

VALMIKI RAMAYANA

by

V. Sitaramiah



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Rabindra Bhawan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi-1.

Rabindra Sarobar Stadium, Block V-B, Calcutta-29.

21 Haddows Road, Madras-6.

Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Building.

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FOREWORD

THIS brochure deals with the human aspects of the Ramayana only and does not mention many items which piety has delighted in among the several sections of our people. The greatness of the Ramayana to the modern time does not derive from any of them. It is grounded in the human worth of the situations and in the character of the men and women, who figure in it. It is difficult in a short compass even to present a few examples of the richness and variety of the descriptions or illustrate even a few of the beauties of expression.

Rama's is a Character-Type which is described by Roback as "an enduring disposition to inhibit instinctive impulses in accordance with a regulative principle" (*Problems of Personality*). His is an unflinching purpose. It is admirable in resolve and execution; it is ashamed of finding itself weak at any time and tries to suppress the trait. Not sparing itself it does not spare others. Indeed, if sacrifice be necessary, it sacrifices itself and all that belongs to it. It is admirable. Though it would like to love and be loved, it keeps itself above love. There is always a certain virtue for which it likes to stand. Living with it is difficult and exacts obedience. A person like Hanuman or Lakshmana has to be content to render it service, a Bharata has to compromise; a Sita who can measure up to it in stature gets sacrificed.

Valmiki sketches an ideal character—great and noble,

clean and of high purpose. It is dedicated to an ideal of conduct and its prestige in the midst of a thousand things large and efficient. All render it honour and none will care to set himself against it : God and man. "The emotions indeed are irrelevant to (such) character. They are waves which break themselves in vain against its base. History is full of examples of men who have exercised their justness and firmness in spite of the emotional claims of friendship and love." (Herbert Read : *Collected Essays*, p. 29).

Valmiki cannot have been the creator of the Sloka metre. It was there already in the Anushtubh; but the beauty, the flexibility and the supreme expressiveness of the metre in the hands of a poet like Valmiki gave it rank and prestige and established it in literature. His was the heart and imagination of a poet; his heart full and flowing; the metre apt and what developed into the great poem enshrined a whole civilization and a scheme of life and values. It came at the end of an epoch and enshrined its ideas. Perhaps no other composition in India, before or later, can claim the felicity and the spaciousness that the grandeur, the ease and the truthfulness of the Ramayana verse gives us.

What Valmiki did when his attention was drawn to the forlorn lady who sat in sorrow in the outskirts of his hermitage marks him out as a true Rishi—sympathetic, understanding, open in heart and ready to help one in distress. Obviously he sensed what had happened in the palace at Ayodhya and saw how cruel it was on poor Sita and in her present condition whatever it might be as expression of kingly duty or responsibility for Rama. He welcomed Sita to his Asrama, looked after her as befitted her birth and status and as one of the cleanest of women; trained the children in all kingly arts, taught them to sing the Ramayana he had composed, and when the time came for publishing the news—both of the Ramayana and of Sita and her children, did it in a unique way.

If Valmiki wrote the poem freshly, it must be sometime

after the coronation of Rama and Sita as described at the end of the sixth Kanda and the children must have grown up for some time in the Asrama. The bulk of the Ramayana story he perhaps wrote or he gathered together from episodes and versions of the story current in his time and fashioned them into the work we now have as his.

Nothing can be a substitute to reading the Ramayana in the original Samskrit and reading it aloud—even to oneself. Samskrit is dear to us in India and the sound of the Ramayana verse is a delight. Its words and lines haunt the memory and play sweetly on the tongue. A glossary at the end is provided for a few Samskrit words that figure in the body of this work for which equivalents are not given earlier.

The present writer is not a scholar nor religion-minded. Only the courtesy and trust of Drs. Kripalani and Machwe are my entitlement to write this. The Ramayana makes anybody love it and if that love and this courtesy have resulted in some fairly acceptable account of the work I am satisfied. In the hope that it will be so acceptable the following few pages are presented to the public.

I am grateful to the Sahitya Akademi for entrusting this work to me and hope that this will commend itself to it.

Bangalore
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V. SITARAMIAH

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTORY

VALMIKI is to us primarily the author of the Ramayana. Only one or two incidents are known about the person of that name : both legendary; and, one of which is local. He was well-born as son of Prachetasa among the first Rishis created by Brahma. Falling into the company of thieves and other bad characters he got into evil ways until a Rishi initiated him into a Mantra. Meditating on it he sat still and concentrated for a number of years. An ant-hill grew over him. When finally he was discovered and came back to the tasks of the earth he was known as the one born in the ant-hill (*Valmika*). In the Ramayana itself, there are the opening sections which speak of the Rishi as residing on the banks of the river Tamasa. Narada visits him and in reply to a question : 'Who is the best man or king known to him?' he is given the story of Rama as the embodiment of the finest royal qualities valued by men in those times. The incident of the Krauncha (curlew) birds makes him tender and moves him to utter a malediction on the hunter who killed the male bird and caused cruel sorrow to its mate. The *Soka* of the situation became a *Sloka*. When he is intrigued about it Brahma appears to him and confirms the true nature and quality of this rhythmic utterance in the sloka form. He tells him he will do well to narrate the life-story of Rama in that metre.

After writing it he trains two young pupils to sing it. How all the Rishis who hear it are moved to appreciation and acclaim the singers and the author of the poem is subject-matter of these early sections. Somewhere about the second Kanda of the Ramayana, there is a description of the Asrama of Valmiki and Rama is said to have passed through it. In the Uttara Kanda, Sita is taken care of by Valmiki who helps during the time of the delivery of the twin-children by Sita, brings them up, gives them training in literature and song. Later on he sends the children to Rama's court. On discovery that they were Rama's own children Valmiki is sent for and he is asked to fetch Sita. This section contains roughly about all the substantial information we have of Valmiki.

The Ramayana is our Adikavya and the poet, the Adikavi. Not that there were no poets or poetry in India before them. The title of Kavi is given to Brahma, the Creator, himself; and there the meaning seems near the Seer. There are great lyrical bits in the Vedas, the Upanishads and elsewhere. But poetry was first greeted as literature and assigned a place of importance and acclamation in this work. It became exemplar to all the later poetical works in Sanskrit. We do not know if all that is contained in the Ramayana now was originally written by Valmiki or he put together in this form events, passages and sequences available to him in different episodes scattered over the then accessible land and fused them into a continuous narrative. Other additions must have been made later to present it in the form in which the earliest manuscript extant finds it about the early 11th century.

Criticism has called it an Epic. According to definitions the title applies to it or not. To us, in India, both the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are Epics, though of different kinds, grades and patterns of expression.¹ The events of the

1. The Mahabharata is almost a Veda, an Encyclopaedia. It has elements of a Smriti as well and deals with larger and more various kinds of secular living, institutional life and behaviour and different types of

Ramayana are one continuous story of a unit family and its vicissitudes and seem to be part of the memory of the Mahabharata age; for, there is a Rama Katha there. So that, it belongs to an earlier strand of Indian chronology. Whether the Ramayana as we have it under the authorship of Valmiki existed or not before the narration of the story in the Mahabharata we have no knowledge. What other full versions of the legend were available in the Buddhist and Jain traditions or elsewhere by that time is also not known.

The Ramayana is a very popular poem and is in daily 'Parayana' (pious-reading) by our people, learned and otherwise. Sanctity attaches to it.¹ A basic reverence for it permeates the country. Possibly not even the Vedas and the Upanishads have so patently influenced the day-to-day life of people in India as the Ramayana (and the Mahabharata). A cleanliness and purity, a loftiness and grace attaches to the Ramayana story and its characters and it is deemed a higher value than the levels of living presented in the Mahabharata. But these two supply examples and models of conduct. Men and women cherish events associated with them. One is more often caught in greater awe with reference to Rama than with anything in the Mahabharata barring possibly the Bhagvadgita section of that work. For, like the Ramayana, the Gita is a continuous living source of inspiration to the Hindu community. Ramabhakti and Krishnabhakti are two different kinds,

value judgement, ethics, philosophy and religion. The fusing of more disparate elements is more clearly and distinctly felt and recognised there than here.

1. Whenever a certain stage is reached in the reading, i. e., in the fortunes of Rama, the event is celebrated. The Rama Pattabhisheka — or the coronation — is a festival event. The birthday of Rama on the Chaitra Suddha Navami is sacred to almost all Hindus in India. Its reading, the recitation and the exposition in song and as literature are great events in the cultural traditions of large sets of people though in recent times, a hard line is taken by a few people on account of an animus among some : born of what is called the Arya and the Dravida which queers the pitch.

the one for Rama has been more austere with a more refined sense of values than attaches to the other. Memory of the deeds and speech of Rama and of other characters of the Ramayana keeps men and women consoled, refreshed, strengthened and helped to steady themselves in life. Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata, Hanuman in different forms are the names of men and women today deemed supreme in the virtues associated with them. The characters are individuated, carrying to their uttermost articulation the virtues absolute almost to the point of suffocation and the despair of men and women made of humbler clay. They are pillars and beacons of light.

Another feature of the Ramayana has been that as poetry it has inspired poets and literary men through the ages. There have been innumerable renderings, extensions and formulations of the story according as imagination, purpose, interpretation and sensing of meaning have directed the writers. Some fantastic versions of the story are current and influential. Many deem it pure allegory; more as an Avatara Katha; or, harness it to philosophical systems; many are religious and sectarian interpretations; some deem the story as cultural and/or sociological excursion — adventures even — of a North-Indian hero into the South and beyond the seas; Sita becomes an agricultural myth. Some deal with it as Geological symbolism. While one school of philosophy makes it Adhyatma another makes it vehicle of a body-symbolism where the organs of the human body and their organisation into life are enshrined. Some make Lanka Ceylon; others limit it to zones nearer the Vindhya.¹ The attitudes are numerous and contradictory. There is fanaticism in some loyalties. The Ramapanthis have been as definitely a sect as the Krishnapanthis are, though fewer in number and kind. But all accept the greatness of Rama. He is Sri Rama; the

1. What the Vindhya are in the Ramayana is itself subject of controversy.

Ramayana of Valmiki is Srimadramayana as against every other version. A very beautiful stanza greets the poet as the cuckoo which sits on the boughs of a tree singing sweetly and eternally the praise of Rama :

*Kūjantam Rāma-Rāmeti madhuram madhurākṣaram
Āruhya kavitā-śākhām vande Vālmiki-kokilam*

—a stanza dear to all the lovers of the Ramayana in my part of the country as referring to the Ramayana katha to the sweet outpourings of that cuckoo — is loved and listened to.

One does not hear of another poem which has been so cherished as a sacred book by so many. Reading and recitation of it is deemed piety and as yielding Mukti.

The basic Ramayana story must have been current in some form from early times though Valmiki is represented as being a contemporary of Rama. It has also had a history later when the Avatara Katha was grafted on it. A second feature has been so skilfully woven into the story that the feeling that it is not even a second motif but a constituent one or even the leit motif is the impression created.¹ The Ramayana

1. About the length and composition of the Ramayana into Kandas or cantos there is uncertainty. The last, or the seventh, Kanda is not conceded as being part of the original Ramayana by some and not Valmiki's at all. Many portions in the Balakanda are disputed. The first four sections of it do not seem to be the work of the poet; and the story is taken to begin with *Sarvāpūrvam iyaṃ yeṣāṃ āsīt kṛtsnā vasundharā* (the beautiful earth lay stretched like some thing totally unknown before). An independent existence to the Balakanda is denied by others; they make it a part of the Ayodhya Kanda. The bulk of the Sundara Kanda is nearly written off by many, or as considerably inflated;—though the practice in Parayana begins with the Sundara Kanda— a practice in the South and bulk of it is surprisingly part of the Baroda edition. The Yuddha Kanda is littered with a large amount of junk or padding; the leap across a stretch of sea— (the sea ? ask some)—and the burning of Lanka by Hanuman are denied authenticity. For a long time now the Ramayana is described

is a compact work, more unitary, more the work and voice of one person — except for some sections — more poetically presented than the sister-epic and by a poet who knew the forest life, i. e., Nature in all its moods and with insight into human nature, with affection and reverence for the clean, the beautiful and the lofty. Being a Rishi was an advantage to him. He was an observer and disinterested — with loyalty to the best in life and culture. Vyasa, author (?) of the Mahabharata, was part participant : which did not make him look on the events without feeling or partisanship. Valmiki is a sympathetic looker-on and can contemplate the events of the story for human content as much as on the values in issue or in process of expression. *Nān Ṛṣi kurute kāvyam* — one who is not a Rishi cannot create a great poem — is a common phrase used in critical appreciation. It applies supremely to Valmiki. His Ramayana represents all that the poet deemed best in the life of his time.

as a work in six Kandas—of some 500 Sargas (Cantos or Sections) and 24,000 slokas and some of these as definite content in popular acceptance. This count takes some ticklish doing to make up.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAIN STORY

We do not know definitely the entire physical, social and cultural geography of India of those times to check up the descriptions we get in it. There could not have been as many kingdoms in India then as there were in the Mahabharata time and practically not much urban life south of the modern Vindhya.

Three types of society — the Arya, the Vanara and the Rakshasa — are presented in it. The Arya itself deals with three groups — Dasaratha and Kausalya belong to Ayodhya and Kosala in the middle part of North India; Kaikeyi belongs to West-Punjab, stretching possibly to near Afghanistan; Janaka belongs to Bihar, the land near the modern Darbhanga. Further down beyond Jubbulpur, say Satna, the Aryan clans do not seem to have penetrated. In one part of the Dandaka, possibly near modern Hampi, the Vanaras lived with an even tenor of life. The Rakshasas ruling from Lanka — or wherever it was—had their outposts and spheres of influence right up to the Southern boundaries of the modern Madhya Pradesh in what is even during these days fatefully — could they not call it by another name to attract refugee settlers? — called the Dandakaranya. There was some No-man's land in which the Rishis had their Asramas (hermitages). In groups or

singly, they performed tapas and kept sacrificial fires burning, living a life the Rakshasas opposed.¹ The farthest point to which a major Rishi like Agastya penetrated is not very much further down the Southern banks of the Godavari. An uncle of Ravana, the emperor of Lanka in the South, Maricha, was powerful as royal representative while Khara and Surpanakha — cousin brother and own sister to Ravana respectively — had their camp and settlements above the Godavari sections of Dandakaranya. Maricha himself was son to Tataka who had created trouble at the Asrama of Visvamitra formerly so far north. Naturally the power of the Rakshasas had to be contained or destroyed for peaceful existence in these Aryan outposts. . .² There was need to produce a hero to do that for them. Rama, son of Dasaratha, had all the makings of one who with the blessings and good wishes of all the kingdoms in the North and the Rishis performing *tapas* of the Aryan kind was able to sustain it. Apart from this matrix of conflict, there is no evidence of populations, kingdoms and powers in the whole of South India during those days;—politically, therefore, a vacuum. The exile of Rama in the Dandakaranya builds itself naturally into one of conflict with the Rakshasa power all-about there. It could not have been the intention of Kaikeyi or part of any fear even of Dasaratha that the banishment was asked for and accepted for such purpose. Nor could Manthara herself be thinking of such things. She was only interested in Bharata becoming king and Rama living exiled to make that possible. The purpose of Kaikeyi and the purpose of the Rishis seem, however, — or, happen — to meet on this. With the natural implications of a situation in which Rama found himself, given his nature, character, ability and courage to press him to such service and

1. If they harassed Visvamitra so far north their inroads must have stretched quite into East U. P. !
2. One opinion is that the Dandaka was a colony of the Ayodhya kings stretching between modern Nagpur and the Krishna. Rama almost claims imperium over the whole of South India for Bharata.

guardianship the rest can happen. He risked and paid the price. It brought him glory even while it took help to destroy the most powerful disturber of peace who like an ogre menaced the tranquillity and security of the whole of South India. In the process, the domestic events in a king's palace bearing on the fortunes of the crown-prince synchronise with a public purpose and fulfil themselves. A few lines in the Aranya Kanda illustrate the point:

*Tasya meyam vanevāsō bhaviṣyati mahāphalah
Bhavatām artha siddhyartham āgatoham yadṛcchayā*

My coming to dwell in the forest by chance will bear great fruit if it helps to realise your purpose.

This is the point of congruence between personal situation and life and the larger purpose shaping through the events from the Aranya Kanda onwards. The destruction of Tataka and Subahu, the pursuit of Maricha, the union between the Ikshvakus and the Videhas and the calling the bluff of Parasurama become preamble : and from here the public motif can take off.

Though the story of the Ramayana can be primarily one of the fortunes of a few members of Dasaratha's family and can be self-sufficient at that, it gets an added dimension by its being harnessed to the larger purpose of getting rid of the Raksasas headed by Ravana. Even if the ascription of an Avatara to Rama was not added, the Rishi¹ v. the Rakshasa theme can easily be an important development of interest. For quite a long time the Ramakatha was current in the country. When in an answer to Valmiki, Narada describes the qualities of an earthly — 'Nara' — king Rama is being held

1. Christian missionary movements went slowly into Asia, Africa and South America; the states to which they belonged followed them with military and political aid.

in the highest esteem for character, integrity and steadfastness and devoted to the highest ideals of Kshatriya kingship. So that there are at least three strands — the personal, the Rishi and the heavenly design. This triple reference has made the Ramayana a big quarry for every sort of pursuit and extension of meaning and much obscurantism too. The main reference in this brochure is the human which the poetry of Valmiki presents with moving power at a pace and grace which only a great poet can endow it with. A few supernatural events will have to be accepted as elements in an Epic set-up and can be granted a symbolic status.

The first six Kandas are in full traditional acceptance: — the Bala, the Ayodhya, the Aranya, the Kishkindha, the Sundara and the Yuddha. The fifth has an extended meaning and reference — for, the others indicate what is contained in them: the boyhood of Rama (in the Bala); the family situation in the father's palace and its consequences (in the Ayodhya); the exile in the forest (in the Aranya); the meeting of the Vanaras (in the Kishkindha): and the war (in the Yuddha). The Sundara is transitional, the name itself has taken a lot of explanation in definition and import.¹ The main story is long known and familiar ground. With a view to supply base for a few observations later the contents of the Kandas may now be briefly stated.

Dasaratha is the king of Ayodhya and has three queens from none of whom he has children. A Yaga (Putrakameshti) is performed as a result of which the favour of the Gods in the form of a Payasa enables him to have four children—Rama the eldest from Kausalya, the chief queen; twin-children, Lakshmana and Satrugna from Sumitra; and Bharata from Kaikeyi. Dasaratha

1. As the story of the great Vanara Hanuman (*Sundara*—monkey also !) as full of natural and poetic beauty of description and felicity of poetry; as bringing Rama and Sita glad redeeming tidings and linking up Sita in hope and Rama in purpose as a result of successful discovery, etc.

is fairly old and very much in the toils of the youngest queen causing much dissatisfaction in the palace mostly because Kaikeyi is vain, self-willed and conscious of her power over the King. The children grow up handsome and strong, well versed in all the arts and sciences at which Princes were educated. The age difference is not much between the brothers — but a few days — though Rama is clearly the eldest. Of the twin children of Sumitra Lakshmana gets affiliated to Rama and Satrughna to Bharata. These are particular affections and loyalties within the set while the regard of all the brothers to Rama is of the highest as much because he is the eldest as for his personal qualities, character and wisdom.

Rama is not quite sixteen when Visvamitra comes to Dasaratha to ask for aid. He says Rama should be sent with him to complete a Yaga he has undertaken for guarding his Asrama against the inroads of Tataka and Maricha. They were dangerous Rakshasas. Dasaratha is unwilling at first to risk his beloved son against such formidable foes. But under the advice of Vasishtha, his Chief Priest, sends the son with the Maharshi. With Rama goes Lakshmana. Journeying towards Visvamitra's asrama, a number of tales and legends are narrated to the brothers by the Rishi in education of them and Rama is instructed in every military secret. He is taught all the Astras known to Visvamitra, the subtlest and practically all then known to the Kshatriyas. The use of weapons as well as defence against any or all of them are taught and learnt. Mantras are taught to keep awake, alert, fresh, strong and untired for lengths of time. When the brothers are actually on the task of defending the asrama, Tataka comes with Maricha and Subahu — her sons — violently disturbing, upsetting, polluting everything. Rama is told that she was a grave disturber of public peace and of social good. The supreme task of a responsible prince is ever to put down such persons whoever they be. Considerations of sex should not matter. Precedents are given. Tataka is destroyed; Subahu is killed; and Maricha is driven far into the sea with wholesome fear in

him that one like him has no chance against Rama's arrows. After the sacrifices are completed, Visvamitra takes the brothers to King Janaka's court at Mithila. In Janaka's court there is a test of powers to gain the hand of Sita, foster-daughter to King Janaka. She had been found by him in the furrows of the field when tilling it for Yajna purposes and he had brought up the child tenderly. She was now a beautiful young lady and of marriageable age—'*Patisamyoga Sulabhā*'. Janaka had said that whoever bends and strings the great Siva bow he has with him and uses it to purpose will get her hand in marriage. The most famous and powerful princes of the day had failed to do that. Rama easily bends it and when he tries to string it, it snaps into two. Janaka is glad and offers Sita in marriage to him. They send word to Dasaratha and the marriage takes place.¹ Visvamitra's task being over, he disappears from the Ramayana scene thereafter.

On their way back to Ayodhya, Parasurama, son of Jama-dagni, who had been wreaking vengeance on the Kshatriyas for a long time and still a menace to them challenges Rama to bend the Vaishnava bow he carried and meet him in mortal combat. Rama takes the situation in and is actually roused. He very easily manages the bow and threatens to use it against Parasurama himself. The latter knows now he is before a master, yields his weapons to him, is granted pardon and allowed to go for *tapas*. This establishes Rama in the highest esteem of men and wins for him fame as not only the breaker of the Siva Dhanus in Janaka's court but of the Vaishnava Dhanus of Parasurama the arch-terror of the Kshatriyas of his time. This completes the full phase of Rama's education and establishes him as warrior for any need against any foe. The party comes happily back home. This is the story of the Balakanda.

1. Along with Sita's marriage to Rama, it is said, Lakshmana is married to Urmila, Janaka's own daughter. Two daughters of his brother Kusadhvaja, Mandavi and Srutakirti, are married to Bharata and Satrugna.

The picture of a high, ancient, Aryan Royal family is presented to us in Dasaratha's homelife in Ayodhya. Ayodhya is an ancient capital city founded by Manu. Succeeding kings of the line have extended and beautified it. And the city life in the capital gets beautiful description for the organisation of its life; its freedom, charms, its opportunities at many levels and the occupations of the people. One who reads it thousands of years after would wish his own city was as well laid and governed and as happy and prosperous as Ayodhya. Dasaratha himself was a good ruler; loved and respected, served well by ministers; with a family priest like Vasishtha and confidantes like Sumantra. The atmosphere is one of comfort and friendliness all round except for the life inside the palace — in the relations between the three queens and their establishments. Kausalya is elderly, proud and wealthy. She enjoys the regard of the king though he has transferred affection and favour to Kaikeyi who has been brought from far-off West-Punjab, i. e., Kekaya. Sumitra comes in between the two and is more with Kausalya than with the younger queen. As mother to the heir apparent Kausalya is building hopes of re-establishing her prestige in the palace. Kaikeyi is behaving arrogantly with the other queens. Not only does Kausalya feel she has to do without the affection of Dasaratha but smarts under slight and condescension from Kaikeyi. A fine feature of the situation is : she likes Bharata as Kaikeyi likes Rama. Between the brothers there is understanding and harmony.

For about a year after the marriage of Rama¹ the princes live happily with their wives in their different mansions : *svām svām bhāryām upādeya, remire sva sva mandire*. Sita herself speaks of her happy life in Rama's palace and she has given Rama an abiding place in her affections (*nityam hr̥di samarpitah*).

1. There is difference of opinion about this period; the versions vary between one year and twelve; likely it was one.

On a particular day, Dasaratha seems to have had an omen and a bad dream about the duration of his life; and, otherwise also, thinks it was time he handed over the kingdom to Rama who is the rightful successor according to ancient custom and the most beloved of his sons, who is also the idol of the people. The announcement of the king's desire pleases all sections of the people. Kausalya is the happiest of all. Dasaratha is eager to get through the ceremonies quickly and does not send word of the event to either Kaikeyi's people at whose house Bharata has been staying for sometime after his marriage or to Janaka, Sita's father.¹

But a situation develops independently in the apartments of Kaikeyi. Manthara, an old maid-servant who has been with Kaikeyi from her childhood days, learns of the preparations : how Kausalya, normally a closefisted lady, was giving out gifts and was in the midst of celebration and ceremonies. She learns that it was because Rama will be made Yuvaraja the next day. She runs up to her mistress, gives her the news and a wake ; she asks the foolish one to rouse herself.

The first news actually pleases Kaikeyi. Rama was as dear to her as her own son was ; perhaps even more. For he showed her great regard and affection as no son could ; and that was proper custom in the family. As the eldst born and the most deserving person Rama received due recognition. Manthara was not to be put off. She tells Kaikeyi that this will be the end to all her power in the palace ; that her vaunted trust in Dasaratha is not real and that the mother of the king to be, Kausalya, will soon gain an upper hand in the

1. The first point has a snag; — in that a promise has likely been made to Kaikeyi's father at the time of the marriage that Dasaratha would make the son born of Kaikeyi his heir. This point is mentioned by Rama later but is not an issue at any moment. Anyway the Yauvaraj-yabhisheka is hurried. Not that Bharata would object to it or obstruct the celebration nor that his maternal grandparents or relatives would remind Dasaratha of promises and claims. The Payasa has made the difference; other rights and claims need perhaps not count; it transvalues.'

royal household and that she who has slighted her for long and treated her discourteously all along will hereafter be forced to serve the will of Kausalya in power. The aim takes. Kaikeyi is asked to insist upon the king granting her the promises he seems to have made to her earlier on a battlefield when she rescued and nursed him back to recovery. Two boons had been given to her then, which she had laid by to ask whenever she desired. Now is the time to collect. By one Rama should be exiled for 14 years and, by the other, Bharata be crowned instead. Kaikeyi is instructed to go into the Kopagriha (a flat into which an aggrieved person repairs) —i.e., as it were on strike — and not be reconciled to the husband on any other terms.

When Dasaratha comes to the chambers of Kaikeyi he sees the young queen dead-set in her resolve to see Rama banished. No amount of pleading, promise or threat is of avail. Having to make her speak about why she has taken to Prayopavesa, he almost fatefully promises to grant her whatever she wants. He could not believe she will ask him to send into exile his dearest son for no fault of his. It is the blight of all his expectations in personal feeling and in the public eye. Yet he is bound as a truthful man to grant her wishes according to promises made in the past ; and now, has more or less done on oath swearing by his Sukrita—promised to grant her desire. Rama is sent for by Kaikeyi and tells him he has to carry out the terms of the promise to which his father is bound. The father cannot speak to him the words but he has to redeem himself as a truthful man.

Rama himself had been happy for a while at the prospect of Yauvarajya publicly made in the assembly a few hours before (and, again, in the chambers of his father). Preparations were on in the apartments of Kausalya and in his own. The rejoicings in the town were fully in swing. This bolt was sudden. He, however, realises the situation, i. e., the abjectness of his father's condition, all in a moment and replies to his mother :

*Evam astu gamiṣyāmi vanam vastum aham tvitah
Jatā cira dharo rājnah pratijnām anupālayan*

May it be so, I go to forest to dwell there with matted hair and wearing bark garments. Let the promise given by my father be fulfilled.

My father should not come to discredit among men as one who broke a promise. I pledge my life in carrying it out. Neither he nor you need have put yourselves to any shrinking or compunction. I do not make any distinction between Bharata and myself ! On a word from you, I am prepared to renounce my all if it only releases my father from the burden of an obligation.

Quickly he returns to his mother to convey to her the news. What was jubilation and sense of fulfilment of a long hope and expectation only a few hours ago and an unclouded blessing becomes a blight for her. She is smitten with sorrow. But she is consoled with the statement that the responsibility was his to redeem the father. And he had resolved to go. Sita is intimated of it. The disappointment is as natural there. She easily reconciles herself to the prospect. She shows no sign of hurt or frustration. Lakshmana is angry beyond bounds against this wrong from an old doting father and a plotting, vicious step-mother; but he is soon quieted. Neither he nor Sita will, however, be dissuaded from following Rama to the forest. Preparations are made for the departure. The turn of events strikes all the people with unrelieved gloom; but they are helpless. Blaming the king or queen led nowhere. Rama had undertaken to go into exile to fulfil the plighted troth of the father and would not relent. The misery of Dasaratha knows no bounds. He becomes limp and speechless, groans and grovels on the ground, but cannot call his son back. All his women in the palace are invited to be present when the king bids them farewell. The two sons and the daughter-in-law leave the city.

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The town suffers as from an eclipse and is steeped in sorrow. Lamentation fills the air which just a few hours back was singing and dancing and feasting. When they are off his sight and after following the chariot which took them away Dasaratha comes back this time to Kausalya's apartment vowing not to look at Kaikeyi again, nor with any benedictory feeling on Bharata if he accepts this dispensation to become king.

Rama goes beyond the borders of Ayodhya crossing the Ganges with the aid of Guha, an old friend and a vassal of the kings of Ayodhya, sends back Sumantra who had driven his chariot so he might confirm to Kaikeyi that Rama has really gone into the forest. He passed through Bharadvaja's Asrama and on the Rishi's recommendation settled in Chitrakuta nearabouts modern Jubbalpur reconciled to the change over in fortune. With Rama, as with many of an executive mind, 'to feel was to think and to think was to act'. Whatever dejection he felt for the briefest while was not for expression or demonstration; his self-control was extraordinary. He would be less than a human being if he did not think at all of this turn in the fortune¹; for, he could see that his father and stepmother could have acted kindlier. If they wanted to make Bharata king they need not have exiled him. This brief vent to feeling is however soon suppressed ruthlessly. Any talk of or reference to it from even Lakshmana he does not countenance.

Within a few days, a little after he receives news from his charioteer that the party has gone beyond the Ganges into the forest, the king passes away.

Messengers are sent in hot-haste to far away Rajagriha in

1. Sita notices the look of dejection on his face as he enters her chamber.

Kekaya to fetch Bharata to Ayodhya quickly without telling him anything about the events at home. Bharata had been feeling uneasy on the eve of their arrival and he journeys immediately back to Ayodhya. All along he is gloomy and the sight of his home-town depresses him beyond bearing. When in his mother's chambers he does not see the king and the mother details to him what she has done to advance his interests and that Rama, Lakshmana and Sita have left for the forest and the father is no more, he is wild with rage. He calls down on her imprecations and says he will never agree to succeed to the throne when Rama is alive and that his mother has done irreparable wrong to the good name of the family bringing dishonour on herself and on him. A too heavy price has been paid for the wilfulness of this mother of his. He meets Kausalya and begs forgiveness of her for what has happened saying he has neither part nor lot in it and that his loyalties are totally for Rama ever. The funeral ceremonies are duly performed. When the priests and ministers ask him to ascend the throne he declines the offer. Instead, he persuades them to go along with him to where Rama was camping to induce him to return. All the three queen-mothers follow the train. Bharata is heavy with grief that his great brother has to wander in the woods all because of the wrong-headed affection of his mother for himself. He meets Guha and passes through the Bharadvaj-asrama. Bharadvaja directs him to the Chitrakuta hills where Rama is now staying.

The meeting of the brothers is tender and touching, but no amount of persuasion can make Rama agree to return till the terms of the promise he has made were carried out. For this is not so much an imposition by others on him as his own undertaking in behalf of his father. All realise the impossibility of Rama's return now to Ayodhya. Bharata begs of Rama finally to make a gift of his sandals so that he will then rule Ayodhya as the agent of Rama considering the sandals as his brother's representatives to which he will render

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account for the duration; and, on one further condition¹: if Rama fails to return at the end of the fourteenth year he will commit himself to flames. This establishes him in worth and esteem and leaves no wrong thoughts in the mind of anybody about the genuineness of Bharata's feeling.

Bharata returns; but not to Ayodhya. In Nandigrama, nearby, he sets up headquarters and for 14 years Ayodhya is ruled wisely and well, Bharata living like a Vratin.

Rama sees that Chitrakuta is too near to Ayodhya and so moves further south. He rests for a night at Atri's Asrama where the Rishi's wife Anasuya cherishes Sita and blesses her before they leave the next morning further down. This completes the story of the Ayodhya Kanda, the largest and the most human of the Kandas in the Ramayana. It is, in modern idiom, a documentary on a royal household.

The incidents of the Aranya Kanda are a series of adventures connected with meeting Rishis and destroying the Rakshasas all along the way. Rama and Sita forget the loss of royal comforts and enjoy themselves amidst nature. Life there makes Sita happy. She does not care what else she has or not so long as she is with her husband. Viradha is destroyed on the way and other disturbers of peace. Rama desires to set up camp at Sarabhanga's; but he is directed to go to Sutikshna's nearby. Sutikshna's and round about is their stay and sojourn for the next 10-12 years.

From Sutikshna's they move further down. The journey to Agastya's Asrama is treated specially. Agastya makes a gift of a sword (!) to him and tells him to settle at Janasthana on the banks of the Godavari which will be an ideal place to reside in. There, too, they go and spend some happy time. These are nearly the closing years of the exile. Events gather round when Surpanakha chances to catch sight of the brothers, falls

1. A queer decision in essence from today's point of view. How does Rama agree to it? Who then is king at Ayodhya?

in love with Rama and offers herself as woman and wife instead of Sita. For a while, she is playfully tossed between the brothers; but when she threatens to hurt Sita she is deformed and dismissed. She is sister to Ravana; and Khara was more or less like an officer of Ravana in these outposts. Khara was angry by reports from Surpanakha. He marches at the head of 14,000 Rakshasas; and is destroyed with the entire army by Rama single-handed.

Surpanakha was not a person to rest. She made haste to complain to Ravana on the happenings and urged on him to punish Rama; and, not only for ill treatment to her but for destroying Khara and his army. Her description of Sita as the most beautiful woman—fit more for Ravana than Rama—acts as additional stimulus to Ravana to lay out a plan to abduct Sita, separating the brothers with a trick. He journeys to a place nearby, where Maricha, his uncle, had been staying and urges him to play the trick; Maricha is to move about the hermitage like a beautiful, spotted, golden-skinned deer and make Sita desire it. Rama and Lakshmana will be in pursuit of it; when they go far enough away he will enter the hermitage and carry off Sita. No amount of dissuasion from Maricha saying it will be a danger to his own life presaging destruction to Ravana's kingdom is of avail. When he is threatened with his own life he agrees to it.

Everything turns out as the Rakshasa has planned. The sight of such a beautiful deer catches Sita's fancy. She desires the deer, dead or alive. Lakshmana has misgivings. He almost suspects it is Maricha and his guile. But his brother and sister-in-law are not convinced. For a moment even Rama seems captivated by it. Maricha sees that Rama's heart is set and lures him away deep into the woods pursuing. When further effort to catch the deer seems useless Rama shoots it down. The deer falls killed. It becomes the Rakshasa while falling and does something else as well : imitating the voice of Rama Maricha calls out to Lakshmana to rush to Rama's aid. Lakshmana is sure it cannot be Rama's voice. He knows that

no one on earth or in heaven is equal to Rama as archer or can stand up to him; but Sita is miserable; desperate. She calls out to Lakshmana to go to his brother's help; it is a question of life and death. She calls him names. Cruel words are used. Lakshmana could not stay under such onslaught. With a heavy heart he leaves the lady to the care of the wood-spirits and all those forces that protect a precious life.

As soon as he leaves Sita, Ravana comes in like a Parivrajaka (a wandering ascetic) and very soon tells Sita that she will make for him a fitter wife than for a mere mortal like Rama. He calls upon her to give up all thoughts of her husband. When she angrily denounces him as a coward so to steal in on her when her husband and brother-in-law were both away he assumes a ten-headed form and terrorising her, carries her into his chariot and is driving her away. She sets up a yell;—her piteous lamentations call out on all sides for rescue and for intimation to Rama and Lakshmana how she, against her will, is being forcibly carried away by the Rakshasa. Old Jatayu, an ancient eagle-chief, friend to Dasaratha, hears the cries and offers battle to Ravana. Ravana is deeply hurt. Finally Ravana gets angry, lops Jatayu's wings and makes him fall down powerless. Then, catching hold of Sita, physically helpless, he takes her to Lanka.¹

Ravana carries her to Lanka and sets her down in his rich and magnificent palace built for pleasure. He shows her all the wealth and luxury that will be hers if she agrees to be his wife, chief over every one else. Sita weeps louder and rebukes him more fiercely than before and tells him that while life lasted she will never be anybody else than wife to Rama. In a fit of anger he orders she should be held prisoner and be beaten, if need be, to submission and acceptance of him. She is taken to his pleasure-garden, called the Asoka Vana, and

1. The grief and the curses of Sita resound through the air. Without his knowledge she, however, lets fall a few of her jewels seeing some monkeys seated in a group on the Rushyamuka hill.

kept there under the surveillance of horrid, ugly and cruel women.¹ She is given a year's time to change her mind. If she then does not yield to him she will be cut into chops and dressed for his breakfast (*pratarasartham*) one day !

Meanwhile the turn of events at sight of the deer changing into a Rakshasa and the false cry in his voice appealing to Lakshmana for help fill Rama's mind with apprehension. He hastens back to the hermitage. On the way he meets Lakshmana, gloomy and depressed and learns of the things that had happened. Severely he admonishes Lakshmana for leaving Sita alone and unguarded — whatever the woman might have said to him. The worst had happened. The brothers saw that Sita was not in, nor traceable anywhere round about. Rama was mad. Nothing could console him. With difficulty Lakshmana consoles him and reminds him that he was a great man known for self-control and should settle into his natural condition of strength and proceed to discover and regain her. Soon they see Jatayu who lies dying for having defended Sita against Ravana. Here was a clue to what had happened. When Jatayu died the brothers gave him proper cremation as to a father.

