Kamba Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana, Bhaskara Ramayana, Govinda Ramayana, Saptarishi Ramayana, Narada Ramayana, Rama charita manasa, Ramayana kalpavrksha, Ramayana darshanam are a few amongst them. Each of them has its own speciality. The story remains the same, but the way it is described, the novel way of depicting the situations based on their own feelings, varies from one composition to another. Each Mahatma perceived the story differently.

In other words, each of them could visualize Ramayana differently. Therefore this was not their imagination, but it was how Ramayana revealed itself to them that is narrated in their compositions.

Rama is the incarnation of the Supreme Lord- Sriman Narayana and that Sita is none other than Mother Goddess Lakshmi. A true devotee cannot bear that his dearest Lord had to shed tears and undergo suffering. Hence such devotee perceives the story from the Vedanta angle. Then, unknown to him, he has a divine experience.

The doubt that normally arises is – Why didn't Valmiki Maharishi compose this Adhyatma Ramayana? Had he done this, the story would have got damaged. Further, it would have damaged the emotional content too. The Karuna rasa (element of compassion) would have evaporated & instead a person would be filled with devotion. But this was not Maharishi Valmiki's intent. He sought that while the principles of truth (satya) and righteousness (dharma) remain upheld, the feelings of compassion and pity should flow in this world.

Life will come to a standstill if feelings of compassion are wiped out in humans. To survive on this earth compassion is essential. Compassion is needed to melt the hardened hearts. Towards achieving this goal, Valmiki Maharishi did not bring the spiritual angle to this story in his composition.

Valmiki was a great tapasvi (ascetic). That is why, through his Ramayana, he could make us visualize Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman and other characters, as Divine Gods who had come down. His wonderful composition has ensured that these impressions have remained deeply imprinted in our minds.

Maharishi Vyasa, who read Valmiki Ramayana, had a deep desire to add this story in all the Puranas composed by him. That is why, in Srimad Bhagavatam and all Puranas, either directly or indirectly, there is a little reference to Ramayana. Not satisfied with this, in his Brahmanda Purana, Maharishi Vyasa composed his Ramayana and titled it 'Adhyatma Ramayana'.

Adhyatma Ramayana is a conversation between Shiva and Parvati. The Divine Mother learnt this spiritual essence from her husband and passed it down to us. It has 4000 verses. In the spiritual field, this Ramayana has immense significance. In the world, it has the same value as Valmiki Ramayana.

It is said that it is extremely popular in the form of folk songs sung in the villages and not in its shloka form. Especially in Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu, folk songs based on Adhyatma Ramayana are sung during festivities and marriages. Tyagaraja Swamy drew many bhavas from Adhyatma Ramayana and incorporated them into his compositions. In earlier days, during Harikathas and evening programs held at temples, Adhyatma Ramayana was propagated.

The main characters of Ramayana also remain in Adhyatma Ramayana. But their actions and approach appear slightly different. They are based on Vedanta. In addition to increasing the bhakti, Adhyatma Ramayana causes Self-knowledge to sprout in the person.

Let us pray at first to Lord Rama –

*Āpadām apa hartāram dātārām sarva sampadām
Lokābhīrāmam śrī rāmam bhūyo bhūyo namāmyaham*

Meaning: Again and again I offer obeisance to Lord Rama, who drives away all problems, showers us with all forms of prosperity and who is dear to all in the world.

*Rāmāya ramabhadrāya ramachandrāya vedase
Raghunāthāya nāthāya sītāya patāye namaha*

Meaning: I offer obeisance to Rama who is known as Ramabhadra and Ramachandra. He is the Lord of the world, the jewel of Raghu lineage and is the husband of Sita.

*Neelāmbhuja shyāmala komalāngam sita samāropita vāmbhāgam
Panau mahāsāyaka chāru cāpam namāmi rāmam raghuvamsa nātham.*

Meaning: I bow to Rama, whose complexion is like the blue lotus, who is of delicate limbs, he who has seated Sita on his left thigh, who holds the mighty bow in his hand and who belongs to the Raghu dynasty.

Let us begin this from the Dakshinamurty stotra:

*Aprameya trayāteeta nirmala jnanamurtayē
Manoghirām vidoorāya dakshināmurtayē namah.*

Meaning: I bow to Lord Dakshinamurty, who cannot be known through direct and other proofs, who is beyond the three gunas, who is absolutely pure, who is a form of knowledge and who cannot be reached through the mind, speech, body parameters.

Let us begin the story with Maharishi Suta.

Maharishi Suta said, “Long ago, the great Yogi Maharishi Narada was travelling in all worlds contemplating about the wellbeing of all forms of life. During his travels, he reached Satya loka where he saw his father, Lord Brahma who was accompanied by Mother Saraswati and who was being profusely praised by Maharishis such as Markendeya and by the Vedas that had taken on a form.

With great devotion, he offered obeisance to his father and extolled him profusely. Pleased with him, his father Brahma said, “My son, without hesitation, please tell me the reason for your visit. I shall dispel all your doubts”.

Maharishi Narada then asked, “In the past, I have learnt from you about the auspicious and inauspicious deeds. Now I have only one lesson left. With compassion, please explain to me the secret (rahasya)”.

We should understand that rahasya means ‘deep secretive knowledge’. In other words, it is the wonderful supreme knowledge that is being referred to.

Narada continued, “When the terrible Kali Yuga begins, people will stop performing meritorious deeds and show a great inclination towards sinful deeds. It is a painful period. None will be happy during this period.

They will show slackness in adherence to truth. People will love to cheat, speak untruth, gossip, and criticize others. They will be envious of others. They seek to grab the hard-earned money of others. (They do not realize that they are drinking the sinful deeds of others through this).

They do not bother about their wife, but instead, their thoughts will be focused on another’s wife. Troubling others and seeing them suffer will be a joyful pastime to many. Most people will be sadists. People are filling their bags with sinful deeds and are all of them are being re-directed towards hell.

People will believe that their body is the Self and will become fools and atheists. They will despise their parents. Abandoning their wives, they will become slaves of wicked women.

Even Brahmins, who are supposed to guide others in the world, will become greedy. They will sell Vedas and earn their livelihood. They will study only to earn money. With the little knowledge that they have, they will turn conceited as if they are all-knowing.

They forget their dharmas (duties in life). There will be no differentiation between men and women in behaviour. O Lord, they are after all our children. Teach me the easy way by which they can be saved. How can the humans of the future get uplifted? Please teach me.”

Brahma replied, “O Narada, you have asked for the most precious knowledge. I will teach you the easy way out of these troubles. Be attentive. Long ago Parvati Devi, who treats her devotees as her children, asked Shiva the same question. At that time Shiva preached to her the most secretive Adhyatma Ramayana. Parvati Devi heard it attentively and was drowned in eternal bliss.

If Adhyatma Ramayana spreads on earth, then people who listen and understand it will also derive great happiness and get uplifted (sadgati). With Adhyatma Ramayana, sins will reduce on earth. The effect of Kali will also diminish. People will become more dharmic (righteous). If Adhyatma Ramayana is popularized on earth, the attendants of Yama (lord of death, who take beings to hell) will have less work. The attendants of Vishnu (who take the beings to Vaikuntha) will have an increased workload.

Feelings of differentiation will vanish in the people. Even the greatest Mahatmas find it hard to understand the essence of Rama. But through Adhyatma Ramayana, it can be easily understood.

O Narada, it is difficult for me to describe in-depth the Adhyatma Ramayana. I can only tell you a little of its essence. Previously, Shiva himself taught me this knowledge. You listen attentively.

*Adhyātama Ramayana tah śloka ślokārtham eva vā
Yah pathet bhakti samyuktah sa pāpān muchyate kshanāt*

Meaning: Even if one shloka or half a shloka of Adhyatma Ramayana is studied with total faith, sins will all be washed away instantly.

(It implies- the sins until then will be washed away and wisdom to not engage in sinful deeds will arise in the person).

Those who teach Adhyatma Ramayana will attain liberation. Those who abandon laziness and study this will obtain the result of performing Ashwamedha yaga. Even if one listens to Adhyatma Ramayana without adhering to all the disciplines or without dedication or hears it accidentally, all his sins are washed away.

Even one namaskara (salutation) offered to this holy text is equivalent to offering obeisance to all the Gods. (We must keep the book at home). The one who publishes Adhyatma Ramayana book obtains the merit of having studied the Vedas and Shastras.

One who fasts on Ekadashi and reads/ listens to Adhyatma Ramayana will be blessed with the result of Gayatri mantra recitation. Especially on Rama Navami (birthday of Rama), the person who fasts and remains awake the entire night (jagarana) and reads the Adhyatma Ramayana will be blessed with the result that would be obtained by giving charity to eminent Maharishis of Vyasa's cadre, that too in sacred places like Kurukshetra on days of the solar eclipse. This is undoubtedly true.

Even Indra and other Gods will obediently listen to the commands of those who daily read Adhyatma Ramayana. Those who read or listen to Adhyatma Ramayana will get manifold returns for their meritorious deeds.

The prayer 'Srirama hridaya' stotra appears in this holy text. By devotedly reciting this stotra for 3 days, the sin of Brahma hatya (killing a Brahmin) will be washed away. In front of the idol/ photo of Hanuman if this stotra is read, the person's desires will be fulfilled. If Srirama hridaya is read in the vicinity of the Tulasi plant (holy basil) or beneath an Ashwattha tree, many special benefits will be obtained.

O Narada, only Shiva has a complete understanding of the essence of Srirama Gita. He gave only half of that knowledge to Parvati. I have half of that knowledge that She has. From my knowledge, I am giving half to you.

O Narada! By chanting Srirama-gita all impurities are washed out. That deed which other teerthas (sacred rivers) cannot accomplish, can be accomplished by the Srirama-gita of Adhyatma Ramayana.

I have scanned the universe thoroughly but I have not come across even one sin that cannot be washed away with the chanting of Srirama Gita. The teaching imparted by Rama to Lakshmana is known as Srirama-gita.

With the desire to kill Kartaviryarjuna, Parashurama was learning archery from Lord Shiva when, he heard Goddess Parvati sing Srirama-gita. With great interest, he learnt this song and recited it with total faith. With this, he could attract an aspect of Sriman Narayana into himself.

For one month if a person recites this Srirama-gita with full faith, he will obtain liberation. The sin of accepting in charity that object which should not be accepted; the sin acquired due to eating prohibited food; the sin acquired due to speaking that which should not be spoken and the sin of indulging in wrongful deeds get washed away by chanting Srirama-gita.

Reciting Srirama-gita in the presence of Yatis, in the vicinity of a holy basil plant, under an Ashwatta tree or beside a saligrama yields indescribable limitless benefits. During pitr srāddha (annual ceremony for deceased forefathers) if this is recited with utmost devotion, the forefathers will be pleased.

On the Dwadashi morning, after duly completing the Ekadashi fast, if the person sits under the Ashwatta tree and chants Srirama-gita with total devotion, he will obtain the darshan of Srirama. Such a person will be revered by all Devatas too. Fruits that are not otherwise available can be obtained by chanting Srirama-gita. Narada, in a nutshell, no text equals Adhyatma Ramayana”.

The greatness of Adhyatma Ramayana was thus taught by Lord Brahma to Maharishi Narada. Those who read or listen to Adhyatma Ramayana with utmost devotion will fulfill all desires and attain the state of Vishnu. This dialogue, which explains the greatness of Adhyatma Ramayana, is contained in the Uttara-khanda of Brahmanda Purana.

From this, we understand the greatness of this Adhyatma Ramayana. Due to this our faith in the holy text multiplies.

The incidents in Adhyatma Ramayana are more or less similar to Valmiki Ramayana but at times there are significant differences. We should use our intellect to understand the inner significance. It is wrong to find faults or criticize.

Just like the Valmiki Ramayana, in this Adhyatma Ramayana, there are 7 sections and have the same names. The first amongst them is Bala kānda. Within this Bala kānda Srirama hrdaya stotra appears.

Day 2, July 11 2021

Bala kānda, chapter 1

Let us listen with total devotion to Srirama-hrdaya.

*Yah prthivībhara-vāraṇāya divijaih samprārthita chinmayah
sanjātah prithvītalē ravikulē māyā-manuśyo-vyayah
Nīśchakram hata-rākśasah punarāgād brahmatva-mādhyam sthirām
kīrtim pāpaharām vidāya jagatām tam jānakīśam bhaje*

Meaning: I offer my worship to the husband of Sita, who is formless, who is of divine illumination; who in response to the prayer of the Devatas incarnated in the Surya vamsa (lineage) on earth; who eliminated limitless demons and established on earth His supreme renown that destroys the sins and who ultimately merged into His Supreme form.

Many Vedantic words which appear here do not appear in Valmiki Ramayana. This is a great difference between the two great texts. In Valmiki Ramayana emphasis is on bhakti. In Valmiki Ramayana, dedication and devotion are important; In Adhyatma Ramayana emphasis is on spiritual sadhana. If we understand that in Adhyatma Ramayana, Rama has been recognized as the Supreme Lord, we will easily understand the subject.

Just as spiritual aspirants consider the mantra as very sacred and chant it again & again with extra focus while fixing their mind, buddhi, senses & body on it, even this Adhyatma Ramayana is extremely important & pure for the spiritual aspirants. More so for the devotees of Ramayana, it is very sacred.

(Those who have heard Ramayana repeatedly & have placed Srirama in the Parabrahma position, find it easy to understand this Adhyatma Ramayana. For those like us in the preliminary classes, many aspects of Adhyatma Ramayana will be confusing. We must repeatedly listen and try to understand).

In the Dhyana shloka explained now, the term ‘Māya manushyah’ was used. In normal understanding, this term is applied to Krishna.

A normal person does not know why he is facing sorrow. He is bound with feelings of 'I and mine'. This is because he is drowned in illusion (maya). But a 'māya-mānava' is the supreme being who knows the past, present and future. He also knows how to change the future. In Adhyatma Ramayana, Rama has been declared as a 'Māya mānusha'. That is why in reality, Rama did not grieve when Sita was kidnapped. He pretended to be grieving. This was because He was aware of the future happenings. He simply remained a witness to all the happenings.

(We grieving because we have forgotten the past, the present is confusing and we are unaware of the future. As the ordinary human is unaware of the three, he grieves for every trivial problem. He grieves because someone insulted him, that he lost something, that events did not materialize the way he had planned. But Rama knew the past, present and future. Hence He did not grieve).

In Valmiki Ramayana, Rama was a supreme emperor. In Adhyatma Ramayana He is a great yogi and a highly knowledgeable being (maha-jnani). If we understand this difference, we will easily understand Adhyatma Ramayana.

(Aren't Maha-yogi and Maha-jnani the same?- we may wonder. Maha-yogi does not speak to anyone on his own. He remains immersed in the supreme bliss. A Maha-jnani has the ability to shower that bliss on others).

The first verse of dhyana shloka explained completely the heart (essence) of Adhyatma Ramayana. Now going to the second verse which explains Srirama's Paramatma characteristics.

*Viśvodhbhava sthiti-layā-diśu hētumēkam
māyāśrayaṃ vigata māya-machintya mūrṭiṃ
Ānandasāndra-mamalaṃ nijabodha-rūpam
sītapatiṃ vidita tatva-maham namāmi*

Meaning: I offer obeisance to the husband of Sita, who is the sole cause for the creation, sustenance and absorption of this universe; who is the supporting pillar for illusion and yet who is beyond its effects (mayāteeta); whose form is beyond the imagination; who is beyond likes-dislikes, who is an embodiment of bliss; who is pure, self-illuminating and who is an embodiment of Supreme Knowledge.

The entire essence of Upanishads is contained in this stotra. All the traits of the Supreme Self as explained in the Vedanta shastra are contained in this verse. The truth is that Rama did not have any sorrow. All the grief that he experienced was nothing but His divine play. It was his maya.

*Tripurāri giri sambhūta śrīrāmārnava sangata
Adhyātma rāma gangēyam punādi bhuvanatrayam*

Adhyatma Ramayana is the Ganga born from the mountain called Shiva or Tripurantaka. It merges into the ocean called Rama. This Ganga called Adhyatma Ramayana purifies all three worlds.

Goddess Parvati addressed her husband Lord Shiva who was seated in meditation on the Kailasa Mountain and asked, "O Lord, You are all knowing. Kindly teach me the Essence of Supreme Lord (Purushottama).

(The truth is that Shiva is the Supreme Guru. On our behalf and to uplift us, Mother Parvati would request the Lord to teach her).

*Śrīrāmachandre-khila lokasāre bhaktir dhrṛḍā nourbhavati prasiddhā
Bhaktiḥ prasiddhā bhava-mokśanāyā nānyat tataḥ sadhana-masti kinchit*

Meaning: It is well-known that unflinching faith in Lord Rama, who is the essence of all the worlds, is the supreme boat that helps in crossing this ocean of repeated rebirths. Unflinching devotion is the only way to cross this ocean; there is no other Sadhana apart from this.

However knowledgeable a person maybe, he could be a great vedantin who has mastered all Vedas, yet he cannot cross this ocean of samsara unless he has unflinching faith in the Lord.

Maharishis praise Lord Rama as Parabrahma. But they say that Rama was enveloped by his own illusion due to which he failed to realize his true nature (atma swarupa) and that through the medium of Maharishi Vasishtha, he had to learn the Yogavasishtha and attain the supreme state again.

If he had truly attained the Supreme Knowledge, why did he grieve for Sita? If he has not attained Self-realization, then why should we pray to him who is at par with other creatures? Kindly dispel my doubts and preach me”.

Lord Shiva replied, “My dear, you are truly fortunate. You have attained the desire to know about the Supreme Lord. Never before has anyone questioned me in this manner. It is the duty of the Guru to dispel the doubts of the disciple.

Yes, Rama is Parabrahma. He is over and above the veil of illusion. Bliss is His inherent form. Due to His power of illusion, He created the entire universe and has spread himself within and outside like space. He resides within the hearts of all beings. Spreading everywhere, He is sustaining and governing this entire creation with the power of illusion.

(He who has enveloped the entire universe is digambara. Not naked one. He who thinks himself as the world. He wanders in the clothes given by Lord. Only if they have body-identification, they will be conscious of their body. But Digambaras do not have any mental modifications).

Ordinary persons find faults even in the Supreme essence. They consider Rama as ignorant. Drowned in ignorance they believe that Rama was also caught in worldly bondages. They fail to see Rama who is within them, just as the person wearing a golden necklace fails to remember its presence on his body.

Rama means bliss (ananda). It inherently exists within every being. Just as darkness cannot exist within the Sun, even a trace of ignorance cannot exist in Rama.

Just as a person with vertigo finds the earth reeling, the human imposes the activities of the body and senses upon the Self, which in reality is superior to the body. Due to this, the ignorant person further gets deluded.

Just as, nothing barring illumination exists in the Sun which is illumination, differences such as knowledge and ignorance do not exist in Srirama. He eternally remains as an embodiment of knowledge.

(Sunrise and Sunset are for us, not for the Sun. We are rotating but impose Sunrise and Sunset on the Sun. Likewise, how can knowledge and ignorance exist in Rama?)

Parvati, illusion can never envelop Rama as it has sought shelter in Him. Illusion is in His control. He is the form of Pure Knowledge. He is the support for this entire creation. In this connection, I will explain a very secretive knowledge. This is connected with the attainment of liberation (moksha). This is a conversation between Rama, Sita and Hanuman. Listen attentively.

After Ravana was killed, Rama returned to Ayodhya and was crowned the king. He was served by brothers Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna and by Sugriva and all other Vanara heroes. When Rama was seated on throne, Hanuman came to Rama and with folded hands bowed in deep reverence and stood.

Seeing Hanuman, Rama said to Sita, “My dear Sita, Hanuman has unflinching devotion towards us both. He is totally sinless. He has become eligible to receive initiation into Divine Knowledge. Therefore, explain to him My tattva (Supreme Essence)”.

Mother Sita said, “Hanuman, understand Rama to be the Supreme Parabrahma. He is all-pervading. He is that universal soul whose form is visible to the eyes. He is the all-powerful energy.

(In Bhagavatam in the verse ānandadhāma, it says- that the Lord who is beyond the perception of the mind and senses, made himself visible as a brother, as a child, as a boy and as a relative to the people in Brindavan).

Understand that I am the moola prakriti (primordial energy) responsible for the creation, sustenance and absorption of this creation. In the presence of Parabrahma Rama, I create this entire universe with great vigilance. The ignorant wrongly impose upon Him, this universe created by me.

Rama’s birth in Ayodhya in the Raghu lineage; Rama protecting Vishwamitra’s yagna; releasing Ahalya from the curse; breaking Shiva’s bow; marrying me; destroying Parasurama’s arrogance; living with me in Ayodhya for 12 years; leaving for Dandakaranya forests; killing Viradha; killing the demon Maricha who disguised himself in the form of illusory deer; abduction of maya Sita (illusory Sita); giving liberation to Kabandha and Jatayu; accepting Sabari’s puja; making friendship with Surgiva, killing Vali; searching for Sita; building the bridge; attacking Lanka; killing Ravana; crowning Vibhishana as the king; boarding the Pushpaka Vimana; returning to Lanka and becoming the king – the ignorant wrongly impose all these on Him.

Hanuman, understand the truth that Srirama knows neither grief nor attachment. He is a form of eternal bliss. He is devoid of any change. He has accepted illusory traits (maya gunas) and is conducting his leelas (plays). Adhering to the ways of the world he appears to exist. That’s all”.

Rama himself said, “Hanuma, now I will explain to you the essence of Paramatma (Supreme Self), Atma (Self) and Anātma (non-Self). Listen attentively”. With this he began to teach Hanuman about ‘Tatvamasi’ and other statements that teach His Supreme Essence.

Only a devotee with unflinching devotion can understand this Self-knowledge. Others can’t understand. Without devotion, neither Supreme Knowledge nor liberation can be attained.

Saying this, Rama taught the ‘Śrīrama Hridaya’ to Hanuman. He told Hanuman that this most supreme essence should not be taught to those who lack devotion.

He also told Hanuman that the result of chanting Srirama Hridaya far exceeds the attainment of heaven. It has the power to grant liberation itself. The text which explains the Supreme Essence of Rama (Srirama tattva) is known as Srirama Hridaya.

The person who listens to this conversation between Shiva and Parvati is freed from heinous sins like matricide and Guru-dosham. Devotion towards Rama will further get strengthened. This is the phala sruti (the resultant fruit of listening).

With this, the First Sarga of Bala kānda of Adhyatma Ramayana concludes.

Bala kānda, Chapter 2

Mother Parvati said, “O Lord, I who have attained your grace, am indeed very fortunate. Even after drinking the limitless nectar called Rama’s essence, I am not satisfied. I want to hear in greater detail. Please, O compassionate Lord, teach me more”.

Shiva continued, “O Devi, I will teach you the Adhyatma Ramayana told by Srirama. In the past, Mother Earth was burdened due to the atrocities of Ravana and other demons. She took the form of a cow and accompanied by Maharishis and Devatas went to Brahma Loka and narrated her anguish to Brahma. The Supreme Lord Brahma closed his eyes, reflected for a moment and understood the intensity of her suffering. He thought of ways to relieve her from her suffering.

He opened his eyes and along with the Mother Earth, the hordes of Devatas and Maharishis he went to the milk-ocean. There he glorified Lord Hari with devotional mantras. He knew that only Hari could relieve Mother Earth of her sorrow.

Pleased with his prayers Lord Hari appeared before them. Unable to bear the illumination, Brahma had to close his eyes. There was nothing but bright illumination.

The Supreme Lord Hari, then out of compassion, made himself visible to them. His form was unexplainably beautiful and divine. It was beyond description. He was shining with the splendour of all the innumerable lokas (planes). With utmost devotion and joy, Lord Brahma praised him once again-

*Antas tvat pāda kamalē bhaktireva sadāstu mē
Samsārāmaya taptānām bheśajam bhaktireva te*

O Lord, you have an absolute love for your devotees. Therefore, the devotee who does not know Your essence, seeks only to be blessed with unflinching devotion towards you in all births.

The Supreme Lord, smilingly asked Lord Hari, "What is the purpose of your visit, Brahma?"

Brahma said, "O Lord, Ravana, the son of Vishravas and the grandson of Pulastya, has become the king of demons and is torturing the inhabitants of all three worlds. I had granted him the boon that he will die only in the hands of a human being. O Lord, you take on a human incarnation and destroy this mighty demon who is the enemy of all Devatas".

The Supreme Lord Srihari replied, "O Brahma, pleased with the austerities of Maharishi Kashyapa I had asked him to choose any boon. He requested me to be born as his son. That Kashyapa is now born as Dasharatha. At an appropriate time, I will create myself in 4 different forms as the sons of his 3 wives. At that same time My yoga maya will take birth in the house of Janaka as his daughter. With her by my side, I will complete your task". Saying this Srihari disappeared.

Brahma turned to the Devatas and said, "Srihari will incarnate in the Raghu vamsa (lineage). With your partial aspects, all of you take birth as Vanaras on earth and assist Srihari as long as he lives on earth". He consoled Mother Earth and asked her to be patient for some more time. Mother Earth duly satisfied, returned back.

(This episode appears in Valmiki Ramayana albeit with minor differences. We should understand that only in Adhyatma Ramayana, it is explicitly mentioned that Kashyapa Prajapati was reborn as Dasharatha and that Mother Sita was yogamaya (illusionary energy). This is not mentioned in Valmiki Ramayana).

Day 3, July 12 2021

Bala kānda, Chapter 3

Lord Shiva said, "Emperor Dasharatha was childless for a very long time. Approaching his Guru Vasishtha he expressed his sorrow, "O revered one! Will I never have children? Is there no end to my grief?"

Guru Vasishtha replied, "O King! You will be blessed with 4 sons. Invite Shanta's husband Maharishi Rishyasringa and under his guidance complete putrakāmeshthi yaga".

With full faith and pure heart, Dasharatha invited Maharishi Rishyasringa and under his guidance began this yaga. From the fire pit, Fire-god arose and while giving a golden pot containing payasa (milk sweet) to the king, he said, "O King! This is the divine payasa that blesses the person with progeny". Saying this, the Fire-god vanished into the fire.

Dasharatha gave this sweet to all his 3 wives. In course of time, they conceived and began to glow radiantly. On Chaitra Shukla navami (ninth day of the bright fortnight of Chaitra month), Karkataka lagna

(zodiac sign cancer), Punarvasu star, when 5 planets were in the ascendance and the sun was in Mesha rasi, at noon, the ancient Supreme Lord was born to Mother Kaushalya.

Jai śri Ramachandra Ki Jai!

There was a shower of flowers from heaven. The infant had the complexion of a blue-lotus. He had draped a yellow cloth (pitambara) around his waist. He had 4 hands, was holding the conch, discus, lotus and mace in his 4 hands. He had lotus-like reddish eyes. He wore sparkling earrings, had worn a glittering crown, had curly hair and was wearing a garland of vyjayanti flowers. He was smiling resplendently and was glowing radiantly. Compassion which had its home in His heart, made itself known through the moonlike smile on his lips.

Kausalya was wonderstruck and overjoyed at the sight of the Divine Lord who had incarnated as her son. Her eyes were brimming with tears of joy. Folding her hands in obeisance she prayed to the Lord,

“Salutations to You O Lord of Lords, who holds the conch, discus and mace! You are imperishable, infinite, Paramatma and are complete in all aspects. You are Purushottama. Knowers of the Veda state that You are beyond the reach of mind and speech and that you are the personification of Supreme Knowledge. Creation, sustenance and absorption take place only due to You. The innumerable crores of universes that exist in your womb appear like small sub-atomic particles.

Yet, O infinite Lord, you project as if you have taken birth in my womb. This is your play (leela). O Raghottama! Today I have experienced the love that exists in your heart towards you devotees. O Lord, I am rotating in this ocean of repeated rebirths. I have placed complete faith in your divine feet. Bless me that this enchanting form of Yours, comprising of 4 arms, remains eternally imprinted in my mind. Ensure that your illusion does not envelop me at any time.

O universal form! Please withdraw this divine super human form of yours. Transform into a tiny infant whom I can hold and cuddle in my arms.

(Even Devaki had prayed similarly to the Lord when He had manifested as Krishna).

Be a blissful and charming infant who showers bliss on everyone. I will rid myself of the terrible ignorance that envelops me by talking and embracing you as my infant son”.

(We come across a similar situation in the life of Maharishi Atri and Mother Anasuya. When Datta appeared before them with 3 heads and 6 hands they were filled with mixed emotions. They prayed to him to withdraw that immense, terrible form and to transform into an infant whom they could hold in their arms.)

The Lord replied, “Dear Mother, let it be as per your wish. Brahma had prayed to me to reduce Earth’s burden. In response to his prayer, I have taken on this human incarnation to destroy Ravana and other demons.

In the past, King Dasharatha and you had performed intense austerities to obtain me as your son. Today I am fulfilling that desire of yours. O Mother, due to the merit of your previous births, you could see my divine form. My darshan enables the living being to obtain liberation. In the absence of this merit, it is impossible to see this form”.

Saying this, the Supreme Lord, with his power of illusion, transformed into an infant. In the next instant, he began to cry loudly. Kausalya was delighted to see this infant form of the Supreme Lord.

Together with Guru Vashishta, Dasharatha who was brimming with joy came there quickly to see the newborn. Seeing the newborn son, Dasharatha shed tears of joy.

Thereafter Kaikeyi gave birth to a son. Twins were born to Sumitra. Dasharatha in extreme happiness gave enormous wealth in charity. Through Guru Vasishtha he had the naming ceremony and other rituals performed for the sons.

He, in whom the Maharishis, whose ignorance was wiped off due to attainment of jnana, delight (ramante), and who with his beauty fills the heart of his devotees with bliss is 'Rāma'. Guru Vasishtha conferred this name to Kaushalya's son.

Chanting 'Ram, Ram' destroys sorrows and showers bliss. When we chant 'Ra'- all sins vanish. When we chant 'Ma', the door is locked and the sins cannot return. He who showers bliss is Rama.

Kaikeyi's son was called Bharata. Sumitra's sons were named Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Rama and Lakshmana were eternally together. Bharata and Shatrughna were always together.

(Here in Adhyatma Ramayana, we learnt that the Supreme Lord incarnated with 4 hands. We even learnt that He gave darshan to Kaushalya in His divine form. We learnt the true forms of both Rama and Sita. When we learn newer aspects, it is better to accept them and increase devotion rather than trying to analyze which interpretation is correct. Is Valmiki correct or Adhyatma Ramayana correct- do not get into this debate).

Kaushalya used to decorate her infant well. As it is, he was extremely handsome and now with these decorations, Rama began to glow even more radiantly. His childish pranks were limitless. Running between the calves in the cowshed, he brought delight to his parents. Immersed in games he would refuse food. Kaushalya and Dasharatha took great delight in all his childish pranks. Here the Supreme Lord was sporting as an infant. The parents performed many charities for the welfare of their sons.

Due to Rama's mischief, she could not complete her household chores. One morning Rama came to his mother and said, "I am hungry. Give me food". As she was busy with her work, she did not listen to him. Rama got angry. Using a wooden pole he broke all the pots. He would take the milk, curd and butter and distribute them to his brothers. The cook reported this to Kaushalya.

Laughingly Rama ran away from there. Kaushalya too laughingly chased him. With utmost difficulty, she caught him. But Rama began to cry. With this, her heart melted completely. She did not feel like punishing him. In this way, with his many childish activities, Rama brought joy to his parents.

The infants grew into young boys. Maharishi Vasishtha completed their thread ceremony. Soon they were masters in archery and in all branches of knowledge. Lakshmana eternally served Rama while Shatrughna was always serving Bharata. Along with Lakshmana, Rama would hunt the wicked wild animals. He learnt the dharma Shastras from elders and offered commentary for them. He loved to serve his parents at all times.

Even though the Supreme Parabrahma incarnated as Rama and got involved in varied activities, we should remember that he was unattached. It appeared as if he was tied down with attachments, but, in reality, it was not so.

Bala kānda, Chapter 4

Vishwamitra heard of the Lord's incarnation and he came to Ayodhya to see Rama. With great reverence, Dasharatha warmly welcomed Maharishi Vishwamitra. On the pretext of protecting his Yagna, he asked Dasharatha to send Rama and Lakshmana with him. (He wanted to impart all his knowledge to them). Out of extreme love for his son, Dasharatha could not agree to send Rama. He offered to go personally and protect Vishwamitra's yagna. Yet Vishwamitra was obstinate that Rama should come and protect his yagna.

(The reason was that demons Maricha and Subahu would not attain liberation if they died in Dasharatha's hands. On the contrary, if they died in Rama's hand, they would obtain liberation. But Maharishi did not disclose this secret).

Dasharatha then had a secretive discussion with Guru Vasishtha and said, "O Gurudeva, please save me from this predicament. I do not want to send my sons. If I refuse to send them, my entire kingdom will be cursed. But my heart does not wish to send them. Please show me a way".

Guru Vasishtha then said, "O King, I will share a great secret with you. Under no circumstances can you share this with others.

Understand that Rama is not an ordinary human being. He is the Supreme Paramatma who is eternal. Due to his illusion, he has assumed a human form. Lord Brahma had prayed to the Supreme Lord to relieve Mother Earth of its burdens. To fulfill this promise to Brahma, the Lord has incarnated in your home as Kausalya's son.

In your previous birth, you were Maharishi Kashyapa. Kausalya was Aditi Devi, the mother of the Devas. Giving up trivial pleasures, for many years both of you performed intense penance seeking Srihari's grace. Pleased with your unflinching devotion, the ever-compassionate Lord made himself visible to you and asked you to seek a boon.

Both of you then said, "O Niranjana! You should be born to us as our son." To fulfill this desire, the Supreme Lord has now incarnated as your son. Adishesha has incarnated as Lakshmana and is serving the Lord. The Lord's conch and discus have incarnated as Bharata and Shatrughna. Yogamaya (illusionary energy) has taken birth as Janaka's daughter Sita. She is going to become Rama's wife.

To unite Rama with Sita Vishwamitra has come here. O King, this is the most guarded secret. It should not be revealed to others. Vishwamitra is here for completing a supreme task. Hence be at peace. Obey Vishwamitra and send the brothers with him."

Dasharatha who heard this story of Rama was overjoyed. He was delighted to know the story of his own past.

(In Valmiki Ramayana, Dasharatha weeps to send Rama. Here he learns the truth about them).

He realized that his birth had been rendered fruitful and hence was delighted. He lovingly called Rama and Lakshmana, embraced them, kissed them lovingly on their foreheads and handed them to Vishwamitra.

Vishwamitra was extremely valourous and powerful. He was pleased when the King handed over the sons to him. The brothers took up their bows, arrows and quiver and followed Maharishi Vishwamitra.

After they had travelled some distance, Vishwamitra lovingly called out, "Rama". He then taught the brothers Bala and Atibala vidyas. With this knowledge, the person will be free from pangs of hunger and thirst.

They then crossed Ganga and entered the forest where Demoness Tataka lived. Vishwamitra said, "Rama, a terrible demoness called Tataka lives in this forest. She can take on any form as she likes. She tortures the world. Without consideration that she is a woman, you have to kill her".

Rama accepted his Guru's command. He strung his bow and twanged it. It resounded in the entire forest. Tataka who was extremely angered with this, rushed towards Rama. Rama hit her with just an arrow. Vomiting blood, she fell dead. As her body dropped down, this demoness was relieved from her curse. An exquisitely beautiful Yakshini (female demi god) emerged from this body. She offered pradakshina namaskara to Rama and left for her abode.

Vishwamitra was extremely pleased with the valour displayed by Rama and he lovingly embraced him. He considered himself fortunate that he could be a Guru to the Supreme Paramatma. He then imparted all knowledge about weaponry and mantras to Rama.

Day 4, July 13 2021

Bala kānda, Chapter 5

Maharishi Vishwamitra considered himself fortunate to be a Guru to the Supreme Paramatma himself. He imparted all secretive knowledge of weaponry and mantras to Rama.

They spent the night there at the ashram. The next morning they travelled and reached Siddha ashrama. The Rishis living there received them with great reverence. Vishwamitra Maharishi accepted the yagna deeksha (vow). The demons Maricha and Subahu poured blood into the yagna pit.

The valiant Rama released just two arrows. One arrow hit Maricha. It caused him to swirl vigorously in the air and then flung him a hundred yojanas. He fell far away in the ocean. The second arrow instantly killed Subahu and reduced him to ashes. Lakshmana killed all other smaller demons.

Seeing this, the Devas showered a rain of flowers from heaven. The yagna was completed successfully without obstacles.

With this, Vishwamitra's eyes overflowed with tears of joy. He lovingly embraced Rama, worshipped him, seated him on his lap and kissed him with father-like love. He entertained Rama and Lakshmana by telling them many ancient stories from the Puranas. In this manner three days passed.

On the fourth day, Vishwamitra said, "Rama, let us go to Videha province and witness the yagna that King Janaka is conducting. He also has Shiva's bow. You should see it. King Janaka will welcome you with honour".

Vishwamitra Maharishi took these brothers and together with all other Rishis walked to the ashram of Maharishi Gautama that was near the banks of Ganga. There Ahalya Devi was engaged in austerities. This place was deserted with no birds or animals. There was no sign of life. All the trees were bent down. Rama was surprised to note this and asked Maharishi Vishwamitra to explain the history of this place.

Maharishi Vishwamitra said, "Rama, this is Gautama Maharishi's ashram. I will narrate his story. Listen. Living in this ashram, Maharishi Gautama was totally engaged in worshipping Lord Srihari. Pleased with his dedication and seeking that his austerities continue uninterruptedly, Lord Brahma offered his daughter Ahalya, who was of unsurpassed beauty, to Gautama in marriage. Gautama and Ahalya were living here.

Indra was captivated by Ahalya's beauty. He wanted to destroy her chastity and was waiting for the right opportunity. Hence, one day when Gautama was not at home, Indra came in Maharishi Gautama's form to destroy her chastity.

Exactly at that time, Gautama returned home. Seeing the illusionary Gautama who resembled him, he was angered. "Who are you in my form? Tell the truth. Else I will curse you and reduce you to ashes"- he thundered. Frightened, Indra said, "O Maharishi! I am Indra. Filled with lust I took on your form. Protect me".

Gautama was further enraged that the king of Devas had stooped to this level. With reddened eyes, he said, "O wicked man who seeks wives of others! May your body turn repulsive such that it eternally reminds you of this mistake!"

He then entered his home and saw Ahalya who was trembling in fear. She had folded her hands and was shivering. She had seen Indra who was in the guise of her husband. For the very chaste woman, seeing itself would destroy her chastity.

Infuriated with her, Gautama said, "O wicked woman! Become a rock in my ashram. Without food and water, exposed to intense Sun, withstanding heavy rains, tolerating intense winds, with single-pointed

focus, meditate on Srirama in your heart. Engage in relentless penance night and day till the time Rama incarnates and comes here. Wind will be your only food. This ashram will be devoid of any form of life.

After many years elapse, you will see Dasharatha's son Rama along with his brother. With his feet, Rama will touch you, who are in the form of a rock. With His touch, your sins will be dispelled. You will worship Rama with devotion, circumambulate him and free yourself of all sins. Thereafter, you will remain happily with me"- saying this he left for the Himalayas.

O Rama, from then, in this sacred ashram, without being visible to any other entity, taking wind as food, Ahalya has been living here performing intense tapas awaiting your arrival. Rama, uplift her by touching her with your feet".

Vishwamitra then held Rama's hand and took him to Ahalya stone. With his feet, Rama touched that stone. He then saw Ahalya, the great ascetic. She was now glowing with a divine radiance.

"I am Rama"- he introduced himself, fell at her feet and offered obeisance to her. At that moment, Ahalya saw the four-armed Supreme Lord, holding the conch, lotus, mace and discus in his 4 hands. He was draped in golden-silken garments. He had lotus-like eyes, a charming smile. A long garland adorned his neck. He had the Srivatsa mark on his chest. He glowed with a radiance that illumined all directions. He was holding a bow and arrow and standing beside Lakshmana. She saw Rama in His form of Narayana.

In uncontained joy, Ahalya remembered her husband's words. She worshipped Rama by offering water to wash his feet and hands. With eyes that were brimming with tears of joy, with the hair standing up on her body, and in a faltering voice she prayed,

Ahalya stuti

"O Jagannivasa! With the touch of the dust from your holy feet, I have accomplished the purpose of my birth. How fortunate I am! I have obtained that dust from your feet, which even Brahma, Shiva and other Guardian deities eternally search with totally pure minds.

O Srirama, your transcendental deeds are so strange! You delude the entire world by acting like a human. You are all-pervading. Although being formless, You are wandering in a human form. You are the form of complete bliss & are beyond illusion. You, the greatest conjurer, appear to be experiencing all sorrows.

The dust from whose lotus feet purifies Ganga, Shiva, Brahma and all Devatas, that Supreme Lord is now visible to my eyes. Aho! What to say of my merit from my past births! I will never worship anyone barring the Supreme Lord Srihari who, in a wonderous form has incarnated in the human world, who is lotus-eyed, who holds the bow and arrow in his hand and who takes on the name Rama.

In my heart, I worship that Supreme Srirama, the dust from whose lotus feet is searched for in the Vedas and the nectar of whose name Shiva also drinks. While shedding tears of joy that completely drench their bodies, Shiva, Brahma, Narada and other Maharishis extol the glories of this Lord in Brahma-loka. His glories are also extolled by Goddess Saraswati. In my heart I worship Him.

This Srirama who stands before me is none other than the ancient, nondual, self-illuminating, infinite Paramatma who cannot be measured by location and time factors. He is the cause for all causes. Throwing the world into delusion, he has taken an illusory human form for uplifting his devotees. From this, his compassion for his devotees is known.

For the purpose of creation, sustenance and dissolution, this non-dual Lord, takes on the three attributes of His illusionary energy and manifests as Hari, Hara and Brahma.

O Rama! You are a totally independent soul. Lakshmi keeps Your lotus feet in her heart and lovingly serves them. When subduing Emperor Bali, Your lotus feet occupied all 3 worlds. Great Maharishis who are devoid of egoism always worship your lotus feet. To such feet, I bow.

O Lord! You existed before creation. You are the primordial cause for the entire creation. This entire world is Your form alone. Seeking shelter in You, the world sustains. Although differences are visible in the world, You exist in everything but yet You do not associate with anything.

O Rama! You are known through Omkara. You are the Supreme Self who is beyond the scope of speech. In the form of words and their meanings, you manifest as the world. You are the world. You are also the primordial energy (moola prakriti) which is the cause for its existence.

Your determined resolve causes creation. You are also the resultant fruit that is to be obtained. You are the means by which the fruit is obtained. Although you are alone, due to Your illusion You appear as many. Just as the actor dons many costumes, You manifest in varied forms.

Deluded by your illusion, unable to know the truth, the ignorant human treats you like an ordinary man. Like the space, You pervade everything inside and outside. Yet You remain untouched.

You are eternally pure. You are the embodiment of knowledge and truth and are indestructible. O Lord! I lack the ability to discern right from wrong. I am a woman who does not have the Supreme Knowledge. How can I understand Your essence? All I know is devotion. Hence with unflinching devotion again and again I offer obeisance to you.

O Lord! I have a prayer. Please oblige. Wherever I am, whatever be my condition, in all times and all situations, may I have unflinching devotion to Your lotus feet. This is my prayer.

O Purushottama, Bhakta-vatsala, Narayana, Hrishikesh, I, again and again, bow to you.

I pray to that Srirama who alone is competent of removing birth, death and fear, who is like a crore Suns, whose complexion is like the bluish-black clouds, who holds a bow and arrow, who drapes a yellow garment having a golden border, who wears gem-studded earrings, whose eyes are like fully bloomed lotuses, and who is with brother Lakshmana”.

Having thus prayed, Ahalya circumambulated the Supreme Lord Srirama and then, with his permission, went to husband Gautama.

Those who chant this stotra with devotion will be freed of sins and obtain liberation. A childless woman who chants this obtains children. With Srirama’s grace, listening or chanting to this stotra with total devotion fulfills all desires. Even the worst sinners who murder Brahmins or who cast lustful glances at Guru’s wife are redeemed from their sins. Even drunkards, burglars, those who harm parents and siblings and atheists who are sunk in material comforts and even those who commit other sins get redeemed from sins if they chant this prayer with absolute devotion. They even obtain liberation in the end.

Bala kānda, Chapter 6

Vishwamitra said to Rama, “My son, let us go to Mithila ruled by Janaka. A great yagna is going there. From there you return to Ayodhya”.

They had to cross the Ganga to reach Mithila. There a boatman stopped them from boarding the boat. He said, “It is being said that if your feet can transform objects into humans. You transformed a stone into a human. So, before you step the boat, I shall wash your feet and remove that dust from them. Thereafter I shall ferry you across the river. If not, if the boat transforms into a girl, what should happen to my livelihood?”

He then obtained the fortune of washing Rama's feet. Thereafter he helped Rama board the boat and took them to the other shore. Maharishi Vishwamitra along with Rama and Lakshmana reached Mithila. By morning they entered the ashrams of the Rishis in Mithila.

King Janaka came to know of Vishwamitra's arrival. In great eagerness, he came forward along with his royal priest Maharishi Shatananda, fell on the ground and offered obeisance. He then worshipped Maharishi Vishwamitra. Seeing the 2 boys standing on either side of the Maharishi, he asked, "O Mahamuni, who are these two divine boys? Like Nara and Narayana they are bringing me delight".

Maharishi Vishwamitra then introduced these boys as the sons of Dasharatha. He spoke about the killing of Tataka, the protection of his Yagna, of killing Subahu, injuring of Maricha and the redemption of Ahalya. He then said to the King, "O Janaka! Show Shiva's bow that is in your custody to Rama. After seeing it, Rama will quickly return to Ayodhya".

Janaka then honoured Rama and Lakshmana and worshipped them. Thereafter he called his minister and instructed that the bow be shown to the boys.

The minister was sent to fetch it. King Janaka then said, "O Maharishi! If Rama lifts the bow and strings it, I will give my daughter Sita to him in marriage. This is the truth".

Vishwamitra smilingly said, "So be it. First you get that supreme bow and show to the mighty Rama". Meanwhile, 5000 well-built strong men brought in a huge vehicle a gigantic bow that was decorated with many bells, diamonds and gems. The minister showed it to Rama.

Rama looked at it with a pleasant heart and bowed to it. Then he lifted it easily and, even as the Kings were watching, quickly strung it. Rama who can draw away the energies from all entities, pulled the string lightly. With it, the bow made a loud thundering noise that caused the 3 worlds to shudder and it broke into two. All the Devatas who had thronged there to see the feat showered flowers on Rama. Beating kettledrums, they extolled Rama. Seeing the bow that had been broken into two, in great delight Janaka embraced Rama.

Sita's mothers heard about the breaking of the bow. They were wonderstruck and soaked in bliss. Then Sita wore silken clothes and ornamented herself. Holding flower garland in her right hand she came there. Smilingly she put the garland around Rama's neck. All the queens witnessed this from their balconies and were delighted.

Janaka requested King Vishwamitra "O Maharishi! Immediately write a note and send messengers who travel at the speed of the wind and inform King Dasharatha of this development. Ask him to come quickly with family and friends".

Maharishi sent messengers who travelled swiftly to Ayodhya and informed Dasharatha of the auspicious development. Dasharatha could not control his happiness on learning of Rama's extraordinary accomplishment and was eager to leave. He immediately instructed his ministers, "Quickly fetch my chariot. Let Rama's mothers and Guru Vasishtha and his wife go ahead. We will follow them". He then boarded his chariot and set out.

On his arrival, King Janaka with along with Maharishi Shatananda came forward and worshipped him. Rama and Lakshmana came forward and bowed to their father's feet. In great joy, King Dasharatha said, "Rama I am fortunate to again see your face that is fully bloomed like the lotus. With Maharishi Vishwamitra's blessings, I have benefitted in all ways". Again and again, he embraced Rama, kissed him on the forehead and was soaked in bliss.

Janaka made the perfect arrangement for Dasharatha's retinue. At an auspicious time, on an auspicious day, he called Rama and Lakshmana and began the wedding process.

A wonderful mandapam was erected. In that hall that was filled with Vedic scholars and married women, he seated Rama on the gem-studded throne. Auspicious instrumental music echoed everywhere. Maharishi

Shatananda worshipped Maharishis Vishwamitra and Vasishtha and seated them in seats placed on either side of Rama. He then lit the sacred fire. King Janaka, along with his wife, brought Sita who was beautifully ornamented. He washed Rama's feet and sprinkled that water on his head.

King Janaka offered Sita to Rama and said, "O scion of the Raghu lineage! I am offering my lotus-eyed Sita to you".

He then offered Urmila to Lakshmana in marriage. He offered his brother's daughters Mandavi to Bharata and Shrutakeerti to Shatrughna.

Janaka then addressed Maharishis Vasishtha and Vishwamitra narrated the story of Sita as told to him by Maharishi Narada. He said, "Once I was ploughing the field for yagna when a beautiful girl, with all auspicious signs, emerged from the earth. Treating her as a daughter I handed her over to my wife.

One day when I was alone Maharishi Narada arrived. I worshipped him and offered him a seat. Maharishi Narada said to me, "O King! Listen to my words which are for your benefit. Out of compassion for his devotees, the Supreme Lord had decided to complete the task for the Devas. Seeking to kill Ravana and other demons, with the name of Rama, he has incarnated as an illusory man. With his 4 aspects, He has incarnated as the 4 sons of King Dasharatha and is living in Ayodhya as a human.

His yogic-energy (yogamaya) is born as your daughter. Hence you give Sita only to Rama in marriage. Do not give her to any other man. This is because, from the beginning, She is the wife of Paramatma Srirama only". Saying this, he left in the path of the skies. From then on, I look at Sita as Lakshmi, the wife of Mahavishnu.

Thinking of ways of getting her married to Rama, I came up with a plan. Previously, after killing Tripurasura demons, Lord Shiva had retained his bow with my grandfather for safe custody. From then, this bow is with us. This bow quells everyone's pride. I put a condition, "The person seeking to marry Sita should break this bow. O Maharishi Vishwamitra! With your blessings Rama has come here to see the bow and has fulfilled my desire".

King Janaka then said to Srirama, "Rama! Today my life has been rendered fruitful. I am fortunate. I am seeing you and my Sita seated on the same throne. Due to sprinkling on the head, the water that has washed your feet, Brahma obtains the capacity to create. Sprinkling that water gave King Bali the position of Indra. With the touch of your feet, Ahalya was redeemed of her curse. There is none barring you who can protect me.

With the touch of your feet, Yogis who conquered time, conquer the fear of samsara. Deeply inclined towards Your divine names, the Devas, abandon sorrow and difficulty. I seek shelter totally in you".

In this way, Janaka worshipped Rama and then gifted to Rama 100 crore gold coins, 10 lakh horses, 10,000 chariots, 600 elephants, 1 lakh soldiers, 2 lakh donkeys, & 300 servants. Out of love for his daughter, he gifted a lot of beautiful clothing, pearls, gems etc. He then worshipped Vasishtha and Vishwamitra. He then honoured Lakshmana, Bharata, Shatrughna and King Dasharatha. He bid farewell to them

Shedding profuse tears, the mothers said to Sita, "Look after your in-laws and elders carefully. Serve them always. Obey them always and be vigilant. Always follow your husband Rama. Follow pativrata dharma and live happily".

(This advice given by the mothers to Sita does not appear in Valmiki Ramayana).

Along with others, Srirama then began his journey to Ayodhya.

Day 5, July 14 2021

(The incident of Parashurama's arrival also finds a mention in Adhyatma Ramayana. However here some Vedanta secrets of the meeting are revealed which are not covered in Valmiki Ramayana).

King Dasharatha along with his entire retinue began the return journey to Ayodhya. After they had covered 3 yojanas, Dasharatha spotted many bad omens and was petrified. He bowed to Maharishi Vasishtha and asked, "O Maharishi! I see frightening omens everywhere. What is the cause?"

Maharishi Vasishtha said, "O King! It is evident that some frightening event is about to arise. But, it is also evident that quickly the evil will wash away. This is because along with bad omen, deer are walking on your right, which is good omen".

Even as he was talking, terrible gale winds blew. There were severe whirlwinds followed by a huge dust storm. No one knew what was happening. Nothing was visible. Everyone's eyes closed due to the intensity of that dust storm. Shortly the dust storm vanished & they saw a divine illumination.

A fearsome man with a gigantic body, who was bluish-black in complexion, who was holding a bow and an axe, who had matted locks and who was dreadful like Yama, the destroyer of entities, was standing before them. He was Jamagni's son Parashurama, the killer of Kartavirya.

Seeing him, King Dasharatha turned nervous and trembled with fear. In that nervousness, he forgot to worship the Maharishi. Instead, he fell on the ground praying- "Save me & my sons. Protect our life".

Even then, not even slightly caring for that prayer, Parashurama angrily looked at Rama and said, "O worst among Kshatriyas! Taking on my name, you are wandering everywhere. If you are truly a Kshatriya, enter into a duel with me.

Breaking an old, dilapidated bow, you have declared yourself a hero. If you take this Vaishnava bow and string it, I will fight with you. Else I will kill you all. By now you know who I am. I am the destroyer of Kshatriyas".

When he thus spoke, the earth trembled violently. The surroundings were enveloped in darkness. The celebrative mood died down. Rama quickly went forward, looked angrily at Parashurama, snatched the bow from his hand, quickly strung it, fixed the arrow and said,

"O Brahmin! Listen to me. My arrow does not miss its mark. Immediately show it the target to be shot. Do you want me to hit all the meritorious worlds that you have earned so far through your penance or do you want me to render you immobile on earth? Tell me what you seek".

(It was the Vishnu's weapon. The time for transferring the weapon from Parashurama to Rama had arrived. This event happened only to transfer the Vishnu-tejas to Rama.

Here Rama addressed Parashurama as 'Brahmin'. This is because the moment Rama snatched the Vaishnava bow, Vishnu's energy that existed in Parashurama automatically went into Rama. Parashurama was now drained of the Vishnu-tejas. He was now only a mere Brahmin).

Rama further said, "Choose any one option. This is my order".

As Rama was saying this, Parashurama's face turned lusterless and pale. Recollecting an incident from his past, he said, "O Rama! O Rama! O Mahabahu! I now know You as the ancient primordial existence and as Maha-vishnu who is the cause for creation, sustenance and annihilation of the universe. In my childhood, going to the Chakrateertha pond near Gandaki I worshipped Srihari and propitiated Him with my penance.

Pleased with me, one day, Maha-vishnu manifested before me and said, "O best among Brahmins! Your penance has yielded fruit. Get up. You are my partial incarnation. You have worshipped me intensely

seeking to kill Kartavirya, who killed your father. Complete that task and then go around the earth 21 times. Kill the kings who have turned conceited.

Thereafter offer the land to Kashyapa and be at peace. In Treta yuga I will be born as Dasharatha's son and will marry Sita, my primordial energy. You will see me then. I will then take back this energy which I am now transferring to you. Thereafter till the end of Kalpa you will remain in tapas on earth".

I have followed His instructions till now. O Rama! You are Maha-vishnu. At Brahma's request, You have incarnated on earth. The radiance that exists in me is Yours. You have now taken it back. My birth is rendered fruitful. I have realized You.

You are beyond the scope of Brahma & other Gods. You are superior to Prakriti. As You are complete in all aspects, the 6 transformations such as birth, growth, decay etc. that arise due to ignorance do not exist in You.

You are all-pervading and exist as a witness within all beings. Coming and going do not exist for You. Like froth in water, like smoke in the fire, illusion seeks shelter in You and, based on Your commands, completes innumerable tasks.

As long as the person is enveloped in maya (illusion), he can never know You. Ignorance, which is the enemy of real knowledge, cannot be destroyed without a proper study of the Shastras and without serving a Sadguru. By serving a Spiritual Master, ignorance is destroyed.

Ignorance (avidya) led to the emergence of the body which is composed of the mind, life-force, intellect and senses. The consciousness that is reflected due to them is called jeeva (individual soul). As long as the individual soul is attached to the mind, intellect, senses, body and life-force, he thinks, 'I am the doer of the action. I am the enjoyer'. In joys and sorrows, he thinks, 'I am experiencing this sorrow/ joy'. This is ignorance.

Due to egoism, considering himself to be the doer and enjoyer, he performs actions due to which he gets bound by his actions. (Even after innumerable births he cannot exit from this bondage).

Just as water becomes hot and fire becomes cool when water and fire combine, when the intellect (buddhi) combines with the consciousness, it turns sentient.

(In the bhajan Jyoti veligindi, Swamiji has said- buddhiki buddhi vacchindi. Only with Sadguru's grace, the intellect (buddhi) develops buddhi (wisdom). That is detachment. It is obtaining the vision of the Supreme).

Likewise, when the Self associates with the inert intellect (buddhi), it obtains inertness and considers itself the doer (karta) and enjoyer (bhokta). This inertness stems from ignorance.

(Eating, talking, sleeping, attachments with family, house, as well as our worldly activities all are outcomes of inertness. Buddhi (intellect) attaining buddhi (wisdom) implies vanishing of this inertness and obtaining vision of the Supreme).

This inertness should be erased through the attainment of real knowledge (Jnana).

(Through cultivating devotion, engaging in Guru seva, reading of good Granthas, adhering to right disciplines and with penance, this inertness should be washed away. We presume only sleeping to be jadatva (inertness). It is not so. Even all our actions performed using the intellect are inertness (jada) although we think we are intelligent. We have the pride that we have mastered Bhagavad Gita and Guru Gita. But of what use is the learning if you are again trapped in activities of the intellect and sunk in ignorance? If so, how can we stay away from falling into the trap of ignorance? The answer for this is- Do not accept into the intellect the objects and the incidents that happen in the world. Do not allow them to enter. Ignore them. The inertness will then vanish and you will merge into the knowledge).

The inert intellect accepting Self's effulgence is good.

(Every day we must teach lessons to the inert intellect, 'This is all an illusion. This is not permanent. I have fallen into this illusion. One day I will have to exit').

But the Self (jeevatma) taking on intellect's inertness (buddhi jadatva) is not good.

(The intellect is already inert. The Self, holding on to it, is like one blind man leading another).

Filling the intellect with sentiency, one must try to obtain the vision of the Self.

(Only with buddhi-yoga, a person can obtain the vision of the Supreme Self).

When the intellect loses its inertness, it remains as pure illumination.

(To dispel darkness we light a lamp. Now, where has the darkness vanished? The darkness transformed into illumination. The lamp has the ability to transform darkness into light. Although the buddhi has this capacity, trapped in inertness it remains sunk in ignorance. When it is freed from inertness, we get the knowledge. With buddhi-yoga, one should obtain the vision of the Supreme. When we obtain the vision of the Supreme, we obtain real knowledge. For this, bhakti is the first step. Only through bhakti one can get Jnana. Thereafter comes vairagya (detachment). Wearing ochre robes and trying to directly jump to vairagya state no use. First bhakti should arise and then step by step one must move ahead).

Srirama! As long as the person does not serve your ardent devotees, he will not escape from the repeated cycle of rebirths.

With the help of the devotion that arises due to Satsang with Mahatmas, if ordinary humans eternally serve You, they will escape from illusion.

The spiritual aspirant will then obtain a Sadguru who, like You, is an embodiment of knowledge. From that Sadguru, he will obtain initiation into tatvamasi and other sacred mantras or initiation into their essence and with Your grace will obtain liberation.

Hence, those who have no devotion to You, will never get liberation even after 100 crore kalpas. They can never experience final happiness.

Hence O Lord, I seek that in every birth of mine, I should have utmost devotion to You and I should associate with your devotees. This is because due to them both, ignorance will die down. Due to serving Your lotus feet and due to serving the lotus feet of Your ardent devotees, ignorance will die down.

Due to devotion to You and due to singing Your divine glories, people in this world are freed from sins. While rendering purity to all the worlds, such devotees will uplift others.

O Lord of all universes! O Lord who is known through devotion! O Lord who is filled with compassion! O embodiment of infinite knowledge! O Ramachandra! I offer obeisance to You.

O Lord! Whatever meritorious deeds I have performed seeking the higher worlds, I offer them all to Your arrow. Hit them with your arrow and uplift me. O Rama! I bow to you".

Rama said, "O best among Brahmins! I am pleased with you. I shall fulfill all your desires. Seek what you want."

Parashurama said, "O Madhusudana! If You pity me, then bless me with eternal devotion to You and a chance to associate with your devotees. Bless that the person who, even without devotion, reads or listens to this prayer uttered by me, will be filled with devotion to You. With it, he will obtain knowledge of Your inherent form. Bless him to remember You at the time of his death".

Rama said, "So be it".

Parashurama circumambulated the Supreme Lord Srirama and with His permission returned to Mount Mahendra. Believing that his son Rama had escaped from jaws of death, King Dasharatha embraced him lovingly with tear-filled eyes. With a happy mind, he resumed the journey and they all reached Ayodhya.

After reaching Ayodhya, the 4 brothers lived happily with spouses in their palaces. Rama spent time with Sita and his parents enjoying as much bliss as Vishnu enjoys in Vaikuntha with Lakshmi.

At that time, one-day Kaikeyi's brother Yudhajit arrived and with Dasharatha's permission took Bharata and Shatrughna to Kekaya kingdom.

In the company of Sita and Rama, Kaushalya shone like Aditi who was in the company of her son Indra. While living in Ayodhya, Rama, who had qualities that were lauded not just in this world but in all the worlds, attained fame that was sung in all the worlds.

He was akin to the bliss that had manifested to fill bliss in humans. He, the Supreme Lord and the Lord of all universes, who was accompanied by Sita, who was eternally filled with the prosperity called knowledge, who inherently was changeless, without limitations and beyond illusion, obtained the renown of a human who was under the control of illusion.

With this, Bala kanda comes to an end.

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 1

One morning Rama was seated on a gem-studded throne in the front yard of his palace. Sita was gently fanning him. He was eating betel leaves and was entertaining her when Maharishi Narada suddenly arrived. Noticing his arrival, Rama immediately got up and together with Sita bowed to the Maharishi and said,

"O best among Maharishis! Your darshan is very rare for householders who are inclined towards sensory pleasures. The merit of all our past meritorious deeds has blessed us with your darshan today. It is only due to past merit that we get a chance to associate with the noble people in Satsang. Therefore I consider myself fortunate. What is it that I can do for you? I will complete your task immediately".

Narada said, "O Rama! Why do you talk like an ordinary man and seek to delude me? You are addressing yourself as a samsari (one bound in samsara)- it is true, as illusionary energy that is the cause for the existence of all worlds, is your wife. Merely due to Your presence, illusionary energy creates everyone starting from Brahma and up to all humans.

This entire creation stems from Your illusion.

Illusion that is composed of 3 attributes of sattva, rajas and tamas seeks shelter in You. O Adi-deva! It is illusion that creates all beings, birds and animals. Hence You are the householder living in the supreme home called the 3 worlds, with Your wife called illusion.

You are Vishnu, Janaki is Lakshmi. You are Shiva, Sita is Parvati (Shivā). You are Brahma, She is Saraswati. You are Surya (Sun-god), Sita is Prabha. You are Chandra (Moon-god), Sita is Rohini. You are Indra, Sita is Sachi-devi. You are Agni, Sita is Swaha; You are Yama, Sita is Samyami devi. You are Nivrti, Sita is Tāmasi devi. You are Varuna, Sita is Bhargavi. You are Vayu (wind-god), Sita is Sadāgati. You are Kubera, Sita is sarva sampat (total prosperity). You are Rudra, Sita is Rudrani.

O Rama! Whatever male form is seen in the world, You are that. In the world, everything that is said to be a female form, is the auspicious Sita. Hence O Deva! There is nothing in the 3 worlds barring You both.

Ignorance born due to Your reflection is called Avyakta (unmanifest) or Avākyaḥkṛta. From unmanifest (Avyakta), Mahat (total cosmic intelligence) emerged. From Mahat came Sutratma or Hiranyagarbha. From him came the Linga-shareera (subtle body).

The combination of ahamkara (I-ness), buddhi, the 5 pranas and 10 senses is called Linga shareera (subtle body). The learned state that the Linga-shareera experiences birth-death, joys-sorrows etc. He who has an affinity for that subtle body is called 'Jiva'. In the composite form (cosmic level), this Jiva illumines as Hiranyagarbha (four-faced Brahma).

That which is without beginning and which cannot be said to be existing or non-existing is avidya (ignorance). It becomes the cause for the Jiva (individual soul) to take birth.

Pure Consciousness has 3 bodies- gross, subtle, causal. Due to these carriers, Pure Consciousness is called Jiva (individual Self). He who has no carrier and not even a trace of ignorance is called the Supreme Lord (Parabrahma)

O scion of the Raghu lineage! O Rama! Creation is of 3 types- waking, dream and deep sleep. But You are distinct from these 3 types of creations. You are the Pure Consciousness and witness for the entire creation. This entire world has emerged due to You. It is sustained in You and gets absorbed in You. Hence, You are the cause for all causes.

Just as a rope is misconstrued for a snake leading to fear, when the person considers himself to be the individual existence (Jiva), fear arises. Just as fear vanishes when the truth of the rope is known, the moment the knowledge 'I am Paramatma' emerges, all fears and sorrows vanish.

You, the Pure Consciousness, exist in all beings and illumine in their intellect. Hence You are the Self for all. Just as a snake is seen in a rope, due to ignorance the world is imposed on You. But when the truth about You is known, everything gets absorbed in you. Then the individual soul has no actions left to be done. Hence every human should strive for attaining that Supreme Knowledge.

For attaining that Knowledge, devotion is a must. Only those who are devoted to Your holy feet, obtain real knowledge that is a means to liberation. Hence only those who have devotion attain liberation.

I am a servant of Your devotees and the devotees of those devotees. Hence bless me O Lord. Do not delude me.

I am the son of Brahma, who was born from Your navel-lotus. Hence, I am your grandson. Raghava, protect me, Your devotee"- saying this, again and again Maharishi Narada bowed to Rama.

He then said, "O Raghottama! Brahma has sent me to meet You. You have incarnated on earth to kill Ravana. But now King Dasharatha seeks to install You as the king. With this, You will be totally involved in administrative activities and will refrain from killing Ravana due to which Your promise of reducing Earth's burden will go futile. O best among kings! Make true your vow. You are eternally devoted to truth".

Hearing this, laughingly Rama said, "O Maharishi. Listen. Is there anyone unknown to me? I will fulfil my vow. There is no doubt about it. While killing only those demons who are destined to die, I shall slowly reduce the earth's burden.

For the destruction of Ravana, I will leave for Dandakaranya tomorrow. There I shall live in the garb of a Rishi for 14 years. On the pretext that the wicked Ravana has kidnapped Sita, I will kill him"- he vowed.

In great happiness, Maharishi Narada circumambulated him thrice and left for heaven.

Whoever studies or listens or remembers this conversation daily, attains detachment. As a result, he will attain that liberation, which is not attained even by the Devatas.

