

THE RAMAYANA

Translated from the Original of Valmiki
A modernised Version in English Prose

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By
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INVOCATION

Glory be unto Valmiki, the First of Poets and the Inventor of Verse, whose welling pity for a poor bird transformed itself into gushing Poetry, and whose divine lyre has given us the deathless lay of Rama that absolves one from sin !

Where is the man who has listened to his immortal song but has not felt its enthralling charms or does not feel elevated or purified by the sacred lay ?

Glory to him, "the Morning-Star of Song" whose fame has overstepped the limits of Time and Space. May we, by his grace, follow the jewel prints of his hallowed feet

(Translator's humble tribute)

INTRODUCTION

There is relation between the hours of life and the centuries of time, says the philosopher, and we cannot get rid of the past even if we will. Thus even those who want to study the present-day mentality of modern India with her vast and complex social, political and religious institutions, cannot do away with the history of her past, for a full and clear comprehension of the same.

Happily, we are not here without a chart or compass. If we only take the trouble of looking to our great Epics—the life history of the ancient Hindus—we shall at once fall upon the trend of our national genius, with all its limitations and greatness, which should not be overlooked in determining the course of national conduct. These great Epics embalm, in their immortal pages, the lives and accounts of those great national heroes, each of whom revealed a new potentiality of national life and added a fresh chapter to Indian glory.

This is in fact the true history of India. And rightly observes Prof. Max Muller, "The true history of the world must always be the history of the few. We measure the Himalayas by the height of Mount Everest. We must take the true measure of India from the poets of the Vedas, the sages of the Upanishads, the founders of the Vedanta and Sankhya philosophies and the authors of the oldest law books, and not from the millions who are born and die in their villages, and who have never for one moment been roused out of their drowsy dream of life."

The ancient Hindus knew full well the elevating influences of a great man. They, therefore, not only honoured their national heroes but extolled them into divinity. There is something really noble in this excess of moral zeal. We are, in truth, idolaters of greatness, bred and born. And what wonder is there if one feels a deep religious reverence for the character of a man who was an ideal king, an ideal son, an ideal man, an ideal brother, an ideal friend, a devoted husband, a valiant soldier, and, above all, a lover of humanity and truth !

If religion be a striving after moral perfection, Dr. Martineau is undoubtedly right in maintaining that from the idea of ideal perfection present in our minds we gradually rise to the notion of an Absolute Perfect Being, towards whom "a sentiment of habitual and permanent admiration" is born. In short, man always asks for a personal God, and sometimes even in flesh and blood, the place of which is often times supplied by an Avatara of our Shastras. And Sree Rama Chandra is one of these great Avatars. This much is for the orthodox view. But if it is held that "the tense of revelation is infinitely past," then we must call him a Super-man, for he can't be less than that, and the more we know of him is better for us. We cannot escape from the hallowing influence of such a man. And it must be admitted that in the Ramayana itself, more stress has been laid upon the Humanity than on the Divinity of Rama. "Ecco Homo," as Professor Seeley might say. Gods are gods, and we feel little interest for them, if they do not share in our sorrows and joys.

We think we should here enter into a timely protest against all learned and ingenious attempts to explain away the whole of Ramayana as a grand allegorical poem, depicting progress of Aryan cultivation and civilisation into the Deccan. There is indeed something fascinating about these interpretations, as in the seductive Dawn myth of Professor Max Muller, in explaining away many mysterious Vedic phenomena. Yet to treat the whole of Ramayana as an agricultural poem is nothing but blasphemy pure and simple. To rely upon the derivative roots of Rama and Sita and to brush aside everything else is neither judicious nor sound.