As they move along an ogre obstructs their movement : a monstrous body with the head and the mouth imbedded in the stomach, with huge powerful arms catching every living thing to gobble it. The brothers are caught in its grasp. They cut off the two arms of Kabandha. When Kabandha asks the brothers who they are they give their names to him. He is himself Danu, he says, with a curse on him owing to some vicious behaviour of his, foretold that when Rama and Lakshmana come to cut off his arms the curse on him will lift. He is grateful they have helped him to get redeemed. On his

1. It is said he was under a curse that if he violated a woman against her will death will be on him, meaning also he will not take a weeping woman, one who will not accept his love.

advice he is cremated. He becomes a celestial person and directs them to seek the help of Sugriva, who himself was a victim of wrong-doing and was with four staunch followers hiding in the Rushyamuka hills near the Pampa lake. Sugriva is powerful, Kabandha says, knows the whole world and can help to discover Sita, wherever she may be. They are also told of a Sabari at Matangasrama on their way to Sugriva's place and are directed to receive her hospitality before proceeding.

Acting on these directions they reach the Pampa lake and pay their visit to the old Sramani, who offers them hospitality with fresh produce of the woodland (*vanyah*). The next morning she gets their permission to immolate herself and throws off her mortal coils. The brothers have felt refreshed at Matangasrama and soon decide to seek Sugriva. Lakshmana is directed to proceed to where Sugriva lives with his followers.

This brings the story of the Aranya Kanda to a close, telling us that the whole time — for more than 12 years of the exile — was spent in the brothers moving about the forest land, visiting Munis and Rishis, observing the culture and the life in the hermitages and acquainting themselves with the needs and aspirations of these representatives of Aryan culture who in the Dandakaranya were taken up with meditation, self-purification and efforts at self-fulfilment. While devoted to them, their need was for protection from the Rakshasas like it was felt and expressed by Visvamitra himself earlier. This part of the country was wild and stricken with the menace of the Rakshasas on a larger scale. Whole armies of them infested it with centres of their strength and power. Communication between the Asramas seems however to have been present for all down to Agastya himself and to Sabari. Matanga, her Guru, is said to have asked her to be expecting his arrival there as Agastya a little earlier seemed to do ; he was exercised why Rama did not visit him so long. The best part of the duration is spent among them ; the major event of tackling the Ravana menace — the second motif — had not happened

yet. When in the Janasthana Ravana carries off Sita, the purpose of the Rishis and that of Rama coincide.

In Kishkindha, a third element of interest gets into the Ramayana situation. Sugriva had been cheated of his position and status¹ and robbed of his wife. The alliance between Sugriva and Rama is subject-matter of the Kishkindha Kanda. So far it has been a conflict between the Kings of Ayodhya and the Rakshasas. Now it becomes an alliance with the Vanaras against the Rakshasa power. Without this help from the Vanara force it should have been difficult for Rama to discover the place to which Sita has been taken and go there with force to subjugate such a mighty person as Ravana entrenched with power and equipment in an almost impregnable island capital.

Sugriva and his friends had by now caught sight of the brothers and Sugriva was at first in fright. After the first flush of excitement Hanuman steadies him and tells him that there need be no fear from them judging from their aspect, gait, colour and stature and the bearing of the two brothers. Anyway as long as they were in the Matangasrama, there could be no harm from Vali, on whom was the curse that if he entered it, he will die. Hanuman is sent to find out who they were and their intentions. The Vanaras like the Rakshasas could take any form they liked. Hanuman approaches Rama in the form of a Bhikshu.² He proceeds gently, speaks politely yet bravely and inquires the purpose that has brought them to this part of the country. When they do not speak a word, he offers information about himself saying that he is the agent of Sugriva who, harassed

1. What legally was it? The king is Vali and Vali has a grown-up son, Angada. Sugriva was not Yuvaraja at any time. His grouse was that he had been driven out from his homeland and chased all over the country.
2. The terms Bhikshu and Sramani are interesting with an echo of Buddhism.

by and living in dread of his elder brother Vali, will like to be friends with them. Rama is struck with Hanuman's speech and manners. One of the most glorious tributes to culture in speech, manners and accomplishment is given about Hanuman here :

*Nān ṛgveda vinītasya na yajur veda dhāriṇah
 Nā sāma veda viduṣah satyam evam prabhāṣitum
 Nyunam vyākāraṇam kṛtsnam anena bahudhāśrutam
 Bahu vyāharatānena na kincit apaśabditum
 Na mukhe netrayorvāpi lalāṭe ca bhruvoh tathā
 Anyeṣvapica gātreṣu doṣah samviditah kvacit
 Avistaram, asandigdham avilambitam adrutam
 Urastham kaṇṭhagam vākyaṃ vartate madhyame svare
 Samskārakrama sampannām. . .
 Uccārayati kalyāṇīm vācam hr̥dayahāriṇīm
 Anayā citrayā vācā trīsthāna vyanjanasthayā
 Kasya nārādhyate cittam udyatā seh arerapi
 Evam vidho yasya dūto na bhavet pārthivasya tu
 Siddhyanti hi katham tasya kāryāṇām gatayoh anagha*

It is hard for one with learning in and mastery of the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Sama Veda to speak as well as he does. He must have full proficiency in grammar; for not a single word in all that he has spoken is wrong or misplaced; mouth, eyes, forehead, brows nor any limb of his body is distorted in the least when he speaks. The words rise straight from the chest, pass through his throat and deliver in a middle tone of voice. An enemy who raises a weapon to kill will be full of regard hearing them. His articulation of our beautiful Samskrit language is perfect, cultured and captivates the heart. A king who has such an agent to compass his ends is sure to achieve his objectives.

They are then led by Hanuman to Sugriva who is also impressed with their presence and personality. Sugriva stretches out his hand in friendship and soon the two swear loyalty and friendship to each other before a fire lit up by Hanuman. Rama promises to kill Vali and as evidence of

his ability so to do shoots a line of seven Tala trees with a single arrow and kicks off to a fabulous distance the skeleton of Dundubhi. Sugriva undertakes to find Sita and help Rama in getting her back. The prowess of Vali is described but Rama has no fear about him. So Sugriva is asked to challenge him to combat.

Vali is incensed. When he is about to go out finally to meet his brother and punish him, Tara, his wife, tries to dissuade him and would like her husband to be brotherly to Sugriva. She is not without a feeling that he must be backed strongly now to make bold to challenge Vali coming out of his secure hiding place. She has heard that Rama, an Aryan prince, has come as Sugriva's ally. Vali has heard of him also but as a righteous and honourable person. So he brushes aside her caution and sallies out to meet Sugriva and gives him a hiding. At a second meeting of the brothers Vali is shot by Rama. Before the arrow is pulled out of his body and Vali dies he commends his wife Tara and son Angada to his brother's and to Rama's care and himself passes away in peace of soul. Proper obsequies are performed; Sugriva gains the kingdom and rights over everything in it and is firmly established.

Rama's side of the promise has been fulfilled. Sugriva's has to be. But before any effort is made, there is the onset of the rains and nothing can be done till they cease. Sugriva promises to send scouts in all directions for the purpose and Rama and Lakshmana have to rest during the rains. Sugriva had been starved of power and pleasure a long while. Along with a whole harem of women he has again come into the possession of his wife Ruma and Tara and spends his time in enjoyment almost forgetting the existence of Rama and his duty by him. Hanuman reminds him of it and Sugriva entrusts him with the task of gathering the Vanara forces and relapses into indulgence.

Soon the rains cease and the season is clear for action. Rama asks his brother to wake Sugriva to the tasks of his promise.

Lakshmana goes to Sugriva threatening him and his establishment with doom. When Sugriva hears it he feels he is not in a fit condition to meet him and sends Tara to speak soothing words and bring down his anger before himself meeting him. Lakshmana is not accustomed to the ways of women and the words of Tara are spoken wisely and charmingly. When he is taken into the presence of Sugriva Lakshmana feels uneasy; Sugriva apologises to him for any discourtesies and delays and assures him that everything is being done for the discovery of Sita; that very soon the entire Vanara army will assemble there and prepare to bring news of Sita and to march. Sugriva is advised to make it up with Rama.

The two friends meet; differences and misunderstandings are ironed out. Sugriva orders the leaders of his armies to go about in all directions. He entrusts the troupe that goes south to Angada and Hanuman. They are asked to bring news within a term prescribed. The scouts on other directions come back to report failure.

The southern troupe wanders about tirelessly and is depressed about its unsuccess. When they are thirsty and parched in the throat, they discover a cleft in the earth which promises water and food; make bold to get into it and soon sight a woman ascetic whom they approach humbly and with respect. She is Svayamprabha, the friend and guardian of the owner of a great magic land. They get all the food and drink they need and with her help reach the sea-coast. By now the time-limit given to them is over. The company is dejected and the crown prince Angada states he will not go back to Kishkindha to meet the anger of his uncle. With some difficulty Hanuman is able to wean them from their decision to inaction and death. They presently see a huge, old eagle, Sampati, who on hearing of the death of Jatayu in defence of Sita tells them he is Jatayu's brother and aids them by saying Sita is carried off to Lanka beyond the seas, a hundred Yojana's distant from there and he can see her even from this distance a prisoner in the pleasure-gardens of Ravana.

Who should cross the sea?—becomes next the question and the strong and silent Hanuman is requested to undertake the task. Hanuman agrees to do it.

From here onwards is what is called the Sundara Kanda. Hanuman leaps over to Lanka; unobserved, in the darkness of the night, wanders over the city, enters the palace and the feasting halls of Ravana. Not finding Sita there goes into the Asoka Gardens and finds Sita sitting sad and pale and forlorn surrounded by an ugly and cruel watch and ward. When she is alone he discovers himself to her. He hands over to her the signet-ring entrusted to him by Rama for recognition. She is happy almost as if she sees Rama himself. Only two months more were now left of the time-limit given to her by Ravana to surrender herself to him. She commends herself to Rama and Lakshmana and says that if rescue does not come well before the day she has decided to kill herself. Hanuman promises her on her husband's behalf that they will all soon be at Lanka and relieve her positively before the time. Or, if she will deign to he will carry her back to Rama like Agni (Pavaka) carries *havis* (oblation) to Indra. She rejects the offer and gives him a jewel she wore on the head and prays for their health and success. Hanuman not only succeeds in this task of seeking out Sita but leaves many marks of his prowess. He surveys the whole city, its strength and fortifications, etc. before he returns to friends. The friends are happy indeed and get back to Sugriva and Rama to give them the news. The march of the Vanara army soon begins and they reach the Southern Coast.

Ravana holds a council explaining to the Rakshasa chiefs the threat impending on Lanka. Next to a grand-uncle of Ravana and Kumbhakarna—the second of the three brothers—who both are silenced in the Council Hall, Vibhishana, the youngest, pleads with Ravana to surrender Sita to her husband. He is discredited as cowardly, disloyal and unpatriotic and is

forced to leave Lanka. Vibhishana comes to Rama with four¹ others and seeks refuge with him. He is accepted and becomes a trusted and faithful adviser and friend in the campaign against Lanka. With the help of Nala a bridge is quickly built on the sea and the army gets into the city. Terrible battles ensue between the invading army and the Rakshasas. Big fights take place with Indrajit, son of Ravana, and with Kumbhakarna the brother. Indrajit, being a master of black-magic, fights without being seen and during the battle both Laksmana and Rama are laid unconscious for some time. With difficulty Lakshmana is brought back to consciousness. Soon he kills Indrajit. The last fight is between Rama and Ravana. It is fought long and hard. At the end of it Ravana is slain with the Brahmastra after almost a total destruction of his army. When the victory is won Vibhishana is crowned king of Lanka.

After a fire-ordeal for Sita to establish her purity Rama accepts her. He felt this was necessary to let the world know that he did not accept an unchaste woman who stayed full 12 months in an other's place. Everything else is righted. Rama himself has never entertained a doubt about her purity.

The 14 years stipulated for the exile were running out. Rama hastens back to Ayodhya as he had promised Bharata. Accepting no courtesy or hospitality from any body he gets transport ready to fly back to Ayodhya along with Lakshmana and Sita with Vibhishana and the Vanaras for the company. They reach Bharadvaja Asrama. From there Rama despatches Hanuman to Ayodhya to find out in what mind Bharata was about Rama's return. If Bharata was desirous in the least of ruling over Ayodhya himself, Rama will not go in.

1. Four is a favourite number in the Ramayana. There are four sons to Dasaratha; four are the daughters between Janaka and his brother. Khara and four trusted warriors fight against Rama; four are the followers of Sugriva at Rusyamuka; four leaders of the Angada army who will not join the mutiny; Vibhishana comes to Rama with four followers.

Hanuman goes to Nandigrama and intimates to Bharata of the arrival of Rama. He can see how deeply touched and happy Bharata is to hear the news. Bharata immediately goes out to welcome Rama, Sita and Lakshmana back home. It is a great reunion. After the usual baths and ceremonies Rama is placed on the throne and adorned with the sandals which represented him in kingship during his absence. The celebration is a great act of trust, loyalty and service with Bharata's report of his rule over the kingdom in fear and regard. All round is joy. The Vanaras and the Rakshasas are overwhelmed with the sight of so much affection between the brothers and with Bharata's self-sacrificing devotion and integrity. The sixth Kanda called the Yuddha Kanda ends with benediction all round marking the natural close to a great work.

A few stanzas that appear at the close are repeated on many an auspicious occasion in Hindu houses and in places of worship even today.

The seventh—Uttara Kanda—is by many considered a later addition to the Ramayana. But it has so formed part of the Rama legend that all Ramayana manuscripts include it and the tradition of the country accepts it. It adds the graciousness of the aid given by Valmiki to Sita in a sad period of unmerited rejection. But for the loving care she gets in his Asrama, her life should have been miserable. The tone, the temper, the narration, the cluttering of legend, the inferior poetic quality, almost the voice itself of this Kanda seems to be different from the first six. The motif of the divine purposing that brings Rama into the world and carries him through to its completion figures markedly. An Asvamedha is, as a rule, performed by a king as great as Rama. Rama is sent to final rest along with all those who have had anything to do with him, except Hanuman and Vibhishana who are asked to carry on till the end of time.

This later Kanda contains the history of Ravana and gives us a tale of all the misdeeds which brought on him the

anger and the fear of the Gods, the curse of a *tapasvini* like Vedavati and that of Nalakubara, the son of Kubera, which indirectly explains why Ravana did not molest Sita during the 12 months in his garden, almost a providence, for it gives time for Rama to organise action against and slay Ravana on the battlefield.

What is more important in the Ramayana story itself is what happens to Rama and Sita after the coronation. They were established comfortably in Ayodhya and in each other's affection. In an Asoka Vana in Ayodhya — queer name here again — Rama and Sita spend beautiful evenings together. On a day Rama refers to her carrying and asks her if she has any wish particularly to be fulfilled. In all innocence she says she should like to get across the Ganges and visit the Asramas of the Rishis once more, for she felt called to them. He, as innocently, says he will arrange it. Fortune's wheel turns another way. That evening he happens to call his information-men to report to him on public opinion about his rule and administration. Generally, it was a fine report; but one Bhadramukha when pressed upon to say even the adverse things speaks of a complaint that Rama's acceptance of Sita to live with him after having been carried off by Ravana and staying in his palace for a year was a bad example for the subjects : for now they could not deal with their wives masterfully when conjugal error was severe. Rama feels miserable about such ill-repute both against himself and Sita. He quickly decides to give up Sita.

He sends word to the brothers, announces to them his decision and says he will not hear anything against it (*Nā atra karyā vicāraṇā*). Personally he is convinced about the purity and total loyalty of Sita to him. But ill-repute among subjects is what an Ikshvaku king has to have removed whatever his own personal interests and opinions be. The king's integrity should be above board. Though everybody is shocked at the decision they can do nothing. The brothers are all tongue-tied. They see the distress of Rama. There

was no way of making him change his mind. Lakshmana is asked to take her the next day to the Asramas beyond the Ganges without rousing any suspicion; for Sita has expressed a desire to visit the Asramas and Rama has promised to carry it out. Only Lakshmana is miserable. They were orders of the king. The chariot is got ready the next day. Sita was feeling happy. Lakshmana takes her to the forest and near the Asrama of Valmiki, breaks to her the bad news and breaks down doing it. This end and way to wish-fulfilment was unexpected, however. Sita thought about it as unmerited for she has never been guilty of disloyalty by word or deed to Rama at any time. But she realises the necessity of the inhuman decision of her husband in keeping clean and clear the name and honour of her lord, the king, above every thing. She sends him and the mother-in-law her dutiful regards and says she will abide by the orders of her husband and wishes him a glorious reign.

Parting for Lakshmana from Sita and in that condition when she was carrying a child for the king his brother was pitiful. He had to return to report execution of duty. There is no joy for Rama or Sita after this point—and, as it turns out one of no return.¹

When Sita sits lost in sorrow, a few young pupils of Valmiki's hermitage notice her and report to the Rishi that a beautiful lady was about there weeping and alone. Valmiki understands it all; comes there and tells her that he knows all about her. With great affection he welcomes her to his Asrama. He takes her to the elderly ladies inside and entrusts her to their care, saying she is Sita, the daughter-in-law of Dasaratha, the daughter of Janaka and the queen of Rama, who for no fault of hers is consigned to the forest. She is about to become a mother and deserves to be looked after well. In due course, she is delivered of twin children—

1. Indeed nothing is glad after the episode of the deer in the Aranya Kanda.

THE MAIN STORY

who are called Lava and Kusa. They are taught as befit the children of a king. As they grow up, they are taught also to sing the story of Rama which in the meantime Valmiki has composed; the boys become accomplished singers. They can gladden listeners with recitation of it.

Bharata, Lakshmana and Satrughna had been assigned several parts of the kingdom over which to rule. Now and again they visit Ayodhya to look up their brother. The Asvamedha is performed; Lava and Kusa come to the court and sing the Ramayana to Rama and the assembly of Rishis. All are touched by its poetry and by the nobility of the lives of Rama and Sita. The chaste dignity of Sita wins the hearts of all and affects Rama. The singers do not accept any gifts from him. The people are struck as much with the poem and the singing as by the personality of the singers. But for their costume there is remarkable likeness between them and Rama. Rama asks them who they are. They tell him they are the pupils of Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana. Messengers are sent to Valmiki who tells him these are Rama's children. He is asked to fetch Sita who may purify herself by an oath and declaration in the open assembly. Sita is brought in and Valmiki tells them all that she is pure and innocent; that these are her children by Rama. Rama says he is personally sure of her cleanliness and innocence. But an oath by her in the Asvamedha assembly will clear the ill-repute publicly. Sita advances with eyes down, holding her hands like to a cup and says :

*Yathāham rāghavādanyam manasāpi na cintaye
Tathā me mādhavī devi vivaram dātumarhati
Manasā karmanā vācā yathā rāmam samārcaye
Tathā me mādhavī devi vivaram dātumarhati
Yathaitat satyamuktam me vedmi rāmāt param naca
Tathāme mādhavī devi vivaram dātumarhati*

If it is true that I have not thought of anyone but Raghava, O

Mother Earth, open out to me.

If I have offered worship in mind, act and speech to Rama only,
O Mother Earth, open out to me.

If it is true I have not known anyone else but Rama, O Mother
Earth open out to me.

Thrice she said it—the vogue all through the Ramayana for an oath or promise. The earth opened out; a golden throne came up. The Mother took charge of her daughter and got down into the earth for ever. Flowers rain from the heavens with cries of *sādhu sādhu*; the whole world acclaims that they had beheld something not witnessed before.

Rama was not prepared for this end. He was sad and angry at the same time and vowed that he will destroy the earth if Sita was not yielded back to him. Gods and men bring down his anger. Now is narrated that it is time for him to think of ending the course of his own life if he feels like doing so since the purpose with which he had come down was completed. This is a totally different level of talking and feeling in the Ramayana. Soon Lakshmana passes away and Rama prepares for what is called the 'Mahāprasthāna', the final journey. Bharata and Satrughna join him; and so do all those who feel like going with him. A procession of men and women marches into the Sarayu for a final passage out of life. The Uttara Kanda also ends.

This Kanda is full of legends. Despite the words in the opening sections of the Bala Kanda and Rama's own words in the Yuddha Kanda that he was just a human being, son to Dasaratha and no more, he is told he is an incarnation of Vishnu. Now that the task Vishnu had undertaken was finished it was time the elders and the Gods said he got back to his natural Vishnuloka. It is likely that a few incidents like the prowess of Ravana and Vali and Hanuman had to be explained. Stories connected with the abandonment of Sita by Rama were current in all parts of the country and had to be included in the Ramakatha. It seems to be part of the Ramayana by the fourth century A.D.

THE MAIN STORY

A few versions current of the later story introduce another element : that of a fight between the parent and the children ensuing when the horse of the Asvamedha sacrifice moves about the Asrama of Valmiki. Little Lava and Kusa capture it and hold it against the armies of Rama. The entire might of Rama is unable to release the horse and when the children beat down and capture Rama and Hanuman and others and inform Sita of what they have done, she is sorry to hear of it. She persuades the children to release the horse and the captives. It is then discovered that they are Rama's own children by Sita. They are taken to Ayodhya by Rama. Valmiki is requested to fetch Sita immediately after and the events narrated earlier about her oath, etc. are narrated as described. Valmiki's original work does not perhaps have it.

The pious reading of the six Kandas only is practice and the story is made to end with the coronation of Rama in Ayodhya after the victory in Lanka and the journey of the party back at the end of the 14 years' period : The Phalasaruti is sure sign that it completes the work.

CHAPTER THREE

TYPES OF FAMILY LIFE

THREE types of family life, representing three forms of civilization are, as may be gathered from the foregoing, portrayed in the Ramayana: The Aryan household with king Dasaratha at Ayodhya; the Vanara-household at Kishkindha lorded over by Vali first and Sugriva later; and the Ravana establishment at Lanka. The first is more elaborately handled for it is the genesis, the fountain-head of the whole story in the evolution of the fortunes of which the story moves and arrives at fulfilment. The name Ramayana indicates the primacy of Rama. How he is born, grows up, educated, married, exiled from the kingdom, passes through adventures, loses his wife, gets her back with the help of a friend after destroying the person who had carried her off and held her prisoner, and how he returns to Ayodhya to the kingship which rightfully belongs to him is the *ayana*, i. e., the going on,—the story. Bharata could have ruled over it substantively under the dispensation of his father. It is a misfortune that Rama has to abandon his wife who was about to become mother to his children owing to gossip and scurrilous tongues. The whole story gathers to a close with the recognition of the children and the wife, but with the wife opting to disappear from the earth after establishing her

innocence. There is a gathering of the shades with Rama's voluntarily giving up his mortal coils. So that we have Rama and his wife and brothers as the principal persons and the several phases of his development being presented in the six (seven) kandas of the story.

There is a time in the story when Rama was not born. For a long time until almost the last 18 years of his life Dasaratha was childless. His was a large household. He had 350 women in the palace and three queens by none of whom he got a son. A ritual yaga had to be performed, where the priests secure for him a *payasam*¹ which produces for him the results. The Payasam is shared out among the three queens.

With this story of Rama is the story of Sita. Indeed, hers is as important a role in the Ramayana : *Sitāyāh caritam mahat*. But for her the Vanara and Rakshasa episodes and, therefore, the destruction of Ravana, the second motif, could not have come about. For the Ramayana as we have it is as much the personal history of Rama as of the fight against the Rakshasas who opposed the civilization and culture which Rama represented. The two threads twine together from the day Visvamitra seeks the assistance of Rama to protect his Asrama against Tataka.

Dasaratha, the king, represents what can have been the best among the Kshatriyas of an ancient line of families — kings known for character and achievement and public beneficence. There had been many in the family. Ayodhya was their capital city. What organization in town planning, social and secular life in the cultivation of the arts of peace and war, what equipment for defence and offence a strong and powerful kingdom should gather within its arsenals as stores, what pageantries, gaiety, entertainment and pleasure a rich, secure and satisfied city could afford and provide in roads, parks,

1. And into it descends Vishnu.

fountains and palaces, temples and monuments, centres of trade and entertainment could add joy to a people — were all three. At a minute's notice whole armies could assemble, engineers be deployed to lay out roads, wells and trees over long stretches of land outside the city, deep in the forests. Elders and representatives in many walks of life, ministers and men of wisdom could be called in for consultation. The picture is one of comfort, settled order, peace and security. No foe seems to have challenged the rule of Dasaratha. The king himself was liked and seems to have done all he could to rule over his people wisely and well for a long time.

Rama is loved by all. All in the palace know of his considerateness to them. Dasaratha has unbounded partiality for him who was the apple of his eye. He will not risk him when Visvamitra asks for aid. "My Rama is not 16 yet"—he says showing how tender is his feeling for the young son. The father is happy to hear of the breaking of the Sivadhanus at Janaka's court, the oncoming of marriage with Sita and the new relationship with Janaka. He is not without fear when Parasurama meets them on the way back. Rama's prowess then must have impressed and made proud the father. He can have had an uneasy feeling about Bharata and does not mind his not being present at Ayodhya for the coronation of Rama as Yuvaraja though he is aware of Bharata's virtues :

*Kāmam khalu satām vṛtte bhrātā te bharatah sthitah
Jyeṣṭhānuvartī dharmātmā sānukrośo jitendriyah
Kīmtu cittam manuṣyāṅām anityamiti me matih
Satam ca dharmanityānām kṛta śobhi ca rāghava*

Yet your brother Bharata is well-behaved to elders, is righteous, follows fine principles and is kind-hearted. He is fully self-controlled. Yet the minds of men are not constant.

He did not send for him or his uncle and grandparents. He must have had his suspicion about Rama's security itself; so asks Rama to protect himself that night.

*Suhṛdaścā pramattāstvām rakṣam tvadya samantatah
Bhavanti bahu vighnāni karyāṅyevam vidhāni hi
Viproṣitasca bhārato yāvadeva purāditah
Tāvadevabhiṣekaste prāpta kālo mato mama*

Let good friends of yours carefully guard you today. Many are the obstacles to acts like these. Bharata is out of town. This seems to be proper time for performing the inauguration.

The picture of old Dasaratha forced against his will to consent to the exile of Rama is pitiful. *Dharma bandhena baddhosmi* — I am bound by the bonds of honour. It is all because of a sense of honour and he cannot deny the right of his wife to ask him to fulfil the promise he made to her long ago, of his own accord, in return for her serving him on the battlefield. That is what makes him a helpless object when he has to disappoint all the people of Ayodhya and all the others in the palace and himself—even when he knows it will cost him his life.

In this household all proprieties are maintained; a sense of the fair and the just prevails throughout. The high priest preceptor Vasishta is respected. The old Suta Sumantra is extended favour and regard for his devotion to the king and is trusted to enter the inner apartments of Dasaratha and Rama. The Ministers of State are learned and efficient. Men and women of all classes and kind have much personal feeling for the king and queen and for Rama. When the news of conferring Yauvarajya is published all are happy that at long last the old king is transferring responsibility to one whom they deem most worthy and the beloved of the people. There are rejoicings in the town—night and day—which makes very pleasant reading. They are uniformly stricken with sorrow—indeed, heart-broken—when they hear of the sudden turn in the events. There is a sense of order and right conduct in ways and speech and in public morality. People speak the truth even when they see a wrong thing done by the

king. No man would be punished for things not done or rewarded without merit. Almost the first reaction of Bharata when he hears that Rama is exiled is what has he done to deserve such a punishment. The people would not countenance a period without a king to rule over them. A whole Sarga is devoted to the evil effects of a kingless state. When Rama meets Bharata later he asks him if he is ruling his kingdom properly and enunciates principles of wise governance.¹ Duties to friends, Gurus, parents and relations between kings and subordinates, behaviour in Asramas are all well understood. The principle of primogeniture is accepted by all and nobody likes to accept a breach of it; not even the beneficiary. That Bharata would not be willing to go against it is proof of the firm convictions of people in such matters. That is tradition and culture. Every one behaves properly and expects behaviour from others. Courtesies are large and anything promised with an oath has sanctity. Whatever the consequences, they carry out a word given.

The love people bear to the town is warm, deep and full. How gay is the town normally ! How forlorn and desolate it can look is described by Bharata when he returns to Ayodhya. The sheer joylessness of the town breaks his heart. It has lost its form; the sights and sounds and the innocent revelries so featuresome of the daily scene, where are they ? and, why ? Rama and Sita have fine memories of it. In far away Kishkindha Rama tells Lakshmana that on a day like this Bharata will be having his bath in the Sarayu with his wife.²

1. This seems a funny exercise in political exposition—barely three or four weeks after Rama has left Ayodhya, Bharata could have been king—and if that only for a few weeks. It must be an extra added later; or, the poet desires to lecture us on Royal conduct.
2. Almost the only time when a wife to Bharata is mentioned after the marriage at Videha. What could Urmila, Lakshmana's wife, be doing ?—neither the poet nor the husband thinks of her. Some dismiss the marriage altogether.

Courtesies between Janaka and Dasaratha in connection with the marriage are picturesque and full of dignity—a whole culture is in expression there. It is altogether a full picture of family life, relationship, of conduct and a pattern of living given to us about an Aryan household at its best in its capital city. From kings of that line come people of exemplary conduct. Rishis look up to them as the leaders of the people; protectors of righteousness and the Asrama life over the entire country.¹ Dasaratha will abide by the decisions of his council. This entails responsibility and is gladly undertaken by a person of the type of Rama. Parents and children, wives and husbands, brothers and friends, they are a picture set in a firm framework of peaceful and intelligent relationship and mutual obligation.

The description of Lanka is rich and colourful. It is an island city built over or in a valley between the hills, rich and strong and full of comfort that a ruler can build for himself and his people. The streets and the mansions are large; the parks and the places of entertainment many. There are chants of the Vedas and offers of sacrifice. The luxury and abandon described in Ravana's palace is rarely matched in our literature. He has robbed the three worlds and brought for his enjoyment the best things needed for pleasure and prestige. He is a direct descendent of Brahma; brother to Kubera whom he has robbed of his Pushpaka Vimana, which can give everyone his desire and carry any number of persons anywhere in the shortest period of time. The city is full of warriors ready to carry out his will; of elephants and horses and weaponry and the fortifications needed for effective defence. To those friendly to him and ready to carry out his orders he is a generous patron; he has smashed and grabbed no doubt and been always wilful. But he can

1. An earlier king seems to have banished his son for being a public scourge and menace.

perform *tapas* and austerities to win for himself the highest gifts the Gods can confer. At two, three or many times the age of Rama, he is a formidable adversary to Rama himself. His vulnerability is to be sought only in what the Gods infer as not included in the boons conferred on him. Both he and his son Indrajit have powers of black-magic to use against an enemy. They offer special worship and win boons¹ to make them invisible and invincible. There are of course a few people in Lanka who advise him to return Sita or not to lay hands on her. Prahasta, the Chief Minister, does not approve of the master's conduct in the assembly; but they all reconcile themselves to serving him in the extreme emergency. Only Vibhishana makes bold to pass strictures on his brother's conduct and therefore has to leave his native city and his brother and go out of Lanka. That Vibhishana's wife and children are not harassed in his absence or ill-treated speaks highly of the conditions that prevail in Lanka.

But there is no opposition to Ravana's will. Those who support him in the most aggressive and offensive ways like Indrajit have pride of place. The opposite view is brushed aside or baited. Almost a cynical answer is given by Ravana against the advice of his granduncle in the saying that *Eṣa me sahaḥ doṣah, svabhāvo duratikramah!*—This is a natural defect in me, one's nature is hard to overcome! When Vibhishana argues against the wrongness of his brother's action he is upbraided for hurting his own side, people and country and is even called names.

Ravana holds back from molesting Sita though she is in his hands for fear she might lay violent hands on herself

1. The boons are a great institution. Like examinations in our day to anyone who answers correctly full marks are to be given despite the character and antecedents of the person, and whatever the use he may make of it!—e. g., a fellow has stood on one toe for 20 years in single-minded devotion. That is the requirement for his God to appear to him. His God is bound to appear and grant him his wish. No option seems to be open.

or that the curse of the Rishis and women like Vedavati and persons like Nalakubara restrain him.¹ Speaking for the universal belief in those days or owing to a feeling that forcing a woman's affection against her will yields no pleasure. He knows that rescue of her is impossible and he can reduce her to a condition to accept him.

His warriors are many and versed in the use of arms. Their eagerness to fight can be seen at all times and in all conditions. Ravana uses flattery, rewards and honours whenever he desires anyone to undertake an enterprise for him. He is himself a great fighter and is not deterred by any fear ordinarily. The Rakshasa warriors can fight with different types of weapon; and, some know special *astras* as well. They assume what shape they like or produce effects of magic whereby the Vanara army might see a false Sita killed or make Sita see that Rama is dead—a method of terrorizing or demoralizing the enemy to reduce the strength of the opposition. It is a whole system of life which Ravana has organized into a mighty destructive force. The very gods live in fear of him and if that motif of the Ramayana is to be given place and credence the primary purpose for the birth of Rama—or Vishnu as man—is to destroy such a wicked monster. Anyway the atmosphere is one of terror, violence and indulgence and total acquiescence in the will of Ravana. Everyone knows him to be invincible. Has he not beaten down the Gods, braved the *chakra* and the *vajra*? robbed everybody of everything he has desired?

The belief in the Gods and in their gifts, their readiness to grant boons to men and women on fulfilment of certain conditions is patent; even as the belief that Rishis can curse and destroy if they will. The Rishis themselves are aware of such powers; others live in dread of them. But generally they do not like to waste them in destruction of others.

1. Misdeeds referred to in the seventh Kanda. In this matter, beliefs and fears seem to be common between Dasaratha, Vali and Ravana.

The Vanaras of Kishkindha represent another type of family. Vali is the strongest warrior of the time with only Matanaga's curse on his head to limit him. If the narration in Uttarakanda is evidence he has subjugated Ravana himself and forced him to be friends with him. The relationship between him and Sugriva is tinged with an unnecessary and cruel vindictiveness. Sugriva would be a good and loyal brother but is driven out of Kishkindha and no credit is given to his explanation to the brother of the circumstances under which the brother took up the kingship of Kishkindha when for too long Vali was out and taken for dead; and, under the counsel of many in Kishkindha.¹

Rama promises to kill Vali and get Sugriva the kingdom. When Vali is killed he is made king though for just a moment Sugriva feels sad and remorseful that he has had to be the cause of the death of his brother. A passing phase that. For just a moment Hanuman himself who knew the history of the case and the agreement between Rama and Sugriva offers consolation to Tara that she should cease to sorrow over the death of Vali and crown her son Angada to rule over the country. Tara knows better than to consider such a proposition. Her answer comes out immediately that now Kishkindha belongs to Sugriva by right of conquest and he can do with it as he likes. One may remember she recommended to her husband that he might make Sugriva Yuvaraja and live in brotherly relationship with him. Only it was not heeded. And at the time of his coronation Rama recommends Angada to be made Yuvaraja of the kingdom. Not that Sugriva may not have done that on his own. Angada has noticed it and mentions it in a mood of dejection and when a mutiny is on saying his Yauvarajya he owes to Rama and not to his uncle. The Vanaras have to be assembled under strict terms of com-

1. There is no doubt a difference of opinion about the event and mental reservations in many.

mand that he who does not turn up on a particular day will lose his life without mercy.¹

If Ravana maintained a large harem and had regular bouts of revelry and group enjoyment and gaiety, pomp and splendour among the numberless beauties whom he had captured or gathered it is a flourish of Ravana's prowess and vitality. He did all things on a large scale and was a law to himself. Sugriva seems to be as prone to feminine charm seeing that for four months he got into his inner apartments and spent all his time in song and dance and among women without so much as calling on Rama once to enquire about his comforts. He has to be awakened to a sense of duty. Lakshmana stands at the palace gate peremptorily to ask Sugriva for action in the performance of his promise to Rama. When the message is taken to Sugriva, Sugriva is not in a condition to be seen or to talk. *Sā nidrā mada samvīto vānaro na vibuddhavān, babhūva mada mattasca*—He is enveloped in sleep born of indulgence; and not quite awake through inebriation. He rather sends Tara to meet Lakshmana first to abate his ire by saying that everything is being done to gather the Vanara army which will soon assemble at Kishkindha.

When Lakshmana is ushered into the presence of Sugriva he has to pass through a whole bevy of ladies—an experience to which he is unaccustomed. If Vali had taken possession of Ruma when he had driven Sugriva out of Kishkindha, now that Sugriva has his wife back he is feeling happy. By a system of levirate he has acquired Tara as well; and she has felt no embarrassment or qualm about her position! Having been starved for a long time Sugriva has lost himself in the pleasures of the flesh in open unconcern for a friend's sensibilities and other duties of kingship. Tara has to speak of this situation in extenuation of Sugriva's conduct. While the

1. That likely is the famous Sugrivajna for nowhere else except in the hard observations of Angada later is any reference to the cruelty of Sugriva.

Rakshasa captures by violence the Vanara appropriates and does not think a second thought. The Vanara people seem to be a little lax in relation to women. No thought seems to pass in the minds of these people when Ruma and Tara pass between Sugriva and Vali.¹ There does not seem to be any reference to such conduct in the Rakshasa kingdom. While the slightest shadow of suspicion or gossip regarding a wife's name is deemed a sully and a taint in relationship with Rama who 'felt a stain like a wound'. When there is the least justification for a word against her name Sita is driven to the fire ordeal or is unceremoniously banished. These pictures in contrast of relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and brothers, are a study in contrast. So much stricter, cleaner, more cultured and of higher manners and morals are the conditions prevailing in the Aryan family than in either the Rakshasa or the Vanara.