(In Adhyatma Ramayana we learn that Maharishi Narada visited Rama. We also learn some secrets of Vedanta in this chapter. This incident and this teaching are not found in Valmiki Ramayana. In Adhyatma Ramayana we know that Rama himself was eager to leave for the forests. We also learn that Rama is beyond all sorrow).

Day 6, July 15 2021

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 2

In this chapter, the reason for Maharishi Vasishtha's priesthood is explained. How Saraswati (intelligence) creates an obstacle for Rama's coronation is also explained.

(Even if Knowledge (jnana) slightly wavers, ignorance (ajnana) occupies. If you observe Ravi Varma's pictures, Lakshmi is shown as standing on a lotus in a fully-filled pond. The lotus in flowing waters eternally moves. It indicates that wealth (Lakshmi) does not remain steadily at a place. Either for good deeds or bad deeds it gets used and spent. Mother Lakshmi is shown with her abhaya hasta (mudra showing assurance of fear-not) and the other palm is facing down indicating the flow of money to the person. This symbolizes that She blesses the person with wealth called prosperity and knowledge.

Ravi Varma has seated Mother Saraswati on a rock. She is playing the veena. Below is a peacock that is watching her. Seated on a rock indicates that she is seated on our rock-like intellect. Our buddhi (head) is her seat. When the knowledge slightly wavers and transforms into ignorance, the person acts per his whims. Hence here, it is said that Mother Saraswati herself created the obstacle. This is because, due to listening to Manthara's ill-advice, Kaikeyi behaved foolishly.

One morning King Dasharatha called his Guru Maharishi Vasishtha and said, "O Gurudeva! The citizens, Vedic scholars, traders and ministers are repeatedly praising Rama. Hence, I seek to coronate Rama, the lotus-eyed one, who has all good qualities, and who is the eldest among my sons as the heir-apparent. Further, I have become old. Hence, I seek to coronate him immediately.

Bharata and Shatrughna have gone to their uncle's home and will not be returning quickly. I seek to complete the coronation tomorrow itself as it is an extremely auspicious day. Hence permit me to complete it tomorrow. Also, please arrange all the materials necessary for tomorrow's coronation. Inform Rama of this coronation".

Calling minister Sumantra he said, "Tomorrow early in the morning I am coronating Rama as my successor. Immediately decorate the entire city with colourful flags and banners. Decorate the city with gems, pearls and gold. In this aspect, follow all the commands that Gurudeva Vasishtha gives".

Sumantra accepted the command. In great delight, he bowed to Guru Vasishtha and asked, "What should I do?"

Vasishtha said, "Sumantra, ensure that tomorrow early morning, 16 young maidens decorated nicely with golden ornaments stand at the main door. Bring a 4 tusked-elephant from the Airavata clan and decorate it with gold and gems. In numerous golden pots, waters from all the rivers should be readied. Drape the throne with the tiger skin.

A white umbrella that has pearl pendants and a handle laced with gems should be arranged. Fragrant garlands, costly garments, expensive ornaments, white clothing should be readied. Scholarly Brahmins who have been well-honoured should stand with darbha grass at the appropriate place. Different types of artists should exhibit their arts at various places.

The 4-fold army should be stationed outside the city's gate equipped with all weaponry. In all temples in the city, worship of the deities should be properly conducted. Inform all the vassal kings of Rama's coronation and ask them to assemble in the court with gifts".

Maharishi Vasishtha then mounted a chariot to Rama's palace. He crossed 3 buildings and reached Rama's palace. As he was the royal priest for the entire Raghu lineage, no one stopped him at any gate.

Meanwhile, Rama came to know of his arrival. Quickly he went forward and, with folded hands welcomed his Guru reverentially. He fell flat on the ground and prostrated to his Guru. By then Sita brought water in a golden pot. Rama seated Vasishtha on a gem-studded seat, washed his feet, sprinkled that water on his head and said, "I have been rendered fortunate with this".

Hearing this, Maharishi Vasishtha smiled and said to Rama, "Srirama! By sprinkling the water from Your feet on his head, Shiva turned fortunate. My father Brahma sprinkled the water from your feet and freed himself of all sins. By saying that You are purified due to sprinkling on your head the water from my feet, you are actually teaching the world how to behave with the Sadguru.

I am aware that You are the Supreme Lord Maha-vishnu. O Raghava! I am also aware that You, along with Your consort Lakshmi, have incarnated on earth for accomplishing the tasks of the Devas, for helping devotees attain great heights in devotion and for killing Ravana. Although I know the truth, Srirama, I have never revealed the secret of your birth anywhere.

O Raghunandana! Seeking shelter in Your illusion, You are completing all your tasks. Based on your resolve, I have become your Guru and you are my disciple. But, O Lord, I know you are the Supreme Lord, the Guru for all Gurus, grandfather for all fathers & the inner dweller of every being. Like a puppeteer, you are playing with us.

O Lord, you are beyond the scope of the mind, speech and words. You, who can manifest in any form, have, with Your illusion (yogamaya) manifested as a human on earth.

I know that the profession of priesthood is condemnable. But, based on Brahma's words that the Supreme Lord would incarnate in Ikshvaku lineage as Rama, I took on this profession of a royal priest for the Ikshvaku lineage. I did this to get the chance to be your Guru. O Raghunandana! Today my desire is fulfilled.

If you seek to free yourself from indebtedness to your Guru, then, O Lord I seek that, illusionary energy which is in your control should never trap or delude me. Ensure that I do not commit any sin due to it. Today, as this topic arose, I spoke the truth about You. But, barring this incident, I do not talk about it elsewhere as it is to be retained secretive.

Rama, the king wants to coronate you as his successor tomorrow. I am here to inform you of this. Hence today, you and Sita should fast, observe all rules of purity, maintain sense-control and sleep on the ground. Now I am going to king. You can go tomorrow". Saying this Maharishi Vasishtha went away in the chariot. (In this last sentence 'You can go tomorrow', Guru is permitting Rama to leave for forests the next day. It is a subtle hint).

Seeing Lakshmana who was nearby, Rama laughingly said, "O son of Sumitra! Tomorrow I am going to be crowned as heir to the throne. In that post, I am only an instrument. You are the doer and enjoyer. This is because you are my life-force. This requires no other thought".

Saying this, Rama proceeded to complete all the disciplines as instructed by Guru Vasishtha.

Meanwhile, Maharishi Vasishtha returned to the king and appraised him of all the developments. One of the palace attendants who had heard the news of Rama's coronation carried the information to the citizens &

Kaushalya and Sumitra. Overjoyed, Kaushalya and Sumitra presented a pearl chain to the information bearer.

Kaushalya prayed to Mother Lakshmi for Rama's wellbeing and upliftment. Yet she was a little apprehensive thinking, "The king is lustful and is in Kaikeyi's grip. I am apprehensive of what could happen ultimately"- with this thought, she prayed to Goddess Durga to remove all obstacles.

Exactly at that time, the Devatas prayed to Mother Saraswati, "O Devi. Go instantly to Ayodhya. This task is extremely crucial. You have to go there and create an obstacle in Rama's coronation. You have to enter first into Manthara and then into Kaikeyi and achieve the task through them. After creating obstacle in the coronation process, you return".

Immediately Goddess Saraswati agreed. She entered Manthara, the hunch-back lady. At that time, Manthara, who was on the terrace, saw the entire city decorated brightly with flags and the celebratory mood in the city. Astonished she asked another maid, "Why is the city decorated? Why is Kaushalya joyfully giving away clothes to the Brahmins? What is the reason?"

The old maid said, "Tomorrow Rama is going to be installed as the heir to the throne. For this reason, the city has been decorated".

Hearing this, Manthara ran to Kaikeyi who was resting on a bed in her room and said, "O foolish woman! Get up. How can you lazily sleep in the bed when a big calamity is falling on your head? You are proud of your beauty but you do not even know what is happening in the city. Rama is going to be installed as the successor tomorrow".

Hearing this, Kaikeyi jumped from the bed and in great happiness offered a precious gem-studded chain to Manthara, and said, "What great news you have brought! My dearest son is going to be the successor to the throne. If so, why do you say that I am in danger? My Rama is more important to me than Bharata is. He talks so lovingly to me and treats me at par with his own mother Kaushalya. Tell me what danger you expect from Rama?"

Manthara, who was triggered by Mother Saraswati was upset on hearing these words. She flung away the gem-studded chain that Kaikeyi had offered to her and screamed, "Who wants these gifts? I am grieving that you are in grave danger. The king who is filled with sensual desires, always tries to keep you happy. He uses you to fulfil his desires. Pampering you with mere words, he is in reality completing all the tasks that Kaushalya seeks.

Understand that Kaushalya is becoming the chief queen. It is with this intention that he has sent Bharata along with Shatrughna to his uncle's home. Sumitra stands to gain in this as her son Lakshmana is always devoted to Rama. Hence, she will enjoy all royal comforts after Rama comes to power.

But Bharata will have to remain as Rama's servant all his life. They may kill Bharata perceiving him as a threat to the throne. And you will have to remain as Kaushalya's servant for your entire lifetime. It is better to die than to be disrespected by a co-wife. Therefore, take the appropriate steps. Listen to me. Instantly demand that Bharata should be coronated and that Rama should be sent for 14 years to the forests.

O queen! Only then Bharata is safe. I will also tell you the ways to accomplish this plan.

Previously in the war between the Devatas and the demons, Indra had requested Dasharatha for help. At that time the King took you along with him for battle. When he was engaged in that bitter war, the central pin from his chariot wheel fell off. At that moment, O Queen, you courageously retained your finger into that hole to prevent the chariot wheel from coming off. Thus you saved your husband's life by retaining that finger till the end of the battle in that wheel-hole.

After killing the demons, the king observed your heroism and was pleased. Embracing you joyfully he said, 'Choose any 2 boons'. You had said, "Keep the boons with you. When I need them, I shall seek them". The king agreed to this. I now remembered this incident which you had narrated to me earlier.

Hence, now you invoke anger. Immediately proceed to the anger-room. Scatter your jewels all over the room. Lie on the bare floor. Continue to remain angry until the king fulfills your desires. Do not utter a word until he comes and promises to fulfill your demands".

Due to the bad association with the wicked Manthara, Kaikeyi was now convinced that she was correct. She considered bad to be good.

Appreciating Manthara she said, "O Manthara! I did not know you are so intelligent. You have such sharp thinking. You are so dear to me. If my son Bharata becomes the king, I will gift you 100 villages".

Thereafter she entered the anger-room, removed all her ornaments, scattered the jewels everywhere, wore an old saree, lay on the bare floor, let her hair loose, and said to Manthara, "Manthara! Until Rama goes to the forests, I will remain like this even if I lose my life in the process". Manthara said, 'Stick to this resolve' and went away.

However virtuous, kind, intelligent, moral and just a person may be, if he keeps the company of the wicked, then he is sure to become like them. Hence one must be very careful to avoid the association with the wicked. If not, like Kaikeyi, he will become wicked.

With this 2nd chapter of Ayodhya kanda comes to an end.

(In Valmiki Ramayana, they narrate the incident and leave the correct interpretation to the readers. In Adhyatma Ramayana, they narrate the incidents as they unfolded).

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 3

After instructing all the ministers about the arrangements for the coronation ceremony the next morning, King Dasharatha arrived at Kaikeyi's palace. On not seeing her he was shocked. He was anxious and heartbroken. He asked the servants, "Where is your mistress who is filled with noble qualities? Why is she, the beautiful one who is nicely ornamented, not coming to receive me lovingly as she would do everyday?"

The servants said, "We do not know the reason. But she is in the anger-room. You could go there and find the reason".

Totally alarmed, King Dasharatha entered the room. Sitting beside Kaikeyi and patting her gently he said, 'O Kalyani! My dear, why are you sleeping on the bare floor instead of the bed? Throwing away your jewels, wearing soiled clothes, removing all ornaments, why are you sleeping like this? Why are you not talking to me? What is your desire? Do tell me. I will fulfill it.

Without any hesitation, I shall punish any man or woman who has harmed you. If needed I will kill them. Hence, my dear, tell me what you seek. However difficult the task may be, I shall fulfill it. You know me – I am your dearest husband and your servant. I am in your control. Do you want me to convert a pauper into a rich man or a rich man into a pauper? Should I kill the one who should not be killed? Or do you want me to pardon one who should be executed? There is nothing more I have to say.

I will give you my life. My dear, I vow on the lotus-eyed Rama, who is dearer than my life, that I will fulfill your words. Tell me what you want".

After he had sworn thus, wiping her tears, Kaikeyi said, "You should fulfil whatever I ask, as you never go against your words. During the war between the demons and the Devas, you had promised me 2 boons. Now I am seeking them.

The first boon is that my son Bharata should be crowned as the king. You should utilize the ingredients you

have arranged presently and crown him the king. The second boon is to send Rama away to the Dandakaranya forest for 14 years. Wearing matted hair, eating roots and fruits, draped in bark clothing he should live like an ascetic. After 14 years, he can return to Ayodhya if he wishes or he can continue to stay in the forests. But tomorrow morning itself Rama has to leave for the forests. If there is any delay in fulfilling my boon, I will leave my life in your presence”.

Hearing these frightening words, King Dasharatha fell to the ground like a mountain hit by a powerful thunderbolt. Slowly he regained consciousness. Wiping his tears he wondered whether he had seen a bad dream or had turned mad. At that moment, to his eyes, Kaikeyi appeared like a frightening tigress sitting in front of him.

He said, “My dear, why are you uttering these words which will take away my life? What harm has Rama done to you? In the past, you would always extoll Rama’s qualities. You would say that he treats you and Kaushalya alike. How can you now speak thus about him? Don’t do this. Do not send him to forests. I cannot live without him. You take the kingdom for your son. But do not send Rama to the forests. Let him stay in the palace. Please be compassionate to me”. Shedding tears, he held her feet and wept profusely.

But with eyes reddened with anger, Kaikeyi said, “O great king! Have you lost your head? Why are you going back on your promise? If you go back on your word, you will fall into hell. If Rama does not wear bark garments and leave tomorrow morning, I shall end my life. You boast that you always abide by the truth. But having sworn in the name of Rama now you are going back on your word and instead are trying to pacify me”.

Hearing these words, the king who was sunk in an ocean of sorrow, fell to the ground and fainted. Due to sorrow, that one night appeared like 1 year to him.

It was sunrise. The bards arrived and began to sing the king’s glories. Auspicious instrumental music was played.

All arrangements were readied for the coronation. Women, young and old, in their happiness, had not slept the entire night. The people of all castes were eager to see the coronation. They were eager to see Rama dressed in golden clothing, wearing the crown and exquisite ornaments, glittering like the 1000 Manmathas and mounted on the elephant.

When the king did not awaken from sleep even after very long, minister Sumantra hurried to his palace. He walked to the inner apartments and prostrated to the king. Observing the grief-stricken king, he asked Kaikeyi, “O Queen! Why does king appear sorrowful?”

She said, “The king hasn’t slept the entire night. Thinking only of Rama and uttering his name, he has spent the night. He is distressed due to a lack of sleep. Hence you immediately bring Rama here. The king desires to see him”.

Sumantra said, “O Queen! Without the King’s command, how can I bring Rama?”

Hearing this, Dasharatha said, “I seek to see my dearest Rama. Quickly bring him here”.

Although Sumantra was puzzled, he quickly went to Rama’s palace and said, “O lotus-eyed one! Victory to you! The King wants to see you. Hence come immediately to the King’s palace”.

Rama and Lakshmana quickly boarded the chariot along with Sumantra and came to the King’s palace. At the palace gate, Rama saw Guru Vasishtha. Although he was in a hurry to see his father, he bowed to his Guru first and then went in to see his father.

Seeing Rama’s arrival, the king got up and with some effort tried to embrace him. But as sorrow overtook him, in a distressed voice he said, ‘Rama, Rama’ and fell down. In great agitation, Rama supported his father, embraced him, and placed him on his lap. Seeing the king unconscious, all the ladies wept loudly.

Hearing these inauspicious cries, Maharishi Vasishtha quickly came there. At that moment, wanting to know the cause for his father's distress, Srirama asked, "Dear mother, why is the King grieving?"

Kaikeyi said, "O Rama! You alone can help him recover. You are bound to truth. Hence your words can be trusted. Make true your father's promise to me. The responsibility to fulfil the promise now rests with you. The king is unable to tell you what he seeks. Putra (son) is one who saves the father from falling into hell. Hence you have to save him from falling into hell".

Hearing this, Rama said, "For my father, I am ready to give up my life. I will leave my wife Sita or mother Kaushalya or the kingdom. The good son is he who, even without the father's asking, fulfils his desire. The mediocre son is he who completes the father's request only when he asks. The worst son is he who, even after being asked does not fulfill the request. So, whatever my father wants me to do, I shall obey. Rama never engages in double-talk".

Hearing these words, Kaikeyi was filled with confidence. She then said, "The preparations made for your coronation should be utilized for the coronation of my dearest son Bharata. He should be made the heir to the throne. This is the first of the boons I had asked. The second boon was that today you should leave for the forest. Wearing matted hair and bark clothing, you should sustain there like an ascetic for 14 years on fruits and roots. This is what your father wants you to do. But he is hesitant to convey this to you".

Rama said, "O Mother! This kingdom will belong to Bharata. I will leave right now for Dandakaranya. But why is the king not telling me directly when I am here?"

Hearing this, the grief-stricken king sorrowfully said, "Rama, I am completely in the grip of a woman. I am one who treads the wrong path. Opposing my command, conquer this kingdom and take possession of it. Kill or imprison me who am treading the unrighteous path. You will not be tainted with sin by doing so. With this, I will not be tainted with the sin of uttering the untruth"- saying this he wept loudly saying, "My dear Rama! My most-cherished love! How can you abandon me and go to the forest?"

The king now wept without any restraint. Rama gently wiped his father's tears. He said, "There is nothing to grieve in this. My brother Bharata will rule the kingdom. Following your advice, I will return after 14 years from the forest. I am far happier in the forest than in the city.

Due to this arrangement, you will be abiding by the truth and my promise of completing the task of the Devas will get complete. My stay in the forest is very beneficial for me. I am eager to leave for the forests. May Kaikeyi's sorrow abate fully. I will console my mother and Sita, fill them with confidence and will come quickly bow to you. Thereafter I shall leave".

Saying this, Rama bowed to his father and left to see Kaushalya.

At that time, Kaushalya was, with total concentration, engaged in worshipping Srihari seeking Rama's wellbeing.

Kaushalya who was meditating on Srihari, the inner Self who exists in everyone, who is non-dual, who is the embodiment of knowledge and bliss, who is Pure Consciousness, could not realize that that Supreme Lord Srirama was her son Rama.

Day 7, July 16 2021

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 4

(Ayodhya kanda is filled with Vedanta).

Srirama came to his mother's palace to seek her permission to leave for the forest. At that time Kaushalya was in deep meditation. Srirama stood silently before her. Startled on seeing Rama standing quietly before

his mother, Sumitra hurriedly awakened Kaushalya from her meditation and said, "Dear sister, Rama has come here for you".

Hearing the word 'Rama', Kaushalya immediately opened her eyes and saw her son standing before her. She lovingly embraced him, seated him on her lap and kissed him on his head. Lovingly patting him, she said, "My son, you will be hungry. Come and eat some rice".

Rama said, "O Mother! This is not the time to eat and rejoice. It has been decided that I have to immediately leave for Dandakaranya forests. My father who eternally abides by the vow of truthfulness has given 2 boons to his dearest Kaikeyi. Based on this, Bharata has been allotted this Ayodhya kingdom and I have been given the kingdom called the forest. I will live like an ascetic for 14 years in the forest and thereafter I shall return quickly. Do not get worried due to this".

Hearing these words, the distraught Kaushalya instantly fainted. After a few minutes, she regained consciousness and sobbed sorrowfully, "O Rama, if you have decided to go to the forest, then take me along with you as I cannot live without you even for half a second. Just as a cow cannot live when its calf is taken away from her, without you, my life-force, I cannot live. If the king loves Bharata, let him give the kingdom to Bharata. But why does he want to send my dearest son Rama to the forests? Let him give all his possessions to Kaikeyi. I have no problem with it. But in what way have you wronged Kaikeyi or the king that they are sending you away in exile?"

O Rama! To you, your father may be equal to a Guru. Let it be so. But, as your mother, to you, I am superior to him. Hence I command that you should not go to the forest. Disobeying my words, if you go, I will go to abandon my life and reach the abode of death".

Hearing Kaushalya's words, Lakshmana was further enraged. He began to hiss angrily. With anger that could burn down the three worlds, he said to Rama, "O brother! The king has gone mad. He is in Kaikeyi's sway. I will bind and arrest him. I will kill Bharata and his uncles who support him. Now everyone is going to witness my valour which is equal to Rudra who consumes the three worlds during annihilation. O destroyer of enemies! O Rama! Get ready for your coronation. Holding the bow in my hand, I will stand by you. I will kill anyone who dares to object".

Hearing these words, Rama embraced Lakshmana and said, "O hero of the Raghu lineage! This is undoubtedly true. You always seek my wellbeing and are always beside me. The valourous words you utter are true. But this is not the time to exhibit your valour.

If this visible kingdom and bodies that we experience were to be real in existence, then your efforts would have been really fruitful.

These material comforts are like transitory flashes like lightning seen in the clouds. It is the same with longevity too, which is like a drop of water on a burning piece of iron.

Just as a frog which, despite being swallowed by a snake, tries to eat the meat piece that is nearby, humans who are being bitten by the serpent called time, crave for these impermanent comforts.

A human being strives night and day in various tasks only for securing bodily comforts. If, at any time, the realization that the Self, which is real, is different from the body, arises in him, then can he enjoy the bodily comforts? Misconstruing the body to be the Self is the root of all problems.

(With Guru's teaching, when the student realizes the truth he will reduce bodily cravings. His desires vanish).

Association with parents, women, children, brothers and relatives is like the meeting of travellers at the rest house. They meet and then go their way. This association is also comparable to the logs of wood that meet in the flowing river and then separate after travelling together for some distance.

Wealth (Lakshmi) is absolutely unstable like the shadow. Youthfulness is as fleeting as the waves in the river. Sexual pleasures are as fleeting and insignificant as a dream. This is because life is very short. Yet, strangely all living beings consider these comforts to be real.

This worldly life is nothing but a dream. It is like an illusory city. Yet the deluded beings consider these comforts to be real and permanent and remain sunk in them.

Each Sunrise and Sunset depletes the lifespan of the living being. We see people succumbing to old age & death. Although the person sees it regularly, due to ignorance, he does not realize that this would be his fate too.

Days and nights pass on, but the person does not realize the speed at which time is moving ahead. He continues to crave for comforts.

Like water kept in an unbaked pot, longevity depletes quickly by the day. Like enemies, diseases are ever ready to strike us. Like the fearsome lioness, old-age stands before us filling us with limitless fear. Death walks behind old-age & waits for the right moment to pounce on the person and gobble him.

That body, seeing which the man bloats in pride thinking, 'I am a renowned king & am superior to all' – ultimately transforms into germs, or ash or dirt.

Lakshmana! That body, seeking shelter in which you are seeking to burn this world, is nothing but a combination of skin, bones, blood, semen, excreta etc. It undergoes 6 types of transformations (birth, growth, old-age, death etc.). How can a body that is prone to destruction be the real Self? Only he who thinks the body is the real Self, faces enormous difficulties.

The intellect which believes, 'I am the body' - is known as avidya (ignorance). 'I am not the body, but the Self that is filled with consciousness' –the intellect that believes this, is called vidya (knowledge).

Ignorance (avidya) causes us to experience repeated rebirths and deaths. Knowledge (vidya) stops the cycle of repeated rebirths. Hence those who seek liberation should strive to obtain that Knowledge (Jnana).

(The spiritual aspirant should not be satisfied that he has read or understood these subjects or that he has done some penance or japa chanting. Sadhana has to be carried on continuously. Only it is the real effort. Such effort is the real penance (tapas). Such penance destroys the ignorance in the person).

O destroyer of enemies! Desires and anger are enemies in attaining liberation. They create obstacles in the path of liberation. Anger alone is the biggest obstacle in attaining liberation. When anger enters into the person, it overtakes him and he murders even his father, brother, friends and other relatives.

Anger is the root of all mental afflictions. It is anger that tightly binds the person in the repeated cycle of births. It is anger that destroys righteousness in the person. Therefore, at all costs, abandon anger.

Anger is the most dreaded enemy. Excessive desires (Trishna) is the terrible impassible River vaitarani (the painful river that needs to be crossed by the soul after leaving the gross body). Contentment is Nandana vana (garden located in heaven). Mental peace is the wish-fulfilling cow (kamadhenu). Hence be calm and peaceful. With this, there will be no enemy for you in the world.

The real Self is different from the body, senses, mind, life-force and intellect. It is Self-luminous, formless and changeless. Until the person realizes the reality of the Self, he will continue to be troubled by the noose of deaths. He will keep taking birth again and again and will fall into trouble all the time.

Hence O Lakshmana! Understand that the Self is different from body, senses etc. Without transgressing the righteous conduct (dharma), continue your worldly activities. Experience whatever has been destined

for you- be it happiness or sorrows. Do not sink into lows when sorrows arise. Experience your destiny with a pleasant attitude.

O member of the Raghu lineage! Action performed without seeking any fruit will not trap you in karmic bondages. With this, likes and dislikes will not emerge in your mind. You will remain pure and your actions will not bind you. Always remember my words. With this, the sorrow of this world will not attach to you”.

Rama then said to Kaushalya, “Dear mother remember my words always. Wait for my return from the forests. There is no need to grieve for long. 14 years will get over quickly as if it is 14 days. Due to Prarabhdha, it is impossible for living beings to always live together. Boats get away with the currents and drift separately, but they are never together. It is the same with us too

Dear mother, 14 years will get over like ½ second. Abandon grief. Permit me to leave. With love bless me and send me. Then I will live happily in the forest”. Saying this, he fell at her feet.

Kaushalya picked him, seated him in her lap, blessed him saying, “My son Rama, when you walk, sleep, travel, and at all times, may all the Devatas along with Gandharvas along with Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva protect you”.

Lakshmana was astonished by Rama’s courage. Shedding tears of joy, in a choked voice he said, “You have dispelled my doubts. I have abandoned anger and enmity. Like a servant I shall follow you completing only your orders. Bless me to come with you. Else I will leave my life”.

Accepting Lakshmana’s request, Rama permitted him to come.

Thereafter Rama went to Sita. Seeing her husband walking into the home, Sita quickly brought water in a golden plate, washed his feet and looking at him, gently asked, “O Lord! Where did you go early in the morning? Why are you without the crown and ornaments that are worn by kings? Why is the ceremonial umbrella not being held over your head? Why are musical instruments not being played when you are moving? Why are you, who should be accompanied by ministers and vassal kings, coming like an ordinary man?”

Rama cheerfully said, “Sita, the king has given me the kingdom called Dandakaranya. I have to go there right now. I am leaving now. You stay here serving your mother-in-law. I am not joking. What I am saying is true”.

Sita trembled. In total shock, she threw the gold plate and in total fear said, “Why did your father, who is supreme, give the kingdom of forest to you?”

Rama said, “O virtuous lady! Being pleased with Kaikeyi he had given boons to her. As part of those boons, he has given this kingdom to Bharta & has given to me the kingdom called the forest. For 14 years I have to live in the forest. This is Kaikeyi’s wish. As I have to make his words true, I am now leaving for the forest. O noble lady! Hence don’t create an obstacle for me”.

Hearing these words Sita joyfully but firmly said, “I will walk to the forest first. You follow me. Leaving me and going is not in accordance with dharma”.

Rama was pleased hearing this and knowing her attitude. Yet He said to her, “O Sita, how can I take you to the forest that is filled with tigers and other wild animals? Further, in those forests, there are cannibals. Lions and other dangerous animals freely wander. Only bitter, sour fruits and roots will be available. My dearest, you will not get sweet fruits there.

As there is no human movement, grasses are overgrown. The path covered by the grasses and shrubs will not be clear. Further, the path will be filled with thorns and pebbles. Only caves will be seen. Crickets will

make shrill noises. The gigantic forest flies suck out blood. It is very difficult to live in Dandakaranya. You cannot withstand as you are delicate.

O auspicious one! One needs to withstand heat, cold, rain & all extremities and walk in the forest. Seeing the ferocious demons, you will give up your life. Hence, you stay here. In a short time, I will return”.

Hearing this, Sita was aggrieved. Her face turned red with anger. With quivering lips, she said, “You are an epitome of dharma. I, your chaste wife who am faultless, have trusted you fully. If so how can you think of leaving me & going? Is this just? Can animals and demons harm me in your presence?

The fruits that remain after you eat will be nectarous to me. I will be content with it. To me, even thorns and pebbles will be like flower mats if I am with you in the forest. I will not trouble you in any way. Further, I will assist you in all ways. During my childhood, an astrologer had predicted that with my husband I will live in the forest. You have to make true those words. Hence I will come with you to the forest.

I have heard different versions of Ramayana from many learned scholars. But nowhere was it said that Rama went to forests without Sita. Hence I will come with you. I will assist you in every way. If you leave me, then I will leave my life right now”.

Hearing her determined opinion, Rama said, “Sita without delay come with me. Give away all your ornaments give to Guru Vasishtha’s wife Arundhati. Distribute all our wealth to the needy and the scholars. Quickly come. We have to leave right away”.

Sita and Rama thereafter distributed all their wealth in charity to the Brahmins, attendants, servants etc. Lakshmana instructed his mother Sumitra to take proper care of Kaushalya. Holding his bow he followed Rama.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita walked to the King’s palace. Rama was joyfully looking at the citizens who had gathered on the streets to witness the coronation ceremony.

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 5

On seeing the trio walking on the road and on learning of the boons sought by Kaikeyi, the citizens were aggrieved. They thought “Succumbing to lust, our king has gone under the control of a woman and is abandoning his son Rama, the son who is eternally bound to truth. Until now Kaikeyi loved Srirama dearly. How could she suddenly turn wicked? How could she ask Rama to live for 14 years in the forest? What is the reason for her to turn wicked?

Hence let us not live here in Ayodhya. Let us follow Sita, Rama and Lakshmana to the forests. Look at Sita walking on foot. Has she, who is the most beautiful in the three worlds, ever been seen by another man?

Today, she is walking publicly on the road such that everyone can see her. Look at Rama, the most handsome in the three worlds. Instead of travelling on the chariot or elephants, he is walking on the road. The demoness Kaikeyi has taken birth solely to destroy us. Seeing Sita walking on foot, even Rama would be deeply pained. Our evil days have arrived. But what can we do? Destiny is strong”- saying this, they all wept piteously.

Muni Vamadeva, who was amidst them, consoled them saying, “Do not grieve for them. Be silent. Listen to the truth I say.

Rama is Maha Vishnu; He is the primordial Lord Narayana who is beyond illusion. Janaki is Goddess Lakshmi. She is the illusionary energy (yogamaya). Lakshmana, who is following his brother, is none other than the 1000 hooded serpent Adishesha.

The Supreme Lord had incarnated as Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar) etc. When He combines with rajo guna, He becomes Brahma who creates the universe. With He associates with Sattva-guna He is Sri maha-Vishnu, the protector of the three worlds. At the end of the creation period, He takes on tamo guna, manifests as Rudra and destroys the entire universe.

Earlier, this Lord incarnated as a fish and rescued his devotee Vaivasvata Manu at the annihilation time by helping him board the ship. He manifested as Kurma (tortoise) and, when the Mount Mandara was slipping to Patala, He held it on his back and supported it.

When the Earth had sunk into Rasatala during annihilation time, He incarnated as Varaha (boar) and holding the earth on His tusk, He brought it up. To shower boons on Prahlada, He incarnated as Narasimha and tore Hiranyakashipu who had become a thorn for the 3 worlds and who was torturing them.

When Mother Aditi, who was grieving that her son had lost the rulership over heaven, prayed to Him, He incarnated as the dwarf Vamana and begged from Bali and restored Indra's kingdom to him.

He came as Bhrigu's son Parashurama and destroyed the wicked Kshatriyas. This Lord of all the worlds has now incarnated as Rama and is proceeding to kill Ravana along with millions of other demons. Ravana is destined to die at the hands of a human.

In his previous birth, King Dasharatha had meditated on Vishnu & begged the Supreme Lord to take birth as his son. To fulfill that promise the Supreme Lord has incarnated as Rama. Hence Rama is none but Vishnu. Along with Lakshmana, He is now proceeding to the forests to kill Ravana. Sita is His illusionary energy (yogamaya) who helps Him in creation, sustenance and annihilation of the universe. Neither the King nor Kaikeyi are the cause for Rama and Sita to leave for the forests. Do not blame them.

Yesterday Maharishi Narada had visited Rama & sought his help in reducing the earth's burden. At that time, Rama said, 'O Maharishi! Tomorrow I shall be leaving for the forest'. Hence, O innocent people, do not weep.

In this world, those who always chant Rama's name can never face death. Hence there is no need to lament that Rama is afflicted with sorrow. Wipe your eyes. In Kali yuga, merely by chanting Rama's name, a person gets liberation which cannot be obtained through other means. Such a Supreme Lord has taken an illusory human form to kill Ravana, to fulfil the king's desire and to give chance to the living beings to extol him".

Hearing Maharishi's words, citizens looked at Rama as Vishnu and rejoiced plentifully. They were freed from all doubts. They now fixed their minds solely on Rama.

Maharishi Vamadeva said, "Those who remember this secretive doctrine of Sita and Rama daily, will develop a deep devotion for Srirama. All of you love Rama dearly. Hence I have explained to you His form that is filled with attributes. Retain this teaching a secret". Saying this, Vamadeva Maharishi went away. The ecstatic citizens now recognized Rama as Paramatma and were delighted.

Meanwhile, Rama, along with Sita and Lakshmana entered the king's chamber.

Day 8, July 17 2021

Along with Sita and Lakshmana, Srirama entered King Dasharatha's chamber and said to Kaikeyi, "O Mother, based on your order we three are leaving for forests. May the king permit us".

Hearing this, in absolute elation, Kaikeyi stood up. She gave them the bark clothes that she had readied for them. Within minutes Rama and Lakshmana changed from royal clothing into bark clothing. (It is clothing made from the bark of the tree trunk). However, Sita stood there puzzled not knowing how to wear those clothes. She looked at Rama in total embarrassment.

Rama then went forward and draped the barkcloth on her sari and showed her how to wear it. Witnessing this scene, the ladies from the palace were so moved that they wailed loudly. However, no one dared to come forward and help her as Kaikeyi stood there like a fiery demoness.

Hearing the cries of the ladies, Maharishi Vasishtha was angered with Kaikeyi. He said, "O wicked woman! You sought that only Rama should go on exile. Why then did you arrange bark clothing for Sita? If Sita, due to devotion towards her husband, decides to go with Rama, she will leave Ayodhya with all ornamentation and royal clothing. Not otherwise. She will leave in a dignified manner. She will bring joy to Rama and dispel from him the agony of living in exile".

As soon as Guru Vasishtha said this, King Dasharatha slowly called Sumantra and said, "O Sumantra! Bring the chariot. These three who want to live in the forests will proceed from here in the chariot".

Having said this, he looked at Rama, Sita and Lakshmana and unable to control his sorrow, swooned again. When he regained consciousness, he wept inconsolably. (Although externally the King projected as if he was soaked in the love for his son, in reality, he knew that Rama was the Supreme Lord. He was aggrieved to send away the Supreme Lord to the forests).

The chariot arrived. Sita quickly boarded the chariot looking at Rama. Rama circumambulated his father and then quickly boarded the chariot. Holding 2 swords, 2 bows and a quiver, Lakshmana climbed behind Rama & asked the charioteer Sumantra to begin driving. The chariot began to move. Meanwhile, unable to contain his sorrow, the king repeatedly said, "O Sumantra stop the chariot". But Rama said, "Quickly go ahead".

Sumantra followed Rama's words and drove quickly. As soon as Rama was out of sight, the king fainted again. Meanwhile, all the citizens, from children to elders, Rishis, brahmins to the ordinary, ran behind the chariot saying, "O Rama! Stop! We are coming with you. Why do we need this city without you? Without you, this city is like a cemetery".

Here, the king was saying to his attendants, "Take me to Rama's mother Kaushalya. I am unable to see this lady's face. My life will remain at least a little longer if I am with Kaushalya. After seeing Kaushalya once, I will not live longer".

The attendants took him to Kaushalya's palace. On reaching there, he fainted again. After gaining consciousness, ashamed of his deed, he remained silent.

Rama, who was travelling in the chariot meanwhile reached the banks of Tamasa river where they spent the night. That night they drank only water. Rama and Sita slept on the bare ground.

Along with Sumantra, the righteous Lakshmana guarded Rama and Sita who were sleeping. The citizens who had followed them from Ayodhya thought, 'Let us return to Ayodhya only if we are capable of taking Rama back with us to Ayodhya. Else let us go with him to the forests'.

Rama, who was lying down, heard their words. He sensed that the men & women, young and old were alike in their opinion. Rama who learnt of their firm decision thought, 'It is incorrect for me to return to Ayodhya. But, if they come with me to the forests, they will suffer which is not right'.

Rama who was thrown into a dharmic conflict remained clueless for a second. Thereafter he called Sumantra and said, "O charioteer! Get the chariot ready. We will leave right now".

Sumantra quickly brought the chariot. When the citizens who were tired after a long day were fast asleep, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana boarded the chariot & left silently ensuring that the sleeping citizens were not awakened. Initially, Sumantra drove the chariot for a while towards Ayodhya and after covering some distance he altered the route. Taking the chariot via a grassland he drove towards the forest.

In the morning the citizens looked for Rama and were upset when he was not to be seen amidst them. They wept. They then noticed the chariot wheels and following them reached Ayodhya. In their heart, daily they thought of Rama-Sita and lived in Ayodhya.

(Ananda Ramayana says that during the period of Rama's absence from Ayodhya, the citizens too ate only 1 meal a day merely for sustaining their life. During these 14 years, there were no weddings, no festivals, no house warming ceremonies etc. No child was born in Ayodhya during this period).

Sumantra drove the chariot quickly. Along with Sita and Lakshmana, Rama crossed all prosperous towns and reached Shrngaberapuram near the banks of River Ganga.

With a peaceful mind, Rama bowed to Ganga and bathed in the river while chanting the appropriate mantras. He then sat in the shade of a Shimshupa tree.

Meanwhile, from his servants, Rama's friend Guha, the Nishada king, learnt of Rama's arrival to Shrngaberapuram. Wanting to see his master Rama, he quickly rushed with fruits, honey and other gifts. Placing them before Rama he whole-heartedly bowed to him. With overflowing love, Rama lifted and embraced Guha.

With total love, Guha said, "With your embrace, I have been rendered fortunate. My life has become fruitful. O Rama! This kingdom of mine belongs to you. Rule it. Step into my kingdom and bless my home. Be merciful to this servant of yours. Accept these fruits that I have brought".

Using the sap from the banyan tree, Rama tied his hair tightly. Lakshmana too tied his hair. That day Rama and Sita consumed only water. That night Lakshmana arranged a grass bed for them. Rama happily slept on that grass bed believing it to be a royal bed. So did Sita.

Guha and Lakshmana remained awake the entire night guarding them. Guha's eyes were filled with tears of sadness seeing Rama sleeping on the grass bed.

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 6

Guha said, "Dear brother! Rama who sleeps on the royal bed is sleeping on the grass bed. Destiny has made Kaikeyi the cause for his suffering. Listening to Manthara she engaged in this terrible deed".

Lakshmana then said, "O Brother! Others are not responsible for one's happiness and sorrows. Our own past actions are responsible for the happiness and sorrows that we presently experience.

The thought, 'I am the performer of the action' stems from our false ego. All beings are bound with the noose called past actions (karma pasha). The human engages in actions and based on it, creates well-wishers, friends, foes, mediators, relatives and neutral beings.

Hence, be it happiness or sorrow, with a pleasant mind he must experience that which comes to him based on his destiny (past actions). I remain unaffected whether wealth is earned or it is lost.

One has to experience the positive and negative results of the good and bad actions that he performs in a particular time and location, exactly in the similar way as the original action. There is no escape from this. Hence when one experiences happiness due to past good deeds, one must not bloat with happiness. Nor should he sink in sorrow that arises as a result of his bad deeds.

Even Devatas and demons cannot transgress destiny that has been written by the Supreme. Only he who willingly goes through these experiences earns His grace.

Humans are tied with joys & sorrows. This human body has been obtained only due to past meritorious and sinful deeds. Just as night & morning collectively form 1 day, human birth is coupled with joys and sorrows.

Happiness is followed by sorrow; sorrow is followed by happiness. They follow one another just as night and day follow one another.

Joy exists between two sorrows. Sorrow exists between two joys. Just as water and sludge are always together, sorrows and joys are always together. Hence the jnanis realize all this to be an illusion. Learn to be balanced in both good and bad. Do not bloat nor shrink”.

As they were talking, the night passed. Rama finished all his daily rituals, & asked Guha to arrange for a boat. Guha told Rama that he would row the boat. Rama agreed. Rama helped Sita board the boat. Holding Guha’s hand, Rama stepped into the boat. The boat began to move. When they reached the mid-river, Sita prayed to River Ganga that on their return from the forests she would worship it.

Guha took them to the other shore. On reaching there he said, “Permit me to come with you. Else I will give up my life”.

Rama said, “Guha! Trust my words that I will return after completion of the exile period. My words are never untrue”. Hearing this, with great reluctance, Guha returned home.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita then reached Bharadwaja ashram & through a celibate boy informed the Maharishi of their arrival. On hearing of Rama’s arrival to his doorstep, Maharishi Bharadwaja carried the worshipful materials and quickly walked to the place where Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were standing and said, “Today I have been rendered fortunate. With your arrival my ashram is purified and my penance has fructified”.

He then worshipped Rama saying- “O Raghunandana! I know completely your past, present and future stories. I know you to be the Supreme Lord (Paramatma). I also know that for the accomplishment of a divine task You are enacting like a human. Due to the transcendental vision that I have attained by worshipping You, I am aware of the reason why, at Brahma’s behest, You incarnated as a human. I also know the reason for this exile and the activities that you will undertake in future.

You are beyond illusion. You are the Supreme Being (Purushottama). Seeing you I have accomplished the purpose of my birth. What else can I say about you, O Parabrahma?”

Along with Sita and Lakshmana, Rama then offered obeisance to Maharishi Bharadwaja and said, “O revered Maharishi! We are kshatriyas. If your grace falls on us, it is enough”.

They rested there that night. Early next morning, with Maharishi’s permission, along with Sita and Lakshmana, Rama went to Chitrakoota Mountain where Maharishi Vakmiki’s ashram was located. They visited Maharishi Valmiki who was thrilled to see Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana. In great happiness, Maharishi Valmiki embraced Rama. He gave them fruits and honoured them.

Rama said, “O great Maharishi! At our father’s command we have come to Dandakaranya. Please show us a suitable place where we can reside. For a little while we will reside in the place that you show”.

Valmiki Maharishi smilingly said, “Srirama, for all the worlds, You are the ultimate and highest residence. All living beings are Your residence. Yet, You are asking me to show you a place where you can stay with Sita. I can show you only an ordinary residence.

The hearts of devotees who are peaceful, who are filled with feelings of equanimity, who have no dislike for other beings and who worship you night and day is your primary residence.

You dwell within every living being. The heart of the person who, abandoning dharma-adharma, eternally remembers You while adhering to the Avadhoota path is Your residence.

The heart-temple of those who chant Your name, who seek refuge in You, who abandon desires and dualities such as likes-dislikes, is your residence.

Those who do not despise You when sunk into troubles and who do not bloat at times of happiness, and who, with the firm understanding that this entire creation stems from Your illusionary energy eternally worship and serve You, their minds is Your residence O Lord.

The 6 transformations are birth, growth, change in form, decay, death etc. The one who realizes that the 6 transformations pertain to the body and not to the Self; who realizes that hunger-thirst, joy-sorrow, fear-bliss etc. are the characteristics of the intellect, who frees himself from the worldly bondage, his mind is your true residence.

(To explain the essence of this teaching, Swamiji sang Manasa mandira..Swamiji says if we meet the above characteristics then undoubtedly the Supreme Lord resides in us)

Together with Sita, You reside in the inner faculties (antah karana) of the person who, in his heart-lotus, perceives You, the infinite, non-dual, unattached, omnipresent Supreme Lord who is an embodiment of knowledge and truth.

Due to relentless practice the person who firmly restrains the mind and prevents it from wavering, who is eternally engaged in your service, and who, due to singing your divine Your washes off all his sins, his heart-lotus is the residence where You reside with Sita.

Who can ever describe the greatness of that supreme name of Yours, due to which I could reach the state of a Brahmarishi?

Although I was a Brahmin by birth, due to associating with tribal hunters, I became one among them. I stopped adhering to all my traditional practices. I married to a woman of the 4th caste and had many children. I lived amidst thieves and became a thief. Holding a bow and arrow I killed people.

Once in a terrible forest, I saw saptarishis passing by. They were glittering with the radiance of the Sun and Fire. Tempted by their glittering clothing, I wanted to steal them. Screaming loudly 'stop stop' I chased them. They said, 'O wretched brahmin why are you chasing us?'

I said, "My wife & children are hungry. I am here to rob you of your belongings. For their sustenance I wander through caves, hilly terrains etc".

Without any fear, the Rishis asked me, "You say that you are doing this for the sustenance of your family. If so, go home and ask each of them individually, 'Will any among you take a share of the sins that I incur for your sustenance?' We will wait for you here till you return with your answer".

I ran home and asked my wife and sons individually. They heard what I said and replied, 'We will eat the food you bring and enjoy the comforts. But we will not share your sins. You have to pay for your sins'.

I was heartbroken. I developed dispassion. In great distress, I came back to the Rishis. The sight of the Maharishis rendered my mind turned pure. I threw away the bow and arrow, fell at their feet, prostrated and asked them to protect me.

The Maharishis said, "Get up. Associating with the virtuous has benefitted you. Our upadesha will uplift you. It will liberate you".

They discussed among themselves, "He is a degraded brahmin and has fallen to the lowest levels. He is to be disregarded by the virtuous. Yet, he has sought shelter. Hence let us show him the path to liberation and protect him".

They then said to me, “Stay here & until we return chant ‘Rama’ mantra without a break”.

Having instructed thus, they went away. Forgetting the outer world, I chanted ‘Rama’ mantra. Over time, an anthill formed all around me. After 1000 yugas passed by, the 7 great Maharishis arrived and asked me to come out. Just as the Sun tears the clouds emerges, I tore the anthill and came out. They said, “As you tore the anthill and emerged, this is a rebirth for you. Henceforth you will be known as Valmiki”.

Srirama, I could reach this state only with the power of your name. Today, I am seeing you with Lakshmana & Sita. Undoubtedly, I have obtained liberation.

Rama! May auspiciousness befall you. I will show you a good residence for your residence”.

Along with his disciples, Maharishi Valmiki reached the place located in-between Chitrakoota and Ganga and got 2 big thatched huts built for them- one facing North-south and another facing East-west. Rama & Sita stepped into those homes lived happily like Devas who lived in celestial homes. Just as Indra resides in heaven with Sachi-devi and Devas, Rama lived there with Sita and Lakshmana and the Rishis.

Day 9, July 19 2021

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 7

Meanwhile, Sumantra who was ashamed to return to Ayodhya without Rama, covered his face with a cloth and weeping profusely, returned to Ayodhya by evening. Stopping the chariot outside the palace, he went in. He saw the king and bowed to him.

Seeing Sumantra, the grief-stricken king said, “Sumantra, where is my Rama staying with Sita and Lakshmana? Where have you left them? What message did Rama, Lakshmana and Sita convey to me, the terrible sinner? Did they address me as hard-hearted?”

‘O Sita! O Rama! O repository of noble traits! Why are you not seeing me who am engulfed in sorrow?’ – said Dasharatha and overcome with sorrow, he wept again.

Seeing the grief-stricken king, Sumantra said, “I took Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in the chariot. They halted at Shrngiberapura near Ganga where the Nishada king Guha offered them roots and fruits. But Rama did not eat. He just touched the fruits in acceptance and returned them. Rama then got Guha to fetch the banyan sap using which he matted his hair.

He then said to me, “O Sumantra, tell the king to not grieve for us. We are happier in the forests than in Ayodhya. Convey my obeisance to my mother. Ask her to abandon her sorrow and to comfort the king”. As he was saying, his voice faltered.

With tears that flowed freely from her eyes, in a hoarse voice, Sita then said, “Please convey my heartfelt obeisance to my father-in-law and mother-in-law”. Lowering her head and weeping, she went away.

They were weeping when they stepped into the boat to cross Ganga. I stood there and watched them till they crossed to the other shore. Then with the utmost difficulty, I came here”.

Hearing Sumantra’s words, the distressed Kaushalya said to the king, “Due to your love for your dear wife Kaikeyi you gave her boons based on which you gave the kingdom to her son. But why did you send my son away to the forest? When you are responsible for everything, what do you gain by weeping now?”

Her words pierced Dasharatha’s heart. He agonized as one would agonize when a raw wound is torched by fire. With tears freely flowing from his eyes, he piteously said, “Why do you trouble me who am already dying due to grief? My lifespan has come to an end. Previously due to my foolishness, I was cursed by a Rishi’s son.

In my youth, conceited with my hunting abilities, I would delight in hunting at nights. No wise man ever hunts in the night as it is said that even a wild animal should not be killed at night. One night, when I was hunting, it so happened that a sage's son had come to the river to fetch water for his parents.

Hearing the gurgling sound from a distance, I presumed that an elephant was drinking water from the river. As it was very dark, I could see nothing. Using my knowledge of shabda-bhedi, I released the arrow in the direction of the sound.

Instantly someone screamed, "Alas! I am dying. Who has killed me? I have not harmed anyone. My parents are thirsty and waiting for water". Hearing these words, I trembled in fear. Slowly I made my way to the river bank. I said, "I am Dasharatha. Unknowingly I have released the arrow which hit you. O muni! Please forgive me". In great grief, I fell at his feet.

The boy said, "O King! Do not fear. You will not be inflicted with the sin of killing a Brahmin as I am a vaysia who had taken up penance. My parents are blind and have no refuge apart from me. They are tormented by hunger and thirst and will be awaiting my arrival. Immediately go and offer them water to drink. Do not waste time. Else my father will get angry. His anger will reduce you to dust. After they drink water, bow to them and then inform them of your deed. Now remove this arrow from me. Injured by it, I am undergoing an excruciating pain. If you pull it out, I will die peacefully".

I pulled the arrow. Thereafter taking the water jar, I went to the aged couple. Frightened of what would happen, I walked slowly and reached there. The aged parents were anxious that their son had not yet returned. Hearing my footsteps the old man asked, "Dear son! Why did you delay? First, you offer us water and then you drink".

Hearing this, I trembled in fear. I slowly went forward and bowing at their feet, humbly said, "I am not your son. I am Dasharatha, the king of Ayodhya. I am a sinner. As I am mad about hunting, at nights I came to the forests for hunting. Hearing gurgling sounds from the river, I presumed that an animal was drinking water and I released the arrow in that direction. But then instantly I heard a boy scream, 'Alas! I am killed'. I ran there.

Seeing a Rishi's son fallen to the ground, I was frightened. I fell at his feet and sought pardon. The boy said, 'Do not be afraid of the sin of killing a Brahmin (Brahma-hatya). Give water to my parents. Bow to them and ask them to spare your life'. As he has directed, I have come here. I am the sinner who has killed your son. You are the epitome of compassion. Please pardon me. Be merciful to me"- I prayed.

The grief-stricken parents fell to the ground and said, "Take us quickly to the place where our son lies". I took them to that place. They touched the boy's corpse and wept piteously.

Thereafter they said, 'O King, instantly arrange a pyre'. I arranged it. On their order, I arranged a pyre and seated them both on it along with their son's body. When I lit the fire, all 3 reduced to dust and reached heaven. But before dying, the old man said, "O King, you too will meet the same fate as us. You will die grieving for your son".

Kaushalya, that curse has now attacked me. The sin is now troubling me. I am unable to withstand the separation from my son"- saying this, Dasharatha wept profusely. 'O Rama! O Sita! O repository of all virtues! O Lakshmana! Due to Kaikeyi I am separated from you & am falling into death'- saying this, the king breathed his last.

Beating their chests, Kaushalya & Sumitra wept loudly. The other ladies in the palace also wailed loudly. The night passed. In the morning, Maharishi Vasishtha arrived and arranged for the King's body to be preserved in oil.

Thereafter he called messengers who could travel at high speeds & said to them, "Quickly mount horses that travel at the fastest speed to Yudhajt's city. Our King Bharata is presently

residing there with Shatrughna. Tell him that it is my order that he should come instantly and meet the King and Kaikeyi”.

The messengers instantly travelled swiftly and reached Yudhaji's city. After bowing to King Yudhaji, they addressed Bharata who was with Shatrughna and said, “It is Maharishi Vasishtha's order that our King Bharata along with brother Shatrughna has to immediately come to Ayodhya”.

Bharata, who was highly intelligent and knowledgeable, instantly sensed that some inauspicious event had happened at Ayodhya. He trembled with fear. Following his Guru's order, along with his brother he instantly followed the messengers and set out. He guessed that either the King or Rama had met with some misfortune.

‘Could my Lord Srirama be harmed? Or is the king harmed?’- with these thoughts, in deep worry he reached Ayodhya. As he entered the city, he observed that it was bereft of any happiness and was drowned in sorrow. There was no movement of people. Lamps were not lit brightly in any home. The city that was always in a festive mood now looked gloomy and desolate.

‘In Rama's kingdom, why is there gloominess? There are no festivities and no torches are burning’- with these thoughts, Bharata was aggrieved. He straightway went to the King's palace. There was no activity there. He saw his mother Kaikeyi seated elegantly on a throne.

With devotion, Bharata bowed at her feet. With great love, she got up, embraced her son, seated him on her lap and kissed him. She then enquired about the wellbeing of her maternal relatives, “My son, are my mother, father and brother doing good? Today my fortune is good. Hence I am seeing you safe”.

Bharata asked, “O Mother, where is our father? Why are you seated alone here? Father never stays away from you even for a little while. Why is he not seated with you here? I am unable to see him anywhere. I am distressed and afraid on not seeing him anywhere”.

Kaikeyi said, “O meritorious one! Why should you be aggrieved? Your father has attained that ultimate state which meritorious and righteous beings who have performed Ashwamedha and other such yagas attain”.

Hearing this, in total shock and grief, Bharata instantly collapsed to the ground sobbing loudly, “O father, leaving me in this ocean of grief, where have you gone? Without entrusting me to Rama where have you gone?”

Lifting him, Kaikeyi wiped his tears and said, “My son, do not weep. May you be auspicious! I have readied everything for you”.

Bharata then asked, “O mother, what were the king's words as he lay dying?”

Kaikeyi fearlessly replied, “For a long time the king grieved, ‘O Rama, O Sita, O Lakshmana’ and then left his body”.

Bharata said, “Wasn't Rama beside him when he died? Weren't Sita and Lakshmana beside him? If so, where have they gone?”

Kaikeyi said, “Your father wanted to install Rama as the future king. Seeking that you should become the king I created an obstacle for it. Previously your father had offered me 2 boons. I sought them now.

Firstly I sought emperorship for you and then I sought exile of 14 years for Rama wherein he should live like an ascetic. Following this, the king sent Rama to the forests. Sita, abiding by her vow of chastity,

followed Rama. Showing brotherly love Lakshmana followed Rama. Grieving for them and lamenting, 'O Rama' and thinking of them, the king died".

Hearing his mother's words, Bharata felt as if he had been hit by a meteor. Like a huge tree that crashes to the ground, he collapsed to the ground. Seeing him thus, Kaikeyi sorrowfully said, "My son, why are you grieving? You who have obtained this vast empire do not need to grieve".

Casting a sharp, angry glance at his mother, Bharata retorted, "You are the form of my sin. O demoness! O cruel-hearted one! You have killed your husband. By taking birth from your womb, I have become a terrible sinner. O ghost! O evil spirit! I will consume poison or enter the fire and die. Or I will kill myself with a sword and go to the abode of death. For the sin of having killed your husband, you have to go to Kumbhipaka hell".

He scolded her and quickly went to Kaushalya's palace. Due to anger, he was not aware of his actions. Seeing Bharata coming towards her Kaushalya wept profusely. Bharata also held her feet and wept piteously.

The chaste renowned mother of Rama, who was submerged in grief said, "Bharata, all this happened when you were away. Your mother must have told you everything. It is her doing. Wearing matted hair and bark clothes, my Rama has gone to forests with Sita and Lakshmana leaving me in an ocean of sorrow.

O Rama! O Lord of Raghu lineage! O Parātpara! You, the Supreme Lord, have taken birth as my son. Yet sorrow does not leave me. I think destiny is very powerful"- saying this she wept deeply.

(Such incidents are found only in Adhyatma Ramayana. In Valmiki Ramayana, nowhere does Kaushalya declare that Rama is the incarnation of Vishnu. She only refers to him as her son. But here she has the knowledge that Rama is Maha-vishnu).

Seeing her weeping, Bharata held her feet and said, "O Mother! Listen to me. If I was previously aware of Kaikeyi's wicked actions, then may I be tainted with the sin of killing 100 brahmins. O mother, I am not aware of this plan contrived by her. If I was aware of her plans, then may the sin of killing my Guru Vasishtha and his wife Arundhati with an axe fall on me"- saying this, he wept loudly.

Kaushalya embraced him & said, "O Bharata, I know all about you. Do not grieve".

Meanwhile, learning of Bharata's arrival, Maharishi Vasishtha came to the palace with the ministers. He said, "Dasharatha was an aged king and a Jnani who eternally abided by truthfulness. Having experienced all human pleasures, he performed Ashwamedha Yaga and other Yagnas in which he offered supreme dakshinas. He obtained Maha-vishnu as his son Rama. He has now ascended heaven to decorate half of Indra's seat. It is incorrect to weep for him who is eligible for liberation. You are wastefully lamenting for him. Do not grieve.

The Self is eternal, without divisions and forever pure. It has no birth and death. It is neither male nor female nor transgender. It is visible and yet invisible. It exists within every entity, is omnipresent and stationary.

On the contrary, the body is inert. It is extremely impure and is destructible.

That which is destructible is impure. That which is indestructible is pure. When pondered deeply it will be clear that there is no cause for grief in this aspect. When the father or son die, only the ignorant beat their chests and weep.

In this world that lacks any essence, when Jnanis have to face separation from anyone, they use it to further their levels of dispassion. They are freed from bondage. They experience dispassion which leads to more peace. On the contrary, in the ignorant, sorrow increases due to separation.

For every living entity on earth, death is born along with birth. Those who have birth have death. There is no escape from it.

Based on its own actions, the living entity obtains birth and death. Despite knowing it, the ignorant weep for the departed ones.

Crores of universes emerge and vanish. Know that everything that is born has to be destroyed. Limitless creations have emerged and dissolved. Even the oceans are sure to dry up one day. Why should one have attachment for this insignificant life which is fleeting? A lifespan is like a drop of water hanging from the tip of the leaf. How can you trust it?

Every living being obtains another birth based on the actions performed in this birth. In this way, he obtains different births continuously one after another. Just as the human abandons old clothes for new ones, the Self abandons the old body and takes on a new one. Why then do you grieve?

The Self is deathless. Neither does it take birth nor does it grow old. It does not have the 6 transformations like birth, growth, change, decay, etc. It is unending. It is the form of existence-knowledge and bliss. It remains a witness to the intellect.

There is only one Self. It is non-dual. It is established in equanimity. Understand this firmly. With this Self-knowledge, abandon grief and complete your father's death ceremony. O Bharata! Remove his body from the oil container and duly complete the rites".

(In this Adhyatma Ramayana, in the teaching given by Guru Vasishtha, the entire Bhagavad Gita has been covered).

With this teaching given by Guru Vasishtha, Bharata abandoned grief that stems from ignorance and completed all the death ceremonies for his father. On the 11th day, he sumptuously fed lakhs of Veda scholars and donated to them plenty of gold, clothing, cows, villages, gems etc. seeking that his father should attain Swarga (heaven).

Although he was living in the palace with his brother, ministers and Maharishi Vasishtha, Bharata had his heart fixed only on Rama. He thought, 'Along with Janaka's daughter Sita, and brother Lakshmana, my Rama is in the deep forests. My mother is like a demoness. With her mere sight, she burns my heart completely. With a stable mind, I shall abandon the kingdom and immediately proceed to the forests. There I shall unfailingly serve Rama, who has a charming smiling face and who is accompanied by Sita'.

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 8

Maharishi Vasishtha, along with other Rishis and Ministers, came to the royal court which was like the celestial court. Calling Bharata & Shatrughna he had them suitably seated.

Based on the time and situation, he addressed Bharata, who is competent in restraining the enemies, and said, "Based on your father's orders, today we shall install you on the throne and make you the king. Kaikeyi sought the kingdom for you. King Dasharatha who eternally abides by the truth fulfilled his promise to Kaikeyi by granting her boons. Hence, may the Maharishis install you as the king".

In response, Bharata said, "O revered Maharishi! What do I gain from the kingdom? Rama is king of all kings. We are his servants. I am now leaving to bring him. You too come with me. Barring the demoness Kaikeyi, let other mothers join me when I leave tomorrow morning. I refuse to even walk in Kaikeyi's shadow. This is my vow.

I would have killed her that day, but if I kill a woman, I cannot show my face to Rama. Irrespective of whether you accompany me or not, tomorrow morning I shall, along with Shatrughna, go on foot to the forest just as Rama has gone. Until he returns, I shall wear bark clothes, matted hair and sleep on the bare

floor. Along with Shatrughna, I shall live like a hermit eating only roots and fruits"- saying this, he remained silent.

Everyone present in the court applauded his decision. Early next morning, when the Rishis were walking ahead, Bharata began his journey. Along with Guru Vasishtha, Kaushalya and other mothers, and the entire army, Bharata set out.

On reaching Shringaberapuram, at Bharata's command, the entire army rested for the night on the banks of Ganga.

Due to his love for Rama, Guha, who heard of Bharata's arrival, was suspicious of him. Seeing the massive army he was suspicious of Bharata's intentions. He thought, 'Undoubtedly he is here with his army to harm Rama. I shall go and figure out the feelings in his heart. If his intentions are good, he can cross Ganga. If not, I will not allow him to cross the river. My boats will remain anchored. No one will take them across'.

Taking many gifts and accompanied by armed men, zealously observing all directions, he came to Bharata and offered all gifts. He observed Bharata who had worn matted hair, bark clothes like a hermit and who was seated with ministers. He was calling out 'Rama Rama' piteously. Seeing Bharata, Guha humbly bowed to him saying, 'I am Guha'.

Bharata lifted and embraced him, enquired about his wellbeing and lovingly said, "Dear brother, You lived here with Rama. You are truly fortunate as you obtained the embrace of the pure-hearted Rama. You spoke to the lotus-faced Rama who was here with Lakshmana and Sita. You have truly accomplished the purpose of your birth. Guha, take me to the place where you met Rama. Show me where he rested along with Sita. You are Rama's beloved".

Thinking of Rama, Bharata wept. That night he reached the place where Rama had rested. Bharata saw the grass bed on which Rama had slept. That place was glittering with the drops of gold that had fallen from Sita's jewels.

Seeing this, Bharata's grief worsened. He said, "Oho! Only due to me, that delicate and chaste daughter of Janaka, who sits on the soft royal bed, had to sleep on this harsh grass bed. What suffering she would have undergone! I was born due to the sinner Kaikeyi. Only due to me, Rama had to suffer. Lakshmana's birth is so fortunate. O Lakshmana! Even if you are living in the forests, you are following Rama.

If I am the servant of the servants of Rama, then surely my life will be fruitful. If I get a chance to serve Lakshmana, I will be truly fortunate. O Guha, if you know where Rama resides, do tell me completely. I will immediately go there and bring Rama".

Noticing Bharata's pure mind, Guha in a friendly tone said, "O Lord! You who have such devotion to Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are truly fortunate. In the Chitrakoota Mountain, close to River Mandakini, Lord Rama is living happily with Sita and Lakshmana in the ashram of the Rishis. Let us proceed there. Let us cross Ganga".

Guha quickly arranged for 500 boats for Bharata and the entire army to cross the river Ganga. He personally fetched a big royal boat in which he seated Guru Vasishtha, Kaushalya, Bharata and Shatrughna. In another boat, he seated Kaikeyi and other queens.

They crossed Ganga and reached Bharadwaja's ashrama. Stationing the army far away, Bharata and Shatrughna went forward to see the Maharishi. There they saw Bharadwaja who was glowing like the fire. They fell flat to the ground and offered prostrations to the Maharishi. Learning that the guests were Dasharatha's sons, Maharishi Bharadwaja lovingly welcomed and enquired about their wellbeing. Seeing Bharata's matted hair and attire, he asked, "Why should a ruler like you need bark clothes and matted hair? Why have you come to the forests where Rishis live?"

Hearing this, Bharata wept and said, "O Maharishi! You are omniscient. But yet if you are asking me, it is your blessings on me. I know nothing of Kaikeyi's plan to obstruct Rama's coronation and to send him to

exile and make me the king. I swear on your feet". Saying this, he fell at Maharishi's feet and in a faltering voice said, "O Maharishi! You only decide whether I am a sinner or not.

What will I do with the kingdom when Rama is the king of the land? I am eternally Rama's servant. Along with Guru Vasishtha and other citizens, I am presently proceeding to meet him and to install him as the king. I am going to take him back to Ayodhya and serve him as his servant".

Bharadwaja Maharishi was astonished on hearing this. He embraced Bharata, kissed him on his forehead and then said, "With my divine vision I know the future. Do not grieve. Your devotion far surpasses Lakshmana's devotion. You are a meritorious being. I seek to honour you who are here with your army. Rest here for this night and leave tomorrow morning".

Bharata said, "Let it happen as you wish".

Maharishi Bharadwaja performed acamana (sipping of purified water), sat silently in the hall and thought of the celestial cow Kamadhenu which then created many dishes for Bharata and the entire army. It supplied food as per each individual's tastes and thoroughly satisfied them.

Bharadwaja Maharishi then worshipped Maharishi Vasishtha and thereafter honoured Bharata and the entire army. That night Bharata and all others camped there. Early next morning, along with Shatrughna, Guru Vasishtha, the ministers, mothers and the army, Bharata left to meet Srirama.

On reaching Chitrakoota he stationed the army at a distance. Seeking to see Srirama, he went on foot searching for Srirama. He was accompanied by Guha, Maharishi Vasishtha, ministers etc. They looked in all the ashrams in that vicinity, there but could not spot Rama's ashram anywhere. Bharata then asked the Maharishis about the location of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita.

They said, "On the other side of this mountain, towards River Mandakini, Rama's ashram exists in a lonely garden filled with mango, jackfruit and plantain trees. Many flowering plants such as jasmine, punnaga, kanchana decorate the place".

In great happiness, Bharata went forward quickly along with ministers. From a distance, he saw Rama's kuteera that was being served by many Rishis. In that ashram, bark clothing hung from the tree branches. That cottage was glittering with Rama's presence.