The historical basis and the great antiquity of the Ramayana have more than amply been proved. It is too late now to attempt to establish the fact over again. The historic remains of Rama Chandra's time are the strongest proofs of its historical truth. No amount of theory can get over this. A simple tour from Ajodhya to Rameswaram will settle all doubts. Yet if any formal authority of history is needed, we can do no better than refer to Col. Todd's immortal Annals of Rajasthan dealing with men sprung from Rama Chandra's loins. It is ridiculous to contend any more about its historical basis, though "the outline is entirely lost in colour."

Still we maintain that to study our ancient institutions we must look more to our Epics and Puranas than merely relying on foreign accounts, as, Hiouen Thsang's Travels, or McCrindel's "India as described by Classical Authors." They are helpful no doubt but do not go to the roots. Here is enough food for patient

research. In the Ramayana itself we find a high order of civilisation existing side by side with some strange practices and customs, some of which are quite Vedic, while the rest is of doubtful origin. There are also other things that will ever perplex a questioning reader, e.g. :—

Who are the Rakshasas ? Some say, they are Non-Aryans (a vague term by itself) or the dark primitive people of India whom the white Hindus conquered. They were savage people. But the civilisation and prosperity that we find in Lanka, the capital of the Rakshasas' chief, could not only vie with that of Ajodhya, but in some points were even superior to that of the Aryan capital. How can we then reconcile these two contradictory things ? Have all the heinous practices been attributed to them out of sheer prejudice or malice, because they represented a different type of civilisation ? But Ravana worshipped the Aryan God Siya and followed the same faith !

Secondly, who are the Vanaras ? Some say they are anthropoid apes ; while others, more scientific, are of opinion that they are Darwin's missing link, while the third maintains, that they were the aborigines of the Deccan. That they were not monkeys is quite evident. They had their kingdoms, and other civil institutions, yet some ape-like tricks and other arboreal habits have been freely attributed to them ! But the devotion, loyalty, intelligence, love of truth, high sense of morality and skill they exhibit are rare not only in apes or missing link, but even in our present civilised age. Thus

every theory which we so readily pounce upon appears to be negatived by some incontrovertible facts !

Thirdly, the occult power, we find, shared by some ascetics and Brahmanas is astounding, but the metamorphic power of their curses is simply astonishing. Even some material objects surpass our power of comprehension. Some of the arms and weapons described in the Epic and the description of the Puspaka that steers through the sky like a modern aeroplane, appear to be quite perplexing. What are they ? Are these the mere fabrications of a hyper-sensitive eastern mind (yet where flourished Vedantas and the Upanishads) or there is some sub-stratum of truth underneath them ("where more is meant than meets the ear") is more than what we can say.

As for the great antiquity of the poem : we can only repeat what Professor Jacobi has said, "The inner kernel of the Ramayana was composed much earlier than the Mahabharata, though the former has subsequently been modified by some later poets."

Nay more, it had, from time immemorial, invited many literary intruders to come with their countryside tales and weave them into the main texture of the poem,—a fact which has rendered the original an arduous reading to most of the modern readers. And the Ramayana, too, like most of the classics is now more admired than read. Yet we hope that, like the Illiad in ancient Greece, the Ramayana should be found under the pillow of every patriotic Hindu who still feels pride for the glorious achievements of his illustrious ancestors.

This has rendered the painful necessity of applying our irreverent scissors in pruning down literary prolixity and mere verbosity in many places, where it has encroached upon the main narrative, or clouded the real issue, or rendered the whole piece a tedious reading. This is an audacity, we admit, but considering modern taste and multifarious demands that are incessantly made upon the time of a modern reader, we have ventured to expunge all verbosity and unnecessary details for which most of the modern readers have little taste, or find little time or energy to feel their way through a regular forest of literary brambles. Economy is looked for in every department of life,—even in reading, since he has now so many things to read. And herein lies our justification for the present publication of the Epic.