All believe in omens, dreams and curses, the power of the Rishis and the Munis; and, each has a system of ceremonial worship and behaviour peculiar to itself though we do not know how a Rishi would be treated in Lanka; and not much is known about the Vanaras either. Their assemblies and councils are characteristic. Dasaratha submits his decision to the assembly and would abide by its advice and recommendations whereas the two others can be drastic. The ruler rules and brushes aside healthful advice in Lanka. The Vanara will and counsels are divided. Consultations need not be formal nor advice heeded. The Madhuvana incident is its own gloss on the Vanara sense of discipline.

The Vanaras fight with trees and stones, with nails and teeth and can wield the mace or wrestle or hit with palms and fists. The presence of a Nala and Susena and a Jambavan—the most ancient in wisdom and experience—and of an

1. A son can, however, feel hurt as Angada did and sulk and rig up a mutiny!

invulnerable and invincible Hanuman distinguishes the Vanara side. They seem to be more inclined to go on without caring for rules or being circumspect than either the Rakshasa or the Aryan people. Though the Vanaras are powerful and spread over the whole country, neither the Rakshasas nor the Aryan tribes seem to have any big estimate of their power or strength. They are deemed inferior. The term *Vānaratva—śākhā-mṛgatva*—comes in as an attribute of fickleness and therefore little loyalty. Hanuman too speaks of it to Angada asking him not to trust too much their fidelity or firmness. The commands to be issued to gather them at Kishkindha have to be strict and summary. They are prone to be lazy, lacking in a sense of duty and given to pleasure. There seems also a division of loyalties between the Vali party and the Sugriva party.¹ Yet when Sugriva, Angada and Hanuman work together the Vanara force can achieve great results. The skill in engineering of Nala, the medical wisdom and resourcefulness of Susena, the wisdom and experience of Jambavan and the all-conquering might of Hanuman are equipment and full insurance, under any estimation. Where they are there is no need to be depressed or to despair.

1. When Angada, detailing the wrong deeds of Sugriva, accuses Sugriva as *krūra, śaṭha* and *nṛśamsa*, Hanuman tells him that his uncle is essentially *dharmakāmah pitṛvyaste prītikāmo draḍhavratah; śucih satyapratijinaśca na tvam jātu jighāmsati*—Your uncle is partial to righteousness, true to the principles of correct conduct, is clean, sticks to truth and ready to carry out his promise and desirous of affection and not one lightly to be upbraided by you.

CHAPTER FOUR

PERSONAE

1. DASARATHA

WE may briefly consider the character and quality of a few persons in the Ramayana and begin with Dasaratha. He had been a good and great King in his time; looked after the welfare of his subjects and provided them every facility and opportunity to enjoy a full life at Ayodhya. He could not have had foes. All abouts were friends. Guha was a fine vassal; Jatayu a loyal friend. As he had grown old and got children late in life his fondness for them was great; most of all for Rama. With 350 'Daras' in the palace and three queens he had infatuation for Kaikeyi. He has neglected Kausalya and Sumitra long. They no doubt have regard for him but who would be happy at the partiality of the king to Kaikeyi who was abusing her position as the ruling favourite. Dasaratha loves Rama more than everything else and is prepared to do anything in his behalf. That is how he denies Visvamitra when he asks for the aid after he has welcomed him as if his visit was a great fulfilment of his life:

*Kam ca te paramam kāmam karomi kimu harṣitah
Pātra bhutosi me bhrahman diṣṭyā prāptosi dhārmikā
Adya me saphalam janma jīvitam ca sujīvitam, etc.*

He would give him anything. I feel as if my birth and life have fulfilled themselves. What can I do to serve you to my uttermost ?

and, Visvamitra is about to go away declaring him a *mithyā pratijnah*¹ and is just saved by the intervention of Vasishtha. A similar situation arises when after swearing by all his Sukrita that he will do anything Kaikeyi asks him to do, he feels unable to do what she desires. Performance of Pratijna now goes against his dearest desires and those of Kausalya and of all the people of Ayodhya. Rama has to redeem him by undertaking to fulfil the father's promise. A promise is a debt of honour to be paid whatever the consequences. Kaikeyi hit Dasaratha where he was weakest. He had never expected this from one whom he loved and trusted beyond measure.

To Rama himself this situation comes like a bolt from the blue. He has every regard for Kaikeyi and she too has affection for him. When he is sent for to meet his father in Kaikeyi's chambers he is feeling that, likely—the two parents will express their joy together and confer blessings on him on the forthcoming Abhisheka. Just a little while ago, in public assembly—and in Dasaratha's own palace—he had been given the blessing of his father. And, what is the picture of Dasaratha now: extreme misery; speechless, helpless, rolling on the ground, not able to say anything to Rama when the hardest words are being spoken by Kaikeyi and his intentions are being misrepresented. Rama has said he is ready to do what his stepmother tells him to do in releasing his father from obligation and to obey him. Dasaratha is feeling choked in the throat when the woman says his father cannot sleep, eat or bathe till Rama agrees to go. Dasaratha later

1. The arch sin almost and the main motif of the story later. Rama will never be guilty of it; eaten up with the feeling that if he dies he will not have carried out his promise to father or of getting Vibhishana the kingdom.

accuses Kaikeyi as the greatest enemy of his life and line; and after the children leave Ayodhya he will not so much as look at her. He goes straight with Kausalya to her place. And in the last breath he tells her how thoroughly he dislikes Kaikeyi.

Before she tells him the reason for her Dharana in the Kopagriha he has been trying to impress on her how much he has loved her. He would do the worst things a king could be asked to. She puts him to performance of promise whatever happened to him. She will much rather die than live even for a day—*ekāhamapi*—if the coronation takes place; and when he is struck speechless Rama comes in to ask why his father is so depressed that he does not look at him or talk to him, he will not value life even for a minute if the king is angry with him. She has the heartlessness to tell him *dhṛṣṭam ātmahitam vacah*, etc. Rama assures her that he will keep to whatever is enjoined on him if that be the wish of his father; *kariṣye pratijāne ca Rāmo dvir nābhibhāṣate*. When the two conditions of Kaikeyi are mentioned and she calls on him to perform, Rama accepts the terms she lays on him saying that it is no task. He will do anything his father wants him to do; to Bharata he will render everything:

*Aham hi sītām rājyam ca prāṇān iṣṭān dhanāni ca
hṛṣṭo bhrātre svayam dadyām bharatāyāpracoditah*

I shall be willing to sacrifice myself, Sita¹, the kingdom and my life, riches and all that is dear to me with all my heart for the sake of my brother Bharata, without anyone asking me for them.

A disablement binds Dasaratha. His *Chetana* has been lost. All that he can do is to mutter the name of Rama and lapse into unconsciousness. He can interject single words of distress and of hurt and protest only. He even begs his son

1. Misery! so lightly, Sita as well !

to subdue him as an unjust ruler moved by the wishes of a wicked wife and forcibly take the throne into his hands. He will be happy if somebody else did that. But when Rama accepts the terms and says he does it for establishing the truthfulness of his father—both on earth and in heaven—he cannot say a word. The father pleads he might delay by one day. Rama does not agree for who knows what change may not come about in another day? The whole town is grieved. And, when Sita and Lakshmana follow Rama to the forest, Dasaratha wants them to take along with them horses, elephants, money and jewellery to make them comfortable during the exile. Rama will not so much as turn back when Dasaratha and Kausalya run behind the chariot. It is no use. When Sumantra is asked by Dasaratha to slow down the chariot Rama commands him to go quicker to shortern the misery. When after Dasaratha goes into Kausalya's palace the final news is brought by Sumantra that Rama has crossed the Ganges and sent him back and Dasaratha does not talk, Kausalya, who in her own distress of soul, asks her husband to talk to Sumantra without fear of Kaikeyi who is not there, he says he has been unable to see with his eyes: *cakṣubhyām tvam na paśyāmi*. Clearly his love for Rama and his distress were no less than Kausalya's.

*Prasādaye tvām Kausalye racitoyam mayānjaliḥ
Vatsalā ca anṛśamsā ca tvam hi nityam pareṣvapi
Nārhasē vipriyam vaktum duḥkhitāpi suduḥkhitām*

Vouchsafe favour to me, Kausalya. I beg with palms open and held together in supplication. You are a kind and affectionate one; and are ever that even to others. It is not worthy of you howsoever stricken with sorrow yourself to be unkind to one as much in sorrow as I am.

When he begs of her : *prasādaye tvām Kausalye*, Kausalya is beaten in her turn. Her condition is pitiful :

Kausalyā vyaśrjat bāṣpam praṇāḷīva navodakam

*Sā mūrdhni badhvā rudatī rājnah padmamivāñjalim
Sambhramāt abravīt trastā tvaramāṇās kṣaram vacah, etc.*

Kausalya's tears flowed freely like rain water through a spout. She stretched both of Dasaratha's hands lotus like over her own head and in great earnestness, stammered these words !

—almost a peak-point in feeling and behaviour in a situation like this. There was not much more time for Dasaratha to live on earth. His memory was going. His eyes could not see; he had to recognise all by touch. He felt he was being urged by the messengers of Death. He was trying to see in fond fancy the people who would be lucky enough to see Rama returning after 14 years of exile :

*na te manuṣyā devāste ye cāru mukha kuṇḍalam
mukham drakṣyanti Rāmasya varṣe pancadaśe punah*

Who will be lucky enough to behold Rama with face brightened by his ear-rings fifteen years from now

They are the Dhanyah; not men but Gods ! He is feeling totally orphaned (*anāthavat*) and breathes his last.

To institute comparisons between the three queens is unnecessary. As the chief queen and an elder, Kausalya was expecting that her position may improve in the establishment and in the kingdom after Rama is crowned Yuvaraja. She has a suspicion that even that may be denied her what with the infatuation of the king for Bharata's mother and possibly of some presentiment of promises given to Kaikeyi's parents about succession to the throne. But she knows that the love of Dasaratha for Rama is unbounded and unmixed. The announcement that the Abhisheka will take place the very next day makes her happy and she rejoices at it. The king after all does the right thing, by the tradition of the line, by the

kingdom, by himself and her. The sudden turn of the events strikes her to distraction. Everything seems lost. She tries her utmost to persuade Rama to listen to Lakshmana's words if not hers or to take her along with him to the forest. But when she is told that none of those ways are open to her or conduct for a son in relation to his father, and, for a wife when her husband is alive she has to stay back. The mother in her is similar to any loving mother on earth, particularly of one who after long years of barrenness is blessed with a son of the quality of Rama. Her sorrow is unbearable. The similies the poet uses—of Kausalya to a cow and Rama to a calf, or a horse and foal—are extraordinarily natural and tender and she lets herself be composed after the departure of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. The words of Sumitra, whose situation is as bad, console her : “With Lakshmana by his side to serve and Sita to feed him with love and company the 14 years will not be unbearable; they will soon be over; Rama will come back to press your feet,” Sumitra says, “with his soft, plump (*mṛdu pīna*) hands in service.”

“As the second of three wives not greatly beloved of the king, life in the palace has brought home to Sumitra one great truth : If there be friendship and love the forest itself is as a city. If they are not there, a city is no better than the wilderness. Her own sorrow was no less than that of Kausalya; yet she spoke words of consolation to the elder queen. Sumitra's behaviour should have struck lookers on with wonder. It induced in her husband Dasaratha a feeling of deep respect. In the last words he uttered the name Kaikeyi as the enemy of the race and Sumitra as a saint : (*tapasvini*). It was apt and correct.”¹

1. *The Poetry of Valmiki* by Masti Venkatesa Iyengar.

2. RAMA

The poem begins with a question :

*Konu asmin sāmpratam loke guṇavān kaśca vīryavān
Dharmajñaśca kṛtajñaśca satyavākya dṛḍhavratah
Cāritrena ca ko yuktaḥ sarvabhūteṣu ko hitaḥ
Ātmavān ko jītakrodho dyutimān anasūyakah
Kasya bibhyati devās ca jataroṣasya samyuge
Etadicchāmi aham śrotum param kautūhalam hi me
Maharṣe tvam samartho si jnātumevam vidham naram*

Who, this present day, is a person gifted with quality, valiant, righteous, sensitive to benefits received, speaks truth, holds fast to principles, has character, is beneficent to all creatures and wed with life of true integrity of soul, one who has conquered spite, is charismatic, free from jealousy of every kind, one of whom when angered Gods and men are both afraid in battle, I should like to hear of such a human being with greater eagerness, O Maharshi. You are the one who is able to tell me that.

And this has to do definitely with a human being; and, Rama is designated as the best among men. Throughout the work his physical stature, how often that is described and by how many ! The impressiveness of his personality takes everyone in as noble and great in presence. Even by enemies like Maricha, Surpanakha and by the arch-enemy Ravana himself. *Sama^h sama vibhaktāngam*—well knit, with equal proportion of limbs is a fine feature.¹ There is something in him which makes him liked by all who see him or has to deal with him. Women and men, people of Ayodhya, the Vanaras and the Rakshasas are all attracted to his gait, his ways, his talk.

V. S. Srinivasa Sastriar once mentioned three qualities which made him a fine human being : *Smitabhāṣī*—speaking with a smile, *Mṛdubhāṣī*—soft in words and *Pūrvabhāṣī*—one

1. Though, later on, Sita is described almost similarly.

who speaks first—lovable qualities for any king or leader of men. And, in a world, where and in times when these qualities are rare they have to be cultivated for culture if they are not inborn : to make the world a pleasanter and a more civilized place to live in. Another such quality is *akliṣṭa karmanah*—no strain is observed about him in doing the hardest thing; and he does things naturally. *Sarva bhūta hite ratah*—taken up with the welfare of all creatures—is a Rishi quality¹, i.e., his compassion and service are open to all living creatures. The mother, the father, all in the palace and outside, the brothers and the wife adore him not merely for his goodness and courtesy but for his integrity and wisdom. And, so superior he seems almost in every quality that men and women not only cherish but revere him. Along with that is a reputation that he always stretches a point in their favour and judges men, things and events wisely and well. His decisions are quick and no one can deflect him from them once taken. This is a character-trait which is at once strength and weakness. For a word uttered is final. Not only is he *dvir nā bhi bhāṣate*—Rama will not speak a second, i. e., a different word—but considers it as part of his Dharma, adherence to which is supreme duty. He seems to condense into his thinking the largest and the highest experience of his people and his time. He can make up his mind without fear or favour. It looks like inflexibility in his mental make-up. His will sustains it; his prowess gives assurance about his ability to enforce it. That is how he is able to say ‘I shall kill’—*haniṣyāmi*² so easily. Something about him says he will do it not only against single men but against whole armies, entrenched in their own fortified capital cities.

1. He himself later says—*Nāham arthaparo devi, lokamāvāstum utsahe viddhi mām Ṛṣibhiḥ tulyam kevalam dharmamāsthitam*—I do not desire to live on this earth seeking wealth. Like Rishis I have faith absolutely in Dharma.
- 2: Rather a word to use in our century!

Along with inborn qualities and training he has the advantage of the instruction given by Visvamitra. Visvamitra had confidence in him even at a tender age (*kāka pakṣa dharah*) to select him to destroy Tataka known to be a scourge to all. His initiation into Astras is made after that event. Many must have been the instructions given by the Rishi all along the way from Ayodhya through Kamasrama and to Mithila, which he enforced with a number of stories from the past and the present to tell him what is Dharma, strength and weakness in thought and in performance. He teaches him to show no mercy to wicked persons on the count they are women . . . if they are disturbers of peace and human weal.

Visvamitra knows from his own life how men are prone to error and to chance straying; that penance and patient suffering can redeem a person. That is what makes him recommend Ahalya to Rama. Only such kindness and understanding can save. When Rama is roused he stands up to a person and does not blench. The first sign of such resentment is noticed in his meeting with Parasurama. But by that time it can be assumed that his education in the use of *sastras* and *astras* is complete. If the Sivadhanus had been broken by him at Janaka's court, the Vaishnava bow was handled in a deadly way against the most inveterate enemy of the Kshatriyas, Parasurama. After this episode he becomes the acknowledged leader and protector of all the Aryan kings then known and all things beloved of them. The Rishis vie with one another in honouring him. They expect his protection and guarantee against all the foes of the Asrama-life right down to Panchavati. Each almost expects him to visit him and is almost sure he will. Each gives him aid and equipment and feels now that they have seen him they can live in peace and comfort.

It is in the palace of Ayodhya that his love and sense of duty articulate to their utmost. That he loves his mother is natural and his affection for Kaikeyi is equal to what Bharata had for her. The least among Dasaratha's women feel he

has for them the same regard that he has for Kausalya. He is to his father, who was doting on him, dear as life. Rama's love for Lakshmana is phenomenal. The two lives were one as it were; a *Bahiscarāh prāṇah*—his own life : only moving outside of him, as it is called. Without Lakshmana he almost cannot live. With him he would be feeling secure and comfortable as if he had a whole army or a state behind him.¹ And only Rama can keep Lakshmana in leash and control. Rama's was the mind and thought that could establish itself and its decision against father and mother, against Vasishtha and the Rishis, against Sita's warnings and abjurations and against all his allies, e.g., in accepting Vibhishana as a member of his camp. For a moment—only for a moment—of vexation or depression he may let himself go—the moods of depression and lamentation are many in a way—for he was human after all. He can be tender and pitiful during those times. He can scent when a word he carelessly speaks may injure another person or is unworthy of him. He soon gains self-control and takes immediate precaution to see that utterance of his will not guide another's conduct wrongly. This shows when the shadow of an unkind thought comes over him remembering Kaikeyi and her obtuse, vicious ways. He says that Kaikeyi may get her rivals destroyed, *api na cyāvayet prāṇām*; and, when Sugriva sleeps over the terms of his promise and engagement to aid him in seeking out Sita. A similar situation arises when Bharata is described as coming with a host of people behind him and Lakshmana is agitated and likes to be permitted to destroy him thinking he must come surely with an evil intention. That is a memorable episode which establi-

1. Any weaknesses of Lakshmana arise only out of his love and fondness for and loyalty to Rama; and pass quickly. Yet it is only he who can remind Rama of his real quality when Rama gets wild or unhinged. *Purā bhūtvā mṛdurdāntah sarvabhūta hite ratah, na krodha vaśamāpanna prakṛtim hātumarhasi*—You used to be soft and generous; engaged in doing good to all creatures. You should not yield to passion. You deserve to be true to your nature.

shes the understanding and great moral worth of Rama. To Sita he is kind. He knows her character : *na vihātum mayā sakyā, kīrtirātmavatā yathā*—I cannot remain without you even as a brave one cannot remain without his honour (good name)—even as he knows how spirited she can be when roused. He almost lets her call him names as a *Sailūṣa*—an actor, a dancer,—or a woman in man’s form : a *Puruṣa Vighraha*—but he can understand to what a desperate state she is reduced when he refuses to take her along with him.

When he is angry he can talk obstinately and in extremity offer to perform Prayopavesa.¹ When Sugriva who had gone to reconnoitre into Lanka, on sight of Ravana for the first time pounces upon him, knocks off his crown and comes back to the Vanara camp Rama rates him for foolishness and thoughtless conduct in a leader of the army. He has the generosity and sportsmanship to tell Ravana at the end of a day’s tough fight,—when Ravana seems tired and his horses weary,—that he may take the day off, refresh himself and return to the fight the next day. It is extraordinary behaviour. That is how he admires courage even in his worst enemy. He says to Vibhishana that it was a brother’s duty to perform due rites to a brother who is a warrior and that if the brother will not do it he will.

The only occasion when it is hard to understand and stomach his conduct is when he behaves harshly to Sita. He has finished his job of rehabilitating his name and character,

1. We notice that the three or four Prayopavesa episodes in the Ramayana are given up as futile ! —a wrong element in Kshatriya behaviour. That is what he said to Bharata at Chitrakuta. On two occasions, particularly when he thought he might give up his life, his own sense of conduct and responsibility come to save the situation ! If he gave up his life he would not be able to fulfil the promise to his father and Kaikeyi or redeem his father in heaven. On the other occasion when Lakshmana is taken for dead, he had to be prevailed upon by the Vanara friends and the words of Vibhishana that Lakshmana and Sita are not dead. The instances of Sita and Hanuman are similar. The arch event is Angada’s before Sampati shows up.

PERSONAE

destroying the enemy; and beaten down through Paurusha what the Daiva tried to do against him—he who is such an inveterate Daiva- or Vidhi Vādi. She is free now to do as she likes, go where she likes and live with whomsoever she likes,—he has no use for her. This is conduct which cannot be expected from a man who has wailed so frequently before—reviving memories of companionship with her, thought of her as prisoner in the hands of a wicked demon, and who, just a few days before, has expressed intense feeling for her. Something more than the purely personal and conjugal has grown on him and he desires to do the thing which should establish him as a just man, an exemplar of Dharma, giving Sita a chance. to prove her purity and innocence.¹ Writers have called him a Nishthura, a Kathora Yasah—as a besetting feature of his character. If anything came between himself and his sense of Dharma or kingly conduct or fair name whatever it cost [*tasya nāma mahad yaśah* (Kanda VII)] he opted for the latter. That was supreme.² Possibly Valmiki desired to present Rama as an example of such ideal character.³ There was no ruth then in him, no extenuation; clear then was the demand and firm the decision—unflinching as it became a purpose. When the fire ordeal proved Sita's innocence,—he knew she would come off unhurt—he took her back into his affection as if nothing had happened. Ordinary mortals would like to know how Sita felt inside her, but she too reconciled herself to it for she seems aware of her duty on such an occasion. She was his Sahadharmā Charini. This

1. There is an uprush of primitive masculine sensibility or a rigour of conduct to establish himself and her in the eye of the world or both.
2. This seems to be the ruling principle in Dushyanta as well. It is in his declaration to the friends of Sakuntala first and later on in his behaviour in Acts V and VI of *Sakuntalam*.
3. Tara hits it off magnificently. *Nivāsā vṛkṣah sādḥūnām āpannānām parāgatih | ārtānām samśrayascaiva yaśasascaika bhājanam* (cp. Sastriar)—He is like a big tree which shelters good men. Sure and of supreme help to all in danger, asylum to all who need aid, one devoted to his fair name, however.

shows very much more clearly when she says she understands Rama's decision to send her to the forest in Uttarakanda. It is surprising that not one in the company—the Vanara Chiefs, nor Vibhishana was able to utter a word against the decision of Rama and the situation as it developed; either they were struck dumb or the personality of Rama was so overwhelming that they accepted the event. The episode in the Uttarakanda is less overpowering though the end is more decisive,—when Valmiki brought her to Ayodhya and said publicly in the Yajnasala that she was innocent and pure.

From the beginning in spite of all the love he bore to her we get occasions when he talks as if she is expendable. In Kaikeyi's presence and to Sita herself when he spoke of his resolve to aid the Rishis, even if that meant losing her, Lakshmana or his own life; in the account that Sita herself gave of Rama's preference for Lakshmana *Mṛdur nityam śucir dakśah, priyo Rāmasya Lakṣmaṇah* and in another place that Lakshmana is always dearer to Rama than myself : *Mattah parataro nityam bhrātā Ramasya*. Yet she says that Lakshmana is *Mātr̥ vat mām sāmācaram*—He behaves towards me like I was his mother. Or, when Lakshmana was taken for dead on the battlefield Rama said that one could find wives like Sita searching for them over the earth, but where could one get a brother like Lakshmana? That is either a flourish of character or the general opinion the people of those times had about the best of women.

In the carrying out a promise, he does not give himself any latitude or benefit of doubt to himself. He will not accept the hospitality of Guha; he will go as far away as possible from the limits of Ayodhya to prevent people coming and disturbing him and will not let Jabali use wrong argument to make him accept the throne offered by Bharata himself voluntarily. He will not go into Kishkindha to crown Sugriva king and chooses to remain outside the city in inclement weather. When Vibhishana begs him to enter his palace and receive some small hospitality as token of his regard or

rest just for a day in Lanka he will not tarry, only asks for quick and immediate transport to get him back to Ayodhya. He waits at Bharadvajasrama on the last night of the 14th year to discover how Bharata exactly feels now about the kingdom. He will not set foot in Ayodhya or Nandigrama if it was discovered that Bharata has the least little desire to continue as king; can he not carve for himself a kingdom anywhere he liked and earn any Punyaloka whenever he liked? That is what he said to Lakshmana in Kausalya's chambers and to Sarabhanga when the Rishi offered him all the fruits of his piety. He did not so much as perhaps shave his beard until Satrugna arranged for the Smasrukriya on the day of the coronation. Here was a man that Valmiki desired to present as a paragon of conduct, an ideal Kshatriya wedded to what was deemed the highest principle of Dharma and kingship. Aristotle gives us a picture of his high-minded man. The two ideals deserve to be compared.

Earlier and all along Rama is described as Jitakrodhah and generous. This supreme aspect of his spirit makes him tell the members of the Vanara camp that he will keep Vibhishana with him as Kshatriya duty; while he is not himself afraid of anything. Does he not allow later the spies of Ravana to see for themselves what his army was like and take what news they will of this camp to their king? If Ravana came seeking refuge, he will accept him! He will kill an evil man as duty but will not pursue him with hatred when he is dead.

How loving he was can be seen throughout his days with Sita till what he deemed kingly duty and honour militated against it. He was not above some fun. When the Brahmin Trijata approached him for some gifts he proposes to give away all the kine which may fall within the ambit of a throw of the Brahmin's staff and soon afterwards feels ashamed of himself that he put a needy Brahmin to such an act. When Surpanakha presented herself to him he for a few minutes would pass her on to Lakshmana saying he had a wife while Lakshmana had none, etc. But the trait which dominated his

personality was *vasitva*, integrity and sense of duty and largeness. It could be hard and was truly awesome.

3. LAKSHMANA

Lakshmana was the brother who from early on followed Rama, lived, fought, worked and died for him. He was a constant companion and was ready to do everything needed for the comfort and in support of his brother, deemed dearer than father or mother. There have not been occasions of his being free with either of the two other brothers or thought of or cared for the wife married to him the same day Sita was married to Rama. When Rama went with Visvamitra Lakshmana went with him and aided him in the destruction of Tataka.¹ Visvamitra uses the singular form of the verb and noun in the initiation in the several Astras he gave to Rama but what was given to him could be accepted as *ipso facto* given to Lakshmana as well? He felt happy that Rama was to be consecrated as the Yuvaraja; and, when immediately after, fortune changed, he was angry. In Kausalya's chambers, he created a big impression upon the mother saying that Kaikeyi had no business to ask for and Dasaratha to concede her such boons. Rama should not agree to banishment and to the installation of Bharata in the State. He raised his voice to say that he would punish all who came in the way of Rama's succession. He would kill Dasaratha himself and destroy Ayodhya if any one obstructed his action in that direction. For just a moment Kausalya hoped Rama might be impressed. But what Rama wanted was not courage or strength, nor the help of another for getting or retaining a kingdom. His decision was based on a totally different valuation of the situation as looked at by the others; helping his father

1. Visvamitra did not object to the company. Were the Mantras taught to him as well?

to keep true to the promise made to Kaikeyi. Therefore Lakshmana was told :

*Tadenām viṣṛja anāryām kṣātra dharmāśritām matim
Dharmam āśraya, mā taikṣṇyam; madbuddhih anugamya-
tām*

Give up, therefore, this unworthy Anarya mentality, grounded in *kṣātra* (passion). Take to the path of Dharma. Forswear violence, and follow my decision.

a counsel and doctrine that spoke as much for the quality of the utterance as for the nature of the resolution. The three terms used here are the largest in exposition of Dharma possible in a secular situation.

Lakshmana was not agreeable to Rama's surrendering his rights. As a Paurushavadi he will not subscribe either to the principle that a father should be obeyed at all costs and in all circumstances; or that one should resign himself to Kala or Niyati or Daiva—terms commonly used by the principal characters and surprisingly by Rama himself¹—for, not Kaikeyi, Rama had said, was responsible for this dispensation but Daiva. A Kshatriya has to think of valour, Lakshmana said, and a sense of his own rightness in all matters; he should not sit weak and philosophising on such occasions. But he knew that Rama had reasons of higher import and his consideration of a matter was always more inclusive and so, he accepted the decision. But he refused to stay behind even to be of service to their father and their two mothers. Who would look after them in the absence of Rama while Kaikeyi got into power and Bharata became king? She who has plotted against Rama may find ways and means of causing the death of Dasaratha himself and / or their mothers. But Lakshmana knew that his tasks and presence were for ever with

1. And, incidentally by all of us even to-day.

Rama; Kausalya did not need his service or protection. She was rich with a thousand villages as her property and strong, wise and resolute with ability to manage ten persons like himself. So he went with Rama as companion to be of assistance to his brother and sister-in-law. To Rama's *Guṇaih dāsyam upāgatah*—being slave to his quality and merit (cp. Vasantasena's words about Charudatta).

His is a picture of service, willing, ready and devoted; and he will not care to exercise any freedom before his brother. When, for example, he is asked to choose a place and build a hut at Panchavati, he said :

*Paravān asmi kākutṣṭha, tvayi varṣa śatam sthite,
Svayam tu rucire deśe, kriyatām iti mām vada*

If for a hundred years I live I shall be dependent on you.
Indicate the site; and tell me what to do.

This is his quality in service. All the 14 years Lakshmana spared no labour or attention to secure the comforts of the pair; built huts, brought food, fruit and flower, fought the wild animals and the Rakshasas, guarded them in their rest and was all that a whole establishment could be. The two brothers could not live without each other. Sita knew that if it comes to her claim to Rama's affection it was second to Lakshmana's. Rama knew he can always depend on him. Indeed he can be taken for granted; so absolute was his loyalty to his brother.

Lakshmana serves Sita like his mother¹ and when cruel words are spoken to him and he knows she might come to grief as a result of his going away, that the deer itself cannot be real but a disguise of Maricha himself (which it really was) and that Rama cannot ever be under mortal danger, her

1. He feels so himself and is enjoined such conduct by his mother.
Rāmam Daśaratham viddhi mām viddhi janakātmajām—Consider Rama as Dasaratha and deem Sita like myself.

charges are unbearable. She had said: *Na tat citram sapatneṣu pāpam lakṣmaṇa yad bhavet*. He had to leave her to the protection of the wood-spirits and gods: with what consequences we know. Rama is displeased with him for this and charges him with disobedience. He has to swallow both. No one can be comfortable in such shoes. When Rama is alone, suffering the torments of separation from Sita, he is the only source of help, comfort and consolation, reminding him of his fortitude (*sthairya*). He alone can speak to him words of courage, strength, cheer and hope; and here his arguments by Ksatra and Paurusa were needed most. In the talk with Hanuman and Sugriva, Lakshmana is the liaison and he is able to impress on Sugriva that he has delayed too long. In Lanka, on the battlefield, Lakshmana's valour is as distinguished as that of the bravest. He wards off the Sakti against Vibhishana and Rama, marches to upset Indrajit at the Nikumbhila Yaga which should have made the Rakshasa invincible and kills Indrajit. Knowing the character of both his brother and sister-in-law he has to carry out the behests of Sita when she calls upon him to fetch fuel for the pyre during the fire-ordeal; and, later, to carry out the behests of Rama in taking Sita away from Ayodhya once and for all to leave her to her fate. Rama offers him the Yauvarajya which he refuses. He is content if he can stay with his brother and serve him. A term used in connection with Lakshmana is that he is the supreme representative of Kainkarya Lakshmi.

He is tender-hearted and straight and he could easily be moved to anger and as quickly recover from it—*sulabha kopi, sulabha śānta*. In almost the last stage he had to disobey his brother again when Durvasa¹ asks him to let him in to look up Rama—the dilemma was personal against general destruction. The words uttered by him in the context—*Ekasya maraṇam me astu mā, bhūt sarva vināśanam*—are monumental and can rank

1. This seems a spurious or cooked up incident.

with the Buddha's or Christ's: *Kali kaluṣa kṛtāni yāni loke mayi nipatantu, vimucyatāntu lokah*—Whatever evil is caused on earth by Kali, let punishment for it be visited on me. Let the world be freed. His was unquestioning obedience and readiness to serve whatever the discomforts, loss to and consequences on himself to carry out the wishes of his brother. He was mother and father, fortress and defence to Rama. When the dwelling was completed by Lakshmana to the satisfaction of Rama, the latter clasps him and says that with Lakshmana by his side, he feels he still has his father with him to look after and provide for him.¹ In rain and shine was this service. A whole tradition considers him as the true Ramanuja—the brother *par excellence*—of Rama. Rama knows him to be Saragrahi; Hanuman knows of his valour and Sita his cleanliness of soul, and devotion and courage.

4. BHARATA

If Lakshmana's service was through devotion and dedication, Bharata's was through total self-abnegation of another kind. Bharata was as worthy a brother to Rama. His regard for Rama knows no bounds. He cannot believe that Rama could do wrong. If he had a grouse against him it was that Rama thought of and for others more than for himself, was always more disinterested; and would sacrifice his own interests from what he deemed were higher motives and principles of conduct. The stanzas following *na tvam pravvyathyet duhkhān prītiriva na praharṣayet*—you are not depressed in sorrow nor elated by happiness—are monumental. It was difficult for others to educate or discipline themselves to such heights in conduct. Yet even in matters where Rama knew better than others, Bharata said he would consult them. He knew his father well and had received a lot of affection from him; but

1. *Tvayā putreṇa dharmātmā na samvṛttah pitā mama.*

his father made too much of his mother. Dasaratha had a good opinion of him. Kausalya liked him and his regard for her was equal to that he showed to his own mother. The first reaction of Kausalya when he called on her was hard and harsh. He begged of her to believe that he did not share the desires of his mother and in the events that had taken place during his absence and that his love for Rama was second to none else. He would not ascend the throne. The first thing he would do after the funeral ceremonies were over would be to go with all who would follow him to Rama, wherever he was, and beg of him to return. Kausalya knew of this tenderness of Bharata for Rama. She had spoken hard words suspecting he might have the same feeling of desiring the kingdom like his mother and in the extravagance of a mother's sense of loss. He has got a kingdom *Akantakam*. She almost said she and Sumitra would go where Rama lived with the family Agnihotra, which was the spiritual symbol rightfully belonging to the one who continued the main line. Bharata was sad beyond compare and he would not care to think a disloyal thought about Rama; she should not suspect him of it. Kausalya could understand this. She took him on to her lap and consoled him. The biggest hurdle for Bharata was the doubts and suspicions about him which had to be removed from the Ministers, the chief priest, Rishi Bharadvaja and Guha—all of whom needed assurance that he intended no evil to Rama. Lakshmana's mistaking the intention has been mentioned already. Only Rama had a full and true understanding of his brother's mind. But whatever argument was used either by him or the other elders, Rama did not alter his decision to abide by the terms that Kaikeyi—and therefore Dasaratha—had imposed on him that he should be in the forest and Bharata in Ayodhya. Both the brothers won their points in a way—Rama keeping out of the kingdom and Bharata staying in Ayodhya, but as Regent for or Agent of Rama whose presence will be symbolised by the pair of sandals which he persuaded Rama to give him.

Bharata will be a mere Viceroy. He undertakes a vow to live like Rama now does abjuring all comforts. He removes the capital to Nandigrama and does not enter Ayodhya for 14 years. All admire Bharata's unselfishness and loyalty not only to his brother but to the Dharma as he and the family understood it. His trust in the Dharma never fades or wavers. There is not a single word or deed by Bharata to tell us that he ever desired the kingdom.

His love for Dasaratha and Kausalya seem to be greater than that to his own mother from the beginning. He has no great opinion of his mother. Yet there was no need in far away Kekaya, in the kingdom of his mother and before he knows what has happened in Ayodhya to use language which is discourteous, to say the least, and uncalled for about his mother while he speaks so well about the other members of the family. *Ātma kāma sadā caṇḍī krodhanā prājnamānini*—interested in herself, obstinate ever, spiteful and one who thinks she knows everything—harder are the words he speaks to her when he learns from her in successive stages all that happened in Ayodhya recently and in behalf of him. He calls her Rakshasi, Kulapamsini, the murderer of her husband, the one who had brought ill-fame upon the family, on him and on herself, cruel to the person who loved her and hurting him who did not deserve exile of any kind and one who by rights was to be the ruler of the country. He almost calls on her to kill herself but will not raise his hand against her. The reason is : that will prejudice Rama's mind against him. Even when he sees Satrughna raising his hand to punish Manthara who is responsible for all this misery and Bharata's aid is invoked by the women and the servants he says a woman should not be touched. Rama will not talk to him or his brother again *Tvāmca māmca nābhibhāśate dhruvam*—He will not speak to either you or me ever if he heard about it. Rama's was the felt presence everywhere and so it is when he talks to Bharadvaja when the Rishi asks to be introduced to his mother : the same harsh language. When Bharata speaks to Rama about

her Rama has firmly to ask him not to blame his mother any way. It is not unnatural for a mother to ask for the rights of her son; and, she had other rights to them. Be kind to her. I call upon you in the name of both myself and Sita that you should not treat her wrongly or use hard words; particularly when he bids them farewell. Rama offers Pranams to Kaikeyi as he does to other mothers. Hearts are full, throats choke; words fail to come out and tears gush through all eyes—Rama's included—at the parting. One thing, however, is established: the absolute purity and innocence of heart of Bharata which convinces everybody. Rama and Lakshmana can thereafter be totally free from the least suspicion of Bharata's sympathy for his mother's designs. That is how when, on a later occasion, he remembers Bharata he is warm and affectionate. Not all brothers can be Bharatas—he says to Sugriva. Guha congratulates him on such great self-sacrifice: that he is giving up claims of kingship twice. That is how also Sugriva and Vibhishana—who were other patterns of brotherly behaviour—are overpowered by the largeness and sublimity of Bharata's conduct when Bharata hands over the kingdom, increased ten-fold in wealth, power and name, to Rama and for 14 years living dedicated to his ideal of Rajadharma and fraternal devotion. What a picture of joy and relief of fulfilment he is when news is taken to him that Rama has returned!