Ayodhya kanda, Chapter 9

With blissful mind, Bharata entered the glorious, beautiful, pure ashram where Rama and Sita lived.

He spotted the glittering imprints of Rama's foot were like a decoration to Mother Earth. They had the imprints of the goad, lotus, flag and vajra. Bharata instantly fell to the ground and offered obeisance to them and said, 'Aha! I am fortunate! I am now seeing Rama's footprints. Brahma and Devatas eternally search for the dust from these footprints. I am fortunate to see the land that is decorated with these imprints'.

Bharata then saw Srirama, who had worn his matted hair as his crown, who had worn new clothes, who had a pleasant face and who was glowing like the rising Sun. At that moment, Rama was looking at Sita. Lakshmana was pressing Rama's feet and serving him.

On seeing Rama, Bharata ran forward and quickly held his feet. He was simultaneously overcome with extreme happiness and sorrow. Rama quickly caught Bharata, lifted him and embraced him tightly. He seated Bharata on his lap, shed tears of joy and embraced him repeatedly.

Just as the thirsty cows rush towards the water body, Kaushalya and other mothers ran to see Rama. Seeing his mother, Rama went forward and washed her feet with his tears. With great sorrow, she

embraced him. He then bowed at the feet of his other mothers. Seeing his Guru Vasishtha arriving, he quickly fell on the ground and prostrated to him, again and again saying, 'I am fortunate'.

Rama welcomed everyone, seated them appropriately and then said, "I hope my father is safe. Please tell me what he, who is grieving at my departure, has commanded me".

Guru Vasishtha replied, "O Raghunandana! Grieving profusely due to separation from you, and while calling you, 'Rama, Sita, Lakshmana' and with his thoughts focussed on you, your father has breathed his last".

Hearing these words that were piercing like sharp spears, Rama and Lakshmana collapsed to the ground weeping 'Oho, Alas'. At that moment, the mothers and all others also wept.

Rama wept, "O father, o compassionate one. Where have you left us and gone? O strong-armed one! I am orphaned. Who is there now to pamper us?"

Lakshmana & Sita also wept profusely. With pacifying words, Guru Vasishtha consoled them all. All of them then went to Mandakini, bathed, purified themselves and offered water oblations to Dasharatha. Rama and Lakshmana offered oblations to the departed father with the pulp of the fruit mixed with honey.

While shedding tears, Rama and Lakshmana again bathed and returned to the ashram. All others also bathed in Mandakini. There was total silence in the ashram. Everyone fasted that night. The next morning they again bathed in Mandakini. Bharata thereafter came to Rama who was seated in the ashram and said,

"Rama, Rama! O most fortunate one! Complete the coronation. This empire which has come from our father belongs to you. You rule it. As my elder brother, you are at par with a father. O King! Ruling the citizens is the primary duty of a Kshatriya. Hence perform many Yagnas and for the furtherance of the lineage beget sons. After handing over the throne to them, you then retire to the forests.

O Lord! Time to retire for forests has not yet come for you. Pardon my mother for her mistake. Please protect us"- saying this, Bharata placed his elder brother's feet on his head, fell flat on the ground and prostrated to him.

Rama lovingly seated Bharata on his lap and said, "O brother, hear what I say. What you have said is true. But our father said, 'I am giving the kingdom to Bharata and you go to exile for 14 years and then return to Ayodhya. With this, it is evident that the king has entrusted the kingdom to you and given Dandakaranya to me. Let us both follow our father's orders. The son who goes against his father's wishes and behaves per his whims is as good as a living corpse. After death he reaches hell. Therefore, I shall rule Dandakarya and you rule Ayodhya".

Hearing this, Bharata said, "Dear brother! Our father was lustful and due to succumbing to the charms of a woman, he was deluded. There is no need to give importance to the words he uttered like a madman".

Rama said, "Never say such words about our father. Our father did not succumb to the charms of a woman, lose his wisdom, get deluded and behave thus like a madman. Bound by his earlier promise to our mother Kaikeyi, he gave her the boons and, fearing that he would break his promise, he did this. You are unable to realise this.

To Mahatmas, failing to live up to the truth is far more fearful than falling into hell. Hence I am also making true the promise that I made by our father to our mother. After taking birth in Raghu vamsha and being called Raghava, how can I render the promise made to my father futile?"

Bharata, "If so, may it happen as you say. O Satyavrata! Wearing matted locks I will live in the forests on your behalf for 14 years. You happily rule the kingdom. In this way, our father's promises will be

accomplished. Each person can only complete the work that belongs to him. He cannot complete the tasks of another”.

Rama said, “Bharata! Father has given the kingdom to you and has allocated the forest to me. If they are interchanged, untruth will remain untruth. Hence I cannot do this”.

Bharata said, “Ok. If you do not come to Ayodhya, I will come here to the forests and along with Lakshmana I will serve you. If not, I will abandon food and will abandon this body”.

He was firm in his opinion. In that hot noon, he spread the darbha grass and sat facing the eastern direction. Seeing Bharata’s adamancy, Rama was astonished. At that time, Rama with his eyes signalled to his Guru Vasishtha. Guru Vashishtha understood Rama’s feelings and took Bharata to a lonely place and said,

“O Bharata! I am telling you a great secret. Listen. Rama is none other than the Supreme Lord Narayana. On Brahma’s prayer, he took birth in Dasharatha’s home to kill Ravana. His illusionary energy has incarnated as Sita, the daughter of Janaka. Adisheha has incarnated as Lakshmana and is serving Srirama.

Rama has resolved to kill Ravana. Hence, undoubtedly Srirama has to go to the forests. Ensuring that Dasharatha gives the boons to Kaikeyi and her utterance of the harsh words happened purely due to prompting of the Devas. Hence abandon this adamancy of taking Rama to Ayodhya. With the army, you now return to Ayodhya. Rama will kill Ravana along with his retinue and then return to Ayodhya”.

Hearing the words uttered by their Guru, Bharata was deeply astonished. Along with Vasishtha he went to Rama and said, “O King! Give me your sandals. Until you return to Ayodhya I shall keep them on the throne and worship them”.

Pleased with Bharata’s devotion, Rama wore those sandals and gave them to him. Bharata accepted with utmost devotion the sandals that were inlaid with precious stones. He circumambulated Srirama and repeatedly bowed to him. His voice choked due to overflowing devotion for Srirama. With that choked voice he said, “O Rama, the next day after the 14 years is over, you should return to Ayodhya. If you do not return by then, I will enter fire”. Rama agreed and bid adieu to the entire army. Thereafter Bharata got ready to return along with Shatrughna, mothers, the ministers, Guru Vasishtha and all others.

At that time, Kaikeyi met Rama when he was alone. Folding her hands, in great distress she said, “Rama, I became deluded and dim-witted. That is why I created an obstacle for your coronation. Please forgive my wrong-doing.

Virtuous people are always filled with the trait of forgiveness. You are none other than Maha-vishnu, the Supreme Self. You are eternal Self, and beyond the perception of the senses. Taking on this illusory human form, you are deluding the entire universe. Your influence causes humans to engage in good and bad deeds. The entire world is in your custody and it lacks independence.

Just as the puppets dance to the tunes of the puppeteer, this world runs only on Your wishes and resolves. Likewise, the dancer called maya (illusionary energy) who manifests in varied forms is in Your control and dances to Your tunes.

O destroyer of enemies! With a wicked intellect, I performed a terrible deed. You are beyond the reach of the mind and speech of even the Devas. O Lord of the universe! O infinite Lord! Protect me. O Lord, I bow to you. I surrender in You.

O Lord! With the sword called Your Jnanagni (fire of knowledge), please shred my bondages that exist in the form of my sons, wealth etc”.

Hearing this, Rama smilingly said, "Dear mother! Whatever you have said about me is true. My power alone caused those words to come from your mouth. All this is happening for the completion of the task of the Devatas. In this, you are not at fault. Now you return to Ayodhya. Due to eternally meditating upon Me in your heart, you will be freed from attachments towards all objects. Due to devotion towards Me, very shortly you will attain liberation. I am filled with equal-mindedness at all times. There is none loved by Me or unloved by Me.

As the magician is aware that the objects created by him are illusory, he has no likes-dislikes for them. Likewise even I have no attachments or aversions towards any object.

All perceptible objects are My imaginary creations. As I know that they are all false creations, I have no aversion for any object nor love for them.

I bless people based on the way they worship or serve Me. O Mother, deluded by my illusion, people consider me to be an ordinary human who has succumbed to joys and sorrows. They can never know My real form.

My blessing enabled you to know My true essence. This will dispel the fear of samsara. Remain in the home while thinking of Me alone. Then you will be unbound by the results of your actions".

In great astonishment, Kaikeyi heard these words. She circumambulated Rama fell on the ground and repeatedly offered obeisance to him. Then she set out for her home.

With his mind fixed on Rama, Bharata too reached Ayodhya along with Guru Vasishtha, his ministers and army. He arranged residences for all the citizens based on their eligibility and provided all conveniences. But he went to Nandigram. On a throne, he placed Rama's sandals. Considering them to be Srirama, he would daily worship them. With total devotion, he offered sandal paste, flowers and fruits.

Living only on fruits, wearing matted locks, sleeping on the bare floor, he adhered to celibacy and lived there with Shatrughna. Offering all his royal duties to Rama, he ruled the kingdom. While counting the days remaining for Rama's arrival, he spent his time. With his mind fixed on Rama, he lived like a Brahmarishi. He followed the Rama-paduka deeksha.

Rama lived in Chitrakoot with Lakshmana and Sita. Due to His presence in Chitrakoot, many people from nearby places began to arrive regularly to see him. Rama thought that the arrival of people would disturb the penance of the ascetics. He, therefore, decided to move into the deeper Dandakaranya forests.

Immediately he abandoned Chitrakoot and went to the deeper forests where he came across Atri Maharishi's ashram which was serene and which provided all forms of joy. Rama saw Maharishi Atri, fell to the ground, offered obeisance and then said, "O Maharishi! I, Rama, am bowing to you. Based on my father's order I have come to the forest. I am fortunate that I could have your darshan".

Hearing this, Maharishi Atri realized Rama to be none but the Supreme Lord. With great devotion, he worshipped Rama and then provided hospitality to them by offering them fruits. Seating Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, he in great happiness, said, "My wife Anasuya is a very chaste, pure woman and a great tapasvi. The aged woman is completely focussed on dharma. She is within the hut. O Rama, I think Sita should meet her".

Rama then asked Sita, "Go and meet Anasuya and bow to her".

Sita then went into the hut and met Anasuya and bowed to her. In great delight, Anasuya said, "O auspicious one! O Sita!"- and embraced her. She then gave to Sita 2 divine earrings that had been created with total devotion by Vishwakarma and two pure silk sarees. She then anointed Sita's body with a divine paste and said, "O lotus-faced one! With this application, your body will never lose its lustre. O Janaki! Always adhere to pativrata dharma. Follow Srirama. With you, Srirama will return home".

Thereafter the Maharshi couple honoured Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. With great love, they fed food to Rama who was with Sita. Thereafter folding his hands, Maharishi said to Rama and Lakshmana, "O Rama! You have created all these worlds. For their protection, You assume the form of the Devatas, humans and animals. Yet the characteristics of those bodies do not touch you. Even the illusionary energy is eternally frightened of You".

With this, Ayodhya Kanda comes to an end.

Day 10, July 20 2021

Aranya kanda, Chapter 1

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! That night, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana stayed in Maharishi Atri's ashram. The next morning, after completing daily ordained duties, they took Maharishi's permission to travel further into the forests.

Rama said, "O great Maharishi. We seek to go to Dandakaranya which is filled with Rishis. Please permit us to leave. Please send some disciples of yours who can show us the way".

Maharishi Atri laughingly said, "O Rama, you are the shelter even for the Devatas and you show the path to all living entities. Who can show the path to You, who dispels ignorance and shows the way to illumination? Yet, following the ways of the world, you are asking me to send my disciples. Hence my disciples will show you the way".

He then sent a few disciples to lead the way. He too went for a little distance with Rama. Thereafter, Rama, the Supreme Lord, lovingly asked Maharishi to return.

After they had walked for a while, Rama saw a river. He asked Atri's disciples, "O celibate boys! What is the boat to cross this river?"

(This is such a wonderful, meaningful statement in Adhyatma Ramayana. The river is the samsara. What is the boat to cross this river called samsara? In this way, every word contains immense significance).

They said, "Using this strong boat, we will quickly take you to the other shore".

They helped Rama, Sita and Lakshmana get into the boat and took them quickly to the other shore.

(If we hold on to the strong boat called Jnana, we will quickly reach the other shore. Strong boat implies holding on to a Guru and Jnana. This is the symbolism contained in the statement).

Srirama applauded them for this service and asked them to return, following which they returned to Maharishi Atri's ashram.

Now Sita, Rama and Lakshmana entered an impenetrable dark forest which was densely packed with trees and shrubs. It was frightening due to the presence of lions, tigers and other carnivorous animals that wandered freely. The sounds of crickets echoed everywhere. Terrible demons wandered freely.

Seeing the area filled with demons and wild animals, Rama said, "O Lakshmana! From here we both have to scrutinise every step carefully and move ahead. I will string my bow, hold the arrow in my hand and be ready to attack. You too do the same. Just like the illusion that exists between the individual soul (jeevatma) and the Supreme Soul (Paramatma), Sita will walk between us both. Be vigilant and carefully scan all directions as we walk. As we have heard before, this forest is filled with demons who can suddenly attack from any direction".

As they were talking, they covered a distance of 1.5 yojanas. There they saw a strikingly beautiful pond filled with lotuses and lilies. They drank the cool water from the pond and were resting under a nearby tree when they saw a gigantic, frightful and extremely strong demon roaring horrendously and coming towards them. With huge tusks, he was frightful to look at. Many humans and human corpses were hanging from the tips of a trident that hung on his left shoulder.

He was swallowing wild elephants and lions as he walked towards them and relishing their blood. Seeing him, Rama readied his bow and said, "Lakshmana, see that demon who petrifies the weak-hearted. Keep the arrow readily positioned on the bow. O Sita! Do not be afraid".

Rama fixed the arrow & stood immobile like a mountain. Seeing Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, the demon laughed boisterously & asked, "Who are you? You hold bows & arrows like warriors but have matted hair like ascetics. To me, you appear like beautiful, small children. How have you come fearlessly and arrogantly into these forests filled with terrible animals?"

Rama laughingly said, "O demon! I am Rama. He is my dearest brother Lakshmana. She is Sita my wife. At our father's order we are here to punish beings like you".

Hearing this, the demon laughed boisterously, lifted his spear above and said, "Rama you know nothing about me. My name is Viradha. Frightened of me, ascetics left this place and ran away. If you seek to remain alive, abandon Sita and the weapons and run away. Else I will eat both of you".

As he ran forward quickly to catch Sita, Rama laughed and effortlessly cut off his arms. In unabated fury, Viradha opened his frightening mouth wide & quickly ran towards Rama. But Rama used his arrows to swiftly chop off Viradha's legs. Yet the demon opened his mouth wide like a snake and rushed forward to gobble Rama.

Rama swiftly used his crescent-moon shape arrow and chopped his head. Viradha fell dead. Seeing the demon dead, Sita embraced Rama in great joy and said, "You have saved me". That moment kettle drums were beaten in heaven. Apsaras danced joyfully. The Kinnaras and Gandharvas danced in great joy.

From Viradha's corpse, emerged a celestial who was glowing radiantly like the Sun. He was wearing beautiful clothes and many divine golden ornaments. Again and again he bowed to Rama, the Lord who dispels sorrows of those who bow to him and who enables them to cross the ocean of repeated rebirths. He then extolled Rama in various ways"- said Shiva.

Aranya kanda, Chapter 2

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati, after sending Viradha to heaven, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana walked to Maharishi Sharabhanga's ashram which showers all happiness. Seeing them arrive, in great astonishment and elation, Maharishi quickly stood up, went forward and welcomed them. He seated them appropriately, offered them fruits and roots and with great love said to Rama, "For many years I have been longing for your darshan. Engaged in deep austerities, I am living here for many years. O Rama! You are the Supreme Lord. Today I want to offer You all the merit that I have obtained till now. With this, I will obtain liberation".

He then offered to Rama the limitless merit earned by him. *(If devotees offer to the Lord and Guru, the merit from all the Yagnas, japa and worship done by them, they attain heaven).*

The great Sharabhanga Maharishi who had attained total detachment bowed to Sita and Rama. Rama is apremeya (beyond all forms of measurement) and is beyond the reach of the mind and senses. Maharishi then created a fire and meditated on Rama for long.

"Aha! In this world, there is none other than Rama who, like Kamadhenu, compassionately fulfills the desire as soon as it is thought of. Knowing that I have been meditating upon him without any other thought, Rama has come here to see me. How astonishing this is! When the Supreme Lord Srirama is watching, I shall burn my body, free myself of all sins and reach Brahmaloaka.

On Rama's left sits Sita who glows infinitely like the lightning seen in the clouds. May Sita and Rama, the rulers of Ayodhya, eternally remain seated in my heart".

For a long time he focussed completely on Rama. Then he strengthened the fire, sat in it, focussed on Rama as he burnt his body. Even as Rama was watching, Maharishi Sharabhanga took on a celestial body and reached heaven.

(This burning of the body is part of Yoga sadhana. Unless the person has done extensive penance for many centuries, it is not possible).

Then, many groups of Rishis from the Dandakaranya forest came to see Rama. Rama, Sita and Lakshmana prostrated to them all. The Rishis blessed and applauded Rama, the Lord who had playfully manifested in human form and who exists within every heart.

Seeing Srihari holding the mighty Kodanda bow, the Rishis bowed and in all humility said, "Adhering to Brahma's request, You, the Supreme Lord Srihari, have incarnated to reduce the earth's burden. Janaki is Lakshmi. Lakshmana is Adishesha. We are aware that Bharata and Shatrughna are the conch and discus.

O Rama! Solve the problems faced by the Rishis. Along with Sita and Lakshmana come with us and see our ashrams and how we are suffering. You are the epitome of compassion. Shower your compassion on us. Then we will be fortunate". Agreeing to their request, Rama went with them.

Heaps of skulls and bones could be seen all around the ashrams. Despite being aware of the truth, Rama politely asked, "O Munis, whose skulls are they? Why are they lying around the ashrams?"

The muni pitifully narrated their woes saying, "These skulls and bones belong to the ascetics. The demons gulp them who, in the Samadhi state have attained oneness with the Supreme and have lost external consciousness. Even now the demons constantly wander in search of Rishis who are in the deep meditative state".

Rama, the ever compassionate Lord, immediately said, "Do not fear. I will kill the demons in entirety and will protect you. I will ensure that there is no obstacle for your meditation".

He thus assured them and then visited all the ashrams and accepted their worship. Along with Sita and Lakshmana, he lived there for a few years.

Thereafter Rama, Lakshmana and Sita walked to Maharishi Suteekshana's ashram which was filled with many Rishis. Suteekshana was a very renowned Maharishi. In his pure ashram which showered happiness at all times on everyone, it was as if all seasons existed simultaneously.

Maharishi Agastya's disciple Suteekshana eternally chanted the Rama mantra. On hearing of Rama's arrival, Maharishi Suteekshana quickly went forward and welcomed them. With eyes that overflowed with limitless devotion, he worshipped Sita and Rama.

He said, "O Lord of infinite virtues! You are beyond all measure. O husband of Sita! I always meditate on Your name 'Rama'. Your feet are the refuge for Shiva and Brahma. O Rama, Your feet are the boat that helps us cross the ocean of repeated rebirths. O Lord! I will always remain the servant of your servants.

You remain invisible to the world filled with moving and non-moving objects. Due to Your illusion, with the knots of attachment, I am bound to this body filled with impurities. I am in a deplorable condition and have fallen into the dark pit.

What to say of your compassion O Lord! You, who resides in the hearts of all entities, have come here to bless me. You throw into illusion those who do not chant Your mantra. But illusion automatically vanishes from those who do your mantra japa.

(That is why we must chant Rama at all times).

As the king, you give results based on the work done by servants. Although being non-dual, in the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, You create, sustain and destroy the creation. However, just as the ignorant see the same Sun as existing separately in different water bodies, those whose minds are caught in illusion, see You, the Supreme Self, as multiple existences.

O Rama! Today I am directly seeing Your feet. Ignorance stays away from you, the embodiment of knowledge. The ignorant and the sinners cannot know You. You shower blessings on those whose minds are purified due to chanting Your mantra. Although You have no form, I am seeing this illusory human form that you have taken and which glows with the beauty of crores of Manmathas .

I will eternally worship You, who, holding a supremely beautiful bow and arrows are invincible. Your heart overflows with compassion and Your face glows with a charming smile. You are with Sita. Your lotus feet are served by Lakshmana. You are pleasant and of infinite virtues. Pure Knowledge and illumination that is beyond the limitations of time and place is Your inherent form.

O Lord! Allow those who recognize it to remain in that awareness. However, may the form that is presently before Me, always glow before me. I seek to see no form other than this”.

Hearing this prayer, Rama smilingly said, “O revered Maharishi! I know that due to your intense austerities, your mind is pure. You have no sadhana other than Me. As your devotion is unflinching, I came here to see You. I always give darshan to those who eternally worship My mantra, who seek shelter in Me and who are free from all desires.

Those who chant this prayer will obtain pure devotion and My knowledge. Merely by intensely worshipping Me, in this birth itself you have obtained liberation. After leaving your body you will undoubtedly attain oneness with Me. I now want to visit your Guru Agastya and spend some time with him”.

Hearing this, Maharishi Suteekshana said, “O Raghava! Tomorrow itself you leave for seeing him. As it has been a long since I have seen him, I will accompany you”.

Next morning along with Sita and Lakshmana, and accompanied by Maharishi Suteekshana, Rama eagerly walked to Maharishi Agastya’s ashram. In a very short time, they reached the ashram of Maharishi Agnijiit, Agastya’s brother”.

Aranya kanda, Chapter 3

Shiva said, “O Parvati! By noon they reached Maharishi Agnijiit’s ashram. That Maharishi worshipped Rama with total devotion and offered them fruits and roots which they ate.

The next morning they got up early and walked to Maharishi Agastya’s ashram which was filled with trees that yielded flowers and fruits of all seasons. Many species of animals wandered freely. Birds of different types chirped melodiously. It was as blissful and beautiful as the celestial Nandana vana & was filled with many Brahmarishis and Devarishis. Thatched huts of all Rishis surrounded that place enhancing its beauty and making it appear like another Brahma loka.

Standing outside Rama said to Muni Suteekshana, “O Maharishi! Go inside and inform Maharishi Agastya that I, along with Lakshmana and Sita, have arrived here”.

Maharishi Suteekshana quickly went inside. He was ecstatic on seeing his Guru Maharishi Agastya who was seated amidst many Rishis and who was explaining in great detail the meaning of Rama mantra to his students.

In all humility, he prostrated to his Guru's feet and said, "O great Guru! Dasharatha's son Rama is here with Lakshmana and Sita. They have joined their palms and are standing outside eagerly waiting to see you".

In great happiness, Maharishi Agastya said, "May you be auspicious! Rama is firmly installed in my heart. I have been meditating on him and have been awaiting his arrival. Quickly bring him in".

Even as he said this, he quickly got up and accompanied by his students and other Rishis went forward to personally welcome Rama. On seeing Rama, even from a distance, with a heart overflowing with devotion, he said, "O Rama! Welcome. It is my fortune that I could meet you. You are most dear to me. O Lord! Today is a very meritorious day as you have come here as a guest to give me darshan".

Overjoyed on seeing Maharishi Agastya, along with Sita and Lakshman, Rama fell to the ground and prostrated to him. Maharishi Agastya lifted Rama and with total devotion, he embraced him. Tears of joy freely flowed from his eyes. With a very joyful and pleasant mind, he lovingly held Rama's hands, gently brought him in and seated him on a proper seat. He then worshipped and offered him fruits.

Thereafter when Rama was seated alone, he joined his palms and said, "O Rama! Previously on the banks of the milk-ocean, Brahma had asked You to reduce the earth's burden and to kill demons such as Ravana. From then, I am engrossed in meditation seeking to obtain Your darshan. All my thoughts are fixed only on You and have been eagerly awaiting Your arrival here while living here with these Rishis.

Before creation, You alone existed. At that time you were without a carrier and without any transformations. Your illusionary energy that is known as Shrutis seeks refuge in You who are devoid of traits. Vedantins address illusion that has sought refuge in You as Avyākṛta. Some address it as Moola-prakṛiti; some address it as Maya; some as Samsṛuti, Bandhana, Avidya and other names.

Your foremost resolve causes an imbalance in the illusionary energy, due to which Mahat tattva (cosmic intelligence) is born. From Mahat, Your influence causes ahamkara (I-ness) to be born. Ahamkara (egoism) is veiled by the Mahat-tattva and divides into three known as Sattvika, Rajasa and Tamasa ahamkara.

From the Rajasa and Tamasa ahamkara, the subtle tanmatras (subtle elements) known as sound, form, taste, smell and touch are born. They combined with the earlier attributes and in turn, the gross elements known as space, wind, fire, water and earth are born.

Due to the subtle element of sound, space emerged. Due to the combination of space and subtle touch (sparsha tanmatra), wind was born. Due to the combination of space, wind and the subtle form (roopa tanmatra), fire was born. Due to the combination of space, wind, fire and the subtle taste (rasa tanmatra), water was born. Due to the combination of space, wind, fire, water and the subtle smell (gandha tanmatra), the earth was born.

Thus, based on the sequence of emergence, among the gross elements, those that emerged later have more qualities than their preceding ones.

For instance, space has only sound as its quality. The wind has both sound and touch as its qualities. Fire has sound, touch and form as its qualities. Water has sound, touch, form and taste as its qualities. Earth has sound, touch, form, taste and smell as its qualities.

From Rajasa ahamkara, the 10 senses were born. From Sattvika ahamkara, the presiding deities of the senses and the mind emerged.

(This should be heard and recapitulated repeatedly. Only then one can understand this science, not otherwise).

Due to the combination of the above elements, the composite subtle body known as Hiranyagarbha or

Sutratma was formed. From the combination of the gross elements, Virat Purusha emerged. From the Virat Purusha, the entire universe composed of sentient and insentient objects emerged.

O Lord of the universe! In course of time, You take births from the wombs of celestials, humans and animals and others. Based on the differences in the attributes of Your illusionary energy, on the strength of Your Rajo guna, You manifest as Brahma, the Lord who creates the universe.

With Your Sattva guna, You manifest as Vishnu, the Lord who sustains the universe. With Your Tamo guna, at the annihilation time, You manifest as the destroyer, Lord Shiva.

Thus, based on the divisions of Your illusionary energy, You manifest as Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra, say learned scholars.

O Rama! Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are creations of the intellect. They cause the living being to experience the waking, dream and deep sleep state. But You remain beyond the three attributes and remain an eternal witness. You are Pure Knowledge, and indivisible (avyaya).

O Raghunandana! When You seek to expand Your transcendental sport called creation, You take the help of Your illusionary energy composed of the 3 attributes and illumine like one who is composed of attributes. (This is detailed Vedanta).

O Rama! Your illusionary energy illumines in two forms- Vidya and Avidya. Those who tread the path of Pravrtti (material expansion) and engage in fruitive activities are under the sway of Avidya (ignorance). Those who tread the Nivrtti (path of return) and are eternally focussed upon the Supreme Self become those who pursue Vedanta. They remain firm in devotion towards the Supreme.

When devotion deeply stabilizes in them, the curiosity, 'who am I?' arises which takes them to Vedanta and ultimately they realize the real Self and the Supreme Self. Such people are eternally submerged in total devotion and knowledge. On the contrary, those who are sunk in Avidya are trapped eternally in the cycle of repeated births and deaths. Only those who are totally dedicated to real knowledge remain liberated.

The real knowledge stems from the inner faculties of those who are devoted to You, who chant Your mantra and who worship You. Such knowledge does not sprout in others.

Hence, the human who has utmost devotion to You, will undoubtedly attain liberation. Those who have abandoned the nectar called 'devotion to You' cannot obtain liberation even in their dreams.

O Rama! What more can I say about You? Let me explain in one single sentence. It has been declared that association with the virtuous (sadhu-sangatya) is the main tool that takes the being towards liberation.

Sadhus are those who during prosperity and adversities have a balanced mind, are free from the 3 desires called wife, sons and wealth. They have absolute sense-restraint, tranquil mind and devotion to You, have renounced all actions and are totally fixed upon the Supreme. They possess the wealth called Yama and Niyama and are content with what is obtained by them.

The fortune of associating with such Sadhus enables a person to develop love towards listening to Your divine stories due to which they develop devotion to You, the eternal Lord. When devotion intensifies, they obtain the Pure Knowledge pertaining to You. This is the primary path trodden by those who seek liberation.

Hence, O Raghava! May I eternally have ultimate devotion to You coupled with love! May I eternally obtain the chance to associate with ardent devotees of Yours!

O Lord! With this darshan of Yours, my birth has attained fulfilment. All my yagnas have borne fruit today. For a very long time, with undeviating focus, I have been meditating upon You as a result of which today I could directly worship You. This is my fortune.

O Raghava! Along with Sita, You eternally reside in my heart. O Rama! whether I sit or walk, may I eternally think of You alone”.

In this way, Maharishi Agastya extolled Rama and gave him a gem-studded sword, a bow and 2 quivers containing inexhaustible stock of arrows. Indra had desposited these weapons with him and had asked him to give them to Rama. He then said, “O Raghava! Kill the demons who have become a burden to earth. For this purpose You have playfully incarnated as a human.

At a distance of 2 yojanas from here, at the banks of River Gautami, is a sacred forest. A beautiful ashram called Panchavati exists there. O Raghunandana! Spend the remainder of your exile period there and while living there, accomplish the task of the Devatas”.

Rama heard the beautiful words and the prayer that was filled with deep essence. With Maharishi’s permission, in great delight he set out in the path as directed by him.

Aranya kanda, Chapter 4

Shiva said, “O Parvati! On the way to Panchavati, Rama saw the aged Jatayu who was humungous like a huge mountain peak. Astonished on seeing him and presuming him to be a demon, he said to Lakshmana, “Give my bow. This huge demon appears to be one who gobbles the Rishis. I shall now slay it”.

Hearing this, the aged Jatayu was terrified. He said, “O Rama! I am your father’s dearest friend and should not to be killed by you. I am a bird called Jatayu and am living here to help you. If you and Lakshmana ever have to go hunting into the forests, I will protect Sita”.

Rama was delighted to hear this. In great happiness he said, “O King of birds! I am delighted with your presence. Do live close to our hermitage and bring joy to us”.

In this way, expressing his approval, Rama embraced Jatayu. On reaching Panchavati along with Sita and Lakshmana, he visited the River Gautami.

To the north of Gautami, was a lonely spot filled with many mango, jackfruit and other trees. The water here was free from impurity. There was no movement of people there. In that isolated spot, with Lakshmana’s help, Rama constructed a huge thatched hut. While bringing joy to Sita and Lakshmana, Rama lived happily like Indra in that beautiful place.

Lakshmana was eternally engrossed in serving Rama and would supply them with roots and fruits. Ever ready with his bow and arrow, he remained vigilant night and day. Taking on the responsibility of their protection, he zealously wandered all around the hut guarding them.

The three would bathe in Gautami. With great devotion, Lakshmana would fetch the river water and worship Sita and Rama.

One day Lakshmana approached the Supreme Lord Srirama who was seated alone and in all humility bowed to him and said, “O Rama! From you, I seek to learn the absolute secretive and decisive path to liberation. O Raghunandana! Please teach me the knowledge coupled with devotion and detachment. Barring You no one can impart this teaching”.

Rama said, “Lakshmana! Listen. I will explain the ultimate secret after knowing which, the human being will quickly get liberated from the imagination called this samsara that is filled with thoughts and resolves.

First I will teach you about my form as illusion. Thereafter I will teach the Jnana-sadhana. Thereafter I will teach the real knowledge coupled with the experiential realization of the same. I will also teach you about the Supreme Self which is the object that is sought (jneya). The human being who knows the Supreme Self obtains liberation.

The feeling of 'Self' that exists towards the body and other non-Self objects is called maya (illusion). This illusion is responsible for the cycle of repeated rebirths. O Lakshmana! It has been determined that Maya (illusion) has 2 forms. One is called Vikshepa. Another is Avarana.

The Viskshepa-energy creates the entire universe composed of gross and subtle aspects starting from Mahat tattva and up to Brahma.

The āvarana shakti puts a veil around the real knowledge and, due to it, in the Supreme Lord who is non-dual, the entire universe is imagined just as a snake is imagined in the rope. On proper scrutiny, it is evident that only a rope exists and not a snake.

Everything that the human hears through the ears, sees through the eyes and thinks through the mind, is unreal. As that which is heard or seen in a dream is not visible in the waking state, it is called unreal or false. Likewise, the mental activity called remembering is as unreal as a dream or imagination. It has no stable existence.

The entire universe appears to be stable and visible but the truth is that it transforms every second and finally perishes. Hence it must be understood that the world is unreal and false.

Considering the body to be the Self is the root for this tree called worldly bondages. In the absence of the body, the Self remains unconnected with wife, children, joys, sorrows, heat, cold and other bondages. When the body does not exist, how can the Self associate with them? It cannot.

The combination of the 5 gross elements, the 5 subtle elements, ahamkara (I-ness), buddhi, manas, reflected consciousness (chidābhasa), body, senses and moola prakriti (primordial nature) is called Kshetra or body. He who is distinct from the mind and other inert principles mentioned above is the individual soul (Jeeva). He is the Paramatma (Supreme Self) that is absolutely pure.

I will now teach some ways by which the Self can be ascertained.

As Jiva and Paramatma are synonymous, they should not be perceived as different. One must abandon egoism, violence, ostentation etc. and should be straightforward at all times. Tolerance should be developed to the criticisms and tortures of others.

Physically and mentally one should, with unflinching and undeviated devotion, serve the Sadguru while maintaining external and internal purity. He must be inclined only towards good deeds and have control over the body, mind and speech. He should wash away egoism, abandon inclination towards worldly objects, give up attachment for birth, old-age, death, have no attachment for wife, children and wealth and keep the mind balanced during desirable and undesirable experiences. He should develop absolute devotion towards Me, the Self who exists in all beings.

Residing in solitude, he should be indifferent towards house-holders who are enjoying household and worldly pleasures.

He should always strive for obtaining Self-knowledge, stay away from developing friendships with materialistic people and should eternally contemplate on the essence of Vedanta. Due to this, knowledge will dawn in him.

Efforts contrary to My teaching will yield adverse results and will further throw him into ignorance.

'I am different from the intellect, life-force, mind, body and egoism. I am the Self which is eternal, pure and wakeful'- this awareness is real knowledge (Jnana). Experientially realizing it is Vignana.

The Self exists everywhere. It is an embodiment of knowledge and bliss (chidananda). It has no destruction. Buddhi and other carriers do not exist in it. It remains eternal without any transformations. With its illumination, it illumines the body and the senses. Yet, it is devoid of all enclosures.

Sajatiya, vijatiya and swagata differences do not exist in it. It is the form of truth and knowledge, is devoid of any association and is self-illuminating. It is an eternal witness for everything. One should experientially realize this.

Through the teachings contained in the Shastras or through the teaching given by a Sadguru, when the disciple understands the oneness between the Jiva (Individual Self) and Paramatma (Supreme Self), ignorance (avidya), which is the foundational root, gets absorbed totally into the Supreme Self along with its causative and effectual factors. This absorption of ignorance is termed as moksha (liberation).

To be frank, from the Self's angle, it is eternally liberated and hence attaining liberation is not a new accomplishment for it. Hence the feeling of 'liberation' for the Self is secondary and not important.

O Lakshmana! I have taught you about liberation which exists in the form of the steps Jnana, vignana and vairagya. This is the form of the Supreme Self and liberation.

It is My opinion that those who are not devoted to Me cannot grasp this teaching. Just as people cannot see the object in utter darkness and need light to see the objects, only those who have devotion to Me can grasp this teaching of mine. Those who have absolute devotion to Me, easily obtain Self-realization.

I will now teach the techniques to develop devotion to Me. Listen attentively.

Associating with My devotees; eternally serving Me and my devotees; observing Ekadashi fasts and other rituals related to Me; celebrating the festive days pertaining to Me; listening to My stories, reading them, offering commentaries for them and having love for them; having devotion towards my worship and engaging in my nama sankeertana are the techniques. The person who eternally fixes his mind upon Me will develop absolute devotion to Me.

He who has absolute devotion for Me will quickly obtain theoretical knowledge (jnana), experiential realization (vignana) and detachment (vairagya) due to which he will attain liberation.

In response to your question, I have revealed the secret completely. The person who fixes his mind on this teaching of Mine will attain liberation.

Lakshmana, this should not be taught to those who lack devotion to Me. But you should call My devotees and teach this to them.

The person who, with dedication and devotion, reads or listens to this will destroy the darkness that arises due to ignorance and obtain liberation. My dearest devotees whose minds are delighted in offering services to Me, who are pure-hearted, whose minds are in tranquil and who have pure knowledge will obtain association with the virtuous Yogis.

Those who are totally engrossed in serving such Yogis with absolute dedication will easily obtain liberation. I will always make myself visible to their eyes. Barring this, there is no other way to obtain My darshan or liberation"- said Rama.

Day 11, July 21 2021

Aranya kanda, Chapter 5

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! In those dense forests, in a place called Janasthana, a powerful demoness who could change her form as per her will would freely wander. One day she came to Panchavati. There, on the banks of Gautami she saw the foot imprints of Rama, the Lord of the universe, which bore the symbols of lotus, goad etc. She was captivated by the beauty of those footprints and was filled with lust. Tracing those footprints she reached the ashram where Rama and Sita lived.

There she saw a man who was as handsome as the Lord of love.

(What we have in the mind, that reflection is seen in the eyes. As she was filled with lust, she saw him as a man who is as beautiful as Manmatha).

Seeing Rama, the husband of Lakshmi, seated beside Sita, the demoness who was filled with lust asked him, "Who are you? What is your name? Why have you worn matted hair? Why are you living in this ashram? What do you seek to achieve through this? I am the sister of Ravana, the mighty king of all demons. I can take any form as per my will. My name is Surpanaka. Along with my brother Khara I live in this forest which the king has gifted to me. I wander here, eat all the ascetics and sustain. Now you give me all details of yourself".

Rama said, "I am the son of Dasharatha, the King of Ayodhya. My name is Rama. This lady is my wife Sita. She is the daughter of Janaka. That is my younger brother Lakshmana. O beautiful one! Why have you come here? What do you want me to do for you?"

Surpanaka said, "O Rama! Come with me and enjoy in these forests. I am captivated by you, o lotus-eyed one, and am tormented by love. Hence I will not leave you".

On hearing this, with his eyes, Rama signalled to Sita and smilingly said, "My wife never leaves me. She is always beside me. What am I to do? If you choose me, you will have this nuisance of a co-wife. How can you live with this torture? My handsome brother who is seated outside is alone. He is worthy of being your husband. Wander with him".

Surpanaka said, 'Ok'. Immediately she said to Lakshmana, "O handsome man! Become my husband right now. Abiding by your brother's order, let us wander happily and enjoy".

Lakshmana said, "O Sadhvi! O beautiful one! I am a servant of Srirama. Hence if you marry me, you will become a servant and will have to do the same work as I do. What can be more painful than this? Hence go back to Rama. He is the King & Lord of many".

The wicked Surpanaka angrily came back to Rama & said, "Why are you making me go back and forth? I will gobble this Sita right now".

Taking on her ferocious ugly form, she ran to Sita. On Rama's order, Lakshmana quickly ran, caught Surpanaka & cut off her nose and ears. Her horrendous shrieks reverberated through the forest. Her body was drenched in blood. In a great urgency, she ran to her brother Khara and while uttering harsh words, she fell down.

Alarmed on seeing her condition, Khara asked, "Dear sister! What has happened to you? Who has reduced you to this state? Tell me. However valorous that man may be, I shall slay him immediately".

Surpanakha said, "Dear brother, along with brother Lakshmana and wife Sita, Rama is living fearlessly in Dandaka near Godavari. On Rama's orders, Lakshmana has done this to me. If you truly consider yourself as belonging to a high lineage and as valourous, kill the 2 men right now. I seek to drink their blood. Else, you eat them who are conceited. If you do not do so, I shall end my life".

Hearing this, Khara was enraged with Rama and Lakshmana. With 14,000 very cruel demon heroes, he went to kill Rama. At his behest, Dooshana too joined. Carrying with them many weapons of different types, the army marched towards Panchavati.

Seeing them, Rama said to Lakshmana, "Hearing the big commotion I gauge that the demons are coming here to attack us. A frightening war will break out between me and them. Lakshmana, take Sita and go to a forest cave. I seek to kill all the terrible demons who arrive here. This is my order. There is nothing to think. Leave right now". Lakshmana agreed. Taking Sita he reached a forest cave.

Rama, the Lord of the world, tightened his garments & holding his strong bow and wearing the 2 quivers, he stood ready for war. By then, the demon-army arrived.

On seeing Rama, the demons began to hurl many strange weapons, trees and rocks from all directions. However, Rama playfully shred them all into bits. Thereafter in a short time of 1.5 hours, he released thousands of arrows and killed all the demons including their prominent leaders Khara, Dooshana and Trishiras.

By then Lakshmana returned along with Sita from the forest cave. He was deeply astonished to see thousands of corpses strewn around. In great delight, Sita embraced Rama and gently massaged the wounds on his body.

Meanwhile, seeing the mightiest demons die, Ravana's sister Shurphanakha was totally alarmed. In great fright, she ran to Lanka & approached her brother who was seated in the assembly, fell at his feet and wept piteously.

Aghast on seeing her condition, Ravana said, "Dear sister! Get up. Who has done this to you? Was it Indra, Varuna, Kubera or Yama? Tell me. I shall immediately kill them rightaway".

Shurphakhana said, "You are foolish, arrogant, self-conceited and dim-witted. You who are always in the grip of women are eternally intoxicated due to alcohol. I think you are impotent because you do not have spies who are considered to be the eyes of a king. That is why you are ignorant of the fact that Rama and Lakshmana are living in Janasthana and that a terrible war took place between them and our armies in which Khara, Dushana and Trishiras died along with 14000 demons. Now Janasthana is free from demons and is filled with ascetics. As you have none to give you this information, I consider you to be a fool".

Ravana asked, "Surphanaka! Who is Rama? How could he kill them all? Give me all the details and I shall kill him".

Surphanakha said, "I was going to River Gautami near Janasthana. There is a place Panchavati where earlier ascetics would live. In this place in a hut was the lotus-eyed Rama. He was holding the bow and arrow and was glowing with the radiance of Lakshmi. He wears matted hair.

I saw him and also his brother Lakshmana who is as handsome as Rama. Rama's wife Sita is broad-eyed and in every way is like Lakshmi herself. Never have I seen any woman as beautiful as her in the Deva-loka or among Gandharvas or humans. Sita has all the auspicious traits and with her auspicious glow, she illumines the entire forest itself.

O brother! I tried my best to bring her as your wife. But, Rama's brother Lakshmana aborted my attempts and deformed my face in the process.

Anguished, I ran to Khara for help. Along with his mighty commanders, Khara immediately set out for war with Rama. But in the battle that followed, the mighty Rama killed wiped away the entire demon-army in just a second. I opine that if Rama wills, in half a second he can reduce the 3 worlds to dust.

O brother! If his wife Sita becomes your wife, your life will be truly be rendered fruitful. Hence O King! Bring the lotus-eyed Sita who is the most beautiful woman in the universe and make her your wife. But let me warn you that you cannot go to Rama in this form. You will have to use deceptive techniques to get her".

Hearing this, the demon-king Ravana consoled Surphanaka with many good words, re-assured her and sent her away. Thereafter he went to his palace. Due to the deep worry that plagued his mind, that night he

could not fall asleep. He thought, "How astonishing is this! How can a mere human from the Raghu vamsha kill my mighty brothers who are considered invincible? Is Rama not a human? Why is he in the forest?"

Could it be that the Supreme Lord has, as per the promise given to Brahma, incarnated as a human in Raghu lineage to kill me with the help of the Vanaras? If I get killed in the hands of the Supreme Lord, I am sure to attain the kingdom called Vaikuntha. Else forever I will be ruler in Lanka. Hence, I will surely go to Rama".

Ravana, the leader of all the demons, pondered over deeply that night and concluded that Rama was the Supreme Lord himself. He thought that the Lord could not be easily obtained through love and hence he decided to merge quickly into the Lord through enmity. He thus made a firm resolve".

Aranya kanda, Chapter 6

Shiva said, "O Parvati! The whole night Ravana pondered over the future course of action. Having come to a conclusion, the next morning he boarded his chariot and through the skies swiftly Maricha's ashram that was on the other side of the ocean.

Here, Mārīcha was living in solitude wearing bark clothing and matted hair and was completely engaged in meditating upon the Supreme Self that is devoid of any attributes.

That morning he completed his meditation and opened his eyes. He then noticed King Ravana who was at his home waiting for him. He immediately got up, welcomed Ravana, embraced him, worshipped him and then said,

"O Ravana! Why have you come here all alone? It appears to me that you are lost in deep thought and worried. O King, tell me the task. If it is lawful and will not taint me with sin, I shall surely complete it".

Ravana said, "O Maricha! Dasharatha's eldest son Rama who eternally abides by the truth is loved by all ascetics. Dasharatha has sent him on exile along with wife and brother. They are now living in the terrible forests of Panchavati. I have heard that Rama's wife Sita is wide-eyed and captivates the 3 worlds with her beauty. Rama has killed all demons, who were faultless. Having killed Khara he is living fearlessly in the forest. He has chopped the nose and ears of my innocent sister Shurpanaka.

Hence I want you to go to Rama. With your help, when Rama is not in the vicinity, I shall kidnap Sita. Towards this, you transform into a golden deer and take Rama and Lakshmana far away from their home. During that time, I will kidnap her".

Hearing this, Maricha was greatly frightened. He said, "O King! This will cause total destruction. Who has given you this advice? Whoever has given you this advice is surely one who seeks your destruction. Hence, kill that informer immediately.

O Ravana! Rama's valour is unimaginable and to date, it still petrifies me. Previously, as a young boy, Rama had come for the protection of Vishwamitra's yagna. At that time, with a single arrow, he flung me 100 yojanas away into the deep seas. Such is the power of his arrow. It normally squeezes away life from the opponent. Remembering that incident, even now at every step I think only of Rama.

Remembering my earlier enmity, at another time, in Dandaka forests, accompanied by other demons I went in the form of a terrible animal with sharp horns. Rama was with Lakshmana and Sita.

Rama saw me when I was rushing swiftly to attack him. He quickly released a small arrow that pierced me and took me high up in the skies. I swirled many times in the air and I was once again flung into the deep seas. From then in total fear, I am living here thinking of Rama at all times.

Any object that begins with 'RA' reminds me of Rama and I get totally nervous. Like one frightened of all objects of comforts, I think only of Rama.

Hence I have abandoned all objects of comforts and due to fear, am in the attire of an ascetic. I think only of Rama and meditate on him. Even in sleep, I think of Rama. If in my dream Rama appears, I get up and sit paralyzed in shock.

Hence O Ravana, forget this idea. Return home. Protect the demon race, that has been coming from eternity. Your enmity with Rama, will destroy the entire demon race. Listen to me. Do not maintain enmity with Rama. He is the Supreme Lord, an ocean of compassion and is the embodiment of dharma. Worship him with devotion. With this, the demon clan will be saved.

I have heard from Maharishi Narada that in the first Yuga, on Brahma's prayer, Srihari manifested and asked him, "O Lord Brahma! What do you desire? I will fulfil it".

At that time Brahma said, "O Lord Srihari! You incarnate as a human on earth. Take birth as Dasharatha's son Rama and kill the 10-headed Ravana who harms the Devas".

Hence know that Rama is not human. He is the Supreme Lord Narayana. In an illusory human form, he is fearlessly wandering in forests. Hence return home".

Hearing this, Ravana said, "O Mārīcha! If it is true that on Brahma's prayer the Lord has come for my destruction, then it will be good if he kills me. I have decided to kidnap his wife. If Rama is the Supreme Lord, then if I die in his hands while fighting valorously in the battle, I will attain liberation. But if Rama is an ordinary man, I will defeat him and obtain Sita.

Hence you transform into a beautiful but queer deer and take Rama and Lakshmana far away from ashram. After completing this task, you return to your ashram. If you say anything more, I will kill you rightaway".

Marīcha thought, 'It is better to die in Rama's hands than to die in Ravana's hands. If I die in Rama's hands, I will cross this ocean of samsara. But if this wicked man kills me I will fall into hell'.

Having decided this, he stood up and said, "O King. I bow to you. I will abide by your orders. I am the servant of your servants".

Along with Ravana, he boarded the chariot and reached Rama's ashram. He then took on an astonishing form of a golden deer whose body was filled with lovely silver spots. The deer had gem-laced horns; and eyes that were like an emerald. It was dancing and running fast and frolicking everywhere trying to catch Sita's attention".

Aranya kanda, Chapter 7

Shiva said, "O Parvati! Meanwhile, Rama grasped Ravana's plan. In solitude, he said to Sita, "Sita! Listen to me. Ravana will come to you in the form of a beggar. Hence I seek that you should leave behind a shadow that perfectly resembles you and then merge into this sacred fire. Live invisibly for a year. Thereafter I shall kill Ravana and then take you back again".

Sita did as instructed. She retained the Maya-Sita and entered the fire. Maya-Sita saw the deer that was frolicking around the ashram. Going to Rama she smilingly said, "Look at that golden deer which is so beautiful with gems and other decorations. Without any fear it wanders freely. Do get it for me as it will give me company".

Rama agreed. As he was leaving, he said to Lakshmana, "In this forest, there are many deceptive demons. Protect my dearest Sita".

Lakshmana said, "O Rama, the deer before us is Marīcha".

Rama, "If he is Maricha, I will undoubtedly kill him. But if it is a deer I will get it for Sita. I am leaving now. With alertness protect her till I come".

Illusion, who enchants the world, had sought refuge in Rama. Having said this, Rama, who inherently is changeless, all-pervading, and form of the Supreme, ran behind the deer like an ordinary man. To give completeness to Maricha's devotion, Rama chased him. He wanted to render true Marichi's wish of dying in Rama's hands.

Although he knew it was Maricha, to give joy to Sita, he ran behind the deer. If not, what purpose did Rama, the Supreme Lord who is an embodiment of completeness and knowledge, have to do with a deer and a woman?

The deer took Rama far away. As it ran, suddenly it would be visible and suddenly vanish from sight. Realizing for sure that he was a demon, Rama then released a sharp arrow. When the arrow hit him, Mārīcha took on his original form and fell down vomiting blood. Imitating Rama's voice he screamed, 'I am dying. Lakshmana, protect me' and he died.

Due to chanting Lord's name at the time of death, even the ignorant beings merge into the Supreme Lord. But Maricha had the fortune of seeing the Supreme Lord along with chanting His name. Hence undoubtedly he attained liberation.

Seeing the illumination emerging from Marichi's corpse and merging into Rama, even the Devatas were astonished. They thought, 'Despite torturing ascetics and engaging in many deplorable deeds, the vile sinner Mārīcha merged into Rama.

Undoubtedly this is the compassion of the Supreme Lord Rama. Even before the arrow hit him, due to fear, the demon's thoughts were fixed only of Rama. Due to abandoning wealth, home and all times thinking only of Rama, he had washed away countless sins. He was killed by Rama. Looking only at Rama, he died in Rama's hand and obtained Rama'.

Thereafter Rama thought, "Why did this wretched demon scream in my voice when dying? What will happen to Sita hearing my voice?" Worried, he ran quickly to the ashram.

Meanwhile, Sita was agitated hearing Rama's screams and in absolute grief, she said, "Lakshmana go quickly. Your brother is suffering at the hands of enemies. Have you not heard that scream"?

Lakshmana said, "These are not Rama's words. Some demon screamed like him while dying. Why will Rama scream like this? If Sirema is angered, he can kill anyone in all the worlds".

Shedding tears, in total grief Sita angrily said, "Do you seek to see your brother trapped in difficulties? O wicked-minded one! I think Bharata has sent you to destroy your elder brother. Else, perhaps you want to take me away after Rama's death. Know that you can never obtain me. Right now I will leave my life. Barring Rama, I will never touch you or Bharata or any other man".

Beating her chest with her hands, she wept profusely. Unable to hear those painful terrible words, Lakshmana closed his ears and grieved. He wept within himself. Totally helpless, he prayed to the Vana devatas to protect her and left to help Rama. Seeing this, in the guise of a Rishi who was holding glittering staff and kamandala, Ravana came to Sita who bowed to him and worshipped him with total devotion.

She welcomed Ravana into the ashram, offered fruits to him and said, 'Munishwara! Eat fruits and rest peacefully. My husband will come shortly and will honour you specially'.

Ravana asked, "O louts-eyed one! Who are you? Who is your husband? Why are you in this forest filled with demons?"

Sita said, "Dasharatha is the prosperous king of Ayodhya. His eldest son is Srirama who is filled with all auspicious traits. I am Janaka's daughter Sita and the wife of Rama. Rama's younger brother is Lakshmana who is filled with total love for his brother Rama. At his father's command, Rama is here in exile for 14 years. Now tell me. Who are you?"

He said "Pulastya's son is Vishravasa. I am Vishravasa's son Ravana. I am the demon-king. I am longing to make you mine and am here to take you. How can you enjoy comforts with Rama who is dressed like an ascetic? Love me. Enjoy comforts with me. Abandon this sorrow of forest life".

Hearing these words, the frightened Sita said, 'If you speak thus, you will die in Rama's hands. Wait a moment. Rama along with Lakshmana will come here. Rama's arrows will shred you into bits'.

Ravana, who was angered hearing this, grew in size and took on his original form with 10 heads and 20 hands. With his nails, he lifted Sita along with the earth that was beneath her feet, placed it on his chariot and immediately travelled in the skies.

Loudly screaming, 'Ah Rama, Ah Lakshmana', Sita looked at the earth in great distress and piteously wept. Her loud wails were heard by the aged Jatayu, the king of birds who had very sharp nails.

Quickly Jatayu flew from the mountain peak and stood in front of Ravana screaming, 'Halt, halt. Just as the dog steals the sacred yagna offerings, finding a time when the Lord is not at home you are stealing his wife. Who are you?'- as he screamed, with his sharp claws he shred Ravana's chariot into bits, tore apart the horses & broke Ravana's bow.

In fury, Ravana abandoned Sita and took up his sword and shred the bird's wings. With his wings torn, Jatayu fell to the earth. Ravana then placed Sita on another chariot and quickly sped away. At that time, Sita was screaming, 'Ha Lakshmana, Ha Rama'. She did not find anyone who could help her.

"Please save me from this demon. O Rama! O Lakshmana! O Lakshmana! I have erred. With the sharp arrows called my words I have pierced you. O Lakshmana! Please forgive me. protect me". Fearing that Rama will come to help Sita hearing her pleas, Ravana increased the speed and travelled swiftly.

Sita who was thus been taken in the chariot looked down. Atop a mountain, she saw 5 Vanaras seated. Immediately she took out her ornaments, tore the end of her sari, tied them in it and while shouting 'Rama' threw them down such that the bag fell on the mountain.

Shortly thereafter, Ravana crossed the ocean and reached Lanka. In an isolated place called Ashoka vana that was near his palace, he placed her. He instructed the demonesses to guard her night and day.

He placed her there along with the earth in which he had carried her. Sita began to shrivel by the day. She abandoned all ornaments. Due to sorrow, her face withered. With fear she began to weep, 'Rama, Rama' as she lived among those demonesses.

Day 12, July 22 2021

Aranya kanda, Chapter 8

Shiva said, "Parvati! Having killed Maricha, Rama was returning when he saw Lakshmana whose face appeared lusterless and withered. He was grieving. Rama saw him from a distance and instantly knew that something unpleasant had happened.

So the wise Rama reflected, 'Lakshmana does not know that I have created maya-sita. Although I know everything, I will not give him all details and will instead lament like an ordinary man sunk in grief. If I remain neutral without displaying any emotion, I will fail in killing crores of other demons. Hence I will grieve like one who is afflicted by love.

Searching for Sita, I will gradually reach the demon-king Ravana, kill him and destroy his entire lineage. Then I will take back the purified Sita from the fire and return to Ayodhya. Based on Brahma's prayer I have assumed a human form.

Hence in this form, I will live for some time on earth. Hence listening to my story which is filled with the illusionary human form, those who tread the path of bhakti, will easily attain liberation".

Having thought thus, he asked, "Lakshmana, why did you leave Sita and come here? By now demons would have swallowed or harmed her".

Lakshmana wept, bowed to Rama and said, "Hearing Maricha's cries, Sita presumed that you were crying for help. Hence totally aggrieved, she instructed me to quickly rush for your help. I said to her, 'Those are not Rama's words. They are uttered by the demon. Hence be at peace'. But I should not utter before you the very harsh wicked words that she used. Shutting my ears, I have come running to you."

Rama said, "Lakshmana! Even if Sita uttered such words, it is incorrect on your part to leave her alone. Aren't my commands superior to hers? Listening to the words of a woman you have left her & come here. By now Sita would have been abducted or gobbled by demons. This is undoubtedly true".

In great distress, Rama and Lakshmana rushed to the ashram. On not finding Sita, in great affliction, Rama wept, "O loved one, where have you gone? O Sita! Are you hiding anywhere to tease me or to play a prank on me?" Lamenting in this way, he combed the forests. But he did not find her anywhere.

"O Vana devatas, where is my Sita? Where is my beloved? O animals, birds, trees, show to me my beloved"- he wept. In this way, Rama, the Supreme omnipresent Lord who is the form of eternal bliss, searched everywhere in the forests and wept.

The Supreme Lord who remains motionless ran in search of her. He who is without attachments and egoism and who is an embodiment of total bliss lamented like one totally afflicted by sorrow.

Although being unattached, he invoked his illusionary energy and succumbed to total grief. To the deluded, he appeared like one totally attached. Only to the enlightened, he appeared as his real self.

As he was searching along with Lakshmana, at one place he saw the broken chariot and said, "O Lakshmana! Look. Someone was abducting Sita when another being attacked him & took Sita away from him".

As he walked further he saw a gigantic body that was as huge as a mountain. It was soaked in blood. Seeing this, he said, "This demon would have gobbled my Janaki. After relishing her with great delight, it is resting here. Lakshmana! Get my bow and arrow. I will right now kill it."

Hearing this, Jatayu who was fallen there softly said, "O Rama, do not kill me with your arrow. I chased Ravana who abducted your wife. A terrible fight broke out between him and me. I tore his chariot, horses, flag etc. But I was badly injured by him. O Lord of the universe! I have fallen down and am about to leave my life. Look at me with compassion".

Rama then recognised Jatayu & touched him. In total grief he asked, "O Jatayu! Who abducted my dearest wife? As you leaving your life for my sake, you are my dearest relative".

With enormous difficulty, Jatayu who was vomiting blood, slowly in a faltering voice said, "Demon Ravana, the mighty king of Lanka, has taken the Mithila princess Janaki and gone in Southern direction. Now I have no energy to talk further. I am leaving my life in your presence. I am blessed to see you at this moment of death. You are Paramatma. You are Maha-vishnu who has assumed the illusory human form. O Raghurama! By seeing you in my last moments, I have obtained liberation. Will you please touch me with your hands? Then I will obtain liberation".

Rama gently touched Jatayu. Then Jatayu fell down and left his life. Rama wept as if his closest relative had died. Along with Lakshmana, he lit the pyre and cremated it. Rama and Lakshmana then bathed and offered salutations and said, "Jatayu, you attain my ultimate state. Today you will attain my form".

Jatayu obtained a divine form and boarded a beautiful, auspicious and supreme chariot that glowed like the Sun. He was holding the discus, mace and lotus, wearing golden clothing and many divine ornaments and had a crown over his head. He who was glowing divinely was being served by 4 of Vishnu's attendants and was being worshipped by others and praised by Yogis. With all humility, Jatayu bowed to Srirama and prayed.

Jayatu stotra-

I glorify Srirama and seek shelter in Him, who is the most handsome in all three worlds, who fulfils all desires, who protects those who seek protection from Him, and who resides in the hearts of his devotees.

I seek shelter in Srihari, whose name is the fire that burns the forest called samsara, who is worshipped by even the most supreme Gods such as Shiva, who is an epitome of compassion, who has the power to kill even 1000 crore Ravana and who is blue complexioned like the River Yamuna.

I seek refuge in Srirama who is at a distance not reachable by those trapped in worldly bondages, but who instantly makes himself visible to the Rishis who are freed from worldly bondages and whose feet are the most-competent boats that help the living being cross the ocean of repeated rebirths.

I worship Srirama who resides in the lotus-hearts of Shiva and Parvati, who in His past incarnation as a tortoise had carried the Mount Mandara, who is of many transcendental sports, whose lotus feet are served by the Devatas and the demons and who showers boons upon the Devatas.

I seek refuge in Srirama who is worshipped by the great beings who relinquish the desire for the wives and wealth of others and who delight in the prosperity of the Lord and others.

I seek refuge in the Srirama whose pleasant face with a charming smile is like a fully bloomed lotus, who is ever-compassionate, who blesses the devotee merely when He is thought of by the devotee, who is easily reachable through devotion, who has a beautiful blue body that illumines radiantly like the blue sapphire, who glows with eyes that are like white lotuses and who is the Guru for Shiva.

O Rama! Like the same Sun reflects differently in the different water pots, based on the different attributes You assume forms of Vishnu, Brahma and Shambhu and illumine as them. I extol you who were impressed with Indra's prayers. You have a body that surpasses even 100 crore Manmathas. You are beyond reach of the beings who, trapped in this samsara, are wandering aimlessly.

O Ishvara! I seek shelter under Raghurama who always illumines in the heart, who dispels the distress of the devotees and who is the Lord".

Pleased with Jatayu's prayer, Lord Srirama said, "Jatayu! May you be showered with auspiciousness! Now you travel to My ultimate abode. He who hears this stotra with absolute concentration, who writes it again and who chants it obtains oneness in form with Me. At the time of death, he will remember Me.

Jatayu heard these words. In absolute delight, he attained oneness in form with Rama. While being worshipped by Lord Brahma, he reached the ultimate abode".

Aranya kanda, Chapter 9

Shiva said, "O Parvati! Thereafter in great distress, Rama and Lakshmana went to another forest where they saw a terrible looking demon who had no eyes and no ears but whose mouth was in the stomach. His

long arms stretched for 1 yojana (8 miles). He was torturing all animals there. On the strength of the vibration of the moving animal, he would stretch his hands, catch and eat it.

This demon Kabandha caught Rama and Lakshmana in his hands. Seeing the demon, Rama laughingly said, "Lakshmana, look at him who is immobile as he has no legs. He has no head, no eyes nor ears. His mouth is in his stomach. He eats whatever he can catch with his hands. Now we are trapped in his arms. If we do not act quickly, he will eat us".

Lakshmana said, "What is there to think? Let us chop his hands".

Rama agreed and cut his right hand with a sword while Lakshmana cut his left hand. Shocked and astonished, the demon asked, "Who are you? Are you Devatas who have descended from heaven?"

Laughingly, Rama replied, "I am Rama, the son of Dasharatha who was the King of Ayodhya. He was extremely compassionate and rich in good qualities. This is my brother Lakshmana".

He then explained about Sita's abduction and said, "We are here in search of her. Caught by you, we had to chop your hands to safeguard our lives. But, tell me Kabandha! How did you get this terrible form?"

Kabandha happily said, "If you truly are Rama, then I am absolutely fortunate that you have come to me. Previously I was a Gandharva who was haughty due to youth and handsomeness. I obtained a boon from Brahma that I would not be killed by anyone. Stealing the hearts of many beautiful women, I wandered everywhere as per my whims and committed many heinous sins.

Once I jeered at Maharishi Ashtavakra with which, the Maharishi who was glowing infinitely due to his power of penance, was enraged. He cursed, "O wicked one! O wicked minded! You become a demon".

I realized my mistake and immediately fell at his feet and in many ways begged him to forgive me. The compassionate Maharishi blessed me saying, "O Gandharva! In Treta yuga, Sriman Narayana will incarnate in the Raghu lineage as Dasharatha's son. He will come to you and will chop your hands that are 1 yojana long. With this, you will be freed from the curse and will regain your original form". Due to his curse, I transformed into a demon.

O Rama, once I angrily chased Indra. Angered with me, he hit me with his Vajrayudha due to which my head and legs sunk into my stomach. However, I did not die due to Brahma's boon.

Pitying me who had no mouth, the Devatas asked Indra, 'How will he live without a mouth?' Indra said, 'His mouth will be in his stomach. He will have long arms using which he will obtain his food'.

From then I live here, drag the prey towards me and eat it. O Rama! Today you have chopped those arms. O Raghava! Now you arrange a pyre and burn me. Cremated by you, I will regain my original form and then I shall tell you how you can get back your wife".

Thereafter, Lakshmana dug a huge trench and threw Kabandha into it, filled it with logs and lit it.

When Kabandha's body was cremated, a celestial who was decked in all ornaments & who in beauty surpassed Manmatha emerged. He circumambulated Srirama, fell at his feet in reverence. Standing in skies, with overflowing devotion, he prayed,

"O Rama! With absolute astonishment, my mind today seeks to extol you and is eager to sing your glories. You are Ananta, without beginning and end and beyond the scope of the mind. O Lord! Apart from the two bodies known as Virat and Hiranyagarbha, the inherent original knowledge is extremely subtle and is beyond the reach of even the Yogis. Every object barring it is insentient and non-Self. If so, how can the mind, which is different from You and which is non-Self, know about You?

(Please understand this meaning carefully. Ponder over it repeatedly. Do not give up saying, 'I cannot grasp this subject'. You have come to me at an early age. Use your time to understand this subject. If you will, you will understand it).

The reflection of the consciousness seen in the intellect (buddhi) is chidabhasa (reflected consciousness). Although the mind and intellect are different, unable to see their difference, the being who ignorantly perceives oneness in them is known as Jiva (Individual soul).

The inner dweller who remains a witness to them is the Supreme Self (Brahma). Such Supreme Self is beyond the reach of any object, is changeless and is complete in all aspects. Due to ignorance, the entire universe is imposed on it.

O Rama! Your subtle body, which is the ultimate subtle cosmic manifestation called Virat, is perceptible in the hearts of the spiritual aspirants during meditation. It is most-worthy of being meditated upon. It showers auspiciousness on those who successfully meditate upon it. The world which is visible as the past, present and future is perceived only by those who meditate thus.

(One should fix the mind totally on it & remain in that meditative state for hours at stretch. They can perceive this world).

Your gross form as the universe is made of Mahat and other principles with the succeeding one being 10 times greater in qualities and completeness than the preceding one. In that cosmic body is the Virat form which is the shelter.