The contrast between Lakshmana and Bharata is often commented on and unnecessary discriminations are made between them. They express two different types of brotherly conduct, Bharata would argue and could be as angry as Lakshmana. He could rate the elderly priest Vasishtha himself in open assembly when asked to accept the throne; and, *Vilalāpā sabhā madhye jagarhetu purohitam*—he wept in the open assembly. That a wise, old man like you should try to persuade me to take the kingdom which belongs to my

brother by the traditions of the Ikshvaku family¹:—how can you ask me to take it? I will not. I shall go and offer it to him”² Morning, afternoon and night in Chitrakuta, he used many types of argument in persuasion; if he failed in one he used another or approached differently to win Rama over. Almost all the important persons of Ayodhya were witness to this competition in Dharma Sraddha. But Rama was able to convince all, that his decision was right, that it was part of Dasaratha’s ordering that he should be in the forest for all the 14 years and Bharata king in Ayodhya during the time. Bharata is half-satisfied that he is able at least to make Rama agree to give him the sandals.

Lakshmana will never argue with his brother even when he thinks differently from him. He is like a child simply devoted to serving Rama. He would not exercise any desire of his own. Close proximity to Rama puts in a built-in feeling of regard and reverence for his brother in speaking about whose praise he knows no bounds. After all the age-difference between the brothers is not much. They learn the same ways, share the same joys and sorrows, share the responsibilities of forest life, friendships and fights on the battlefield. But his estimate of Rama is ever that which is spoken in Kausalya’s chamber: *Devakalpam, rjum, dāntam, ripūṇāmapi vatsalam*—Godlike, straight, self-restrained, affectionate like a father even to the enemy—(Note: *Devakalpam* never *Devam*; even he will not confuse him with Deva or Vishnu or Indra). If such was Rama was he not equal in quality and worth to the highest Deva? What else will be Divya? He can never believe that men or Gods ever can beat him on the battlefield. This assurance in his mind, added to his own knowledge of his strength and accomplishment as a warrior makes him stand up fearless in every circumstance. Lakshmana him-

1. Rama himself is proud of the family and quotes Sagara’s behests to the sons to lay down their lives.

2. *Lectures on the Ramayana*, V. S. S. Sastriar, p. 192.

self is a great warrior ; it is proved not only on the battle-field in Lanka; but Hanuman speaks of it to his Vanara friends that his arrows are like Indra's vajra and he has many such.

Strangely there are no meetings or talk between Lakshmana and the two other brothers nor is there much talk—excepting once when Lakshmana was nagged out from Janasthana—between him and Sita in the issue of the situation to make fire for her to enter and least of all when she asks him to look at her pregnant condition before he leaves her alone in the woods in the Uttara Kanda. It is not part of an epic to present sides or details of character possibly; but we should have been grateful to the Poet for something of that kind. Satrughna is no doubt supervising the *smaśru karma* of Rama when he is being given a hair-cut before the coronation after 14 years of beard and whiskers. Satrughna appears only when he sees Manthara, short, stumpy, vicious and vain, strutting about like a *vanari* decked with the abundant jewellery and clothes given to her by Kaikeyi—we know that she is introduced in the Ramayana as *Jātidāsī, yathājātā*, i.e., a born slave and nobody knew where she was born and who her parents were—her interests were purely and totally in the power and prestige of Kaikeyi, whose nurse she was. Satrughna has given her a hiding and is almost rubbing her body against the floor ! When it is brought to the notice of Bharata he tells his brother to let her go. When Lakshmana has bid farewell to the queen mother, his own poor mother tells him *Sr̥ṣṭatvam vanavāsāya*—you were born to dwell in the forest; almost as if she was commenting upon his fortune. A fate which was far more fatefully fulfilling itself in the case of good Sita; for Sita tells Rama that astrologers had foretold her father that she will have to dwell in the forest!¹ Bharata is almost jealous that Lakshmana was lucky in for ever being with brother Rama rendering him service. Lakshmana cannot have

1. This was to hound her more pitifully at a later date.

had much cause of complaint against Bharata for any personal reasons. The two attitudes—the Bharata and the Laksmana—are distinctive in service, loyalty and affection, each good and great in its kind, making them exemplars in character and conduct without parallel in our literature. The *Bandhuprema*, the *Sodaryam* and the selfless devotion to Rama of these two is tribute as much to them as to Rama who could inspire such a thing in two such great people.

5. SITA

The Ramayana is distinguished by its association with the name and story of Sita. *Sitāyāh caritam mahat* is a description of it. She is rightly a personality and character which have earned the love and regard of our people through the ages. She is not a weak or clinging type of heroine and can never be taken for granted. Her sense of pride and dignity is high and for all the sweetness and amiability of her character, she will speak her mind when necessary. Any husband would have to be careful with regard to one like her. Yet it was one of the beneficences of Rama's life that he had her for wife. She stands by him in all his fortunes. There is no answering largeness from that husband who preferred his kingly duty first. Perhaps rightly. She understands him and stays loyal. Only when she is called upon to prove her chastity again does she choose to be gathered into the lap of her mother.

Her life is a strange mixture of the Real and the Ideal. She was discovered in the furrows of the field (*Sita*—the furrow) when king Janaka was getting the ground ploughed for a sacrifice, was adopted as daughter and brought up. She was beautiful and gentle and became dear to him. He was worried about finding a suitable match for her when she came of age¹ and set up a condition to test the worth of one wor-

1. What could have been her age then? Accounts conflict in the Ramayana.

thy of her in wielding a heavy bow which could not be bent or stringed by any one till then. One able to do that would be fit groom for Sita, he had announced. When after Visvamitra had completed his sacrifice and people were going to witness a sacrifice at Janaka's Visvamitra took the brothers there and asked Janaka to produce the weapon. Rama was able easily to bend and break the bow and so was considered the proper match for Sita. The parents on both sides along with Visvamitra celebrate the marriage. When she was being handed over by Janaka before the fire :

*Iyam sītā mama sutā saha dharma carī tava
praticcha cainām bhadrām te pāṇim gṛhṇītvā pāṇinā
pativratā mahābhāgā chāyeva anugatā sadā*

This is Sita, my daughter. She will be companion in everything you do. Accept the good one and take her by the hand. She will be constant and devoted as wife, great souled and she will follow you always like your shadow.

said Janaka. *Saha dharma carī, chāyeva anugatā sadā*—are the words though *chayeva* cannot be taken in a pejorative sense—it rather is inseparable—in the fullest sense of the term. She asks for being and is a *Saha dharma cāriṇī*, i. e., followed him in thunder and sunshine. Even when he unfairly sends her away into final exile she could say: “In your heart you need me; my character is without a stain; I have never been false to you—in mind or in body. Yet because your subjects suspect my purity you throw me out. So be it. . . Your honour and love of your people are paramount to you. . . If to preserve your good name among them I must be sacrificed I am content to be sacrificed. As you serve your subjects so do I serve you; not less but more.”

Sita tells Anasuya that she spent happy time with Rama at Ayodhya. She had made it impossible for him to leave her behind at Ayodhya to go alone to the forest. Its dangers

and discomforts did not daunt her. If it be possible for them it will be for her. With him, though it be forest, her life will be as comfortable as in Ayodhya. When he argues against his taking her and she feels desperate she hurls at him words which make it impossible for him to leave her behind. She twists a word which he uses, saying that perhaps *Svayam tu bhāryām kaumārīm, ciram adhyuṣitām satīm, śailūṣaiva, mām rāma, parebhyo dātumicchasi*—A young wife like me, who for quite some time lived with you, you will—will you give me away to another like a dancer or actor does? Or, are you not man enough to protect me ? Has my father got for his son-in-law a woman showing in the form of a man? *Striyām puruṣa vighram*. Those words were spoken not so much in criticism—*Praṇayācca abhimānācca, paricikṣepa Rāghavam*—She blames Rama out of affection and regard. Rama understands the depth and sincerity of her feelings. She was *Viśamjñām iva duḥkhitām*—Like one who is not in full possession of consciousness owing to sorrow. He took her in his arms and said: *Na devī tava duḥkhena svargā-mapi abhiroccaye*—No good lady, I shall not fancy the heavens themselves if that means causing suffering to you. I wanted to know your mind fully before I took you to the forest: I am able to look after you and protect you in the forest : *Yat sṛṣṭāsi mayā sārddham vanavāsasya . . ./ na vihātum maya śakyā kīrtih atma vatā yathā*. She had threatened to end her life if he did not : *Bhaktām pativratām, dīnām, mām samam sukha dukhayoh netumarhasi kākutstha yadi mām duḥkhitām évam vanam netum na cecchasi viṣam agnim jalam vāham asthasye mṛtyukāraṇāt*. One like that was not likely to be denied a request. Her promise not to be a burden or source of anxiety and trouble was not needed for the brothers. The poet introduces a phrase *Brahma-cāriṇī* cleverly as an insurance against other consequences from the exile. It is a clear trick of the author and saves him from criticism. Else two young, vital people in the most beautiful surroundings, and having intimacies will have to be

accused of infertility for 12-13 years. They can take care of her and the three form an integral group. When they leave for the forest and for the first time all relations with Ayodhya are cut Lakshmana goes foremost, clears the way and makes their place for rest: with however an expression of sadness.

That was the first night outside the borders of Ayodhya and the party feels free without Sumantra's presence. The task of looking after Sita devolves upon the brothers. Rama says to Lakshmana that this sorrow need not have come to them : *Kṛta kāmāstu kaikeyī ṭuṣṭā bhavitum arhati* but the conditions are wrong and harmful for the old King and the mothers. He yields to sadder thoughts about how weakness for a woman can reduce wisdom and sense like it did in his father. He knows that he can conquer the whole world and that his arrow would get him out of every opposition. What controls him is this principle in his life *Nanu vīryam akāraṇam*—We should not opt for (use of) force (prowess) without proper reason—and, here is a declaration of faith. Force even in a right cause ought to be the last arbiter. It is under an Ingudi tree and on a bed prepared by Lakshmana with *darbha* and leaves that they sleep for the night. This is about the most personal moment of self-expression in connection with the events that have taken place. For the rest of the time they reconcile themselves to what fortune brings them and to the needs of a forest-life and wandering.

All along we do not hear a single word from Sita's lips about any loss of comforts. Not once. They cross the rivers; the arrangements how to do it and how Sita has to be got into or out of the boats are made; how resting places are to be built go on as matters of course. Sita goes merrily on asking the names of the places, the birds, the trees and the flowers. They live like birds, happy together. The brothers fetch her whatever takes her fancy. It is as if they are to the forest-land and to that life born. They kill deer of many kinds—Prusata, Krishnasara, bisons, Godha, birds like Vardhrinasa, cook dainty dishes for themselves and eat together. Rama

commends to Sita, on occasions, a meat saying, taste this, it is eminently eatable, this is sweet, this is beautifully cooked; *Idam medhyam, idam svādu, niṣṭaptam idam agninā*—This is clean and good, sweet, well-cooked in fire. Lakshmana silently looks on, helping. In the forest the brothers move with her moving between them. They kill the Rakshasas who cause trouble.

An interesting episode occurs when Viradha who first catches her declares he will kill the brothers and make her his wife. When the two brothers face him, he throws down Sita and holds the brothers tight in his arms and runs forward. For a while Rama feels almost pleased—it was fun!—that they will have a jolly ride along the road they have to traverse. . . . But Sita finds herself left behind and has to run after them. She calls out to Viradha, drawing the attention both of the Rakshasa and the brothers to her condition. She offers herself as food to Viradha so he releases the brothers. That is equal to giving notice to the brothers that she is member of the party. The brothers then make short work of Viradha and restore themselves to her.

She will not stay silent when she sees a need for speaking and expresses herself strongly, e.g., on the promise of help Rama made to the deputation of the hermits who met him on his way to Sutikshna's Asrama.

In the Janasthana she is naturally attracted by the movements of the Maya (magic) deer. Dead or alive, she likes to have it. Alive they can play with it during the exile and take it home to gladden the eyes of the old mothers at Ayodhya. Dead, its skin will be a precious memento. For a moment even Rama is taken by the idea despite the warning of Lakshmana. Rama goes behind it. And what happens to the deer and the consequences thereof are fateful. The treacherous cry of Maricha calling to Lakshmana in the voice of Rama beats her so thoroughly that she makes it impossible for Lakshmana to stay behind to protect her, without rushing to the aid of her husband. Her anxiety tears her and she

does not hear reason.

Immediately after Lakshmana leaves Ravana comes in disguised as a Sanyasin. There is something about him that fills her with apprehension and makes her suspect his frivolousness and makes her feel totally uneasy. She answers his questions, shows him all the courtesies due to a Sanyasi and asks him just to wait; for very soon Rama and Lakshmana will return bringing a lot of edible forest wealth (*Vanyāni vipulāni*). All the while she is in trepidation about his intentions. Soon they are declared. Ravana has not much time to lose and after she has told him who she was and why she was there he makes loud remarks about her entrancing beauty and says he is fascinated by her figure and has come there to take her for wife. The Raksasas take women that way—he says to her; describes to her his prowess, wealth and prestige and of his world conquest; and of the luxuries and glories of wealth and enjoyment she can be mistress of. She can have him rather than stick to a miserable human being wandering in the forest as an exile under a woman's behest. Sita's mettle shows to advantage here. Her description of Rama and his invincible courage was eloquent and the contrast she sets up between him and Ravana inflames the latter's desire for her. What irritates him is her saying that a fellow like him had no chance against the arrows of Rama or the might of Lakshmana. A little while back she had called Lakshmana names and imputed the vilest motives to him. She says now to Ravana that Lakshmana was *śuciśilah*, *dr̥ḍha vratah*¹—clean of character, firm in principle. No god, no power on earth can stand up to them. Ravana must be a coward to come to her when she was alone choosing a moment when both the brothers were out for, if either of them was there, he should have no chance of getting back alive from

1. On another occasion she speaks of him as *Vṛddha sevi*, *lakṣmīvān*, *śakto*, *na bahu bhāṣitah*—One who serves the old; a luminous one, able, one who does not speak much.

that place. Ravana took on his natural form, caught her in his arms and carried her off by force.

The interlude of Jatayu is a brave performance which makes Ravana leave behind him his chariot drawn by mules and broken weapons—lying on the ground and the shattered body of the eagle-ancient himself and himself flying through the air, carrying her by main-force to Lanka.

Earlier when Surpanakha made overtures first to Rama and then to Lakshmana Sita had looked on amused. It is only when the Rakshasi offered to kill her to clear her way to get the brothers that Rama asks Lakshmana to punish her and drive her out. Though she described Sita as a grotesque one, setting against her own charms and power to yield them delights undreamt off on earth or heaven she was profoundly impressed with Sita's beauty which she describes first to Khara and then to Ravana. When 14,000 Rakshasas with Khara at their head were destroyed by Rama single-handed Sita sees for the first time the quality and extent of the might of her husband.

When she was being carried in the air lamenting, no amount of flattery or temptation, no exposition of his wealth and pomp, no promise of supremacy among all his queens and women held out can persuade her, even to listen to them. She expresses to him her contempt and in reply describes more gloriously the greatness of Rama and the power of Lakshmana. She does not care to talk to him directly, but takes a blade of grass addressing it instead, indicating to him he was worth no more than that blade of grass, and that it is beneath her dignity and improper for her to talk to him directly. When other persuasions fail and his heart becomes more deeply engrossed by her charms he takes her to Asokavana to keep her there as prisoner, surrounded by the most disagreeable and fearsome of Rakshasis instructing them to convert her with threats and/or cajoling, to forget Rama and love him instead. But since, to put it mildest, he will not like to kill the object of his love and prefers to have her willing and friendly, he will give her a

year's time to change her mind. This condition was a God-send. He could have forced her body—if for personal and other reasons he did not refrain from it.

This opens out the chance for Rama to concert measures for the discovery and recovery of her. Ten months of the limit of time had elapsed before Hanuman met her. At first she suspected the appearance of a monkey as a bad omen and that it may perhaps be another disguise of Ravana to approach her. She thought many times of suicide but refrained from it. When she was satisfied that Hanuman really came from Rama she gave him her confidence; talked to him graciously, commended herself to the brothers and sent word to them to hurry operations; for the time limit given to her by Ravana will soon expire and she has decided to give up her life if relief and rescue do not come in time. She makes sure to herself that Hanuman is not a little monkey which he does by taking on a powerful form. She refuses to escape on his shoulders when he offers the suggestion. Her reasons are interesting. His flight with her may be discovered; the enemies might bring them down; during his flight across the sea she might drop into the ocean! Two weightier reasons were: she cannot willingly be touched by another male even to be saved—that will be wrong for a chaste woman to do. And the other was Rama, as a Kshatriya, should invade Lanka, fight Ravana, and punish him for his evil deed and set her free; only that will be worthy of him and enhance his reputation on earth. We should not deprive him of the honours; for only then will his fame burn white and bright. Even as she feels assured on sighting Rama's ring brought as a token of recognition and feels as happy as if she has seen him, she hands over her Cudamani (the crest-jewel) to be taken back as a mark of her loyalty to him. That will establish also the fact that Hanuman has seen her. We know how much the sight of the Cudamani by Rama made them happy filling both souls with hope, strengthening resolves and hurrying the process of liberation.

A kindly Rakshasi, Trijata by name—related to Vibhishana—comforts Sita saying that she had a dream about the happy termination of her imprisonment soon; that Rama will come soon, destroy Ravana and Lanka and take her back. This happened a little earlier than Hanuman's appearance. That friend had spoken to the watch and ward women not to torment Sita too much for she feels that Rama will come and set Sita free. If Sita had better memories of them as guardians and not as tormenters she might plead for a kindly treatment for them at the conqueror's hands for themselves. Else, they would sure be punished mercilessly. Whatever the consequences on them of these words, this releases an aspect of Sita's nature as she says that if only the dream comes true she will be happy without their begging to see that they are not in any way hurt at all. She was generous by nature not caring to remember any thing about a wrong done to her even by such cruel women.

The next is a grimmer situation : victory against Ravana is won; Hanuman is sent to Sita to convey to her the news and to ask her what she will like to do next. The news naturally makes Sita happy. Her reply is that she likes to see her husband. Rama directs Vibhishana to bring her to him bathed and dressed properly. Vibhishana intimates this to her. She prefers to be taken as she is, for that will tell Rama how she has lived all these days as prisoner. But the chance is denied to her. This is a command. She was taken to Rama seated amongst the whole concourse of friends and others. Way was made forcibly by the officers of Vibhishana and there is some disturbance. Rama naturally senses the reason : they were clearing the ground and preventing the spectators getting a view of Sita. He says that no such effort should be made against people seeing her ; for to a good woman a home or clothes, a surrounding wall or palaces or veils — *Avarana* of any sort — is no cover and protection. She can be seen openly and freely in *Vyasana* (sorrow), *Kricchra* (penance), *Yuddha* (war), *Svayamvara* (choice from among suitors),

Kratu (sacrifice) and in *Vivaha* (wedding). She is on the battlefield now and in a state of great hardship. Looking at her is no wrong. What is more : she is right near and before me—*mat samīpe*. When I am looking on there should be no shyness or embarrassment. No one knows what was in his mind and they notice his looks and behaviour. They realise that he does not seem to desire the wife and is feeling like displeased with her. Not one of them has the courage or the feeling to express any opinion in the developing gravity of the situation.

Sita was taken by Vibhishana before him. Almost shrinking into her own body — a mannerism with Valmiki — she followed him. She tried to cover her face with her upper cloth shying at such crowds of men and began to weep, uttering but one word : ‘Aryaputra’ and broke down. Her heart was full of gladness because she was able to see the face of her husband at last and the ‘Aryaputra’ expressed fullness of heart, the *Vismaya*, the *Harsha* (joy) and the *Sneha* (friendliness) of the moment. What she received was a cruel burst of fire. Rama turned his face away from her and it took on harsh form. “I have killed the enemy, good lady, and the anger in my heart has gone. So has the humiliation I was feeling inside. Today, my *Paurusham* and my labour become fulfilled. My *Pratijna* has been carried out. When the Rakshasa carried you off the *Daiva* brought upon me a *Dosha* and with my human power that has been conquered¹, and the shame has been washed out through my *tejas*.” When he sees Sita *Mṛgīva utpulla nayanā āsrupariplutā*—Like a female deer opened her eyes full with tears—something like rancour grows upon him. The brows knit on his face and the eyes look aside. And, to Sita as she stood between the Vanaras and the Rakshasas he speaks harsh words. “I have not done any

1. Here is the opposition between the *Daiva* as value and the *Manusa* expressed by Rama which formerly Lakshmana used to flourish; this deserves to be noticed and properly weighted.

of these things for your sake. Sight of you hurts me as light does one who suffers from an eye-sore. Therefore, *Tad gacchahi abhyanujnātā yatheṣṭam janakātmaje etā daśa diśo bhadre*—You have my permission to go where you like. I have no need for you—*Kāryamasti na me trayā*. For who born of a great Kula and proud of himself will take back a woman who has lived in another's house : *Rāvaṇānka paribhraṣṭām dṛṣṭam duṣṭena cakṣuṣā*—One who is thrown out of Ravana's lap ; one who has been looked on by and with evil eyes. You are free to do whatever you like, go wherever you like from here—*Nāsti me tvaiyabhiṣvangaḥ yatheṣṭam gamyatām itah*—I shall no more take you into my arms. He does not stop there. "You may live with any one you like. Choose Lakshmana or Bharata as it pleases you or Sugriva or Vibhishana Live with any of them. You are a beautiful woman and Ravana has cast his eyes on you". Rama could not certainly have been happy speaking the words.

The shock of such harshness from Raghava spoken in anger hurts the poor woman. She had not heard such words before spoken by men ; they were spoken savagely by her own husband now to her. She was filled with shame. Her eyes filled with tears at these words sharp as arrows. They fell on her face. With a slow and broken voice she said : *Kim mām asadrṣam vākyam śrotradāruṇam, rūkṣam śrāvayase vīra prākṛtaḥ prākṛtām iva*—What words do I hear, O valiant one, unworthy of you and me ? harsh to the ears and rude ; like those from a boor to another boor—spoken as by an uncultivated boor to an an other uncultivated one. I am not what you think and describe. I thought you would not need any swearing to vouch for my character. Seeing the behaviour of some single woman you speak in suspicion of the entire class : *Prīṭhakaḥ strīṇāṃ pracāreṇa, jātim tām pariśankase* — magnificent — Having learned of some woman or women you suspect the whole class of women. My body might have been touched when I was not in possession

of myself. I was no free agent then. The fault is not mine but of the Daiva. My mind has ever been under my control and my heart has always been taken up with you ; when I got into other hands *Parādḥīneṣu gātreṣu kiṁ kariṣyāmi anīśvarā*—My body was in the hands of an other. What could I do not mistress of myself. We have grown up together long and have had relations with each other and if you do not recognise me today I am finished. You need not have sent Hanuman to me ; you should have left me to die in Lanka. Why did you not forsake me then ? Hanuman is witness to say how I lived there. Life has no value for me when you suspect me. You have got into a fit of anger. I have had a great father and my life and character have not been properly valued by you. My hand which you took when I was a girl has not given you proof of my faith. My faith and character you have thrown behind out of sight.

There was nothing left for Sita to do. These words were uttered describing the extreme pain of a great woman in distress. Weeping and with words choking her voice, she said, "*Citām me kuru saumitre vyanasyāsyā bheṣajam, mithyopa ghātopahatā nāham jīvitum utsahe*"—Make me a pyre, Saumitre. That is medicine for sorrow. I am smitten with false allegation and I have no zest for living. Lakshmana was in distress.

This public humiliation and rejection by a husband who had spoken so fulsomely all along, has now lost his love for the wife has driven her to the only decision an honourable woman can come to. She decides to enter fire. Lakshmana looked at the face of his brother. It did not show any change or relax. He piles up fuel and makes a fire. Sita bent her face ; slowly went round Rama, went round the fire ablaze, bowed to the Gods and the Brahmins and bringing her palms together (*anjaliḥ*) spoke these words near the fire :

*Yatha me hṛdayam nityam nāpasarpātī Rāghavāt
Tathā lokasya sākṣī mām sarvataḥ pātu pāvakah, etc.*

If my heart has always cherished Raghava you, purifying fire, the living witness ever of things happening on earth, may protect me.

and she entered the flaming fire, lone except in the purity of her heart. All standing around were overwhelmed. This prayer was to the Fire and the appeal was that she may be protected by the fire. The fire-god did not burn her body but let her emerge unhurt. Rather he makes a present of her to Rama before the host of men, vouching for her chastity and cleanliness of character.

Rama was feeling relieved. He declared to Sita that at no time had he any doubt or uncertainty about her Vritta or of any violation of her virtue. The Rakshasa could not have had any success with her, howmuchsoever he desired her or whatever temptations he offered to her. When all speak about her chastity and nobility and the fire-god has borne witness to this Rama feels happy. Tears well up in his eyes. *Viśuddhā triṣu lokéṣu*—Clean and pure in all the three worlds. Sita does not have any taint of sin. If I had taken back Janaki without this proof and clearing of character the world would have blamed me ; — that Rama, son of Dasaratha too fondly took her back who had been an inmate of Ravana's *antahpura* (inner apartments) for a long time. The world wanted some public proof. *Pratyayārtham tu lokānām trayāṇām satya samsrayah*—That the three worlds should get a full proof of the truth. What other protection does Sita need ? *Rakṣitām svena tejasā*—Protected by her own lustre. The wicked Ravana could not ever impress her mind. He cannot outrage her even like the sea does not outflow the shore. Sita is to me what the Prabhā is to Bhāskara. She is the supreme embodiment of my Kirti and I accept her.

To compare this situation with the one in the Uttara-kanda is to pass from an epic tension and glory to a condition of mind at least in Sita to fatigue and loss of all zest for life. . . Lava and Kusa have sung the glory of the Ramayana Katha to Rama. The truth is vouchsafed that they are his children

by Sita. Valmiki is asked to fetch Sita to the open assembly at the sacrifice; he will accept her if she will declare her innocence and cleanliness in the presence of all assembled. It is *śodhana* again. She is asked to repeat the proof and evidence of her character. It is her husband who asks her to do it. Well, *Tathā kariṣyate sītān daivatām hi pati striyā*—So will Sita do. To women their husbands are god. Right behind Valmiki Sita came—*Anvagacchat avāṅgmukhī*—Followed him with bent face. Rama gives clear instructions here. He is asking her to clear herself to satisfy popular opinion. All look on. Sita, *Kāshayavāsini*, looks on all those of the earth and heavens who are present there, holds her palms wide and turning her face to the gods speaks the words which clear her. She speaks no other words, does not raise her face; is taken up with deep sorrow and the sadness of life on earth. She has taken her decision. This prayer wells out from her. The three stanzas here send out her prayer to Mother Earth to open out to receive her if she has been pure of heart. She has known nobody else in her heart and affection. Her mind, deed and word always have adored Rama. Even in the farthest limits of her mind no thought for another has been entertained by her. As Sita has called out Mother Earth opens out from under—clasps her in her arms and takes her home back into the Earth. Mother and daughter—they are symbols of suffering, endurance and forgiveness—and the form of Sita goes out of the sight of men for ever. Sad and impressive as this scene is—its is a different flavour. It has not the intensity and passion, the compelling force and charge of the earlier prayer. Poor Sita is put to grief unnecessarily and she prefers death to continuation. It does not stand out in imagination as an event, in that kind great and glorious for its is a different peak and height. There Sita had to speak to establish her trust in him and express her heart that longed for him under the stress and strain of a whole year. She could see that the lips that uttered those harsh words were bursting inside with pent-up feeling. A public act was needed for both of them.

Under such circumstances both he and she knew that a clean and pure soul had nothing to fear as issues from a fire-ordeal. She chose the ordeal to prove to him and to the world her loyalty and faith. Love of life was still left to her. The steel in the character of Rama stands high almost in him whose will and unselfishness are willing to pay the highest price that mankind can exact, from men and women with a brightness of character and in the vindication of what the best of men of those days could accept as Dharma. In the latter case Sita sees clearly that the cause is very much more personal; and, she is, by this time, feeling tired of being called upon to vindicate herself before all kinds of men again and again. There can be no end to this kind of feeling; and, it is likely her time was coming near when the curtain will ring down on the Ramayana scene in its final phase.

6. HANUMAN

Hanuman is the next most illustrious person : from Kishkindha Kanda onwards. When Rama and Lakshmana had been directed to seek the aid of Sugriva at Rushyamuka for success in the discovery and rescue of Sita and Lakshmana was about to be sent to negotiate (a meeting) with the other side¹, Sugriva commissions Hanuman to meet them, find out who they are and what are their intentions, seeking their aid in regaining his position and fortune. Hanuman meets them and states to them his purpose in meeting them. His exposition impresses Rama. When Hanuman details the pass to which Sugriva has been driven by Vali, Rama expresses his admiration for the Hanuman's Samskrit speaking—*Vācām kalyāṇīm* of the North—which is encomium indeed. He comments on his courtesy and skill, tells Lakshmana no prince who has such a spo-

1. Here Rama is the person who is seeking aid and asylum. The words are *Sugrīvam nātham icchati*—Desires to have Sugriva for Master (Protector).

kesman and agent to represent him need be unsure of success, incidentally telling us what qualities in Valmiki's valuation make for accomplishment in a speaker. He comments on his courtesy and skill. He has been won over. He whom we were seeking has come to us. Speak to him Saumitre. They have desired to seek asylum with Sugriva and the latter has come to them as friend. Hanuman is told that they will do what he says. From the first the brothers and Hanuman are struck with each other's personality, and bearing; their features and assurance convince Hanuman of their capacity and ability to carry out a task.

Soon friendships are sworn and promises given and taken. Vali is killed and Sugriva is installed on the throne. The delay in the execution of Sugriva's side of the promise has been smoothed by Hanuman waking Sugriva in time from his pleasures to his responsibilities. Hanuman is entrusted with the duty of collecting the Vanara army and organizing the scouts. When Sugriva chooses Hanuman to proceed South along with Angada and other powerful elders, Rama feels that this choice was the likeliest to bear fruit and that Sugriva is doing that with an inner certainty that Hanuman will be the man to fulfil the task. It is he who leads the army when it is tired and worn and parched in the throat, i. e., into the grotto of Svayamprabha—and describes to her their mission and present need. When they are all led out and landed near the sea they were nearer accomplishment of it and it is only the sea they had to cross to find Sita. That puts enthusiasm now into Angada himself.

A little before that could be done it is Hanuman that had to break the likely defection of Angada and his group of followers — who, feeling that the time given to them by Sugriva is over, are unwilling to go back to announce failure and take punishment from the king. Hanuman has quite to avert a mutiny in the party and win them back to Sugriva. The words he speaks to them mark him out as an able 'strike buster'. He tries to divide them and warn them against con-

sequences, warns Angada against giving a wrong lead and getting into a state of no return. Hard are his words. He does not mince them. Whatever other people do he and the four other seniormost will never be party to such attitudes and resolutions to defect. There is the final threat that Lakshmana's arrows will find them out wherever they are and destroy them, they cannot hope to be safe in the valley kingdom if they again go into Svayamprabha's cave.

Just then they get unexpected help from Sampati who actually tells them where Sita now is and what actually has to be done by them. With his sharp eyes, Sampati seems to see Sita pining as prisoner in Ravana's gardens. There can no longer be lassitude. But the question now is who, among the monkeys, should cross the broad sea to Lanka: a forbidding, terrifying prospect. When no other could measure up to capacity and as Angada the crown prince and leader should not be risked but be spared, the wise Jambavan suggests to them the one man who can accomplish the flight and do what is needed. Hanuman was sitting apart not uttering a word while others spoke about their respective abilities. Jambavan was the oldest among the monkeys—the one who had seen the churning of the milky ocean and the incarnation of Vishnu as Trivikrama. If only he had the strength now he had then when he could traverse 21 times the known earth he would do it. Hanuman is the one who can do anything being gifted as he is with the powers of his great father or of Garuda himself. It is Jambavan that gives us the life-account of Hanuman as the son of Vayu from Anjana and how he had been blessed by Brahma and Indra with invincibility on one side and Sveccha Marana on the other. By some curse as it were — as, later, it is described in the Uttara Kanda — Hanuman has moments of amnesia and if only he is reminded of his power and gets enthused he can exercise the powers. It is Hanuman who remembers that Matanga's asrama was free from Vali's incursions and helps his master and friend Sugriva to find asylum there.

Hanuman now realises that he can save the situation. He undertakes the task, grows into full size to the astonishment of the entire troupe—a glory of expansive energy and power—climbs up the peaks of Mahendra and flies across to Lanka. At some points his beautiful shadow on the waters was ten yojanas broad and 30 long. “*Daśa yojana vistīrṇam-trimśad yojanam āyatā, chāyā vānara simhasya jahe cārutarā bhavat.*” Then changing into smaller size he goes round the whole of Lanka through the pleasure-chambers and dance-halls in Ravana’s palace and finally locates Sita in Asoka Vana, surrounded by the Rakshasi watch and ward. It is a great passage. He quietly, humbly and skilfully introduces himself to Sita as messenger from Rama; delivers the gift from her husband; assures her aid and rescue quite soon and gets back to tell the waiting Vanara friends of his success. Even without the incident of creating trouble in the Asoka Vana, meeting Ravana and setting fire to Lanka, the exploit of Hanuman of crossing the sea and succeeding in the task is a breath-taking enterprise. How the party goes back to Sugriva and Rama and with what joy and promise of action and success is quite a description. This makes the fifth Kanda — as it is described—the most beautiful, i. e., The Sundarakanda. The one who compasses all this is Hanuman, the ablest and the strongest among the monkeys. What he could accomplish and what faith and resources of heart and head he had are presented to us in this Kanda. A firmer and finer relationship between Rama and Hanuman is established. They become devoted to each other.

When the bridge is built and the monkey army marches into Lanka for a seige and actually joins battle with the Rakshasa army it is given to Hanuman to kill a number of leading warriors. He actually strikes at Ravana and Kumbhakarna. The exchange of blows with palm and fist proves Ravana as the abler of the two and establishes what a mighty warrior Rama has to contend against. It is Hanuman who twice saves Lakshmana and the monkey army from the effects

of the Sakti weapon used by Indrajit and Ravana. A great episode speaks of Susena, calling out to those about him to ask if Hanuman is still alive and anywhere nearby. When asked why Hanuman is remembered rather than the other greater ones, Susena says: "If Hanuman is alive, he will bring all back to life in Lanka." Hanuman needed this praise to kindle him into activity and he goes flying back to the Sanjivana hill to fetch the herbs which had medicinal power to revive Lakshmana and the army. Once again we see Hanuman forgetting the name of the herb; but luckily his physical prowess makes him pluck a part of the entire hill and carry it on his shoulders to Lanka to enable Susena to pick out the herb.

Hanuman must have been impressed by the wealth and luxury and the beauty of such a gorgeous scene as the Panabhumi in Ravana's palace. But his one thought was Sita: *Ravaṇāntahpuram sarvam drśyate na tu Jānakī*—something that at once tormented him and filled him with relief.

But at one moment he was smitten with sorrow and regret which is a compliment to his character. When he does not see Janaki anywhere there: *Jagāma mahatīm cintām, dharmasādhvasa śankitah*—He gets into a great worry; doubting the morale of his action. The ethic of whether it was right for him to witness so many women in such condition in a private harem where he had no right of entry and which he should not see fills him with a sense of shame and guilt. He was smitten with care and conscience if he did the right thing looking on so particularly at another's women in such condition. The women are asleep. Can one look at them at all? Is not Dharmalopa caused? Immediately an excuse flashes to him and argues him back to guiltlessness. He had to search for Sita. She was declared to be in Ravana's palace. A woman should be sought among women only and not among deer; but these women were not she. He was sure however of one thing: He did not look at them with a wishful eye or viciously. It is only when one's mind gets deflected through

desire it does wrong. He is sure, he never once was so moved or deflected. He should therefore be free from a sense of guilt and should not convict himself of unworthy conduct. No, he has not cast eyes lustfully upon the women. I have looked about with some other purpose in view—not the least Vikriti has arisen in my mind. This major premise of all moral consideration comes in to his aid. His mind is well regulated and controlled. Where else could I search for Sita? My mind has been pure; clear now. Sita is not in Ravana's palace and with this conviction Hanuman gets out to discover where she might be.

This is an episode which tells us how meticulous Hanuman was in matters of conduct. From the moment he met Rama and Lakshmana right till the last moments when he is rewarded by Sita in Ayodhya we see him in many places of trust where his mind gets tested for right and wrong — and on all occasions—even when desperately he thinks of putting an end to his own life for failure or in a situation when he has to handle fellow-monkeys under the influence of Angada near Svayamprabha's cave, we find him thoughtful and wise. When he offers to take Sita to Rama the comparison he gives is that he will take her there as Agni carries Havis to Indra: *Prāpayiṣyāmi śakrāya havyam hutam iva analah*. He never hustles a thing. Even when he does not quite like a decision he will much rather be not fully committed to the other side while he thinks there is something positive to be said from the doing of it, e. g., in the acceptance of Vibhishana by Rama. He has a sense of personality, situation or occasion and will react worthily to win for himself a place equal to the highest in the Ramayana—trusted, respected and loved by all.

The whole purpose of the flight to Lanka seems to go waste when Indrajit creates a magic head of Sita and cuts it off in the presence of the entire Vanara army. Hanuman tries to prevent him and does not succeed. When the act is done he is one of the most dejected. Not one of them is happy to convey the news to Rama. Rama himself loses interest in the

battle. Vibhishana has to tell them that Sita is not really hurt and it is all the trickery of his nephew.