You are the form of liberation. The 14 worlds are your limbs. Patala is the sole of Your feet. Mahatala is the upper part of Your feet. Rasatala and Talatala are Your ankles. Sutala is Your knees. Vitala and Atala are Your thighs. The hips are Bhu-loka. The navel is Bhuvan-loka. Your neck is the Mahar-loka and Svarga. Your face is the Jana-loka. Tapo-loka is Your forehead. Satya-loka is the crown of Your head.

O Rama! Indra, the other Guardian-deities and the Devatas are Your arms. Your ears are the directions. Ashwini-devatas are Your nose. Agni is Your face. Sun-god is Your eyes. Moon-god is Your mind. Time is Your eyebrows. Brishaspati is Your intellect. Rudra is Your egoism. Vedas are Your speech. Yama is Your tusks. The stars are the rows of Your teeth.

Illusion, which deludes everyone, is Your laughter. Your gaze is the creation. Dharma is Your chest. Adharma is Your back.

O Raghurama! The closing of Your eyes is the night. The opening of Your eyes is the day. The seven oceans are Your nadis. The trees and creepers are Your body hair. Rain is Your semen. Real knowledge is Your Mahat-tattva.

He who fixedly retains this gross form of Yours in the mind, he easily attains liberation.

This gross form should be meditated mentally. Then there is nothing more to be attained by the Self. There is no path barring this for attaining liberation.

Therefore, O Rama, I always meditate on this form of Yours. Due to this meditation, my body hair stands up and love surges in my heart. The being who meditates on Your universal form, instantly attains liberation.

In my mind, I think of this playful form of Yours as Rama. I seek that this form of Yours, holding the bow and arrows, with bluish complexion, wearing matted locks, youthful, searching for Sita along with Lakshmana should eternally remain fixed in my mind.

Raghurama! The all-knowing Shiva, along with Parvati, eternally meditates on Your form. Further, in Kashi, He joyfully imparts Your name (Taraka mantra), which is the initiation of the Supreme Essence, to the dying.

O husband of Janaki! Undoubtedly You are the Supreme Lord. But the ignorant who are deluded due to Your illusionary energy are unable to fathom Your real essence and form.

O Ramabhadra! O Ramachandra! O cause of the creation! O Supreme Self! Salutations to You. O King of Ayodhya, who is served by Lakshmana! Obeisance to You. O Lord of the universe! Save me. May Your illusion never delude me"- prayed Kabandha.

Then Rama said, "O Deva-Gandharva! I am very pleased with this prayer uttered by you with total devotion. O sinless one! Proceed to My abode which is ancient and which is the goal for all Yogis.

Those who, with absolute devotion and concentration, eternally chant this prayer, which is told in Vedas, will become embodiments of knowledge and will be freed from the repeated cycle of rebirths. Ultimately they will attain Me."

Aranya kanda, Chapter 10

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! After obtaining boons from Rama, the Gandharva who was proceeding to Vaikuntha said, "O Raghunandana! At a little distance from here is Shabari's ashram. She is the epitome of devotion. She is extremely devoted to your feet. Go to her. She will direct you further"- Saying this, he boarded the celestial plane that was glowing like the Sun and went to the highest world.

Thereafter Rama walked in the forest which was filled with terrible lions, tigers and reached Shabari's ashram. From a distance, Shabari saw Rama coming along with Lakshmana. With great delight, she fell at Rama's feet and bowed to him. Shedding tears of joy she welcomed them and offered them seats. With utmost devotion, she washed their feet & sprinkled that water on her head. In this way, she worshipped the guests who had come to her home.

She offered to Rama the fruits that she had collected for him. With fragrant flowers and sandal pastes, she worshipped his feet.

After providing hospitality she then folded her hands and said, "Rama! For thousands of years, my Gurus lived here. I served them. They said, "Shabari, you continue to live here. Be extremely vigilant. Rama, the son of Dasharatha, who is none other than the ancient Paramatma, will come here for killing the demons and for the protection of the Rishis. Presently he is in the Chitrakoota mountain. From there he will come here. Safeguard your body till he comes. After he visits, you leave your body. You will then attain his abode".

O Rama! From then I am with single-focussed attention waiting only for you. Today the words of my Gurus have become true. Despite being a woman, a deluded being and one born in the lowest class, I could obtain this darshan which my Gurus could not. I, who do not have the chance even to become the servant of the 101st servant who serves the 100th servant of yours, got a chance to serve you. How was this possible? O Rama! How could I see You who are beyond the scope of mind and speech? O Lord of the Devas! I do not know how to pray to you. I request you to be pleased with me".

Smilingly Rama said, "O Shabari! Differences such as man or woman or differences such as caste, state of life or ashrama are not the requisites for worshipping Me. Devotion is the only pre-requisite. Those who are without devotion to Me, can never see Me through the performance of Yagnas, charities, penance or through the study of Vedas or such other activities.

Hence I will teach you the methods for the attainment of bhakti (devotion)-

- a) Association with the virtuous
- b) Singing the glories of My birth and transcendental deeds
- c) Discussing my infinite virtues
- d) Listening to the Shrutis, Upanishads & other such teachings which are My teachings and also explaining Gita and other such statements and also discussing about the,
- e) Retaining the intellect firmly in Me and without succumbing to illusion being extremely inclined towards

performance of meritorious deeds. While adhering to the Yama, Niyama disciplines, always serving the Spiritual Guru.

f) Eternally being dedicated to My worship.

g) Devotionally chanting My mantra

h) Having more devotion towards My devotees than for Me. Seeing Me in all forms of life. Developing detachment towards worldly objects, cultivating mental restraint, sense restraint etc.

i) Contemplating on My real essence.

These are the 9 tools for attaining bhakti. O auspicious one! O Shabari! If these 9 are cultivated, then, be it a man or a woman or an animal or a bird or any other form of life, he will develop devotion to Me.

When devotion springs in the heart, My real essence comes to his experience. He who has thus experientially realized My true form and essence attains liberation in that birth itself. Hence it has been decisively stated that only devotion is the means for liberation.

He who obtains the first tool i.e. association with the virtuous, will gradually attain all other tools. Due to this, devotion emerges in him and undoubtedly he attains liberation.

That Satsang helped you cultivate devotion to Me. That devotion caused Me to come to see you. Due to My darshan, now you will obtain liberation.

Shabari, where is my Sita? Who has kidnapped my beloved Sita? If you have any details, please share”.

Shabari said, “O Gurudeva! I am aware that despite being omniscient you are following the ways of the world and enquiring from me. Listen. Sita has been abducted by Ravana and presently she is in Lanka. At a short distance from here is Pampa lake. Near it is the Rishyamukha mountain. On that mountain is the Vanara-king Sugriva who is unsurpassed in might. Fearing his brother Vali, with 4 ministers he is residing on that mountain. Fearing the Rishi’s curse, Vali dares not step on that mountain.

O Lord! Befriend Sugriva! He will accomplish the task for you. O Raghunanda! Now in your presence I will step into the fire. I am proceeding to Your ultimate abode. O Lord! Until then please stay here”.

Shabari entered the fire. In a second she shred all the bondages caused due to ignorance. She abandoned association with the body. With Rama’s grace, she attained the liberation which is rare to attain.

When Srirama, the Supreme Lord who loves his devotees as his children, is pleased, there is nothing that remains unattainable. Shabari who was born in a low caste attained liberation. If so, is there a specific need to mention that Brahmins and those who are born in other high castes, will attain liberation if they meditate on Srirama?

Devotion to Srirama undoubtedly bestows liberation. Devotion is a form of liberation. There is no doubt about it.

Hence O humans! Devotion towards Srirama that is represented through worship etc. will shower liberation. Hence enthusiastically worship Rama.

With this, Aranya Kanda concludes.

Day 13, July 23 2021

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 1

Lord Shiva said to Parvati, “Accompanied by Lakshmana, Srirama walked and reached the banks of the lake Pampa, which is the most-supreme of all lakes. The beauty of the lake coupled with its clear waters that were free from dirt and pollution left Rama astonished.

The lake was extremely wide and was very deep. It was filled with lotuses, water lilies and black lilies. Swans, chakravaka and many other birds were swimming in it enhancing its beauty. With their chirps, the water ducks, cranes and other birds enlivened the entire area. The banks of the lake were filled with many different flowering trees and trees that bore different types of fruit. The waters of the lake were fragrant due to the padmaraga and were totally clear like the heart of the virtuous man.

Rama and Lakshmana drank water from the lake and then, admiring the Rishyamukha Mountain and the valleys near it, they walked in the shade of the trees beside the lake.

At that time, Surgiva who was on the Rishyamukha mountain along with his 4 ministers noticed their arrival and quickly climbed to another higher peak. In deep fear, he said to Hanuman who was beside him,

“O dear friend! Who could these 2 mighty men be? Why are they coming in this direction? Go and enquire about them. Adopting the form of a celibate boy go to them and, showing humility gather all details about them. Speak to them sweetly and assess the feelings in their hearts. If they appear to have wicked intentions, signal to me from there. Be vigilant. May you be successful in your mission.”

Hanuman immediately took on the form of a celibate boy and approached them. Bowing to them he said, “Who are you who appear to be the best among humans? You are in the prime of youth and appear like mighty warriors. Just like the Sun you are illumining all the directions.

It appears to me that You both are the creators of the 3 worlds. You must be Prakriti and Purusha or Pradhana purusha. That could be the reason why you appear to be the causative factors for the creation and as those who pervade the entire universe.

It appears you have playfully assumed illusory human forms to reduce earth’s burden and to rule the devotees. It also appears that You both, the supreme warriors, have assumed the form of Kshatriya men to playfully complete the tasks of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world and to destroy the wicked.

You both are ever-independent and ones who trigger the intellects of the living entities. To my intellect, it appears that you both are Nara and Narayana who, while residing in the hearts of all, govern them. I believe that Nara and Narayana are wandering in Your forms”.

Rama then said to Lakshmana, “Observe this celibate boy. Undoubtedly he has thoroughly studied the treatise of grammar and is adept in it. His words are filled with deep meaning and through them, he has conveyed a lot of message. His speech is flawless without even a harsh or wrong word anywhere”.

He then addressed Hanuman and said,, “O best among Brahmins! I am Rama, the son of King Dasharatha. This is my younger brother Lakshmana. To abide by my father’s command, I came to the forests along with my wife Sita and was living in Dandakarayana when one demon abducted her. Searching for her I have come here. Who are you? Whose son are you?”

Hanuman then said, “O Raghottama! Sugriva, the wise king of the Vanaras, lives on this Rishyamukha mountain along with his 4 ministers. He is the younger brother of the sinful-minded Vali. Having been thrown out of his home by Vali, and fearing him, Sugriva is living here. Vali has also taken away Sugriva’s wife.

I am Sugriva’s minister. My name is Hanuman. My father is the Wind-god and my mother is Anjana. O best in the Raghu lineage! It will be good for you if you befriend Sugriva. He will help in destroying the demon who has abducted your wife. You will obtain his complete help. If this is acceptable to you, let us proceed to meet Sugriva”.

Rama said, “O great monkey! I am here to befriend Sugriva. If, as a friend, there is something I can do for him, I will surely do so. I am here to enter into an alliance with him. There is no doubt in this’.

Hearing this, Hanuman took on his original form and said, "O Rama! Sit on my shoulders. I will take you to the place where Sugriva stays with his ministers".

Rama and Lakshmana then sat on Hanuman's shoulders. In an instant, the great monkey flew up and took them to the place where Sugriva was seated.

While Rama and Lakshmana waited beneath a tree, Hanuman went to Sugriva, bowed to him in humility and said, "O King of monkeys! Abandon fear. Srirama and Lakshmana have come here. I have ensured that friendship blossoms between you and Rama. With fire as a witness, you enter into a friendship alliance with Rama".

In great happiness, Sugriva came to Rama. Breaking a branch of a tree, he created a seat for Rama and with great joy and reverence asked Rama to sit. Hanuman similarly created a seat for Lakshmana. Lakshmana offered a seat for Sugriva.

All of them with great delight sat on the tree branches. Then in great detail, Lakshmana narrated Rama's story to Sugriva. Hearing this, Sugriva said to Rama, "O King! I will search for Sita. I will help you in killing the enemies. I will tell you a little about what I have seen. Once when I was standing on the mountain peak with my ministers I saw a virtuous, noble lady being taken away in a chariot by a demon. She was screaming, 'Rama, Rama' in great distress. Seeing us, she took her ornaments and tying them in the cloth, threw the bundle towards us. O Lord, I have safeguarded that bundle. See the bundle. Perhaps it is your wife's ornaments'.

Saying this Sugriva placed the bundle of ornaments before Rama. Seeing the ornaments, Rama burst out into tears crying, 'Aha! Sita!' Again and again, he placed the ornaments on his chest and like an ordinary man shed profuse tears while beating his chest.

Sugriva, and his ministers wept profusely seeing him. The mountain itself shuddered. Lakshmana consoled Rama saying, "Rama! in a very short while, with Sugriva's help, in the war you will kill that demon Ravana and obtain Sita".

Sugriva then said, "O Rama! I pledge now that I will kill Ravana in the war and hand over Sita to you".

Hanuman then lit the fire. With fire as the witness, Rama and Sugriva stretched their arms and embraced one another and sealed their friendship. Thereafter Sugriva sat beside Rama and narrated his story,

"Dear friend! I will tell you how Vali harmed me. Maya's son Mayavi, once came to Kishkinda and loudly roaring like a lion challenged Vali for war. Provoked for war, with reddened eyes Vali came out and with his fists hit Mayavi. With this, Mayavi was terribly frightened and he ran to his cave. Vali and me chased him. When entering that cave, Vali said to me, 'You stand here. I shall enter the cave'.

A month passed by but Vali did not come out. Thereafter blood began to gush from that cave. I was deeply sorrowed seeing this. Believing that Vali had died, I grieved. I feared that having killed Vali, Mayavi will attack Kishkinda. Hence I blocked the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder and returned home.

I informed everyone of Vali's death in Mayavi's hands. Everyone was aggrieved. Much against my wishes, the Vanaras crowned me as their king.

O Rama! For some days I ruled Kishkinda. One morning Vali returned. In great anger, he saw me, uttered very harsh words and beat me with his fists. Frightened of him I left the city and ran away, but he chased me. After running to various places in the world, I, at last, reached this Rishyamukha mountain to save my life. This is because fearing the curse of the Rishis my brother will never step on his mountain.

From then on, the wicked Vali has forcibly taken my wife and kept her in his custody. I have lost my wife. I have no shelter. I am living here in great fear and sorrow. Today due to touching your feet I have obtained

relief and bliss”.

Rama was distressed hearing the troubles faced by his friend. He said, “O friend, I will quickly kill your enemy Vali who has kidnapped your wife”.

When Rama thus vowed, Sugriva said, “Rama! Vali is the mightiest of the mighty. His body is as strong and hard as a diamond. Even Devatas and demons are frightened of him. If so, how can you kill him? Listen to what I say.

One day a mighty demon called Dundhubhi took the form of a buffalo and attacked Kishkinda. Roaring horrendously in the night he challenged Vali for combat. Provoked by those cries, Vali ran outside and in unabated fury caught the buffalo by its horns and flung him to the earth. He placed one foot on the demon’s body. With his hands, he twisted its head and severed it from the body. He then swirled that head with his hand and flung it far away.

O Rama! Dundubhi’s head that was flung, fell at Matanga Maharishi’s ashram that was 8 miles away. Due to the falling of the corpse, his ashram was filled with blood. Deeply angered with this, Maharishi Matanga cursed, ‘This is Vali’s task. If that Vali ever steps on this mountain, his head will be shattered to bits and he will die instantly’.

From then on, Vali does not step on this Rishyamukha mountain. Hence I fearlessly live here. But I constantly live in the fear that Vali will send someone to kill me. Look there. That which is lying there like a mountain is Dundhubhi’s skull. If you can hurl it, I will believe that you can kill Vali”.

Rama looked at the skull. Smilingly, with his big toe, he lightly kicked it. That skull flew and fell 10 yojanas away leaving everyone gaping in astonishment.

Sugriva and his ministers applauded Rama saying, ‘Well done, well done’. Sugriva then said, “Rama, see these 7 palm trees. In his childhood, Vali would shake each of them violently till all the leaves fell down. If you can pass an arrow through them I can believe that Vali will die in your hands”.

Rama agreed. He strung his bow, readied the arrow and released it. The infallible arrow pierced all 7 trees breaking them. Not stopping with it, it cut through the nearby mountain, dashed into the earth and then returned to Rama’s quiver.

Amazed and delighted, Sugriva said, “O Deva deva! Seeking respite from this bondage called samsara, Mahatmas eternally serve You. Hence, by obtaining You, the bestower of liberation, as a friend, how can I again seek worldly bondages?

Wife, children, kingdom and riches are all illusory creations and are not real. Hence, O Devadeva! O Ishwara! I seek nothing barring your compassionate glance. It is my greatest fortune to have obtained this friendship with You who are the form of bliss.

Just as a person digging the earth suddenly obtains a treasure trove, I have obtained Your association due to which I am now freed from the worldly bondage that arises due to the birthless ignorance.

The knots called worldly bondages do not get destroyed through the performance of Yagna, charities, penance and other activities. In fact, they intensify. But, O Lord, merely by seeing Your lotus feet, these bondages gets destroyed. This is undoubtedly true.

All difficulties, along with ignorance which is their primary root, get destroyed in the person whose mind remains steadily on You for even half a second. Hence, O Lord I pray that my mind should fix steadily only on You and not on other objects.

The person who, at least for a short time, melodiously chants Your name, ‘Rama Rama’, is freed from the effects of terrible sins, even if he is a drunkard or happens to despise the Supreme Lord.

O Lord! Neither do I seek victory over Vali nor do I ask for my wife. Eternally I seek devotion to Your feet, which will destroy all bondages.

O Raghottama! This world is nothing but a play of illusion. I am only Your partial aspect. Hence bless me with devotion to Your feet and uplift me from this danger called samsara.

Formerly, enveloped by Your illusion, the world appeared as filled with friends, enemies, neutral beings. It appeared as filled with attachments and aversions. Now, due to seeing Your lotus feet, the illusion has vanished and I can see the entire world as the manifestation of the Supreme Lord. Who is a friend? Who is an enemy?

As long as Your illusion ties down the living beings, they are bound by the effects of the three attributes. As long as illusion exists, distinctions such as friend, enemy etc. exist.

Fear of death exists as long as the multiplicity of existences is experienced due to ignorance. Hence, the person who chases the activities that stem from ignorance gets sunk into terrible darkness and gets bound by the attachment that arises in the form of wife, children etc., all of which stem from illusion.

O Raghottama! Please destroy in me, illusion, who is your servant. May the movements of my mind be eternally fixed on Your feet. May my speech be eternally directed towards singing Your divine names and narrating Your stories. May my hands be eternally engrossed in offering services to Your devotees. May my eyes be eternally focussed on seeing You, Your devotees and our Gurus.

May my ears listen to Your transcendental glories until they are totally satiated. May my feet always walk only to Your temples.

O Rama! O Lord who has the flag of Garuda! May the dust from the places that have been purified by Your holy feet fall on my body rendering it pure! May my head always bow to Your divine feet, which, in all situations, times and places accept the worship offered by Shiva and Brahma and to which they offer obeisance”.

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 2

Lord Shiva said, ‘O Parvati! Due to his association with Rama and due to being embraced by him, Sugriva was freed from all sins. He became pure.

Smilingly, Rama looked at Sugriva, and seeking the success of his mission, threw Sugriva again into delusion and said, “My friend! Whatever you have spoken is true. nevertheless, the world will say, ‘With fire as a witness Rama befriended Sugriva. In return, what did he do for the Vanara-king Sugriva?’

I want to avoid this infamy in future. Hence you challenge Vali for combat. With a single arrow, I will kill Vali and install you as the king”.

Agreeing to this, Sugriva went to Kishkinda and standing in the garden, roared loudly challenging Vali for combat. Hearing these roars, Vali was extremely enraged. With blood-red eyes, he rushed out of his house and ran to Sugriva.

With his fist, Sugriva vehemently hit Vali who was rushing towards him. Vali retaliated by hitting Sugriva with his fist. In this way, they vehemently hit each other again and again.

Rama observed that the brothers, who were fighting each other, perfectly resembled one another. He was totally astonished. Frightened that he may wrongly pierce Sugriva with his arrow, he remained silent without releasing his arrow.

Totally beaten by Vali, the Sugriva who was vomiting blood, in absolute fear ran from Kishkinda and entered Rishyamukha mountain and then said to Rama, “O Rama! Do you seek to see me getting killed in

the hands of enemies? If you want to see me dead, then you kill me. O one who adheres to the truth! You instilled faith in me that you would kill Vali. O Lord who protects those who surrender! Why then did you step back?"

Grieving along with him and embracing him lovingly, Rama said, "Dear brother! Do not lament. I observed that you and Vali are identical. If accidentally my arrow would pierce you, I would be the murderer of a friend. With this doubt, I hesitated from releasing the arrow. This time when you challenge Vali, I will give you a symbol by which I can recognise you. So you go again and challenge him for combat. I assure you that you will see Vali dead. I swear on myself, Rama, that I will kill him in a second".

Rama consoled Sugriva and touched him gently. With this, all the pains vanished. Thereafter Rama said to Lakshmana, "Bring a garland that has only blooming flowers and no withered flowers. Then convince Sugriva to challenge Vali again".

Lakshmana put a flower garland around Sugriva's neck and coaxed Sugriva to challenge Vali. Convinced, Sugriva proceeded again to Kishkinda. Roaring loudly, he challenged Vali for combat.

Sugriva's roars angered Vali far more than earlier. Infuriated, he was ready to leave when his wife Tara held his hands saying, "Do not go. If immediately after losing to you badly, Sugriva has returned to challenge you, it is evident that is some secret. I have heard that Ayodhya-king Rama is here. Perhaps Sugriva has befriended him and with his support is challenging you. It is evident that Sugriva has the backing of some strong power".

Vali said, "Tara, your doubts are baseless. Do not hold me back. I will go and attack that enemy. I cannot tolerate those roars. I have to kill him. Let him have support, I do not care. I will kill him and return. Who can befriend Sugriva who lives in the forests? If at all there is someone along with Sugriva, I shall kill him too. When an enemy challenges for war, how can a valourous one sit at home? So I am leaving".

Tara said, "O Vanara-king! Listen to what I say. Thereafter you can do what suits you. When our son Angada went hunting into the forest, he heard that Srirama, the son of King Dasharatha of Ayodhya, was in the Dandakaranya forests with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. There Ravana kidnapped Sita.

Rama and Lakshmana who were searching for Sita met Sugriva on the Rishyamukha mountain. With fire as a witness, Rama sealed his friendship with Sugriva and promised, 'I will kill Vali and make you the king'. Our spies reported this. Listen to me. Otherwise, why will Sugriva, who has lost to you just now, return again and challenge you? Hence, abandon enmity completely. Invite Sugriva and crown him as the heir to the throne. Go and seek refuge in Srirama. O best among the Vanaras! Protect me, Angada and the Vanara race".

In great distress, she fell at Vali's feet and held them tightly while wailing loudly in fear. Vali lifted her, embraced her and said, "My dearest! By being frightened, you are showing natural feminine traits. But I am not scared. If Lord Srirama is here along with his brother Lakshmana, then undoubtedly I will develop a friendship with him.

My dearest! I have heard that for reducing the earth's burden, the Supreme Lord Vishnu has incarnated as Rama. He is the governor for all the worlds. Differences such as 'my people' and 'others' do not exist in him.

O chaste woman! I shall bow to his feet and bring him home. Rama loves those who serve him. He is the Lord of everyone! Only with devotion, one can attain him.

If Sugriva challenges me for war, I shall kill him in a second. O my dearest! I can never refuse a challenge for war by an enemy. When Sugriva challenges me for a war, how can I crown him as the heir?

Tara, my supreme might has been acknowledged by all the worlds. If so, why are you scared? Abandon fear. Stay here”.

Comforting her, he swiftly ran to slay Sugriva. Sugriva observed Vali who was quickly rushing towards him. The flower garland on his neck filled him with courage. Like a male elephant, he jumped forward and with his fists hit Vali. Vali too retorted by hitting Sugriva. In this way, they attacked each other repeatedly.

At that time when they were engrossed in battling, Rama took out an arrow from his quiver and fixed it on his bow. From behind the tree, he observed Vali and fixed his aim on Vali's heart. The mighty Rama then released the arrow that moved at lightning speed. While causing the earth to shudder, it dashed forward and tore Vali's heart. Roaring loudly, Vali jumped up and fell to the ground. For a while, he lost consciousness.

On regaining consciousness, he saw Srirama who was holding the bow in his left hand. In his right hand, he was holding an arrow. He had mighty, broad shoulders. On either side were Lakshmana and Sugriva.

Condemning Rama, he said, “O Rama! What harm did I cause to you that I had to be killed by you? What was my mistake? As you do not know the kingly duties, you hid behind the trees and slyly hit me. What renown do you expect due to acting like a thief?

Srirama! You are the Kshatriya born in the Manu lineage. If you would have directly faced me and obtained the result, your deed would have been laudable. I have heard that as your wife has been kidnapped in Dandakaranya, you sought shelter in Sugriva. It would have been better if you had approached me.

O Rama! The entire world accepts my might. But you failed to know it. If I decide, I can reduce destroy the entire Lanka along with Ravana and his retinue within half an hour and return your Sita to you. O Raghunandana! The world addresses you as dharmic. If so, like a tribal-hunter, from behind the trees why did you kill me, a Vanara? What merit did you gain from this? The flesh of a Vanara is not edible. If so, what do you gain by killing me?”

Srirama said, “I am the protector of dharma. Holding the bow and arrow I wander in the world killing unrighteous beings and restoring dharma. One's daughter, daughter-in-law, younger brother's wife and sister are all equals. A person who has lustful feelings towards any of them is truly a fool and wicked sinner. Such a person a king should always be hunted down.

O Vanara! You are enjoying yourself with your younger brother's wife. That is why I, the embodiment of dharma, had to kill and punish you. Although by birth you are a Vanara, you are acting like an animal deprived of wisdom.

Mahatmas wander only to purify the world. You are unable to realize this. An animal should always be killed slyly from behind a tree. One must not overstep the boundaries when talking to Mahatmas”.

Hearing these words, Vali realized that Rama was none other than the husband of Lakshmi. He was frightened. Immediately he bowed to Rama and said,

“O Lord! Srirama! I have understood that You are the Supreme Lord. Due to my foolishness, I uttered debased words. Kindly forgive me. I have been personally pierced by Your arrow and am leaving my life in your presence. Can there be a fortune greater than this?

Even supreme Maharishis find it difficult to obtain Your darshan. Any being who, even if he is in the control of others, chants Your divine name at the time of death obtains the ultimate state. Such Supreme Lord is now standing before me.

O Deva! I have realized You as the Supreme Lord Srihari. I have realized that Janaki is Lakshmi. Based on the prayer of Lord Brahma, you have incarnated to kill Ravana.

O Rama! Permit me, who am now leaving for the higher abodes. Please have compassion for Angada, who is at par with me in might. With your hand touch my heart and pluck out the arrow”.

When Vali thus prayed, Rama lovingly touched Vali who instantly left his body.

O Bhavani! In this way, Vali was hit by Rama’s arrow. When touched by Rama’s hand that showers all happiness, he left the Vanara body and obtained that supreme abode which is beyond the reach of others and which cannot be obtained even by the divine troops.

Day 14, July 24 2021

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 3

When Vali fell dead, the mighty warriors and ministers ran to the city and said to Tara, “Vali is dead. Now protect Angada. Ensure the ministers are vigilant. Ask them to be ready for battle. Block all the entries to Kishkinda from all sides. Install Angada as the king of the Vanaras”

Hearing that Vali was dead, Tara was shocked and aggrieved. With her hands she beat her chest and head and wailed, “Why do I need this kingdom? Why do I need these riches? I will quickly go and enter the fire along with my husband”. Wailing, she quickly ran to the place where her husband’s corpse lay. There she saw him who was like a lump of blood and covered with dust.

Seeing him lifeless, she loudly wailed and screamed, “O Lord! I told you to not go. You did not listen”. She held his feet and wept loudly. Seeing Rama she said, “The arrow with which my husband has died, please kill me with that arrow. I shall go to the world that he has attained. There he will be waiting for me. Without me, he cannot enjoy any happiness even in heaven. Hence quickly send me to that world where he exists. O Rama! You too are experiencing separation from your wife. Hence send me to the place where my husband is. With this, you will obtain the result of quickly attaining your wife.

O Sugriva! With the help of Rama, you have quickly obtained the kingdom. Now with Ruma enjoy this Vanara kingdom that is freed from all enemies. Know that my husband did not even touch Ruma once’- saying this, she wept profusely.

With total pity, Rama consoled Tara by teaching her the Supreme Essence.

He said, “Tara! Why are you grieving for that husband who should not be grieved for? Is your husband the body that is lying before you? Or is he the Jiva (soul) that is within the body? Think properly and understand the essence.

If you consider the body to be your husband, then understand that it is inert, is composed of the 5 elements and is made of skin, blood, bones, muscles etc. It has emerged due to time, actions and attributes. If so, who is it that is dead?

The ignorant misconstrues the body to be the Self and hence considers it to be everything. The body of Vali remained was with you before his death and now, even after his death, it is before you. If so, why do you grieve for that body which still exists before you?

Even if you consider the soul within the body to be your husband, there is no need to lament. This is because the Self is untainted, formless and changeless. The Self has no birth and no death. It remains in the same place without moving. It is neither male, female nor neutral gender.

The Self is omnipresent, without divisions, non-dual and does not have the svajatiya, vijatiya and svagata differences. It is pure like the space, remains untouched and pervades everything. It is an embodiment of knowledge. If so, why do you weep for that Self?”

Tara asked, "O Srirama! The body is inert like wood, the Self is eternal and is consciousness. If so, what causes joys and sorrows to arise? Please explain."

Rama replied, "As long as the ignorant being associates with the body and senses due to egoism and attachment (I-ness and mine-ness), he can never realize the difference between the Self and non-Self.

(As long as the person has the feelings 'my body, my word, my deed, my wife, my opinion, my assets' he cannot obtain the real knowledge. This subject cannot be understood until desires and anger are totally routed out from us. As long as any desire remains, this subject cannot be grasped. Total faith & dedication are required. Towards this, the first step is to cultivate devotion).

Ignorant people who are deprived of wisdom necessarily have an association with worldly activities composed of joys and sorrows.

(As they are sunk into delusion, they are greatly affected by joys and sorrows).

Know that worldly bondage has been falsely imposed on the Self. Bondage will not automatically die down in the person who is eternally focussed on sensory objects.

Just as the objects seen in the dream vanish soon after the dream vanishes, worldly bondages vanish the moment Supreme Knowledge arises in the being.

(For attaining knowledge, one must cultivate devotion).

Spiritual ignorance (ajnana) is without a beginning. Due to association with it and due to association with its outcome called egoism, this world, although being unreal, is filled with likes and dislikes.

O Tara! Mind (manas) itself is bondage. Due to attaining oneness with the mind, the soul obtains association with the joys and sorrows.

The pure crystal is inherently clear and colourless. Yet, when a coloured object is kept in the vicinity, the crystal reflects that colour. Likewise, as the intellect is in close proximity to the senses, the Self forcibly is thrown into bondage. Due to this, the Self accepts the mind that has recognised it.

Succumbing to the influence of the likes-dislikes that stem from it, the Self gets trapped in the wheel of repeated rebirths.

Firstly the mind creates likes-dislikes and other qualities. Thereafter based on the desires of the mind, the Jiva (soul) engages in different actions.

Such actions are classified into three- Shukla, Lohita and Krshna. Shukla activities are japa, tapa, dhyana or sattvik actions. Lohita actions are those which are coupled with violence or rajasa actions. Krshna actions are sorcery or other tamasic activities.

Based on the type of action, the resultant fruit is derived. In this way, succumbing to actions, the soul falls into the cycle of repeated rebirths and forever continues to rotate in it.

Even if all the living entities merge at the annihilation time, due to the desire for feelings of doership and enjoyership, due to the earlier vasanas (subtle mental impressions) and due to own free actions (sveeya karma), the soul remains in the grip of ignorance that is without a beginning. Hence, he can never get liberated.

At the time of creation, the Jiva is helplessly bound to his mind that is tainted with the earlier mental impressions and hence continues to obtain repeated rebirths.

At some point, he performs some extremely meritorious deed due to which he gets a Sadguru or gets a chance to associate with the virtuous beings. Or due to having a very peaceful mind or due to fixing his mind completely on Me, he gets a chance to associate with the virtuous beings. This, in turn, allows him to listen to My stories. With this, he will develop dedication. In turn, he will obtain the knowledge of the Self.

Due to the blessings of the Spiritual Gurus, he will understand the meaning of Tattvamasi (You are that) and other Maha-vakyas. Then, he will experientially realize that the Self is an embodiment of sat+chit+ananda (eternity, knowledge, bliss). He will realize it is non-dual and that it is different from the body, senses, life-force and egoism. With this realization, he will instantly obtain liberation from this bondage.

O Tara! I have told you the truth. The sorrows of samsara do not touch those who eternally remember this knowledge and who re-capitulate it. Such beings will obtain a pure intellect. Hence recapitulate this message thoroughly. Then sorrows will not touch you. You will be freed from karmic bondages.

O Tara! As you had a supreme devotion to me in your past birth, I have made myself visible to you so as to bless you with liberation and have taught you this Supreme Knowledge. Eternally meditate on this divine form of mine. Study this teaching given by me. Then, even if you continue to routinely complete the actions that arise due to the flow called prarabdha karma (destiny), the results of those actions will not taint you”.

Hearing this, despite being a Varana female, Tara obtained Self-experience. Ultimately she attained liberation. Due to associating with the Supreme Lord for a second, Tara was freed from the bondage created due to ignorance. She became pure, freed from sin and was liberated.

Even Sugriva who heard this teaching washed away his ignorance and obtained a pure mind. Thereafter Rama said to Sugriva, “Ensure that Angada completes the death rites for his father. This is my order”.

Sugriva obeyed. He got mighty Vanaras to lift Vali’s corpse from there and placed it in a palanquin that was decorated with flowers. With all the royal symbols the last rites were dutifully completed.

Thereafter Sugriva, bathed and accompanied by ministers came to Rama, bowed at his feet and said, “O King! You rule this Vanara kingdom which is filled with all forms of prosperity. I am your servant. Like Lakshmana I too will serve your lotus feet”.

Hearing this, Rama laughingly said, “Sugriva! Unhesitantly it can be said that I am you. Go quickly. It is my command that you should accept the rulership of Kishkinda. Become the king. During my 14 years of exile, I should not enter any kingdom. Hence my brother will accompany you. You honour Angada by installing him as the heir to the throne.

Till the end of the monsoons, I shall stay with my brother on this mountain peak. You enjoy the royal comforts for some time. Thereafter begin search for Sita”.

Sugriva fell at Rama’s feet and said, “O Deva! I will act as per your command”.

With Rama’s permission, accompanied by Lakshmana he went to Kishkinda and was crowned as the King of the Vanaras. Lakshmana, who was duly honoured by Sugriva, returned to Rama, bowed to him, and immersed himself in the service of Rama.

Thereafter Rama and Lakshmana reached the Pravarshana mountain where they saw a vast cave that had all auspicious features. It was glowing like a pure crystal. It was conducive to withstand the intense rain, heat and cold and was very close to the place where fruits and roots were available. Rama preferred to live

in it. There was a pond that was filled with crystal clear waters closeby. Colourful and beautiful birds of many species flocked there. He and Lakshmana lived in that cave.

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 4

Lord Shiva said, 'O Parvati! Eating the fruits and roots Rama began to spend his time in that cave. The animals and birds that wandered by the cave would stop motionless when they spotted Rama and without blinking would look at him for long. Like great Rishis who were immersed in meditation, they would remain like statues.

Many Siddhas who learnt that the Supreme Lord was presently on earth in the form of Rama and that he was living in this cave, came there in the form of animals and birds.

One day Rama went into a deep state of Samadhi. After he came from his Samadhi state, Lakshmana, with total love, devotion and humility, approached him and asked,

“O Lord, previously you had initiated me due to which the doubt pertaining to ignorance was washed away. O Rama, now teach me the way by which Yogis worship You through Kriya yoga. I seek to know this. All the Yogis, the celestial Maharishi Narada, Maharishi Vyasa and also Brahma state that this is the tool that leads to liberation.

O Lord! For the Brahmins, Kshatriyas etc., as well as to those who adhere to Brahmacharya, house-holder and other stages of life, this is the path that showers liberation. Even women and those of the fourth caste easily obtain liberation by adhering to this. Please teach in detail this method that is beneficial to the world”.

Rama said, “Lakshmana! For my worship, there is no end point. Yet, I shall explain to you, in brief, the sequential procedure from the beginning to the conclusion.

Following the ancient tradition abided by his clan and based on the grahya sutra known to his sākha, the human obtains dwijatva (twice-born state). Thereafter with total devotion, he must obtain My mantra as an initiation from his Guru.

The wise man should, in the method taught by his Guru, see Me either in the heart, fire, idol or images, Sun or in the Saligrama and worship Me.

In the morning, he must first purify his body through a bath. The divjas should, with through Vedic mantras or other mantras, anoint his body with mud or other pastes and then bathe. Thereafter he must complete Sandhya Vandana or other obligatory rituals specified for all three times.

He should make a resolve (sankalpa), consider his Guru as his God and worship Him with devotion. If he seeks to worship the idol, he must bathe it. Or if it is an image/ picture, he must sprinkle water on it. The worship that is accompanied by the offering of sandal paste, flowers etc. yields good results.

With a pure heart, without succumbing to delusion, in the method taught by his Guru he must follow the disciplines and worship Me.

O Lakshmana! The decoration done to the idol or image/photo brings Me great joy. Through making offerings into the sacred fire, I should be worshipped. Likewise, in the rice flour, Sun's Yantra or Sun's form can be drawn and worshipped.

Even the water that is devotionally offered to Me by the devotee fills Me with joy. If so, is there any specific necessity to mention that the worship performed using sandal paste, akshata, flowers and edible foods, yields proper results? Hence the person should arrange all the Puja materials and then worship Me.

Now I shall explain the Puja procedure.

Firstly, the person should sit on darbha grass or cloth. We must never sit on the bare ground. We must sit directly facing the Lord.

Thereafter, with total mental purity, the internal and external nyasa should be done while chanting the 24 names starting with Keshava. Then, as told in the Vishnupanjara, Panjara-nyasa should be done for My idol. Mantra-nyasa should be done. Even in the idol worship, abandoning laziness and carelessness, following the method taught by Me, daily the nyasa should be done.

The Kalasha should be placed to his left. The flowers and other ingredients must be kept on the right. Thereafter the offerings of arghya (water for washing hands), padya (water for washing feet), acamana (water for sipping) and madhuparka (honey water for drinking) must be readied in 4 different vessels.

My aspect (kala), which is at par with the Sun's rays and which is called jiva, should be meditated upon in the heart. The devotee must meditate upon Me believing that his body is filled with My aspect (kala). He must also invoke the same kala into the idol.

Without any cunningness, he must offer Me water to wash hands and feet, offer water for acamana, give bath, offer clothing, ornamentation, camphor, saffron, incense stick and sandal-paste etc. worship Me to the best of his abilities.

With fragrant flowers accompanied by chanting of mantras, worship should be offered daily. It is very important to light incense sticks, oil lamps and offer food as Naivedya. The dashāvarana puja should be done as taught in the Agama shastra. With total devotion, the offerings should be made daily. I consume only those foods that are offered to Me with total devotion and dedication.

Only he who knows the mantras should, as per the right procedure, conduct the invocation. The wise aspirant, who is well-versed in the Agama, should set up the homa-kunda in the method taught by Maharishi Agastya.

With the moola mantra taught by the Guru or through the chanting of the purusha sookta he must perform the homa. Where this is not feasible, the aspirant who conducts fire-worship, should, in the Aupasana agni or loukika agni, offer the havis and conduct the homa.

When doing the homa, the performer (yajaka) should meditate upon the Supreme Lord who is of golden complexion and who, in the form, Yagna-purusha has worn divine ornaments. After making the bali-haranam to the sevakas, the homa should be concluded.

Thereafter he must sit silently and meditate upon Me. He must offer to Me the tambula that is filled with camphor that delights the mind. He must sing, dance and chant stotras to please Me.

Placing My image in the heart, he must fall flat on the ground and prostrate to Me. He must believe that the Prasada has been sanctified and returned by Me. He must bow to Me. Then, believing that the consciousness that exists in the idol, has entered into Me he must remove the idol (visarjana).

The person who worships Me in this manner will, with My blessings, obtain all comforts of this world and the next. He will develop devotion to Me. He who worships Me daily will obtain oneness in form with Me and attain liberation.

This is a very secretive subject that is very ancient and very pure. It has been taught directly by Me. By reading this or listening to this daily the person will, undoubtedly obtain the result that is obtained by conducting all forms of worship”.

In this way, the Supreme Lord Srirama taught the highest Kriya yoga and procedure of worship to Lakshmana, his brother and disciple who was an aspect of Lord Adishesha.

Thereafter he re-invoked the illusionary energy and like an ordinary man wept the entire night saying 'Ah Sita, Sita'.

Exactly at that time, the wise Hanuman met Sugriva in private and said, "O King! Listen to what I say as it is meant for your upliftment. Already Srirama has done a great help to you. But like an ungrateful man, you appear to have forgotten the help received from him.

Vali, who was famed in all the three worlds, was killed only to benefit you. With this, you became the king of this vast and prosperous kingdom of Vanaras. You have obtained Tara as your queen, which is the rarest fortune. Srirama is the cause for all this prosperity that you have obtained.

Rama is living with his brother on the mountain and thinking of the difficult task that lies ahead of him, he is weeping. He is eagerly awaiting your arrival. But you are enjoying yourself here like a vanara. Succumbing to your lustful needs you are engaged in the company of women and have forgotten your promise to locate Sita. You, who are ungrateful, will die like Vali"

Hearing these words, Sugriva was startled. Immediately he said, "O Hanuman! What you say is true! Immediately as my order send 10,000 Vanaras in all the 10 directions. Immediately ensure that all the Vanaras who are in the 7 islands assemble here within a fortnight. Anyone who comes after the stipulated time will die in my hands".

Immediately obeying this command, the wise minister Hanuman sent the Vanaras in all 10 directions. This son of the wind, who was in great urgency to accomplish Rama's mission, pleased the messengers who were of infinite virtues. The Vanaras who were filled with purity and goodness, who in size were like mammoth mountains travelled at speeds of wind.

Day 15, July 25 2021

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 5

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! One evening during the Pradhosha time, seated on the Manimaya peak of Pravarshana mountain, Rama who could not withstand the grief caused due to separation from Sita, said to Lakshmana,

"O Lakshmana! The demon has forcibly abducted Sita. I do not know whether that beautiful one is still alive or not. Until now we have not obtained any information about her whereabouts. If anyone at least informs me that she is alive, he will be doing me a great favour. The moment I know that the greatest chaste woman is alive, however and wherever she is, I will immediately get her, even if the task is as daunting as fetching nectar from the ocean. Along with his sons and retinue, I will destroy the demon who has abducted my Janaki. This is my vow.

O Sita! You are stranded in that demon's house unable to see me. I do not know how you are still alive. Without Sita, even the Moonrays afflict me like the Sun's rays. O Moon! With your rays first, touch Sita. Due to touching her, your rays will turn cool. Then you touch me with those cool rays.

Oho! Sugriva has lost pity for me. Even though I am grieving, he is unconcerned. Having obtained a kingdom without any obstacles, he is now addicted to drinking. He is surrounded by women who are addicted to sensual desires and is enjoying in solitude. It is evident that due to this, he has become ungrateful.

Despite knowing that autumn has set in, he has not come and offered to search for Sita. Being ungrateful he has forgotten the help rendered by me. Just as I will kill the demon who had abducted Sita, I will kill Sugriva along with his kinsmen and destroy that city. Just as Vali was killed by me, today Sugriva will be killed in my hands".

Seeing the angered Rama, Lakshmana said, "Please permit me. Right now I shall go and slay that wicked Sugriva and return to you". Saying this, he held his bow and wore his quiver.

Seeing Lakshmana who was ready to go to Kishkinda, Rama said, "Lakshmana! Sugriva is not worthy to be killed in your hands as he is my dearest friend. A friend is like a brother. Just frighten him with your words. Threaten him that like Vali he too will meet his end. Then return to me and inform me what he says. I will then complete the task that is due to be done by me. There is no doubt in it".

Lakshmana agreed and walked quickly to Kishkinda. The Supreme Lord Rama who is the witness for the intellect, who is beyond illusion, who is omniscient, who is eternally replete with prosperity, who is an embodiment of knowledge, and who is devoid of attachments and aversions, grieved for his wife just as an ordinary man would do.

To make true Brahma's words and to shower the rightful fruits Dasharatha's penance, the Supreme Lord had incarnated as a human. For having incarnated as a human, he was enacting like one. If not, there was no reason for him to grieve.

Lord Vishnu thought about how to help the ordinary humans who due to illusion are sunk in ignorance. Srimad Ramayana washes away the sins of all the universes. O Parvati! The person who reads this Ramayana, who develops devotion to Ramayana and who discuss about Ramayana, undoubtedly obtains liberation. For furthering Rama's story, the Supreme Lord Maha-vishnu enacted like a human.

Based on the time and situation, he displayed anger, delusion, attachment, desires etc. as shown by humans in this world. With His transcendental sports, he was attracting towards himself the living entities that had succumbed to illusion. Although he appeared to have succumbed to all attributes, the truth is that he was not under the sway of the attributes.

He is devoid of any attributes. He was the manifestation of experiential knowledge and a witness to every happening. While pervading everything like the space, he remains unattached to anything. Only Sanaka and other few Maharishis know about Him. His essence remains beyond the understanding of the ordinary. Only Janaka and a few devotees who are of totally pure intellect know Him.

Such Supreme Lord, who is birthless, takes on incarnations for the benefit of devotees. I opine that He manifests before them in a form in which they have visualized Him.

Lakshmana reached Kishkinda and twanged his bow loud enough to petrify all the Vanaras.

The ordinary Vanaras who had never seen him before and who were on the tree branches believed that a human had stepped into their land. Hence uprooting trees and holding stones, they giggled loudly and came to attack him. Seeing those Vanaras the red-eyed Lakshmana was angered. He steadied his bow and fixed his arrow ready to destroy the entire Vanara clan.

Angada who realized that Lakshmana had arrived, silenced the Vanaras. He was very intelligent and knew how to act in accordance with the situation. Approaching Lakshmana, he fell flat and prostrated reverentially. Immediately Lakshmana was overcome with great love. He embraced Angada and said, "My son! Go inside. Inform your uncle that Rama is very furious and also inform him of my arrival".

Angada went quickly and said to Sugriva, "Lakshmana is very angry. He is standing at the main gate of Kishkinda with reddened eyes".

Hearing this, Vanara-king Sugriva was extremely frightened. He called Hanuman, the best among his ministers, and said, "Go quickly with Angada. With humility, calm the angered Lakshmana. Bring him here with all honours".

He then said to Tara, "O Tara! You too go and with good, melodious words, calm Lakshmana. After you have pacified him, bring him to me".

Meanwhile, Hanuman went with Angada, bowed to Lakshmana and with full devotion greeted him, "O hero of all heroes! Welcome to you. This is your house. Without any doubts you please step in. You can meet the royal ladies and then meet Sugriva. We shall obey your command".

Holding Lakshmana's hand, Hanuman led him to the palace through the city centre. Lakshmana observed the beautiful buildings and the Vanara leaders, as he walked to Sugriva's palace.

At the centre of the palace, queen Tara was seated. She was wearing royal ornaments and her eyes were slightly red due to drinking of wine. Tara was very learned and had excellent oratory skills. She greeted Lakshmana smilingly and while bowing to him said, "Dear brother in law, come inside. May you be bestowed with auspiciousness! You are very gentle natured and have a deep love for your devotees. Sugriva is your devotee and servant. He always follows you. If so, why are you so angry with that Vanara king? You gave respite to Sugriva who, for a very long time, was suffering without any help and support. Due to your grace, he has been protected and he has obtained this luxury. Being a Vanara he is filled with lust due to which he could not immediately offer himself in Raghunatha's service.

O best among the Raghus! Already from all directions, Vanaras who are as huge as mighty mountains, are quickly arriving here. 10000 Vanaras have already been sent in all directions to call all the Vanaras from other lands. Vanara-king Sugriva will lead them in battle and will kill Ravana. Today itself this King of Vanaras will come with you to Rama's service.

Come inside and meet the king. Sugriva is seated there with his wife, son and relatives. Meet him and bless him. Then take Sugriva and go for Rama's service".

With Tara's words, Lakshmana's anger abated. He went into Sugriva's palace. There Sugriva was on the bed with Ruma. Seeing Lakshmana, they stood up in fright. Their eyes were intoxicated due to the drinking of wine.

Seeing them, Lakshmana was infuriated. He said, "O wicked one! O wicked one! Have you forgotten Rama? Do you not realize that the same arrow that killed valourous Vali will now kill you? O wicked one! With my arrow, you will travel to the same worlds where Vali has reached".

Hearing these harsh words, Hanuman said, "O hero! Why do you utter these words? In devotion to Rama, this Vanara-king surpasses you. He has not forgotten your task. O Lord! See from all directions, crores and crores of Vanaras are already arriving. They will quickly proceed to locate Sita's whereabouts. Sugriva has already made arrangements for them to travel in different directions. Without any lacunae, he will complete Rama's task".

In this way, Hanuman made known to Lakshmana the devotion of the Vanaras to Rama. Hearing this, Lakshmana felt embarrassed. His anger died down. Sugriva worshipped Lakshmana and then said, "O Lakshmana, I am Rama's servant. I have been saved by him. In just half a second, with his prowess Rama can conquer all words. O Lord! Our help is only in name".

Lakshmana said, "O Sugriva! You are truly great. Forgive me for the harsh words that I have uttered out of love. Further, due to excessive love for Rama, I have spoken thus. Let us leave right now. Rama is alone in the forest and is grieving due to separation from Janaki".

Sugriva mounted his chariot and along with Lakshmana, quickly reached the palace where Rama lived. Many bears and monkeys followed him. He was accompanied by Angada, Neela and many other prominent Vanara warriors. Drums were beaten as the chariot moved forward. Attendants were fanning him with the vinjara fans. In this way, along with Hanuman and other ministers, Sugriva came to Rama.

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 6

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Rama was seated on a rock near the main entrance. He was wearing animal skin and shining with his matted locks. He had a pleasant smiling face, beautiful wide and calm eyes. He was dark-complexioned. He was grieving due to separation from Sita. Seated on a boulder, he was watching the animals and birds. Sugriva and Lakshmana saw Rama who was thus seated on a boulder.

In great urgency they jumped from the chariot, rushed and offered obeisance to Rama's feet. Rama, who was an embodiment of dharma, embraced Sugriva, honoured him, made him sit beside him and enquired about his well-being. With total devotion and humility, Sugriva said, "O Deva! The vast Vanara army, with all its divisions, is on the way here.

Countless Vanaras who are born on the mammoth mountains, who have huge bodies like the Meru and Mandara mountains, who live in mountain caves and who can take any form they seek are coming there. They are of divine aspect and experts in warfare. Among them some have the might of 10 elephants, some are as powerful as 10,000 elephants and the might of some is beyond measure.

Some are black like Anjanadri Mountain, some are golden, some reddish faced, some are long-tailed, some pure and like crystal and some are like demons. They are of strange appearances. Discussing about the war, roaring enthusiastically, itching for a war they are quickly coming here. With total knowledge of the assignment, they are coming here and will follow your orders. As they eat only fruits, there is no need to arrange food for them.

He is Jambhavan, the king of bears. He is wise and intelligent and is the best among my ministers. He is the leader of crore bears.

This is Hanuman. He is the son of wind-god, is extremely valourous, renowned, has unsurpassed might and is the best among the wise.

Then there is Nala, Neela, Gaya, Gavaksha, Gandhamadana, Sharabha, Dvididha, Mainda, Gaja, Pavanasa, Valimukha, Dadhimukha, Sushena, Tara and Hanuman's father Kesari, who is very mighty. They are all the commanders for your army.

O Rama! Based on their importance, I have named them in order. These virtuous beings are mighty warriors. Each of them can fight with Indra. Each of them is leading an army division having a crore Vanaras.

This is Vali's son Angada who is of great prowess. In might, he is at par with Vali and is like the death for enemies.

In addition are many others who are ready to lay down their life for you. They can combat huge mountains and are adept at killing enemies. O Raghugama! Command them. They will obey your orders".

Hearing this, Rama embraced Sugriva, shed tears of joy and said, "O Sugriva! You know in entirety about the completion of the task. Hence you command them to search for Sita".

Sugriva was delighted. He sent the mighty vanaras in all directions with instructions to locate Sita. But to southern direction, especially with wilful thought, he picked Angada, Jambavan, Neela, Hanuman, Nala, Sushena, Sharabha, Mainda and Dvidida.

At that time, Sugriva instructed, "Assiduously search for the auspicious Janaki. Return in 1 month. Do not forget my command. If you take even a day longer than that, I will kill you all".

Having warned all the Vanaras, he bowed to Rama and stood aside.

Then Rama looked at Hanuman and said, "O Hanuman! Take my ring on which my name is written. Only Janaki who has kept her heart solely on me can see the words written on it. Give it to Sita secretly. O best among the Vanaras! You alone are competent to complete the task. I am aware of your might. May you be successful in your assignment".

Angada and all other Vanaras set out in search of Sita. They searched the entire earth. The team that had Hanuman in the group covered many areas and reached the thick forest in Vindhya mountain range where they saw a huge ferocious demon, who was like a mountain. He was eating elephants and other huge animals. Some demons presumed that they had spotted Ravana. They made many frightening noises, hit him with their fists and killed him. When he died easily, they concluded that he was not Ravana.

From there they stepped into another forest. By then they were extremely thirsty. There was no pond anywhere. As they were walking looking out for water, they saw a huge cave that was closed with heavy grass and reed. From a small gap in that opening, swans and cranes were flying out with wet wings. Seeing this, they concluded that there was a water body located in that cave. Hence, they decided to enter it.

Hanuman was the first to enter that cave. Holding each other's hands, they entered the dark cave. After they had walked a long distance in darkness, they came across a huge pond filled with clear water. That place was totally illumined. The trees there were filled with different varieties of fruits and were bending down due to the weight of fruits they bore. Honey was dripping from those fruits.

They saw homes decorated with many gems and coloured clothing. But there was no movement of humans. In a golden home on a golden seat was seated a yogini who was in deep meditation. The radiance emanating from her body was illumining the entire place.

With total devotion, the Vanaras prostrated to her. Seeing them, she asked, "How could you enter here? To which place do you belong? Whose messengers, are you?"

Hanuman said, "O Devi! Ayodhya's King Dasharatha is filled with many auspicious traits. His son is Rama. On the king's command, Rama came to the forest along with his wife and brother. In those forests, demon Ravana abducted his wife Sita. Rama and his brother who were searching for Sita met Sugriva. Due to feelings of friendship, Sugriva agreed to search for Rama's wife Sita. On Sugriva's orders, we are combing the forests searching for her. When we were searching for Sita through the forests we were thirsty. Due to thirst, we entered this cave using our divine energies. O auspicious one, who are you? What are you doing here?"

The Yogini was happy to see the Vanaras. She said, "First all of you eat fruits to your heart's content. Drink the nectareous waters and quench your thirst. Then I shall narrate to you my story".

The Vanaras ate what they wanted, drank the water, quenched their thirst and then sat to hear her. She said to Hanuman, "Vishwakarma's beautiful daughter Hema pleased Shiva with her dance. In great delight, Shiva gifted this entire city to her.

For many thousands of years, she lived here. I am her attendant Svayamprabha and am the daughter of a Gandharva. I am a devotee of Srihari and seeking liberation I am living here.

When going to Brahma-loka, Hema said to me, "You live here in solitude and continue your penance in this place that is devoid of all forms of life. In Treta Yuga, the indestructible Lord Narayana will incarnate as Rama, the son of Dasharatha. For reducing the earth's burden he will come to forests.

Some Vanaras who are searching for his wife will come here. You worship and honour him. Worship Srirama. With this, you will attain Vishnu's abode which is very ancient and which is the goal of all Yogis".

Hence, I am longing to see Rama. All of you now close your eyes. I will take you out of this cave".

All the Vanaras closed their eyes. Immediately they were transported to the place from where they had entered the cave. Thereafter Swayamprabha left the cave and quickly went to Rama. There she saw Rama who was with Sugriva and Lakshmana.

She circumambulated Rama and again and again bowed to him. Then the wise woman said, "O King I am your servant. I am here for your darshan. I seek to serve you. My penance which I have performed for thousands of years in the cave has fructified today.

I bow to you who cannot be caught by illusion and who is separate from it. You are beyond the perception of living entities. You are within everything and outside of it too. You are the one who is behind the curtain called illusion. You are the actor who changes costumes. The ordinary folks cannot recognise you and the ignorant can never know You.

You have incarnated to teach the path of devotion to your ardent devotees. If so, how can an ignorant one like me, ever know You, O Lord?

O best among the Raghus! I seek that Your form in which you are holding the bow and arrow in your hands should eternally remain in my heart.

O Rama! Seeing Your lotus feet blesses the being with liberation. You show the way to cross the ocean of repeated rebirths. You are the wealth for those who do not seek worldly comforts. The human being who is conceited due to wealth, son, wife and other forms of prosperity can never worship You.

I bow to You, who are the wealth for those who do not seek worldly comforts. You show the path to those who seek Nivrtti (the path of return to Godhead).

I bow to You who are devoid of traits, who revel in Self's bliss, who is filled with all attributes (gunatma) who are the form of time and who are without beginning and end. You are eternally filled with equal-mindedness. I believe You are the Supreme Purusha.

O Lord! Who can ever understand your transcendental activities that perfectly resemble human activities? You have no aversions and attachments. Only those whose minds are totally captivated by Your illusion believe that You too have friends and foes. The truth is that You are birthless. You are not the doer of any action. You are the Supreme Lord. All the births in the wombs of animals, birds and humans are nothing but creations of Your illusion.

Some say that You who are indestructible have incarnated to shower fruits on the beings due to listening to Your story. Some others say that to bestow fruit for the penance performed by Dasharatha, the King of Kosala, and in response to the prayer of Kaushalya devi You incarnated. Some others say that in response to Brahma's prayer You incarnated as a human to reduce the Earth's burden by killing the wicked demon.

O Raghunandana! Those who sing Your stories or listen to them, obtain the vision of Your lotus feet that can help the person cross the ocean of repeated rebirths.

O Paramatma! You are beyond illusion and are its husband. How can I, who am bound by illusion, ever know You? Hence help me realize that this creation is purely illusory.

O Lord! How can I extoll you who is all-pervading and beyond the scope of speech?

O best among the Raghus! I bow to You, who holding a bow and arrow are together with brother Lakshmana and with Vanaras such as Sugriva".

When the Yogini Swayamprabha thus prayed to Him, Srirama, who dispels the sins of those who seek shelter under Him, was pleased. He said, 'Seek what you want'.

Then Swayamprabha said, “O bhaktavatsala! O Prabhu! Please bless that whichever birth I may take I retain unflinching devotion to you. May I associate only with those who are devoted to you. May I never associate with worldly bondage. May my tongue eternally chant Your name ‘Rama’ with devotion.

Rama, may my mind eternally meditate upon your divine form that is bluish in complexion, which is accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana, which glows with golden-yellow clothing and glowing crown and which glitters due to armlets, anklets, pearl chains, kausthuba gem and earrings. I seek nothing barring this”.

Rama said, “O meritorious woman! Your desire will be fulfilled. Now proceed to Badari forests and meditate on me. Very shortly you will abandon this gross body and reach my ultimate residence”.

Hearing this, Swayamprabha instantly reached Badari forest that is filled with Badari trees. In that sacred place she meditated on Srirama and left her body and attained the ultimate abode.

Day 16, July 26 2021

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 7

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Exhausted after the long search, the Vanaras who were searching for Sita, cluelessly sat in a place that was thickly covered with trees.

Angada said, “While we were searching in this cave, undoubtedly a month would have gone by. The time given to us has elapsed but we could not locate Sita. As we could not complete King Sugriva’s command, if we return to Kishkinda, he is sure to kill us. Especially as I am his enemy’s son, he is sure to kill me. He has no love for me. I have been protected by Rama alone. Using the pretext of non-completion of Rama’s task, he will kill me. That wicked vanara is enjoying with his elder sister-in-law who is equal to his mother. Hence I will not return to Sugriva. I will therefore end my life here”.

Saying this, he shed tears. Seeing him aggrieved, some Vanaras too shed tears and said, “O Prince! Why do you grieve? We are here to save your life. Along with you, we will live in this cave which is as flourishing as Amaravati city. Since the time given by the King has elapsed, let us continue to live here happily”.

Hanuman, the best among those who convince others, heard the Vanaras who were discussing softly. He quickly embraced Angada and said, “Give up this thinking as it is wicked. It is wrong to think that your uncle has misbehaved with your mother when in reality he treats her like his mother. As in you feelings of enmity haven’t still eroded, you have stooped to this wicked way of thinking. Do you realize that you are very dear to Sugriva? You are Tara’s dearest son. Tara is enjoying like the queen-mother. Sugriva’s love for you far surpasses Rama’s love for Lakshmana. You have no fear from Rama or Sugriva. My son! Even I too seek your well-being as you are the future king. Hence abandon this discussion with other Vanaras.

Why do you believe this cave is safe? Remember that in the three worlds there is no place that is safe from Rama’s arrow. Will the Vanaras, who have given you this wicked advice, abandon their wives and children and live here permanently with you?

My son, I will give you another piece of advice. It is a great secret. Listen. Do not consider Rama to be a human. He is none but the indivisible Supreme Lord, Srīman Narayana. The illusionary energy has incarnated as His wife Sita. Lakshmana is Adi-śhesha, the leader of the serpents and the support for the entire universe.

Based on Brahma’s prayer, they have incarnated as humans for the destruction of demons and for the protection of the world. We all are mere servants of the Lord who resides in Vaikuntha. When the Lord, on His independent will, assumed a human form, then, with His illusionary energy we took forms as Vanaras. Previously with our penance, we pleased Him and obtained his blessings, due to which we have become his servants. Now, He has given us this birth to ensure that we take part in His transcendental sport. Hence let us complete our task, return to Vaikuntha and live happily there”.

In this way, Hanuman re-assured Angada and instilled courage in him. Thereafter all the Vanaras resumed the search. Gradually they reached the sacred Mahendra Mountain on the southern shores where they came across a vast, ferocious and uncrossable deep sea.

Seeing the ocean and not knowing how to continue their search, the Vanaras turned clueless and worried. Not knowing how to proceed, they simply sat on the beach. One month had already elapsed since the time Sugriva had commanded them. They were yet to find Ravana and trace Janaka's daughter Sita.

'The dreaded and fearsome Sugriva who is known for his unrelenting rules is sure to kill us for our failure. Better than dying in his hands, is to end our lives here'- thinking thus, they decided to end their lives through prayopavesha technique. Hence they spread the darbha grass, sat on it and restrained their breath.

Exactly at that moment, a giant eagle that was as huge as a mountain emerged from a cave in Mountain Mahendra and slowly walked towards them while murmuring softly, "Today I have obtained very good food. Gradually I will eat them one per day and abate my hunger".

The Vanaras heard this and trembled. They lamented, "This eagle is sure to devour us. Oho! O best of the Vanaras! We failed in completing Rama's assignment. We are now meeting a dreadful end in the hands of this bird. We could not be of any help to Sugriva nor could we benefit ourselves. By dying in the hands of this eagle, we are meeting a horrible end. That righteous Jatayu is better than us as he met a heroic death fighting for Rama's cause. That wise bird fought with the enemy for Rama's cause and obtained that ultimate position which even Yogis fail to obtain".

Hearing these lamentations, the eagle curiously asked, "Who are you? By mentioning about my brother Jatayu, you are pouring nectar into my ears".

Angada approached the bird and said, "Dasharatha's son Srirama was living in the forests with wife Sita and brother Lakshmana when the wicked Ravana abducted her. Hearing her crying, 'Rama, Rama', the valorous Jatayu fought ferociously with Ravana for Rama's sake. Fighting heroically, he died. He was cremated by Rama and that very second he attained oneness with Srirama. Rama then befriended Sugriva. With fire as a witness, they sealed their friendship.

Instigated by Sugriva, the mighty Rama then killed the invincible Vali and entrusted the kingdom of Vanaras to Sugriva.

Sugriva thereafter sent many mighty, valorous Vanaras like us to find Sita's whereabouts with the instructions, 'Locate Sita and return within a month. If you do not return in the stipulated time, I will kill you all'.

In abidance with his commands, we were combing the forests when we entered a cave. It took us a month to exit from it. As of now, we have not located Ravana or Sita. Instead of going back, we feel it is best to end our lives here on the banks of this ocean. O king of birds! If you have any idea of Sita's location, please tell us".

Hearing Angada's words, in great elation, Sampati said, "O Vanaras! After thousands of years, today I have heard of my dearest brother Jatayu. I will surely help you. But before that, I seek to offer water oblations to my departed brother. Hence take me to the ocean. After I offer oblations to him, I will talk to you and help you accomplish your mission".

The Vanaras then took Sampati to the ocean. The bird bathed in the waters, offered water oblations to Jatayu and returned to his place. Then he brought joy to the Vanaras by saying, "O Vanaras! On the Trikuta peak is a city called Lanka. There, in the Ashoka Vana, Sita is located. She is being protected by many demonesses. Lanka is at a distance of 100 yojanas in the oceans.

Being a bird I can see great distances. From here I can see clearly Sita seated in Ashoka vana. Do not doubt my words. He who crosses this ocean will see her. Although I am eager to kill that wicked Ravana,

the killer of my brother, I cannot fly as I do not have wings. You, therefore, make some attempt to cross this ocean. Then Rama can easily kill Ravana. Only after crossing the ocean, one can set foot into Lanka, see Sita, and pacify her. Again he has to leap across the ocean and return here. Now you discuss among yourselves and accomplish it”.

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 8

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Hearing Sampati’s words, the Vanaras were extremely excited. In great eagerness, they sought to hear his story in its entirety.

Sampati began his narration, “Once in the pride of our youth Jatayu and I decided to test our might. We flew high in the skies and travelled towards the Sun. As we neared the Sun, Jatayu began getting burnt by the Sun’s rays. Due to my brotherly love and attachment for Jatayu, I covered him with my wings and protected him, but in the process, my wings were burnt due to the Sun’s intense rays.

From that height, I fell on this Vindhya mountain. Due to falling from a height, I fainted. After 3 days I regained consciousness. I was alive but my wings were completely burnt. I did not know the land or the name of the mountain where I had fallen.

On opening my eyes, I saw a sacred ashram. Slowly I walked there. Rishi Chandra who was in the ashram saw me and in great astonishment asked, “Sampati! What has happened to you? Why are you in this pitiable state? Who is responsible for this? How did your wings get burnt?”

I narrated my pitiable story and in total dejection said, “O great Rishi! I will jump into the blazing fire and give up my life. How can I live without wings?”

Seeing my dejection, the Rishi pitied me and said, “My son! Listen to my words, then do as you please. The body is the root of all sorrows. Such a body is obtained purely due to one’s past actions. In the absence of past actions, a body cannot arise.

When the Self attains feelings of ‘I-ness’ towards the body, it develops an interest in the performance of action. Egoism (I-ness) is without a beginning, is insentient, and it stems from ignorance. Like the iron that is burnt in a blazing fire, egoism is always coupled with chidabhasa (reflection of the Pure Consciousness).

Because the body has identified completely with the feeling of ‘I’, the body turns sentient. Due to this, the being thinks, ‘I am the body’. This thought causes the being to rotate in the cycle of repeated rebirths which in turn throws him into experiencing joys and sorrows.

The Self itself is changeless. However, due to the false identification with the body, the living being eternally thinks, ‘I am the body; I am the doer’ and with this resolve completes all actions. He is therefore bound by the resultant fruits of those actions and gets trapped. Based on his meritorious and sinful deeds, he continues to rotate in the endless cycle of births and deaths.

The aspirant resolves, ‘I have done many Yagnas, given plentiful charities, engaged in many meritorious deeds and hence I will undoubtedly reach heavens and enjoy there’. Due to his imagination, ‘I have performed many meritorious deeds’- he enjoys many comforts in heaven for long. But once the merit is exhausted, triggered by his past actions, he is thrown down much against his liking.

The descending soul firstly reaches the Chandra mandala (sphere of the moon). From there he mixes with fog and falls to earth through the medium of the moon’s rays and enters the grains he lives in them for very long. Thereafter he becomes anyone among the 4 types of foods- bhakshya, bhojya, lehya and choshya. In this form, he is consumed by the man.

In the man, he converts into semen and enters the woman’s womb. Within a day, he mixes with the blood and is enveloped by the sac. At the end of 5 nights, he transforms into a bubble and within 7 nights he

transforms into a lump of flesh. Within 15 days, he is filled with blood. Even before 25 nights are complete, he transforms into a small shoot. By the end of 1 month, he obtains the neck, head, shoulders, backbone and stomach.

In the second month, arms, legs, hips and knee-caps develop. In the 3rd month, the joints are formed. In the 4th month, fingers are formed. In the 5th month, eyes, ears, nose, teeth, nails and genitals develop.

In the 6th month, the earholes, anus, the uterus or the testicle and the navel develop. In the 7th month, body hair and skull are formed. In the 8th month, all limbs are formed and a complete human form emerges.

O King of birds! In this way, the fetus that is growing in the womb obtains complete consciousness in its 5th month. Through the umbilical cord, the foetus draws the nutrition from the mother and grows. The past actions of that embodied soul prevent him from perishing when in the mother's womb.

The foetus now gets the memory of its past births and actions. With that memory and suffering due to hunger, it thinks, "Previously I have obtained births in innumerable wombs and have associated with innumerable relatives, cattle, wives and sons. I am truly unfortunate and unlucky that in those births I did not think of Maha-vishnu even in my dreams.

I was engrossed only in sustaining my family and in earning wealth either through fair means or foul. Consequently, I am now facing the sorrow of living in a mother's womb and am considering this perishable body as imperishable and permanent. (The suffering undergone in the mother's womb is inexplicable).

Trapped in insatiable cravings, I was always engaged in deeds I should never have done. I never put in any effort that is beneficial for me (soul). Hence based on my past actions, I am suffering enormously in the mother's womb. I do not know when I will exit from this hell-like womb. After I exit, I will always immerse myself in the worship of Maha-vishnu".

As he is thus thinking, he is thrown out of the mother's womb. With an enormous effort, he exits the womb just as a sinner exits from hell. He falls down like a worm that is covered with bad-smelling, impure pus and blood. Thereafter he undergoes the sufferings of infancy and childhood states. In this way, all embodied souls suffer.

O king of birds! As you are aware of the sufferings that arise in youth and other stages of life, I will not describe them. Bodily identification causes the soul to suffer in hell and the mother's womb.

Hence, abandoning identification with gross and subtle bodies, one should realize that he is the Self that is beyond Prakriti. He must avoid attachments to the body and other objects and must strive for knowing himself (Self-knowledge).

He must realize that waking and other states do not exist in the Self. He must know it to be eternal, filled with consciousness, pure, wakeful and peaceful.

With this, he will realize 'I am the Supreme Self, I am the one who dwells in every existence'.

When this knowledge is experientially realized, the delusion that arises due to ignorance vanishes. Then it is immaterial whether the body dies or continues to live due to destiny. A yogi (Self-realized being) has no joys and sorrows that arise due to ignorance. Hence, as long as karma exists, he continues to live happily in this body like the snake that does not shed its skin.

O King of birds! Listen to these auspicious words that I utter. In Treta yuga, the Supreme Lord Narayana will assume a human form for killing Ravana. He will come to the Dandakaranya forests with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana.

Finding a time when Rama and Lakshmana have gone away, Ravana will abduct Sita and imprison her in Lanka. Based on Sugriva's command, some Vanaras will set out in search of her and in the process will

come to your place. Destiny will ensure that you befriend them. You inform them of Sita's whereabouts. When you do this, two new wings will suddenly sprout in you".

Sampāti continued, "O Vanaras! This is what Rishi Chandra Muni said to me. See my newly emerging wings. I am now leaving. You will definitely see Sita. Try to cross this uncrossable ocean. O best of Vanaras! You all are very dear devotees of Rama. Due to merely remembering the name of that Lord, even the evillest beings cross even the cycle of rebirths and attain the ultimate abode.

Sri Maha-vishnu who is the cause for the creation, sustenance and annihilation of all the worlds has incarnated as Srirama. You are his very dear devotees. Hence O Varanas, undoubtedly you will cross this ocean effortlessly".

Kishkinda kanda, Chapter 9

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Having said this, Sampati flew in the skies. The Vanaras were now very anxious and eager to locate Sita. Seeing the vast unapproachable ocean they spoke to another, "With dangerous crocodiles, fearsome whirlpools and with its huge waves that touch the skies, this ocean is very frightening. How can we cross it which appears uncrossable?"

Angada said, "O Vanaras! Listen to me. All of you are very heroic and powerful. Who among you will cross the ocean and complete the king's assignment? Such a hero will undoubtedly be the life-giver for the Vanaras, for Rama and Sugriva. He should come and stand before us".

Hearing this, all the Vanaras remained silent looking at one another. No one came forward. Then Angada said, "O Varana heroes! For the accomplishment of this task, each of you should tell your strengths and capacities. Based on it, we will decide who can accomplish this task".

With this, each of the Vanaras narrated his capacities. One said he could fly 10 yojanas, another said he could cross 20 yojanas, another said 30 etc. Thereafter Jambhavanta said, 'I can fly within 100 yojanas'. He further said, 'In the previous Yuga, Lord Trivikrama incarnated on earth and expanded his foot to cover the earth. At that time, I circumambulated His foot 21 times. But now as I am very old, I cannot leap across the ocean".

Thereafter Angada said, "I can cross the ocean but am unsure if I can return".

Jambavan said, "O Angada! For this accomplishment of this task, you truly are competent. But as you are our ruler it is inappropriate to assign this task to you".

Angada said, "If so, let us all go back to our darbha (grass) seats and give up our lives through the prayopavesha vrata (staying off water and food). There is no hope of remaining alive"

Jambavanta who heard this, said, "O Angada! Do not lose hope and do not frighten us. In a short time I will show you the hero who can accomplish this task".

He then went to Hanuman who was seated silently aloof from them all and said, "O Hanuman! When this mammoth task stands before us, why are you seated in silence? You are the son of Vayu and in valour, you are at par with him. O mighty-armed one! The time has approached for you to show your competence.

For the completion of Rama's task, you incarnated as Vayu's son. At the time of your birth, seeing the rising Sun and believing him to be a fruit, you flew up to eat it. At that time, you fell to the earth from a height of 500 yojanas. Who can explain Your potency and might? Hence stand up. Accomplish Rama's task! O son of Pavana! Protect us!"

Greatly delighted with these words, Hanuman let out a lion-like roar that reverberated throughout the universe. Suddenly, like another Trivikrama, he grew as huge as a mountain and addressing the Vanaras

said, "I will cross this ocean, burn Lanka, kill Ravana along with his retinue and bring Janaka's daughter Sita. Else I will uproot Lanka, bind Ravana with a noose, drag him here along with the Trikuta Mountain and throw him before Rama. Or I will locate Janaki and return".

Jambavanta said, "O Hanuman! May you be successful! Now go and find out if Janaki is alive or not. Thereafter when you are accompanied by Rama, you show your prowess. May you go safely in the path of the wind. May he help you who are going to accomplish Rama's mission".

All the Vanaras applauded Hanuman. Thereafter Hanuman stood on the Mahendra mountain and took on a gigantic wonderful form. He stood on it as if he was another mighty Mahendra mountain. He was glowing in golden complexion. His radiant face was emitting reddish rays. He had powerful arms like the king of serpents. In this way, he gave wondrous darshan to all the Vanaras and all the living beings.

With this, Kishkinda Kanda comes to an end.

Day 17, July 27 2021

Sundara kanda, Chapter 1

Lord Shiva said, "Hanuman, the son of the wind, decided to cross the ocean that spanned 100 yojanas and which was filled with many alligators and other dangerous animals. Enthusiastically, in great delight, he readied for the accomplishment of the task.

Thinking of the Supreme Lord Srirama and while very eager to see Mother Goddess he stood atop the mountain and said, "O Vanaras! Hear my words. Like the supreme unfailing arrow released by Rama, I shall now travel in the path of the skies. Today itself I shall locate Mother Sita, the dearest wife of Rama and the daughter of Janaka and see Rama.

I am a messenger of that Lord, by uttering whose names at the time of death the person will be freed from the terrible shackles of repeated rebirths and attains liberation. I have with me his signet ring and I am thinking of Him in my heart. If so, for me, crossing this ocean of 100 yojanas is not a great accomplishment. I will easily cross it".

Saying this, he stretched his hands, raised his head and looked up, ensured his tail stood stiff, contracted his legs and then looking in the southern direction, swiftly leapt into the skies.

Even as the Devatas were watching, at swift speeds Hanuman darted forward at the speed of the wind. Due to his swiftness, it appeared as if the sky itself was moving. Seeing him who was flying at unbelievable speeds, the impressed Devatas thought, 'Undoubtedly this Vanaras is extremely powerful and he flies at the speed of the wind. But we do not know whether he possesses the competence to enter Lanka. Hence let us test his strength'.

With this plan they approached Surasa, the mother of serpents, and said, "O Surasa! Go and create some obstacle to this Vanara. Find his capacity and intelligence and quickly return".

Thus instructed, Surasa quickly arrived to create an obstacle in Hanuman's journey. Standing in front of Hanuman, she blocked his path with her gigantic form and said, "O wise one! Come and enter into me. I am suffering from extreme hunger for many years. Surely the Devatas have given you to me as food".

Hearing this, Hanuman said, "O Mother! I am going to locate Janaki, the wife of Rama. As soon as my mission is complete, I shall quickly give the information about her safety to Rama and return to you. I give you my word. O Surasa! I bow to you. You are my mother. Let me proceed".

Surasa adamantly said, "As I am extremely hungry, I cannot let you go. Letting you go implies going against my dharma. Hence I will eat you now. Enter into me".

Hearing this Hanuman said, "If so, quickly open your mouth so that I can quickly enter it".

Hanuman instantly grew to the size of a yojana (1 yojana is 8 miles) and stood before her. Seeing his massive form, she opened her mouth 5 yojanas (approx. 40 miles) wide. Immediately Hanuman doubled his size. On seeing this, Surasa widened her mouth to 20 yojanas. Hanuman now grew to 30 yojanas. Then Surasa made her mouth 50 yojanas wide.

Suddenly, in the time taken to click the fingers, Hanuman reduced himself to the size of a thumb, flew into her mouth, swiftly flew out and said, "As instructed by you, O mother, I have entered into your mouth and come outside. I bow to you O Mother".

Seeing Hanuman and hearing his words, Surasa replied, "O Hanuman! O best among the wise! Go and successfully complete Rama's assignment. O Vanara! Prompted by the Devatas who wanted to know your might, I have come here. You will surely see Sita and then return to Rama"- saying this she returned to her heavenly abode.

Hanuman resumed his journey and flew swiftly like Garuda, the king of birds. Seeing him who was flying swiftly, the Ocean-god said to Mount Mainaka who was in the waters, "O Mainaka! See Hanuman who is flying to accomplish Rama's task. He is the son of the wind and is an embodiment of absolute purity. You must serve him.

Due to King Sagara's efforts, I have swelled and grown into an ocean. Dasharatha's son Rama belongs to Sagara's lineage. As Hanuman is going on Rama's task, you quickly come out of the waters. Let Hanuman rest on you and then resume his journey".

Mainaka agreed. He came out of the waters and with his mountain peaks that were laden with innumerable precious gems, he stood outside blocking Hanuman's path. Taking on a human form, Mainaka stood atop the mountain and seeing Hanuman who was trying to fly past him, he said, "O best among the Vanaras! I am Mainaka. O Maruti! The Ocean-god has sent me to assist you. Hence come and eat the nectarous fruits on the trees growing here. Rest here for a second and then resume your journey".

Hearing this, Hanuman said, "For me, who am on Rama's assignment, where is the need for fruits and rest? I need to rush quickly and complete Rama's assignment". Yet, to show his reverence for Mainaka, he gently caressed his peak and quickly darted forward.

After he had covered some distance, Simhika, the terrible demoness who lived in the waters and who dragged the animals towards herself based on their shadow, saw Hanuman who was speedily flying in the skies. Catching his shadow she began to drag him towards herself. Hanuman who was being pulled down thought, 'Who is dragging me? Who is retraining my speed? This puzzles me as I do not see anyone'.

Thinking thus, he looked down and in the ocean saw the terrible, fearsome and gigantic form of Simhika. Quickly Hanuman darted into the waters, angrily crushed her with his feet and then leapt to the skies and resumed his journey in the southern direction.

Shortly thereafter he noticed a land that was replete with animals, birds, creepers and fruit-yielding trees. On Trikuta Mountain located on it, were many fortresses. The high fort walls and the deep moats in all directions were protecting the city.

Seeing the well-guarded city, Hanuman pondered how to enter it and then concluded, "At night, in a very tiny form I will enter this city that is zealously protected by Ravana".

He waited till nightfall and then took on an extremely tiny, almost subtle form and set foot in Lanka through the main gateway. This gate was being guarded by Lankini.

Lankini saw the tiny Hanuman seeking to stealthily enter. Hence she loudly threatened, "Who are you? Taking on the form of a monkey, you are stealthily trying to enter the city without even caring for me. What work do you have here?"

Not stopping with this, with reddened angry eyes she kicked him violently. Considerate that she was a woman, Hanuman gently hit her with his left hand. However, with this blow she vomited a large quantity of blood and fell to the ground.

She then stood up and said, "O Hanuman! Go in. You will be successful. O sinless one! Lanka has been conquered by you. Previously, to reduce the earth's burden, Brahma prayed to the Supreme Lord Vishnu. Thereafter, Lord Brahma conveyed to me the message that the Supreme Lord had given him.

Lord Brahma said to me, 'In the Treta Yuga of the 28th chaturyuga, the Supreme Lord Narayana will incarnate as the son of Dasharatha. Yogamaya will be born as Janaki, the daughter of King Janaka. Rama will go to the forests along with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. Here Sita will be abducted by Ravana.

Thereafter Rama will befriend Sugriva, the Vanara-king. Then Sugriva will send the Vanaras in search of her. One among those Vanaras will come to Lanka at night. You will hit him. Not frightened of you, he will punch you causing you to fall and be gravely injured. When this happens, know that the destruction of Ravana and Lanka has commenced'.

As this was the boon granted to me by Brahma, this is undoubtedly true. O sinless one! O Hanuman! You have conquered Lanka. In the sacred Ravana's place is a beautiful Ashoka vana garden where, under the Shimshupa tree, Janaki is seated. Terrible demonesses are guarding her at all times. You see Sita and then return with this news to Rama.

I consider myself fortunate as I have got a chance to participate in Rama's mission and could associate with the devotees of Lord Rama, which is very rare to obtain. May Lord Rama remain eternally situated in my heart!"

Thereafter Hanuman set foot in Lanka. The moment Hanuman, the son of the wind, set foot in Lanka, Sita's left eye and Rama's right shoulder twitched which is a good omen. As an ill-omen Ravana's left shoulder severely twitched.

Sundara kanda, Chapter 2

Lord Shiva said, 'O Parvati! Thereafter, in his tiny subtle form, Hanuman set foot in the beautiful Lanka and wandered through the city. Searching for Sita, he entered the royal palace. There he scanned minutely but could not find her anywhere.

Remembering Lankini's words, he directly went to Ashoka vana which was filled with many trees and many deep wells that contained many steep steps that were inlaid with many precious gems. Many different types of birds and animals wandered in the garden which was heavily filled with trees that bore plentiful fruit. There were many golden buildings too.

Hanuman searched for Sita under every tree in the Ashoka Vana but could not trace her. In that search, he came across a beautiful compound that was so vast that it appeared it would touch the skies. It had many precious stone pillars.

Crossing it he went forward and came across a huge Shimshupa tree that was so thick that even sunlight could not seep through it. On its vast branches, many golden birds had made their nests.

Beneath that tree he saw Janaki who was being garuded by many ferocious demonesses. Janaki, who looked like a Devata on earth, was grieving. She had a single plait and was emaciated. She was wearing

extremely soiled clothes and was lying on the floor lamenting, 'Rama, Rama'. Although she had many auspicious features on her body, due to fasting she had shrivelled.

Hanuman, who observed her from the branches of the tree thought, 'I have attained success. I have accomplished the task of Rama, the Supreme Lord. My birth has attained fulfilment. I am fortunate that I could see Sita'. He was supremely delighted.

By then, he heard sounds of laughter from Ravana's palace. With total curiosity, Hanuman, who was in his subtle form, peeped from the branches of the Shimshimpa tree. To his astonishment, he saw Ravana coming to Sita along with many women. With his 10 faces and 20 hands, Ravana resembled a gigantic fearsome mountain.

Meanwhile, Ravana was all along thinking, 'How can I quickly die in Rama's hands? Why hasn't Rama come here in search of Sita? Why could be the reason for this delay?'

He, who was worried at this delay and whose thoughts were all on Rama, saw a dream during the last portion of the night. He saw that a Vanara who could take on any form as per his will and who could become big or small had been sent by Rama in search of Sita and that, the Vanara had reached Lanka and was watching everything from the branches of the trees.

Stupefied at this wonderous dream, he thought, 'As at times dreams turn true, I shall quickly go and pierce Sita with my harsh words. I will enhance her sorrow. May that Vanara quickly go and report it to Rama'. With this thought, he quickly came to Sita that morning.

Hearing the sounds of the ladies' anklets and delicate footsteps, Sita realized that Ravana was coming and she trembled severely due to fear. She lowered her head, shrank into herself, shed tears profusely and thought of her husband Rama.

Ravana addressed Sita and said, "O beautiful one! Why do shrink on seeing me? Along with brother Lakshmana, Rama is living like the forest-dwellers. At times he is seen and at other times he is not seen. I have sent many people to locate Rama but they all failed.

What work do you have with Rama who doesn't desire you? Why do you weep for him? Even after living with you and embracing you, he has no love for you. Even after experiencing all comforts along with you, he does not know you properly. Hence he lacks gratitude to you. He is the worst among the lowly men.

Abducted by me, you have come here. Being devoted to him, you are grieving for him here. But yet Rama has not come here to take you as he lacks love for you. Why will he come here?

Also, Rama cannot reach here as this land is inaccessible. That Rama for whom you weep has no affection for you. He is arrogant, deluded and considers himself to be learned. He is the worst among men. Why do you think about him who has no love for you?

O Sita I desire you. Hence serve me. If you marry me, you will be the queen for all the celestial, gandharva, naga, kinnara yaksha, ladies who live in my palace".

Sita was extremely angered by these words. Following the rule that one must not talk to another man and that, during unavoidable situations, an inert object should be placed between herself and another man, she placed a blade of grass between her and Ravana and lowering her head, said,

"Frightened of Rama you took the form of a beggar to abduct me. You stole me just as a dog steals the sacred offerings kept for offering into the Yagna-fire. Like a thief, you abducted me when Rama and Lakshmana were not around. Only when your body is shredded into bits with Rama's arrow, you will learn of Rama's greatness. You will reach the abode of death. With Lakshmana's help, Rama will either swallow the ocean or will build a bridge. But he will come here and kill you in a battle.

O worst among demons! Undoubtedly you will see this happening. He will kill you along with your sons, family and army and will take me to our Ayodhya”.

Enraged at these harsh words uttered by Sita, Ravana’s eyes turned blood red. He raised his sword seeking to kill her. However, his wife Mandodari stopped him and said, “Leave this woman who is pitiable, innocent, weak, and is lamenting. You have the best among deva, gandharva, yaksha, kinnara, naga women who serve you with utmost love. Why do you care for this human female who is emaciated?”

Ravana then turned to the ferocious demonesses there and said, “Either use threats or persuasion. But ensure that she quickly develops a love for me and yields to my advances. Within 2 months she should agree to marry me. If so, she will enjoy all royal comforts. If she does not yield after 2 months, kill her and serve her as my food”.

Instructing them thus, he returned to his palace along with all the women-folk. After his departure, the demoness began to threaten and frighten Sita in many ways. One demoness said, ‘Your youth will go for a waste if you do not obtain Ravana’. Another said, ‘Why the delay? Now itself we shall shred you to bits’. Another was ready with a sword to pierce Sita. Another opened her mouth and frightened Sita.

Trijata, the learned and aged demoness, saw them frightening Sita and said to them, ‘O wicked ones! Listen to me. Do not frighten her who is weeping. Offer obeisance to this Janaki. Just now in my dream, Rama who was seated on white Airavata along with Lakshmana had come here, destroyed Lanka, killed Ravana, placed Sita on his lap and was seated atop a mountain.

Ravana was naked and his body was smeared in oil. Along with his sons and grandsons, he was wearing skull-garland and was submerged in a dirty pond that was filled with dung. Vibhishana was happy in Rama’s company and was serving him.

Hence, when seen from any angle, it is evident that Rama will kill Ravana, hand over the kingdom to Vibhishana, take Sita and return to his kingdom”.

Hearing Trijata’s words the rakshasa-women were frightened. They remained mum. They began to sleep by lying down here and there.

Sita who was harassed by them, was petrified. She wept. In that fright, she said, ‘Undoubtedly these ladies will eat me tomorrow morning. I wish I knew what to do’.

Holding the Shimshupa tree she decided to end her life. Hence holding the tree branch for long she wept profusely.

Sundara kanda, Chapter 3

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Sita who was crying thought, ‘I will put a rope and end my life. What life is this? I am living amidst these demon women. What is the use of such a life? My long hair will help me end my life’.

Seeing Janaki who wanted to end her life, Hanuman was lost in thought. Thereafter, remaining in that tiny form, he spoke softly just enough for her to hear.

He said, “In Ikshvaku lineage was the great king Dasharatha who was the ruler of Ayodhya. He had 4 sons who had traits at par with the Devas and were renowned worldwide. Bound by his father’s words, the eldest among them left for Dandaka forests with his wife and brother. Here, the broadminded Rama build a hut near Panchavati on the banks of Godavari and was living there. Finding a time when Rama was not around, the wicked Ravana kidnapped the auspicious Janaki, the daughter of King Janaka.

The woeful Rama searched everywhere for her. He then came across Jatayu, the bird that had fallen to the earth. He blessed Jatayu with liberation and then quickly walked to the Rishyamukha mountain where he developed a friendship with Sugriva.

Rama killed Vali who had kidnapped Sugriva's wife and entrusted the Vanara kingdom to Sugriva. With this, he lived up to the promise made to his friend. Thereafter, Sugriva called all his ministers and sent them in all directions in search of Sita.

I am Sugriva's minister and one of the Vanaras who have been sent in search. Based on bird Sampati's words, I have leapt across the ocean that is 100 yojanas long and have reached here. Searching for the auspicious Janaki I have reached Ashoka vana and have now come to this Shimshupa tree. Beneath the tree, I am seeing Janaki who is lamenting. I am fortunate to reach Sita, the queen of Rama".

Saying this, the wise Hanuman stopped talking. Astonished on hearing these words, Sita thought, 'Were these words of the wind? Was it a dream or hallucination? As I am not sleeping due to sorrow, this cannot be a dream. How can it be a hallucination? May he who has spoken these auspicious words that are nectareous to my ears come before me".

Hanuman heard these words. From in-between the leaves, he slowly emerged and stood before her. He who was the size of a thumb had a red face and was glowing in golden complexion. He joined his hands and in all humility stood before her. Thinking that Ravana had come again in this form to delude her, Sita was frightened and remained silent.

Hanuman then said, "O Devi! I am not what you assume me to be. Abandon your doubts. O Mother! I am the servant of Rama, the Supreme Lord who is also the King of Ayodhya. I am the minister of Sugriva, the King of Vanaras. I am the son of wind-god, who is the life-force for all the worlds".

Seeing him, Sita asked, "You say that Rama befriended the Vanaras. But how could friendship develop between vanaras and humans? How can you claim to be a servant of Rama?"

Hanuman said, "Dear mother! Based on Shabari's message, the wise Rama along with Lakshmana came to Rishyamukha mountain. Sugriva who was frightened seeing them both asked me to find their opinion. I took on the form of a celibate boy and approached Rama. Knowing Rama's good intent, I carried them both on my shoulders and took them to Sugriva. I even sealed their friendship.

Vali had abducted Sugriva's wife. Rama killed Vali with a single arrow and made Sugriva the king of the Vanaras. Sugriva thereafter sent the Vanaras in all 10 directions in your search.

At that time, Rama said to me, "O son of Maruti! My task totally depends on you. Inform Sita that I and Lakshmana are safe. Give her this ring of mine which has my name engraved on it".

Saying this, Rama removed the ring from his finger and gave it to me. See the ring"- saying this, Hanuman handed the ring to Sita, bowed to her and stood aside.

Seeing that ring that had Rama's name engraved everywhere, Sita was greatly delighted. She placed it on her head. Shedding tears of joy, she said, "O Vanara! You are my life-giver. You are wise and have utmost devotion to Rama. Rama has the utmost trust in you. If not, why would he send another man to me?

O Hanuman! Have you not seen my pitiable condition? Please inform Rama of my deplorable condition. Tell him that my life will last only for 2 months more. If Rama does not come by then, that evil demon will eat me. Hence quickly along with Sugriva and the Vanara army, Rama should come here and kill Ravana along with his sons and family. He should quickly save me from here. Only then it is truly befitting his valour and he will be extolled by one and all. Do your best to ensure that Rama quickly kills Ravana. Through your words, you will be doing a great help and will be protecting righteousness".

Hanuman said, "O Mother! I shall report everything to Rama as I have seen. On hearing my words, along with Lakshmana, he will take weapons and come here quickly accompanied by the Vanara army. Quickly he will kill Ravana along with his retinue and take you to Ayodhya. In this, there is no doubt".

Sita asked, "Although Rama has unimaginable might, how can he cross this vast ocean along with the vast Vanara army?"

Hanuman said, "Rama and Lakshmana will sit on my shoulder and come here. The Vanara king Sugriva will leap across the ocean with his army and come here. Crossing the ocean, Rama will destroy all these demons for your sake. In this, there is no doubt. O mother! Now permit me to leave. I have to go quickly to Rama who is with his brother and then I need to quickly bring them all here. Now give some object that I can give Rama as proof of having met you. Then I will go with even greater enthusiasm".

Hearing this, Sita thought deeply for a while and then removing the crest-jewel that was in her hair, gave it to Hanuman and said, "Seeing this, along with Lakshmana, Rama will believe your words. I will also narrate an incident that will give Rama the confidence that you have truly met me.

Previously when we were living on Chitrakoota mountain, Rama and me were alone. Rama was sleeping with his head rested on my lap. At that time, Indra's son came there in the form of a crow. Mistaking my reddish toe for a piece of flesh, with his beak and claws he pierced it. Meanwhile, Rama woke up.

Enraged on seeing my injured foot, he asked, "My dearest! Who has harmed you?" He looked around everywhere. He saw the crow and was infuriated. Taking a blade of grass he empowered it with a mantra and released it.

Releasing fiery flames, that weapon chased the crow which in deep fright flew to all the worlds. But neither Indra, Brahma or any other Devas could offer it any protection. Then that crow came back and sought shelter in the ever-compassionate Rama.

Rama, the Lord who protects those who have sought shelter in him, said, "My arrow is infallible. Hence offer one eye to me". The crow offered his left eye and left. Remind Rama of this incident".

Having said this, Sita wept again and said, "Why does such a valorous Rama neglect me?"

Hanuman said, "O Mother! If Rama knew that you were here, within a second he would have destroyed this city of Lanka that is filled with demons".

Sita then asked, "O Hanuman! With such a tiny body, how can you fight the demons? I think that like you all the Vanaras have tiny bodies".

Hearing this, Rama's servant Hanuman showed her his never-seen-before universal form that was as huge as the Mountains Meru and Mandara and which instilled a deep fear in the demons.

Seeing his humungous form, Sita in great delight said, "O wise one! You are ever competent. The demonesses will see you who are supremely mighty. May your journey be successful! Leave immediately. Go to Rama".

Hanuman, who by now was extremely hungry, said, "O Mother! I have seen you. Rama's task has been completed. Can I not satisfy my hunger now? I will now eat these fruits that are before your eyes".

Obtaining her permission, he ate the fruits, bowed to Mother Sita, and readied for his return journey.

Day 18, July 28 2021

Sundara kanda, Chapter 4

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Having obtained Mother Sita's permission, Hanuman travelled a little distance. Then he thought, 'One who has come as a messenger should ensure that there is no danger to his task. In addition, he should also accomplish a little more in the extension of that task, else he will be addressed as the worst type of messenger. Hence I must perform that deed which has never been done before and which will eternally be remembered by all. Further I should also see Ravana's court. I will see Ravana and impart a little knowledge to him. Only thereafter I shall proceed to meet Rama'.

Immediately, this messenger of Rama, who had a body that was as strong as a diamond, began to uproot all the trees in Ashoka vana. Barring the tree under which Sita was seated, he destroyed the entire garden within minutes.

Seeing Hanuman who was uprooting all the trees, the demonesses asked Sita, "Who is he who, in the form of a monkey, is destroying the entire Ashoka vana?"

Sita said, "The secrets behind the illusions created by the demons are known only to you. How will I, who am suffering due to endless agony, know about him?"

Now the demonesses were totally frightened. They ran quickly and reported to Ravana of the damage saying, "O Lord! Some mighty being has arrived into the Ashoka vana in the form of a monkey and has destroyed the huge mansion as well as the entire Ashoka grove. He has killed many guards there".

Hearing this, in great alarm, Ravana thought, 'Who can destroy such a vast garden in minutes?' In great , he immediately sent 10 lakh troops called the kinkaras to the Ashoka vana.

Hanuman who was huge like a mammoth mountain was standing at the entrance of the mandapa holding a huge metal pillar as a weapon and moving his tail. His face was red and he was ferocious to look at. Seeing the mighty army that was coming towards him like a massive ocean, he roared, 'hum'.

With his roar, many kinkaras fell unconscious. Seeing Hanuman, the destroyer of demons, the kinkaras attacked him by hurling different types of weapons at him. However, just as an elephant crushes the mosquito, Hanuman stood up and, with the iron pillar that was held by him, within seconds crushed the Kinkaras to a fine paste.

Ravana was enraged on learning that the kinkaras were killed. He immediately sent 5 very powerful commanders who were very fierce in appearance to tackle Hanuman. Seeing them rush towards him, Hanuman killed them instantly with that iron pillar.

This news further enraged Ravana who now sent the 7 sons of his ministers. Hanuman effortlessly killed them all with that metal pillar and then went back to his place and sat there awaiting the arrival of more demons.

Thereafter, Aksha-kumara, the mighty and valourous son of Ravana arrived. Seeing him, Hanuman took up the iron pillar and flew into the air. From a great height, he dashed quickly and struck Aksha-kumara on his head with the pillar. He thus killed Ravana's dearest son Aksha-kumara and destroyed the entire army.

When Ravana learnt that Aksha had died, he was enraged beyond limits. He said to Indrajit, "My son! I shall kill that enemy who has killed my dearest son or bind and bring him here".

Indrajit replied, "Dear father! When I am alive, why do you seek to go? I shall bind that monkey with Brahma's noose and bring him here".

Accompanied by many mighty demon warriors, the heroic Indrajit went to capture Hanuman. Hearing Indrajit's roars, Hanuman took up the metal pillar and flew into the sky. Indrajit attacked Hanuman who was flying in the skies. He hit Hanuman's head with 8 very sharp arrows, the heart and the feet with 6 arrows

and the tail with an arrow and roared loudly. Delighted on hearing these roars, Hanuman in great joy used the pillar and killed Indrajit's charioteer, destroyed Indrajit's chariot and horses and reduced them to a pulp.

Thereafter Indrajit mounted another chariot, quickly released the Brahmastra and binding Hanuman with it and began to take him to Ravana.

That Lord Hanuman, by eternally chanting whose names Mahatmas free themselves from the noose called ignorance and reach the ultimate abode which illumines like a thousand Suns, has eternally fixed the lotus-feet of Lord Srirama in his heart-lotus. He was immediately freed from all bondage. Hence, no ropes or noose could ever harm Hanuman.

O Parvati! Hanuman who was bound by Brahma's noose and tied with other ropes was taken to Ravana's court. Observing the city as he walked, Hanuman went with them.

At that time, the demons assembled everywhere to see him. They were walking behind him, raining blows upon him with their fists and pricking him with their hands.

Due to Brahma's boon, the Brahmastra touched Hanuman's body only for a second and then vanished. Hanuman was aware of this but, as he wanted to achieve a far greater deed, he allowed himself to remain bound to the ropes with which he was tied.

Hanuman was now taken before Ravana. Indrajit said to the king, "O Lord! With the help of Brahma's boon, I bound this Vanara who has slaughtered many of our warriors, and have brought him here. O father! Discuss with the ministers what should be the apt punishment for him. He is no ordinary monkey".

Hearing this, the demon-king Ravana looked at Prahastha, who was jet-black like a mountain and asked, "O Prahastha! Ask this Vanara why he has come here, why he is destroying this place and why is he killing my warriors? To which place does he belong?"

Abiding by Ravana's command, in sweet words Prahastha questioned Hanuman, "O Vanara! Who has sent you here? Tell fearlessly. Who are you? I will get you released if you tell the truth in front of this king of kings".

Srirama's messenger Hanuman again and again thought of Srirama. Then, in great joy, he saw Ravana's magnificent court. Seeing his enemy Ravana who was like the thorn for all the three worlds, he joyfully began narrating the entire story of Srirama from the beginning.

He said, "Listen to me carefully. I am the messenger of that Srirama who resides in the hearts of all the living entities. Just as a dog stealthily takes away the offerings readied for the homa and meets death, seeking to destroy yourself, you have abducted the wife of the Lord of all worlds.

Know that Rama then arrived at the Matanga Mountain, where, with fire as a witness he sealed his friendship with Sugriva. Subsequently, with a single arrow, he killed Vali and crowned Sugriva as the king of the Vanaras.

That mighty Vanara-king Sugriva, who is assisted by innumerable crores of Vanaras, stands beside Rama, who is served by Lakshmana. He is deeply enraged at your wicked deed. Presently he is standing with them on the Pravarshana Mountain and has dispatched innumerable Vanara warriors in different directions to locate Mother Sita.

I, the son of the Wind-god, am one among those Vanaras. Searching for Sita I secretly entered this place and after an extensive search found her here. Being a monkey that is given to fickleness I destroyed the garden thereafter.

On seeing me your warriors sought to kill me with weapons. To protect myself, I had to kill them all.

The embodied beings consider their body to be very dear. They consider the body to be their Self. I destroyed their body. Then Meghanatha bound me with the Brahmastra and brought me here. Because of the boon given by Brahma, the Brahmastra touched and released me instantly. Despite being aware of this, with compassion and seeking to impart some good lessons to you, I pretended as if I was bound by it and have allowed them to bring me here.

O Ravana! Abandon your demonic nature. Using your wisdom ponder about the ways of the world. That which ultimately uplifts and frees those who have taken on a gross body from the repeated cycle of rebirths is the daiva marga (divine path). Adhere to it.

You are born in the great lineage of Brahma and are the son of Pulastya and the brother of Kubera. Even from the bodily angle, you do not belong to the demon clan. When seen from a supreme angle too, you are not demon.

Understand that the endless suffering that arises due to body, intellect, and senses do not pertain to the real you. You are unconnected to them. You are inherently changeless and unperturbed. That which arises due to ignorance is as unreal as the scene in the dream. In the real you, there are no transformations. You are non-dual.

Just as the sky pervades everything but remains untouched by anything, you who are the Self, are untouched by anything. Although existing in this body in a subtle form, you remain untouched by the joys, sorrows and other changes that arise from it. Due to associating with the body, senses and life-force, the individual soul gets bound to these bondages.

The individual who realizes, "I am Pure Consciousness; I am without birth; I am indestructible; I am form of bliss" - is freed from bondage.

As the body emerges due to the modification of the earth element, it is not the real Self. As the life-force is the modification of the wind element, it also is not the Self. As the mind is filled with I-ness (ahamkara), it too is not the Self. As it emerges from the modification of the Prakriti, even the intellect is not the Self.

The Self is an embodiment of Pure Consciousness and bliss. It is changeless. It is separate from the combination of the body and mind. Although dwelling in the body, the Self is nothing but the Supreme Self.

The Self is eternally pure. Without attaching to the bodies and their characteristics, it remains separate. The person who thus realizes the Self, is freed from bondage.

O wise man! Hence I shall teach you the means to attain liberation. Listen attentively. As devotion to Vishnu totally purifies the intellect, cultivate devotion to Him. Due to it, the extremely pure knowledge will arise in you.

(To cultivate this devotion, one must totally absorb the mind in listening to the glories of the Lord. The story must not be considered a mere story. We must enter into the character and listen to the story. Only then devotion arises).

Then the person perceives the Supreme Existence everywhere. Devotion enables him to completely understand the Supreme Essence and reach the ultimate abode.

Hence, without any delay serve Srirama who is Narayana, the foremost Lord. He is the husband of Lakshmi, is ancient and is all-pervading. Abandon enmity that exist in your heart. Giving up foolishness, serve Srirama who offers protection to those who surrender to him. Along with your sons and relatives, offer Sita back to him and prostrate before him. With this, you will be freed from fear and this demon kingdom will shine in all glory.

Can living beings who refuse to worship Srirama, the Supreme non-dual Lord who resides in the heart and who is a personification of bliss, ever hope to cross this endless agitated ocean of repeated rebirths that is replete with sorrow?

Being burnt in the fire of ignorance, you cannot protect yourself. Your sinful deeds will throw you into the worst of the hells. There will be no scope for liberation for you then”.

Unable to tolerate the nectarous words spoken by Hanuman, Ravana fumed with rage. With reddened eyes, he laughed boisterously and roared loudly, “What is it that you say?! Without any fear you dare to utter such words directly in my presence! O monkey! O wicked one! You are the worst among the Vanaras. I now know your intellect. After all who is that Rama? Who is the forest dweller Sugriva? I shall kill him who has sought friendship with Sugriva. Before that, I shall kill you immediately. Then I shall kill Janaki. After that, I shall kill Rama and Lakshmana. Shortly thereafter I will kill Sugriva along with his army”.

Hanuman, the son of the wind, was incensed on hearing this. Boiling in rage, he said, “O worst among demons! Even crores of Ravana cannot be equal to me in might. I who am Rama’s servant am of unlimited prowess”.

Driven totally mad with Hanuman’s words, Ravana angrily said to Prahasta, “Even when all the demons, friends, and relatives are watching, shred this monkey into bits”.

Prahastha took up his weapon and was going towards Hanuman when Vibhishana stood up & stopped them. He then said to Ravana, “O King Ravana! This Vanara has been sent by another king as a messenger. If the messenger is killed, then who will send the message of his death to Rama, whom you eagerly seek to kill? As this messenger should go back and inform Rama about us, you should give another punishment at par with death. Seeing him, Rama will come immediately with Sugriva for battle”.

Hearing Vibhishana’s words, Ravana said, “For monkeys their tail is very important and is a sign of their pride. Hence tie clothes to this monkey’s tail and set it on fire. Take him through the city and then set him free. Let all the citizens see his misfortunate condition”.

The demons then brought many bundles of cloth & began to tie Hanuman’s tail with them. They dipped the cloth in oil before tying the tail. Thereafter they lit the end of the tail.

They tied him with cords and loudly shouting, ‘He is a thief’, began to thrash him again and again as they took him through the streets of Lanka. Hanuman who wanted to teach them a lesson silently bore all the beating. In this way, being beaten by them Hanuman went along with them through the entire city.

When they reached the western gate, suddenly Hanuman shrunk himself to a very tiny form due to which the cords loosened. He escaped from the grip of the demons and suddenly flew atop the building towers. There he suddenly grew into a mammoth size, uprooted a pillar and killed all the guards there. Having done this, he jumped from one building to another setting them all on fire with his burning tail.

The valourous Vanara thus set on fire the entire city of Lanka. In this way, he gave an apt response to Ravana’s intelligence. Cries of lamentation and shrieks could be heard from all directions. He spared only Vibhishana’s home. Then he jumped into the ocean, and dipped that tail in the water due to which the fire was doused.

Due to Sita’s prayer and due to being friend of the wind-god, Fire-god Agni did not burn Hanuman’s tail. When chanting Rama’s name is sufficient to burn down all the sins of a person and ensure they immediately cross the fire called their sorrows, how can fire burn his special messenger?

Sundara kanda, Chapter 5

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Thereafter Hanuman went back to Sita, bowed to her and said, “O Devi! Now

permit me. Now I will proceed to meet Srirama. He will immediately come with brother Lakshmana and see you". He circumambulated her thrice and then said, "O Mother! I am leaving. Very shortly you will see Rama along with Lakshmana and crores of Vanaras".

Afflicted deeply by grief, Sita said, "Your presence here brought me great respite and delight. Now you are leaving. How can I live without knowing Rama's wellbeing?"

Hanuman said, "O Mother! If you wish, you can sit on my shoulder. In a second I will take you to Rama".

Sita said, "Let Rama come here with the Vanara army. Either he should dry the ocean or build the bridge, but he must come here, kill Ravana in the battle and then take me. Only then his renown will last forever. I will somehow sustain my life till then". She then permitted him to leave.

Hanuman then climbed the hill and soared to the skies. Due to the pressure put by him when leaping, the mountain that was 30 yojanas in height, was flattened and sunk into the earth. As soon as he reached the skies, he let out a loud joyous roar that reverberated everywhere.

Hearing his roar, the Vanaras, who were on the shore, realized that Hanuman was returning and they roared in great joy saying, 'Hanuman has completed the mission and is returning. From his roar it is evident'.

As they were speaking to each other in great excitement, Hanuman landed on the mountain peak. Addressing the Vanaras, He said, "I have seen Sita. I have destroyed Lanka that was filled with demons. I have spoken to Ravana and have come. Let us now proceed to Rama and Sugriva".

Hearing these sweet words, the Vanaras were extremely delighted. Some embraced Hanuman. Some kissed their tails in great joy. Some kissed Hanuman's tail. Some danced in great excitement.

With great enthusiasm, they all set out for Prashravana mountain to meet Rama and Sugriva. En route, they saw Madhuvana garden that was filled with bonsai trees. It was a garden zealously protected by Sugriva. The monkeys requested Angada, "O hero! We are very hungry. Permit us to eat these fruits and drink the honey from this garden. Thereafter we shall proceed to meet Rama".

Angada said, "O Vanara heroes! Hanuman has accomplished the great task and returned successfully. Hence as his prasada drink honey and quickly eat the fruits".

Hearing this, the Vanaras quickly rushed to the garden and began to drink the honey. Dadhimukha who was protecting the garden was aghast on seeing the Vanaras who, without his permission were eating fruits and drinking the honey. He sent the guards to warn them but without caring for those guards, the Vanaras continued to drink the honey. The guards violently thrashed the Vanaras. The Vanara heroes retaliated angrily by beating the guards with their fists and kicking them with their legs. After trashing them, they continued to relish the honey.

Dadhimukha, who was Sugriva's maternal uncle, was infuriated. Along with the guards, he quickly went to Sugriva and said, "O Lord! Based on your order, we have been zealously protecting the Madhuvana garden for a very long time. However today it has been destroyed by prince Angada and by Hanuman".

Sugriva was delighted to hear these words. Joyously he said, "Hanuman, the son of Wind-god, has seen Sita. This is undoubtedly true. If not, they would not dare to enter that garden and damage it".

He then said to Rama, "O Lord! Sita has been found. Hanuman and other Vanara heroes are in Madhuvana and are feasting on the fruits there. They have beaten all the guards. Without accomplishing my orders, they would not dare to even cast a glance at my Madhuvana garden. Hence it is evident that they have seen Sita".

He then said to the guards, "Do not fear. Go and tell Angada and other Vanaras that it is my order that they should come here immediately".

Hearing this, the guards travelled at the speed of the wind and said to Hanuman and others, "It is the King's order that you all should report to him immediately. Along with Rama and Lakshmana, he wants to see you all. O Vanara heroes! They are very pleased with you all and are eagerly waiting to meet you".

Led by Hanuman and Angada, the Vanaras set out to meet the king. They travelled in the path of the skies and quickly reached the place where Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva were seated.

Hanuman immediately said to Rama, "O Lord! I have seen Sita. She is safe".

He then bowed to Rama and Sugriva. Addressing Rama he said, "O King! My mother Janaki has enquired about your welfare. She is living under the Shimshupa tree in Ashoka vana and is being guarded by many fierce demonesses. Due to totally staying away from food, she is very lean and weak. She is wearing extremely soiled garments and is constantly lamenting, 'Aha! Rama, Ha Rama' and is weeping. Gently I consoled that mother who was grieving.

Sitting amidst the branches of the tree in a subtle form, I sang your story in minute detail and narrated how Ravana had kidnapped her during your absence, of your friendship with Sugriva, of killing Vali and of Sugriva sending the Vanara heroes in her search. I told her that I was one among those Vanaras and that I was the only one who arrived in Lanka. I informed her that I was Sugriva's minister and Srirama's servant and that I was fortunate to see her and that my efforts had rendered fruitful only with her darshan. Then in my subtle Vanara form, I bowed to her and stood afar.

O Lord! Sita scrutinized me and enquired, 'Who are you?' Once again I narrated everything in great detail to her and gave her the ring given by you. Seeing it she developed total trust in me and said, "O Hanuman! You have seen how I being tortured by these demonesses. Narrate all my sorrows to Rama".

I said to her, "O Mother! Like you, even Rama is grieving. Further he is agitated about not knowing your location". I then consoled her appropriately and said, "O Mother! Immediately I will report this to Rama. On hearing it, Rama will, along with Lakshmana and Sugriva and accompanied by the Vanara warriors will come here, kill Ravana along with his entire demon army and take you safely to your city. Give me something by which that Lord will believe that I have really met you. She then removed the crest-jewel from her hair and also narrated the story of Kakasura incident that took place on Chitrakoota Mountain.

Weeping profusely, she said, 'Tell my Rama that I am still alive. O Lord! Thereafter she asked me to convey this message to Lakshmana, 'O father! Please forgive me for the ignorant and harsh words that I have uttered earlier. With compassion for me, think of a plan by which Rama can save me from here. Make wholehearted efforts towards this'.

Saying this, she was again submerged in an ocean of grief and she wept profusely inconsolably. O Rama, I then narrated your story in detail and consoled her. Thereafter, on my return journey, I destroyed the Ashoka vana that is greatly loved by Ravana. I killed all the demons who confronted me, including Ravana's son Aksha-kumara. I met Ravana, spoke to him, burnt the city of Lanka completely and then have quickly come here".

Hearing these words, Rama could not contain his joy. In great delight, he said, "O Hanuman! This deed which you have accomplished is beyond the capacity of even the Devas. I do not know how I can repay you for this help. O Maruti! I give to you everything that I have". Saying this, he embraced Hanuman tightly while shedding joyful tears. With this, Hanuman obtained limitless joy.

Rama then said to Hanuman, "It is very rare for any entity to obtain this embrace from Me, the Supreme Lord. O best among Vanaras! You are my devotee and are very dear to me. Hence I have given you my embrace".

Those who worship Rama's feet with Tuasi and other ingredients obtain the unparalleled abode of Vishnu. Such Supreme Lord Srirama blessed Hanuman, the storehouse of all merit with His embrace. What more can we say of the fortune of Hanuman, the son of wind and the servant of Srirama?'- said Shiva

With this, Sundara Kanda comes to an end.

Day 19, July 29 2021

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 1

Lord Shiva said, 'O Parvati! Delighted with Hanuman's words, Rama said, "Our Hanuman has accomplished that deed which is unimaginable by anyone on earth & unaccomplishable even by the Devas. Who can leap over the ocean that is 100 yojanas? He has killed the strange demons, destroyed the exquisite Ashoka vana, the beautiful gem-studded mansions and also burnt the city of Lanka. He has accomplished all the tasks on Sugriva's behalf as his servant. Sugriva never had a servant like Hanuman in the past nor will he get one in future. Sugriva is truly fortunate.

Due to Hanuman's deed of seeing Janaki, the Raghu lineage, Lakshmana, Sugriva and all of us have been protected. The search for Sita has been accomplished. But the thought of crossing the ocean that is of 100 yojanas and which is filled with alligators and whales petrifies me. How can we cross it and kill the enemy? How can I see Janaki?"

Sugriva said, "O Rama! We will cross the ocean even if it is filled with alligators and other creatures, destroy Lanka and kill Ravana. O best among the Raghus! Abandon worry as it destroys the task. See the Vanaras who are filled with limitless might. They are ready to jump into the fire just to bring you joy. You devise a plan to cross the ocean. Then we will surely reach Lanka. Once we cross the ocean, Ravana is as good as dead. We will easily kill him, destroy the entire city, kill all the demons & bring Sita.

O Raghava! When you stand holding the bow and arrow, no one can confront you. Do the demons have any chance of survival when you are on the battlefield? Hence, O Rama! From every angle, victory is ours. This is the truth. The good omens here indicate this".

Then Rama turned to Hanuman and said, "Using some method or the other we must cross this ocean. But after that how do we proceed in Lanka which, even the Devas & danavas find impossible to conquer? Hence O Hanuman! You describe this city to me in detail. O great monkey! On learning this, I will take the future steps. Give me details of their strengths, weakness, army stations, moats and the weapons they use".

In absolute humility, Hanuman folded his hands and said, "I will describe whatever I have seen. The beautiful city, which is located on the peak of Mount Trikuta, has fort-walls made of gold. Even the walls and terraces of the buildings are made of gold. The city is surrounded by numerous water-filled deep moats containing alligators and other dangerous animals.

The city has many beautiful flower gardens, deep wells, tanks and many beautiful houses, the walls of which are inlaid with precious gems. Near the western gate, thousands of elephants are stationed. At the northern gate, the vast army comprising of the infantry and cavalry guards the city. At the eastern gate, an army regiment consisting of 10 crore warriors is stationed. An equal number of valorous soldiers guard the southern gate.

Even at the city centre, limitless horses, elephants, chariots and foot soldiers are stationed. Warriors who are adept in the usage of all forms of weaponry, including missiles and rockets, guard the city at all times. The city also has many underground tunnels.

O Lord! Let me tell you some of my deeds. I have killed 1/4th of Ravana's basic army and have burnt the city. I have destroyed the beautiful homes. O best among the Raghus! I have destroyed the underground tunnels and missiles.

O Lord! I know that merely with your gaze, the city of Lanka will get burnt. O Sureshwara! Now set out immediately. Along with the Vanara army, let us reach the salt ocean”.

Rama said, “Sugriva, command the armies to start marching. Presently the auspicious Vijaya muhurta is ruling. Leaving now will bestow us with victory. I will destroy that entire city, kill Ravana & return with Sita. Presently my right eye is twitching indicating success.

Let all the valourous Vanaras leave right away. The commanders will take positions in the front and back and at the sides and will protect the army from all directions.

I will sit on Hanuman’s shoulders and travel in front. Lakshmana will sit on Angada and travel behind me. Sugriva, you march along with me. Gavaksha, Nala, Gavaya, Mainda, Dvividha, Neela, Sushena, Jambhavanta and other army leaders who are competent to kill the enemy will come along with the armies”.

After giving these orders, accompanied by Lakshmana and Sugriva, in great joy Rama set out with the army. Each Vanara, who was like a mighty king elephant and who could take on any form as per his will, enthusiastically walked roaring and shouting loudly. As they walked they were drinking nectar and eating fruits. All along they enthusiastically shouted, ‘We will kill Ravana right now’.

In the centre of the army was Rama, who was seated on Hanuman’s shoulder. Beside him was Lakshmana who was seated on Angada’s shoulder. Rama and Lakshmana, who were in the centre of the army, glittered like the Sun and Moon located among the stars.

Beating the earth with their tails, crushing the trees on the path and plucking the fruits, the vast army marched forward fervently. Wherever one saw, countless monkeys and bears could be spotted. In great delight, under Rama’s protection, they travelled night and day without any break.

Crossing Malaya and Sahyadri hills, and admiring the beautiful forests in those mountain ranges, they marched and reached the tumultuous ocean at the southern shore.

Rama got down from Hanuman’s shoulder and along with Sugriva went to the ocean. He said, “We have reached this mighty ocean which contains many fearsome aquatic creatures. What is needed now is a concrete plan to cross this ocean. Without a plan, the Vanaras cannot cross it. Hence, till we draw a concrete plan, set up camps so that the Vanaras can rest”.

Sugriva made arrangements for the camps to be set up. Vanara warriors stood guarding those tents. With its loud, ferocious waves, the ocean, which was filled with humongous alligators and other dreaded animals, was roaring frighteningly. Seeing this massive ocean, all the vanaras began to weep uncontrollably not knowing how to cross it.

‘Like the skies, this ocean has no boundaries. No one can estimate its depth. Once we enter the waters, we do not know the direction in which we should proceed. How are we to cross such a terrible ocean?’- standing beside Rama, the Vanaras thus grieved.

Rama, the non-dual Supreme Lord and embodiment of knowledge, who had taken on a human form solely to complete the task of the Devatas, grieved piteously thinking of Sita.

He is the Supreme Self that is eternal in existence and is without the differences of sajatiya and vijatiya. When even the ignorant man who knows this truth about Rama cannot be touched by the sorrows, how can sorrows, joys, anger, desire, fear, greed, delusion and other traits of ignorance afflict Rama who is bliss and knowledge?

Only he who has body-identification grieves for this body. This sorrow does not affect one who considers himself to be the Self. Rama is an embodiment of knowledge. Merely chanting His name, frees the person from all sins. Even Shiva chants the name 'Rama'.

In the Sthitaprajna state when duality vanishes, only the non-dual Supreme experience remains. In that state, pain, sorrow, hunger etc. vanish. Joys and sorrows are the characteristics of the inert intellect. But, as intellect and other activities of the three attributes do not exist in the non-dual Pure Consciousness, sorrows cannot exist in him who is established in Pure Consciousness.

Rama is the Supreme Self who is eternal and ancient. He is eternal illumination, is without action and is eternally in bliss. Yet due to association with illusion, the ignorant consider him to be experiencing joys and sorrows.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 2

Lord Shiva said, 'O Parvati! Hanuman's deeds in Lanka, which even the Devatas could not perform, left Ravana embarrassed. He lowered his head in shame. Calling his ministers, he said, "All of you have witnessed Hanuman's deed. He has done that which is beyond the scope of any other being. He has entered the impregnable city of Lanka, seen Sita, killed demons, destroyed the city, killed Mandodari's favourite son Aksha-kumara and burnt the beautiful city of Lanka. Easily and effortlessly overcoming you all, he went away from here. Now I want all of you to think of a plan which will help me".

The ministers said, "O King! How can you, who have conquered all worlds, fear Rama? Your son Indrajit bound Indra, the Lord of the Devatas, & brought him before you. You conquered Kubera, took away his Pushpaka vimana and are presently enjoying it. You have conquered Yama, the Lord of death, and hence have no fear of the dictates of time. Varuna and others have been conquered by you. Fearing you, the mighty demon Maya offered his daughter to you. Even to date, he remains your subordinate. The mere mention of your name causes many others to tremble and die.

Hanuman could destroy the city only because we did not take him seriously considering him to be a mere monkey. We did not seek to show our might on an ordinary monkey. Due to our carelessness, Hanuman cheated us. However, there is nothing lost or gained with his valour. O Lord! Command us. We will kill all the monkeys and humans in this world and return".

Kumbhakarna, who heard all this, then said to the demon-king Ravana, "Dear brother! Your terrible deed will lead to your destruction. It is your fortune that Rama did not see you when you were abducting Sita. Had Rama seen you then, you would not have returned alive.

Rama is not a human. He is the Lord of all Lords. He is the indivisible Supreme Lord Narayana. His famous wife Sita, who is the epitome of beauty, is Mother Goddess Lakshmi. Being brought to Lanka by you, she became the cause for the destruction of the entire demon clan.

Just as the fish suffers and dies due to swallowing the poisoned bait, due to bringing Janaki here, you have invited your destruction. Even though your deeds are all wrong, I can set them right. Be at peace. Now at least get wisdom".

Hearing Kumbhakarna's words, Ravana's son Indrajit said, "O King! Permit me. I will kill Lakshmana along with Rama, Sugriva and the Vanaras and return".

At that moment Vibhishana, the best among the supreme devotees of the Lord, entered the hall. This wise devotee who, with absolute concentration, eternally meditated upon the lotus feet of Srirama, bowed to Ravana, the enemy of the Devatas, and took his seat. In deep astonishment, he observed Kumbhakarna and other demons. He saw Ravana who was being tormented by lust.

Being pure-minded, Vibhishana grasped the situation and said, "O King! Facing Rama in war is beyond the capacities of Kumbhakarna, Indrajit, Mahāparshva, Mahodara, Kumbha, Nikumbha, Atikayi and other rakshasas. No one is a match for Rama in battle.

O King! You have been trapped by the terrible alligator called Sita and now cannot get redemption. With great presents and wealth, you honour Sita and hand her back to Rama. Then you will be at peace.

O Lord! Before Rama's sharp arrows pierce Lanka and shred the heads of all the demons, become vigilant and offer Janaki to him. Otherwise, death is certain for you. But along with you, all other demons will get killed. Everything in Lanka will be destroyed.

Vanaras, with their lion-like prowess, are mighty warriors who have nails and teeth as their powerful weapons. Before they attack Lanka & destroy it, return Sita to Rama.

If you do not do this, then, o brother, even if Brahma and Shiva come to protect you, or you seek shelter in Indra's lap or hide behind the Lord of death or in Patala, you cannot escape from Rama. You will not remain alive".

However, just as a man doomed to die does not accept medicine, the foolish the demon-king Ravana did not heed Vibhishana's words. As if prompted by death, he instead rebuked Vibhishana saying, 'Using the comforts provided by me, you have sustained and nourished your body. After living under my protection, instead of working for my benefit, you are harming me. Although appearing externally like my friend and well-wisher, you are actually my enemy who seeks to harm me.

O ministers! Listen. Vibhishana is a wicked, ungrateful and impudent wretch. I can no longer live with him. It is known that the close relatives of a person often seek his destruction.

O wretched Vibhishana! Had any other demon from our race uttered such words, I would have killed him instantly. However, I do not want to kill you, although you are the worst among the demons. Never again show me your face".

Rebuked thus by Ravana with harsh and heart-piercing words, Vibhishana instantly held his mace and, along with 4 ministers, flew up to the skies from the centre of the court.

Standing there, shaking violently in absolute anger, he said to Ravana, "Do not invite your destruction. As an elder brother is at par with a father, seeking your well-being I am saying this. But without heeding my advice, you are insulting me.

Do you realize that seeking your destruction, time which causes destruction (Kāla) has taken birth in the home of Dasharatha, with the name Rama? Mother Kāli (the feminine form of that time) has taken birth as Janaka's daughter Sita. They have incarnated as humans solely for your destruction and to reduce the earth's burden. Triggered by them, you consider my well-meaning words to be a piece of ill advice.

Rama is the Supreme Essence who is beyond Prakriti. He is eternal in existence. He exists equally within & outside. He is everywhere and exists equally in all entities. He is ever pure and eternal. Just as the same fire appears to have different shapes based on the shapes of the different trees, to the ignorant He appears to exist differently due to His different names and forms.

Just as the crystal appears in blue, yellow and other colours due to proximity with those colours, due to the differences in the 5 sheaths, Rama appears to have taken those forms although He is untouched and pure.

Despite being eternally liberated, Rama reflects in the 3 attributes of his illusionary energy and appears in 4 forms as Kala, Pradhana, Purusha and Avyakta. Although being birthless, using Pradhana and Purusha as the cause, He creates this vast universe. In the form of time, He who is indivisible and changeless, annihilates everything. On Brahma's prayer, such time has, with His illusionary energy, incarnated as Rama to kill you.

That Supreme Lord who is of unfailing resolve will not change his resolve. He will kill you along with your family, sons and retinue. You are responsible for this destruction. As I cannot see you and the entire demon race being killed by Rama, I am leaving. You happily live in your house for eternity”.

Hurt by Ravana's harsh words, Vibhishana instantly left his house which was filled with all comforts. Seeking to serve Lord Rama's lotus feet, in great delight and with his heart overflowing with devotion, he quickly left from there.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 3

Lord Shiva said, 'Parvati! Thereafter, along with his 4 ministers, the fortunate Vibhishana reached the place where Rama had camped and loudly said, "O Lord Rama! I am Ravana's younger brother Vibhishana. My elder brother has thrown me out and I seek refuge in you.

O Lord! I explained morals to the ignorant fool Ravana and beseeched him to return Vaidehi to you. But being trapped by the noose of time, he did not heed my advice. Instead, enraged with me, he took up the sword threatening to kill me. So along with my 4 ministers, I left him. Frightened of this repeated cycle of rebirths and seeking liberation, I have come here and am seeking refuge in You”.

Hearing this, Sugriva said to Rama, "O Rama! One should not trust the demons as they are deceitful. Further, he is the younger brother of Ravana, the kidnapper of Sita. He is very strong and has come along with his 4 ministers all of whom are holding weapons. Finding the right opportunity, he will kill us all. Hence, O Lord! Command me. Right now the Vanaras will kill him. I am doubtful of his intentions. O Rama! Tell me what you feel is right”.

Rama smiled and said, "O best among the Vanaras! If I resolve I can instantly destroy the entire creation along with its inhabitants, and, within a second I can recreate them all. Hence there is no need for you to worry. As I have offered protection to Vibhishana, you go and bring that demon before me. It is my vow to protect him who has sought refuge in me just once. I will protect him from all fears. This is my principle”.

Sugriva who was delighted to hear this joyfully brought Vibhishana to Rama. In great delight and with overflowing devotion, Vibhishana fell flat on the ground and prostrated to Rama. Vibhishana joined his palms and prayed to the black-eyed Rama who had a joyous face, who was calm, who was equipped with bow and arrows, and who was accompanied by Lakshmana. He prayed,

“Obeisance to Rama, the king of kings! Obeisance to Sita's husband Srirama! I offer obeisance to Rama who wields the frightening and massive bow Kodanda. I bow to you, O Lord, who treats devotees as children.

I bow to him who is unending. I bow to Surgriva's friend Rama who is an epitome of peace, who is of limitless brilliance and who is the Lord of the Raghu clan.

I bow to that Lord who is the cause for the creation, sustenance and annihilation of the universes and who is the Guru for the three worlds. I offer obeisance to the primordial householder.

O Rama, you are the foundational cause for the universe. You are the one who sustains the world. You are the one into whom the universe dissolves.

O ever-independent Lord! O Lord who pervades the universe! You pervade all sentient and insentient objects. Existing within and outside of them, You illumine.

O Lord! Deluded by Your illusionary energy, the ignorant who lack the wisdom to decipher the real from the unreal, eternally engage in meritorious and sinful deeds and remaining in their sway, endlessly rotate in the cycle of births and deaths.

As long as the human being does not realize Your true essence, he misconstrues the unreal world to be real, just as silver is wrongly seen in the pearl shell. Not knowing You, the eternal truth, he remains attached to his wife, son and house believing them to shower happiness upon him.

O Lord! Although sensory pleasures ultimately end in sorrow, the ignorant man chases them, repeatedly experiences them and ultimately obtains only sorrow.

O Purushottama! You are Indra, Agni, Yama, Nirrti, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera and Rudra. You are subtler than even the sub-atomic particle. Yet You are bigger than the biggest object. You are the father, mother and protector of all universes.

You are without a beginning, middle and end. You are complete in all aspects. Although You do not have hands, legs, eyes and ears, you can hear everything, see everything, accept everything and move swiftly. You are beyond the 5 sheaths and without any attributes. You are changeless, formless and do not need any support for Your existence. Barring You, there is no ruler.

You are without the 6 transformations. You are superior to Prakrti and the primordial being. But yet, with the help of Your illusionary energy, You enact like a human being.

Those who are ardently devoted to You, gradually realize that you are devoid of attributes and without birth. With this realization, they obtain liberation.

O Raghava! I seek to climb the ladder called devotion to Your lotus feet, and through it obtain real knowledge. I offer obeisance to Rama, the husband of Sita. O merciful one! I bow to You. O enemy of Ravana! I bow to You. O Lord! Save me from this ocean of repeated rebirths”.

Rama, the lover of devotees, who was pleased with this prayer pleasantly said, “Vibhishana! May good befall you! Choose any boon”.

Vibhishana asked, “O Raghava! I am fortunate as I have accomplished the object of my birth. Due to seeing Your lotus feet, I have undoubtedly attained liberation. O Lord! I feel there is none as fortunate and blessed as me in this world as I could obtain a chance to see Your pleasant form.

O scion of the Raghu lineage! For breaking my karmic bondages, please shower on me the knowledge of Your true essence that is coupled with devotion. Also, shower upon me the capacity to meditate upon the Supreme Essence.

O Rama! I do not seek trivial sensory pleasures. I seek only unflinching devotion towards Your lotus feet. Please bless me with such devotion”.

Rama said, “So be it”. He then said, “O Vibhishana! I will teach My true essence which is absolutely secretive. Listen.

Along with Sita, I always reside in the hearts of Yogis who are devoted to Me, who are always calm and who are devoid of worldly attachments. This is undoubtedly true. Hence always remain calm and peaceful. Free yourself from all sins. With your mind eternally fixed on Me, free yourself from this terrible cycle of rebirths.