Just as it was given to Hanuman to carry the news of her husband whose love to her knows no bounds and who will be hastening to liberate her, it is given to him later to communicate to her the news that the enemy Rakshasas are all killed and Rama has won a victory over the enemies which makes Sita feel joy beyond bounds. If only men and women could be patient and live in hope, the worst fortune is likely to change for the better. A hundred years is not too long to wait: *eti jīvantam ānando naram varṣa śatādapi*—If a person lives for 100 years, it will be given to him once to experience joy. Hope is said ‘to draw nourishment even from death’.

When affairs at Lanka are settled and rounded off the whole party hastens back to Ayodhya on the Pushpaka and arrives at Bharadvajasrama. Rama calls upon Hanuman to go to Nandigram to see if Bharata was really expecting him. If by any sign—look, change of colour, talk or behaviour—Bharata looked like continuing as king of Ayodhya Rama will not like to disturb him. Hanuman has to bring news about the reality of the situation to him if Bharata is desirous of being king himself. *Rājyārthīcet svayam bhavet*—If he desires the kingdom for himself—i. e., Bharata’s *ingita*—when the news reaches him that Rama has returned. It is thus Hanuman who takes the glad news of victory and Rama’s return to Bharata as on an earlier occasion he took glad news to both Sita and Rama. The sight of Bharata and his joy overwhelms him and the treatment accorded to him personally is so extraordinarily warm and affectionate that Bharata who had been *Bhartṛ vyaśana karśitṁ, papātu sahasā hr̥ṣṭo*—He had been eaten up with sorrow for his brother. He now was heartily glad and fell on the ground. He is so happy to hear the tidings that he does not know what to give as prize to him. He said, ‘I give you cows a hundred thousand and a hundred villages, well adorned and well-born young women (and to

Hanuman, this !)—for bringing me this dear news.” The opulence of the statement and the sight should have so overwhelmed Hanuman that for once Hanuman does not carry out the commands of Rama: rather a thing to do ! The act of obedience expresses itself rather in accompanying Bharata to welcome him home.

Rama and Sita were seated on the throne and Rama handed over to Sita a great necklace of pearls to be given as gift to whomsoever she likes most for qualities like :

*Pradehi subhage hāram yasya tuṣṭāsi bhāmini
tejo dhṛtiḥ yaśah dākṣyam
sāmarthyam vinayah nayah
pauruṣam vikramo buddhiḥ
yasmin etani nityadā
dadau sā vāyuputrāya
tam hāram asitekṣaṇā*

Give it to anyone whose conduct and quality have satisfied you. Lustre, courage, good name, efficiency, capability, humility, refinement, manly prowess, achievement, wisdom — were qualities she found in him. The jewel she therefore gave to Vāyuputra, i. e., Hanuman.

The qualities are real attributes of Hanuman and no one in the company could be jealous of such honour. How gorgeously these qualities run similar to what Valmiki lists when he asks Narada for the best of men !

Yet withal Hanuman is modest essentially when Sita asked him about his own strength and powers. He gave her a demonstration of them. When she asked Hanuman about the strength of Sugriva’s army he said:

*Madviśiṣṭāśca tulyāśca
samti taṭṭra vanaukasāh,
mattah pratya varah kaścin
nāsti sugrīva sannidhau*

There are those superior or equal to me in Sugriva's court but none inferior to me.

His prowess as he grows in size before the Vanara army is no show off but was just then needed to fill the vanaras with confidence and to vivify faith and hope in them and in himself for the largeness of the task.

It was given to Hanuman to remain on earth as long as the Rama Katha and the fame of Ramayana lasts. He is one of India's Ciranjivins.

7. RAVANA

The biggest factor in the Ramayana story on one count is Ravana. He is far older than Rama or Dasaratha. If one of the stories of the Uttarakanda be evidence, Dasaratha's forbear Anaranya tells Ravana that one of his own descendants will destroy him in the coming years. The birth of Rama himself is represented as due to the need to destroy Ravana. In the boon granted by Brahma to Ravana, no other class of being but man can kill him. It is thus that Vishnu has to be born as man and he does it as Rama, son to Dasaratha. This purpose seems to grind throughout the story directly or indirectly. It is the Rakshasa-badha that is continually taking Rama out; now by Visvamitra and later on as wanderer in Dandakarnya when the Rishis in the hermitages or in other groups invoke his aid and they drive him to Janasthana. Some writers make of this a purpose and elevate the function of Manthara herself. Indeed, when Bharata describes his mother as hard and harsh to Bharadvaja, Bharadvaja tells him¹ not

1. Even as there are writers who do elevate Ravana. By deliberate enmity against Rama whom he knows as an incarnation of Vishnu Ravana desires release for himself from the curse by the worst act against a husband by the capture of Rama's wife. For then punishment will be visited on him surely and he will get back to the feet of his Lord (The Jaya-Vijaya story).

to be unkind to his mother; for great good is going to come to all by this exile of Rama. But this is looking at the story—from the wrong end of the telescope and not like the all-too-human story that men of literature like to cherish it as: and as possibly the version Valmiki presented—Rama himself does not believe he is a God at any point—nor Lakshmana, nor Sita. He knows himself as just the son of Dasaratha, a Kshatriya and no more. Even when comparisons are made about the power and heroism of Rama the comparisons liken him to and do not equate him with Vishnu.—*viṣṇoriva* or *deva-kalpam* or *vasāvopamam* or *varuṇopamam*. Practically in all those contexts the earlier Gods of the Indian pantheon Indra and Varuna are associated. The Brahma episodes plough a different line. Brahma had created the mess by conferring upon Ravana indestructibility by any hand. Ravana had neglected to mention man; and, he has to clear the mess. The boon and the curse system is used as an element of special teleology and is made to be almost the main motif of the story. All those Raksasas against whom Rama is asked to fight are related to Ravana. Maricha, Khara, Subahu were such. Surpanakha is his sister and Ravana and Kumbhakarna are part of the Avatara Katha which speaks of Jaya and Vijaya as taking three hostile births before they are taken back to Vishnu's favour again.

That is an other story. The whole of India had learnt to be afraid of Ravana and it became a part of Rama's task and exploit to kill him though he does not know of it till he comes to Panchavaṭi. That brute event of carrying off Sita and Rama's need to recover her would be enough purpose for the Ramayana to record it. The Uttarakanda particularly narrates the evil story of Ravana's life and of his brother Kubera whom he had robbed of the Pushpaka, married Mandodari by pressure and got Indrajit by her as son. Kumbhakarna was a formidable brother. Ravana enriched Lanka to make it as flourishing and beautiful a city as any capital of an emperor could be and built his palaces on the peaks of hills with

impregnable fortresses all round, the Southern Sea surrounding it like an impassable moat.¹ Through *tapas* he gained powers and he could assume any form he liked and any moment invoke spirits and supernatural forces to confer on him any thing he prayed for. In the true Rakshasa way he could grab everything as he did the most beautiful women on whom he set eye.

He seems to have pleased all about him, even those who did not accept all his opinions and ways; but all live in fear of him. His army was organised and equipped superbly. The only occasion when he seems to have met superior strength this time again the evidence is from Uttarakanda—is the episode of Vali whom he wanted to subdue and take advantage of at prayer. Vali saw that Ravana was standing behind him with evil intent and when he bent over him Vali took him under his arms and carried him over the four² seas, limp and helpless and dropped him at Kishkindha. Ravana saw how much more powerful Vali was than himself, swore friendship to him and wished to render him service whenever required.

Is it not likely that Jambavan, Sugriva and others have seen and known him if that was true? Jatayu died before he could say anything. Only Sampati has knowledge of him. They know him to be wicked and wilful and a great menace to the Asrama life and the order of Yajna and Yāga, the practice of the Aryans in the North. He was conversant with the Vedas. It fell to the lot of Rama to call him to account and destroy him. Rama does not show the least little fear about confronting him or anyone else. Until the fight with Rama was on neither hero seems to have faced a warrior like the other. Probably the panel in strength and prowess—among the living—marks Ravana second only to Rama for he could beat down Hanuman in the course of an

1. Though whether the Island is modern Ceylon is long in controversy.

2. Three we know; which was the fourth in India?

engagement. Rama was master of himself and the military arts. He could sustain himself untiredly on the battle-field and when he saw Ravana deprived of his charioteer, his chariot damaged and his weapons broken he called upon Ravana to go and rest that evening and come back the next day refreshed and fit for a fight. If it was sportsmanship for Rama it was humiliation for Ravana; — experienced for the first time in his life. This instilled into him almost a fear of life which he had not felt before. He now remembers almost all his past and sees a concentration of all the curses overhanging him to materialise in this encounter with Rama. When Khara was destroyed with a whole army and Surpanakha rates her brother in the open assembly at Lanka he looked on unconcerned. When such an affront has been offered¹, naturally he has to take action. The worst feature of Ravana was his addiction to women. The description of Sita's charms by his sister inflamed his desire. He thought out a plan and with the unwilling complicity of Maricha executed it.

Ravana had many wrong episodes with women. In the last days memories of them and of the curses which he did not bother about early came back to his mind crowding — when he is face to face with the one man who was more than a match to him. The destruction of the entire Rakshasa army made clear to him that Brahma's boon was expressly inapplicable in his encounter with Rama and that another curse brought on him the Vanaras; that Vedavati was almost born as Sita and her curse that if ever he touched an unwilling woman he would be destroyed.² Rama seemed to be that descendent of the Ikshvaku line who should bring death on him which

1. Her observations have some fine maxims of state which are interesting even today, e.g., the one which says that subjects do not help a king who is violent, chary in payment, insolvent, proud and deceitful — even in his direct need : *Tikṣṇam alpa Pradātāram. . . pāṛthivam.*
2. This luckily protected her.

Anaranya had foretold. But to the last moment he would not give up his desire for Sita whose beauty and desirability grew with every look like an 'increase of appetite.' He ordered Sita to be taken round the Vanara camp where the brothers lay looking like dead. Surama, the wife of Vibhishana, tells her that the brothers are in a state of unconsciousness only and not dead.

To the last extremity he went desiring to kill her who was cause of all his misfortune; he was just induced by a wise friend that it will not be worthy and proper for a learned man and a true warrior like him to kill a woman. Was Sita really the cause of the death of his son and brothers? It was himself. Ravana saw the truth of it. He was a great warrior and to the last he fought manfully against Rama. When his charioteer saw that Ravana's hands had weakened and the horses were tired he turned away the chariot from the battle-front. This made Ravana angry that he was made to look like a coward. He raged against his charioteer charging him with treachery. But soon, when he was told that it was part of a charioteer's responsibility to save the master from an ugly and weakening situation and that only his loyalty to him took him away from the field just to give him rest so as to refresh the master and rest the tired horses, Ravana could appreciate the action of his servant and honoured him with the gift of a necklace. He encouraged and filled with confidence the great warriors of his kingdom when they were chosen to lead the Rakshasa army; praised and flattered them, gave them gifts and personally patted them on the back — a mark of honour which from so great a man and a victor against the Gods — made them willingly get into the field and distinguish themselves. His qualities as a fighter are spoken about highly by Rama who realises that nothing less than the Brahmastra can lay him.

Ravana fell and was mourned by all. His was a magnificent personality. Even Rama is struck with his extraordinary presence as Hanuman had been impressed by it when he first

visited Lanka. His virtues and qualities were many making him dear to all his people. He seems to have been a great giver to those loyal to him and carried out his wishes; even as he was a deadly and unforgiving foe to those who opposed him.

He had many women whom he had captured or won, or gifted to him or who had come attracted to him. Mandodari, his chief queen, was second only to Sita in beauty and was an honourable and affectionate wife. Ravana says it is the Rakshasa way of life to capture a desired woman. He treated them well. The revelry and the orgies he indulged in were phenomenal and we get the picture of one such when Hanuman saw them sleeping stretched about in his halls. That was what daily went on in Ravana's halls and they seemed to like it. They knew his weaknesses and even his wickedness; but their sorrow at the death of such a lover was genuine as the scenes round his dead body proved; the lamentations of Mandodari in particular are eloquent and speak of a great love by a woman who has tried to dissuade her husband from a fateful infatuation for a chaste and unwilling woman: all which show that he had built up a vast world of power and loyalty for himself in his palace as in his kingdom. Gods and men had lived in fear of him and the world had despaired of ever being free from his menace and inroads. When he was killed it could breathe freer. The time limit also of Rama's exile was coming to an end and the principal part of the Ramayana story could gather to its close with Ravana's defeat and death which is the outstanding purpose of at least the second motif of the work as it is necessary for the release of Sita.

8. A FEW OTHER CHARACTERS

A. MARICHA has been featured as participating in the progress of events of the Ramayana : at least twice : the first time—obstructing the sacrifice of Visvamitra ; in guarding it

Rama used against him an Astra which swept him off *sampūrṇam yojanaśśatah kṣiptah sāgarasamplave*. Off and on in later days he is described as taking many forms and disturbing the Asramas in the Dandakaranya. Lakshmana has more than a suspicion that the golden deer which so took the hearts of his sister-in-law and brother could be a wife of Maricha himself. Real deer approached it and its smell frightened them off. He himself felt like eating them but it would hurt his role then and so he could not. But quite before he agreed to take that shape he had learnt the lesson of his life against facing Rama or Lakshmana. A number of other details of Rama's character are put forth to Ravana against the deprecations by the latter. He should not be treated lightly he says as one given up by his father. He had begun more seriously with very wholesome advice :

*Sulabhāh puruṣā rājan, satatam priya vādinah,
Apriyasya ca pathyasya, vaktā śrotā ca durlabhah*

It is easy, O king, to get men who speak agreeably always; but such speakers and listeners are difficult to get who will speak wholesome but unpleasant truth.

an advice true for all time in all places, bearing repetition in every age and situation ; so rarely spoken nor so definitely. If you essay this enterprise no Rakshasa in the world can be saved. When Rama gets angry he will destroy the entire species of the Rakshasas, and you are invoking peril to your own life. You are thinking of an act which destroys yourself, your people and your kingdom. This is frank advice and caution and as fearlessly spoken as anything spoken to Ravana any time ; but Ravana did not heed the words. Maricha saw that Ravana would kill him if he did not carry out his nephew's demand. Being killed by Rama's arrows he deemed a worthier way of dying. The feeling bore fruit in his case as it did in the end for Ravana and so

of all the evil men who took up his cause and fought for him. Maricha was known to be good at *tapas*. At first it was used for wicked purposes, but latterly, he had been chastened to the point of realising the proper values of life.

B. For a long while SUGRIVA and VALI were good brothers. Each was strong. It is when Mayavi attacked Vali that he pursued him even through the mouth of the cave through which he escaped. Sugriva was to watch and wait there till he came back. He waited a long time and when blood flowed in large quantity through the mouth of the cave Sugriva took his brother for dead and did not know what to do. Either he persuaded himself to believe or believed really that his brother was dead. He closed the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder, came to Kishkindha and became its king. In course of time Vali came back and was angry with what he felt was treachery to him. He drove his brother out of the kingdom and was cruel and vindictive. He deprived him of the company of his wife Ruma and took her for himself. He was driven from pillar to post and only the chance memory of Hanuman saved him his life at Matangasrama which was out of bounds for Vali. The belief of the bravest heroes of the time prevented him from risking his life against the prohibitions of a Rishi.

Vali was the stronger of the brothers and Sugriva lived in mortal fear of him. Vali must have been a powerful and popular leader. We do not know how Ruma felt about him. Tara's loyalty to him was great. When Vali lived, he was her husband and master and when he was dead she became wife to Sugriva, the younger brother, her Devara. Both brothers had great regard for Tara and her skill, her wisdom and her understanding both of human nature and of statecraft. Angada had been brought up tenderly and was handed over by Vali to Sugriva. Tara loved her son dearly. In valour and strength Angada took after his father and seems to have had a feeling that his uncle had no love for him. A

person so unfraternal as to take his own brother for dead and rule in his absence, making himself master—both of the kingdom and the wife of his elder brother and who ruled the land with a stern hand could not have mercy for him or fail to use any chance to destroy the nephew. Vali must have had a big following in the Vanara land. We see how—except four or five persons—the rest of the leaders induced themselves to desert the camp of the seekers after Sita ; their clear loyalty and convictions were with Angada. Hanuman had to use every trick of a politician, commander and minister ; and, *Sāma* and *Bheda* to keep them on Sugriva's side. Even to Angada he had to say he was mistaking the character of his uncle who was not naturally cruel ; loved his brother and really loved his nephew and always deferred to the wishes and advice of Tara—all arguing for the point, that there need be no suspicion that everything was not right with Sugriva. One point intrigues us also. Credited as Sugriva was with a full knowledge of the geography of the world as Kabandha had described earlier, he should know in what direction Lanka was at which Ravana was king. His packing the group of searchers with the mighties in his army—Hanuman, Jambavan, Tara and Mynda and Angada as their leader and the instructions given to Hanuman made even Rama see that he and this party would be the most likely to succeed in the effort. This proves that Sugriva knew his business, yet he pretended to Rama and Lakshmana that he was ignorant of the actual situation of Lanka.¹ If Rama was directed to Vali instead of to Sugriva, Vali could help him more surely against Ravana to yield Sita. Vali says that himself. But would he be minded so ? Even if he helped in securing Sita would she be any safer in the hands of Vali ? On the other hand, Sugriva a brother who had his wife forcibly taken by his elder could be expected to have sympathy for an

1. Or, was Lanka itself an obscure place hidden somewhere in the valley as Dr. Mankad and others say ?

other in the same condition and more definitely expected to sympathise and make common cause with him. If Ravana lived entrenched in the fastnesses of a sea-girt island, a whole army had to march against it and Gods and Rishis seem to be behind the process. Kabandha does not for some reason give Rama details of Lanka. Naturally Rama makes alliance with Sugriva. This means help only if Vali is destroyed; and, quickly. No delays could be thought of. That is how Rama promises he will kill Vali that very day—*adyah*.

A point in the controversy over the centuries is the way in which Vali is killed by Rama. While the brothers were engaged in combat Rama took aim from the cover of a tree and shot him down. Rama could have killed Vali in open fight. Normally Rama would never do a thing like he did. But Vali was in Kishkindha at the head of a whole army; Rama would have to fight him for no personal grievance against him and knowing that Vali was stronger than Ravana himself he can have realised it would take time. Things had to be hurried and Rama had promised Sugriva to kill him immediately, even as earlier he had promised the hermits he would destroy the Rakshasas. All the adverse arguments used by later people were used by Vali himself and Vali could never believe that Rama who was famous (as a true Kshatriya in conduct and a great prince) will ever do an unrighteous thing. That is what he told Tara when she spoke to him of the promise of aid to Sugriva by Rama. Vali asks Rama why he should have hit him from cover in a cowardly way. No personal interest would be served. . . A monkey's meat is not even edible like even a *godha's* is. If Rama had applied to him he would get him his Sita. Rama answers him fully. Chief among the arguments are that Vali is an unrighteous man in that he annexed a younger brother's wife for pleasure; her who should be treated like a daughter; he himself was the agent of Bharata, the king of Ayodhya, to whom the whole country belongs and it is the best part of a Kshatriya's Dharma to kill wrongdoers. No hunter would consider, e. g., consulting

a wild animal its convenience or stand before it to kill it. He could use any method he liked in destroying it. That is the method he used in connection with a Sakhamriga. Sugriva was exiled wrongly and was deprived of home; cruel spite had kept him in fear of the brother all through. Life in fear is misery; to remove that he had undertaken to destroy him and as quickly as possible. Sugriva had sought refuge with him. It is part of Kshatriya's dharma to protect the person harassed:—all rather superior. None of these arguments may convince a modern mind. The thing happened and is a fact; Vali himself seems to have accepted the dispensation finally either because he was convinced or because of a sense that he had wronged Sugriva disproportionately; or, by a wisdom, that now that he was to die, it was necessary to hand over the kingdom, Tara and Angada to hands which should look after them without malice. Tara had argued for Sugriva with him before he left for the last fight and possibly he saw reason in her words. Above and beyond all that the personality of Rama must have borne him down as much as his arrow had laid him low. . . The killing had to be done quickly and was done according to the promise given by Rama to Sugriva almost as an exigency;—a crass event.

Negatively, if Vali was right men like Hanuman and Jambavan would have stayed with him and if Sugriva was wrong they would not have stayed with him and if Sugriva was wrong they would not have befriended him. Each of them had strength equal to that of an army—one through his illimitable strength and energy and the other through wisdom and experience of life from immemorial times.¹ Vali handed over to Sugriva before he passed away the necklace which gave him supernatural powers. It will, he said, make Sugriva strong and powerful for the wearing: so that one might say Vali died fully reconciled. What situation he accepted may be accepted by others. The case may possibly rest there.

1. This is beautifully rendered in *Setubandha* by Pravarasena.

C. VIBHISHANA and KUMBHAKARNA were different kinds of brother to Ravana — each loving him and having regard for him. They were aware of the strength and achievements of Ravana. Both knew that Ravana did a wrong thing bringing Sita to Lanka by force and against her will. Both were good warriors though Kumbhakarna was the fiercer with greater destructive energy and more truly a Rakshasa because he is described as drinking blood and eating up the enemies whom he had killed. But he boldly told his brother that they should have been consulted before he laid hands on Sita. Not once but twice. Ravana would not listen to reason or be lectured by anyone. Since Kumbhakarna decided to stay in Lanka¹, and if need be to fight for his brother, he did so. Vibhishana could not reconcile himself to his brother's wrong doing. In open assembly he counselled his brother to hand back Sita to Rama; and there was no chance of victory against Rama. Naturally, he was disliked. His nephew Indrajit used wrong language to him. Vibhishana asked him to behave; an irresponsible, immature youngster should not have been permitted to enter an assembly where wise men should assemble for counsel. But Ravana was angry also and spoke to him in scorn for being a *jnāti* (cousin), jealous of a brother's power and position and no well-wisher. He was actually asked to get out of Lanka. He went²; and one step further: he went to Rama's camp with four friends and sought refuge with him. The greater cause of complaint is that he became a Quisling.³ But he chose the side of right and against an evil man who had done a wrong thing abducting a good man's wife in his absence from home and so deserved punishment. Such a one did not deserve to be king bringing destruction on his people and land. On one side his

1. A comparative study of patriotism could be taken up with, say, Bhishma, Vibhishana, Brutus and Coriolanus as characters.
2. Yet what would have happened to a person like him in a modern State is anybody's guess.
3. Michael M. Dutt arraigns him for his being one in his *Meghanād Vadha*.

loyalty was to the right and on the other a wicked ruler deserved to be punished. It was the part of a righteous man to join in the punishment. That he was a Rajyakamuka also seems to be more or less accepted from the beginning.¹

In accepting Vibhishana Rama knows what he is doing. All in the Vanara Camp were against accepting him. Hanuman had escaped the order of death against him in Lanka's court through the counsel of Vibhishana that an agent or a messenger should not be put to death; and, about him other reports — even Surpanakha's—spoke well as an honest and righteous man. Even he had mental reservations about getting him into the camp. But Rama accepted him. He has sought asylum with me, said Rama, from a wicked brother who has ill-treated him and who has not listened to advice offered in all sincerity and righteousness. That if Ravana himself seeks asylum Rama will accept him easily is a monumental utterance.²

Vibhishana was loyal to Rama and gave him all the help necessary for victory. He knew the strength and weakness of all the Rakshasa heroes. He knew their ways and guiles. That is how he was able to suggest that Indrajit's Sakti had not killed Lakshmana for that *astra* does not kill. Lakshmana will come back to life if proper treatment is extended. Both then and when Ravana's Sakti has had the same effect on the army again a similar treatment is indicated. Sushena sends Hanuman to fetch the herbs from across the sea quickly to revive the heroes and the chiefs of the Vanara army. When Indrajit kills a mock Sita before the whole army and Rama is depressed it is Vibhishana that tells him that Ravana will never kill Sita for he was gone on her and he knew about curses on his brother against the violation of a chaste and unwilling

1. At one point in the fortunes on the battle-field Vibhishana says that at least he will have to do without a kingdom and Ravana has all that he can keep.
2. Suppose he did not return Sita? And, would anything different happen to her at the hands of Rama if he did ?

woman. Vibhishana roused Ravana to strike him with Sakti from which Lakshmana saved him. It is again Vibhishana that hurries Lakshmana to prevent Indrajit completing the Nikumbhila sacrifice undertaken by the young Rakshasa to destroy the enemy army. Lakshmana was thus able to finish Indrajit which was tantamount to weakening Ravana to the utmost. Rama will have to dispose off Ravana no doubt ; nor Sugriva, nor Hanuman, nor even Lakshmana would be equal to that task. Even for Rama it took full two days to do. He had to use all the arrows and *astras* he knew.¹

A very moving incident before that is a meeting between Vibhishana and Kumbhakarna. Vibhishana saw Rama was getting ready to meet Kumbhakarna. He thought better of the situation and himself took his mace and rushed against his brother. Kumbhakarna seems to be smitten with tenderness both for this brother advancing to fight him and with feeling certain that Lanka and the Rakshasa army will both be destroyed as a result of Ravana's conduct. So he says to his brother that among all the Rakshasas Vibhishana alone stood for truth and righteousness. The next lines are even more tender and are most surprising; as they are unexpected; You will have to live to continue the race, he said to Vibhishana: One does not know how happy he could be speaking those words for the next words urge him to action against the enemy. I am by nature fierce and, on the battlefield, I do not see who is of my side and who of the other. Pray get out of my path and save yourself,—and waves him off his path. Vibhishana tells him why he came to the side of Rama—to protect the Rakshasa Kula and goes out :

1. Helped by Indra and Garuda or not or by the suggestions of Matali or by the Aditya Hridaya — all of which sound not so authentic; for Rama knew the *astra* and that is the final stage. He had to use the most powerful *astra* he knew, i.e., the Brahmastra to bring down Ravana. Such items are the last resort always.

*Evam uktvāśrupurṇākso gadāpāṇih vibhīṣaṇah
Ekāntam āśrito bhūtvā cintāyāmāsa samsthitaḥ*

When Kumbhakarna had said this Vibhishana full of tears in his eyes and mace in hand sought a lone place, sat supporting himself with the mace.

a picture which one can never forget. This meeting between the brothers and the issue are a memorable incident in the history of the war in Lanka.

There was great lamentation when Ravana fell. Vibhishana's sorrow is as great and touching as that of the women who sat round him singing praises of their lord and the loss they had suffered;—Mandodari's most of all. She knew his strength and weakness and had spoken to him about the wrongness of his bringing Sita to Lanka. She speaks now how dear he was to her, how all their life and fortune was laid to waste now that he was dead leaving them all forlorn. Her sorrow is a heartrending piece of composition and occupies a whole Sarga. Vibhishana knew how great his brother was and was sad that he had brought down on himself this death; but at the end of the sorrow which was genuine — he was unsure whether the brother deserved to have funeral rites performed as duty towards a worthy Chief. Of course, he deserves them says Rama and commends him to do them. Rama knows how great a warrior he was and after all no enmity should be pursued after the death of the person¹, and his sense of values indicate to us the graciousness of a true man of culture and character, making for the Ramayana a point or two in the ethics its hero represents.

Vibhishana seems to be as much awed by the personality and greatness of Rama as anybody else. Even when he has

1. One has only to contrast the heartless, inhuman conduct of Achilles against Hector in the *Iliad*. Or, remember what tragedy follows in *Antigone*.

become the king of Lanka, he does not want to protest against the decision of Rama when Rama accuses Sita as *Ravaṇāṅka paribhraṣṭām*. He knew how chaste and clean Sita was in Lanka and how Ravana did not or could not violate her. He could vouch for it. Vibhishana also tried to make Rama accept some small token of gratitude to him and stay just one night as guest. Rama would have none of it. Let all the leaders of the Sugriva army be treated to food and drink and to bath. Bharata is waiting for me; I cannot tarry here for bath or dress; I must hurry. The way to Ayodhya is long and difficult and I must hurry up to keep my word to Bharata. The Puspaka is offered by Vibhishana for doing the journey and is got ready. Vibhishana, Sugriva, Hanuman all go to Ayodhya and when they see how Bharata has been looking after the kingdom in the absence of his brother himself living like Rama did in the forest looking *Brahmarṣi sama tejam*. Ruling the country under the aegis of Rama's sandals they see what greatness could be and do. They see *Bharatam draṣṭvā bhrātṛ vatsalam, mumucuh vānarā bāṣpam rākṣasaśca Vibhiṣaṇah*, The Vanara chief Sugriva and the Rakshasa chief Vibhishana see the brotherly affection and loyalty of Bharata and shed tears—a situation which they could not dream of in their own lives.

D. VISVAMITRA. The story of Visvamitra is woven into the Ramayana both as part of an education and preparation for Rama and for telling us how important a personality he was in himself. His is a great name in the history of Indian culture and he is perhaps the only person who through deliberate choice built himself into a great personality through challenging established authority. Belonging to the Kshatriya clan and possessed of strength and skill in arms, he becomes master over all the kings and ranges himself against Vasishtha¹, the leader of the Brahmin class

1. The two cannot have been the same person between the Vedic and

for a cow which belongs to him. He sheds blood and causes misery to Vasishtha by killing all his sons, but he finds that Vasishtha's Brahmada is far more powerful than all his powers and decides to become a Brahmarsi. Like it happens to many great Rishis in the course of their *tapas*, he is tempted with Menaka and succumbs. When after a fill of pleasure he realises the mistake he becomes careful and resists Rambha who is sent next. And when in a final act of fulfilment he shows kindness, forgiveness and self-control he is accepted as a Brahmarsi. No other example stands out to represent such striking individuality and indomitable personality as his in India. Obviously there had been rivalries between the Kshatriya and Brahmin classes for power and dominance.¹ He was master in the use of every weapon and in the knowledge of all the *astras* — both of Sandhana and of Upasamhara kinds. When Dasaratha expressed unwillingness to lend the services of his little son to Visvamitra against Tataka and the Rakshasas breaking his own promise earlier and Visvamitra is about to go away vexed Vasishtha intervenes confirming what Visvamitra had said earlier that he knew the latent strength of Rama : he would be safe and well protected under the care of the Rishi. I shall confer upon him *śreyobahurūpam* and Rama's fame will spread over the three worlds he had said. Maricha and Subahu cannot stand upto Rama. And no one else is man enough to kill them, he had said. I know who Rama is.² But when Visvamitra saw that Dasaratha had

Epic times. Legends get mixed up ; it is not easy to disentangle them.

1. Visvamitra and Vasishtha were king-makers. In philosophical thought in the Vedic days, the name of Visvamitra seems to count for more than Vasishtha's and he is the Rishi of the Gayatri Mantra which makes the Brahmin a Brahmin, though in course of time, Vasishtha the leader of priests, becomes greater. Visvamitra is credited with being the author of the Dhanurvedya.
2. Which links him to the other motif of the story — *Viśvāmitra Hṛdaya* is a great term.

done a wrong thing he becomes angry and says that Dasaratha's conduct is unworthy of one born in the Raghu line. You break a promise you have made. I go; may you live happily with your people and relatives. Visvamitra's knowledge of the *astras* and an account of his accomplishment is given in eight or ten stanzas; and among them is a power to create new *astras* and there is nothing that he does not know in the past, present or future. Rama will come back victorious and famous. Visvamitra is himself able to destroy the Rakshasa but will not use his *tapas* that way. He comes to you to promote the greatness and welfare of your son, says Vasishtha. This is only confirming what Visvamitra himself had said earlier. I was myself angry when my sacrifice was disturbed. But one would not waste *tapas* and *samyama* cursing the disturbers.

We know that Rama and Lakshmana went. Throughout their stay with him, on the roads and in the Asrama, the Rishi instructed them in the arts of peace and war and in procedures of self-control and gave them directions, conferred upon them Mantragramas. There would be none like Rama to control himself. He would have no *Śrama* or *Jvara* or *Rupasyaviparyāya*. No sleepiness or Pramattata and the Rakshasas cannot take advantage of him in sleep or inattention. None comparable in *Bāhuvīrya*; in *Saubhāgya*, *Dākṣiṇya*, *Jnāna*, *Buddhi*, *Niścaya* no one can answer him in argument: the Bala and the Atibala powers into which Rama is initiated are *Sarvajnānasya mātaram* (mother of all knowledge). Repeat them on the way he had said, you will overcome hunger and thirst etc. and the secret of all the *astras* was given to him. When Rama carries out the invocations as instructed, the powers presiding over them appear before him and ask for his commands. He just says to them they may appear when he calls out to them. This just proves to him that he will have their aid when desired. The second direction is in the practical application of Kshatriya Dharma when he calls upon Rama to kill Tataka and have no qualms about killing a woman. The arguments are buttressed

by all the points that should weigh with a Kshatriya who has to work for the welfare of his people. A prince ought not to shy off or shirk duty—in the interests of the public; nor deem killing a woman a sin. Here is the radical consideration. The poet is presenting the picture of an ideal Kshatriya as man, as prince and as king. Naturally, the ordinary human weaknesses and failures are subdued by him and he stands up for the moral law whatever it costs him. Even when he can accede to the requests of all the others and so escape consequences he will not avail himself of an advantage. He would give up his own life and kill them all. He is *Apavāda bhayāt bhītah*—I am afraid of evil report; *kim punah janakāt-majām* — I feel ill fame. Do I stop at Janakātmajā? He actually forbade any brother to say a word against his decision to leave Sita in the Uttarakanda. Rather a difficult man to live with; but that is how he is made and can function at all. When he is prepared himself to die, would he not give up Sita? “Thereafter I shall not listen to anyone to say a word against my decision.” He put it on them with almost an oath.¹

The last incident comes when the time for passing comes for Rama. He is talking with Kāla and — and, here is symbolism — on his advice enjoins that no one should disturb them while engaged in talk and somebody might be at the door. Anyone found guilty breaking this instruction will have to pay with his life. Lakshmana is told to stay at the door. At the last moment Durvasas — always a trying intruder and a hard customer — comes and insists on seeing Rama that minute, else there will be a curse on him, Ayodhya and everybody; an extreme emergency. Laksamana risks his life in preference to such total destruction:—*Ekasya maraṇam me astu, mā bhūt sarva vināśanam*—If Death comes I singly will die. Let not all the rest be destroyed — the supreme expe-

1. The oaths sometimes are on one's arms and legs! (*Bhuja* or *Pāda*)

sion of character and a cultural preference. It speaks of the high quality of Lakshmana's soul. That is how Rama and Lakshmana stand out as exemplars of two types of behaviour even as Bharata does in another of what the Ramayana extols as quality in a great Kshatriya.

CHAPTER FIVE

A FEW EPISODES

A FEW episodes may now be briefly touched on.

1. AHALYA

One version of the Ahalya story is in the Ramayana. Indra is described even from the Vedic days as Lover (Jara) of Ahalya, and the term Ahalya itself is interpreted in many ways. If Sita is furrow Ahalya is the unploughed and unploughable land and Rama's redeeming her is by some interpreted as the bringer of unploughed land into cultivation! In the Ramayana she is the wife of Gautama a great Rishi whose *tapas* has caused anxiety to the Gods. Gautama and Ahalya must have been a loving couple and a son has been born to them before the episode described here. He is Satananda, now chief priest at Janaka's court. Rama and Lakshmana are being taken by Visvamitra to Mithila after the sacrifice of Visvamitra is over. Brahmins are going that way for a large sacrifice at Janaka's capital. When they come almost to the outskirts of the city they see how beautiful Janaka's city looks from a distance. On the outskirts is a forsaken garden, an ancient one, as it seems, not now inhabited by any human being, but beautiful; and Rama

asks Visvamitra whose Asrama it is : it looks so sad and forsaken. Rama is told that the Muni to whom the Asrama belonged got angry with his wife and left it. The Muni is Gautama. He performed austerities here with his wife Ahalya. One day taking the opportunity of the Rishi not being in Indra took on the guise of Gautama, called on Ahalya and expressed his extreme desire to have union with her. Ahalya saw the disguise clearly. But was roused to have an opportunity of union with Indra :—*Matim cakāra durmedhā devarāja kutūhalāt*. Her fall was deliberate. Both were satisfied and felt fulfilled. Ahalya called upon Indra now that he was satisfied to go away quickly from there and see that neither he nor she suffered in honour. *Kṛtārthōsi suraśreṣṭha gaccha śīghram itah prabho | ātmānam mām ca deveśa sarvadā rakṣa mānadā*. He who has been the cause of despoiling her *māna* is being called upon to protect her honour. But that is perhaps a way of saying ‘O worthy one !’

But it so happens that as he was getting out of the hut afraid of being discovered Gautama really stood before him. He has had a bath, is luminous to look at and is coming towards his cottage. He has Kusa grass and the fuel for worship in his hands. The sight fills Indra with terror and he begins to shake and get pale of face. The Rishi sees Sahasraksha in his disguise and easily infers the violation that has taken place inside the hermitage. He gets angry with him and curses him with ineffectiveness of manhood : *Viphalo bhava*. Be fruitless was the curse.¹ He goes in and curses Ahalya also — for a thousand years remain unknown, unseen in this place : — *Iha varṣa sahasrāṇi bahūni tvam nivatsyasi | vāyubhakṣā, nirāhārā, tapyantī, bhasmaśāyini | adṛśyā sarvabhūtānām āśrame'smin nivatsyasi* — For a thousand years you will stay here in this Asrama with air for food, fasting, burning

1. In a pitiful condition Indra returns to his capital, narrates to the Rishis his plight and by a plastic surgery gets grafted the testes of a goat (*Meṣa vr̥ṣaṇah* is the term used).

with repentence, with ashes for your bed and unseen by any living creature — till Rama, son of Dasaratha, comes to this place. (It is all so ordained !) You will become pure if you extend to him hospitality without feeling *lobha* and *moha*. You will then be clean and worthy of acceptance by me again.” Having said this he left the Asrama and went away for *tapas*.

This is the history of the hermitage said Visvamitra. The time has come now for her redemption. We shall go into the Asrama. Redeem the good lady Ahalya, who through *tapas* and penance over a long time has become bright and clean : — *Tārayainām mahābhāgām ahalyām devarūpiṇīm* — Redeem this worthy lady Ahalya who has divine form now. They see the good lady and the light of her personality shines through her *tapas*. Like by a great fog, smoke or cloud, she seemed covered so long : which had made it difficult for the outside world to see the light and glory of that body. Inside, she was like the fullmoon, or like a bright flame of fire; or, the bright sun or a star. . . Others could not see her so far and she had to remain unseen by anybody : *Yāvad Rāmasya darśanam* (till you see Rama) was the curse. So the time for the redemption of the curse had come. Rama goes to the place, touches her feet and offers prostration to her. Lakshmana does the same. Remembering the words of Gautama Ahalya offers him Padya and Arghya and extends to him hospitality with an even and composed state of mind. Rama accepts it. This event is celebrated in the heavens. This brings Gautama also in and the Rishi couple feel happy, united now that Ahalya has become purified through *tapas*. They treat Rama to hospitality. All are happy and the party next moves to Mithila.

This incident seems to be as beautiful an account as any later version of the story which converts Ahalya into a piece of stone for all the length of time she was under the curse and when Rama’s feet touched the stone — later writers use even kicked — it was transformed into its Ahalya form again. The

curiosity and inquiry of Rama and the recounting of the story by Visvamitra are human and there is an immediate flow of heart in sympathy on hearing the story of the erring Ahalya, who has paid for it through long stretches of time, condemned to loneliness and separation from her husband, to stay unseen and neglected by the rest of the world. // Visvamitra who has erred in his life knows how frail is flesh and commended her to Rama;

A point that adds further feeling to this happy ending is the enquiry in Janaka's sacrificial hall by Satananda. He is happy to hear the news: that Visvamitra has taken Rama and Lakshmana to his father's Asrama, that his mother has seen Rama after the period of penance, that she treated them to food and drink and worship. "Did Rama hear the story of her fall and the viciousness of Indra? Has my mother been accepted by my father Gautama again? Has my father forgiven my mother? — and, in peace of mind, accepted her? The news brings great joy to Satananda, who is the principal priest in Mithila in Janaka's kingdom. One is grateful for this version of the story.

2. BHARADVAJA'S HOSPITALITY

After visiting Guha, Bharata and his army reach the Asrama of Bharadvaja. Keeping the followers some distance away from the Asrama he divests himself of princely robes and weapons and with a two-piece wear he enters the Asrama on foot behind his priest. When Bharadvaja sees Vasishtha coming in, he welcomes him and Bharata. He talks to Bharata about all things except the death of Dasaratha. In return, these people inquire after the welfare of all in the hermitage. Bharadvaja has much affection for Rama and asks Bharata plainly the purpose of this journey when he has to be ruling the kingdom. I am apprehensive about it. Rama has gone out with wife and brother exiled by the parents. I hope you do not wish him any harm. Bharata is pained to hear it.

Tears roll down his eyes and in sorrow he says : I feel as bad as dead; I do not like what my mother has done. I have come here to find out where Rama is, to beg him to return to Ayodhya. I need your blessings for the fulfilment of this purpose. Where is he now ? The priest and the other Ritviks support the words. Bharadvaja is pleased and happy. "It is proper for one born in the line of Raghu to behave this way. Deference to the Guru, self-control and goodly conduct are natural to your family. I just asked the question to confirm to myself and also to proclaim to the world how worthy of fame is your conduct. There is no need for you to keep away your army from the Asrama, fearing it might disturb us and damage the grounds. Get them all in. You will all be my guests for the night. All of you will receive hospitality in the Asrama today." Bharata does as he is told.

Meanwhile Bharadvaja with the powers of his *tapas* gets into his Agnisala and invokes celestial powers to provide the hospitality. This event is almost archetypal and has scale and colour. Visvakarma comes to rig up the camp and the residential quarters—three of the Dikpalas come and all the spirits of the rivers; the latter supply the drinks yielded by dates and other suras; some others cool waters and sugarcane juice; the Gandharvas come with Visvavasu, with musicians called 'Haha' and 'Huhu'; the Apsaras come down and all the beautiful women from the courts of Brahma and Indra for dance and song with full musical equipment, along with Tumbura. The entire park and garden, i. e., the Chitraratha of Kubera flourish there that day. They bring clothes and jewellery and the heavenly damsels. Soma brings eats of every kind in plenty; flowers and garlands; drinks and meats. They arrive separately. A heaven is created.

Into a well-built and furnished tent intended for the king Bharata is led and shown to a golden throne, rich and glorious. Bharata, however, goes round the throne thrice, invokes the presence of Rama into it. He takes a Cāmara (fly-whisk) and waving it offers service to him and himself sits on a seat

meant for the ministers... There are rivulets of milk and other provision for enjoyment. Women sent by Kubera appear decked with gold, rubies, pearls and corals with a beauty which would madden any man who clasped them. Dances begin by the heavenly dancers. In this Prayagakshetra, the very trees of the garden begin to take human shape, clap hands, dance and sing. Bharata's establishment is treated to every type of entertainment. The thousands of beauties that appear exhort them to eat and drink to their fill. The women give the the soldiers oil-baths at seven to eight of them per soldier, massage them softly, give them dress and drinks immediately after the bath. The horses, elephants and camels are all looked after. The army eats well; the stable boy does not know his horse, the elephant-boy his elephant. These enjoyments bring them total satisfaction. They speak these magnificent words :

*Naivāyodhyām gamiṣyāmo na gamiṣyāma daṇḍakān
Kuśalam bharatasyāstu rāmasyāstu tathā sukham.*

We shall not go to Ayodhya nor to Dandaka. May Bharata be happy and Rama too be happy.

All the infantry men and the warriors, all those serving the elephants and horses begin to talk as if there was no master over them. They begin to say : *Svargoyam iti*, — 'This is heaven.' Dance and song and feasting are then described and the types of dishes; the different kinds of meat and fruits, fruit-juices and vessels full of cooked white rice. The feasting and enjoyments and the baths and the dances, the cloths and the jewellery, the mirrors and the hair-dress, the unguents, the beds and the carpets, the scents — are a veritable picture of opulence and luxury. After food, ginger decoctions are served ! This is the picture of a banquet and hospitality that a Rishi was able to offer to the kings of Ayodhya. When the next morning dawns the heavenly parties return to their respec-

tive places, but the party itself is not a dream; for the flowers and the unguents are still on their bodies when morning breaks; only the providers have gone. This is the picture of magnificent hospitality purveyed by a Rishi to an army.

3. RAMA AND BHARATA

A little before the army approached their residence at Chitrakuta, Sita and Rama were having food on a level land near a rivulet. He had placed some meat before her and was commending it to her. Then were heard at a distance sounds of a great crowd of men and animals moving in their direction and the dust raised rose sky high. He calls upon Lakshmana to find out what it was all due to. The latter gets up a tall Sala tree and looks around. He descries an army and asks Rama to move into cover and get armed. He is angry. He feels that Bharata was coming with an evil mind to kill them both. He has sighted the Kovidara banner belonging to their family. "He for whose sake you have been deprived of the kingdom and Sita is made to suffer hardships, Bharata, deserves to be killed. Killing him is no wrong. I will kill all the people round about him and Kaikeyi too. Let evil be destroyed."

Rama sees the cause of the anger of Lakshmana. He speaks to him gently, but firmly. Lakshmana was *Krodhamūrchitam*—overwhelmed with passion (anger) — and Rama had to soften his ire.¹ "There does not seem to be any need for bow and arrows or sword and shield when the good and wise Bharata is himself coming to us. I can see why he is coming. He has learnt the truth of all that has happened in our absence. He cannot have any evil intention. Shall I kill him after having come here to perform the promise I gave to his mother? What

1. The difference between prejudice and passion and clarity and understanding is nowhere presented better than in this episode. How different in temper and reactions the two are!

shall I do with a kingdom which brings me ill-fame ? I shall not have any wealth got through the destruction of relations and friends. That will be poison. I seek Dharma, Artha and Kama : I swear on the weapon I hold that I shall desire a kingdom to live happily with brothers and for living with them and not desire Indrahood itself gained through Adharma. Without you and Bharata and Satrughna the happiness I enjoy will be like ashes left behind by a fire. Bharata loves his brothers. He is dearer to me than my life. He has heard that I have come away wearing Jata and Valkala and with Janaki and you. He has got angry with his mother; spoken disagreeable words to her; comforted my father and comes here in all friendly affection to give me the kingdom. He will never desire any evil to happen to us. Shall I ask you a question, Lakshmana ? Has he ever in the past done you wrong that you should now suspect him so wrongly ? It is not proper for you to speak harsh words of Bharata. It is like speaking them to me; what good can happen by sons killing fathers, brothers brothers ? — are not the brothers one's own life ? Soon as I see Bharata I shall ask him to hand over the kingdom to you if out of a desire for the kingdom you speak such words. He will straight agree to it : *Bāḍham ityeva vakṣyati.*

Poor Lakshmana feels beaten. He had spoken angry words out of extreme loyalty to Rama and for no advantage to himself. He is stricken with shame. Rama brings down the anger of his brother who now stands ready to carry out all behests.

Bharata asks the army and the establishment to come slowly behind him and is impatient to meet his brother. Again and again in four stanzas he says that until he does that he can have no peace. And when finally he sights him all that he can do is to rush to him. He cannot speak a word. A little later information is given that Dasaratha has passed away. This causes immense grief to the brothers here. They perform the bath and offer to the spirit of their father the food they eat.

And the words with which Rama conveys news to the other two of the death of his father are pitiful :

Sīte mṛtaste śvaśurah, pitrā hīnosi Lakṣmana—

Sita, your father-in-law is dead, you have lost your father,
Lakshmana

The mothers are later on met, to all of whom he offers prostration. Who could have been happy seeing them in this condition? Inquiries are made about everything and Bharata is called upon not to be hard on Kaikeyi for what she did : for father and mother are to be treated with respect and obeyed.

Bharata uses every method open at the time to persuade Rama to return. He does not in the least like to become king nor has expressed at any time to any body a desire for it. He has been no party to forming the mind of his mother or shared in her request to their father about either his own coronation or for the exile of Rama. He knows the tradition of the family and what is proper Dharma regarding succession to the throne and the duty owing from a younger brother. It was wrong of his mother to force the father the way she did. He therefore begs Rama to revise his decision and come back. He says Kaikeyi herself has changed and is with the party in requesting Rama to return home to be king (though no words are spoken by any of the Queens after the Ayodhya Kanda). The country needs a strong ruler and Bharata cannot be a patch on what Rama will or can be. All the leaders of the people are behind Bharata to press him to reconsider his decision. Ministers, priests and the leaders of the community beg of him to do so. Bharata is particularly sorry that when such things took place at Ayodhya he was out of the city. He will, if need be, reverse the roles and be the one to live like a Vratin in the Dandaka for 14 years. Let not the mother's prayers be given higher priority than his own. Every way it is proper that Rama should get back.

All these arguments Rama has revolved in his mind before accepting the terms imposed by Kaikeyi and his father. “To me the mother and the father are supreme. I have to abide by their joint command. It was necessary for my father to concede the demand of Kaikeyi, because he had promised to grant her two requests which she was holding over for a long time. He had also given his promise to her father before the marriage of Kaikeyi to make her son king.¹ Kaikeyi was right and Dasaratha would be wrong to deny her prayer. You have spoken noble words worthy of you. There is nothing wrong in a mother asking the kingdom for her son. Bharata should give up using wrong language of and to her. It will be the task of both of us to help our father to keep to his promise. “If I did not keep to my part of the promise I would not be true to him or the grant of her prayer to Kaikeyi by him. He will have failed in truth. His position in heaven will be affected. We should not substitute roles. The duties are clear. You have to be in Ayodhya as king and I in the forest. Others do not come into the picture and the terms. I have heard the representations of all the people before now. My father Dasaratha gave me birth and life : *Ājnātam yan mayā tasya na tan mithyā bhaviṣyati*—He has commanded me; I shall not make false the promise. This last word is uttered to Vasishtha in answer to an argument of his. When Bharata fails to make Rama change the situation he says he will offer *Prāyopaveśa*. Rama is firm and says it is not proper for a Kshatriya to do that. I should abide in the forest for 14 years. And at the end of the period I shall return to rule along with such a Dharmasila brother like you.

All see how firm of purpose Rama is and how righteous. This emulation for Dharma between the brothers gladdens the hearts of all who hear the talk. The basic stand is clear: To make the father *Anṛṇa* (redeemed from debt). I shall not

1. Why did no one mention this when they prepared for the coronation? If Rama knew this, why did he not remind his father about this ?

oe deflected; and, this above all : do not be hard on your mother. Vasishtha then suggests to Bharata to ask that a pair of sandals on which Rama would be requested to stand might be carried to Ayodhya and crowned as the ruling authority. That was a way out. Rama agrees to do it. Bharata takes the sandals, covers them with rich cloth, carries them on his head, goes round Rama and places them on the elephant. All eyes are wet. No words are spoken. Rama offers his respects to the mothers, to the elders and to all those assembled; and retires into his hut.

In a way Bharata is happy that at least he has succeeded to this extent. He gets into his chariot and leaves for the capital. Bharata feels miserable to see the desolateness of Ayodhya. The city has lost its form; there is no joy in it; orphaned without any sound of life. Bharata settles the mothers in Ayodhya and decides to have the seat of administration in Nandigram near by. He instals the sandals on the throne and crowns them. "Hold the umbrella over them" is the proclamation he made. He will only feel happy when at the end of the 14th year Rama comes back and allows himself to be crowned. He himself continues to wear the fibre cloth of a hermit and lives in the city like Rama does in the forest. All that he does in the king's name he reports to the sandals and rules the land as under their command. This furthers and concretises what he has spoken to Satrughna on their way to Chitrakuta : that his mind will not be peaceful and happy till he brings Rama back to Ayodhya. He has just been enabled to do that in proxy and as by consent of Rama even during the period of his exile.

At last the fulfilment comes up. Rama completes the period of exile and has been assured of the fullness of the welcome waiting for him at the hands of Bharata. Bharata is described here as Satyavikramah. Commands are issued to beautify the city of Ayodhya. All people march to Nandigram to witness the home-coming. Great welcome is extended to

Rama and the picture of this meeting is a vision of affection and loyalty establishing human worth. On an earlier occasion Rama had said : where on earth could you ever get a brother like Bharata? Bharata clasps Sugriva and says—"We were four brothers formerly; with you we have become five". Then Bharata takes the sandals in his hands adorns the feet of Rama with them, saying that he is happy handing back the kingdom, the treasury, the city, the army all improved ten-fold through your *tejas*. He attributes the success and prosperity to the *tejas* of Rama. On hearing a line like this the Vanaras and Vibhishana are in tears. They were Rajyakamas and could not but be affected; they were borne down.

4. A TALK

The next incident is the conversation between Sita and Rama in the early stages of Aranyakanda (VI. x) when in consonance with the promise Rama makes to the Rishis on their way to Sutiksna's Asrama Rama and Lakshmana gird with bow and arrows and sword march out with Sita. She raises an important question the answer to which commits Rama deeper to his mission involving practically all the consequences of the story and their fortunes thereafter. It throws light both upon the thoughtfulness and sensibility of Sita and the character of Rama with its quickness of decision, steadfastness of purpose and will to execute.

Vratis call upon him to give them protection from and rid them of the menace of the Rakshasas. It ought to be part of your purpose as a Kshatriya to do that, they say. They call him not only the Lord of the line of Ikshvakus but of the whole world. And it is his duty to give them the aid. With you as 'Natha' we feel like orphans they say. They show him the remains of Rishis who have been eaten up. All along the river Pampa and the Anumandakini and upto Chitrakuta they threaten us with fights. We have sought asylum at your hands : —*Parā tvattā gatiṃ vīra pṛthivyām*

nopapadyate, | paripālaya no Rāma vadhyamānam niśācaraih
 — There is no help in all the worlds except from you. We are exposed to killing at the hands of the Rakshasas. Protect us. He has answered them saying :— *Naivam arhata mām vaktum ājnāpyeyam tapasvinām, | bhavatām artha siddhyartham āgatoham yadṛchayā, | tasya me ayam vane vāso bhaviṣyati mahāphalah.* — You do not need to petition to me. The Tapasvins may command me. I came by chance to the forest. If it will fulfil your purpose, my dwelling in the woods will bear great fruit. This gives an idea of the full-involvement of Rama in the task of destroying the Rakshasas.

When the three are alone, Sita begins a short talk : “*Hṛdyayā snigdhayā vācā bhartāram idam abravīt*”. There are three fatal failings in even great men which become Vyasanās : speaking untruth, *paradārābhigamanam* and *vinā vairanca raudratā* — In her heart’s affection she spoke this to her husband : ‘Violent anger without enmity. You are to be causing hurt out of your fondness for the Rishis. You have promised the dwellers in Dandakaranya protection and the killing of the Rakshasas. Of the first two you are not guilty : that you are — *Vaśyendriyam* — I know. The third one — *Raudram para prāṇābhihimsanam/ nirvairam kriyate mohāt/ tat ca te samupasthitam/ pratijnātas-tvayā vīra/ daṇḍakāraṇya vāsinām/ ṛṣiṇām rakṣaṇārthāya vadhah samyati rakṣasām//* — and you have undertaken it to protect the Rishis of the Dandakaranya and are about to execute it : my mind is full with *cīnta* (care and anxiety). I who have been considering your — *niśśreyas | nahi me rocate, vīra, gamanan daṇḍakān prati.* Your going in the direction of Dandaka does not commend itself to me. A Kshatriya, armed with weapons, is likely to use them against the Rakshasas. To a Kshatriya a bow and arrows are like fuel to fire. They stimulate each other. She then narrates to him a story she has heard of a Rishi whom Indra chose to test by handing over a bright sword as trust saying he will come back to fetch it, and how the *Rṣih* — *Nyāsarakṣaṇa tatparah* — in tent on safeguarding the trust — gradually thinks more of the

sword than of his *tapas* and finally becomes cruel and violent in nature and falls into *naraka*. This is what comes of arms. Here comes a great phrase which is repeated later on : — *Snehācca bahumānācca smāraye tvām na śikṣaye* — Out of affection and regard I reminded you ; not lecture you. And, what courtesy !

She is not lecturing him ; only reminding him of an aspect of the situation in friendliness and regard : “to kill people without Vaira or Aparādha is wrong. And you are not now charged with such tasks. Your dress and Vrata now do not agree with killing : — *Deśa dharmastu puḡyatām* — Have respect for the laws of the country here — and the Deśa Dharma is quite a limiting condition. When we have gone back to Ayodhya and you take up kingship again, you may undertake these responsibilities. She appeals to him — *Nityam sucimatih saumya cara dharmam tapovane*. You are always clean of mind, gentle and peaceful — Live the Dharmic life in the Tapovana. You are free, however, to decide as you like.

Here are three questions at least as valid today — even in national and international contexts indicating the nature, the conditions and the consequences of involvement to be thought of before executive action. Such points deserve consideration. Sita was right to raise these questions and they are raised in all humility, reverence and grace. The arguments are weighty. A promise is given to somebody. It involves violence and death. The person gets armed. He is not impelled by any personal provocation to punish and it is somebody else’s land.¹ Other laws and customs may be prevailing here. The other party has done no wrong to you. The promise is made *ex-parte*.

Rama’s answer is characteristic and final. He thanks Sita for these words: worthy of her born of a good family

1. Unless one grants that Dandakaranya belongs to the kings of Ayodhya; which Rama later says belongs.

and of one who knows Dharma. The point I should like to make, he says, is: *Kṣatriyair dhāryate cāpo nārta śabdo bhavediti/ na labhante sukham bhītā rākṣasai krūra karmabhih*¹—The Kṣatriya carries a bow so that no one may hear the cry 'I have no help or aid' from any one. To those who live in fear of the Rakshasas indulging cruel acts, no happiness is gained. A Kshatriya wears arms so that the cry 'I am helpless' shall not be heard in the world. Good men and true have come seeking refuge at my hands. They are Munis and—*Samśitavratāh*—harmless people taken up with their Dharma; they live by eating roots and fruits. *Rakṣa nastvam saha bhrātrā tvam nātha hi vayam vane/ mayā ca etad vacah śrutvā kārtsnyena paripālanam/ sam śrutya ca na śakṣyāmi jīvamānah pratiśravam/ munīnām anyathā kartum/ satyam iṣṭam hi me sadā*. They ought to be free from fear and fear hangs on their head every minute of their life.² When these people are engaged in austerities the Rakshasas come, pounce upon them and eat them. The Munis so exposed to violence have begged me who am here with my brother for aid. And I feel humiliated to be addressed to like that by them. They have power earned through their *tapas* to kill the Rakshasas but are unwilling to use such power for destructive acts. It devolves on me to protect them. I have promised to give them the aid by pledging my life. I shall carry out my promise."

And here is another characteristic utterance of Rama. It is dear to me, a task like this even if no one asks me to do it. I am now bound with a promise. I shall do it whatever it might cost me, you or Lakshmana or my own life; Even unasked I should do it; what now having plighted my word to the Brahmins, i e., the Vratins : *Anuktenāpi vaidehi pratijnāya tu kim punah*. References to even contemporary and inter-

1. cf. The obligations the European nations have assumed in Asia and Africa and the conduct of Errant Knights in the days of Feudal chivalry.
2. This freedom from fear is one of the declarations of the Atlantic Charter.

national conduct (pace, e. g., U.S.A. and U. S. S. R.) may be considered and evaluated in the light of such utterance and conduct in pursuit. It is an executive decision he has made and he declares the purpose. Here is the validity or the necessity of his conduct. Moral worth—duty—flows from it such as it is. He has, however, listened patiently to the words of an affectionate and thoughtful wife, appreciating the friendship and the *Sauharda* with which she has spoken. He is actually happy hearing those words from her and so worthy of her.

This episode is as memorable for the principles of political and personal conduct as it is for the affectionate relationship existing between Rama and Sita and the level of life they live together with good Lakshmana, silent spectator and audience, part of all the storms as of the peace always, participating quietly in anything that Rama decides to do. About the tenability of the arguments on either side and the exigencies of the situation, there can be difference of opinion and judgement. We know how the consequences of this decision come down on Rama's head and expose Sita to all the misery and fatefulness of the life hereafter. But decision is decision for Rama, and no consideration of self or Lakshmana or Sita stands in the way. It is a sad feature of Rama's argument that in such declarations of conduct and what he deems right he always speaks as if Sita is expendable. She pays heaviest.

5. SABARI

The episode of Sabari has developed significance in later times and a lot more sentiment than can hang round it is usually developed. The incident in the Ramayana succeeds the direction of Kabandha to the brothers. Rama is asked to make friends with Sugriva who lives with four friends in a hidden cleft of the hills near the Pampa lake and is described as occasionally coming out to sit on the Rushyamuka hills and

his various qualities are commended. Nearby the Lake Pampa is commended not only for its site and picturesqueness, but for the undisturbed peace of the place where the birds move about without knowing that a human being can disturb them. They do not know of death at the hands of man. There too are birds and fish which are tasty food :

*Ghr̥ta piṇḍopamam sthūlam tān dvijān bhakṣayiṣyathah
Rohitān, vakratuṇḍāmśca naḍamināms ca*

Like a lump of ghee, plump, those birds will form good eats for you; Fish kinds like Rohita, Vakratunda, Nadamina, etc.

What special dressing they will take is also described. And then you will meet a Paricarini, a Sramani, Sabari by name. She is an old woman (*cirajīvini*). She is desirous of meeting you before she goes to heaven and that place is the famous Matangasrama¹; the Asrama is an exceptionally beautiful place where Sabari used to render service to the great Matanga when he was alive.

The brothers go over the land and on the left bank of Pampa they sight the hermitage of Sabari. They go to her place. On seeing them she folds her hands, touches the feet of both the brothers and offers them water for hands and feet and hospitality. They make inquiries about her austerities and she offers them the fresh food gathered from the forests round about in her expectation of them as guests. Her Guru Matanga had told her that Rama will be going to that place and when he touches that point he may be offered hospitality here. It will then be time for her to seek heaven. The wait has been long but she has made it. She had been told from the days he came to Chitrakuta — 10 to 12 years ago ! — that Rama will travel to this place. Curiously

1. That is what has given protection to Sugriva, therefore the place which blesses the friendship between Sugriva and the brothers.

people so far down have expected him and the brothers are being sent from one place to the other.¹ The brothers ask her to take them round the wondrous Matangasrama which is described beautifully. There they bathe and offer *tarpana* to Dasaratha. She tells them how her desire to give up life may kindly be permitted. Permission is granted to this Paricarini of the Muni. She then burns herself to death.

This is all there is to it in what has come down to us from Valmiki and seems enough. Enough is enough is not a bad maxim either. It is now time for Rama to discover the place where Sugriva resides and he directs Lakshmana to find it. Meanwhile, Sugriva is making efforts to contact them on his own.

6. HANUMAN IN LANKA

Hanuman enters the city of Lanka in a form in which he cannot be noticed ; goes about everywhere searching for Sita and naturally gets into the palace of Ravana.² The wealth and the grandeur of the place impress him as the Devaloka itself ; — that is the feeling he gets. It seems to satisfy Hanuman like a mother. The time is near midnight. In a large hall thousands of beautiful women dressed in fine cloth, decked with jewellery and having had orgies earlier have gone to sleep overcome with drink : *Pāna nidrā vaśam gatam*. The sight is one of absolute self-forgetfulness. They were lying down scattered higgledy-piggledy. The pearls worn by some had

1. Was it part of the itinerary to the extreme limits of Dandakaranya in the south; and, was it the Godavari or the Krishna? Or, as fulfilment of the divine (the Rishi also here) purpose, arranging for the destruction of Ravana, keeping Rama and Sita themselves in the dark about it? This seems almost ordained, and takes the story to the next stage: for Sugriva to carry it forward.
2. Had not Sampati said Sita was sitting sad and disconsolate in a garden of Ravana at Lanka? We shall not be raising questions! A poet is taking us through; and a hero is in.

slipped off their necks : some had tied them round their bodies; the flowers, the braid, the jewellery hung loose ; the vermilion mark on their faces had slanted. The anklets of some were thrown very much away from their bodies. The golden and jewel belts they wore had slipped off ; they looked like mares stretching to throw off strain and labour. They had thrown their bodies in reckless abandon. So fine was the cloth worn by some that even in their slow breathing it fluttered and the edges of clothes stood out like penons ; some were speaking pleasing coddle to Ravana, as it were, in their sleep ; and some mistaking the faces of other women for Ravana's, kissed him in their sleep and those women in return felt as if Ravana was loving them. A number rested heads on each other's arms and slept on trunks and shoulders of others looking like garlands of flowers, row on row.

When Hanuman went into the next hall, he saw a luxurious couch where Ravana was sleeping. Dark like a cloud, wearing bright ear-rings, red in the eye (*Lohitākṣam* — sleeping ?), stretching long and sturdy arms, wearing rich robes he looked like a huge rain-cloud suffused with the rays of the setting sun, shot with lightning. He wore scars made by the tusks of Indra's Airavata which had mauled him and on his shoulder those of Indra's Vajra. Another scar had been made by Vishnu's Chakra. A lot of red-sandal paste and scents and several unguents smeared the body. One picture of Ravana is : *Māṣa rāśi pratīkāśam niḥśvasantam bhujangavat| gange mahati toyānte prasuptamiva kunjaram* — Shining like a heap of blackgram ; hissing (breath like that of) like a cobra or like an elephant sleeping under the waters of the Ganga; — a little below his feet were more intimate women whose bodies were thrown about. One lay with her Vina in her arms, another clutched her Mridanga under her arms like she would her child. Another lay embracing a different percussion instrument. These were people who had sung and pleased him to sleep. Another was clasping her own breasts. On another luxurious cot nearby the most beautiful of all the women was sleeping

separately, alone and distinguished. She was Mandodari and Hanuman felt he had at last seen Sita herself : He was happy beyond compare and for a minute he danced about. A controversial and an end stanza as to what he did comes in here :

Āsphoṭayāmāsa cucumba puccham
Nananda cikrīda jagau jagāma
Stambhā narohan nipapāta bhūmau
Nidarśayan svām prakṛtim kapīnām

He beat his tail on the floor and kissed it again and again, climbed the tall pillars of the hall and came down; showing up the traits of a born monkey.

But no ; this was not Sita. Any way after having searched fruitlessly and witnessing such great beauty it is not surprising that he, for a minute, felt that he found Sita after all. Only for a minute. Soon he decided that Ravana's woman Sita would never be ; and he moved forward.

A little further were all the drinks and varieties of food and the specially dressed meats that had been served and partaken during the mass dance and the song and the dalliance. The meat of deer, buffalo, bison, of peacocks and fowl, pork and Vardhrinasa. Some were half-eaten ; some had been untouched ; some were *lehyas* and there were pickles of many kinds. The vessels themselves were many in size and shape — made of gold and silver. The cooks must have dressed them sweet and fresh and fragrant ; savoury and flavoursome. They were so various. The assemblage of women, music, dance, festivity and abandon — all indicated content, love and joy of the several types of women of different complexions and races and classes. There was not one there who did not seem totally to accept Ravana and his celebrations. A Rishi is describing this and a Brahmacharin is looking on ! If there were women in Bhara-

dvajasrama they were heavenly damsels who had been invoked by the Rishi to make the army and the principal persons of Ayodhya happy ; — and things are idealised. Here are shoals of women belonging to Ravana's personal establishment, those who had accepted him as Lord. These are enjoyments of the Rakshasa emperor in his central palace. When Hanuman did not find Sita there he was stricken with feeling for what he had done, having to look on so many women who belonged to an other and in different states of deshabelle and abandon. And when at the end of all this peregrination he failed to see Janaki, his immediate concern became to find out where she was. At each phase he says "I have gone about" but do not see Janaki anywhere here : *Dṛśyate na ca Jānakī, naiva paśyati jānakīm, na tu paśyāmi jānakīm* — were his words.

7. MADHUVANA

If these two are pictures of festivity one in a hermitage, the other in Ravana-antahpura, we may just look at what the monkeys did when they celebrated the success of their efforts to get news of Sita. They were moving towards Kishkindha and got near the reserve garden of Sugriva, laden with fruit and beehives, strictly guarded by a formidable uncle of Sugriva, Dadhimukha by name. Sugriva was jealous about this Madhuvana and kept it inviolable. The Vanaras felt a strong desire to drink fresh honey from the honeycombs and asked Angada for permission to do so. Angada consulted the elders in the camp. Hanuman permitted them to imbibe any quantity of honey without bothering about anything. He will be responsible, he said, for all consequences and will see who will obstruct : *Aham āvārayiṣyāmi yuṣmakam paripanthinah* — I shall protect you from whoever sets up against you. It is almost like in a mafficking. The reaction of Angada is characteristic and there is the added point that not only were they celebrating the success of

their mission which should be extenuating circumstance to them ; but the person who accomplished the task, staid and strict and a trusted friend of Sugriva, is permitting them to do so.¹ When such a person lets us do a thing, we can permit ourselves even improper things ! Many were the gambollings of the monekys, the things they did and how they got elated and the monkey in them was in full play. Not one remained sober and no one remained unsatisfied. Naturally the keeper objected to this and tried to obstruct their action. He was mauled and scratched, pulled about, beaten and kicked by the monkeys. There was jubilation: The Vanara intruder drove away the guardians of the orchard, ate the fruits they liked and drank as much honey as they liked. threw the extra down spilled on the grass. Some beat each other with sheets of the honey-comb; some jumped up the boughs of trees and swung about; a few spread the leaves of the trees on the ground and slept on the leaf-beds. They were so intoxicated that they jostled each other; stumbled on each other and fell down; some roared like lions and produced peculiar noises. A few others threw themselves down to sleep wherever they liked; they poked mischief at each other and laughed; some wept; others did other things and spoke differently; others misunderstood that; when the watchmen came in their way, the monkeys pulled their knees apart and showed them their behinds — the poet feels unbuttoned here. He is dealing with monkeys and for the moment is feeling relaxed : *Jānubhistu prakṛṣṭāśca devamārgam ca darśitah* — Pulling them with their knees they held them there and showed them their behinds — is repeated more than once. Dadimukha is angry and a regular fight follows between the watch and ward and the monkeys. Blood is shed and hurts given without caring that Dadimnkha was uncle to the ruling king Angada beat him down to the ground. His arm, thigh, shoulder were

1. And perhaps or not innocent in that they were violating a preserve of Sugriva.

hurt. The chief became angry and began to hit right and left. But he could not stand against the whole horde of the riotous Vanaras and so with difficulty he escaped threatening complaint to Sugriva attributing the whole folly to Angada and thinking that the angry king will have all these monkeys destroyed.

So he made way to where Sugriva was seated with Rama and Lakshmana. The complaints were duly made and heard; Dadimukha described how the monkeys under Angada and Hanuman were ruining the garden and he even detailed the arch-insult offered by them. What was happening was not immediately intelligible to the brothers Rama and Lakshmana. They asked Sugriva what it was all about. A surprising thing happened. Instead of getting angry Sugriva felt glad. The report that Dadimukha gives me tells me, he said, that the Vanaras sent southwards have invaded my reserve garden and are rioting and feasting there. They must have come back successful; else they will never be guilty of such vandalism. They must have accomplished their task; they will have seen Sita; and, no doubt about it. I am sure also that Hanuman has accomplished the task. This is glad news to all. Sugriva tells Dadhimukha, "We are happy to hear all this. We are eager to see them. Despatch them here as quickly as you can." The revelries of the Vanaras thus end happily in the consequence. Though this is an ordinary event, the poet presents it with as much naturalness, vividness and gusto as he has described the larger and the deeper scenes involving character and fate and the dignity of the staid, sober hospitality which Svayamprabha extends to them in the magic cave. How full of dignity and decorum that is.

8. THE HERMITAGES

A picture of the life in a hermitage can be got in any of the first five Kandas of the Ramayana. From the way leading up to Visvamitra's Asrama where a sacrifice is to be held for six days

for the guarding of which Rama is taken, right up to Matangasrama in Kishkindha Kanda, where Sabari shows to the brothers the type of life led by the elderly Rishi there it is one series of such pictures. There is a presiding Rishi round whom gather a number of people taken up with various types of austerity, study and meditation. They like to be left alone to pursue their discipline — it is only because they want to be unhindered in such pursuits by the Rakshasas who not only disturb them but lay violent hands on them, fight with the inmates, extinguish the sacrificial fire or defile it with pouring blood and unclean flesh into the fire to dirty the asrama—that Kshatriya protection is sought. Such violent persons should be destroyed. The powers the Vratins have gained through tapas should not be used for small purposes. These remain gentle, peaceful and non-violent.

Life in the hermitages is one of harmony and devotion. plants are looked after; the huts are well made and the bath and the worship happen at fixed hours and the food is fruits and roots; bird and beast move about without fear and wild animals themselves move about without fear of men. Specially standing out are the Asramas of Bharadvaja, Atri, Sutiksna, Agastya and Matanga.

Bharadvaja and Agastya seem to be powerful Rishis, capable of providing not only the aegis for spiritual practice and ordering the non-secular life needed for the treatment of guests of any degree or size. Bharadvaja freely questions Bharata himself, who comes at the head of an army what his intentions are and asks to be introduced to the mother of Bharata who has made history. The banquet and the festivity he provides tells us how rich and opulent would be the provision to serve the pleasure of the guests. Situated as his Asrama is near Ayodhya — actually Prayag — and honoured by the states round about, trusted by both Bharata and Rama the Rishi presents a picture of much influence and power . . . Sutiksna's is quieter. He is a secular being. Sarabhanga is one such who looks after the *tapas* in the Asrama. But the passage into

Sutiksna's asrama introduces to us a host of *tapasvins* who wait upon Rama to describe to him who and what they are and the kind of protection they need. They are able to secure for them a promise that will occupy him for the rest of his sojourn in Dandakaranya. The list of Vratins is interesting.¹

All these *Sarve brāhmyā srīyā justā dṛḍha yogah*, and *samāhitā* All of them were endowed with the wealth of Brahma (*tejas*) and taken up with austerities firmly. This picture of *vrata*, *nema* and *upavasa* is impressive as much with its variety as for the earnestness of these people about their spiritual endeavour. Such persons will appeal to any strong man to undertake their defence and protection. All of them in a body call upon him as their only source of help and the only one who would be strong enough to do that for them. *Pare tvattā gatih. . . pṛthivyām nopapadyate*. One can understand how Rama promises them the protection they ask for. It was the duty of a Kshatriya in those days to see to such things without being referred to. When persons specifically beg of him to help them he cannot say no. It was not in the nature of Rama also to say no in such a cause and situation.

Agastya is further down south and a powerful Rishi and he must have been having a mighty Asrama. He is expecting Rama and cannot understand why he has delayed his visit so long. The gift he makes is a sword with special powers in it to destroy the Rakshasas; and this Rishi perhaps knows against whom it will have to be used. It is Agastya that directs him to make a hermitage on the banks of the Godavari in Janas-thana. The stage is set almost for the further adventures or events of the Ramayana story. It almost looks as if the Rishis from the first days onwards have engineered the whole business — from outside the Royal family and take him from one part of the country to an other to further points down South — is exactly the point from which a big settlement of the

1. See Madras Edition of the Ramayana III-6.

Rakhsasas under Khara is operating and Surpanakha is wandering about and Marica himself is engaged in some sort of spiritual practice.