This prayer now uttered by you is very dear to Me. Those who chant it, write it or listen to it will attain oneness with me”.

Rama then said to Lakshmana, “O Lakshmana! Vibhishana will immediately obtain the fruit of having My darshan. This moment itself I will crown him as the king of Lanka. Fetch waters from the ocean. As long as the Sun and the Moon exist, as long as the earth exists, and as long as My story remains on earth, Vibhishana will rule Lanka”.

Rama then coronated him as the king of Lanka. Sugriva embraced Vibhishana and said, "We are mere servants of the Supreme Lord Rama. With devotion you have sought refuge in Rama and obtained his blessings. Hence you are the foremost among us. Now you help in the destruction of Ravana".

Vibhishana said, 'Who am I to help the Supreme Lord Srirama? Yet, without any deceit, with devotion, and to the best of my abilities, as his servant I will offer services".

At that time demon Shuka, the spy sent by Ravana arrived there. Standing in the skies, he said to Sugriva, 'Ravana, the king of the demons considers you as his brother and has sent this message to you. He says- 'Sugriva, as you are born in a good lineage and are the king of the Vanaras, you are like a brother to me. In what way are you affected if I have kidnapped the wife of another prince? I have not harmed you in any way. Hence, along with your army, you return to your kingdom. When even Devatas cannot set foot in Lanka, how can the weak humans and vanaras set foot here'?"

Even as Shuka was conveying this message, many vanaras flew up in the air and bashed him with their fists. Shuka who was being beaten by them said to Rama, "O King! A messenger should not be killed. Hence ask these Vanaras to stop".

Hearing his pitiable request and seeing his suffering, Rama instructed, "Do not kill him".

Shuka, who was then freed by the Vanaras, was ready to fly back to Lanka. He asked, "O King! What should I say to Ravana?" But then, on Rama's command, Sugriva bound Shuka and kept him in his custody.

Even before this, demon Shardula observed the Vanara army and precisely reported everything to Ravana. On hearing this, Ravana pondered very deeply about his future course of action.

Meanwhile, with eyes that had turned deep red due to anger, Rama looked at the ocean and said to Lakshmana, "O Lakshmana! The Lord of the ocean is wicked. Even when I have personally arrived here, he does not come forward to see me. Considering me to be a mere human, he neglects me. He believes that I, who am aided by monkeys, cannot harm him in any way. Hence, this moment, with my arrow I will dry up the ocean. With it, the Vanaras will easily walk across the ocean".

Saying this, he angrily strung his bow and fixed the arrow which was burning like the fire of annihilation. He pulled the bowstring to his ear and said, "Now all living entities will see the might of Rama's arrow. Right now I will dry up the ocean and burn down the Lord of the ocean".

When Rama uttered those words, the entire earth together with the mountains and forests trembled violently. The skies turned dark. The ocean was agitated and it shrunk by a Yojana. Tormented by the heat coming from the arrow, the alligators and other ocean animals agonized piteously.

Exactly at that moment, the Ocean-god manifested there in a divine form. With his divine ornaments, he was illumining the 10 directions. Holding precious gems he came to Rama, offered them at His feet, prostrated to Him and then said, 'O Lord of the universes! Protect me. O Rama! You are the protector of the 3 worlds. Protect me. In this universe created by you, I was created wickedly. It is impossible to overcome one's inherent nature.

The 5 gross elements created by you are inherently inert and do not transgress your orders. O Rama! As they are born from tamasic ahamkara, they naturally exhibit their tamasic qualities.

O Lord! But You are changeless and formless. Playfully You assume many forms and take on the name Virat (Universal form). From the Sattva aspect of the Virat form, which is filled with attributes, the Devatas were born. From the Rajasic aspect, Prajapati was born. From the tamasic aspect, Rudra ganas were born. If so, how can I, who am enveloped by illusion and deluded due to it, know You as one who transcends the attributes?

O Lord! Only through punishment, fools and animals learn lessons. O Lord of all Lords! O lover of devotees! I seek refuge in You. Protect me. I will show the way to cross the ocean”.

Rama said, “This powerful arrow fixed by me is infallible and cannot be withdrawn. Quickly show the target where I should release it. On whom should I direct it?”

The Ocean-god said, “O best in the Raghu lineage! To the North is a place called Druvaykulya which houses numerous sinful creatures who torment me night and day. Release the arrow on them”.

Rama released the arrow which instantly destroyed the sinful creatures and quickly returned to his quiver.

Then, in all humility Ocean-god said, “O Lord! Vishwakarma’s son Nala, who is very wise and competent, will build the bridge on my waters. Due to a boon obtained by him, he will be successful in building the bridge. With this, the world will know of your renown that washes away all impurities”- saying this, he bowed to Rama and left.

Rama, Sugriva and Lakshmana then instructed Nala to quickly build the bridge with the help of the other Vanaras. Along with the Vanara army commanders, each of whom was the size of a huge mountain, Nala built the bridge using mountain rocks and trees. The bridge was very wide and strong spanned 100 yojanas in length.

Day 20, July 30 2021

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 4

Lord Shiva said, ‘O Parvati! At the commencement of the construction of the bridge, Rama installed Shivalinga at Rameshwara seeking the wellbeing of the world. He worshipped it and said, “The human who sees and offers obeisance to this Shiva and this bridge will, with my blessings, be freed from all sins including the sin of killing a Brahmin.

With a good resolve, the person should bathe at the Ramasetu, and then have darshan of Shiva at Rameshwara. Thereafter, he must go to Varanasi, get the water from River Ganga and do abhishekam to Lord Ramesha at Rameshwara. Thereafter in this ocean, he should deposit that sacred pot. Such a person will surely attain the Supreme Lord”.

In 5 days, Nala completed the bridge construction. On the 1st day he constructed 14 yojanas, on the 2nd day he constructed 20 yojanas, on the 3rd day he constructed 21 yojanas, on the 4th day he constructed 22 yojanas and on the 5th day he constructed 23 Yojanas. In this way, a strong bridge that spanned 100 Yojanas in length was constructed by the innumerable Vanaras in short time.

Thereafter the Vanaras crossed the bridge very quickly, arrived in Lanka and halted near the Mountain Suvela. Anxious to view Lanka, Rama sat on Hanuman’s shoulders while Lakshmana sat on Angada’s shoulders and reached the peak of the high Suvela Mountain.

Standing there, Rama saw Lanka which was extremely extensive. It was filled with many colourful flags. With strange forts, wide moats, many golden skyrisers, many gate towers, arches and missiles, it was shining. On a huge and wide terrace, the 10 headed Ravana, who was dark-complexioned, was seated majestically. He appeared like the peak of a blue mountain. He was accompanied by many competent ministers. Numerous royal umbrellas that were laced with gems were held over his head.

After viewing the city, Rama ordered the release of the demon Shuka. Set free by them, Shuka quickly went to Ravana who smilingly enquired, “O Shuka what happened?”

Shuka said, “O Demon-king! As commanded by you, I went to the Northern side where the Vanaras were stationed and reported your message as is. However, immediately the monkeys flew into the skies, caught me and with their teeth and nails bound me. They were about to kill me when I beseeched Rama for help.

On his command, they released me from their grip. I have observed the might of the Vanara army from all angles and have come here.

O demon-king! All of them are mighty warriors. Very shortly they will reach the boundaries of Lanka and will not spare us.

When I was returning to you, Rama called me and has given this message for you, 'That strength, army and retinue, trusting which you abducted Sita from me, – may they all come forward now and show their capacities. Tomorrow morning with my arrows and army I will destroy your city filled with arches and forts. You will witness your city getting destroyed and your might dwindling. I am about to show my might to you. Understand this'- this is the message given by Rama to you.

O Lord! Even if all the Vanaras abstain from battle, the four warriors- Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana alone can rout Lanka completely. I say this as I have experienced their might.

I have scanned Rama's form, weapons and strength very carefully and I believe that, even without the help of the other three, He alone is competent to destroy Lanka completely.

Just look there. Countless Vanaras are filling our entire land and are standing in order of their positions. Each of them is like a huge mountain. Wherever we see, only Vanaras are found.

Sugriva's army commander, Nila, who is the son of Fire-god, is roaring outside Lanka and is surrounded by one lakh Vanara warriors. Next to him is Vali's son Angada, who is like an enormous mountain peak, and is very mighty. He is showing his wrath by hitting the earth with his tail repeatedly.

Beside him is the supremely renowned Hanuman who is extremely dear to Rama, who located Sita and who killed your son Aksha-kumara. Thereafter is the vanara Rambha who glitters like the white silver. In mighty and wisdom he is supreme. He looks like a lion, is alone capable of destroying Lanka & is a Mahatma.

Look there. He who is ready to burn Lanka is the Vanara Sharabha who is the leader of one crore monkey regiment. Besides, the Vanaras Panasa, Mainda, and Dvididha are equally competent and mighty warriors. Vishwakarma's son Nala who built the bridge is extremely powerful. Each Vanara is mighty, heroic, heavy-bodied, and has the competence to destroy Lanka completely. Even Indra and other Devatas cannot destroy them.

It is impossible to describe these Vanaras who are countless. Our city which is surrounded by seas on all sides is now surrounded by monkeys.

Under each commander mentioned above are 21 lakh-crore warriors and another hundred thousand million mighty warriors. I have so far described the might of only a few of Sugriva's ministers. I am unable to estimate the might of the others.

O King! Do not kill me but I seek to say something. Rama is not human. He is the Supreme Lord Narayana. Sita is the energy of knowledge and the form of the universe. She is the universal soul. The entire universe consisting of sentient and insentient objects emerged from them and hence they are its mother and father. Enveloped by ignorance, you are unable to under the truth that Sita is mother of the universe. If so, is there any scope for you to survive after earning their enmity?

This world which is filled with names and forms is destructible. Even this gross body made of 24 elements is fleeting in existence and is made of flesh, pus, urine, and excreta. It is a nest made of bones, is foul-smelling, inert, and is the storehouse for egoism.

Why then do you have attachment for this body which is not the Self? Attachment to the body only leads to one's destruction. Unable to know the Supreme Self who resides within, you are succumbing to worthless desires and attachments and engaging in sinful deeds believing this body to be everything.

The joys and sorrows that emerge from the meritorious and sinful deeds chase the embodied soul night and day and cause it to take up a body. As long as the body exists, due to ignorance, the soul believes 'I am the doer of the action'. This false knowledge remains till the end of that birth. If Self-knowledge does not arise in the being, the cycle of rebirths continues.

O wise one! Hence abandon attachment to this body. Know that the Self is very pure, clean, unstained, knowledgeable, without movement, without modification and without destruction.

Bondage arises due to not learning about the Self. It causes the being to succumb to delusion. Hence, with a pure mind, understand that the Self is very pure. Meditate on it. Develop detachment towards sons, wife, house, and other belongings, for, even in the hellish bodies like those of pigs and dogs, some sensory pleasures can be enjoyed.

(We have taken birth 80 lakhs times as aquatic times. Thereafter 80 lakhs as animal births. Thereafter 80 lakhs as birds. Then we get a human birth. In that human birth if we do not get spiritual knowledge again we slip to lower levels).

To obtain a human birth is extremely rare. In this very rare human birth, you have obtained the rare fortune of being born a Brahmin. To obtain birth in the land of action called Bharata is very rare. The learned man who has obtained them will not chase sensory pleasures. After obtaining birth as the son of Vishravas and the grandson of Pulastya, like an ignorant man why are you succumbing to sensory pleasures and chasing them?

Nothing is permanent. O Ravana! At least now abandon attachment for these objects and with total devotion eternally worship Rama, the Supreme Lord. Return Sita to him and serve his lotus feet. Thereby free yourself from all sins and attain Vishnu loka.

If not, even after obtaining this human birth you will fall to the lowest levels. Apart from this, there is no other way by which you can uplift yourself. Know that I speak thus only for your upliftment. Listen to me.

Surrender to the virtuous souls and seek their association. Rama dearly loves those who have surrendered to him. Hence seek shelter in the Supreme Lord Rama who destroys the sins of all, who illumines like the emerald, who is accompanied by Sita, who holds a bow and arrow, and whose feet are served by Sugriva, Lakshmana, and Vibhishana. Think of him eternally".

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 5

Lord Shiva said, 'O Parvati! Hearing from Shuka these auspicious words that destroyed ignorance, Ravana was enraged. Looking at Shuka with reddened eyes that appeared to burn him down, he roared, "O wicked man! Being my servant how dare you talk to me as if you are my teacher?! Do you know that I am the ruler of the 3 worlds? Don't you, a mere servant, feel ashamed to advise me thus? Although you are worthy of being killed, remembering your past good help I am sparing your life today. Do not show me your face ever again. I cannot tolerate these words"- Shivering in fright, Shuka left the place.

Previously, Shuka was a Brahmin who had thoroughly studied the Vedas. He was the best among those who were learned in the Vedas. Adhering to the Vanaprastha way of life and diligently following all the disciplines of that stage, this wise man was living in the forests performing many Yagnas seeking the well-being of the Devas and the destruction of the demons. Due to this, the demons developed enmity with him while the Devas treated him as a well-wisher.

Demon Vajradamshtra who lived in that forest was always vigilantly seeking an opportunity to harm this Brahmin.

Once it so happened that Agastya Maharishi arrived there. Brahmin Shuka worshipped him reverentially and invited him for food. Maharishi accepted the request. Thereafter the Maharishi went to the river for his bath. Seizing this opportunity, demon Vajradamshttra assumed Maharishi Agastya's form and said to Shuka, 'O Brahmin, since you seek to feed me, cook mutton for me. It has been long since I have eaten a goat'.

The Brahmin agreed and began to cook accordingly. Meanwhile, the demon rendered Shuka's beautiful wife unconscious and took on her form and began to assist in the cooking. A little later, Maharishi Agastya completed his bath and austerities and arrived. The demon fed the Maharishi with the deliciously cooked human flesh and meat and then instantly vanished from there.

Maharishi Agastya was furious when he was served impure food that should not be eaten. He angrily said, "Knowing that this food is impure and that it should not be eaten, you have served this to me. Hence, from today you will become a demon and a cannibal".

Brahmin Shuka trembled. He piteously asked, "O Maharishi! I acted as per your commands. You had asked me to serve you different types of meat. If so why are you cursing me?"

Maharishi then meditated for a while. He realized that it was the evil-doing of a demon. He said, "O Shuka! A demon has acted thus seeking to harm you. Without thinking I have cursed you. But as my words cannot become false, you will become a demon. Go to Ravana. Live there till the time Rama along with the Vanaras arrives to kill Ravana. At that time, Ravana will send you as an envoy to Rama. The moment you see Rama you will be freed from the curse. Thereafter you will then teach Supreme Essence to Ravana. With this, you will obtain the ultimate state called liberation".

In this way, Brahmin Shuka became a demon and entered Ravana's group. After obtaining Rama's darshan, he taught the Supreme Essence to Ravana. With this, he regained his original Brahminical form. He then began to live with the Vykhanaasa vanaprasthas in the forests.

After Shuka left, Malyavan, the aged, wise, virtuous, and intelligent demon who was extremely dear to Ravana, came there and said, "O demon-king! With a calm mind listen to my words and then do as you please. From the day Rama's beloved Janaki stepped into Lanka, I am spotting many ill omens that predict the destruction of the demon race. I will narrate them. Listen.

The clouds are thundering frightfully. It rains hot blood. The idols of the deities are weeping, sweating, and shaking. Mother Kali who has white teeth, stands before the demons and laughs boisterously.

The cows are giving birth to donkeys. Rats and mongooses are engaged in bitter fights. At another place, they are fighting with the cats. Snakes and eagles are fighting. The mighty and fearsome Lord of time who is dark-complexioned is repeatedly staring at the homes of the demons. Newer ill-omens are arising daily.

Hence O ten-headed one! Make peace to save the demon race. Honour Sita and along with wealth, offer her to Rama reverentially.

Know that Srirama is Lord Narayana himself. Abandon aversion towards Him. Knowledgeable beings surrender to the lotus feet of Srirama and cross the ocean called repeated rebirths. Understand that such Srirama is not a mere human.

Realizing him to be the dweller in every heart, serve Him with total devotion. By doing so, even though you are evil-minded, you will be purified. O King! For the well-being of the demon race, listen to my words".

Due to the force of time, the wicked-minded Ravana, could not tolerate that well-meaning advice. He, therefore, retorted, "O Malyavan! Why do you consider that lowly human, who lives like a hermit, who is dependent on monkeys, who was exiled by his father, and who is loved by the Rishis, as competent? I believe that prompted by Rama you have come here. Hence, without any inhibition, you are seeking to

advise me. Get away from here. I am tolerating your words solely because you are old and are my relative. But your words are filling my ears with fire and are burning me”.

Seething in anger, along with all his ministers, Ravana quickly left the place. Going to the terrace atop his mansion, he observed the Vanara army. He then ordered all the demons to get ready for battle.

Seeing Ravana who was with his ministers, in intense fury Rama released a crescent-shaped arrow. In an instant, that arrow broke all the 10 crowns on Ravana’s heads and the hundreds of umbrellas that stood over his heads.

Embarrassed beyond limits, Ravana immediately retired to his palace. Thereafter the evil-minded Ravana called Prahastha and other demons and instigated them for battle.

When the drums, kettle drums, and other instruments were being loudly beaten, the demons took their positions. They used buffaloes, donkeys, horses, lions, tigers, and mules as their vehicles. Holding axes, bows, darts, pestles, bludgeons, spears, lances, nooses, shakti, and other weapons, they rushed to the main gates of the city.

Meanwhile, on Rama’s orders, the Vanara heroes who were enthusiastically letting out war cries and were shouting, ‘We are ready for war. War! War!’, held trees, mountain-peaks, huge boulders, and other weapons and attacked Lanka.

Shouting, ‘Victory to Rama! Victory to Lakshmana! Victory to the Vanara king Sugriva!’- they attacked the demons.

Hanuman, Angada, Nila, Nala, Jambhavan, Kumuda, Sharabha, Mainda, Dvididha, Dadhimukha, Kesari, Tara, and other prominent warriors surrounded all the city gates. The Vanara warriors uprooted huge trees and mountain peaks and attacked the enemy. They also used their nails and teeth to severely injure the demons. Meanwhile, the mighty demons, rushed out of the city gates in absolute fury and with axes, tridents, spears, and other weapons attacked the Vanaras.

The victorious Vanaras reciprocated by fighting vehemently. In the war that followed they killed many demons. The entire battlefield was filled with blood, flesh, and corpses making it murky. The war between the Vanaras and demons intensified. Mounting horses, elephants, and chariots, the demons let out terrible warcries that reverberated in 10 directions.

Empowered due to the gaze of the Supreme Lord Rama, the Vanaras fought valiantly like the Devas who had drunk nectar. Due to being protected by the wicked Ravana, the demons were losing their luster and prowess. With renewed enthusiasm, the Vanaras were slaughtering the demons.

Meghanatha (Indrajit) observed that only 1/4th of the demon regiment remained on the field. Worried that his army was getting destroyed, he used Brahma’s boon to make himself invisible. He then released the Brahmāstra and other weapons upon Rama’s army and injured the Vanaras. He also shot arrows on Rama. Everyone was astonished at this feat.

Rama knew that one must revere Brahmastra and hence remained silent for a second to show respect to it. Thereafter, burning angrily he shouted, “Lakshmana, fetch my weapon. Using the Brhamastra, I will burn down this vile demon”.

Meghanatha trembled hearing this. He again resorted to magic and rendered himself invisible and quickly fled to the city. Rama lamented piteously seeing the vast troops of Vanaras who had died due to the weapon released by Meghanatha.

He said to Hanuman, “Quickly go the milk-ocean. There you will find the Drona mountain which is replete with many divine herbs. Quickly fetch it so that we can revive the dead Vanara heroes. This will bring you eternal renown”.

Hanuman instantly flew to the milk-ocean, fetched the Drona mountain and revived the dead Vanaras. Thereafter he restored that mountain back to its original place and returned.

The Vanara army that was revived roared enthusiastically and ferociously as before. Ravana, who was wonder-struck hearing their shouts, issued the following order, "Rama is my ultimate enemy who has been deputed by the Devatas. All those who are dear to me, who are my relatives and who seek my love, and the commanders who obey my commands, should go to the battlefield to destroy him. I shall kill the timid ones who, due to fear of life, transgress my command".

Frightened with this order, all the demon warriors like Atikaya, Prahasta, Mahanatha, Mahodara, Devashatru, Nikumbha, Nirantaka, and others came out to fight. Hundreds and thousands of demon warriors rushed forward and attacked the Vanara army.

Conceited with their physical might, the demon forces attacked the Vanaras with weapons known as Bhindipala, Bhushundi, swords, arrows, lances and axes. The Vanara heroes uprooted trees, held sharp mountain-peaks, and using their fists, nails, and teeth fervently attacked the demon forces.

Few demons met their end in Rama's hands. Few others were killed by Lakshmana, Angada, Hanuman, Sugriva, and other army commanders.

It is purely due to Rama's power that the Vanaras could efficiently handle and fight the mighty demon forces with increased energies. If not, how could they attain that capacity?

Srirama is the Supreme Self who is eternally in the Sacchidananda state. He is the Lord for all existences and regulates them all. This supreme existence decided to seek refuge in its illusionary energy and incarnate in a human form. Having incarnated as a man, He followed the human ways and engaged in the war and all other human activities.

Day 21, July 31 2021

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 6

Lord Shiva said, 'O Parvati! Ravana who heard that the entire army under the leadership of Atikaya was badly destroyed was aggrieved beyond limits. His fury knew no bounds. Stationing Indrajit for Lanka's protection, he mounted a golden chariot equipped with every type of weapon and, along with a massive army, set out to the battlefield eager to fight with Rama.

With sharp arrows, he killed many Vanaras. Using sharp, snake-like powerful arrows, he caused Sugriva and many other prominent Vanara warriors to swoon. Seeing Vibhishana who was holding the mace, in total fury he hurled the shakti weapon that had been given to him by demon Maya. Just as the Shakti-weapon was about to hit Vibhishana, Lakshmana quickly held up his bow and stood before Vibhishana guarding him like an immovable mountain.

Due to this, the shakti weapon pierced Lakshmana. As Lakshmana was the partial aspect of the 1000 headed serpent Adi-shesha, the weapon could not harm him, nevertheless, as he had assumed the human form, to respect that weapon he swooned and fell to the ground.

Ravana immediately resolved to carry Lakshmana away into Lanka. Using his hands he tried his best to lift Lakshmana from the earth. But he failed. As Lakshmana is the Supreme Lord and the universal form who is the sole support for the universe, the vile, insignificant demon could not even move him.

When Hanuman noticed Ravana trying to carry away Lakshmana, he was enraged. Using his fists that were as powerful as diamonds, he vehemently hit Ravana on the chest. Hit by Hanuman, Ravana fell on his knees and blood began to gush out from his mouth, ears, and eyes. His head reeled and he was thrown to the back of his chariot.

Hanuman then gently carried the unconscious Lakshmana and took him to Rama. The shakti-weapon released by Ravana recognized that Lakshmana was an aspect of the Supreme Lord Narayana and hence he could not be killed. Therefore it returned to Ravana's chariot.

By then Ravana regained consciousness. In unabated fury, he took his bow and rushed to attack Rama. Angered on seeing Ravana rushing to attack him, Rama, the Lord of all Universes, who saw Ravana coming in the chariot, sat on Hanuman's shoulder and twanged his bow. Twanging the bow produced loud deafening sounds that appeared to reduce even Indra's Vajrayudha to rubble.

Then, in a deep, grave voice Rama said to Ravana, "O worst among the demons! You have done many unpardonable offences. Yet I have tolerated them all. Now you are before me. Having committed an offence against one who perceives everything equally, how can you escape from me? I shall now kill you with the same arrow with which your followers at Janasthana were killed. Just stand here before me for a while".

Hearing this, Ravana released arrows in quick succession and attacked Hanuman. Even when he was being pierced with extremely sharp arrows, Hanuman's strength only increased and he roared loudly like a lion.

Seeing Hanuman wounded, Rama's wrath intensified. In that anger he resembled Rudra, the destroyer of the creation. He invoked into himself the fury of all 11 Rudras. Releasing very pointed and sharp arrows, he killed the horses yoked to Ravana's chariot, broke the chariot, destroyed its flag, killed the charioteer, and broke all Ravana's weapons including his bow. He broke the umbrella.

Instantly releasing another arrow that was as powerful as the thunderbolt, he injured Ravana who was mighty like a mammoth mountain. Ravana who could not withstand the intensity of Rama's attack was panicky. The bow slipped from his hand.

Seeing this, using a half-moon-shaped arrow, Rama cut off the crowns on Ravana's heads and then said, "O Ravana! I permit you to return home. You are distressed due to the wounds caused by my weapons. Go and rest today. Return to the battle tomorrow. Then you will have a greater experience of my valour".

These words shattered Ravana's pride. Embarrassed at being badly injured with Rama's weapons, in haste and humiliation he quickly returned to Lanka. Blood was oozing from his body and the pain was unbearable.

Rama who noticed Lakshmana had fallen unconscious said to Hanuman, "O Hanuman! Again go and fetch the medicinal herbs and revive Lakshmana. Also bring back to life all the deceased Vanaras".

Hanuman agreed and quickly and effortlessly crossed the ocean.

The spies instantly reported to Ravana, "O King! On Rama's command, Hanuman has gone to the milk-ocean to fetch medicinal herbs to revive Lakshmana".

On hearing this, Ravana was deeply worried. Instantly he went to Kalanemi's house. Shocked at seeing Ravana at his doorstep, Kalanemi instantly stood up and greeted him. With total fear, he reverentially welcomed Ravana and then asked, "O King! How can I serve you?"

Ravana who was overcome with total sorrow said, "Due to the force of time, I am sunk into deep troubles. The Shakti-weapon released by me hit Lakshmana who fell dead. To revive him, Hanuman has gone to fetch the medicinal herbs. O wise one! Hanuman's efforts should be rendered futile. Hence come up with a plan.

O Kalanemi! You are adept at magical tricks. Hence you assume the form of a Rishi and trick that great monkey. Ensure that the time within which those medicinal herbs work elapses before he returns. Follow

my command and return home”.

Hearing this, Kalanemi said, “O Lord! Listen to my words and understand the truth. Not caring for my life, I shall work for your benefit but I am sure to meet the same fate that Marichi obtained due to assuming the form of a deer.

Your sons, relatives, and many demon warriors have already died. After destroying the demon race, why do you still seek to live? Do you seek to live for the kingdom or for Sita or for this body which is inert? What do you gain from any of them?

Listen to me and return Sita to Rama. Hand over the kingdom to Vibhishana. O mighty-armed one! Proceed to the forests that are filled with Rishis. Bathe in the early hours of the day, and complete Sandhya and other obligatory duties. Sit in solitude. Stop all external activities and associations. Turn inwards all the senses that chase the external objects.

O meritorious one! Focus on the Self that is different from the Prakriti (illusionary energy). The entire universe comprising of moving and non-moving objects, including the intellect, body, senses, and also everything from Brahma to the blade of grass- in fact, everything seen and heard in creation is called Prakriti. That is maya or illusionary energy. It is the root from where the creation, sustenance, and annihilation of the universes take place. It generates white, red, and dark-complexioned beings.

It creates the sons called desire, anger and other passions and daughters called violence, insatiable cravings, and other tendencies. Then with its attributes, this illusion eternally deludes the all-pervading Self, which is the Lord of all beings. Such an illusion approaches the beings in different ways.

Maya (illusion) then imposes upon its Lord i.e. upon the Self, its qualities of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship. Keeping its Lord (Self) in its sway, it eternally sports. Associating with illusion, the Self gets deluded by its attributes and forgets its inherent form.

The Self is eternally pure. Nevertheless, it focuses only on external objects at all times. The Self that is awakened with Pure Knowledge obtained through the Sadguru, who is an embodiment of knowledge, reverses from its eternal focus on the external objects. Then it sees its inherent original form. With this, the embodied being attains liberation. He will be freed from the attributes of Nature.

O Ravana! Restrain your senses. Eternally focus upon the inherent form of the Self. Know the Self which is different from the Prakriti and with this attain liberation. If you are incompetent to pursue meditation, then seek refuge in the Lord with attributes and form (Saguna).

In your heart, meditate upon Rama who, along with Sita, is seated on a golden throne studded with precious stones. Meditate upon Him as seated in Veerasana, having wide lotus-like eyes, wearing the garment that illumines like lightning, wearing the crown, garland, pearl chain, Kousthubha gem, and other ornaments, illumining with the beautiful Vanamala garland, bracelets, golden armlets, holding two bows and being served by Lakshmana.

The person who, with utmost devotion, meditates upon the Lord who resides in every heart, will undoubtedly attain liberation.

With absolute concentration listen to His glories from the mouths of ardent devotees. By doing so, even the most-terrible sins will burn down instantly like the ball of cotton thrown into the fire.

Abandon enmity with Srirama who is non-dual and complete in all aspects. Have unflinching devotion for him. The feeling of Supreme Existence that is entertained in every heart has manifested as Rama. He is devoid of name and form. He is ancient Purusha. Serve Him”.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 7

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Kalanemi's nectarine words further fuelled Ravana's fury. He exploded like the drop of water that had fallen into the pot of boiling ghee. With reddened eyes, he loudly screamed, "I shall now kill you, who dares to go against my commands. You talk like one who has been bribed by the enemy". Kalanemi said, "O Lord! Why are you angry with me? If you did not like my words I shall do as you say".

Then, under Ravana's direction, Kalanemi decided to create an obstacle in Hanuman's task and, with this intent, quickly reached the Himalayas. With his illusionary powers, he created a magical hermitage. Taking the form of a Rishi he was seated in it with many disciples.

Meanwhile, Hanuman who was travelling in the path of skies, spotted a beautiful, auspicious hermitage. He thought, "This is the ashram wherein some supreme Rishis reside. I shall go there and meet the Rishis. I shall drink water there and then proceed to the Drona mountain".

Thinking thus, he set foot in the ashram which was 1 Yojana long in all directions. Plantain, sal, date, jackfruit, and other trees filled the place. The weight of the fruits borne by them caused the trees to bend to the earth. The animals there had given up animosity with one another and were totally at peace.

In that beautiful ashram, Kalanemi, who had resorted to magical powers, appeared to be engaged in Shiva's worship. Hence Hanuman mistook him for an ardent devotee of the Lord. Bowing to him in all humility, Hanuman said, "O great Rishi! I am Hanuman, the messenger of Rama. I am proceeding to the milk-ocean to accomplish Rama's task. O revered Maharishi! I am exceedingly thirsty. Show me where I can get water. I will go there and drink plenty of water freely".

Hearing this Kalanemi said, "O Hanuman! Take the water from my waterpot and then eat fruits from these trees. Rest for a while here. There is no hurry. With the powers of my penance, I know all that has happened in the past, that which is happening now and that which is to happen in the future. I will direct you to the future course of action. With Rama's powerful gaze, Lakshmana and other Vanaras will return to life".

Hanuman then said, "O revered one! The water in your water pot will not quench my thirst. Hence show me a water body wherein I can quench my thirst".

Kalanemi then addressed a boy whom he had created through illusion and said, "O Brahmachari! Show to Hanuman the mighty pond".

He said to Hanuman, "Quickly drink water and return. I shall impart to you the mantra by which you can easily locate the medicinal herb".

Hanuman agreed. He quickly went to the lake shown by the boy. Entering the pond, he began to drink the water with closed eyes. At that time, a ferocious female crocodile caught him in its jaws trying to gobble him. In intense anger, Hanuman tore its jaws and killed it.

At that moment he saw a divine damsel standing in the skies. She was Dhanyamali. She said, "O best among monkeys! Due to your grace, I have been redeemed from the curse. I am an apsara who was cursed by a Rishi. O meritorious one! The one whom you have seen in the ashram is not a Rishi. He is the demon Kalanemi. To create an obstacle in your path he has been sent here by Ravana. He is an imposter. Further, this Kalanemi tortures Brahmins. He is wicked. Hence kill him and quickly proceed to Drona Mountain. With your touch, I have been freed from all sins. I am now proceeding to Brahma-loka"- saying this Dhanyamali left.

Hanuman, who was now freed from exhaustion, returned to the ashram. Seeing him, Kalanemi said, "O best among Vanaras! Why did you delay? Now learn from me the mantra and give me Guru dakshina".

Hanuman closed his fist and said, "First I shall give you the Guru dakshina". He hit Kalanemi once with his fist. With this, Kalanemi let go of his guise as a rishi and manifested in his real form. Showing many illusions, he fiercely fought with Hanuman. It transformed into a fierce fight.

Hanuman, the Lord for all illusion, violently hit Kalanemi's head. With this, Kalanemi's head cracked into two and he fell dead. Hanuman then flew quickly to the milk-ocean and spotted the Drona Mountain. He could not locate the herb on that mountain. He quickly uprooted the entire mountain and at the speed of wind returned to Rama.

He said to Rama, "I have returned with the mountain. Now do the needful". Hearing this, the wise Srirama plucked the required herb and quickly got Sushena to treat Lakshmana. Then Lakshmana got up like one who had awakened from sleep. He was shouting, "O Ravana! Remain there. Where will you escape? I shall kill you right away".

Rama kissed him on his forehead and said to Hanuman, "O mighty monkey! With your grace, I am now seeing my brother in good health".

All the Vanaras extolled Hanuman. On Vibhishana's advice, along with all the Vanaras and Sugriva, Rama readied for battle. The Vanaras held rocks, boulders, trees, mountain-peaks and stood ready.

Meanwhile, deeply wounded by Rama's arrows, Ravana suffered the entire night. Like the elephant attacked by a lion or like a snake attacked by an eagle, he agonized. Seated on his throne, Ravana who had been humiliated in the battle by Rama, said to the demons, "Previously Brahma had predicted that I would die in the hands of a human. But no human can kill me. Therefore undoubtedly the Supreme Lord Narayana must have incarnated as a human. As Rama, the son of Dasharatha, he has come here for my destruction.

In the past Anaranya had cursed me, "O demon-king! In my lineage, the ancient Supreme Lord will incarnate. In his hands you will die along with your relatives. This is undoubtedly true". Saying this he left for heaven. Hence undoubtedly the Supreme Lord has incarnated as Rama. He will surely kill me. The extremely powerful Kumbhakarna is a fool who always sleeps. Immediately awaken him and bring him to me".

With this command, with the utmost difficulty, they awakened Kumbhakarna and took him to Ravana. After bowing to Ravana, Kumbhakarna took his seat.

Addressing Kumbhakarna, Ravana said, "O Kumbhakarna, listen! A terrible difficulty has fallen on us. The greatest warriors of our race along with our sons, grandsons, and relatives have died in Rama's hand. Presently death has approached me. What should I do?"

Dasharatha's son, the mighty Rama, along with Sugriva and the army has crossed the ocean and is destroying our foundational army. All the best warriors are dying in the hands of the Vanaras. But the Vanaras are not getting destroyed. You go and destroy them. Kumbhakarna, for your brother, you have to complete this difficult task".

Hearing these pleading and sorrowful words, Kumbhakarna laughed boisterously and said, "O Lord Ravana! Your sins have come back to you. I have already told you that Rama is Narayana and that Sita is Yogamaya. Yet you did not heed my advice.

Once in the moonlight, I was sitting leisurely on a rock in the garden. At that moment I saw the omniscient Maharishi Narada. I asked him, "O Maharishi! From where are you coming?"

He said, "Until now I was participating in the secretive discussions of the Devas. I shall reveal to you the discussions held there. Listen to my words and grasp the truth. All the Devas who are suffering in your hands and in the hands of your brother, have approached Lord Maha-vishnu. With utmost devotion and absolute concentration they prayed to the Lord of all Lords and beseeched him as follows,

"O Lord! None in the three worlds can face Ravana. He is like a thorn for the worlds and is torturing everyone. Hence immediately kill him. Previously Brahma had granted him a boon that he would die only in the hands of a human. Hence You incarnate as a human and kill the enemy who is in the guise of Ravana".

Then, the Lord whose resolve is unfailing and who governs all the worlds assured them of help. He then incarnated in the Raghu lineage and became famous as Rama.

Know that Rama is the ancient Lord who is eternal. Abandon enmity with him. Srirama is playfully enacting as a human. Worship Him. If you serve him with devotion, Rama is sure to bless you.

Devotion is the mother of real knowledge (Jnana). Devotion is the tool that grants liberation. Any deed done without devotion is a sheer waste. The sportive incarnations of Maha-vishnu are many. Among them, the most-auspicious one which is an embodiment of knowledge is the incarnation as Rama. Intelligent and dexterous people eternally worship Rama with their minds and speech. They effortlessly cross the ocean of repeated rebirths and reach Hari's abode.

Those humans who, being filled with purity (sattva) eternally meditate upon Srirama, those who eternally chant the stories of Rama, do not get trapped in the naga-pasha (serpent coil) called samsara (repeated rebirths). Ultimately they reach the supreme abode of the husband of Sita"- said Kumbhakarna.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 8

Lord Shiva continued, "O Parvati! Hearing Kumbhakarna's words, Ravana was incensed beyond limits. His eyebrows were knitted in anger. He shouted, "What a wise man you are! I haven't called you here to hear your sermons. If you accept my deeds as correct and go and fight with Rama. If not, go back and sleep".

Hearing this, the powerful Kumbhakarna realized that Ravana was angered with his words. Immediately he set out for battle. Kumbhakarna had a colossal body that was huge like a mammoth mountain. As it was difficult for him to squeeze through the main gate, he flew across the fort wall and exited the city. Letting out fierce war cries he stepped into the battlefield. He began to catch the Vanaras with both his hands and gobble them. He appeared like a huge mountain with wings. Seeing him, all the Vanaras ran in fright just as one runs on seeing Yama, the Lord of death.

The powerful Kumbhakarna wandered through the battlefield striking terror with his iron mace and eating the Vanaras. Beating them with his iron mace he crushed them.

Seeing this, Vibhishana who was holding the mace, bowed at the feet of his elder brother Kumbhakarna and said to him, "I am your younger brother Vibhishana. Please show compassion to me. Dear brother! Many times I have given good advice to Ravana. I asked him to return Sita to Rama. I told him that Rama was none other than the Supreme Lord Janardana. But he did not heed my advice. Further in that court that was filled with the wicked men, he lifted his sword seeking to kill me. Saying, 'Go away from here' - he kicked me with his legs. Then, with my 4 ministers, I sought refuge in Rama".

Hearing this, Kumbhakarna embraced his younger brother and said, "After the end of the war, for the protection of our family and for the wellbeing of the demons who are left alive, you seek shelter in Rama's feet and continue to live. Previously Maharishi Narada has told me that you are the supreme devotee of the Lord. My dear! Go away from me now. Due to the influence of liquor, I am unable to see clearly. I cannot distinguish a friend from the enemy".

Hearing this, Vibhishana shed tears and bowed to Kumbhakarna's feet. Immediately he came to Rama and stood beside him grieving.

Crushing the Vanaras with his hands and trampling them with his feet, Kumbhakarna moved through the battlefield like the king of elephants tormenting the Vanaras. Totally infuriated, Rama released the Vayuvastra which cut Kumbhakarna's right hand that was holding the mace. Kumbhakarna shrieked frightfully. Many Vanaras were crushed under that hand as it dropped to the earth.

All other Vanaras, while trembling frightfully and while witnessing this war between Rama and Kumbhakarna, remained stationed at their places.

With his other hand, Kumbhakarna uprooted a gigantic tree and rushed toward Rama seeking to kill him. Rama released the Indra astra which cut off the hand that was holding the tree.

Even when both his hands were cut, Kumbhakarna roared violently and stood on the battlefield. Rama then released two sharp arrows with crescent moon tips and cut off Kumbhakarna's both legs. His legs that were thus chopped flew high and fell at the gates of Lanka.

The terrible Kumbhakarna, whose feet and hands were thus cut, opened his mouth that was like the burning fire in the ocean and while roaring loudly, rushed towards Rama just as Rahu rushes towards the moon.

Rama then released sharp arrows called Shilimukha and filled Kumbhakarna's mouth with them. Kumbhakarna howled frightfully. Deciding to kill Kumbhakarna without any delay, Rama released the most supreme Indra-astra that was as powerful as the Vajrayudha, and which emitted flames like the Sun.

This arrow severed Kumbhakarna's head which was as huge as a mountain and which glowed radiantly with glittering earrings. The severed head flew and fell at the gates of Lanka city, closing those gates. His body became the food for the crocodiles in the ocean.

Thereafter, many Devatas, Nagas, Gandharvas, Siddhas, Yakshas, Apsaras and Rishis rained flowers upon Rama.

At this moment, the celestial Maharishi Narada, who with his radiance illumines the 4 directions, travelled in the path of the skies and arrived to meet Srirama who was dark-complexioned like the night lilies, who had a beautiful body and who was holding his bow. His wide eyes were slightly reddish. Holding the Indra-astra he was glowing. With utmost compassion, he was casting a glance at the Vanaras who were injured in battle.

Seeing Rama, Maharishi Narada with utmost devotion prayed, "O Lord of all Lords! O Lord of all worlds! O Supreme Self! O eternal one! Narayana! O supreme witness! To You I offer obeisance.

Although you are the embodiment of pure knowledge, yet, assuming a human form you are enacting as though you are experiencing joys-sorrow. Although You reside in the hearts of all as the inner controller and are inherently self-luminous, You enact as if You are covered with illusion. Hence, You fail to be known by the ignorant. Only those who have a very pure mind can see You.

O Rama! With the opening of Your eyelids, You create the three worlds. With the closing of the eyelids, you destroy all the worlds. You are that Supreme Lord due to whom the entire world illumines, from whom this world filled with sentient and insentient emerged, and from whom this world does not have a separate existence. To You, I offer obeisance.

I offer obeisance to that Rama who is known by the Supreme Maharishis as Prakriti, Purusha, time, the manifest, and the unmanifest.

O Lord! You are devoid of any transformation and are extremely pure. You are the form of knowledge. Vedas say that your body transforms as the entire universe.

O Lord! Without Your blessings, in the debates that take place in the assemblies where Vedic scholars gather, the scholars cannot come to any conclusion. With Your illusionary energy, You sport.

In Vedas there is no contradiction. Yet, just as due to the Sun's rays, the mirage appears like water, due to illusion, the entire world is imagined in You.

But O Lord, the formless and attribute-less Supreme cannot be reached by the mind. If so, how can Your form, which is beyond the scope of the mind, be perceived? When it is not perceivable, how can it be worshipped? Hence, in this world, dexterous and wise people adore Your incarnations and worship them and, through this, cross the ocean called repeated re-births

Enemies such as desires and anger create obstacles in the path of devotion and just as a cat frightens a rat, they frequently frighten the living being.

O Rama! Those who eternally think of Your form, chant Your name, station the mind exclusively on Your worship, fix the heart exclusively on Your stories, and eternally associate with Your devotees, cross this ocean of repeated rebirths as easily as one crosses the cow's hoof-print. Hence although You are inherently formless, I eternally fix my mind only on Your form (Saguna-roopa) and meditate on it.

Due to this, freed from all bondage, I travel freely across all worlds and am worshipped by all the Devatas. O Lord! For the benefit of the Devatas, a supreme task has been accomplished by You. With Kumbhkarna's death, the earth's load has reduced.

In tomorrow's battle, Lakshmana will kill Indrajit, and the day after, You will kill the ten-headed Ravana. O Lord of all Lords! Stationed in the skies and accompanied by all the Siddhas, I shall watch this. O Lord! Please bless me. Permit me to leave for Swarga".

Saying this, even as the Devatas were worshipping him, Maharishi Narada took Rama's permission and returned to the ever-pure Brahma-loka.

On hearing the news that Kumbhakarna had been effortlessly killed by Rama, Ravana was grief-stricken. He fell unconscious. On regaining consciousness, he wept profusely. Grief-stricken at the death of his uncle and observing his father's grief, Indrajit came forward and said to Ravana, " O wise one! Do not grieve.

When I, Meghanatha, am alive, there is no need for you to grieve. I am very powerful. O annihilator of the Devatas! Abandon sorrow. Be at peace. Gathering all the forces I shall slay all the enemies.

Right now I will go to Nikumbhila and appease the Fire-god. From him, I will obtain the materials necessary for the war due to which I will become undefeatable". saying this, he left for Nikumbhila.

Indrajit wore red robes, red flower garlands and applied red-sandalpaste to his body. Accepting the vow of silence, in Nikumbhila, he began to perform the fire-sacrifice.

The news of Indrajit's fire-sacrifice reached Vibhishana's ears. He said, "O Rama! If the fire-sacrifice begun by the evil-minded Indrajit is completed without obstacles, he will become undefeatable by the Devatas and the demons. Therefore, I shall have him killed by the powerful Lakshmana. Permit me and send Lakshmana with me".

Rama then said, "Indrajit is my enemy. I shall come and personally kill him with the Agneya astra (Fire-weapon)".

Hearing this, Vibhishana said, "O Rama! Due to Brahma's boons, only he who has abandoned food and sleep for 12 continuous years can kill Indrajit. He cannot be killed by others. I have come to know that Lakshmana, who is the incarnation of Adi-shesha, has been engrossed in serving you from the time he has accompanied you from Ayodhya and that during this period, he has totally abstained from food and sleep.

Hence, without a second thought, send Lakshmana with me. Lakshmana is Adi-shesha, the one who supports the earth. Undoubtedly he will kill Indrajit.

You are the Supreme Lord Narayana, the ruler of the universe. Lakshmana is none but Your serpent bed. You two, who are the directors for this universal drama, have incarnated as humans for the reduction of the earth's load".

Day 22, August 4

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 9

Hearing Vibhishana's words, Rama replied, "O Vibhishana! I know of Indrajit's wicked illusions. He is adept in the art of releasing the Brahmastra, is extremely powerful, and is an expert conjurer. I am aware of Lakshmana's real form, his true nature and his ability to complete the service. Hence, keeping in mind the great task that was to be accomplished in the future, I remained silent when Lakshmana stayed without sleep and food for 12 years".

Thereafter, Rama, the embodiment of knowledge, said to Lakshmana, "Along with Hanuman and other prominent army commanders, go & kill Indrajit.

Vibhishana will come along with his ministers. The bear-king Jambhavan will follow you along with his army. Vibhishana is very well acquainted with that terrain. He will show you the secretive path to reach that place".

Hearing this, the extremely powerful Lakshmana wore a strong bow, bowed to Rama's feet, and happily said, "The arrows now released from this bow will rip through Indrajit's body and then take a dip in River Bhogavati located in Patala". He then circumambulated Rama and once again bowed to his feet.

In great urgency to kill Indrajit, Lakshmana enthusiastically set out. Hanuman along with thousands of Vanaras, Vibhishana with his 4 ministers, and Jambhavanta with many bears followed Lakshmana to the Nikumbhila province.

From a distance Vibhishana assessed the strength of the demon army situated there. Meanwhile, Lakshmana strung his bow and was ready for attack. Angada, Jambavan, and other mighty warriors also got ready for attack.

Vibhishana then said, "Lakshmana, see that huge army of demons located there like the thick black clouds. First, you need to pierce those warriors. Only thereafter Indrajit will be seen. Before he completes those sorcery rituals, you must, without even the slightest delay, approach and kill him".

Hearing this, Lakshmana released a volley of arrows in the direction where Ravana's son Indrajit was located. The Vanaras held huge trees, mountain peaks, and heavy rocks and hurled them upon the demons. The demons retaliated by attacking the Vanaras with axes, sharp arrows, swords, pestles, lances, and other weapons. A huge commotion erupted as the war between the Vanaras and demons turned fierce.

Indrajit who saw his army getting destroyed abandoned his ritual midway and quickly emerged from Nikumbhila. Holding a bow and mounting a chariot, in great fury he challenged Lakshmana for war saying "I am Meghanath. You cannot return alive today".

With harsh words, he then condemned his uncle Vibhishana saying, "You are my paternal uncle and have been born and brought up here. Abandoning your own ones, you are now serving the enemy camps. Why do you seek to harm me who am like your son? You have a wicked intellect and are the worst among the sinners".

Seeing Lakshmana who was seated on Hanuman's shoulder, Indrajit took a very strong bow, tightened the bowstring, and twanged it, while shouting, "O Vanaras, now my arrows will drink your life".

Meanwhile, in intense anger, hissing like a snake Lakshmana released an arrow as powerful as the Vajrayudha. Pierced by that arrow, Indrajit's eyes reddened and he fell unconscious for a short while.

Regaining consciousness, he composed himself. In severe anger, he saw the valourous Lakshmana standing before him. Fixing the arrow to the bow, in great fury, he said, "Now I will show my strength and valour. Without running away, just remain standing before me".

As he was speaking, he, who was excited due to anger, released 7 arrows and injured Lakshmana severely. Using 10 arrows, he wounded Hanuman. Using 100 arrows, he injured Vibhashana.

Lakshmana responded by releasing a continuous shower of arrows upon Indrajit. With this, Indrajit's golden armour was shredded in bits. In unabated fury, he attacked Lakshmana with thousands of arrows and shattered Lakshmana's armour.

In this way, the war continued frighteningly with each hissing angrily and releasing arrow for arrow. Pierced by arrows, their bodies were wounded and blood began to gush from them. Hurting each other with arrows, they fought for very long.

Lakshmana used 5 arrows and killed Indrajit's charioteer and horses. He also broke Indrajit's chariot and his bow.

Without any delay, Indrajit took another bow and tightened the string. Meanwhile, Lakshmana used 3 arrows and broke it. In various ways, Lakshmana injured Indrajit who was holding the broken bow. Then, the mighty warrior Indrajit took another bow and while glowing like the Sun, injured Lakshmana and many other Vanaras with sharp piercing arrows.

Deciding to kill Indrajit, Lakshmana took up the powerful weapon, Indra astra. Praying to Rama's lotus feet, he said, "If Rama, who is truly devoted to dharma and the vow of truthfulness is truly the son of Dasharatha and if he is the unsurpassed warrior in the 3 worlds then, may this arrow kill this son of Ravana". Saying this, he empowered the arrow with a mantra and released it.

The arrow darted forward swiftly and severed Indrajit's head, which was adorned with glittering earrings and a glittering crown. It flung that head on the earth.

Delighted at Indrajit's death, in great joy the Devas extolled Lakshmana and showered flowers on him. Lord Indra and Maharishis rejoiced. Kettledrums were blown. Earth, which was tormented by the demons who were ruling it, was happy and peaceful. Shouts of victory filled the air. Lakshmana blew the conch indicating his victory and roared loudly in happiness. With satisfied minds, all the Vanara leaders glorified Lakshmana.

In great delight, along with Hanuman and Vibhishana, Lakshmana went to Rama and in all humility bowed to his elder brother who was the Supreme Lord Narayana himself, and said, "O best in the Raghu lineage! With your blessings, in the war Indrajit was killed".

In uncontained happiness, Rama embraced Lakshmana, kissed him on his forehead, and with great love said, "Well done Lakshmana! You have accomplished an impossible deed. I am extremely pleased with your accomplishment. O destroyer of enemies! After fighting nonstop for 3 nights and 3 days, you have killed the enemy and have ensured that I am freed from him. Now Ravana who will brood the death of his son will come for battle with me. I will kill Ravana".

Meanwhile, Ravana fainted on hearing of Indrajit's death. He bemoaned the death of his son. Recollecting his son's actions and qualities, he wailed loudly. "Now all the Devas, celestials, and Maharishis will sleep peacefully without any fear"- he said as he wailed. Then in terrible anger, he screamed, "Go to the battlefield and kill all the enemies".

He then ran to kill Sita. Seeing Ravana who was coming to her with a sword in his hand, Sita, who was

seated in the middle of all demonesses, shuddered. In great sorrow, she shrank. At that time, the wise and pure-minded minister Suparshva intervened and said, "O Dashakantha! Being Kubera's brother, why do you engage in this vile deed? Is it right to kill a woman? You will earn infamy with it. You have studied the Vedas & have engaged in many Vedic rituals. You are a repository of all good qualities. Why do you seek to kill a woman? Do you not feel ashamed? Let us all go for the war. In the war, kill Rama and Lakshmana and then obtain Janaki".

With this advice, Ravana returned home. Sunk in great sorrow, he was deprived of his wisdom. Accompanied by his ministers and friends, he entered the court.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 10

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! After Indrajit's death, Ravana held consultations with all ministers and advisors. Thereafter followed by the remaining demons he set out for battle. Just as a moth takes with it the other moths and rushes towards the blazing fire, he rushed to fight with Rama.

In the war that followed, all the demons died in Rama's hand. With a sharp arrow, Rama pierced Ravana's chest injuring him severely. The wounded Ravana turned back and quickly returned to Lanka. He pondered deeply upon Rama's supra-human prowess and Hanuman's wondrous achievements. Then he quickly approached Guru Shukracharya, bowed to him & said,

"O Acharya! The city of Lanka which is zealously guarded by mighty army commanders has been destroyed completely in Raghava's hands. All the warriors have been killed. All my sons and relatives are killed. Why did we have to suffer when we have the guidance of a Guru like you? What is the reason?"

Sukracharya said, "O Ravana! Seeking your victory I will suggest a fire-sacrifice which you should secretly perform. However, in-between the ritual there should be no interruptions or obstacles. On successful completion of that sacrifice, you will obtain a great chariot, horses, bows, quiver, and arrows. If you accept them, you will become undefeatable. Now attentively learn this mantra that I teach. Then proceed immediately and begin the ritual."

Ravana returned to his house and got a secretive cave made in the basement of his home. He had the city gates locked, procured all the materials necessary and began the sorcery ritual as taught by Guru Shukracharya. Taking up the vow of silence, he began the ritual.

Vibhishana observed the smoke emerging from Lanka and was awfully scared. Immediately he said, "O Rama, Ravana has commenced a fire ritual. If this ritual is successful, he will be unconquerable. Hence quickly send Vanara heroes & create some obstruction".

Rama agreed. He obtained Sugriva's approval and then commanded Angada, Hanuman, and other Vanaras to go to Lanka and obstruct the fire-ritual. 10 crores Vanaras leapt across the boundary wall, entered the city, and neared Ravana's palace. Quickly they killed the horses, elephants and the armies stationed there.

By then, it was sunrise. Vibhishana's wife pointed out to them the underground cave where the ritual was being conducted

The powerful Angada quickly reached the spot. Using his feet, he kicked and broke the boulder blocking the cave. Within the cave, he saw Ravana seated immobile in meditation with eyes closed.

With his permission, the Vanaras quickly entered the cave and began to beat the Ravana's servants. They poured all the materials into the fire pit and scattered the remaining ingredients.

Hanuman snatched the gigantic sruva from Ravana's hand and hit Ravana with it. All the Vanaras bit Ravana with their teeth. They hit him with rods. Yet determined to finish the yaga, Ravana did not get disturbed. Then Angada quickly went to the palace & dragging Mandodari by her hair, brought her to

Ravana's presence. She was weeping piteously. On seeing Ravana, she wailed loudly. Angada broke her ornaments and scattered them. When her waistband slipped, her sari slipped even as Ravana was watching.

To disturb Ravana's meditation, the Vanaras eagerly ran to his palace and dragged all the celestial women to the place where Ravana was conducting the ritual. All of them were wailing piteously. Then, in a pitiful voice, Mandodari begged, "O Lord! Protect me. In your presence, another man is holding your wife by her hair and is dragging her. Will you continue with your fire-ritual? Are you shameless? It is far better if the person, whose wife is tormented by the sinful enemies in his presence, dies, for, what is the use of his living?"

O Meghanatha! If only you were alive, today I would not face this terrible suffering. My husband is worried only for his life. In his desire to continue living he has abandoned his wife and his respect".

When Mandodari rebuked him with these words, the demon-king Ravana abandoned his meditation, stood up, immediately took up his sword, and while shouting, 'Leave my wife', he hit Angada powerfully on the waist.

As their task had attained completion, the Vanaras swiftly ran away from there. In great jubilation, they approached Rama and said, "We have obstructed Ravana's fire-ritual". Consoling Mandodari, Ravana said, "O auspicious one! Everything is happening as destined. During a lifetime, the person has to undergo all experiences. O wide-eyed one! Abandon sorrow. Obtain the knowledge.

The sorrow which emerges from ignorance destroys knowledge. Due to ignorance, feelings of I-ness arise towards the body and other non-Self objects. Due to bodily identification, associations such as wife-son emerge. Attachment towards the wife and sons causes repeated births and deaths to arise which in turn leads to happiness, sorrow, fear, anger, greed, delusion, and desire. Birth, death, old-age arise due to ignorance.

The Self is non-dual, unblemished, totally pure, and has an existence separate from Prakriti. It is unconnected with any existence and is the embodiment of knowledge and bliss. It is free from change. Hence, in that Pure Existence, there is no coming together or separation. Know this truth. O meritorious one! Know yourself to be the Pure Self and abandon sorrow.

I am now leaving for the battle and shall return only after killing Rama and Lakshmana. Either I will kill Rama or he will, with his diamond-like arrow, shred me. If he kills me, I shall merge into his feet. O dearest one! You have to abide by one order of mine. You kill Sita. Thereafter, along with me enter the funeral pyre".

Hearing this, Mandodari was totally inconsolable. She said, " O Lord! Listen to what I say. Rama who is invincible cannot be conquered by you or by others. He is the best among all the Devatas. He is none other than the Supreme Lord. He is the Lord of both Prakriti and Purusha. He is Narayana.

Out of love for his devotees, this Raghava incarnated as a fish and saved Vaivasvata Manu from all problems. In the past this Lord Srirama incarnated as a tortoise that was 1 lakh yojanas in width and during the churning of the ocean, he carried the Mount Meru on his back. At that time this Srirama manifested as a boar, killed the degraded Hiranyaksha and uplifted the Earth.

This scion of Raghu lineage has, in the past, incarnated as Narasimha and killed Hiranyakashipu, the enemy of all the worlds. This Raghurama bound Bali and with three feet occupied the three worlds. He then returned the three worlds to his devotee Indra.

To reduce the burden of the earth by killing the demons who took birth as kshatriyas, he killed them all. As Bhargava-rama, he conquered the entire earth and gifted the same to Maharishi Kashyapa.

Such Supreme Being has, for killing you, taken on a human form and incarnated in the Raghu lineage. Today he stands as the best among the Raghu lineage. Why did you forcibly abduct his wife from the forests? It appears that you did this solely to invite your destruction. Even now it is not late. Return Vaidehi to Rama. Hand over the kingdom to Vibhishana. Let us retire to the forests”.

Ravana heard all that she had to say. Then he said, “O auspicious one! Rama has killed all my sons, brothers, relatives, and other demons. I have thus become the cause of their death. If so, how can I become a forest-dweller and live like one? Hence I shall fight with Rama. With the arrows released by Rama, I shall die in the battle and shall reach the ultimate abode of Vishnu.

I am aware that Rama is Maha-Vishnu and that Janaka’s daughter Sita, is none other than Goddess Lakshmi. With full knowledge of these facts, I abducted her. As I desired to die in Rama’s hands and obtain the ultimate abode, I committed this deed.

O beloved! I am leaving you and, along with my relatives, am going away from this world of mortals. By dying in Rama’s hands, I shall attain that ultimate state which is worshipped by those longing for liberation and which is the abode of ultimate pure bliss. With this, I shall wash away all my sins. I shall attain that liberation which is very rare to obtain. This is my final decision.

This ocean of samsara has 5 waves of impurities known as Ignorance, I-ness, attachments, aversions, and fear of death. It has whirlpools known as illusion/ imagination. Wife, children, friends, wealth and relatives are the aquatic creatures in it. Terrible anger is the fearsome fire that rages in this ocean. It has nets known as desires. I shall cross this ocean of samsara and reach the abode of Lord Vishnu”.

Day 23, August 5

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 11

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Having consoled Mandodari with utmost love, Ravana readied for the battle. Accompanied by many ferocious, terrible-looking demons, he set out. He was seated in a massive, sturdy chariot that had 16 wheels. The sight of the chariot instilled fear in the onlookers. It was loaded with all missiles and weaponry of all kinds.

Ravana with a fearsome form consisting of 10 heads set out for war. Seeing his formidable form, the Vanara army protected by Rama trembled fearfully. Trapped under his chariot wheels, many monkeys died.

Seeing Ravana who was coming for war, Hanuman, the unsurpassed warrior, jumped forward & hit the demon-king with one fist on his chest. With this blow, Ravana fell on his knees and swooned for a while. Within a few minutes he recovered and said, ‘Hanuman, your strength is amazing’.

Hanuman said, “O Ravana! It is a matter of shame for me that you have only fainted and not died. Now you hit me. I want to assess your strength. Then I will give you a terrible blow with which you will give up your life”.

In total anger, Ravana hit Hanuman. With it, Hanuman’s eyes bulged. But again Hanuman got ready to fight with Ravana. But by then, frightened of Hanuman’s blow, Ravana escaped from there.

Thereafter Hanuman, Neela, Nala, and Angada got together and seeing the demons Agnivarna, Sarparoma, Khatgaroma, and Rucikaroma, fought with them. A bitter war ensued. It was unclear who was fighting with whom. In that battle, they killed the 4 demons, who were known for their supreme might. Loudly shouting victory slogans they reached Rama.

Incensed by the death of his warriors, Ravana bit his lips, rolled his eyes, chattered his teeth, and, looking cruelly rushed to fight Rama. While Rama was standing on ground, Ravana stood in his chariot and hurled terrible weapons as powerful as the Vajrayudha and injured Rama. Even the Vanaras who were behind Rama suffered due to being hit by those powerful arrows.

Thereafter Rama fixed his mind on Ravana & on the war. Then he released upon Ravana arrows that glowed like fire.

Indra who observed Rama standing on the ground called his charioteer Mātali and said, “O meritorious one! Quickly take my chariot and go to Rama who is standing on the earth and fighting. Complete this task of mine”.

Indra’s charioteer Mātali then yoked green-coloured horses to the chariot and seeking Rama’s victory quickly arrived to earth. Bowing to Rama he said, “O Raghottama! Seeking your victory, Indra, the Lord of heaven has sent me with his chariot. O King! This is Indra’s bow which is glowing with all ornamentation. See the unbreakable armour, sword and the two divine quivers which Indra has sent for you. Board this chariot & kill this wicked demon. I will remain as the charioteer. Just as Indra kill Vrta, you kill the demon Ravana”.

Rama circumambulated the chariot, bowed to it & then mounted it seeking the well-being of all the worlds. Thereafter a frightening war ensued between Rama and Ravana. That war caused the bodies of the onlookers to tremble frightfully. When Ravana used Agneya astra (Fire weapon), Rama responded by releasing another Aneya astra. Using a celestial weapon Rama thus shred the celestial weapon that had been hurled upon him.

Seeing this, in unabated fury, Ravana used the very cruel rakshasa weapon. Arrows released from Ravana’s bow transformed into ferocious poisonous snakes and enveloped Rama from all directions. Having snake faces, the arrows were emitting fire. They began to envelop all directions.

Seeing snakes everywhere, Rama in response used the very powerful Garuda astra which ate the snake arrows released by Ravana. When Rama destroyed all his powerful arrows, Ravana boiled in rage. He now released deadly arrows one after another in quick succession and tormented Rama by inundating him with a shower of arrows. He badly wounded Matali. More importantly, Ravana furiously released arrows breaking the flag and causing it to fall back.

Seeing Rama’s plight, all the Maharishis, Devatas, Gandharvas, forefathers and Caranas were deeply saddened and anxious. Even the Vanaras and Vibhishana were deeply saddened and anxious.

With his 10 heads and with the bows in his 20 hands, Ravana appeared like Mainaka mountain. With knotted eyebrows and reddened eyes, Rama who was incensed looked as if he would burn Ravana with his gaze. In anger he took up Indra’s powerful bow. Fixing an arrow that was like the fire of annihilation, he looked at his enemy.

Rama, the embodiment of time, was glowing radiantly and looking at all the worlds. He then pulled the bow-string, released arrows, and broke Ravana’s bow.

Seeing Rama who was glowing like the raging fire of annihilation, the Vanaras were delighted. Seeing his anger directed towards the enemy, all the living beings were frightened. The earth trembled. Rama appeared ferocious and terrible.

Many ill-omens could be spotted in nature. Seeing them, all the living beings shuddered. Even Ravana was filled with fear. The Devatas, Siddhas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, who were seated in their celestial airplanes situated in the skies watched the war that appeared like the terrible dissolution of the universe.

Using Indra’s weapon, Rama cut Ravana’s head one by one. The heads, that were bleeding profusely began to roll down like palm fruits that fall from the skies. The days, nights, sandhyas, and directions remained invisible at that time. In that war even Ravana’s form could not be seen. Only his heads that were falling from the skies could be seen.

In deep astonishment, Rama thought, "I have so far chopped 101 heads of similar luster. But Ravana is not dying. It does not appear that his life-force has left him. Previously with these arrows, I have killed many demons. But now these arrows are failing in killing Ravana".

At this time, Vibhishana came and said "O Raghava! Due to boons received from Brahma, Ravana's heads and his hands will keep re-appearing when severed. In his navel, there is a pot of nectar. Use the Agneya astra and dry it up. With that, he will die".

Hearing this, the mighty Rama fixed the Agneya-astra (fire-weapon) to his arrow and quickly hit Ravana's navel. Thereafter with great swiftness, he chopped Ravana's heads and hands.

Seeking to kill Vibhishana, Ravana held the shakti weapon & hurled it at him. But with very sharp arrows, Rama quickly shredded that shakti-weapon into many bits. Ravana's heads were chopped. He now appeared gruesome. He had lost his luster.

In absolute anger, Ravana who had just one head and two hands used many weapons and arrows on Rama. When he was thus fighting, the war only intensified.

Seeing this, Matali reminded Rama saying, "O Raghurama! The time prefixed by the Devas for his destruction has neared. Hence quickly use the Brahmastra and kill him. O Rama! You need not cut his heads. He will not die even when his head is severed. His longevity is stored in his chest. Only when his chest is attacked, he will die".

Hearing Matali's words, Rama then fixed a snake-like arrow that was burning and hissing like fire. In it, he invoked Pavana (wind) to the rear, and installed Sun and Fire in the front. In the middle he installed the space. This arrow was as heavy as the Sumeru and Mandara Mountains. On the sides, he invoked the Guardian-deities.

Rama fixed to his bow that arrow which glowed radiantly like the Sun, which dispelled the fear of all the worlds, which was extremely ferocious and wonderful and empowered it with the mantras. The moment Rama fixed this arrow to his bow, the earth shuddered and all living beings were frightened.

With total anger and with the firm decision to kill Ravana, Rama pulled the bow-string till his ear and very carefully released that arrow on Ravana.

That arrow that could pierce the chest appeared fearsome like the Lord of death. It was unbearable like Indra's powerful thunderbolt weapon. At extreme speeds that arrow pierced Ravana's chest. Entering deep into his body, it tore apart the heart. After taking away Ravana's life it immediately entered the earth. Thereafter it again returned to Rama's quiver and remained there.

The moment the arrow pierced him, the bow slipped from Ravana's hand. The arrows fell down. As soon as the life-force departed from his body, his body swirled around and fell to the ground.

Seeing their leader dead, all the remaining demons were frightened. They ran from there in all directions. Seeing Rama's incomparable valour, the vanaras shouted in great delight. In the skies, kettledrums were sounded. Flowers were rained from the skies. Maharishis, Siddhas, Caranas, and Devas glorified Rama. Apsaras danced.

Then, even as the Devas were watching an illumination that glowed like the Sun emerged from Ravana's corpse and entered into Rama. Seeing this, Devas thought, "Ravana is truly a Mahatma. How fortunate is he! We are the Devas who are filled with sattvik traits. We have procured the grace of the Supreme Lord, yet we are trapped in repeated rebirths that are filled with fear and sorrow. But Ravana is a demon who is filled with cruel tendencies and tamasic traits. He desires other women. He despises Vishnu and abhors the ascetics. Yet, even as all the beings are watching, he has merged into Rama. This is astonishing".

Seeing the Devatas who were talking in absolute astonishment, Maharishi Narada smilingly said, "O Devatas! You are aware of the nature of dharma. Hence listen to me. Due to hatred for Rama, Ravana has been eternally thinking about Rama and talking to his servants about him. He has heard all events of Rama's life eternally. Fearing that death will come in the form of Rama, in trepidation he saw Rama everywhere. Even in his daily dreams, he saw Rama alone.

This anger gave him a far greater fruit than the initiation from his Guru. Finally he died in Rama's hands, freed himself from all sins, and attained oneness with Rama. He is thus freed from the shackles of rebirth (samsara).

Hence, even the worst sinner, wicked man, or one who is desirous of other wealth or other women, if he focuses entirely on Srirama either due to love or hate, thinks of Him alone and leaves the body with such focus, then his mind is rendered totally pure. He obtains freedom from the innumerable sins of the past innumerable births and reaches the ultimate state called Vaikuntha, which is the ultimate abode of Srirama that is extolled by Brahma and other Devatas".

In this way, Maharishi Narada revealed the secret. After killing Ravana, Rama rested on the earth the bow held in his left hand and then circularly rotated the arrow held in his right hand. At that moment his eyes were reddish like the Aruna colour. His handsome body, which was wounded due to being pierced by hundreds of arrows was glowing with the brightness of a crore Suns. May such Srirama, who is being glorified by Indra, protect me always!"- said Shiva to Parvati.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 12

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Thereafter Rama saw Vibhishana, Angada, Hanuman, Vanara-king Sugriva, Lakshmana, Jambhavan & other Vanaras and rejoiced plentifully. In great delight he said to them, "Only due to your strength and might I could kill Ravana. Your pure glory will remain until the time the Sun and Moon exist. Your story which is coupled with mine will dispel the impurities of Kali-yuga. It will purify the three worlds. Those who glorify this story will obtain the ultimate plane".

By then Mandodari and other ladies who had heard of Ravana's death, came there wailing loudly. Sitting around his corpse they shed profuse tears. Vibhishana sat before Ravana's body and bemoaned his death.

Then Rama said, "O Lakshmana, you revere others. Go and convey this message to Vibhishana. 'O Vibhishana! Without any delay complete the death rites for your brother. Mandodari and other ladies are rolling on the earth and weeping profusely. Console them who were very dear to Ravana & send them away'. Convey this message".

Lakshmana agreed. Addressing Vibhishana who was grieving for the dead and who, in the process, appeared like a dead body he said, "O Vibhishana! Think wisely. How is he, for whom you are weeping, now related to you? What was he to you before he took this body? What relation does he have with you now that he has abandoned this body?"

Just as in the flowing waters, the sand-grains come together for some time and then separate, due to the force of time, the beings come together for a while and then separate.

When paddy seeds are sown, some sprout and some do not. The grains that sprout perish ultimately. But the relationship of a father and son does not exist between the paddy plant and the grains. That is why, in the growth or perishing of the paddy grains, there is no happiness nor sorrow. Know that the same rule applies even to us.

Due to the Lord's illusion, living beings emerge from other living beings. At times they are not born. As everything that is born is bound to perish one day, happiness and sorrow due to birth and death should not arise. One's birth and death occur as pre-destined.

A boy creates dolls and thereafter breaks his own creations. He does not derive any joy nor sorrow in creating them or in destroying them. Likewise, the birthless Lord, does not seek any fruit for his sport. He has no likes-dislikes. Yet, through the medium of the entities created by him and who are in His control, He creates other beings and also destroys other beings.

Due to associating with the body, the individual soul is bound (dehi). Just as a seed emerges from another seed, from the parents another body is born. It is not the soul but the body that takes birth. The individual soul dwelling in the body has an existence different from the body. He is eternal. The truth is that the relationship between the body and the Self emerges due to ignorance, which exists from eternity.

Just as the fire exists everywhere but it takes the shape of the burning log, the Supreme Lord illumines in all the various forms that exist.

The fire obtains a different shape based on the log it burns when, in reality, differences in form do not exist in the fire which is devoid of form. Likewise, the innumerable forms, birth-death, decay-growth, results of past actions, and merits-sins are characteristics of the body and not of the Self. Due to ignorance, they appear to exist in the Self when in reality the Self is unconnected to them.

The Self is devoid of transformations and remains an eternal witness. The characteristics of the body appear to be of the Self because of the connection the Self has developed with the body due to ignorance.

Understand that transformations pertain to the body and are unreal. Abandon the unreal and accept the real. Gradually focus on the Self's essence. Then the association with the body weakens and the Self-knowledge is grasped.

During deep sleep, feelings of I-ness do not exist in the person and hence the world does not exist for him. Likewise, repeated rebirths do not exist for the person who lacks the feeling of I-ness. In other words, he who frees himself from bodily identification is liberated.

Know that this world is a mental creation born out of illusion. Abandon feelings of I and mine. Make the mind aware of the impurities that exist in the sensory objects. Thereafter, slowly withdraw your mind from the external sensory objects and fix it on Rama, who is the Self within all living entities, who is an embodiment of supreme bliss, who is the Lord for all beings, and who has playfully assumed the form of a man.

Relationships such as siblings, parents, friends, lovers and spouses arise due to the false knowledge that the body is the Self. When it is firmly known that the Self is different from the body, then who is related to whom? Who is the sibling? Who is the parent? Who is the son? Who is the relative? Who is the friend?

Sensory objects, wealth, army, servants, kingdom, lands, sons, and all others, emerge only due to false knowledge and ignorance. Understand that they have a fleeting existence.

Hence abandon sorrow. Get up. With devotion, contemplate upon Srirama, the Lord who dwells in the heart. Experience the results of your past actions destined for this birth (prarabdha). Wisely rule this kingdom that you have obtained.

Do not think about that which has happened and that which is yet to happen. Live only in the present. Without transgressing the lawful path, act only in the present. Then the evils of the samsara will not taint you.

Rama is commanding you to complete the death rites for your brother as per the Shashtra methods. O wise one! Console the wailing ladies. Ensure that they quickly return to the city. Do not delay".

Hearing this, Vibhishana abandoned grief and attachment. The virtuous Vibhishana decided to abide by Rama's commands. He, therefore, said to Rama, "O Lord! This Ravana is a cruel man who has abandoned dharma. He is untruthful, immoral, and eyes the wives of others. It is not apt to perform final rites for him".

Rama replied, "O brother! Enmity exists only until death. After death, there is no more enmity. Presently our task is complete. Hence complete the death rites as stipulated. Now he is as related to you as he is to me".

Immediately Vibhishana dutifully abided by Rama's commands. He consoled Mandodari and hurried all the relatives to complete the death rites. He arranged the funeral pyre as per the injunctions of the Shastras. Along with the ministers and relatives, he completed the final rites and lit the pyre. He bathed and in wet clothes, with water mixed with darbha and sesame seeds, he offered water oblations. Thereafter, he lowered his head and offered obeisance. He again consoled all the weeping women and sent them back to the palace.

After all the ladies had returned to the palace, Vibhishana came & stood humbly before Rama. In the company of Lakshmana, Sugriva and the army, Srirama who had killed his enemy rejoiced like Indra who had killed demon Vrta. Matali circumambulated Srirama and with his permission returned to swarga through the path of the skies.

The overjoyed Rama said to Lakshmana, "I have previously given the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishana. Yet, now formally go to the city and complete the coronation rituals as per the rules of the Shastras".

Along with the Vanaras, Lakshmana quickly went to Lanka. He had the waters from the ocean fetched in golden pots for the coronation. He ensured that Vibhishana was crowned as the king of the demons. Vibhishana accepted the gifts brought by the citizens.

Thereafter, along with Lakshmana he came to Rama and fell flat on the ground and prostrated to him. Rama was ecstatic to see Vibhishana who had been crowned as the king of the demons. He felt as if he had accomplished his mission in life.

Rama then embraced Sugriva and said, "O valourous one! Only with your help Ravana was conquered. O meritorious one! Based on my word I have made Vibhishana, the king of Lanka"

Addressing Hanuman who was standing beside him in all humility, he said, "O Hanuman! With Vibhishana's permission enter Lanka. Meet Janaki and inform her of Ravana's death and all other news. Report to me what she says".

The wise Hanuman, who is the son of the Wind-god, stepped into Lanka, even as the demons were extolling him. He entered the Ashoka vana which was situated adjacent to Ravana's palace. There he saw the virtuous Sita who was seated under the Shimshupa tree. She was surrounded by demonesses and was thinking eternally of Rama. He lowered his head, joined his palms, bowed to her, and stood humbly before her.

Seeing him, Janaki was pensive for a while. Then she remembered him as Rama's attendant and looked at him in absolute delight. Realizing that she was in a pleasant mood, Hanuman narrated Rama's message saying, "O Mother, along with Lakshmana, Sugriva, Vibhishana, and the entire Vanara army, Rama is safe. He has killed Ravana along with his army, sons, and relatives and has crowned Vibhishana as the king of Lanka. He now enquires about your welfare".

Hearing such delightful news about her husband, Sita was overjoyed. She said, "My son Hanuman! There is nothing in the 3 worlds that I can give you as a reward for bringing to me this auspicious news".

Hanuman replied, "O Mother! I have seen the victorious Rama who has killed the enemies and has obtained mental peace. This is a far greater reward than all treasures, precious stones, and the kingship of heaven".

Hearing this, Mythili said "O gentle one! All virtues exist in you. I should now itself see Rama. May Raghava quickly command me".

Hanuman bowed to her and returned to Rama and conveyed the message saying, "O Lord! The reason for which this task was taken up is complete. Now you see Janaki who is grief-stricken".

Rama now decided to abandon Maya-Sita and obtain the real Sita who was being safeguarded in the fire. Hence he said, "O Vibhishana! Let Janaki bathe, wear beautiful clean clothes and ornamentation. Thereafter bring her quickly to me".

Along with Hanuman, Vibhishana quickly went to Lanka. Based on Vibhishana's order, the aged ladies from the demon clan bathed Janaki and decked her in good clothing, and decorated her with plentiful ornamentations. They then seated the beautiful Sita in a palanquin.

Attendants wearing turbans and coats and holding staffs in their hands walked behind the palanquin guarding her. Vibhishana was bringing Janaki, who was seated in the palanquin, to Rama. The attendants were shooing away the Vanaras who were jumping forward in great eagerness to cast a glance at her.

From a distance, Rama saw Sita who was coming in the palanquin and all the commotion around her. He said to Vibhishana, "O valourous one! Why are your attendants stopping the Vanaras? The Vanaras are seeing Janaki just as they would see their mother. Let Janaki come walking to me".

Sita who heard these words, got down from the palanquin and came gently walking to Rama. Then, for the accomplishment of his purpose, Rama uttered many improper and hurtful words to the Maya-Sita who had been created by him.

Unable to tolerate those hurtful words that pierced her mind, Sita said "O Lakshmana! Very quickly Rama should get faith in me. The people of the world should also get confidence in me. Hence, instantly create a fire".

Lakshmana instantly grasped Rama's feelings. He quickly gathered wood, created a fire, and stood silently beside Rama.

Then, in absolute devotion, Sita circumambulated Rama. Even as all the Devatas, all the worlds, and the demon-women were watching, she bowed to the Brahmins and the Devatas. She joined her palms and approached the fire. She prayed,

*"Yatha mē hridayam nityam nāpasarpati rāghavāt
Tathā lōkasya sākshī mām sarvataḥ pātu pāvakaḥ"*

If I know nothing other than Raghava, then may this fire-god, who is the witness to all the worlds, protect me".

She then circumambulated the blazing fire and fearlessly entered it. The Siddhas & other living beings who saw Sita entering the fire were deeply agitated. "How could the all-knowing Rama abandon Sita, who is none other than Lakshmi?"- they said to one another.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 13

Lord Shiva continued, "O Parvati! At that time, Indra, Yama, Varuna, Kubera, Shankara, Maharishis, Lord Brahma who was accompanied by Siddhas and Charanas, myself, Gandharava, forefathers, Sadhya, Nagas, apsaras and many other beings came there in the celestial aircrafts.

All of them joined their palms and prayed, "O Rama! You are the creator of all the worlds and the witness for them all. You are the embodiment of knowledge. Among the Vasus, You are Prabhāsa, the 8th vasu. Among the Rudras, You are Shankara. You are the primordial creator and the four-faced Brahma.

Ashwini devatas are your nostrils. Sun and Moon are your eyes. You are the point of origin and merger for all worlds. You are eternal. In you, sajatiya, vijatiya and svagata differences do not exist. You illumine

eternally without differences such as night and day. You are eternally pure without even a trace of illusion. You are eternally wise, eternally liberated, devoid of traits, and non-dual.

To those enveloped by illusion, you appear like a man. To those who eternally chant your name, you illumine eternally as an embodiment of knowledge. The wicked Ravana who stole our radiance and positions has died in your hands. Hence we have regained our positions”.

Then the four-faced Brahma, the creator of the universe, addressed the eternally truthful Rama and humbly said,

“Obeisance to You who are the cause for the sustenance of all the living beings. The Self-realized meditate upon You in their hearts. Dualities known as aversions and likes do not exist in You. You are beyond Prakriti and are the non-dual pure existence that exists as the witness in every heart. You are the Supreme Knowledge and the Supreme Lord Sri-mahavishnu. O Rama, to You, the Lord of all Lords I offer obeisance.

I salute the Supreme Lord Rama, who with a gem-studded crown glows like the radiant Sun. With a firmly determined intellect, Yogis restrain the prana-avana and with wilful effort destroy all the bondage, doubts, and subtle impressions of past actions. With this, they overcome delusion and perceive Him in their hearts.

I salute Rama, who remains untouched by illusion, who is the husband of Lakshmi, who is the primordial cause for everything, who is the cause for the existence of the worlds, who is beyond the reach of the direct and other proofs, who does not have the divisions such as location, time and object, who destroys all illusion and ignorance, who is worshipped by all Maharishis, who is meditated upon by all Yogis, who furthers the path of Yoga, who pervades everything, who showers bliss to the worlds and who is extremely handsome.

I bow to Rama who is without differences such as existence and non-existence, whose lotus feet are worshipped by supreme Yogis as well as by Shankara and other supreme Gods, who is eternal, wise, pure, and infinite, who has Om as his name, who is valourous and who is like the raging fire that destroys all the demons.

O Lord! You are my master. You have accomplished all that I had sought. You are the husband of Lakshmi and the support for all forms of life. You are the one who is obtained by treading the path of bhakti. You manifest before a person in the form in which he has worshipped or visualized You. You destroy the fear of samsara. To those pure beings whose hearts are purified through Yoga, You are their companion. To You, O Rama, I bow.

You are the beginning of all the worlds. You are their ending too. You are the Supreme Being and the Lord of all the worlds. It is impossible to know You through worldly proofs and tools. You are worshipped by those whose minds are filled with dedication and devotion. To bless the devotees, You are illumining in a beautiful form that is like the blue lotus. O Srirama! To You, I offer obeisance.

O Madhava! You are beyond the direct perception and other proofs. Hence, how can the being who is enveloped by illusion ever know You? I bow to Rama who is revered by all the Rishis, who is glorified by all the Devatas in Brindavan, to whom Shiva and others offer obeisance, and who is an embodiment of infinite bliss.

O Rama! Your complexion is like the emerald. O Lord of Mathura! All Vedas and Shastras define You alone. You are the embodiment of Pure Knowledge and are without beginning, middle, and end. Obeisance to You, who, for the accomplishment of our tasks, have manifested as a man.

The human who, with absolute dedication, recites this prayer composed by Brahma which bestows Supreme Knowledge and meditates upon Srirama, will, with the Lord’s blessings, will be freed from all sins”.

After Brahma completed his prayer, the Fire-god appeared from the blazing fire wearing red clothing and divine ornaments. His body was glowing with reddish complexion. The Fire-god, who is the witness for the entire universe, manifested with Mother Sita seated on his lap.

Seeing Rama who dispels the difficulties of those who seek refuge, he said, "O Lord of Raghu lineage! Previously, in Dandakaranya you deposited Janaki in my custody. Now take her back. O Lord! O Srihari! To kill Ravana, you had created an illusionary Sita (Maya-sita). Thereafter You killed Ravana along with his sons, relatives, and retinue and have reduced the earth's burden. The illusionary Sita (Maya-sita) has accomplished the purpose for which you had created her and has now vanished".

In great delight, Rama accepted Sita, and together with her, worshipped the Fire-god. After this, he seated Janaki, who is none other than Lakshmi and the mother of all three worlds, on his lap. With her beside him, he glowed radiantly.

Indra was delighted to see him along with Sita. In great happiness, he joined his palms and, with total devotion said,

*"Bhajēham sadā rāma-indīvarāmam bhavāranya-dāvānalā bhidhānam
Bhavānīhrdā bhāvitā-nanda roopam bhava bhava hētum bhavādri prapannamll*

I shall eternally serve Srirama, the Supreme Lord who is dark complexioned like the blue lotus, whose name is like the raging fire that destroys the forest called samsara, on whom Parvati eternally meditates, who is an embodiment of bliss, who frees the person from the shackles of samsara and who is served by Shankara and others.

I worship Rama due to whom the distress of the Devata troops has been removed, who despite being formless has assumed a human form, who is the leader for the Devatas, who is the embodiment of ultimate bliss, who is to be sought by everyone, who dispels all afflictions, who regulates all the worlds and who reduces the burden of the earth.

I will serve Srirama who offers total protection to those who have sought shelter in Him, who is the shelter for all the worlds, whose name dispels the suffering of those who have sought refuge in Him, on whom Yogishwaras focus through penance and Yoga, who is the friend of Sugriva and who glows radiantly like the Sun.

I shall always seek shelter in Srirama who remains beyond the reach of those who are inclined only towards comforts, who illumines very near to those who are contemplating upon Him through Yoga, who is an embodiment of Jnana, who is the source of all happiness and whose auspicious form fills Sita's heart with joy.

O Lord! You eternally illumine with the attributes of Your illusionary energy and transcendental human plays. O Lord of all! Those who listen to Your delightful sports will attain eternal bliss in this world itself.

O Prabhu! Conceited by the honours received and due to drinking the Soma-rasa, I previously failed to honour others considering myself to be the Lord of all worlds. As such, I failed to know You. Now with the blessings of Your lotus feet, my pride in being the Lord of all the worlds has been shattered.

O scion of the Raghu lineage! You are glowing with gem-studded armlets and pearl chains. You are the raging fire to the forest called 'demons who had become a burden to the earth'. Your face is like the autumn moon. You have divine beautiful eyes. You remain beyond the illusion that is uncrossable. I worship You.

I worship you, whose body glows like the blue gem and blue lotus. Having killed Viradha and other demons, You have showered peace upon the worlds. You, the Lord for Shiva and the Raghu lineage are illumining with the crown and other ornaments. O Rama! I worship You.

You are like the flash of lightning. Along with Sita who is seated on your lap, You are seated on a throne that illumines like a crore Moons. You quickly dispel the distress of the troubled beings. O Srirama! To you I offer obeisance”.

After Indra thus prayed, Lord Shiva was seated in a celestial airplane along with Bhavani said, “O Rama! I too shall come to Ayodhya to witness Your coronation ceremony. Now see Dasharatha, who was the father for this body of Yours”.

Rama then saw Dasharatha in the celestial plane. In great delight and devotion, along with Lakshmana, he lowered his head and offered obeisance to his father’s feet. Dasharatha embraced Rama, kissed him on the forehead, and said, “My son, due to you I have been rescued from the sorrowful ocean of samsara”. He again embraced Rama, accepted the worship, and departed from there.

Thereafter Rama addressed Indra who was bowing to him and said, “O Indra! Shower nectar and revive the Vanaras who have died while fighting for my sake. This is my order”.

Saying, “So be it”, Indra showered nectar and revived the dead Vanaras who got up as if they were waking from sleep. They had been restored to their previous energy levels. In great delight they neared Rama. But despite being touched by nectar, the dead demons did not come back to life.

Vibhishana then prostrated to Rama and said, “O Lord! Please bless me with love. Along with Sita take the auspicious bath. You and your brother wear royal ornamentation. Tomorrow we will all leave for Ayodhya”.

Hearing this, Rama said, “O Vibhishana! The delicate and gentle Bharata, who is my dearest devotee, is eagerly awaiting my arrival. With matted locks and bark garments, he too is following all the disciplines and is eternally chanting only my name. Without him, how can I take the auspicious bath? How can I wear all the ornaments? Hence you honour Sugriva and other Vanara heroes. Worshipping them is equivalent to worshipping me. This is undoubtedly true”.

Thereafter, Vibhishana honoured all the Vanaras and offered to them the gold, diamonds, gems and other objects desired by them and worshipped them all. He then bid them goodbye.

He then brought the Pushpaka Vimana that glowed like the Sun. Holding Sita’s hand, Rama boarded the aircraft. Lakshmana boarded the aircraft and stood beside Rama.

Rama who was seated in the aircraft addressed Sugriva, Vibhishana, Angada and others and said, “My task was accomplished by you all. Hence I am permitting you all to leave. O Sugriva! Together with the army proceed to Kishkinda. O Vibhishana! With total devotion towards me, reside in your kingdom Lanka. The Devatas led by Indra will never trouble you. Now I seek to leave for my father’s capital Ayodhya”.

Hearing this, all the Vanaras, their leaders and Vibhishana said, “O best among the Raghus! We all seek to come to Ayodhya with You, witness your coronation and bow to Mother Kaushalya. Thereafter, we shall return to our kingdoms and rule. Permit us”.

Rama said, “May it happen as you wish! O Sugriva! Vibhishana! Hanuman! All Vanara heroes! Immediately board this aircraft”.

Then, Sugriva along with his ministers and army boarded the aircraft. Vibhishana got in along with his ministers. The Pushpaka Vimana which belonged to Kubera made itself vast enough to accommodate them all. After everyone had entered, on Rama’s command, it flew into the skies.

Rama who was travelling in that aircraft that radiated divinely resembled the four-faced Brahma who was seated on the Swan vehicle. Pushpaka vimana which is exceedingly beautiful had been obtained by Kubera on the strength of his austerities. Now due to the presence of Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana, it attained even more glow and resembled the Sun.

Day 24, August 6

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 14

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Rama, who was seated in the Pushpaka Vimana said to Sita, "O Sita! See the battlefield. This is where a fearsome war broke out between the Vanaras and the demons. Right now it is filled with blood and flesh and is murky. Look there is the Trikuta Mountain on which shines the city of Lanka. This is the place where the demon-king Ravana died in my hands. Even other demons heroes like Kumbhakarna and Indrajit died here.

Look at the ocean on which I constructed a bridge. This pure and sacred place, which is called Setubandha is worshipful in all worlds. Merely by seeing it, the living being is freed from all sins. At this place, I have consecrated Lord Shankara with the name Rameshwara. This is the place where Vibhishana along with his ministers surrendered to me".

After covering some distance, he said, "O Sita! This is the strange city Kishkinda that is filled with forests. This is Sugriva's city".

Then, with Rama's permission, to bring delight to Mother Sita, Sugriva brought Tara and other Vanara women. After they had boarded the plane, it flew swiftly forward.

Rama then said to Sita, "O Sita! This is Rishyamukha mountain. That is the place where Vali died in my hands. Look, there is Panchavati where the demons were killed by me.

O auspicious one! See the ashrams of Maharishis Agastya and Suteekshna. See the Rishis. See this mountain on which is located the supreme Chitrakoota. At this place, Bharata had come to plead with me. Look, there is Bharadwaja ashram on the banks of Yamuna. Look at the River Ganga that Bhagiratha brought to earth and which purifies the three worlds.

O Sita! On the banks of River Sarayu, see the sacrificial poles that have been set up. That is Ayodhya city. Sita, offer obeisance to Ayodhya".

Travelling in this way, Rama reached Maharishi Bharadwaja's ashram. By then 14 years were complete. On Panchami, along with his brother, Rama met Maharishi Bharadwaja. He bowed in all humility to Maharishi and then said, "O great Maharishi! Do you know whether my brothers Bharata and Shatrughna are doing good? Is Ayodhya prospering? Are my mothers safe?"

Pleased to hear Rama's words, Maharishi Bharadwaja said, "O Rama! Everyone is doing good. The broad-minded Bharata is wearing matted locks, sustaining only on roots and fruits, and is strictly abiding by all the disciplines. He has rested all the responsibility of the kingdom on your sandals and is eagerly awaiting your arrival.

O Raghunandana! I know all your activities right from your stay in Dandakaranya. Beginning from Sita's abduction and up to the killing all the demons, I know everything. I could learn all the facts with the supernatural powers that you have showered upon me.

You are the Supreme Lord who is without beginning, middle and end. You are the creator for the hordes of living beings. You initially created waters and rested in them. Hence you became Narayana. (Nara means water. Narayana means he who lives in water).

O Self for the universe! You exist as the inner Self in all humans. Brahma, the creator of the world, emerged from your navel-lotus. You are the Lord for all the worlds and their governor too. You are worshipful for all the worlds. You are the Supreme Lord Mahavishnu.

This Janaki is none other than Lakshmi. Lakshmana is none other than Adishesha. In yourself, with the help of Your illusion, You have created the entire universe. With Your knowledge, You remain a witness for everything and like the sky, You remain untouched by anything.

*Bahir antaśca bhūtānām tvamēva raghunandana
Pūrṇōpi mūḍha bhūtānām vicchinna iva lakshyase ॥*

O Raghunandana! You exist within and outside all living beings. To the dim-witted and ignorant, You appear as existing separately.

O Lord of the universe! You are the world. You are the support for the universe. In all beings, You are the enjoyer of the food. You are the food that is consumed.

O best in the Raghu lineage! Everything seen, heard and thought is You alone. O Rama! The illusion that is triggered by your energy, creates all the worlds with its quality of egoism. In this way, their creation is merely being imposed on you.

Just as the iron pieces appear to obtain life in the presence of a magnet, merely with Your gaze, the illusionary energy generates the world.

Although You do not have a body, with the intent of protecting the creation, You take on 2 bodies. Among them, the gross body is called Virat (Universal body). The subtle body is Sutratma (Hiranyagarbha). O Raghunandana! From Your Universal body, thousands of incarnations emerge. They complete their assignments and merge into You alone.

O Lord of Raghus! Only the person who fixes his mind solely on You, and listens or chants the transcendental stories of Your incarnations, obtains liberation.

O Raghava! Brahma had prayed to You to reduce the earth's burden. Pleased with his penance, You incarnated in Raghu's lineage and have accomplished a task that was impossible for the Devas. In this human body, You will still live for many thousands of years and will accomplish many supra-human deeds for the well-being both in this world and the next. You will engage in many supreme deeds that destroy sins. Your renown will pervade all the worlds.

O Lord of the universe! I request you to stay here for this night. Purify my ashram with your feet. Tomorrow you leave for Ayodhya”.

Rama agreed and stayed there that night. Bharadwaja Maharishi worshipped Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana. He honoured everyone appropriately.

For a while Rama was thoughtful. Calling Hanuman he said, “Hanuman! Go quickly to Ayodhya. Enquire the well-being of all in the royal palace. Before that go to Srīngabherapura and meet Guha. Enquire about his well-being. Tell him that I have returned with Sita and Lakshmana.

Thereafter go to Nandigrama. Meet my younger brother Bharata and inform him of my well-being. Tell him all the events right from Sita's abduction to Ravana's killing. Tell him that I have destroyed the enemies and having accomplished the purpose I am returning with my brother, wife, Vanaras and bears. Observe his reaction. Read his mind & then quickly return to me”.

Hanuman took on a human form and just as the eagle flies swiftly to catch a snake, he darted to Srīngabherapura and met Guha. With immense delight, he melodiously said to Guha, “The prosperous and righteous Rama, who is the son of Dasharatha and who is your friend, is safe with Sita & Lakshmana. He enquires about your well-being. He is presently at Bharadwaja's ashram and is going to visit you very shortly. You are about to see Srīrama, the Lord of all Lords”.

Hearing these words, Guha was ecstatic. His body horripilated. Thereafter, at the speed of the wind, Hanuman flew. Crossing Ayodhya and the River Sarayu (Rama-teertha) he joyfully reached Nandigram which was at a distance of 1 krosa from Ayodhya.

He saw Bharata who had worn matted locks, and bark clothing and was in a pitiable condition with an emaciated body. He was living like an ascetic. Due to neglect, his body had completely withered. His matted locks were all entangled. He looked pitiable. He was living only on fruits and roots. His thoughts were eternally focussed on Rama.

With Rama's sandals in front of him, he was completing his administrative tasks. All the ministers, attendants, and citizens were wearing saffron robes. Even the cattle appeared emaciated. Everyone appeared like a living corpse. (From every mouth only the words 'Rama, Sita' could be heard. Eating roots and fruits they were living with total devotion to Rama).

Seeing Bharata who was like an embodiment of dharma, Hanuman bowed in total humility and said, "O great man! You are worrying about Rama who is living as an ascetic in the Dandakaranya forest. That Rama has informed you of his well-being. I am bringing to you very cheerful news. Abandon this terrible sorrow. Very shortly you will meet your brother Rama. O Lord! In the war, Rama killed Ravana and re-obtained Sita. He is now coming here with Sita and Lakshmana".

Hearing this, Bharata was totally ecstatic. Unable to contain his happiness, he swooned and fell to the ground. In a short time, he awakened and embraced Hanuman who was talking lovingly to him and shed uncontrollable tears of joy drenching Hanuman's body.

He said, "I do not know whether you, who have come here with compassion for me, are a human or a Devata. But, to you who have given me such precious and cherished news, I will give you anything you choose. Do you want me to give you 1 lakh cows? Or 100 of prosperous villages or 16 maidens? What do you seek? Tell me.

*Ēti jīvanti mānandam naram varṣa śatādapi
Rāghavasya hariṇām ca kathamāsīt samāgamaḥ ||*

O noble one! The saying= If a person is alive then at least after 100 years he will attain happiness, has turned true today. May auspiciousness come to you! How did Rama develop a friendship with Vanaras? Tell me the truth. Only then I will believe you".

Hanuman then narrated in detail Rama's story. Hearing all the details, Bharata was delighted. In great happiness he instantly instructed Shatrughna, "Shatrughna, in all the city temples, all the deities should be worshipped by the priests with all proper ingredients and naivedyas. Ensure that hundreds of wise men, bards, singers and dancers are ready to welcome Rama. Let the mothers, vassal kings, ministers, armies, brahmins, citizens, elephants, horses, infantry and, the kings who are here to see Rama's arrival, proceed immediately to receive him".

The orders were immediately executed by the officers. Immediately the city was decorated with pearls and jewels. Arches made of pearls and gems were hung everywhere. Flags were flown everywhere. People artistically decorated their homes in varied ways. With a desire to see Rama, everyone rushed out of his homes.

One lakh horses, 10,000 elephants, 10,000 chariots adorned with golden decorations set out. The queens set out in the palanquins. Bharata went on foot carrying Rama's sandals on his head and his hands joined in salutation. He was followed by Shatrughna. The young and the old carried many objects-big and small-and set out.

From a distance, they saw the Pushpaka vimana which was glowing like Moon and Sun. That Pushpaka vimana had been created merely with Brahma's mental resolve. In it, Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Vibhishana with his ministers, Sugriva along with the Vanaras could be seen. Hanuman said, "O people! Look there".

“Sriramachandra is arriving. Look there is Srirama”- loud shouts went up in the air. All the ladies and the children were shouting joyfully. The people dismounted from the chariots, elephants, and horses and stood on the ground and looked at those who were in the aircraft.

In uncontrollable happiness, Bharata joined his palms and went forward to receive Rama. He joyously prostrated to Rama who was seated in the aircraft. At Rama’s command, the Pushpaka vimana touched the earth.

Along with Shatrughna, Bharata entered the aircraft, went to Srirama, and in great joy bowed to him. Rama lifted Bharata, whom he was meeting after a long time, seated him on his lap, and lovingly embraced him. Then Bharata went to Lakshmana and then going to Sita, he mentioned his name and bowed to her. Bharata was filled with love for relations.

Bharata then embraced Sugriva, Jambavanta, Mainda, Angada, Dvivida, Neela, Rishabha, Sushena, Nala, Gavaksha, Gandamadana, Sharabha, and Pavana. All of them took on human forms and accepted the respect being given by Bharata. The gentle and peaceful Vanaras reciprocated by offering respect to Bharata and enquiring about his well-being.

Bharata embraced Sugriva and said, “O King! Only with your support Rama could obtain victory. Ravana has died. O Sugriva! We are not 4 brothers but 5. You are our 5th brother”.

Shatrughna too offered obeisance to Rama and Lakshmana. With total humility, he bowed to Sita’s feet. Rama then went to his grieving mother. With total humility, he touched her feet, bowed to her, and brought joy to her mind. He then bowed to Kaikeyi, Sumitra, and other mothers.

With total devotion, Bharata now offered to Srirama, those sandals of his (Srirama’s) which he had been worshipping for many years with great devotion and said, “O Lord! You now accept back the kingdom which you had deposited with me in custody. O Lord! As you have returned to Ayodhya, my birth has attained fulfillment today. My desire has been fulfilled. Due to your grace, the treasury, granary and weaponry have multiplied by 10 times. O Lord of the worlds! Now you rule your kingdom”.

Hearing Bharata’s words, all the Vanaras sheds tears of joy and applauded him.

With a joyful mind, along with Bharata who was seated on his lap, Rama in that aircraft went to Bharata’s ashram. There he got down and set foot on the ground. He then said to the Pushpaka vimana, “O vehicle! Return to Kubera, the Lord of wealth. I am permitting you”.

Thereafter Srirama bowed to the feet of Guru Maharishi Vasishtha. Seating him on a very high seat, he sat near his Guru’s feet.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 15

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Thereafter, with absolute devotion, Kaikeyi’s son Bharata joined his palms, raised his hands above his head, and said to Rama, “Dear brother! You gifted me the kingdom thereby honouring my mother’s words. O Lord! This kingdom is yours. I offer back to you your own kingdom”-saying this, he fell flat on the ground and bowed to Rama’s feet.

Along with his mother Kaikeyi, he prayed to Rama in various ways to accept back the kingdom. Then, the Supreme Lord Srirama, who, taking recourse in his illusion was enacting like an ordinary mortal, agreed and accepted the kingdom from Bharata.

Why does that Supreme Lord who is the embodiment of knowledge and unlimited bliss and who, due to being the Lord of all, enjoys unparalleled supreme monarchy need this insignificant and worthless position as a king on earth?

Why does that husband of Lakshmi who, with the mere movement of his eyebrows destroys the three worlds, who playfully protects the entire creation, and by whose grace the infinite wealth is obtained, need this insignificant kingdom?

Yet, with the desire to fulfill the desires of those who eternally worship him, He has accepted a human form and he enacts according to the ways of the world.

Thereafter, all the materials essential for Rama's coronation were readied. After Rama had completed his bath, Lakshmana bathed. Thereafter the Vanara-king Sugriva and the demon-king Vibhishana bathed.

Rama then removed his matted locks, bathed again, and wore sweet-smelling flower garlands. He applied sandal paste and other fragrances and wore costly beautiful garments. He was now glowing resplendently. Lakshmana and Bharata decorated Srirama. Meanwhile, the maids decorated Sita with costly attire and beautiful ornamentation.

Kaushalya had immense love for her son. Pleased with the wives of the Vanaras, lovingly she personally decorated them all.

When all of them were ready to depart for Ayodhya, on Shatrughna's command, minister Sumantra brought a chariot that illumined like the Sun. Yoking the horses to it, he stood there humbly. Rama mounted that chariot. Sugriva, Angada, Hanuman and Vibhishana also wore royal attire and royal ornamentation, mounted chariots, horses or elephants and positioned themselves either in front of Rama or behind him.

Sugriva's wives and Sita sat in beautiful palanquins. A royal procession set out. Rama who rode in a chariot that was yoked with parrot-green horses, appeared like Indra who was travelling in his chariot. Bharata was driving Rama's chariot. Shatrughna was holding the white umbrella that had a gem-studded handle. Lakshmana held the peacock fan. Sugriva and Vibhishana held the royal fans.

At that time, the Devas and Siddhas greatly extolled Srirama. These melodious praises reverberated everywhere. All the Vanaras took on human forms and mounting elephants followed Rama to Ayodhya.

As the procession travelled to the city, drums, kettledrums, conches, mridamgam, and other musical instruments were played. The citizens rejoiced on seeing Rama, who was arriving royally into the city.

Rama who was bluish in complexion had worn many gem-studded ornaments. His crown was glittering radiantly. He had wide reddish eyes. He was wearing yellow garments inlaid with many gems and which had a border made of gold. With absolute delight, all the citizens looked at Rama who was coming in a procession.

With priceless pearl chains and gem-studded chains that adorned his broad-chest and strong arms, he was illumining radiantly. Seeing him, the citizens derived untold bliss. Sugriva and other prominent Vanaras were serving him. He had applied Kasturi paste to his body and was wearing a garland made from the flowers of the Kalpavriksha tree.

The ladies of Ayodhya who heard the pleasant news of Rama's arrival were overjoyed. Abandoning their chores they decorated themselves nicely and ran to the terraces of their homes. They saw the Supreme Lord Srihari who was before them in the form of Rama.

Seeing his joyous form that brings delight to the eyes and the mind, in uncontained joy they rained flowers on him. Seeing him who is an embodiment of bliss, they embraced him mentally. The Supreme Lord Srirama smiled joyfully and cast loving benevolent glances upon the citizens.

Moving forward gradually, Srirama reached his father's palace which was glowing like Indra's palace. Entering the royal palace, with a very pleasant mind, Rama bowed to his mother Kaushalya's feet. Thereafter, with utmost devotion, he bowed to the feet of his other mothers.

Then he said to Bharata, "Provide my palace that is furnished with every form of riches for the stay of our friend Sugriva. Arrange appropriate buildings for the stay of other guests".

With this instruction, Bharata, based on the worthiness of each guest, arranged appropriate residences for their stay. Thereafter Bharata said to Sugriva, "For Rama's coronation, the waters from the four oceans need to be fetched. Hence send attendants who can travel quickly".

Immediately Sugriva summoned Jambavanta, Hanuman, Angada and Sushena and entrusted them with this task. They travelled at the speed of the wind and, in golden containers, fetched the waters from the oceans. Sugriva then handed over those containers to Maharishi Vasishtha so that they could be used for the coronation.

The aged Vasishtha seated Srirama along with Sita on the gem-studded throne. Vasishtha, Vamadeva, Jābāli, Gautama, Valmiki, and other Maharishis, in great delight, gave Srirama the ceremonial bath with waters that were fragrant due to the addition of darbha grass, Tulasi leaves, and other fragrant substances.

When the Devatas along with their troops were watching from the skies, when the Guardian-deities together with their attendants were extolling from the skies, along with the priests, Brahmins, maidens and ministers, all the Maharishis gave Rama the ceremonial bath with the herbal waters. Just as the Vasus had bathed Indra in the past, the Maharishis gave Srirama the ceremonial bath.

Shatrughna held the royal umbrella over Srirama's head. Sugriva and Vibhishana held the white royal fans. The wind-god who had been sent by Indra offered a golden chain. Indra offered Rama an ornament that was laden with many precious gems and which was glowing with gems and gold.

At that auspicious hour, the Gandharvas sang. The Apsaras danced. The kettledrums were beaten. Flowers were rained from heaven.

Sita who was decorated with all ornamentation and, who was glowing with a golden complexion was seated to the left of Rama. She was holding the red lotus in her hand. Rama had put his left arm over her shoulder.

At that time, when all the Devata troops were surrounding him, Shiva who was accompanied by Parvati, glorified Rama as follows:

*"Namo'stu rāmāya saśaktikāya nīlotpala śyāmala kōmalāya
Kirīṭa hārāṅgada bhūṣaṅāya simhāsanasthāya mahāprabhāya ॥*

I offer obeisance to Lord Srirama, who is accompanied by Sita, who is handsome like a blue lotus, who is decorated with a crown, armlets, chains, and other ornaments, who adorns the throne and who showers radiance everywhere.

O Rama! You are nondual, without beginning, middle, and end. With Your illusion, You create the worlds, govern them and then merge them again into You. But you remain unattached and are eternally soaked in Self's bliss. Due to this, the different impurities do not exist in you.

For showing the path to the devotees who have surrendered, You incarnate among Devatas and humans in different forms, and display strange transcendental deeds. Due to this, perhaps the ordinary ignorant folks consider You to be a human but, the enlightened clearly perceive You as the Supreme.

O Lord! With Your aspect, You have created the worlds. In the form of Adishesha, staying at the bottom of the universe, you are carrying all the worlds. Likewise, manifesting as the Sun, Moon, wind, herbs, and clouds, You are sustaining all the worlds.

In the bodies of the living beings, You take on the form of the digestive fire and with the help of the 5 pranas, You are digesting the food consumed by the living entities. You sustain all the worlds.

O Isha! Your energy shines as the radiance in the Moon, Sun, Fire, and other luminous bodies. You are the consciousness that exists in the bodies of all living entities. Valour, strength, longevity, and courage found in living beings are Your existence alone. For everything, Your existence alone is the cause. Barring You, nothing exists.

O Lord! You illumine separately in the form of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, and with divisions such as time, actions, Sun and Moon. For the followers of different doctrines, You appear as different existences when in reality You are the non-dual Existence.

Just as the Puranas and Smritis describe You as one who has incarnated as fish and others, everything known as real and unreal is You alone. Barring You nothing exists in creation. Everything inert and sentient is You alone.

You are beyond the world which is the outcome, and Prakriti, which is the cause. Enveloped by Your illusion, living beings fail to know You, the Supreme Lord. Only those, whose minds have been rendered pure due to serving Your devotees, fathom Your Supreme Essence which is non-dual and which governs everything.

Even Brahma and other Devatas fail to know Your Supreme Truth as their minds are external facing. Hence, the wise place their devotion and trust only in Your incarnations and serve them. Through this, they cross the sorrow and obtain liberation.

O Rama! Together with Bhavani, I always chant Your divine name. Living in Kashi, I initiate the people dying there into Your Taraka mantra to liberate them from the shackles of repeated rebirths.

O Lord! Those who, with unflinching devotion, listen to this prayer daily or who sing or write it, will enjoy all comforts with Your grace. Further, upon death, they will attain Your ultimate abode”.

Then Indra said, “O Lord! On the strength of the boons given by Brahma, the demon-king Ravana stole away all the comforts of the Devatas. Now with your grace, the wicked Ravana has been killed. With Your blessing, we have regained all our comforts”.

The Devatas said, “O Murari! O Lord Vishnu! The dim-witted Ravana stole the fire-offerings made by the Brahmins to appease us. It is purely Your grace that the evil Ravana is dead. Due to Your blessings, we will henceforth obtain the offerings made into the fire”.

The forefathers said, “O Mahatma! The rice-balls offered by the humans for the forefathers in the sacred places such as Gaya, were usurped by the demons due to Ravana’s might. Such a wicked demon has been killed by You. Now we will obtain all the rice-balls offered to us and, with them, we will regain our strength”.

The Yakshas then said, “O Raghava!The wicked Ravana got us to serve him and made us carry his palanquin. He tied us to vehicles and tortured us. Now that he has been killed by you, we are now free from endless suffering. This is Your blessing upon us”.

The Gandharvas said, “O Rama! We are expert musicians. Rendering Your glories we were immersed in the ocean of nectar and were leading satisfying lives. But, governed by the wicked Ravana, we had to sing his glories and worship him. He has died in Your hands. Hence, we have been saved by You”.

In this way, the serpents, Kinnaras, Siddhas, Marutts, Vasus, Rishis, Guhyakas, birds, Prajapatis, Apsaras and other beings came to Rama and feasted on his form with great delight. They individually extolled him to their heart's content. Rama also honoured them all.

Brahma, Rudra, and others saw Rama who was drenched due to the ceremonial bath, and greatly extolled him and his glorious deeds.

Meditating upon Rama who is together with Sita and Lakshmana, who is seated on the royal throne and who is filled in their hearts, they returned to their respective abodes.

When the kettledrums were being beaten in the skies, the hordes of Devatas extolled Srirama. With peaceful minds, they rained flowers from the skies. From all sides, the Rishis began to glorify Srirama.

Then, Srirama, who was glowed in bluish complexion. He had a delightful face charming smile that glowed with the radiance of a crore Suns. While being served by Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman, Rishis, Vanaras, he illumined brightly.

Yuddha kanda, Chapter 16

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Rama is the one who bestows happiness on all the worlds. This King of all kings completed his coronation ceremony. In his rule, the earth was lush green with crops. All trees bore plentiful fruit. Even flowers that inherently do not have any smell, began to emit divine fragrance.

Rama donated to the Brahmins lakh horses, a lakh milk-yielding cows along with their calves, thousands of oxen, and 30 crore golden coins. Further he also happily and freely gave away huge quantities of clothes, ornaments and precious gems. With utmost love, he gave Sugriva a chain made of all precious gems and which glittered like the Sun. He gave two supreme armlets to Angada.

With utmost love, He gifted Sita a necklace that illumined like a crore moons, and which was made of pearls and gems. Sita then took that necklace from her neck and held it in her hand. Again and again, she looked at the Vanaras and then at her husband's face. Then, reading her mind, the wise Rama said to her, "O Vaidehi! That hero with whom you are supremely pleased, gift this necklace to him"

Then, as Srirama was watching, Sita gifted that necklace to Hanuman. With this necklace Hanuman glowed divinely. Seeing Hanuman who was standing there with folded hands, Rama, who was supremely pleased with his supreme devotion, said to him, "O Hanuman! I am extremely pleased with you. Seek any boon. Even if it is difficult to obtain in all three worlds I shall give it to you".

In absolute delight, Hanuman bowed to Srirama and said, "O Lord! O Rama! Even after chanting your name endlessly, I am not satisfied. Hence I will forever remain on earth eternally chanting your name. My body should remain on earth as long as your name remains on earth. O King! This is what I seek".

Rama agreed to this and further said, "O Hanuman! Remaining eternally liberated you live happily. At the end of the Kalpa (creation) You will attain oneness with me. This is undoubtedly true".

Then Janaki said in great delight with utmost love said, "O Maruti! Wherever you may stay, with my command all different comforts will always surround you".

When Sita thus blessed him, Hanuman was supremely delighted. His eyes were filled with tears of bliss. Again and again with utmost devotion he reverentially bowed to the feet of Rama and Sita, the Lords who govern the universe. Then, even though it was very painful for him to stay away from Sita and Rama, he went to the Himalayas for penance.

Thereafter Rama said to Guha, "O friend! Return to your beautiful Srngabherapura. Contemplating eternally upon me, enjoy the luxuries that you have earned. In the end, you will attain oneness in form with me. This is undoubtedly true".

Rama then gifted to him many precious ornaments. He also gave him a huge kingdom and also blessed him with Self-knowledge. Embracing Guha he lovingly bid him goodbye. In great delight, Guha left for his kingdom.

Rama gifted many precious gems to the Vanaras and to others who had accompanied him to Ayodhya. He gave them many precious clothes and honoured them exceptionally. Sugriva and the other prominent Vanara heroes were honoured by Srirama and in great delight, they returned to their respective homes.

Vibhishana obtained a kingdom that was free from all enemies. Honoured by Rama, in great delight he returned to Lanka.

Rama loved his citizens as his children. Much against Lakshmana's liking he appointed him as the heir apparent. Lakshmana served Rama with utmost devotion. The Supreme Lord is the witness for all actions. He is very pure, changeless and is freed from the impurities known as likes and dislikes. Feelings of doership do not exist in him. He revels in Self's bliss.

Despite being the form of supreme bliss, as he had taken on a human form, for teaching the ideals to all the worlds he personally performed Ashwamedha and other Yagas and through them worshipped the Devas. In all the Yagas he gave plentiful dakshina to the priests.

When Rama was ruling, there were no widows who lamented the loss of their husbands. There was no fear of serpents or diseases. There was no fear of thieves. There were no dangers of any form. Fear of untimely death did not exist for the young, the virtuous or the old. Everyone worshipped Srirama and thought of him. Clouds showered appropriate rain based on the season. All citizens were immersed in completing the dharmas stipulated for them. They duly followed the rules of the caste and the stage of life.

Rama protected his citizens just as a father would protect his children. While being devoted to his dharma, he ruled his kingdom for 10,000 years"- said Shiva to Parvati.

This Ramayana showers wealth, grains, and infinite prosperity. It showers longevity upon the person. It bestows merit upon the person. It is very secretive and very pure. This Ramayana which is known as Adhyātmika, was previously narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati.

*Shronti bhaktyā manujah bhaktyā pathētvā paritva
Sarvāh samāpnōti manōgatāśīṣō vimucyatē*

The human who, with absolute concentration, listens or with a pleasant mind reads it, fulfils all desires. He will be instantaneously freed from all sins.

The person who listens to Rama's coronation with total dedication will obtain great wealth if he seeks wealth. If he seeks sons, he will obtain sons. This Ramayana should be read from the beginning. Due to such reading, the person will obtain a worthy son who will earn the appreciation of the elders.

The king who hears this Adhyatma Ramayana will obtain monarchy over the earth. He will conquer all enemies and will be freed from the fear of enemies. Ladies who hear Adhyatma Ramayana will be duly revered by their children. Childless women if they listen to this story with devotion, they will obtain a handsome son. (If not in this birth at least in the next birth she will obtain).

The person who conquers anger and jealousy, and reads or listens to this text with total dedication, will conquer all obstacles easily. Without any fear, he will have intense devotion toward Rama and will enjoy happiness.

All the Devatas will shower boons upon those who listen to this Adhyatma Ramayana from the beginning. They will be rid of all their poverties. They will obtain wealth. The lady who after her period, with total devotion to Rama, listens to this entire story of Rama from the beginning will obtain a long-lived son. She will be a chaste woman and will be revered in this world.

Those who worship this Ramayana and who daily bow to this sacred book will be freed from all sins and will reach the ultimate abode of Vishnu.

Rama will be pleased with those who listen whole-heartedly and devotedly to this Adhyatma Ramayana or who with full devotion read it.

*Rama eva Parabrahma tasmims tuste khilatmane
Dharmātma kāma mōkṣānām yaddyadicchati tat bhavet*

Rama is Parabrahma. He is the Supreme Being. He is the dharma. He is the embodiment of liberation. The person with whom he is pleased obtains whatever he seeks- be it, dharma, artha, kama or moksha.

Adhyatma Ramayana should be read unfailingly without breaking the rules. This showers longevity. It protects health. It destroys the sins of crores of births. Due to listening to Ramayana, the Devatas are pleased. The planets, the forefathers and the Rishis are pleased.

The person who reads, listens or writes this great text which is coupled with detachment and which is very ancient and wonderous, will obtain liberation in this birth itself. He will not obtain birth again in this world.

Maheshwara, the Lord of all beings, churned the heap of Vedas many times, scrutinized it deeply, and nicely learnt that Srirama was the Taraka Brahma and that he was the secretive primordial form of the Supreme Lord Maha-vishnu.

In short, He disclosed to his beloved wife Parvati, this Supreme Truth which contains the essence of all the Vedas and the secretive essence of Rama with the name Adhyatma Ramayana.

Sri Ramachandra Parabrahmane namah

Day 25, August 7

Uttara kanda, Chapter 1

May Dasharatha's son Srirama, who is the scion of the Raghu's lineage, who fills Kaushalya's heart with bliss, who has killed the 10 headed Ravana and who has wide eyes like the lotus be victorious!

Parvati asked Shiva, "O Lord! What were the activities of Rama, the Lord who while enhancing Mother Kaushalya's bliss, instilled fear in his enemies, after the killing of Ravana and other demons? After his return to Ayodhya along with Sita and after taking on the reins of the kingdom, what were the activities of this eternal Lord who had playfully assumed a human form?"

How long did he stay on earth? How did he leave this human body and return to his world? O Lord, with utmost dedication I seek to know. Even after hearing the story of the Supreme Lord Srirama for so long, my ears are not satiated. Hence please explain Rama's story in greater detail".

Lord Shiva replied, "O Parvati! After the destruction of the demons, Rama accepted the responsibility of ruling the kingdom and was ruling wisely. The pure-minded Saptarishis and other Maharishis once wanted to revere Rama. Maharishis Vishwamitra, Vasishtha, Durvasa, Bhrigu, Angirasa, Kashyapa, Vamadeva, Atri and others arrived at Ayodhya. Maharishi Agastya who had come along with his disciples said to the doorkeepers, "Inform Rama that the Maharishis are here to shower blessings on him".

(Normally, God showers blessings upon us. But here the Maharishis had come to shower blessings upon Rama, the Supreme Lord. This indicates the supreme power of the ascetic powers).

In great haste, the doorkeeper ran to Rama and said, "O Lord! Maharishi Agastya is here along with other Maharishis to see you. They are waiting at the main door". Rama replied, "O doorkeeper! Quickly bring them in with all honours".

The doorkeepers worshipped the Maharishis, honoured and welcomed them reverentially. The Maharishis then entered Rama's palace which, being inlaid with all precious gems, was glittering divinely.

Seeing them arrive, Rama quickly got up, went forward, welcomed them, worshipped them and offered them water to wash their hands and feet. He then donated plenty of cows to them. In all humility, he bowed to them and offered them appropriate seats. With this, the Maharishis were pleased.

After they were seated, Rama enquired about their wellbeing. In response, the Maharishis enquired, 'O strong-armed one! Are the citizens happy in your land? O destroyer of foes! It is truly our fortune that we have got this chance to see you, the destroyer of foes.

O Rama! O mighty one! When you stand on the battlefield with the bow in your hand, you effortlessly conquer the three worlds. Such is your competence. If so, what is Ravana's might in front of yours? Killing him was not a burdensome deed for you at all!

We have been fortunate that the Ravana and other demons died in your hands. O strong-armed one! Killing Ravana and others was an effortless task for you. But, in comparison to them all, handling Indrajit was far more difficult. Yet you accomplished it easily.

O best among the Raghus! Unable to withstand the might of your death-like arrows, ferocious and vile demons such as Kumbhakarna died. As per the promise made earlier to us, in the battle you destroyed entirely the hordes of demons. You lived up to your words. It is our greatest fortune".

Astounded on hearing this, Rama folded his hands and humbly enquired, "O revered ones! Ravana had conquered the 3 worlds. Kumbhakarna was a terror in the world. Leaving them, why do you glorify only Indrajit?"

To bring joy to Rama, Maharishi Agastya replied, "O Rama. Listen. In brief, I shall narrate the births of Ravana and Indrajit, their deeds and the boons obtained by them.

Previously, in the Kṛta Yuga, there was a Maharishi called Pulastya who was extremely wise and very learned. This son of Brahma went to Mount Meru for penance. Staying in the ashram of the virtuous King Trnabindu, he was immersed in deep penance along with a relentless study of the Vedas.

However, the dancing, singing and other sports of the Gandharva women in the ashram became a regular hindrance to him. Unable to tolerate their disturbance, he angrily cursed, "The woman who is seen by me, will become pregnant instantly".

Frightened by this curse no woman dared to come in that direction. But Trnabindu's daughter, who was unaware of this curse, one morning walked past Maharishi Pulastya. Suddenly she sensed some changes in her body and was alarmed. Slowly it dawned on her that she was pregnant.

She was deeply worried and frightened. Her body was drained of lustre. She trembled. In great fear, she ran to her father Trnabindu and reported everything to him. With his yogic vision, Trnabindu realized that this was the outcome of Maharishi Pulastya's curse. He, therefore, decided to get his daughter married to Maharishi Pulastya. The Maharishi consented.

Trinabindu's daughter served her husband with total dedication and pleased him. He said, "O auspicious son! I will bless you with a son who will bring great renown to both our families".

As time went by, she gave birth to Vishravasu, who attained renown in the three worlds as a Maha-jnani and as the best among the Munis. Impressed by his virtues, character, knowledge and humility, Maharishi Bharadwaja joyfully gave his daughter to Vishravasu in marriage.

This couple had a son who too was renowned in all worlds. As the son of Vishravasu, he was known as Vaishravana. He was famously known as Kubera.

Kubera undertook severe penance and became at par with his father. Pleased with his penance, Brahma showered many boons upon him. Based on Kubera's desire, he blessed him with limitless wealth and made him the Lord of all wealth. Brahma also gifted him with an aircraft Pushpaka vimana.

In that aircraft, Kubera went to his father Maharishi Vishravasu, bowed to him and said, "Dear father! Lord Brahma has given me plentiful boons but has not given me a place to reside. Hence, please suggest a good place where I can live untroubled by others".

Vishravasu said, "Vishwakarma has created a beautiful city called Lanka for the residence of the demons. But fearing Vishnu, the demons have abandoned it and are presently living in Patala. Lanka is situated in the oceans and is unconquerable by enemies. Go and live there as so far no one has claimed a right over it".

With his father's permission, Kubera, the Lord of wealth, went to Lanka and lived there happily. A very long time passed. One day, a demon-cannibal Sumali came to the earth along with his young daughter Kaikasi who was as beautiful as Lakshmi.

Sumali saw Kubera wandering in his Pushpaka vimana. He went into deep thought. Thereafter, seeking the well-being of the demon clan, he said to Kaikasi, "Dear daughter, you are young and very beautiful.

Although you are of the marriageable age, fearing your rejection, no one approaches you seeking marriage. Listen to my suggestion. You marry Pulastya's son Vishravasu who belongs to Brahma's lineage. From him, you will obtain mighty sons who in glory will match Kubera."

Kaikasi agreed and immediately went and stood before Vishravasu while looking down shyly and rubbing the earth with her big toe. Noticing her, Vishravasu asked, "O jewel among women! Who are you? Why have you come here? You appear unmarried. Whose daughter are you?"

Kaikasi bowed to him and said, "O Lord! With the powers of your penance, you can figure out everything". Vishravasu thought for a while and then said, "O auspicious one. You have come here to obtain a son from me. Your desire will be fulfilled. You will obtain a son. But, this is the evening Sandhya time which is an inauspicious time. As you are seeking a son at this inauspicious hour, you will obtain 2 sons who are filled with wicked qualities. They will be demonic".

Kaikasi was alarmed and dejected. In great sorrow, she said, "O best among the Rishis! Can bad sons be born due to Rishis as great as you?"

Vishravasu then said, "O auspicious one! Thereafter a son will be born who will be very wise. He will be the best among the devotees. He will be a supreme devotee of Rama".

Thereafter, Kaikasi gave birth to Ravana, who with 10 heads and 20 hands, filled everyone with fear. At the moment of his birth, the earth shuddered. Evil omens that indicated the destruction of the world could be seen everywhere. Meteors fell from the skies. Kaikasi thereafter delivered another son who was like a colossal mountain. He was Kumbhakarna. Then a daughter Surphanaka was born. She was Ravana's sister.

Thereafter, a pleasant minded and calm looking Vibhishana was born. Among Kaikasi's sons. Vibhishana was moderate in eating habits and inclined towards learning Vedas and completing his daily obligatory duties. The wicked Kumbhakarna would eat Rishis and torture them at all times. The mighty Ravana became a menace to the world. Just as a disease torments the body, he tortured all the worlds, and became a disease to the world.

O Rama! As you dwell within every heart, you know everything. You are the form of knowledge. Even without the help of the mind and other faculties, you remain a witness to everything that happens in every heart. You are the eternal existence and Supreme Being. You are freed from all impurities. You have playfully taken on a human form and remain unaffected by the three attributes of Your illusionary energy.

Playfully prompted by you, I am explaining the birth-story of these demons when, in reality, I am insignificant before you. You are infinite, non-dual, beyond imagination and are the embodiment of knowledge. You are permanent in existence and are without births. I am aware that You are adept in the Self-essence. O Rama! You always retain your essence a secret. Despite being a deluded fool, I am talking freely in your presence".

Hearing these words, Rama smilingly said, "O Maharishi! This world filled with illusion is not different from me. Glorifying my deeds and attributes, destroys all the sins in this world. Know this".

Uttara kanda, Chapter 2

Shiva said to Parvati, "O Parvati! Hearing Srirama's words, Maharishi Agastya was delighted. He continued, "O Rama! One day seeking to see his father, the handsome Kubera, who was glowing due to his virtues and the radiance obtained from penance, boarded the Pushpaka vimana and arrived.

Seeing him, Kaikasi went to her son Ravana and said, "Ravana, look at Kubera. He is the Lord of wealth. Just observe how he glows with that radiance. I seek that you too should shine like him. Hence put in the right efforts".

Hearing his mother's words, Ravana angrily said, "O Mother! I will become equal to Kubera. No, in fact, I will become superior to him. Very shortly I will become a very great. O mother! You do not grieve".

Having taken this vow, along with his brothers, he went to Gokarna seeking to undertake rigorous austerities and obtain unbelievable fruits. Reaching there, all the brothers selected their respective places and began their penance. Adhering to terrible disciplines and rigorous austerities, Ravana began penance. Kumbhakarna began fearsome and terrible austerities which tormented the three worlds. He continued his austerities for 10000 years.

The righteous, virtuous and truthful Vibhishana stood on one foot & conducted penance for 5000 years. Ravana's penance stretched for 10000 celestial years. All along he abstained from food. As part of his austerities, at the end of every 1000 years, he cut one head and offered it to the Lord. At the end of the last year i.e., after the completion of 9000 years and just before the completion of the 10,000th year, he was about to offer the last of his heads when Brahma manifested and said, "O Ravana! You have performed terrible austerities. I am pleased with your penance. Seek any boon. I will grant it to you".

In great delight, Ravana asked, "O Lord! If you seek to give me any boon, then bestow immortality upon me. If that is not feasible, then ensure that I do not die in the hands of any Devatas, Yaksha, Naga (serpent) or Gandharva. I do not fear humans".

Agreeing to this, Brahma said, "So be it. The heads that you offered in fire will return to you. In future they will become infinite".

Lord Brahma then looked at Vibhishana and said, "My dear Vibhishana! Your penance was supreme and it was filled with dharma. I am pleased. Seek any boon".

Vibhishana bowed to Brahma and humbly said, "Ensure that at all times my intellect remains eternally fixed in dharma (righteous conduct) alone. It should never travel towards adharma (unrighteousness)."

Pleased with this, Brahma said, "My son! You are truly righteous. It will happen as you seek. Even though you have not asked, I shower immortality on you".

Brahma then looked at Kumbhakarna and asked him to seek any boon. Then, at the behest of the Devas, Goddess Saraswati entered into him and cast her influence upon him. Hence, he said, "I want to sleep for 6 months and then eat for 1 day". Brahma cast a glance at the Devas and then said to him, "So be it". Soon after he got the boon, Saraswati left him and went away. The wicked Kumbhakarna regretted the boon he had sought and was dejected.

Demon Sumali was thrilled on knowing the boons obtained by his three grandsons Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. With this, he developed great confidence. Along with Prahastha and other demons, he left Patala and came to earth.

Prahastha embraced Ravana and said, "It is my fortune that my greatest desire has been fulfilled. Now we need not fear that Maha-vishnu fearing whom we abandoned Lanka and escaped to Patala. O Ravana! Presently your brother Kubera has occupied Lanka. Evict him from there either using friendly techniques or through force. Always remember that a king has no relative or friend".

Ravana replied, "It is incorrect to utter such words because Kubera, the Lord of wealth, is my elder brother. He holds the position of our Guru".

In all humility Prahasta replied, "Ravana! It does not befit you to speak thus. You are ignorant of the science of politics and have not studied the Niti shastra. Heroic men abandon feelings of brotherhood. Listen to me. Although the devatas and demons are sons of Kashyapa, they have abandoned relationship & fought bitterly injuring each another with arrows and weapons. Hence, the enmity between devata and demons has been coming from eternity".

In this way, very tactfully the wicked Prahasta influenced Ravana. Ultimately Ravana was convinced. He said, "It will happen as you say".

With eyes that were deep red due to anger, he quickly went to Trikuta Mountain. Sending Prahasta as his envoy, he threatened Kubera. Kubera went to his father and narrated Ravana's deeds. At his father's request, he left Lanka. Going to the Kailasa Mountain he pleased Shiva with his deep penance. He earned Shiva's friendship and became one of the Guardian-deities. Vishwakarma then built a beautiful city called Alkapuri for Kubera.

Meanwhile, Ravana who occupied Lanka was crowned by the demons as their king. As the demon-king, he was happily living with them in Lanka. He gave his sister Surphanakha married to a demon called Vidhyutjihva, who was born in the Kālaghanja lineage.

Diti's son Maya, who was impressed with Ravana's qualities and prowess gave his beautiful daughter Mandodari to him in marriage. At that time, he also gifted a mighty shakti-weapon to Ravana.

Ravana got his brother Kumbhakarna married to Bali's granddaughter Vrtrajwāla. Gandarva Sailusha gave his beautiful and virtuous daughter Sarama in marriage to the righteous and noble Vibhishana.

Ravana's wife Mandodari gave birth to a son. As he reverberated like clouds at the time of birth, he was called Meghanatha.

One day Kumbhakarna said to Ravana, "I am unduly troubled by sleep". At Kumbhakarna's request, Ravana built for him a very vast and long cave made of iron pillars. In it, the foolish Kumbha snored and

slept. After he had slept, Ravana began harassing all the worlds. He harmed the Devatas, Kinnaras, humans, serpents, and others.

Kubera learnt of Ravana's atrocities. He tried to warn him through a messenger. Instead of heeding that advice, the angered Ravana attacked Alkapuri, defeated Kubera and snatched the wealth including the Pushpka vimana.

Ravana then conquered Yama, Varuna, and went to fight with Indra. A fierce fight ensued between Ravana and the Devatas who were led by Indra. In that war, Indra bound Ravana.

Coming to know of Ravana's plight, Meghanatha immediately came for war. He fought bitterly with the Devatas and conquered them. He bound Indra and released his father from imprisonment. He brought Indra to Lanka as a prisoner of war.

On learning of Indra's defeat, Brahma immediately came and spoke to Meghanatha and got Indra released. At that time, Brahma showered upon Meghanatha all the boons that he wanted.