From the time they reach Chitrakuta news is abroad that Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are going about the Dandkaranya. Rishi Matanga has heard of it and expects him to visit Matangasrama on the banks of the Pampa Lake; he has arranged it with his pupil and attendant Sabari to see that he is served properly when he arrives there. Only then will be the time for her to think of heaven, i. e., actually they pass Rama from one to the other. At Sarabhanga's Indra is present. Sighting Rama he will not like to meet him then, for Rama has still work to do before he may be met. Even Viradha and Kabandha who have been under a curse have information that Rama will be the source of their redemption and both of them help in their way either to send him further down or help him with directions of hope and promises of help. It is interesting that even before the marriage of Rama and Sita at Mithila, when the party touches Gautamasrama, Gautama has perhaps been expecting him and his advent into the Asrama; though the limit set for the termination of Ahalya's curse was fixed long ago (How long ago may it be?). Offering him hospitality would be the time and occasion for Ahalya's re-emergence and for his accepting her. This will mean that the work of Visvamitra himself is foreseen and that Vasishtha's recommendation to Dasaratha to hand over Rama and Lakshmana to the care of Visvamitra for the boy's own good and fame is part of a larger game that is being played about without the principal actors on the human plane knowing anything about it. Dasaratha need have no fear about the safety of his sons; for with Visvamitra to protect them they will be like Amrita surrounded by Fire.

Even before the birth of Rama, the Gods gather invisibly over Dasaratha's sacrifice and lay the plot for the destruction of Ravana; pray Vishnu to do the thing for them in the only form in which that Rakshasa can be destroyed. For the human

beings and Vanaras have been excluded from the boon Brahma has conferred on Ravana. If Vishnu enters the wombs of Dasaratha's wives here the Gods many of them have become the progenitors of the Vanara Chiefs! Much (why, the whole of it) is, therefore, ordained and arranged. The Rishis, the chief among men, with their inside knowledge become part of the teleology and the entire human story from this point of view will be merely a puppet show. The human expression and tones are then secondary, incidental things. The sorrows to which many men and women are exposed, the torments and agonies, the hopes and the excitements and almost the travail which makes the Ramayana so human and loveable then seem a means to this end. What do they matter? It is the Daiva — though it speaks of beneficence towards men and the weal of the world — that has been operating and when every item is stanced for the advancement of a different purpose. On the human level, Rama can but feel that it is Niyati or Kshatra or Daiva or Kala. Yet he says that it is his Kshatra and Paurusha that have won at the end. And is even that ordained? At the last moment it looks as if it is not so much the prowess of Rama himself that wins but the aid of a Garuda, the inspiration of the Aditya Hridaya and the sending of the chariot with Matali by Indra and Matali's whispering in the ears of Rama that Brahmastra may be used to despatch Ravana finally that brings off the event. Rather a way of dehumanising a great poem!

Or, it lends colour to the statement by some that Rama himself does it as human Lila: The entire human level is then a make-believe. Rama is not Rama, Sita is not Sita; it is all Divine and a Rishi-engineering to destroy Ravana. A mercy that Ravana at least is Real. Kaikeyi, and more than her Manthara, become the chief instruments of the entire motivation for all this purpose and its fulfilment. Curiously enough none of these Rama knows; he knows only that he is the son of Dasaratha and if anything more is attributed to him they might be recounted. Rama then cannot be a human being. Will

he be happy to feel that he counts for nothing else but to be a crude instrument? What hurts the modern sensibility is the mention of a small event in the Aranyakanda that when Sita was struggling in the hands and clasp of Ravana to liberate herself from him, cursing and weeping and her braid gets loose the Gods and the Rishis that looked over the events feel glad; for, now that this has happened Ravana's doom is certain—a sorry and unfeeling attitude to think of.' Ugly.

9. ATRI'S HERMITAGE

One of the most beautiful pictures of a hermitage is that of Atri's at the end of the Ayodhya Kanda. Atri and Anasuya are ancient persons and Atri's own affection for Anasuya amounts to regard. The old lady is happy to see Sita who has been sent by Atri to her for cherishing. To Rama himself Atri describes how during a famine of some ten years she created food and made the water flow into the Ganga that had dried up. He tells Rama how chaste and devoted a woman old Anasuya is and of her endless austerities. She is like a mother to you Rama. Let Vaidehi go to her. Rama directs Sita to report herself to Anasuya for *Śreyas*. Sita goes round her in reverence. And what a picture of an ancient: *Śīthilām, valitām, vṛddhām, jarā pāṇḍara mūrdhajām, satatam vepamānāṅgīm, pravāṇe kadali yathā*—With no tautness in the body, wrinkled of skin, old, with hair rendered white with age and limbs shaking like a plantain exposed to hard wind. After the preliminary enquiries of their welfare Anasuya congratulates Sita for choosing to share the hardships of her

1. But the whole of this seems a set up—framework at a later time; for what is an all-too-human-story is dragooned into serving an Avatara Katha, making the co-ordinating motif look like being the principal. Poetry and literature as a humanity, feels suffocated and bleeds at the use made of Rama, Sita, Dasaratha and Kausalya, Lakshmana's service and Bharata's self-sacrifice show up to advantage no doubt but become reduced in significance: bloodless.

husband when he was homeless and an exile in the forests and she speaks highly of the Pativrata woman who stays with her husband in the worst of his fortunes. Sita quietly tells her she is grateful to the good lady for reminding her so mother-like of her duties as wife. Sita says that her husband is not like any other; he is not a *vṛttavarjita* but *guṇa slāghyah, sānukrośo, jitendriyah, sthirānūrāgo dharmātmā, mātṛvat pitṛvat priyah*—Praiseworthy in quality, compassionate, self-controlled, constant in affection, righteous, dear like a mother and father. He behaves towards the others—the least among his father's women—as he does to Kausalya. My mother at the time of my marriage has spoken to me words like you have spoken now. Anasuya's words refresh her and are great reminders. Anasuya is happy to hear all this, how sweet! What culture and discipline! Anasuya asks her what she could do for her out of love and from the ample gifts of *tapas* she has. There was nothing particular Sita would ask for.¹ This makes the old thing happier still. And out of her own love, she gives her flowers and cloth and jewellery which have supernatural powers. Wearing they add to your beauty and make you dearer to your husband. With this Angaraga you will be forever fascinating—*Śobhayiṣyati bhartāram*—Will look beautiful in the eyes of your husband—*avyayam*. This *Prītidāna* makes Sita happy. The old woman asks her to wear them all in her presence; and, now that the evening was on, a little earlier, asks her to go to her husband. She asks her to narrate to her the story of her life which Sita does briefly.² The old lady is happy and after blessing Sita she sends her to her husband.

1. None of these worthies ask for gifts. The staid Svayamprabha says to the Vanaras "*Carantya mama dharmena na kāryam iha kenacit*"—later. She is carrying out her Dharma and needs nothing from anyone.
2. One or two small differences come into her narration from the main narration in Balakanda chief among which are the discrepancies about the accounts of the age of Rama and Sita and the period of her stay at Ayodhya after the marriage.

A FEW EPISODES

Rama and Lakshmana are happy to see Sita coming back dressed and decorated looking more beautiful than ever.

Here comes a description of the night as it descends on an Asrama which is one of the most picturesque in the Ramayana. The sights and the sounds as the day's tasks are done and the life in the hermitage is gathering to a close. This is the quietest of the descriptions of a hermitage we have, matched if at all by the quiet silence and the depth of the great Matan-gasrama later on.

CHAPTER SIX

THE POETRY OF VALMIKI

THE Ramayana is considered the first great poetical work in India which has supplied literary models for much later poetical writing : the Mahakavyas or the Khandakavyas or Drama. There was poetry and beautiful imagination and expression in lovely stanzas in the Vedas and the Upanishads, — the Usas, the Marut, Prthvi Suktas and some Indra and Agni and Varuna items. We have poetry in the modern sense of the term of a high quality there, but none of these was deemed such for their intention was religious, ritual, invocatory, propitiatory. The human side of life was not the main point in presentation in such exalted modes. There is eloquence, lyricism and beautiful description of nature in the descriptions of the thunder and the rain, of the clouds and the flow of the waters, of the dawn and the hills but the first purposive shift to harnessing natural beauty to a human situation, to create a background or atmosphere, to enhance an affect, in contrast or in full support of a human mood or a situation or an event and some times for the sheer luxury of it marks a great stage in the development of literature. A human mind plays on it and presents it imaginatively¹; adds, selects, embellishes to

1. The purpose is more directly poetic here.

make it richer. From nature description as an element in worship to description, presenting it for its own sake and in evoking what in later times was for *Rasa* or as *Alankara* was the change—not deliberate, no doubt; but Valmiki's was a poet's mind, inspired by a great theme, continuous, surveying a whole process of events in an individual way. A live imagination and experience of life inform the whole and make it a unit of composition. Repetition, contradictions, grinding of other motives than the principally human, the introduction of supernatural elements are perhaps later inflations. What we have today in the six kandas—(or seven)—is much larger in size and ordering than the basic story. When it was made a *Kavya*, some later writer/s put in additional stanzas of a different character, tone and sensibility to make many *Sarga*-ends close with different metrical items, which becomes the rule in the *Mahakavyas*. Nobody can swear that Valmiki did not or could not compose some of the things. A few *Trishtubhs* and *Jagatis* can have been part of the original; not all. They breathe a different air. There is deliberate play of words and ornateness. They repeat in a pale way or lower down the intensity and the strength of tone of the main contents of the *Sarga*. Figures of speech, tricks of expression, embellishments which are the darlings of a classical way thereafter appear in many places. One feels in his bones that it is not the same voice speaking in them as in the main. And, is not poetry a voice distinguishing it from others? Where the earliest manuscript tradition does not contain some of them, one clearly understands the nature of the interpolation. Much sentimentality and effort at dotting the *Is* and dashing the *Ts* bring down the epic effect of the primary voice and movement.

Whole passages seem excrescent. Neither in the number of *Sargas*, nor in the total number of stanzas is any final decision on the original text yet possible while the popular sympathy and partiality and the *Avatara Katha* motivation and later extensions of episodes and detail have made many

portions dear and memorable to a large bulk of the population; for they have been current for more than a thousand years now. For example the stanza which makes Lakshmana say *nāham jānāmi keyūre, nāham jānāmi kuṇḍale*, etc.—I cannot recognise the armlet, or the ear-rings, only her anklets I know seen during the morning when I offer worship at her feet in trying to set off preciously the worshipful regard of Lakshmana to Sita does not seem to be borne out by the earliest manuscript evidence and it definitely contradicts early observations by him, e. g., that the sun has darkened the face and figure of Sita though it has not taken away from her lustre or loveliness.¹ Whole passages which were used later on as illustrative of special Alamkaras indicating the poetical ability of Valmiki sometimes hurt the fundamental dignity of the characters and situation. With the result that we cannot speak definitely in praise of a few things which have been held up for praise in works on Poetics. Yet it is not for them that we value Valmiki. Often one stanza of Valmiki is equal in sheer beauty and poetic power—and in what may be called the loftiness (the *Peri Hupsos*) of its tone and voice—to a whole *Sarga*—if not a *Kavya* itself—of the later times. This might sound extravagant as claim, but any one who hears what is indubitably Valmiki will know what the epic tone and voice are. Greater and nobler in the utterance, larger without any effort at ‘gilding the lily’. *Aklisha*, *akardama* are its features as well. The thing, the person, the situation, speak and express themselves effortlessly.

Valmiki was a Rishi and had a hermitage of his own on the river Tamasa. He knew the forests, the hills and the rivers, the flora and the fauna of the country; the sunset and the sunrise, moontide and star light, the onset of the rains and the burst of the storms, the nature and habits of animals

1. Between the brothers they have helped Sita to get into and out of boats.

gentle and wild; of birds and their cries. As a Rishi his mind had got toned and tempered by meditation on Nature, man and God, on the impulses to conduct and on how conduct expresses itself giving him an insight into human nature. He was able to know how and why men and women behave the way they do, their nobility, strength and tenderness, friendship, loyalty and love, envy and crassness, sags and lapses—all of which are part of the unerring portrayal 'yathavat' in the poem. It is as much in portrayal as in narration that the major events of the Ayodhya Kanda and those connected with the fortunes of Rama and Sita stand out in human dignity and worth. Anything else that happens subserves this. The Aranya, Kishkindha and Yuddha Kandas deal primarily with non-human types, of two different types of civilization and culture. Yet when fundamental feeling, emotion and behaviour are described, the base is human—where and how can it be different?—though the ways in articulation seem different. It is in presenting us how the human Rama shaped and set and in his relationship with parents, brothers, wife, friends, townsmen, foes, Rishis and others with whom he comes into contact, and first and most of all, in his sense of dignity and integrity that the greatness of Valmiki shows up. After all the subject-matter of poetry and literature is the life of men and women. Environment is helpful for or against and supplies external colour and background, similitude or contrast to the events. It is in the portrayal of the household of Dasaratha that the conflict develops and this as presented by the poet makes the Ramayana a great literary and poetical document. The poet knows what people say and do—in strength and weakness, in expectation and disappointment, in fear and hope, in anger and jealousy, in fatigue and excitement, in separation and union; what works in the mind unknown or unexpressed to others and what is spoken out as character and resolve and virtue, and the sorrow that still is felt inside not so much as

weakness but as a strength of character or purpose or duty; a groan inside the recesses of a soul.

There are at least four full descriptions of the seasons : of the Spring early in Chitrakuta and one just before they reach Kishkindha; of the Hemanta; the onset of rains and the autumnal glory of the Sarat. In all these they are in the forest land and among the hills, the rivers and the lakes. All description naturally speaks of them and the life of these people amidst them. In the spring at Chitrakuta Sita and Rama are together and heartily appreciate its exhilarations. The gladness and the blossom of creepers and plants, the cool-winds blowing, the laughter, the cuckoo and the bee, the river as it flows on adding to the beauty of the scene, the huge boulders stretching high in different colours, the peacock dancing before its hen moving about to please its mate and the hen admiring it. How many colours from the foot to the peak—white, red, yellow, madder, *manjishta*, bright like precious stones of every hue and lustre. The number of trees full of leaves, how many of them! In all epic literature the mention of names—of trees and birds—shows up as influence. Then there is a river Mandakini. As the river flows they see its colourful sands stretched on the banks and water-fowl like the swans and the cranes moving about in flocks; the deer come to drink water and move about, the water gets muddy and they can watch it getting clear soon after. It induces love in them. The hermits in the neighbouring forests come ; the cool winds blow carrying flower petals and fragrance; Rama and Sita are together then.

The contrast in Kishkindha is making Rama miserable. The brothers have just been on the Pampa with its *vaidurya vimalodakam*, *padma phullotpalavati*—Clear and clean water white like opal with lotus and lily opening out. Sita has been carried off causing the sorrow of separation ; none of the things that gladdened Rama formerly do so now. They are still beautiful no doubt, but they bring to him memories of

what other springs have been in her company making him feel now how cruelly Sita herself must be as prisoner in the hands of Ravana, yet thinking of him. The stretches of grass are green with dark patches of flowers fallen from the trees; yellow and dark, looking like a many-coloured carpet. It inspires love. The flowers which have opened out breathe fragrance all about, the winds carry flowers from the tops of the trees and scatter them on the rocks, the wind plays with them while the dance and the glad cries of the birds and the plants bending one against the other, look like woven into each other. The hum of the bees carrying the petal-dust and pollen of flowers as they move about make these trees look like musicians. "Yet all this makes me feel doubly sad being without Sita and sorrowing for her, says Rama—In other springs when Sita was with me she used to call my attention to them and we were joyous together. The male birds and the female sing and dance, cry out and move together; each item of life looking on the other, celebrating it. They but inflame my passion now. The tender shoots are like tongues of red-flame. I see this beauty, not my Sita. The peacock dances with his mate nearby; they are mocking at me;—They have not had their consorts carried off by the Rakshasa. Being separated from her in this Pushpamasa is an agony. If the Rakshasa had not deprived me of her she would now have come out to me with eyes opening out and with great zest. How can she live far away from me, with spring on, she a prisoner and me not with her. This might kill her" etc. "Whatever is beautiful form causes me sorrow now." This gives us pictures of love, remembering joy that has been theirs and their happiness together. Each item brings to him a memory of some aspect of her form, talk or movement; when the boughs of trees sway about the creepers nearby clasp them like beautiful women madly clasping their lovers. "If I get my Sita and I can live here I shall not be jealous or desirous of Indra's fortune, nor will I care to return

to Ayodhya. It is a contrast the same season has worked on him. He cannot live without Janakatmaja.

The description of the Cold Hemanta is as tender : the land has become hard with dew falling; the sun has left for the south; the north seems to look like a beautiful lady with no *tilaka*-mark on her forehead. The day time when the sun is on is pleasantly warm. The sun himself is down and covered over and the moon looks like a mirror made dull with one's breathing on it. Of a morning when dew drops have fallen the plants and the cornfields seem to be lit up by the rays of the sun and the dew drops on them light up in a myriad ways. One does not know where the water in the river is, looking at the water only. We have to infer it from the cries of the water-fowl. An elephant comes occasionally to slake its thirst and when through the trunk end it wants to suck the water, it feels cold and withdraws the trunk.¹ So are the beauties of description of the Pampa lake — clear, lovely, detailed. We had a picture of its beauty and wealth and the engrossing landscape of Pampa with its birds, fish and flowers from Kabandha when he described them. The actual site fascinates further still.

The Sarat is a spreading picture of moonlight and is sheer beauty. The feeling, sympathetic illusion makes the whole world kin. In this section is the famous stanza :

*Cancat candra kara sparśa, harṣonmīlita tārakā,
Aho rāgavatī sandhyā, jahāti svayam ambaram*

With the joy of the spreading rays of the moon touching her the blood-red coloured evening is showing up the twinkling stars and is herself getting out of the sky.

(Or the lady of the evening is happy and joyous with the rays of

1. Here comes the observation by Lakshmana : *Siteva ca ātapa śyāmā, lakṣate na tu sobhate*. The combination of terms like *Snehācca bahumānācca, Lakṣate na tu śobhate* and verbs like *Smārāye na śikṣāye* is another mannerism with Valm ki but what a picture of Sita . . .

THE POETRY OF VALMIKI

the moon touching her, and with glad eyes herself loosening the cloth she wears)

and the other stanza which has disturbed a number of innocents who question whether it is Valmiki's at all :

*Darśayanti śarannadyah, pulināni śanatah śanath,
Navasangama samvrīḍā, jaghanānīva yoṣitah*

The autumn rivers are slowly showing out their small sandbeds like beautiful women young in love show their parts bashfully, slowly to their lovers during their first union with them.

or the still broader one which describes the slow-movement of the river :

*Mīnopa sandarśita mekhalānām,
Nadī vadhūnām gata yo'dya mandāh,
Nāntopabhuktālasa gāminīnām,
Prabhata kāleṣviva kāminīnām*

Slow is the movement of the rivers with their girdles of fish like those women do who after a night's enjoyment with their lords, as they slowly go out in the morning.

All about it is the life of nature seen in consonance or contrast with the situation of men and women.

The descriptions of fights are as lively, sharp and fierce as in the meeting with Parasurama or terrible and determined as against Khara and the pictures of the seven days' fight in Lanka where there is heavy killing—the cries and the bloodshed, the terror and the flight; the rush and the attack and the hatred that spills red blood from eyes and the steady determination as Rama stands unperturbed—there as on other occasions, yet involved, the Vanaras fighting with huge boulders and trees, finger-nails and teeth, hitting with hands and fists and the Rakshasas using sword, spear and lance in direct

fight or through magic. The fights are more or less of the same kind with different leaders of the Ravana army coming in while the Rakshasas are destroyed. There is a stage at which the smell of the Sanjivani herb and the flap of wings of Garuda revive the bulk of the dead-vanaras.

At the beginning of the siege, the most surprising pounce is made on Ravana by Sugriva, who has just gone to look about things. All his anger against him is precipitated. He takes him by surprise and knocks off the crown on his head ! Once or twice Angada and Sugriva are worsted in the fight, even Hanuman suffers under a buffet. The fight of Kumbhakarna is almost a ghoulish passage of killing and gobbling. The very sight of him frightens away the Vanara army. At the end of the first stage, he catches hold of king Sugriva, pins him tight under his arm to take him to his brother. Hanuman gapes helplessly, but feels that the resourcefulness of his master will somehow prevail. It materialises when he bites off the nose and the ears of Kumbhakarna ! The sudden unaccustomedness of such an operation makes Kumbhakarna roar with pain and loosen hold, — and, Sugriva escapes.

Two great episodes in the fights are associated with the meeting between Rama and Ravana. At the end of the first, as noticed earlier, Rama feels that Ravana is tried and tired; and Rama advises him to withdraw that day and return on the next re-equipped and refreshed; almost the first experience for Ravana of meeting a more than his match and suffering humiliation. On the last day the battle rages ferociously and about noon, the charioteer of Ravana takes his car away from the field a little. All the three persons excel here : the two warriors and the charioteer. Ravana is noticed as sagging. The charioteer seeing this condition of his master takes the chariot aside : *Ratham apavāhayat*. When Ravana realises that he is being taken away, he is angry. He speaks hard words to his Sūta for construing him as *Hīnavīrya*, *laghum*, *ṣatvam* and *pauruṣeṇa vivarjitam* or *bhītam*. Why have you

treated me so with *avajñā, durbuddhe*?—he asks, deciding things on your own? from the face of a great enemy when I feel that at last I have met a worthy foe to fight with. It hurts his pride :

*Śatro prakhyāta vīryasya ranjanīyasya vikramaih
Paśyato yuddha lubdo'ham kṛtah kāpuruṣah tvayā*

The foe is a famous warrior, his prowess acts and fills me with charm. I am greedy of a fight with him and you have made me look like a coward in his eyes.

No one who is a friend of the master and interested in his fame will do it. This is an enemy act : *Nirvartayasya ratham sīghram*. The poor Suta is put on his defence, and he gives a great answer. He says he is not afraid, or foolish; nor partial to the enemy; not careless; nor unfriendly. I have done it to be of help. I saw you languid, tired and sweating like one drenched in rain. It is the duty of a Suta to see the condition of the master, notice his disadvantage and the condition of the horses. His business is to see the field and the time and understand the implications of the situation, the relative weakness and strength of the Rathins. The Rathakutumbinah should be aware of the lie of the ground. I have not done this *Svecchaya*, but done with : *Bhartṛ sneha parītayā*—out of affection for my master. By this time Ravana has got back his fire and strength. The horses have had rest; Ravana orders turning back the chariot to the field for the last stand in a war which is described in a clever piece of rhetoric earlier that the battle between Rama and Ravana was like unto Rama and Ravana. The Brahmastra is finally used and the arrow like Vajra itself—and like Death—pierces him and he falls; then it returns to Rama's quiver like many other Mahastras used by Rama : *Kṛta karma nibhratavat, svatūṇīm punarāgamat*—after having performed its task it came back to dwell on his quiver.

There are many beautiful similes all through the Ramayana. It is a picturehouse for comparisons, clouds, flowers, elephants, boars and peacocks, deer and balakas, swans, plain and *matta* (drunk), the ripples on the flowing river; or, the proud flooded rivers move fast as in open love they rush to clasp their beloved lord, the Sea; the planetary movements and eclipses, everything is brought into comparison. They are not merely descriptive or decorative; they are functional and illuminating the whole field,—background and the human situation. The picture of Dasaratha as he grovels before Kaikeyi imploring her not to insist on exiling Rama saying she looked like *Bhutopahata citteva*—Like one whose mind was smitten by a ghost. Without a word Rama will say 'yes' if he (Dasaratha) asks him to do so, but I shall not have done 'right' he says to his wife and goes to the extent of saying :

*Avadhyo vadhyatām kovā, vadhyah kovā vimucyatām,
Daridrah kovā bhavātvādhyo dravyavān vāpyakincanah*

Do you desire me to kill any one who does not deserve to be killed; or release someone who is condemned to death.
Do you desire me to make wealthy a poor man : or a rich man poor?

The picture of Rama as Sumantra sees him resting in his own chambers is impressive. He is an old intimate and trusted and so is permitted to come in. Rama is resting, stretching on a gold cot; decked handsomely (*Su alamkṛtam*) a very white sheet covers the bed. His body is smeared with sandal paste, fragrant and clean red like the blood of a boar :

*Varāha rudhirābhena, śucinā ca sugandhinā,
Anuliptam parārdhyena, candanena paramtapam*

He is smeared with a clean fragrant unguent made of sandal paste with a colour like the blood of a boar.

which heightens the features of Rama. Sitting by his side is Sita with a *Vālavajana hastayā* (Hair-fan in her hand) and looking like the full moon *Citrayā Śaśinām yathā*—like the moon with Chitra. . . Another occasion offers thus when it is decided that Sita will go with Rama and a bark-fibre cloth is brought to her to wear. Sita does not know how to wear it; a picture she makes is of the deer with large eyes looking at the web of the cloth—it looked like a net symbolic of her present position as of all that is going to happen to her thereafter in life, as also bringing into our ken the whole contexture of the world of deer, caught inextricably as they are in nets by hunters: helpless, inescapable, finished—and also of men in the meshes of Fate? And, poor dear, Sita does not know how to wear it; not being skilled in it she becomes Vridita. Rama has to help her out coming up to her quickly. Many times about the last stages of separation between mother and son, i. e., Kausalya and Rama, the comparison between them is affectionate. Rama is getting out of her sight; and as he looked on the moving scene, with hosts of people following him crying, demonstrating, his father in distress, looks tenderly with tears in his eyes. The mother was almost unconscious and was running on uneven ground, jumping across obstacles, avoiding persons on the way, looking like dancing! rather a way of putting things in that condition. . . More than once the dark gigantic Ravana is compared as he is clasping firm and carrying away Sita to a black cloud lit up with lightning: picturesque in its way; but portentous. The cloud will have to yield its water like it does its life and the lightning will burn it out. Ravana hears the news of the death of Indrajit at the hands of Lakshmana. He looks terrible. His eyes burn red and he is taut and grim and determined. Tears fall from his eyes and each drop looks like a lit up drop of oil falling from the lamp burning with a lurid flame. The pictures of Ravanantahpura or Sita as she is surrounded by the monstrous hags or the great mourning by Mandodari are haunting.

What a picture of Sita as Hanuman describes :

✓ *Himahata nalinīva naṣṭa śobhā*
Vyasana paramparayā atipīḍya mānā
Sahacara rahiteva cakravākī
Janaka sutā kṛpaṇām dasām prapannā

Lost in lustre like a lotus hit with hail and oppressed with a series of sorrows like a Cakravaki without its mate Janakasuta looked pitiful in her condition.

So is the lamentation of Tara when she sees Vali on the ground. . . The sounds of anklets and bangles, of music and dance as the Vanara women crowd or bustle about inside Sugriva's palace; and Sugriva seen clasping Ruma as Lakshmana enters, or even the picture of Tara as she has just come out of Sugriva's company—*Mada vihvalākṣī, Pāna yogād vinivṛtta lajjā*—Her eyes showed signs of heavy drink and she had no sense of modesty—to meet Lakshmana and lessen his anger, to speak to him words in polite expostulation realise the character and the person. . . The picture of the parched Vanaras as they desperately seek water and food and enter the opening leading to the Svayamprabha's wonderland of beauty, wealth, opulence, holding each other tight, going single file for almost a Yojana length and the sudden awe with which they are struck at sight of the elderly tapasvini, surrounded as they were by the garden-land, the fountain and ponds with gold-fish, jewellery, precious stones rich beyond dream of an Ali Baba or a Monte Cristo grotto is striking description. The poet must have enjoyed it all : the monkeys obedient to the behest of Svayamprabha cover their faces and eyes with their delicate fingers *Sukumāra(!)angulih* as Svayamprabha directs them. Else not one can escape with his life, she had said. Fear constrains the bravest to behave. The despondent monkey host as it decides to throw its fate with Angada's even against the advice and caution of

Hanuman—all lie on the ground together, weeping and wailing in sympathy with Angada and lying on the ground in *prāyopaveśa* is a compelling picture; Old Sampati gloats in satisfaction seeing them line after line lying limp and prone, so that he might use them as food as God-sent provision when he is personally disabled to fly about in search of it! . . . The quiet, silent Hanuman who has not spoken about his ability to cross the sea agrees to undertake it; the way he grows in size, gets on to the Mahendra Peak and with a roar and sweep, trains his body to leap across is a mighty picture of strength, energy and form.

These are bright pieces of colour. Two instances of perception about aspects of human nature are interesting :

(i) Countless Brahmins assemble at Dasaratha's sacrifice. They were satisfied with food and gifts. They were all properly lodged; a special instruction was that things were to be provided out of love and regard, not lightly as amusement or as entertainment. People of all castes should be looked after. We do not know who were the kings of the South—but the Daksinatyas were invited.¹ The food was plentiful, well-dressed and satisfyingly served. Those who served were well-dressed and wore jewellery. As they fed, the Brahmins carried on discussions and sang. There were talks with a view to winning victory over one another : *Paraspara jigīṣayā*—desirous of victory over each other—a feature common to the Pundits. Very large gifts were given all round.² Yet, after crores of gold pieces were given—*Jāmbunadam koṭisamkhyam, brāhmaṇebhyo dadau*—one person featured a petty request. He sees a *hastābharanam* a strik-

1. A small picture of how the Daksinatyas[†] love of flowers and how they wear them on the head is mentioned later. Usually well-born ladies do not deck their braids with flowers in the North.
2. In a later context cows are given as gifts, their horns are goldplated. All are good milkers. Calves are sent with cows and gold buckets for collecting the milk are presented.

ing piece of jewellery worn on the fingers (hand) of Dasaratha and asks for a gift of it. Dasaratha gives it to him.

(ii) Rama was distributing all the valuables he had among friends and townsmen, Ritviks and the poor. He had asked Sita to do similarly among her friends and maids. Almost at the last moment he saw a poor Brahmin coming to him, one Gargya Trijata by name. His wife had pressed him to go to Rama for some presents. He had not been stopped on the way through the five enclosures of Rama's palace and petitioned him as one *nirdhano bahuputrosmi*—poor and with many sons to bring up. For once Rama feels like having some fun. Rama says he will not be satisfied with merely promising a thousand cows; he will rather suggest a modus. Take your staff in hand, he says, swing it as forcibly and far as you can across my flock of cows. I shall give you all the cows which come within the limits of the throw of your staff : *Parikṣipasi danḍena yāvat tāvat tavasyāsi* and the picture of the Brahmin then is realised to a shade :

*Sa śāṭīm tvaritah kaṭyām, sambhrāntah pariveṣṭyatām,
Āvidhya danḍam cikṣepa, sarva prāṇena vegitah.*

He tied up his Dhoti to his waist and with full energy threw the staff with vigour that all his vitality gave him.

Rama sees it and is at first amused; but soon is filled with a dissatisfaction with himself for his vulgarity and begs the Brahmin not to get resentful with him for putting him to such indignity : I did this for fun : *Manyuh na khalu kartavyah, parihāsyo hi ayam mama*—Pray do not get angry. This was just done in fun. You may ask for anything else you desire, he says. The Muni, however, does not desire anything else and goes away satisfied.

The picture Kaikeyi presents in the Kopagriha as she lies unpropitiable except on her conditions is a description fully

realised. A number of similies detail it. She had been asked by Manthara to insist on the performance of the terms immediately for soon that very day the crowning will be over ; and, no good comes of a bridge after the water has all flowed out. How beautiful the old hag looked ! Kaikeyi has expressed her extreme appreciation of her in the best part of a Sarga. She promises to carry out her instructions. She goes into the Krodhagara wearing a soiled piece of cloth and with but one braid. She is earlier described as *Apathagā Kiśorī*.

Dasaratha sees her in this condition. He goes in to carry to Kaikeyi glad tidings. He had thought she would be happy to hear it. There was every hope and expectation for he knew she loved Rama as much as she loved Bharata and that Rama loved and honoured Kaikeyi as much as Bharata did. Beautiful and bright was the palace full of all the things that please a person. He was told that she had gone into the Kopagriha and saw her lying like one whom a spirit has smitten—a wife whom he loved dearer than his life.

How the city of Ayodhya was constructed and life articulated there, how parks, fountains and drink-bars, flower bazaars and Vesavatis filled the town, adding to the gaiety and the richness of its life ; celebration of Dasaratha's announcement that Rama will be crowned the next morning as Yuvaraja—is elaborate as picture. The public assemblies, the homes and the streets and the walls and the tops of houses are all gaily decorated. The mothers who had just given birth to their first boy-baby forget the event in this moment of joy ! Ceremonials and distribution of largesse goes on in Kausalya's palace¹, and the austerities, fasting and prayer in Rama's are described picturesquely.

The layout of Ayodhya as well as the organisation of life

1. Both in Kausalya's palace and Rama's own invocation and worship of Narayana is said to be made devoutly.

among classes and occupations have been commented on earlier. The arrangements made to take Bharata to Chitrakuta show a high stage of development in public works, where officers lay out the roads and create amenities for the passage of elephants and cars, the army, horse and the establishment along with the principal constituents of the party. The poet speaks of the queen mothers following the party in *śibikas*. All the three including Kaikeyi are happy that they are going to bring back Rama. Kaikeyi seems to be tame by now and follows the party. The whole city seems to have marched : *Pratiyayur hr̥ṣṭah sarvāh prakṛtayah*, goldsmiths, carpet-makers, massageurs, physicians, perfumers, brewers, washermen, tailors, cowherds, boatmen, dancers with their women. Men learned in the Vedas, etc. dressed in clean and elegant clothes, followed Bharata in slow moving carts—telling us how eager all were to follow Bharata in his fraternal pursuit.

But the people who prepare the ground for them uptil almost the Ganga cleared it to make the passage smooth and easy for this large procession of men and women to pass. Those who knew the condition of the land—*Bhūmipradeśajnah, sūtrakarma viśāradah*,—who measured the lands for pitching tents; guardians and makers of the roads, able and efficient at their tasks, sappers and miners :—*Karmantikah, Sthapatayah*, cutters of trees *Vardhakah, Marginah, Vriksha takshakah* seem to have been mobilised. Along with them well-diggers and whitewashmen *Kupakarah, Sudhakarāh* ;—and over them are able supervisors. They carry tools and implements ; cut the creepers and boughs and bushes that impede the way ; thorns are removed ; rocks and boulders thrown out ; huge trees are cut down ; where no trees were fresh trees are planted to create shade ; axe, chisel and sickle are used in plenty. Others fill up pits and make level rugged ground. The *Marga samskāra* is elaborate.¹ Whether it is the poet him-

1. How much time, money, tendering and licensing would be taken up today for work like this : It is a government on the move and the whole establishment is deployed.

self or somebody else that did it later, this throws interesting light on the execution of the project and the stanzas match the work and action. Bridges, causeways and aqueducts were built, and tanks and channels. They sprinkle lime water on the roads. Plants have been made to wear flowers ; birds chirp from the trees ; banners and flags fly on both sides. Water perfumed with sandal has been sprinkled on the way and the road is decorated with flowers as buntings. When the roads are ready tents and shamiana are raised where drinking water and fruits are provided.

Stanzas have a structure and roll of sound peculiar to the pattern used in the Ramayana—principally the Sloka—the preference for the long syllables in Sanskrit works magnificently heighten grandeur or sonorousness and deepen sorrow, gravity and seriousness. The shorts and the succession of short syllables are not so much in play as the longs and heavy syllables. One might compare however a tell-tale lascivious stanza attributed to Ravana :

*Piba vihara ramasva bhunkṣva bhogān
Mayi lala lalane. . . yathā sukham tvam.*

Drink, roam about, enjoy yourself, taste all the wealth and luxury you find here.

Play about with me, beautiful one ; as it please you.

The phrasing sounds more like a classical addition than genuine Valmiki. Almost the same things have been said earlier in the Canto to make the epic work a glory with intrinsic merit to attract attention. It is not the prose sense or conveyance of situation and character only or the indication of events in progress or reflection or description or the deepening of a lyric mood that distinguish the Ramayana, but the full complement of sound which speaks satisfyingly on the tongue, feeds the ear with harmonies of sound ; it is the roll, the sweep and the

music which make the work dear thousands of years after the work was completed. No other work in our literature enjoys this pre-eminence in the affections of the people. The sound intoxicates.

Apart from the occasional and rare bits of clever and ornate phrasing, the far-reaching effect of an irony or an antithesis or generalisation and mere conceit it is this richness and magnificence of structures that raises it in esteem. One may not like the jaw-splitting bars occasionally ; but the lines are made with parts which break up helpfully to mouthing them. There are examples of harshness ; we feel not so happy when Rama himself addresses Sita as Gajanasoru or Vararohe, or the repetitions of phrasing which sometimes grind too deliberately though on some occasions they enforce an instruction or emphasize a moment of feeling or passion : *Sasape, trīn dadāmi, nātra kāryā vicāraṇā*. The elaborate, sophisticated, reduplicated forms of verbs are another feature. Phrases like *Raghupungava, naraśārdūlah, satyaparākramah, satya sangarah, akliṣṭa karmaṇah* etc. or combinations like *Smāraye tvam na śikṣaye, Praṇayācca bahumānācca* and *Lakṣate na tu śobhate*, even great statements like *na kaścit na aparādh-yati* lose force and value through repetition. They are liable to the remark that they can be floating bits of popular wisdom picked up as they migrate from one person or place of work to an other.¹ Phrases like *Kausalyānanda vardhanah, sumitrā suprajā* sometimes fill the line. Whole bits of a line get repeated in a number of places. They do not look like being put in there either bringing together versions of a section from elsewhere or for emphasis. Stanzas get repeated with just an alteration of a word or change of place for a word or two. Trees and birds and flowers are many and the poet knows them but they get too frequently repeated for immediate

1. It is part of epic poetry to repeat attributives and titles of persons. The Iliad also does it when speaking of Zeus as the Thunderer, Achilles as Son of Thetis or Hera as the white-armed goddess, etc.

poetic effect ; or, they become mere lists of names. Occasionally one gets lapses as, e.g., in saying that lotuses and lilies grow on flowing water which becomes later on a cramping poetic convention. Clear marks of inflation of the text can be discovered where the same descriptive content is repeated more than once.¹

But when Valmiki is truly on, there is nobody to approach him. The movement of the stanzas is natural and unimpeded; the voice has depth as well as loftiness, the pictures are clear and straight; well shaped and concrete, realising every moment and situation. Whether it be Kshatriya quality in issue or a Vanara or a Rakshasa trait they stand out bold and convincing. The charge of 'fantastic grimaces and formless fermenting verbiage' attributed by a German poet is if at all in the extra or inflated portions—rather than in what rings true as authentic Valmiki.