After conquering Swarga (heaven), Ravana slowly conquered other worlds. Proud of his physical strength, one day he violently shook Mount Kailasa with his iron-like hands. Infuriated with his audacity and deed, Nandi cursed, "O Ravana! May you who are conceited due to power and might be killed by humans and vanaras!"

Ravana however attached very little importance to Nandi's curse. He continued to attack everyone. Waging terrible battles, conquering others and humiliating them, he once attacked Kartavirya's kingdom. In the battle that ensued, he was defeated and bound by Kartavirya. At that time, Maharishi Pulastya approached Kartavirya and requested that Ravana be released. Obeying Maharishi's request, Kartavirya freed him from imprisonment.

Thereafter Ravana attacked Vali. But Vali who was of unimaginable strength effortlessly caught Ravana and tucked him in his armpit. He then travelled to all 4 oceans and bathed in them with Ravana bound in the armpit. He tortured Ravana severely. The defeated Ravana made friendship with Vali.

O Rama! In this way, Ravana conquered all the worlds and enjoyed them. He was supported by Meghanatha or Indrajit. In the war, you killed Ravana, the harasser of all the worlds. Indrajit was killed by Lakshmana. Kumbhakarna, who was humungous like a huge mountain, was killed by You.

You are the primordial creator for the entire creation. You are Narayana and the all-pervading Lord. This world composed of sentient and non-sentient entities is Your form. From your lotus-navel, Brahma, the creator of the world, has emerged.

From your face, fire along with speech emerged. From Your arms, the hordes of Guardian deities emerged. Sun and moon have emerged from your eyes. From your ears, directions have emerged. From your nostrils, Ashwini devatas and life-force have emerged. From your buttocks, thighs, knees and waist, all the worlds that exist below the earth have emerged.

O Srihari! The 4 oceans were born from your stomach. From Your heart, Indra and Varuna were born. From your semen, Valakhilya Maharishis were born. From Your anus, death was born. From Your anger, the three-eyed Rudra was born. From Your bones, the mountains emerged. From the hair, clouds were born. From Your body-hair, medicinal herbs were born. From Your nails, donkeys emerged.

Together with illusionary energy, You manifest as the Universal form. Coupled with the three attributes, you appear to exist in varied forms. Only with Your support, the Devatas drink nectar from the Yagnas.

You create the universe composed of sentient and insentient objects. Only due to Your support, all the moving and non-moving entities are living. O Raghava! Just like ghee pervades the entire milk, you

pervade the entire universe.

Only due to Your illumination, the Sun and the Moon illumine, but You do not illumine due to them. You are all-pervading, eternal and non-dual. Only he who perceives from the supreme angle can understand You in this way. Just as the blind cannot see the Sun, those who cannot perceive from the supreme angle cannot see you.

Through the Upanishadic statements, 'Not this, not this', Yogis discard all the non-Self objects and, within their hearts, eternally search for You, the Supreme Self.

O Raghava! If Yogis develop even a trace of devotion towards Your holy feet, then, influenced by it they search and realize You. Those who lack devotion to your feet, cannot know You. Barring this, there is no path to know You.

O Lord, in front of You, the omniscient Lord who are beyond time and space I have spoken irrelevantly. Please forgive me. Shower Your grace upon Me.

You are indivisible, immutable, changeless, chinmatra, without any action and movement, all-knowing, birthless, Lord of everyone, omniscient and a repository of all virtues. You remain beyond the influence of illusion. You are always with devotees. O Raghupati! Srirama! I will always worship You".

Day 28, August 8

Uttara kanda, Chapter 3

Rama asked Maharishi Agastya, "O Maharishi! I have heard that Indra and Surya were born as Vanaras. I seek to know the truth about the birth of Vali and Sugriva. Hence narrate their story to me".

Maharishi Agastya then said, "O Rama! Mountain Meru is a golden mountain that illumines with the many precious gems. In the centre of its peaks, exists Brahma's court which has a width of 100 Yojanas.

Once when the four-faced Brahma was seated in deep meditation, tears of joy dropped from his eyes. Brahma caught them. Holding them he meditated for a while and then left them on the ground. The moment the tear drops touched the earth, from them a mighty vanara was born.

Lord Brahma addressed the vanara and said, "My son! For a while live with me. It will be beneficial for you". Based on Brahma's order, the vanara Vruksharajasa lived there. A long time passed. One day Vruksharajasa was searching for fruits when he spotted a deep well made of precious stones and filled with divine waters. Seeking to drink water, he stepped into that well. Seeing his reflection in the waters, he presumed it to be his enemy. Immediately he jumped into the waters. Noticing that there was no vanara in those waters, he came out. However, he had transformed into a beautiful female.

Seeing his female body, he was deeply shocked and anxious. It was mid-noon. At that time, having worshipped Lord Brahma, Indra was returning when he accidentally spotted the beautiful female and was tormented with lustful feelings. Immediately the semen dropped from his body. But that semen fell on the female monkey's tail and then touched the earth. Instantly from the tail, Vali, who matched Indra in prowess, was born. Indra gifted that boy a golden chain and returned to heaven.

Exactly at that time, the Sun-god who was passing by noticed the beautiful female vanara. He too was filled with lust on seeing her. His semen dropped. It fell on the vanara's neck. Instantly from that neck emerged a vanara who glowed brightly. He was Sugriva.

Sun-god gave Hanuman as an attendant and went his way. The female vanara took the boys and left. After travelling a little distance, she drifted into sleep. When she awakened the next morning, her body had regained its original male form. Taking these newborn sons Ruksharajasa went to Lord Brahma, bowed to him and stood aside.

Lord Brahma consoled the vanara. Calling an attendant, he said, "It is my command that you should take these vanaras from here. In Kishkinda there is a beautiful city constructed by Vishwakarma which is replete with every form of comfort. Even the Devatas cannot conquer it. These vanaras will be the kings of that land. All of the vanaras from all the seven islands will be the friends of these vanara-kings and will be in their sway. When the Supreme Lord incarnates on earth as Rama, these vanaras will help him".

Based on Brahma's command, the messenger took the Vanara and his two sons to Kishkinda, installed Vruksharajasa as the king of all the Vanaras and returned to Brahma. From then on, Kishkinda was the capital of the Vanaras".

Having explained the birth story of Vali and Sugriva, Maharishi Agastya further continued, "O Lord! You are the one who controls all beings. You are Narayana, the Supreme Lord who was worshipped by Brahma. Playfully taking on a human form you have reduced the earth's burden. You are the inner dweller within all beings. You are eternally liberated and an embodiment of knowledge. To You, who is infinite and indivisible, reducing the earth's burden is not an astonishing feat. Yet, virtuous beings glorify the exceptional deeds that You have performed as a human. Glorifying You and Your deeds dispels sins and showers happiness.

As the birth story of Vali and Sugriva is connected to Your story, O Rama, the person who glorifies their birth and who narrates it to others, will be freed from all sins.

O Rama! I shall now narrate another story that pertains to You. I shall explain why Ravana kidnapped Sita. Listen.

Once, in Krta yuga, when Brahma's son Sanat-kumara was seated in solitude, Ravana approached him and humbly enquired, "O Maharishi! Presently who is the best in this universe? Who is the most powerful among the Devatas? In whom do the Devatas seek shelter to gain victory in the battles? For whom do the Brahmins eternally perform Yagnas and Yagas? On whom do Yogis meditate? O Lord! You are the best among those who know the answers to all questions. Hence, please answer".

Maharishi Sanat-kumara pondered deeply upon the questions. Through his Yogic vision, he grasped the feelings in Ravana's heart and said,

"My son! Srihari, who sustains the entire creation and who is freed from births and deaths, is worshipped by Devatas and demons. He cannot be destroyed.

From Srihari's navel-lotus, the creator Brahma emerged. He is Narayana from whom the entire world of sentient and insentient is created. Seeking shelter in Him, the Devatas conquer the demons in the battle. Yogis through dhyana-yoga meditate upon Him".

Hearing this, Ravana asked, "O Maharishi! When the demons who belong to the daitya, danava and rakshasa tribes die in Vishnu's hands, what worlds do they attain?"

Maharishi Sanat-kumara said, "Those who die in the hands of the Devatas reach heaven or Swarga. After exhausting the merit balance, they fall and come back to earth. But those who die in Vishnu's hands, obtain Vishnu's abode. They do not take birth again".

Hearing this, Ravana was delighted. "If so, I will fight with Vishnu"- he thought. Maharishi Sanatkumar grasped Ravana's thought and said, "Your desire will be fulfilled. There is no doubt about this. O Ravana. Await that time and live happily. I will teach about Vishnu.

Maha-vishnu is inherently formless, nevertheless, due to the three attributes, he pervades all the mobile entities, immobile entities, oceans, omkara, Savitri and the entire earth. He manifests as the 1000 headed serpent who is the support for the entire universe.

All Devatas, Vasu, Brahma, Rudra, Yama, Vayu, Agni, Indra, oceans, time, sun, moon, sunrise, morning, night, the Lord of death, clouds, and all other Devatas and demons are His forms alone. He exists as light and burns like fire. As Vishnu, he protects. As Rudra, he annihilates. As Brahma, he creates. He is indestructible and engages in many transcendental sports. All the three worlds composed of mobile and immobile entities exist in Him.

That Lord is dark-complexioned, wears glittering clothes, and, on his left chest retains Lakshmi, who glitters like pure gold. Neither the Devatas, danavas nor serpents can see Him. He can be seen only by those whom He has specifically blessed.

To see Him on the strength of Yagna, penance, charities, the study of Vedas or other means is impossible. Only those who have total devotion to him, who have fixed their minds solely upon him, who are freed from sin and who due to study of Vedanta has developed a clear perception can see Him.

If you desire to seek Him, then, in Treta yuga He will incarnate as a king. For the well-being of Devatas and humans, He will be born as Rama in the Ikshvaku dynasty as the son of Dasharatha. On his father's orders, along with his brother and wife, who is none other than the supreme illusion, He will reside in Dandakaranya. O Ravana! Hence with total devotion worship Srirama along with devi”.

Rama, demon-king Ravana heard everything that Maharishi Sanat-kumara had said. For a while, he was lost in deep thought. He then concluded that developing enmity with you is the best way to obtain you. Hence, seeking war he wandered in all worlds. Desiring to die in your hands, he kidnapped Sita.

The person who hears this story that exists as a conversation between Ravana and Sanatkumara will be blessed with long life, health, wealth and prosperity. He will obtain the blessings of Mother Saraswati.

Uttara kanda, Chapter 4

Lord Shiva said to Parvati, “Ravana who was wandering in all the worlds once saw Narada who was returning from Brahma loka. He enquired, “O Maharishi! You know all the worlds. Suggest to me the right being with whom I can fight. The desire to fight is very strong in me. Show me the being who matches me in might”.

Narada thought for a while and then said, “O Ravana! You proceed to the luminous Sveta-dvipa. The beings who live there are powerful and broad-bodied. Only those who worship Vishnu and who have died in Vishnu's hands obtain birth there. They are invincible. They cannot be defeated by the Devatas or the demons”.

Ravana immediately boarded the Pushpaka vimana, and along with his ministers, set out for Sveta dvipa. However, due to the radiance of the Sveta-dvipa island, the Pushpaka could not enter it. Yet Ravana did not abandon his resolve. He abandoned his aircraft and his ministers and proceeded alone into the island. When he entered Sheva-dvipa, a woman held him by his hand and asked, “Who are you? From where have you come? Why have you come? Who has sent you?”

Some other ladies joined her and effortlessly held him and laughingly enquired about him. Ravana who was conceited due to his physical strength escaped from their grip with great difficulty. But their might left him speechless.

With this, he intensified his resolve and thought, “I will surely fight with Vishnu, die in his hands and reach Vaikuntha. I will do that deed which angers Vishnu”.

To fulfill this desire, he kidnapped Sita. Hence, despite knowing that you were Supreme Lord, he still kidnapped her. This was because his desire to die in your hands was very strong. Waiting for your arrival, he guarded Sita mentally treating her as his mother.

O Rama! You are the Lord for Brahma and other Lords! You are the governor of all universes. You are the embodiment of knowledge. Hence, without the help of any tools, You remain a witness to everything in the past, present and future.

You are devoid of any transformations, yet, for showing the path to the devotees and to bless them, You have incarnated as a man. Like an ignorant being, you are listening to the stories told by Maharishis when the truth is that You are the Lord for all the worlds and are worshipped by them. You are glowing infinitely with limitless compassion”.

Thereafter in great delight, Agastya and other Maharishis took permission from Rama and then returned to their ashrams.

Rama lived like an ordinary householder. Although he was detached in every aspect of life, he enjoyed all luxuries along with Sita.

One day Pushpaka vimana came to him and said, “Kubera has sent me to you for your service. He said to me, “O Pushpaka! First Ravana conquered you & then Rama conquered you. Hence, from then on, Rama is your Lord. As long as Rama lives on earth, you serve him. The day he leaves earth, you return to me”.”

Hearing this, Rama said to the illumining aircraft, “O Pushpaka! May good befall you! You come to me whenever I think of you. Now you leave. Invisibly you can stay anywhere”.

After taking on the kingdom, Rama along with his brothers, and ministers got immersed in all administrative affairs. During Rama’s rule, the earth was replete with crops, flowers and fruits. People of all castes led their lives based on dharma rules. Women were extremely devoted to their husbands. No man ever saw the death of his sons. Along with Sita and his brothers, Rama would occasionally wander in Pushpaka Vimana. He accomplished many impossible deeds.

One day a Brahmin was bemoaning the loss of his son. To please him, Rama killed Chaturtha who was meditating transgressing the dharmic rules and restored the boy to life. The person who was killed by him obtained a residence in heaven.

The Supreme Lord Rama installed crores of Shivalingas on many places on earth. By providing Sita with many luxuries far beyond human reach he brought happiness to her. He ruled righteously. He established on earth his story that dispels all sins in totality.

The Supreme Lord, whose feet are worshipped by all, lived on earth for 10,000 years. Living like a Rajarishi, without any desire and while maintaining the vow of having only one wife, he completed all tasks pertaining to the householder stage of life.

The chaste Sita always acted in agreement with his wishes. With humility, sense-control, and fear, she stole his heart.

One day Rama was relaxedly seated. Sita who was ornamented in all finery was gently pressing his feet. Softly she said, “O Lord of all Lords! O Lord of the worlds! O Supreme Being! O eternal one! O embodiment of knowledge and bliss! The Devatas met me in solitude and enquired about your return to Vaikuntha.

They said, ‘Leaving us and the eternal Vaikuntha, the Supreme Lord is living on earth with you, the energy of knowledge. O mother of the universes! Rama stays where you stay. Hence you first return to Vaikuntha. He will then follow you and come to Vaikuntha. Only if he returns to Vaikuntha, we will have some shelter. Until then we have no shelter.’ O Lord! I am merely conveying their message. You do what you feel is best. I am not triggering you to act”.

Hearing this, Rama meditated for a while and then said, “O Devi! I have understood everything. I will suggest a plan. I will trigger a situation due to which you will be wrongly blamed by the world. Like an ordinary man, I will pretend to fear infamy and hence will abandon you in the forest. You are pregnant. In Valmiki’s ashram, you will deliver twin boys. Thereafter you return to me. Then, for the sake of the world,

you make a promise and through the hole, enter the earth and from there return to Vaikuntha. Shortly thereafter I will follow you”.

A few days after this discussion, Rama was seated in the assembly along with ministers, commanders and friends. The witty jesters were making him laugh with their jokes. At that time Rama asked Vijaya, “O Vijaya, what do the people in the towns and villages say about me, Sita, Kaikeyi, brothers and mothers? Tell me everything fearlessly irrespective of whether it is good or bad. This is my command”.

Vijaya said, “O King! I will tell you everything. They say, ‘The extremely renowned Rama has accomplished an unaccomplishable task by killing Ravana. However, without even the least doubt he has brought back Sita who was abducted by the demon. How can Rama live happy with her? Due to his deed, henceforth we are forced to approve the bad conduct of our wives. This is because the citizens always follow the footsteps of the king’.”

Hearing this, Rama cross-verified the news with other friends and assembled members. All of them confirmed that the people were making such statements.

Hearing this, Rama sent away his friends and ministers. He called Lakshmana and said, “Dear brother! Due to Sita, I have got infamy. Hence, tomorrow morning leave Sita in Valmiki’s ashram. Do not oppose my command. Going against my orders, is equivalent to killing me”.

Hearing this, Lakshmana was aghast and aggrieved. But left with no choice, early next morning he ordered Sumantra to ready the chariot. At quick speeds, he took Sita and left for the forests. Dropping her near Valmiki’s ashram, he said, “O Mother, fearing infamy, Rama has instructed me to leave you here. O mother! I am faultless. From here, you proceed to Maharishi Valmiki’s ashram which is at a very close distance”. Leaving her there, he left for Ayodhya.

Sita who was left alone in the forest began to weep. From his disciples, Maharishi Valmiki learnt that a woman was weeping in the forests. With his transcendental vision, he realized she was Sita. He immediately had her brought to the ashram. He worshipped her and consoled her. He who knew the future entrusted her to the ladies of the ashram and asked them to look after her. From the Maharishi, the ladies learnt that she was Lakshmi, the wife of the Supreme Lord. Hence with total faith and devotion, they served her with all humility and reverence.

Rama is the non-dual Supreme Lord who is an embodiment of knowledge. Yet, on Sita’s departure, he too abandoned luxuries and turned dispassionate. Like an ascetic, he began to adhere to strict disciplines.

Uttara kanda, Chapter 5

(This chapter contains Srirama Gita)

Lord Shiva said, “O Parvati! Thereafter Lord Rama, seeking the wellbeing of the world, with the divine form that he had assumed established supreme glory everywhere in the form of Srimad Ramayana. He followed the traditions of his elders and the practices followed by the virtuous kings of the past. At Lakshmana’s request, he would narrate supreme stories from the ancient past.

As part of this, he narrated the story of King Nrga who, due to being cursed by a Brahmin, was born as a chameleon.

Once when Rama was seated alone, Lakshmana approached him and, with a pure mind, bowed to him with total devotion and enquired, “O Supreme one! You are the embodiment of Pure Knowledge and the Self for every living entity. You are the one who governs everyone. You are inherently formless. Only those who associate with supreme devotees, and who ardently worship Your lotus feet, can perceive You from the supreme perspective.

O Lord, I surrender to your lotus feet which are eternally meditated upon by Yogis and which shred worldly bondage. Please initiate me into that Supreme Knowledge which will enable me to easily cross this deep ocean of samsara, which is filled with ignorance”.

Rama is eternally pleased with those who seek refuge in Him and dispels their sorrow. On Lakshmana's request, He initiated him into that Supreme Knowledge which is taught in Vedas and which dispels spiritual ignorance. He said,

“The human being should, based on his caste and stage of life, complete his duties perfectly as stipulated in the Shastras. With this completion, mental purity is attained. Thereafter he should abandon action in its entirety and master śama-dama (inner and outer sense restraint) and other disciplines, and, seeking Self-knowledge he should surrender to a Sadguru.

(Only after one attains total mental purity, he or she can abandon all actions in their entirety. Not before that).

Elders say that our actions are responsible for our future bodies. Actions performed by a person are of two types- loved and unloved. In accepting that which is loved and in abandoning that which is unloved, one acquires dharma and adharma. Due to the performance of good deeds, the person earns merit. Due to bad deeds, he earns sin. Both lead to the emergence of another body.

After obtaining another body, he again engages in action through that body thereby endlessly furthering the cycle of repeated births. Spiritual ignorance (ajñana) is the fuel for the repeated rebirths which rotate like a wheel. Attaining Supreme Knowledge is the most competent tool to destroy this ignorance.

Spiritual ignorance does not get destroyed as long as actions are continued. As action stems from ignorance, the performance of action only furthers ignorance but can never counter it.

Raga (attachment for the sensory objects) does not die with the performance of actions. In other words, likes-dislikes cannot die down in a person as long as he continues his actions. As long as likes-dislikes exist, the lineage of actions that are coupled with merits and sins continues to arise. Due to this, he cannot exit from the cycle of rebirths. Hence the wise man should remain eternally focussed in attaining Self-knowledge or in conducting Self-inquiry.

Those who follow the doctrine of logical debates (tarka vadi) and who do not properly grasp the Supreme Essence, link action (karma) to knowledge (jñana) and say, 'performance of action (karma) helps in accomplishing the 4 goals just as knowledge (Jñana) helps. Even Vedas agree with this. Hence, every living entity must necessarily engage in action as actions aid in the acquisition of Supreme Knowledge. As Smriti declares that not engaging in actions is a fault, those who seek to get liberated should necessarily continue to engage in action'.

But they refuse to accept any statement contrary to their doctrine. For example, they reject the statement that attainment of Supreme Knowledge (Jñana) is independent and that it yields fruit without the necessity of action or any other tool.

While justifying the performance of actions, they vehemently argue, 'Although Yagna and others are good actions (satkarma) taught by Vedas, they need external support for completion. Similar to it, even for the attainment of Supreme Knowledge (Jñana), action is essential, Due to completion of the mandated duties, one attains knowledge and liberation. Hence, it is improper to abandon action'.

Lakshmana, actions take place purely due to bodily identification. When egoism dies in the person, knowledge is obtained. Hence linking action to knowledge is incorrect.

The final knowledge that is attained due to scrutinizing the Vedic statements and understanding them is called Vidya. Actions cannot co-exist with Vidya.

Further, the deed attains completeness only when it is accompanied by related actions. On the contrary, Jnana rejects the necessity of all other efforts. Hence one must adhere by actions only until the purity of mind is obtained.

Regarding the attainment of resultant fruit, understand that action is sāpeksha. But knowledge is nirapeksha. Due to these contrary qualities, actions and knowledge cannot co-exist. Hence the wise person i.e., the person who intensely seeks liberation, should reject action in its entirety. He should abandon all objects pertaining to senses and should eternally search for the Self which is sacchidananda (eternity, knowledge, bliss).

As long as the person is enveloped by illusion and as long as body identification remains in him, he must necessarily complete all his mandated duties. Following the 'Neti neti' technique i.e., using the approach, 'Not this, not this', he must totally reject all non-Self objects. Through this, he must learn the Supreme Essence and only thereafter he must abandon actions.

When the wisdom to differentiate the Self from the non-Self objects illumines in the mind and intellect, then illusion/ ignorance, which triggers the entire cycle of rebirths will automatically die and will not emerge again.

This is because the Supreme Essence, which is nothing but Knowledge, is pure and non-dual. Hence, once Knowledge emerges, ignorance cannot lift its head again. The thought 'I am the doer' cannot re-emerge in him.

Lakshmana, Real Knowledge (Jnana) is independent. Only it can shower the ultimate liberation to the beings who seek nothing but liberation. It shines as a non-dual existence. This is my opinion.

Even the Vedic statements from the Taittareya branch also advise abandoning actions. Even the Shruti called Vājasama agrees that Jnana is the only tool for attaining liberation and that actions (karma) cannot lead to it.

Hence, it is improper to compare Yagna and other actions as equal to Jnana. This is because both yield different fruits. Only when many other factors come together, Yagna yields fruit. Contrary to this, Jnana is independent. It is free from dependency on other factors.

Lakshmana, only the ignorant think, "I should atone for having abandoned action completely". Only the ignorant have the feelings of non-Self (anatma buddhi). Such a feeling does not arise in the wise who have grasped the Supreme Essence. This is well-known.

Hence, the person who deeply longs for liberation should abandon even mandated actions. Then, he should secure Guru's grace and with a pure mind that is overflowing with dedication, he should learn Tatvamasi from him. Through this, he should understand the oneness between the individual Self and the Supreme Self. Thereafter, remaining immobile like the Mountain Meru, he must experience the ultimate bliss called liberation (Jeevan mukta).

In understanding the supreme statement Tattvamasi, the first step is to know its meaning. Tat represents the Supreme Self. Tvam refers to the individual soul. Asi represents the oneness between the supreme soul and the individual soul.

Among them, one is pratyaksha and another is paroksha. The individual Self is the witness for the inner faculties. The Supreme Self is beyond the senses.

There are 3 bodies- gross subtle and causal. This body which is born due to earth and other elements that have undergone grossification (panchikarana), is the shelter for joys and sorrow. It arises due to parabhdha (effect of the past actions), is filled with illusion and has a beginning and end. The learned address this as the gross body taken by the Self.

The second is the subtle body which is comprised of the mind, buddhi, 10 indriyas (senses) and 5 prana (life-forces). In other words, it consists of 17 limbs. It is born due to subtle elements (elements before grossification) and it becomes the cause for the Self to experience of joys and sorrows.

The third body, which is the causal (karana) body, is without a beginning, is indescribable and is an embodiment of illusion (mayā-mayam). It is the 3rd body taken by the Self.

The spiritual aspirant must learn that the Self is different from the three bodies. With this understanding, he must gradually reject the 3 bodies and must fix the Self-essence in his heart.

Due to association with the Annamaya and other sheaths, the Self appears like them, just as a crystal reflects the colours. When this is properly understood, it will be clear that, due to being non-dual, the Self has absolutely no association and is without birth.

To the intellect that is composed of the three attributes, the three states known as waking, dream and deep sleep exist. However, among them, as each state inter-mingles with the other two states, none of the three really exist in the Supreme Self who is non-dual, freed from associations, who is the embodiment of auspiciousness and who is eternal.

Due to the combination of body, senses, life-force, mind, and the Self that is filled with consciousness, the activities of the intellect constantly fluctuate. This modification is tamasic i.e., it is composed of ignorance. Hence, only as long as it exists, the birth in this world occurs.

Though 'not this, not this' (neti neti) and other statements from the Vedas, the world should be abandoned and the real nectar should be relished in the heart. Just as the person drinks coconut water and throws away the coconut shell, the embodied being must accept the essence of the world i.e., he must accept only the real existence and abandon everything else.

The Self never dies. It is never born. Nor does it shrink, grow or decay. It is eternal. It is beyond the body and the senses. It is an embodiment of happiness. It is most supreme. It inherently illumines. It is all-pervading and is without a second. It is an embodiment of Pure Knowledge. He who knows the truth that he is the Self does not seek anything else.

How does such a Self perceive this world that is filled with sorrow? It happens due to the false imposition (adhyasa) which arises due to ignorance.

How does it get destroyed? Just as darkness vanishes when light is showered, the moment the Pure Knowledge arises in the person, his ignorance is washed out. This is because jnana and ajnana are enemies.

(Seeing one object in another is called adhyasa or aropana. It is falsely imagining one object in another like seeing a snake in a rope. Falsely imagining the world in the Supreme Lord who is the real existence is adhyasa).

In the form of egoism, adhyasa initially appeared in that Supreme Self, which is non-dual, all-pervading, flawless, without transformation, without illusion, which is the cause for every existence, and which is the embodiment of knowledge.

Like-dislike, joys-sorrows, are modifications of the intellect and are the cause for the repeated birth and deaths. They are not the characteristics of the Self. Hence, we cannot say that the Self is bound due to them. This is because, in the deep sleep state, none of the characteristics of the intellect (buddhi) exists in the Self that exists as a witness. At that time it is evident that the Self is only an embodiment of bliss.

In the intellect that is born due to ignorance that without a beginning, the consciousness which is reflected is the individual Self. The Self remains separately as a witness to the intellect and does not get limited due

to the characteristics of the intellect. Hence, know that the individual Self (Jivatma) itself is the Supreme Self (Paramatma).

(Adhyasa means perceiving the object not as it exists, but differently. For example, seeing a snake in a rope).

First is chidabhasa (reflected consciousness). The second is sakshi atma (the Self that remains a witness). The third is buddhi (intellect). As the three co-exist, like the iron that is burning in the fire, mutual adhyasa is born. Due to this adhyasa, the inertness of the intellect is seen in the Self and the Self's sentiency is perceived in the intellect.

For example, when the iron pellet is put in the fire, as the iron and the fire attain oneness, the form of the iron is seen in fire and heat which inherently is the characteristic of the fire is found in the iron pellet. Likewise, due to the merger of the Self and the intellect, the Self's sentiency is seen in the intellect and the intellect's inertness is perceived in the Self.

Hence, due to this adhyasa, although everything starting from the intellect and up to the body is non-Self, it is misconstrued to be the Self.

Through obtaining the knowledge of the Vedas from the Sadguru one must strive and obtain knowledge of the Self. In other words, initially one must obtain the knowledge of the Self.

Thereafter, due to focussing deeply upon the Maha-vakyas, and after understanding the knowledge, one must experientially realize the Self which exists in the heart and which is without a carrier.

The body and other non-Self objects that appear as the Self must be completely abandoned. Those learned in the Vedas eternally meditate in their heart as follows: 'I am the form of illumination; I am without birth; I am non-dual, I inherently illumine (svayamprakasha); I am extremely pure; I am an embodiment of Pure Knowledge; I am flawless and am devoid of the limitations of time, place and objects; I am an embodiment of complete bliss; I am devoid of action; feelings of doer-ship do not exist in me, I cannot be comprehended; I am beyond the senses; I am an embodiment of Jnana'.

The mind of the person who eternally focuses on this will become totally pure. Just as the medicine that is taken as prescribed cures the disease, such thinking destroys ignorance in totality along with the causes.

The person who engages in Self-scrutiny should sit in solitude and should withdraw the senses from their objects. He must obtain absolute mind-control. Barring having a very pure mind there is no path to obtaining Self-knowledge and liberation.

Remaining in Nirvikalpa samadhi, from the angle of Jnana, he must focus only on the Self. In the world, he should see only the Self as existing everywhere. He must merge his Individual existence in the Self which is the cause for all causes.

The person who, thus attains the complete sat+chit+ananda state will lose awareness of all objects, outside and inside.

Prior to attaining the Samadhi state, he must firmly believe that the entire world comprising of moving and non-moving objects is filled with 'OM'. This world is vācya; Omkara is vācaka. It manifests due to ignorance. When Pure Knowledge arises, nothing remains.

In Aum, A is representative of the presiding deity of waking state (Vishwa), U is the representative for the presiding deity (tejasa) of the dream state, Ma for Prajnya i.e. the presiding deity of the deep sleep state. This state arises before attaining the Samadhi state.

From the angle of the Supreme Essence, none of these differences exists. Vishwa, who exists in innumerable forms as A-kara, should be merged into Taijasa who exists in the U-kara. Thereafter U-kara

i.e., Taijasa should be merged into Prajnya which exists in the Ma-kara. Thereafter Ma-kara should be merged into the Supreme Self which is an embodiment of Pure Knowledge.

Further, he must firmly believe that "I am the Supreme Self who is eternally liberated, pure, freed from any carrier (body) and which is an embodiment of Pure Knowledge".

When the person endlessly focuses on the Supreme Self, he attains Self's bliss. He reaches the state wherein he forgets the entire visible world. One must reach this state and experience Self's bliss that is eternal. The person who is eternally in this state is addressed as liberated when alive (Jeevan mukta).

The liberated Yogi is like the ocean without waves. He who eternally remains in samadhi, in whom the sensory objects have died down, who conquers desire, anger, and other enemies and who can subdue the 6 senses, eternally perceives Me.

The Muni who is eternally engrossed in Self-contemplation should abandon all bondage. Abandoning doer-ship and enjoyer-ship he must experience his destiny (prarabdha). Only after his prarabdha is exhausted, he can merge into Me.

Seen from any angle, this samsara is the cause of fear and grief in all stages- beginning, middle and end. It is imperative to know this. The duties prescribed also enhance the cycle of rebirths. Hence, even those actions ultimately turn into a cause for sorrow. The wise man should ponder deeply over this and understand it. With this understanding, he must abandon all action that is nothing but the cause of sorrow.

He must then worship his inner Self which is the Self that exists within all beings. Just as the river water mixes completely into the ocean water, milk merges into milk, pot-space merges into the vast space, wind merges into the wind, the spiritual aspirant must perceive the entire world as attaining oneness with his Self. Such a person will attain oneness with Me, the Supreme Self.

With Shruti (Vedas), with Yukta (logic) and pramana (proofs/ tools), this entire world has been established as non-Self and has been rejected. While living in the world, the aspirant should perceive the world as a false existence. Until he learns to see the entire world as My form, he must continue worshipping Me. The person who has absolute dedication and devotion will eternally perceive Me in his heart.

In this way, the person who has absolute dedication and devotion to Me will gradually attain discriminatory wisdom (viveka) and detachment (vairagya). He will then become eligible to obtain initiation from the Sadguru. He will then attain this knowledge of supreme oneness and will obtain liberation (jeevan mukta).

I have thus summarized the entire knowledge that is contained in the Vedas. The wise man who deeply studies this teaching will instantaneously be freed from all sin.

Lakshmana, conclude firmly that this entire visible world is only an illusion. Eradicate it from the mind and remain indifferent to this world. With the thought, 'This world is nothing but Rama', become pure-minded. Obtain happiness. Wash off all impurities and become an embodiment of total bliss.

Know that the person who, eternally worships Me as without attributes (Nirguna) or at times as with attributes (Saguna), is My form. I am him. Like the Sun, the dust of his feet purifies the three worlds.

Know that this unparalleled knowledge is the complete essence of all the Vedas.

I, the Supreme Lord who is known through Vedanta, have sung this Supreme Essence. The person who, with pure devotion to Guru, chants this with total dedication and faith, will develop devotion towards My teaching. Thereafter he will attain My form. In other words, he will merge into Me"- said Rama.

Day 29, August 9

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! Once the Rishis living near River Yamuna approached Rama unable to withstand the atrocities of the demon Lavanasura. Many Brahmins, led by the supreme Maharishi Chyavana approached Rama seeking protection.

With supreme devotion, Rama worshipped them all. Bringing delight to them he softly asked, "O revered Maharishis! I am truly fortunate that out of love you all have come to see me. What is it that should do for you? However difficult the task may be, I shall accomplish it. I am your servant. Command me. Brahmins are equivalent to the Supreme Lord".

Hearing those words, Maharishi Chyavana in great delight said, "O Lord! In the Krta yuga, there was a mighty demon called Madhu. He was righteous. He unfailingly worshipped the Devas and the Brahmins. Pleased with his penance, Shiva gifted him with a mighty trident and said, "He on whom you hurl this trident will be burnt to ashes".

Madhu's wife Kumbhīnasi was Ravana's sister. Their wicked and mighty son is Lavanasura. We are being harassed by him. We are here to seek shelter in you".

Hearing this, Rama said, "Why are you frightened? We will kill Lavanasura. Abandon fear and grief and leave happily".

He then said to his brothers, "Dear brothers! Who among you will kill Lavanasura and free these Brahmins from fear?"

Then Bharata bowed and said, "I will kill him. Permit me to leave".

Shatrughna came forward, bowed to Rama and said, "O Raghava! In the war, Lakshmana has accomplished extraordinary deeds. The wise Bharata has experienced untold agony in Nandigrama. Hence O Raghottama! Permit me. I will kill Lavanasura. With your blessings, I will surely kill him in the battle".

In great joy, Rama seated Shatrughna on his lap and said, "Dear brothers! I will now coronate Shatrughna as the king of Mathura".

Lakshmana arranged all the materials for the coronation. But Shatrughna was not very keen on becoming the King of Mathura. With unending love, Rama coronated Shatrughna as the king and giving him a divine bow said, "Lavanasura is a pain to the world. Kill him with this bow. Remember this caution. He worships a trident in his home and then goes hunting in the forests.

Before he returns from the forest, you wait at the door with the bow. Prevent him from entering his home. Ensure he gets enraged with you. He will then fight with you without that trident. In that battle, he will surely die in your hands.

Thereafter, in that forest, establish the city of Mathura and live there. This is my command. 1000 horses, 2500 chariots, 5000 horses, donkeys, mules, 600 elephants and 30000 infantry will follow you. You will be their commander. With their help kill the demon Lavanasura".

Rama kissed Shatrughna on his forehead, blessed him and sent him with the Maharishis. Shatrughna abided by Rama's order and killed Lavanasura. He established Mathura. By conducting numerous meritorious deeds and plentiful charities, he ensured that the city turned prosperous. He built good homes for the residents.

Sita meanwhile delivered twins in Valmiki's ashram. The elder among them was named Kusha by Valmiki. The younger one was Lava. These sons of Sita studied under Maharishi Valmiki. He conducted their upanayana and taught them the Vedas. In addition, he taught them the Ramayana in a poetic form.

To bring out the complete essence of the story that Shankara had told Parvati, he composed Valmiki Ramayana and ensured the boys memorized it. The boys who were handsome like the Ashwini-devatas mastered all knowledge. With their melodious voice and in a melodious tune, they began to sing Ramayana and wander in all the ashrams in the forests.

Seeing the two divine boys, the Rishis in all the ashrams remained stupefied. Hearing the story of Rama sung melodiously by these boys, they deeply appreciated them thinking, "What melodious singing! It is nectareous to the ears. Hearing them sing, we forget ourselves. Neither among the humans, Gandharvas, kinnaras, nor in heaven, Patala or Brahmaloaka have we heard such enthralling song and captivating music".

The boys were applauded by all the Rishis everywhere. For long they lived in Valmiki's ashram. Meanwhile, in Ayodhya, Rama installed a golden image of Sita and performed many Yagas including the Ashwamedha yaga in which he gave plenty of charities.

During one such Yagna many Rishis, Brahmins, saintly-kings, other Kshatriyas and Vysyas arrived. Maharishi Valmiki too arrived there with the 2 boys to showcase their musical talent. He stayed along with the other Rishis.

One day Kusha completed the day's music rendition and approached Maharishi Valmiki who was seated in solitude. He asked "O Lord! How does the individual Self get entangled in the bondage of repeated rebirths? How can it free himself? Please teach me in brief. I seek to learn from you. O omniscient one! Please bless this disciple of yours".

Valmiki said, "My son! Listen. I will teach you briefly about bondage and liberation. Thereafter, you should put it into practice. With it, you will obtain liberation.

This body is a home for the Self that inherently is bodiless. Egoism created by it becomes its minister. The minister imposes upon the Self its attachment to the house called the body.

Due to attaining oneness (with the body), it imposes its actions upon the Self which inherently is the embodiment of knowledge and bliss (Chidananda roopa) and which resides in the body. Due to egoism, he makes resolves and through them gets bound. Due to those resolves, he eternally seeks sons, homes, wives etc. The embodied Self thus makes resolves and then laments all the time.

Egoism is of three types- lowly, mediocre and supreme. They are well-known as tamas, rajas and sattva. They become the causes for furthering the cycle of repeated rebirths (samsara).

A person with tamasic resolves always engages in tamasic or forbidden deeds and thereby attain births as worms etc. The person with sattvic resolves engages in righteous deeds and moves closer to liberation.

He who has rajasic resolves completes fruitive actions. Enjoying with wife and sons he remains trapped in this world. Hence O wise man! One who abandons all the 3 types of resolves i.e., one who eradicates the mind, attains liberation.

Abandoning all thoughts, the mind should be restrained with the help of the mind. Even resolves pertaining to the external objects should be destroyed.

Even the being who undertakes severe austerities in patala, earth, or heaven for thousands of years cannot escape from repeated rebirths. Barring eradication of resolves, there is no other way to attain freedom from bondage.

Hence, with wilful effort, strive courageously and eradicate resolves. It is freed from sorrows; is changeless, bestows happiness and gives purity. All objects and beings are strung together with the inner thread called resolve. No one can specify what will happen to the bhavas once the thread is cut.

Therefore, without thoughts and resolves, complete all actions that arise due to destiny. With this, thoughts and resolves will get destroyed and the individual Self attains the supreme state.

Towards this, first, understand the Supreme Essence. Ponder over it deeply. Destroy all resolves and thoughts that are tightly spun like a web. Attain the non-dual state and experience the supreme bliss"- said Maharishi Valmiki.

Uttara kanda, Chapter 7

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! From Maharishi Valmiki, Kusha obtained the Supreme Knowledge. He abandoned all resolves, discarded illusion and became a Jnani. Following the ways of the world, he completed external actions.

One day, Maharishi Valmiki called Sita's sons and said, "Sing Rama's story in every street of Ayodhya. Gradually reach Rama's presence and sing before him. If Rama offers you any gifts, do not accept".

The boys went through Ayodhya melodiously singing the glories of Rama as they walked through the streets. Rama learnt that two unknown children with melodious voices were singing his story in beautiful words. He gathered additional news about the twins.

After learning about them, he was extremely eager to see them. Hence he invited Maharishi Valmiki to visit him during the break obtained during the Yagna-ceremony. He also invited the learned men, story-tellers, bards, kings, brahmins, aged and others to attend the assembly. Along with the Maharishi, the twins were invited.

People assembled in the hall were stunned on seeing the boys. They repeatedly looked at the boys and then Rama. Without batting an eyelid, they looked at the boys and drank in the handsome faces with their eyes.

They said to each other, "Had these boys not worn matted locks and bark clothing, they would have looked like Rama himself. They appear to be perfect replicas of Rama. There is absolutely no difference between them and Rama".

Meanwhile, the boys began singing Ramayana. The hall was filled with utmost melodious Gandharva music. Until the evening twilight time, Rama listened to them with rapt attention. Then he said, "Bharata give them 10,000 gold coins".

When Bharata offered coins, the boys refused saying, "O King! We live in ashram and eat only the fruits that grow in the forest. Hence, we have nothing to do with wealth".

Saying this, they rejected the wealth and returned to Maharishi Valmiki. Rama was astonished to hear his own story. By then he understood them to be Sita's sons.

He called Shatrughna, Sushena, Angada, Vibhishana, Hanuman, Sugriva and others, and said, "Ask the worshipful Maharishi Valmiki, who is at par with the Devas, to come to the court along with Sita tomorrow. To instill faith in all my citizens, in my court Janaki will take an oath. With this, everyone in the kingdom will know that she is flawless".

Although Rama's commands were very shocking to the ears, abiding by his commands, the attendants immediately conveyed the message to Maharishi Valmiki.

Maharishi Valmiki who understood Rama's heart, said, "Tomorrow when the citizens are watching, Sita will come to the court where she will make the promise. This is undoubtedly true. For a woman her husband is her God".

Despite being born in the Raghu lineage, despite being of a divine nature wherein he brought joy to Sita's heart, Rama said to the assembled members, "O Kings! Rishis! Listen to me. Hearing the oath made by Sita, the world will learn of her merits and faults".

The next morning the hall was filled with Maharishis, vanaras and all the citizens belonging to all the four castes.

Just as Lord Brahma had brought Lakshmi in the past, Maharishi Valmiki now brought Sita. She was walking behind Maharishi shedding tears. With her head lowered and joined palms, she entered the Yaga shala. Seeing her, in great elation, the citizens shouted, "Victory to Sita".

When the din had died down, Maharishi Valmiki said to Rama, "O Rama! This is your righteous and chaste dharmic wife Sita. Being condemned by the world, she was abandoned by you in the forest close to my ashram. Now she has resolved to create faith in you. These twins are her sons. They are unsurpassed warriors who are invincible in battle. O Rama! They are your sons. This is true.

O scion of the Raghu lineage! I am the 10th in the lineage of the Pracetas. I never remember uttering any lie ever in my life. They are indeed your sons. I have performed limitless penance for a very long time. If Sita is at fault, may I lose all the power of penance that I have obtained till now!".

Rama said, "O Maharishi! What you have said till now is the truth. I have full faith in your flawless words. In the presence of all Devatas in Lanka, Vaidehi conquered far bigger tests than this and was trusted by all. Only thereafter she entered Ayodhya's royal palace. Although she is a chaste wife and although she was flawless, fearing infamy, I abandoned her. Forgive me for this. I am also aware that these boys, Lava and Kusha, who are adept in the knowledge of music, are my sons. Now the world will know that I have a great love for Sita, who is totally pure".

All the Devatas who learnt of Rama's resolve, in great enthusiasm thronged to the court led by Brahma. Sita was wearing a fine silk saree. She turned North and while looking at the earth, said, "O Mother Earth! If barring Rama, I have never thought of any other man, then I beg you to give me way".

Even as she was uttering those words, to everyone's utter surprise and shock, from the earth emerged a huge gem-studded, divine throne that glittered like the Sun. It was being carried by the king of serpents. Mother Earth who was seated on that throne lovingly welcomed Sita with outstretched arms. She seated Sita on her throne. As Sita who was seated on the throne was entering Rasatala, flowers were rained on her from heaven. All the Devatas applauded Sita saying, "This is ultimate wonderful".

The next moment there was stunning silence everywhere. The Devatas, citizens, and Rishis remained like statues. Some pondered about Sita's oath. Some went into meditation. Some were looking only at Rama. Some helplessly looked everywhere.

For an hour there was silence. Although Rama knew the future he wept as if he knew nothing. Lord Brahma and the Maharishis consoled him. Then like one who had awakened from a dream, Rama completed the remaining Yagna and gave plentiful dakshina to the Rishis and the priests and honoured them. He brought them great delight and then bid them goodbye. Taking his sons, he then returned home.

From that day, Rama abandoned all desires for all comforts. He was always in solitude, pondering about the Self.

One day when he was in solitude, Kaushalya came to him. With total devotion, she bowed to Rama and said, "O Rama! You are the primordial cause of the world. You are without a beginning, middle and end. You are the Supreme Self and an embodiment of ultimate supreme bliss. You are all-pervading. Due to feelings of individual existence, You are the one who sleeps in the city (pura) called the body.

It is due to my past merit that you, the Supreme Lord, were born to me. O Rama! Now at the fag end of my life, I have got this opportunity to ask you this. Even now I am not freed from the shackles of worldly

bondages that have emerged due to ignorance. Hence, now at least briefly teach me the Supreme Knowledge such that the ignorance in me gets washed away”.

When his aged mother who was filled with all virtues thus pleaded, Rama who had supreme love for her said, “O Mother! Previously I had taught three paths for attaining liberation. They are the paths of action (karma), knowledge (jnana) and devotion (bhakti). They are eternal. Based on differences in person’s nature, bhakti is of 3 types. The devotion of the person is dependent on his individual nature.

He who maintains feelings of difference due to anger, violence (himsa), hypocrisy and jealousy is called a Tamasic devotee.

He who, along with the desire for the resultant fruits, also aspires for heaven and other such fruits, who seeks comforts, renown and wealth, who maintains differences towards the different idols and worships Me is a rajasic devotee.

He who offers everything to the Supreme Lord, who completes his duties totally with a desire-free attitude considering them to be duties ordained to him and who sees all the living beings with equanimity, considering them to be forms of the Supreme Lord is a sattvik devotee.

Just as Ganga, without stopping anywhere, rushes to the ocean and merges into it, he who seeks shelter in My virtues, who fixes all mental activities on My auspicious virtues, and who eternally thinks only of Me, merges into My form. This is the quality defined for Nirguna bhakti-yoga.

The person who, without any cause, develops limitless devotion towards Me, does not seek even anyone among the sayujya (attaining oneness with the Lord), saristhti, saloka (living in the same world) and samipya (living beside the Supreme Lord). He seeks nothing barring offering service to Me.

O Mother! This is called āntyāntika sampoorna bhakti-yoga. Due to this, the devotee crosses the 3 attributes and reaches Me.

O Mother! I will teach the ways to quickly reach Me. Listen.

- a) The spiritual aspirant should totally abandon desires
- b) He must diligently abide by his ordained duties (swadharma)
- c) He should abide by the highest Karma-yoga and abandon violence/ harming others
- d) He should have My darshan, sing My glories, worship Me, think of Me, bow to Me.
- e) He must see Me in all forms of life
- f) He must engage in satsang with the virtuous
- g) He must abandon untruthfulness
- h) He must revere the elders
- i) He must be filled with compassion for the poor and the helpless.
- j) He must maintain friendship with equals
- k) He must practice inner and outer sense-restraint (Shama and dama)
- l) Listen to the teachings from Vedanta
- m) He must conduct Nama sankeertana
- n) He must associate with the virtuous.
- o) He must be straightforward in his dealings with others.
- p) He must abandon ahamkara (ego)
- q) He must be inclined towards the bhagavata dharma

The person who, due to following the above tools, develops a very pure mind, will hear my glories and teachings of Vedanta. He will quickly attain Me. Just as the wind causes the fragrance to travel from flowers and enter the nostrils of the person, likewise the mind of the person who practices Yoga, enters into the Self.

I firmly exist as the Self in all living beings. Without realizing this, foolish people believe that I live only in idols. Although idol worship is important, they must learn that Lord lives everywhere, while also living in the

idol. Through kriya yoga and the usage of many materials, My idols should be worshipped. But while worshipping Me in the idols, if the person looks down upon even one form of life, I will not accept his worship in the least.

Hence the person should learn to see his Self as existing in all forms of life. While completing the duties mandated to him, he must worship Me in the idols.

O Mother! Now I will teach you about the Jnana-yoga.

He who perceives differences between the individual Self and the Supreme Self, (Paramatma) and who has feelings of multiplicity, lives in the fear of death. This is undoubtedly true.

Hence- 'in all the living entities that appear to be distinct, I am the one who exists'- this feeling of absolute oneness should be cultivated. Everyone should be revered and treated with friendliness.

'I, the Pure Consciousness, exist as the individual soul'- the person who realizes this, becomes wise. Such a wise person should mentally bow to all forms of life. He should never perceive differences between the individual Self and the Supreme Self.

O Mother! In this way, I have taught the Bhakti-yoga and Jnana-yoga. The person who adheres to any one of them, will obtain the ultimate auspiciousness.

Hence, O Mother, with bhakti-yoga perceive Me as existing in all hearts. Or see Me as your son. Follow this eternally and attain peace".

Hearing this, Kaushalya was delighted. She meditated only upon Rama. Gradually she shed all worldly bondages and obtained the highest state that is beyond the states of bhakti, jnana and karma.

Kaikeyi too followed the Yogic practices that Rama had taught her when she had visited him at Chitrakoota Mountain. With faith, devotion and a peaceful heart she meditated upon Rama. Eventually, she died and reached heaven where she met Dasharatha. There she lived happily.

Lakshmana's mother Sumitra, with pure devotion for Srirama and with a pure calm mind, left her body when thinking of Rama. She too reached the world where her husband lived.

Uttara kanda, Chapter 8

Lord Shiva said, "Parvati! Some time elapsed. Based on his maternal uncle Yudhajit's desire, Bharata went to visit him. During his stay there, based on Rama's command, with his army's help, he fought the Gandharvas. In that war, the mighty, powerful Bharata killed 3 crores Gandharva leaders and constructed 2 cities.

On Rama's orders, he installed his 2 sons as the kings of those cities. One city was named Pushkaravati and it was given to his son Pushkara. The other city was named Takshashila and was given to his son Taksha.

Bharata fortified those kingdoms with wealth, grains and friends. After rendering them prosperous, he returned to Ayodhya and immersed himself in Rama's service.

One day Rama called Lakshmana and said, "O Lakshmana! Take both your sons and travel to the west where the wicked Bhilla-rulers live. Kill them. Install your sons Angada and Chitraketu as the kings of those two cities. With elephants, precious gems, horses, ensure the two cities become prosperous. Thereafter return to me".

Lakshmana destroyed the enemies, installed his sons as the kings and returned to Rama and remained in his service.

A long time passed. One day the Lord of time (Kalapurusha) arrived at Ayodhya in the guise of a Rishi and said to Lakshmana, "O wise man! I, the messenger of Maharishi Atibala, am here to see the Supreme Rama. I have to convey the Maharishi's message to Rama. It is a very time taking process. Inform this to Rama".

Lakshmana quickly went and said to Rama, "A Rishi has come to see you". Rama said, "Bring in him immediately with all the honours".

Lakshmana went to the Rishi who was glowing as fire dipped in ghee. With full honours he brought him to Rama.

The Rishi saw Rama and said, "May you be successful!" With total devotion, Rama worshipped him, enquired his wellbeing and then asked, "O great one! What brings you here?"

The Rishi said, "O Rama! Only we 2 should remain here. No one should hear our secretive conversation nor should you reveal it to anyone. If anyone sees us talking or hears us, he should be killed by you".

Rama agreed to this condition. He said to Lakshmana, "O Lakshmana! Guard the gate. Ensure that no one enters this room until our secretive conversation is complete. If anyone enters the room when we are talking, he will be killed. This is undoubtedly true".

Then Rama asked, "O Lord! Who has sent you? Please tell me the thought in your mind".

The Rishi said, "Rama! Brahma has sent me here for the completion of an assignment. O destroyer of enemies! I am your eldest son. I was born when you associated with illusion. I am called Kāla (time of annihilation). My task is to snatch everything. The Brahma who is worshipped by all Devatas and Maharishis has conveyed this message to You,

"O wise one! O Lord of the universe! The time for you to protect heaven has arisen. At one time, you merged the entire creation into yourself and existed alone. With the wife called illusion, you first obtained me as the son. Thereafter, you created the 1000 headed serpent Adi-shesha who lives in the waters.

Thereafter, you killed the ferocious demons Madhu and Kaitaba and with their flesh and bones, You created the earth. O Purushottama! From the lotus which emerged from Your navel, You created me and entrusted the entire responsibility of earth to me.

O Lord of all the worlds! When accepting this responsibility of creation, I prayed that You should destroy the wicked ones that emerge in my creation while protecting the virtuous. You agreed to this.

Thereafter, in Kashyapa Prajapati's home, You incarnated as the dwarf Vamana, restrained the mighty demons and reduced earth's burden. O sustainer of earth! When people were suffering under Ravana, You incarnated among humans to kill that demon. At that time, in the presence of the Devatas, You had vowed that you will stay on earth for 11000 years. That time is now complete. Your resolve is fulfilled. Now in the form of this Rishi, time of annihilation (Kāla) has come to you.

If you still seek to rule the earth for still longer, do so. May You be successful! If you resolve to return to Heaven, then due to You, the Devatas will be freed from their orphaned state. They will obtain a protector. Freed from the agony of separation from You, they will be peaceful".

Rama, who heard this, smilingly addressed the time that destroys everything and said, "O Mahatma! I heard everything that you have said. Your words have brought me joy. I am delighted with your arrival. My birth is only for the completion of the tasks of the 3 worlds. May auspiciousness befall you!

I will go back to that place from where I have come. My desire has been fulfilled. There is no need for further thought. Dear son! The Devatas are my servants”.

As they were conversing, Maharishi Durvasa arrived at the royal gate to see Srirama. He said to Lakshmana, “O Lakshmana, I have to see Rama right away. There is a very urgent need. Hence immediately take me to Rama”.

Lakshmana said, “O Mahatma! You tell me the task that you have with Lord Srirama. I will fulfill your desire. Rama is busy with other administrative tasks. Wait for a short time”.

Hearing these words, Durvasa was enraged. Shaking violently in anger, he said, “O Lakshmana, I need to see Rama this very minute. If not, I will burn Rama and his kingdom to ashes”.

Lakshmana was worried. Hearing Maharishi’s fearsome words and assessing the danger that had arrived, he thought, “Better than the total destruction of the kingdom, it is better for me to die. If not, everything in Ayodhya will be burnt down”.

With this resolve, he went in and informed Rama about Maharishi Durvasa’s arrival. Hearing this, Rama immediately sent away Kala-purusha, came out and bowed to Maharishi Durvasa and lovingly asked “O Maharishi! What should I do for you?”

Maharishi replied, “O Rama. The fasting (Upavasa-vrata) that I have been doing for 1000 years is complete today. Hence O Rama! Feed me today the food that is already kept ready”.

In great delight, Rama fed the Maharishi. After eating that tasty food, Maharishi went away in happiness.

Thereafter Rama remembered the promise given to Kāla (time) and was aggrieved. Unable to say anything, he lowered his head. He grieved that Lakshmana was as good as dead.

Lakshmana saw Rama grieving. Rama was sunk in an ocean of sorrow. He was cursing the bondage called friendship.

Seeing Rama in that state, Lakshmana said, “O Lord! Abandon grief. Kill me. I have already guessed that this is the play of time. There should be no obstacle to the promise made by you. If your promise is broken, then due to it I will be thrown into hell. Hence if you love me, abandon all doubt and kill me. Bless me. O wise one! Do not abandon dharma at any cost”.

Rama was totally shaken due to love for his brother. Immediately he called Maharishi Vasishtha and all ministers. In their presence, he informed Maharishi Vasishtha of the developments. He informed him of the promise made to Kāla and of how Lakshmana had interrupted their conversation.

Hearing this, all of them folded their hands and said, “You have completed the task of reducing the earth’s burden. This separation from Lakshmana is predestined. We have foreseen this with our divine vision. Do not abandon your promise. Abandon Lakshmana.

O Lord! If one makes a promise and goes back on it, then dharma is lost. O Rama! If dharma perishes, the 3 worlds will perish. This is true. As you are the ruler for all the worlds, abandon Lakshmana and protect the 3 worlds”.

Hearing this, Rama called Lakshmana to the assembly and said, “O Lakshmana! Now you go anywhere you seek to. In this, there is no transgression of dharma. To the virtuous, banishment and killing are equal”.

In uncontrollable grief, Lakshmana bowed to Rama and went home. From there he went to River Sarayu, sipped water in acamana, joined his palms, bound the 9 gates and fixed his life-force in the head. He thought of the indestructible, indivisible, Supreme Lord Vāsudeva and his divine abode.

Seeing Lakshmana who had totally controlled his vital airs, all the Devatas and Maharishis rained flowers and extolled him in great delight. At that time, Indra arrived invisibly and carried Lakshmana to heaven along with his body.

The Devatas who saw the arrival of Lakshmana, who was the 4th aspect of Vishnu, were delighted. They worshipped him. Lakshmana, who was the aspect of the Supreme Lord, thus reached the ultimate abode.

Seeking to see Lakshmana, who was glowing in his form of Adishesha, all the Yogis from the Siddha world accompanied by Lord Brahma arrived there.

Day 30, August 10

Uttara kanda, Chapter 9

Lord Shiva said, "O Parvati! After banishing Lakshmana, Rama was deeply aggrieved. Addressing his ministers, learned Vedic Brahmins and Maharishi Vasishtha he said, "I will crown the wise Bharata as the king of Ayodhya. Then I will follow Lakshmana and go away".

Hearing of Rama's plan to go away, all the citizens were aghast. In total shock, they swooned. Even Bharata fainted. Regaining his composure, he condemned the kingdom and said, "O Lord! I swear on the truth. Even on earth or in the heavens I do not seek a kingdom where you are not present. O Rama! I swear on your feet. Crown Kusha and Lava as kings. Install Kusha as the King of Koshala province. In the Northern province, install Lava as the King. Messengers will go quickly to bring Shatrughna. They will inform him of our plan to return to our own abode".

All the citizens applauded Bharata's plan. Fearing separation from Srirama, and unable to withstand this separation all the citizens were aggrieved. Vasishtha said to Rama, "These citizens have fainted in shock. Pity them. Based on their feelings, shower compassion upon them."

Hearing this, Rama lifted them, honoured them and asked, "Dear citizens! What should I do?"

They humbly folded hands and in total devotion said, "O Rama! Wherever you go, we will come with you. This will give us total happiness. Please show mercy on us. We have resolved firmly to follow you. Hence along with our wives and sons, we will follow you. O Rama! Be it an ashram, heaven or any other city, we will come with you and live with you".

Rama grasped their firm resolve. He remembered the words of Kala purusha. Noticing the devotion of the citizens he assured them saying, "Your desire will be fulfilled".

He then completed the pending activities. On the same day, he coronated Kusha and Lava as the kings in their respective kingdoms. To each, He gave them 8000 chariots, 1000 elephants, 60,000 horses and a huge infantry. The twins bowed to their father. With great difficulty, they left their father and went to their kingdoms.

In the meantime, messengers quickly went to Shatrughna and informed him of the visit of Kāla purusha, Maharishi Durvasa's arrival, Lakshmana's departure and Rama handing over the kingdom to the twins.

Shatrughna gathered all the details of the final journey of his dear brothers. He was saddened by the outcome of the events. He gathered himself and immediately called his sons. He installed Subahu as the king of Mathura and Nupaketu as the King of Vidisha. Then eager to abandon his body along with Rama, he quickly reached Ayodhya seeking to see Rama.

There he saw Rama who was wearing 2 silken garments and was glowing radiantly. He was seated with the Rishis.

Shatrughna bowed to Rama and said, "I have crowned my sons as kings and have come here. O King! I have firmly resolved to follow you. Please accept my request. Do not leave behind this devotee of yours".

Rama observed his unflinching devotion and firm resolve and said, "Tomorrow at noon be ready for the departure".

By that time, the Rishis, the thousands of vanaras and bears who were partial incarnations of the Devatas, and the demons came to know of Rama's final journey. They came there and said, "O Lord! We all have decided to follow you. Please permit us".

Sugriva bowed to Rama and said, "O Rama I have crowned the mighty Angada as the king and have come here. Please take me with you".

Rama heard the firm resolve of the demons, the vanaras and the bears. With all humility and reverence, he said to Vibhishana, "I promise on myself that as long as the earth remains, you will rule the demon kingdom. Do not transgress my words".

He then said to Hanuman, "O Maruti! You should live forever. Do not make my words false".
He then said to Jambhavana, "You wait till the Dwapara-yuga. At that time a certain reason will cause you to fight with me".

Then with total pity, he said to the remaining bears, Vanaras and said, "All of you come with me".
Early next morning he said to his royal priest Vasishtha, "O Acharya! Hold the fire and walk ahead of me".
Then, Vasishtha through special rituals made the arrangements necessary for the final journey. Rama wore silk garments and held darbha grass in his hands. He fixed his resolve on completing the final journey.

Just as the Moon appears from behind the clouds, Rama, while illumining like a thousand Suns, began to walk from Ayodhya. On his left, holding a lotus, the wide-eyed Lakshmi walked. On his right, holding the red lotus, the bluish complexioned Mother Earth (bhudevi) walked.

Vedas took form and walked. All the Rishis followed Rama. Vedamata who exists together with Om and other Vyahrtis and Gayatri also manifested in a form and followed him. When Rama was thus walking, without any desires the devotees of Ayodhya along with their wives and sons walked behind him as if they were entering the doors of liberation that had opened up.

Shatrughna and Bharata went with their wives, palace members and attendants. All the citizens, including the young, old and children, followed Rama. They were led by the Brahmins and accompanied by the ministers and other officers. People of all castes in great delight walked with him.

The pure Sugriva and other Vanara warriors shouted victory slogans for Rama as they walked behind him. Among those who were following Rama, not even one was afflicted due to worldly bondage. No one was inclined towards sensory comforts. Everyone was immersed in bliss.

In total dispassion, along with cattle and servants, they followed Rama. All the sentient and insentient entities developed detachment and followed the non-dual Supreme Self. There was not even one life that remained behind in Ayodhya.

As soon as Rama left the city, it was deserted. Rama walked a long distance from the city. He then neared River Sarayu which had emerged from Vishnu's eyes. Sarayu purifies the person who thinks of it. He smiled delightedly on seeing the river. Recollecting his pure Universal form, he saw the entire universe in his heart.

At that time, Mahatma Lord Brahma who was being served by Devatas, Munis, Siddhas arrived there. he was surrounded by all the Devatas who had arrived there in their aircrafts.

The endless sky was illumined due to celestial aircrafts that glowed like the Sun. It was filled with meritorious beings and with the Mahatmas who inherently illumine.

At that time fragrant winds blew. Flowers rained from the skies. Devatas beat mridamgam. Vidyadhara and Kinnaras sang melodiously. Rama, who is of infinite energies, went forward and touched Sarayu and sipped water in acamana. He then walked on the river just as he had walked in Ayodhya.

Brahma then bowed to him and said, "O Rama! You are the Supreme Lord. You are Vishnu. You are eternally complete. Only you know your complete essence.

O Lord of everyone! You treat your devotees as your children. That is why, you abided by the request made by me, your servant. O Lord! Now along with brothers, you take on your non-dual form as Vishnu and rule the Devatas. Or if you love any other form, You take it and rule us. You are the Lord of all the Devatas. You are Vishnu. You are all-pervading. Barring me no one knows this supreme truth. O Lord! Thousands of times I bow to You. Be pleased with me. Again and again, I bow to you".

Even as Brahma was thus praying and the Devatas were watching, Rama glowed before them like lightning. He manifested his form with 4 weapons and 4 hands. Adishesha, the 1000 headed serpent with illumining hoods, transformed into His bed. Bharata and Shatrughna transformed into the divine discus and conch. Sita was already there as Lakshmi.

He now took on his original form as the primordial, ancient Maha-vishnu. Along with his brothers, he took on his original form and illumined as the Supreme Being.

In this way, soon after he took on his original form, all the Devatas, forefathers, Siddhas, Rishis, Yakshas and Lord Brahma glorified him with many prayers and worshipped Him.

In great delight everyone celebrated. Seeing Brahma, Maha-Vishnu said, "O Mahatma! These are devotees who have a deep love for me. When I was coming to this divine abode, they followed Me. As they are extremely meritorious beings, they will obtain places equal to Vaikuntha. It is my command that they should be sent to those abodes".

Brahma said, "O Lord! All these who, due to devotion for You, have attained immense merit, are eligible to reach worlds that are even higher than my Brahma-loka. They are eligible to enjoy unique and exquisite comforts there. They will surely attain them. Further, unknowingly at the time of death due to chanting Your divine name, will obtain the divine worlds that are attained by Yogis".

In great delight the vanaras, demons and other beings touched the waters and left their bodies. All those who were partial incarnations obtained their earlier forms. As Sugriva was born from the Sun-god, he merged into the Sun-god.

Thereafter all the citizens dipped in Sarayu and abandoned their bodies. They obtained divine ornaments, sat in celestial aircrafts and reached unending supreme worlds.

Even animals dipped into Sarayu and attained divine worlds due to Rama's compassionate gaze. People from other villages who had come to see this event, were freed from their attachments due to having Rama's darshan. Thinking exclusively of Srirama, the Jagadguru and the Lord of the universe, they also dipped in Sarayu and easily reached His abode.

In this way, Lord Shiva narrated to Parvati this highly supreme story of the Supreme Lord. He concluded with this.

Even if one shloka or one-quarter of a verse of Adhyatma Ramayana is chanted, the sins from thousands of births are washed away in the person.

Even a sinner who, with total faith, daily sings or reads at least 1 verse from Adhyatma Ramayana, will be freed from all sins. Further, he will obtain the salokya (residence in the same world) with Rama which is so rare to obtain.

Previously, Lord Shiva who was inspired by Rama, told this Ramayana along with the Uttara kanda that would take place in future. Srirama will be pleased with those who listen to this in his vicinity.

This poem called Ramayana grants extreme merit. Lord Shiva personally narrated it for Mother Parvati's benefit. If this is read or heard with devotion, the person will be freed from the sins of many past births.

Those who daily read or listen to this with faith or who writes it with devotion obtain Srirama's grace. Along with Sita, Srirama will always remain beside them and shower them with comforts. In the end, he will bless them with liberation.

This Ramayana, which is the Adi-kāvya, is delightful to the people. It is praised by Brahma and Devatas. The person who regularly reads or listens to Adhyatma Ramayana with devotion obtains a pure mind and pure body. At the time of leaving the body, he will reach Vishnu's abode.

With this, Adhyatma Ramayana concludes.

Sriramachandra Parabrahmane namah.