Often a comparison is made between Valmiki's Ramayana and Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid. Neither in the subject matter nor in the atmosphere created, nor in the character of the principal persons, nor in the values involved is the comparison fair. At the foundations of European culture—Pagan in essence — these Greek and Roman poems have an established place. It is likely that the language, stanza structure, the grandeur and the majesty of verse of these two epic poems mark them out as supreme. Perhaps even there the Iliad must

1. Sometimes in a tame way; sometimes to contradict or make uncertain the correctness of a statement, e. g., the descriptions are in some of the scenes inside the palace at Ayodhya; in the revelries (at the Madhuvana), in the details regarding a season and in the banqueting party at Bharadvaja's Asrama or in Ravana's pleasure-halls; whenever there was an opportunity for lengthening or the description of a fight. The Yuddha Kanda naturally is full of it. Descriptions are repeated, the monkeys fighting with stones and trees and the Rakshasa heroes as they fight in much the same way, due possibly to please the love of valour of warlike listeners.

be far greater and nobler than the Aeneid. Aeneas — the Destiny man is a chance-survivor, — rescued by being taken away on the Trojan battlefield—and his voyage to the Roman shores, there to found a great new kingdom aided all along by the Gods who play the same tricks with his fortune as they do with some of the heroes of the Greeks and Trojans in Troy. The Aeneid looks like suburban extension of the Trojan war ringing smooth changes, e. g., in the councils of Daunus with Drances and Turnus — set against each other, — what took place in Priam's councils or those of Agamemnon or on the Olympus: Nothing comparable to the pitiful and the star-crossed love of Dido for Aeneas is in the Iliad. The love of Dido and Aeneas itself does not commend itself either for nobility or for loyalty. There is wilful break of heart not based on any principles of conduct or character. The Aeneid closes with the cutting down mercilessly of Turnus who begs for mercy. But the description of fights in the Iliad and in Aeneid are far more realistic and human than in the Ramayana. They are rawer and in fury implacable. The men and women are cruder — of the earth — than some of the characters in the Ramayana except in Kanda III which are idealised, carried to extremes in purpose. In descriptions of the Vanara and the Rakshasa, there is much more that is fantastic and unreal. But for the nobility and heroism of Hector, the affection of Andromache and the love of Priam for Hector and the ferocious insane loyalty of Achilles to Patroclus — at least one mind does not see nobility of character anywhere. The passions are savage. Even in the councils in Agamemnon's tent and in the tent of Achilles no hero can get marked for largeness. There is guile and strategem in plenty. The quarrels and rancour are unending. Their sense of revenge knows no relaxation of mood for five-sixths of the epic; the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon persists. Desperate efforts are made to win over Achilles with efforts at and appeasement of Achilles with return of Briseis along with rich gifts, if he will relent and fight the Trojans. But the sense of the wrong is

nursed; or is not relieved till almost the end. It is Thetis the mother of Achilles that plays the most crucial part by being the liaison between Achilles and Zeus; and first in the reverses of the Greeks and later in the victories achieved by unquenchable Achilles. Neither Paris nor Menelaus comes out with greatness of soul or character and Helen cannot distinguish herself for even loyalty to Paris. She says it is a pity she fell for the lesser of the two brothers. She almost invites Hector to rest on her couch !

All the pent-up anger and spite of Achilles so long unvented over the whole course of the battle is released — when in the last stage he fights down the enemy, drives the Trojans inside the fort walls. His mother has to plead for him with the Great Zeus and help to bring off both his victory and finally in the relaxation of spite in Achilles in handing back the body of Hector to Priam. She makes Vulcan fashion armour to make her son invulnerable. ~~Hector~~ could possibly not win if Pallas Athene had not on one side decoyed Hector out of the walls and on the other side helped Achilles fetching back to him the weapon each time he hurls it at Hector; and, unseen by Hector to strengthen Achilles. The quarrels and jealousies and the plots of the Gods are more in evidence in the Iliad : brother and sister quarrelling one against another, mother and daughter at odds and the great Zeus at strife with his own recalcitrant wife, with Mars and Venus having to get along as inferior powers, his supreme might as the only relieving and compelling feature to keep order on Olympus and on Earth. Indeed the quarrels in the Iliad are more between the Gods than between the Greeks and Trojans which but is occasion for them. Apollo, Zeus and Athene could be propitiated with sacrifices of hefty heifers and the oblations of choice wine and worship at their shrines. There is no relief through what can be accepted as greatness or disinterestedness or humanity; nothing to compare — at least to an Indian mind, with the basic humanity and largeness of soul such as in Rama and Sita and Lakshmana, Bharata and Sumitra — at any point in

the epic. The cleanliness and chaste dignity of Sita, and the uprightness of Rama despite failings—more faults of virtue—his sportsmanship do not find a parallel either in the Iliad or the Aeneid.

The battle descriptions, however, are more natural; the warriors are human warriors; there is terseness and vividness in the fight and other descriptions and in the councils and at their level they convince for the strategy and the negotiations. The similes—the epic or Homeric similes as they are called—are intrinsically beautiful, organic or architectural and they hit off. And a sort of tautness and economy that marks the Iliad makes it a great poem — with the establishment of the courage and strength of Achilles who whether he is on the field or not seems to be the one presence for victory or failure. The Iliad does not convince us in India as being a greater poem in beauty or worth than the Ramayana for substance, atmosphere or spirit or loftiness of soul. And, not merely because the latter is an Indian poem and the Iliad is not. The contrary opinion has been too commonly expressed, for long.

In the descriptions of nature, bad omens are described in a very popular way. Movements of animals or flights of birds indicate them. The omens are there almost from the beginning. It is because of some bad dream and some wrong conjunction of the planets that Dasaratha wants to expedite the coronation of Rama as Yuvaraja. He apprehends death or disaster to himself. Bharata has had a bad dream on the eve of messengers going to him to Kekaya to fetch him urgently back to Ayodhya. Bad omens are described in Ravana's palace and on the way to the battle front. In Khara's march against Rama a solar eclipse seems to happen though it was not a new moon day. The stars seem to shine like fire-flies though it was not the night; the fish get down into the bottom of the waters; the lotuses fade on their stalks; fruits and flowers drop in numbers and the trees fall bare, with no wind blowing. Dust rises up red like a red-cloud.

Or, a stanza shows how the poet can present a peculiar feature :

Vīcī kūcī vāsyanto, babhūh tatra śārikah

The Sarikas cry out making sounds like *vīcī kūcī* and *ulkāścāpi sanirghātā nipetuh ghora darśanah*. The Ulkas fall down with a particular sound making it fearsome.

Occasion is taken of dissatisfaction against Sugriva in describing Lakshmana how he waved his arm — like an elephant its trunk. He threw up his arms and pulled his head up and down, shook it as if he did not approve of what was happening. He bent his head again and again. Yet inside he had been admiring the steadiness of the mind of his brother; but his brows were knit and he breathed hard like a big poisonous cobra in its hole. His face looked fierce like that of an angry lion.

Lakshmana sees the misery of his brother during the four months of the rains in Kishkindha and is himself chafing at the failure in courtesy of Sugriva. Rama is angry. He has almost said to Laksmana that Sugriva has been taken up with coarse pleasures and is ungrateful. Go and tell him Lakshmana the nature of my anger; and the words are hard :

*Na ca sankucitāh panthā ena Vāli hato gatah
Samaye tiṣṭha Sugrīva mā Vāli patham anvagāh
Tvāntu satyāt atikrāntam haniṣyāmi sa bāndhavam.*

That path is not narrow on which Vali went in death. Carry out the terms of your contract, Sugriva; do not follow the path trodden by Vali. If you transgress from truthfulness, I shall kill you with all your relations.

This was enough to rouse Lakshmana. In a minute Rama realises he has excited his brother. He says that Lakshmana

should not use hard language to an ally even under such an aggravating circumstance and should not think of killing him. So he counsels calmness. *Mitravadha* – slaying a friend—is a sin. *Prītim anuvartasva* he says, use a behaviour consistent with our friendly relations. Let the words be conciliatory. Harsh words may be avoided in your speech to him. Tell him that the time is passing uselessly without action. . . Earlier on other occasions when Rama felt hard at heart against Kaikeyi, Lakshmana had been provoked similarly, Rama had suddenly cooled down and forbidden Lakshmana to get excited or entertain harsh thoughts about her and had given him the special reasons why Kaikeyi should be understood and forgiven for her conduct because it was natural for a mother to do so. In him it is a moment's weakness. He could control himself. In another and particularly in one so earnest and touchy about Rama's rights like Lakshmana—it might lead to wrong consequences. Yet Lakshmana could not contain himself. He marched to Kishkindha like a destroying wind. And how did he go? The Sala, Tala and the Aśvakarna and various other trees which were obstacles on his way he cut down; he pushed down rocks on the hill-side; kicked big stones on the way and pounded them to powder 'like an elephant,' as he marched quickly, taking long strides with his feet. Such description need not be pursued further.

The picture of Sita, as she is rushing Lakshmana out to Rama's aid when she thought he was delaying aid, is riddled with language which can hurt any one. Lakshmana had his own fear that the whole thing was a cooked up situation. There is not the least fear that evil will happen to Rama. Rama has commanded him to stay guarding Sita and every word is now spoken to drive him out of the place: "*Nai tat citram sapatneṣu*"; or are you a spy of Bharata? or do you covet me for yourself?, etc. He has looked upon her like a mother, like a God. He now is told that she will put an end to her life drowning in the Godavari or with poison or by strangling or burning

herself; and the sight of all sights! *Pāṇibhyām rudatīm dukkhat, udaram prajaghānahā* — with both her hands she beat her stomach — typical behaviour expressing desperation . . .

An other typical behaviour when one is expressing final unreconciliation is seen when Dasaratha calls down every sort of malediction upon Kaikeyi and says : that though he has married her and allowed her to go round the fire with him he is forswearing her and will not consider her his wife any longer, but an enemy. And if Bharata acquiesces in her desire and becomes King he will not accept food and water offered as oblation to him by that son, a characteristic attitude in a Hindu home . . .

The poem elaborates the defects of a political void when a king is dead and the successor is not proclaimed. Anarchy and its evil consequences are listed a little disproportionately. The evils of a kingless state are given a whole canto. It is not quite a month since Rama has left Ayodhya on exile and we know that Bharata has not had enough time even if he has agreed to rule as king to get established as one. Almost a whole Sarga is devoted to a series of questions like as if the poet read him/us a lecture — on the principles of political science and administration. Practically all that was considered wisdom and efficiency in the organisation of public life is desired to be conveyed in that section. Interpolated ?

A great phrase distinguishes two situations in the Ramayana: one in Kishkindha, where Sugriva uses it; the other in the Yuddha Kanda when Sita uses it. The phrase *Na kaścī na aparādhyati*; there is no one that does not commit a fault or wrong. *Aparādha* is a term which stretches in Indian secular literature to even a crime. But neither situation here adds up to one. It is possible that a phrase like that was current-coin among the really cultured and as some people say “a floating bit of moralism”, yet, one wishes it had been

used only once in the Ramayana. But the two instances and situations mark two levels of conduct and character. In Sugriva's case: it is in apology for possible wrong done:

*Yadi kincit atikrāntam viśvāsāt praṇayena vā
Prekṣasya kṣamitavyam me na kaścit nāparādhyati*

If, by a little, a word is not followed, look at it with a friendly forgiveness and trust me. There is no one who is not guilty of a fault.

I might have violated the confidence Rama placed in me, or been too free with the affection between us. I deserve to be forgiven. Who does not commit a mistake? For four months Sugriva has buried himself among the women-folk in physical enjoyment and has not once cared to inquire about Rama. He has not called on the brothers. The rainy months are now over and the skies are clear and the time has come for action. There was still no sign in Sugriva's palace that he was bothering about anything but the pleasures of the flesh. Even when information is being received that Lakshmana is at the gates—angry and demanding—and he hears the deadly twang of Lakshmana's bowstring and when Angada brings him the message that Lakshmana calls he first sends Tara to soothe and prepare his mind for kindly consideration. Tara explains to Lakshmana how a person starved so long and frustrated has given himself up to indulgence—wine, women and charm. If that was natural for a Rishi like Visvamitra, a common person should be excused. Sugriva is a Kapi.¹ With a view to bringing down Lakshmana's anger Tara had asked him to get in to the interior apartments for they are those of a friend.

What does Lakshmana see? Sugriva clasping Ruma and almost not fully conscious of what was happening! The fumes

1. It is likely Valmiki is speaking here and not Tara — being herself a Kapi woman.

of drink had not come down. Hanuman had spoken to him before. Tara's softness and elaborate persuasation had of course soothed Lakshmana's attitude. Luckily efforts have already been made to assemble the Vanara army. They will be here in a day or two and the campaign will be set on foot. The king has not been neglectful or indifferent. But the sight of Sugriva hurts Lakshmana. Soon Sugriva pulls himself together and these words *Kṣamitavyam me* and *Na kaścit nāparādhyati* bring down Lakshmana's ire and Lakshmana accepts the truthfulness and the friendly regard Sugriva has for Rama. Sugriva says also that his help is a mere nothing to Rama who could alone achieve his ends. Rama's bow and arrows can destroy the earth and the hills. Anyway, the situation is a significant one. The men are reconciled and friendships are re-established. There was no more need for further word or deed after Sugriva accompanies Lakshmana to where Rama is staying on the Prasravana hills.

The level of the observation is altogether higher in the Sita-Hanuman episode. News of victory of Rama against Ravana is conveyed by Hanuman to Sita. For a minute it makes her speechless; she is happy to hear of Rama's victory. The same person who brought her news of Rama and the message of love and regard the first time when she was captive in Lanka and desperate is now bringing her the news of victory and naturally of release. He has been asked to bring from her her wishes—what else could she say except that she desires to meet her husband ?

In between a small episode builds up. Hanuman sees the ugly, cruel Rakshasis who under Ravana's orders have tormented her night and day a whole year. She has been the victim of cruelties. He wants to punish them as thoroughly as possible for what they have done. He begs permission of Sita to do that in different ways. How much *kilbiṣa* have they not created against you ? It is natural considering the

suffering they have inflicted on her.¹ But he was dealing with Sita. He had realised the character and the quality of soul of this great lady when she refused to be taken back by him to Rama. Rama and Sita were matched in eminence as in beauty of form. The record here shows something higher than is normally met with. She speaks to him gently. The words are *Dharmasahitam*. "These people have acted according to instructions from their king; they were under orders—servants of an other's will. One should not get angry with them. It is my Fate possibly to suffer all this :

*Bhāgya vaiṣamya yogena purām ācaritena ca
Mayai tat prāpyate sarvam svakṛtam hyopavṛjyate*

I have been able to endure the persecutions of these slaves. They cannot hurt or torment me now that Ravana is dead. And she remembers a saying : *śāntah cāritra bhūṣaṇah*. Good ones have their own character and conduct as embellishment. And now comes the supreme sentence:

*Pāpānām vā śubhānām va, vadhārhanam plavangamā
Kāryam karuṇam āryeṇa na kaścinnāparādhyati.*

The Rakshasas considered it fun and entertainment to tease and hurt others. But to hurt them in return is wrong. Here is an attitude which Sita considers should distinguish an 'Arya'.² *Karunam*—kindliness—is the essence of it under the most provoking circumstances even when death as penalty is deserved. She is essentially great and noble. If it was then a sally of nature it is now the expression of a mighty ethic which flows naturally from the soul of a great person and her

1. A whole section deals with how they will like to torture her. Their names and their features are a fright.
2. A comparable phrase though in a lower key is perhaps one who hates human weakness and failings hates man.

reason is *Na kaścit nāparādhyati*—Can you find any one who does not commit a mistake or wrong?—is note of a profound understanding of human nature. One does not know if there is anything equal to it even in the Ramayana. The articulation of this Arya Karuna and the associating it with such understanding of man's nature and situation marks it out as the high water-mark of nobility. If *Āmaraṇāntāni vairāṇi* distinguishes Rama *Kāryam karuṇam āryena* and its compelling association with *Na kaścinnāparādhyati* is as supreme an utterance to distinguish Sita.

Such a person is soon to get exposed to the harshest experience of life at the hands of her own husband, who after so much wailing and yearning and such profession of love will not care to look at her and with eyes and face turned away, says: I did not do all this *Tvadartham* — for your sake; but to *Rakṣatā tu mayā vṛttam, apavādan ca sarvatah*—to safeguard my character—and to clear the bad name that would attach to a great line of kings. My human striving has righted the wrong done by the Gods : *Daiva sampādito doṣo mānuṣeṇa mayā jitah*. You stand before me under suspicion with regard to your character, i. e., with *Prāpta cāritra sandehā*. You are as distressful to me as a burning light before a person whose eyes are sore. *Tad gaccha yatheṣṭam*—all the ten ends of space are open to you. I shall have nothing more to do with You: *Karya masti na me tvayā*. Other words lash with further harshness spoken by a self-conscious—even self-righteous—male, to a helpless woman. What if the man and woman are Rama and Sita ?

*Kah pumān hi kule jātah striyam paraḡhoṣitām
Tejasvī punarādadyāt suhṛllekhyena cetasā*

What male born in a great line and one who is honourable will in a heartfelt way take back a woman who was in an other's house ?

Harder still :

*Rāvaṇānka paribhrastām dṛṣṭam duṣṭena cakṣuṣā¹
Katham tvām punarādadyām kulam vyapadiśan mahat
Tadartham nirjitā me tvam yaśah pratyāhrtam mayā*

you have fallen from the lap of Ravana and been looked at by his evil sensual eyes. How can I who say I belong to a great line take you back again. To redeem the fair name of that family I have won you back.

I shall no more have a desire for or contact with you :

Nāsti me tvayyabhiṣvango yatheṣṭam gamyatām itah

I have no more interest in you. Go where you like from here.

He does not stop. He calls upon her to choose whomsoever she likes—Lakshmana, Bharata, Sugriva or Vibhishana: *Niveśaya manah site*—like hitting, crying out ‘take that and that’—No woman could stand accusations and cruelty like that; least of all Sita, all whose life has been lived in and for him. The words were *Paruṣa, rūkṣam*—harsh and rude. She was smitten with shame, and felt like getting swallowed in her own body:

Praviśantīva gātrāṇi svānyeva janakātmajā²

Like she felt sinking into her own body.

Tears flow from her eyes and her face is bathed with tears.

1. And, what, in all conscience, shall be the fate of all these good women who for no fault of theirs are captured and ravished in war contexts are harmed by the enemy--when we have not been able to protect or defend them ?
2. A common utterance in Ramayana, yet how well it fits here !

Slowly and with words broken in the throat she speaks these words :

*Kim mām asadṛśam vākyaṃ idṛśam śrotra dāruṇam
Rūkṣam śrāvayase, vīra, prākṛtaḥ prākṛtāmiva*

Why do you speak to me these unworthy words, brave one, so harsh to the ear, so rude, like a boor to another boor.

The words Grāmya for the pleasures of Sugriva may be remembered ; he was at least a Kapi. This Arya king, a paragon of virtue and righteousness, is talking like a Prakrita — a barbarian. Obviously he does not know womankind : “I am not like what you think I am. You may have heard some wrong things of some woman. But *Jātim tām Parisankase* — the whole class you suspect ; an enormity and unjust. Have you not studied my character ? If when I was totally in an other’s control my body has been touched by another my mind was not, nor my will :

*Kāma kāro na me tatra daivam tatrāparādhyati
Madadhīnam tu yat tanme hṛdayam tvayi vartate
Parādhīneṣū gātreṣu kim kariṣyāmi anīśvarā*

It is none of my doing. The fault is God’s. What was in my control was my heart and will. They lived true to you. When my body was in the hands of another what could I do not being mistress of myself ?

I have grown up with you and have had contact with you: my honour has been yours. If you have not understood me *Hatā tena asmi śāsvatam* (I am done for all time). You know my Bhakti and Śīlā.

None of these appeal to Rama. The only thing now open to her is to ask Lakshmana who stood stricken-dumb with the events shaping that way, *Citām me kuru saumitre* — make me a pyre the only doctoring now left for me who is

struck with grave misunderstanding. I have no further desire for life. Prepare a fire. The pile of faggots is made on which Sita decides to burn herself. Head bent, she slowly goes round Rama offers her prayer to the Gods speaking these words :

*Yathā me hṛdayam nityam nāpasarpati rāghavāt
Tathā lokasyasāksi mām sarvatah pātu pavakah, etc.*

If it be true that in heart, act, mind and speech, I have not transgressed Rama, may fire, who knows all Dharma, protect me.

The sun and the wind and the directions, the moon and the day, the evening, night and the Earth, my mother, know me for pure and as *Cāritrasamyutām*. Let them protect me. "Going round the fire", she enters it. Here is the character which as Arya, renders on account of its worth when the one who had to protect and sustain her gives her up and exposes her to the harshest humiliation to which a woman and wife can be exposed before a whole world of men. What happened afterwards is not of much concern to us. She sought the protection of the fire and the Gods. Such ordeals by fire have been known in the history of men and society. The husband and the spectators accept her purity when the fire fails to hurt. This acceptance is not so very important as the trial and tribulation and the sublimity of the stand Sita took and the nobility of conduct under the most humiliating of circumstances. This is the Sita of whom India is proud ; the one cherished by countless generations of men and women as exemplar of virtue.



Narada comes into Valmiki's Asrama and in the course of the conversation, Valmiki asks him a question — for he is surely the one who knows — who among the living kings of men is the best for character and ability ; and, the qualities are specified. It is a cluster which cannot all be found in any

one person says Narada. Yet Narada is glad to describe to him one such, who adds other qualities like *Vaśi*, *Śucih*; one who protects his *Dharma*, *Sādhu*, *Adīnātma*, one who has no parallel for nobility and a phrase *Viṣṇunāsadṛśo vīryah* — throughout it is *sadṛśo* — telling us of similarity only not of identity by any means or chance. *Svadoṣa paradoṣa vit* — one who knows his own faults as of others — is rare in men. The outline of the Ramayana story is given to Valmiki here. And it is interesting that there is no detailing of the events of Uttarakanda. His narration ends with the beneficence of Rama's rule.

Narada is soon out of the hermitage and Valmiki's mind is naturally full of this story. He takes a young pupil Bharadvaja of the Asrama with cloth for a bath and sees the water of Tamasa and remarks to Bharadvaja. "How clear, free from slush, pellucid and beautiful to look at like the mind of a good man — *Akardamam idam tīrtham...ramaṇīya prasannāmbum, sanmanuṣya mano yathā* — a great phrase. For some short time, the Rishi moves about with the Valkala (bark garment) in his hand and as he is moving about the stretching woods, he hears sweet sounds of a pair of Kraunca birds, petting and fondling, happy and *anapāyinam* (unsuspicious of danger). It is a pleasant feeling for him. Suddenly some hunter-aims an arrow at the birds and one of them falls to the ground. The female bird sends out an agonised cry: *Tam śoṇita parītāngam veṣṭamānam māhitale, bhāryā tu nihatam dṛṣṭvā rurāva karuṇām giram*. The antecedent picture of joy and security and sweetness is thus followed by the sight of violence. This cry and rolling in its own red-blood naturally pierce the heart of the tender Rishi, *Rurāva* a reduplicated form of the verb — the Ramayana is full of these and more complicated, more sophisticated forms of such — comes in a hundred places later on, but nowhere with such naturalness, passion and intensity; and, this is also the first time in the Poem. This rouses the Rishi. He is angry that the consideration the birds are making love

to each other did not enter the hunter's mind. He should not have killed a bird in a situation like that. His heart is full of compassion for the wailing bird. The kindly Rishi feels it as an unrighteous act and immediately calls down upon the hunter a curse :

*Mā niṣāda pratiṣṭhām tvam, agamah śāsvatīh samāh
Yat kraunca mithanāt ekam, avadhīh kāma mohitam*

You do not deserve to live long for you have killed one of a pair of curlews engaged in an act of love.

This is a perfect stanza in the sloka metre and spontaneous as utterance coming from the heightened sensibility and emotion of a poet who witnessed a bloody event. It was creative utterance. This at once surprised and thrilled him and disturbed him. Surprised — for the words were in perfect rhythm and order and made an Anushtubh Sloka ; and, disturbed him — for he had betrayed himself into anger — calling down a curse on the hunter : *Śāsvatīssamāh*. And to Bharadvaja, he says this :

*Pāda baddho akṣara samāh, tantrī laya samanvitah
Śokārtasya pravṛtto me, śloko bhavatu nānyathā*

Feet well knit, syllables equal in number, tuned beautifully to a lyre, may what I have said (made sad by this event) become a *śloka* and no other ?

This thrilled him and he asks the pupil to commit it to memory. This is the genesis of the poem; and it expresses the mood and the correctness of the medium.

The next stage deals with the actual creativity and involvement; and of the realisation of every detail connected with

the story ; for it speaks of the advent of Brahma.¹ Brahma receives proper welcome from the Rishi. The latter's mind seems to be preoccupied with the Sloka that had come out of him and on the theme. Brahma understands this and the Kāruṇya for the Kraunca (curlew) female on one side and the *Akaraṇa Hanana* — wanton killing on the other. He smiles and confirms to the Rishi that the lines constitute a true sloka and he need not have any uncertainty about it. “It is by my will that this utterance (Sarasvati) has come out of your lips. Rama's is a great story, narrate his heroic life as you have heard it from Narada. You will be able to visualise all that has happened inside and out. Nothing that you will speak about it will be untrue :

*Yaccāpi aviditam sarvam viditam te bhaviṣyati
Na te vāk anṛtā kāvya kaccidatra bhaviṣyati*

If there be anything unknown to you it will become intelligible to you nothing in your Kavya will be untrue

by imaginative realisation. And what you write will be a great poem that will stand for all time, as long as the hills and the rivers last :

*Yāvat sthāsyanti girayah, saritas ca mahītale
Tāvat Rāmayaṇa kathā, lokeṣu pracariṣyati*

As long as the hills stand on earth and the rivers continue flowing so long will the story of Ramayana circulate (stay current) in the worlds.

1. Brahma is known as Kavi—primarily seer and creator. The advent of Brahma in the Ramayana comes later also ; it is for other purposes ; here it is as one who confirms the creative art which takes it to levels of thought and feeling which do not seem to be part of the earliest strand of the Ramayana events. More particularly Indra and Varuna are the Deities connected with the Ramayana story ; the invocation, occasionally, is to Vishnu as Trivikrama.

So will your poem abide current in the world — *Pracarīṣyati*. Saying that Brahma disappears. It is more or less confirmative of the mystery that surrounds the creative act which gives confidence to the writer in the process of creative imagination and giving it shape and form by one who is the first Creator, the first poet. Every creative act carries its benediction from him.

The whole hermitage feels surprised at this advent and disappearance of Brahma. They are thrilled to hear how the *śloka* took shape from the *śoka*. And Valmiki decided to proceed with the creation. The next *Sarga* details the events contained in the several *Sargas* of the *Ramayana* and as Valmiki visualises and builds up the events. The Rishi seems to feel intensely into the episodes as they must have developed in the history of Rama and everything happening from the beginning to the end in essential truth. He visualises the story of Rama : *Hasitam bhāṣitam caiva, gatiyacca ceṣṭitam, tatsarvam dharma vīryeṇa, yathāvat samprapaśyati* — The laughter, the conversation, the movements and behaviour all become realised in his eyes through his vision — and the *Raghuvamśasya caritam*¹ as outlined by Narada was fully visualised in his imagination.

The fourth *Sarga* calls itself the *Anukramanika*. The number is put in first as *Ṣat* and afterwards the *Uttaram* is mentioned. Anyway, the *Ramayana* is a *Kṛtsnam Kāvya* distinguished also as *Sitāyāscaritam mahat*. For sometime the Rishi is thinking as to who will learn it and sing it. Two boys Kusa and Lava inmates of the *Asrama* just then offer him obeisance. They seem to be the proper instruments for its propagation and they are taught the poem.

All this must have happened after Rama has gained back his kingdom and forms a coherent tale. The boys learn the poem and with the sweetness of their voice and their

1. Kalidasa uses a part of this term as name for his classic poem.

skill and knowledge of music very soon learn how to present the Rasas of the Poem. They were handsome to look at—brothers and children of Rama who have been brought up by the Rishi and when they sing the poem the Munis of the hermitage are filled with joy with an experience of a piece of surpassing beauty and creativity. They praise the composition and appreciate the singing by the boys and spontaneously give the gifts which they have about them. They compliment the boys on their rendering of it so well. Not only that : it surely will be *Parām kavīnām ādhāram*, they say—as true then as today. In course of time this Poem as sung by the boys catch the ears of king Sri Rama who assembles his brothers and others about him to hear it. The fifth Sarga of the Balakanda begins the Poem with a description of the Ayodhya.

The story of the Ramayana—as narrated from the fifth Sarga onwards—is what Rama seems to have heard from the young singers as Valmiki had taught them. How this work came to be written, taught and sung is the subject-matter of the first four sections. They supply a beautiful account of how a poem comes to be written; the nature of poetic sensibility, the circumstances under which a creative sensibility and imagination are charged—the moment—and how an incident or fullness of mood starts the processes of utterance and develops into a composition, wherein every part of a bare outline fills up into a fully articulated epic poem as great as the Ramayana.

The first four sections, therefore, form the preliminaries of the composition of the Ramayana and can almost be taken as descriptive of a theory of poetic composition and a process concretely illustrating how perhaps the greatest poem in Indian literature came to be written, recording incidentally the appreciation of people who first listened to it in proper receptivity and appreciation of it. To the Hindu who is conversant with Samskrit, the language has always certain charm and men revere it as the language of the Gods, that in which

the Vedas, the Sastras and Puranas are written. But the glory of Valmiki's work is in the roll of its verse, the long sounds so natural to Samskrit as language resonate effects of place, time, circumstance, the situations as they develop and as the poet presents them. To all who read it or hear it read, it is an unique experience for which there is no substitute. One is impatient — and disturbed—when some element in the text does not seem to present the Poet's authentic voice or present the Poet as he may not have spoken. A heightening of feeling and the experience of a way of life of surpassing beauty and worth — distinguish it. The effect is almost felt in the blood and impresses with a stateliness which is feature of no other composition in India: a thing which Indians cherish with the utmost reverence, piety and love.

GLOSSARY

<i>Akaṅṭaka</i>	: Free from trouble or enemies
<i>Akardamam</i>	: Without slush
<i>Akliṣṭa</i>	: Without a strain or weariness
<i>Adhyātma</i>	: Related to the soul or the highest Lord
<i>Alamkāra</i>	: Ornament, Figure of speech
<i>Amṛta</i>	: Heavenly nectar
<i>Angarāga</i>	: Fragment, unguent
<i>Anjali</i>	: Palms held together like a cup in supplication or reverence
<i>Anṛṇa</i>	: Freed from debt
<i>Antahpura</i>	: Inner apartments where women live
<i>Apathagā</i>	: Going in a wrong direction
<i>Artha</i>	: Wealth ; Interest : Means
<i>Avatāra</i>	: Descent of God to the earth on a purpose
<i>Avāṅgmukhi</i>	: Face turned down (here Sita)
<i>Avyaya</i>	: Not spendable ; diminished
<i>Astra</i>	: Missile, used with a Mantra
<i>Bādhā</i>	: Pain ; torment
<i>Bandha</i>	: Tie ; bondage
<i>Bandhana</i>	: Being tied up ; captivity
<i>Bandhu</i>	: Relation
<i>Bāhu vīrya</i>	: Strength of one's arms
<i>Bhaya</i>	: Fear
<i>Bhikṣu</i>	: Mendicant
<i>Carita</i>	: Story, history
<i>Cāritrya</i>	: Character
<i>Ciranjīvin</i>	: One who lives for ever
<i>Cetana</i>	: Sensitivity ; energy

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<i>Dakṣa</i>	:	Efficient ; able
<i>Dākṣiṇya</i>	:	Considerateness ; generosity
<i>Dikpāla</i>	:	Lord of the Directions
<i>Divya</i>	:	Godly ; ordeal
<i>Daiva</i>	:	God ; Destiny
<i>Dhanus</i>	:	Bow
<i>Dharma Bandha</i>	:	Bond of honour or Dharma
<i>Graha</i>	:	Planet ; Ghost
<i>Grahaṇa</i>	:	Seizing ; holding ; eclipse
<i>Grāma</i>	:	Field ; Range
<i>Grāmya</i>	:	Vulgar
<i>Havis</i>	:	Oblation
<i>Ingita</i>	:	Hint ; covert intent
<i>Jnāti</i>	:	Cousin, with claim to property
<i>Jvara</i>	:	Fever, anything like it in the mind
<i>Katha</i>	:	Story
<i>Kaṭhōra</i>	:	Hard-hearted
<i>Kākapakṣa</i>	:	A bit of tuft on the head left uncut
<i>Kāṇḍa</i>	:	Canto
<i>Kāvya</i>	:	Poem
<i>Kāṣāya Vāsīnī</i>	:	The lady who wears the garments of ochre (of a Sanyasin)
<i>Kiśorī</i>	:	Young thing ; young mare
<i>Kūpakār</i>	:	Well-digger
<i>Kṛcchra</i>	:	Punishment ; penalty
<i>Kaimkarya</i>	:	Service
<i>Kopagṛha</i>	:	Chamber to which people repair indicating they have a grievance
<i>Krama</i>	:	Order
<i>Krodhāgāra</i>	:	A chamber for those in anger
<i>Kṣatriya</i>	:	One of the warrior class
<i>Kṣama</i>	:	Forgiveness ; fortitude ; Earth
<i>Kṣātra</i>	:	Passion
<i>Mada</i>	:	Intoxication
<i>Manjiṣṭha</i>	:	Madder ; a kind of colour
<i>Mārga Samskāra</i>	:	Improvement of the road

GLOSSARY

<i>Māya</i>	: Deceit
<i>Mitra</i>	: Friend
<i>Mithyā</i>	: False
<i>Mūrchana</i>	: State of unconsciousness
<i>Nara</i>	: Man
<i>Niyama</i>	: Rule
<i>Niyati</i>	: Fixed order ; Ordinance
<i>Niśśreyas</i>	: Highest good
<i>Niṣṭa</i>	: Devoted to
<i>Niṣṭhura</i>	: Hard of heart
<i>Paṭṭābhiṣeka</i>	: Coronation
<i>Patita</i>	: Fallen
<i>Pativrata</i>	: Devoted to husband ; chaste
<i>Pantha</i>	: Path
<i>Panthin</i>	: Follower of a path
<i>Parivrājaka</i>	: Wandering Sanyāsin
<i>Paruṣa</i>	: Hard ; harsh
<i>Pāyasa</i>	: Porridge cooked with milk and rice, etc.
<i>Puruṣa</i>	: Male , Man
<i>Puṣpamāsa</i>	: Season of flowers ; spring
<i>Pauruṣa</i>	: Manliness
<i>Pratījna</i>	: Vow ; promise
<i>Pramatta</i>	: Intoxicated ; made forgetful and inattentive
<i>Prītidana</i>	: A gift out of love
<i>Rājya kāma</i>	: Desiring Kingdom
<i>Samskāra</i>	: Regular culture ; training
<i>Sapatni</i>	: Another wife to the same husband
<i>Śarat</i>	: The fourth out of the six seasons ; of clear moonlit skies
<i>Sādhu</i>	: Well done
<i>Sāragrāhi</i>	: One who grasps the essence
<i>Sukṛta</i>	: Merit
<i>Suhṛt</i>	: Friend
<i>Sūtra karma</i>	: What is done using a tape
<i>Sodarya</i>	: Brotherliness
<i>Saubhāgya</i>	: Wealth ; good fortune
<i>Smṛti</i>	: Code of law
<i>Sthapati</i>	: Engineer ; builder ; maker of figures
<i>Svayamvara</i>	: Choosing one's husband ; an occasion created for it.

VALMIKI RAMAYANA

<i>Sailūga</i>	: Actor ; public dancer
<i>Śoka</i>	: Sorrow
<i>Śodhana</i>	: Testing for purity or danger
<i>Smaśru</i>	: Beard ; whisker
<i>Śloka</i>	: a form of stanza in four lines with eight syllables each or two lines of 16 syllables
<i>Śraddha</i>	: Earnestness
<i>Śramaṇi</i>	: Female ascetic
<i>Śreyas</i>	: Conducive to one's highest good
<i>Takṣaka</i>	: Carpenter
<i>Tapas</i>	: Practice of Penance
<i>Tāla</i>	: A kind of palm
<i>Tilaka</i>	: A decoration mark on the forehead
<i>Tejas</i>	: Glory ; Lustre, Aura
<i>Vaśyendriyam</i>	: One who has control of the desires of his flesh, etc.
<i>Vānara</i>	: Monkey
<i>Vimāna</i>	: Flying chariot ; mansion
<i>Viśuddha</i>	: Highly pure
<i>Visamjna</i>	: Unconscious
<i>Vīrya</i>	: Valour ; prowess
<i>Vaiḍūrya</i>	: Cat's eye gem
<i>Vṛtta Varjita</i>	: Devoid of character
<i>Vrīdita</i>	: Shy ; feeling ashamed
<i>Vyasana</i>	: Addicted to sorrow
<i>Yathāvat</i>	: As it is really.