This, of course, in no way means any disrespect to the great poet. Time has adorned the stately mansion with wall-flowers and other blossoms (the lovely evidence of its hoary age) and the tributes of unknown poets that have swelled the mighty current of Valmiki's poetry. Now, to dilate upon the merits of the Ramayana would be, in the words of Shakespeare, as useless as 'to gild the refined gold or to paint the lily.' Yet to a modern reader many things might appear quite absurd and dull. He may even be shocked by excessive hyperboles and supernatural elements of the Epic. But certain allowances must be made for its hoary age and the state of belief that characterised the society of that time. Literature of every age is tinged by its atmosphere. The Ramayana, too, was coloured by

its environments. We are afraid that a modern reader will not feel much enthusiastic about the literary charms of the Ramayana, specially through the medium of a translation. We have, therefore, tried to be brief and simple instead of conforming to the exacting demands of a learned critic. But we have not left a single incident with its mental and physical accompaniments that finds its place in the original. Such cuts that hurt popular sentiments are improper, if not impertinent. We are, however, guilty of one such offence, though sometimes we have taken the liberty of condensing unnecessary details and many country-side tales, and redundant anecdotes into a close compact.

In short, the present translation is a modernised version of the original. But we have omitted nothing which may be missed, though we have tried our best to adapt it to modern taste. And for this, we have tried to be faithful more to the spirit than to the form of the original. Some latitudes in translating such a work are inevitable. Thus, where we thought that word per word translation would render the whole thing unreadable, we have taken the liberty of a free translation there. To have a host of adjectives attached to every noun, in a monstrously long sentence, is anything but agreeable to modern taste, and we make no secret of doing away with a lot of them, which could be done without altering the sense in any manner. In some cases, alterations were necessary in the structure of sentences and in the sequence of words. There has also been a laxity in the use of articles. We have

thus attempted in our humble way to present the book in a simple, readable form, specially to enable those who are ignorant of Sanskrit to see how the thing has been treated in the original.

A few words more are necessary to indicate the line of our translation. Of the two famous recensions of the poem—the Benares recension in more poetic than the Bengal one, and we have followed the Benares recension in the main, though here and there we have taken the help of the Bengal text.

We have not excluded the Uttarakanda which in all probability appears to be a later addition by some other poet or poets, as the main story properly ends in the Sixth Kanda. Divisions of cantos differ in different readings, and as we have condensed sometimes different cantos into one, we have thought it more advisable to divide the book into chapters than into cantos. Important historical, philosophical or literary references have been given in their proper places.

Lastly; with our literary limitations, we cannot but feel diffident in presenting such a book in our poor form to the public—a book that has loomed large for centuries over the destinies of millions of people, and will continue to do so for ages to come. And for our ambitious venture we bow down to the spirit of immortal Valmiki, the jewel prints of whose hallowed feet we have dared to follow.

CALCUTTA

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MAKHAN LAL SEN

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BOOK 1

THE RAMAYANA

CHAPTER I.

VALMIKI AND NARADA

The great sage Valmiki asked Narada, the foremost of the saints, versed in the Vedas, "Tell me, O Saint ! who is, at present, the most accomplished, learned, powerful, noble-minded, truthful, firm in vows, of excellent moral character, and of grateful turn of mind ? Who ministers to the good of every creature ? Who is well familiar with manners and customs of men ? Who is peerless, clever, and beautiful to look at ? Who is not subject to anger or malice ; yet whom when enraged even the gods fear to face in the battle ? Whose prowess can protect the world from evil ? On whom Fortune has emptied her choicest blessings ! Who is the best of kings, and can justly be compared with Indra, the king of heaven ? O Sage ! You alone know who is so qualified on earth. Great is my curiosity to hear."

Then, the great saint Narada, cognisant of the three worlds, cheerfully said, "O hermit ! The great qualities just now mentioned by you, are rarely to be found in ordinary mortals. Let me, however, remember and tell you who is such a qualified person on earth."

There is a famous king by the name of Rama, born

in the line of great Ikshwaku. He is of subdued sense and of exceeding might. He has mighty arms reaching to the knees. His throat is marked with three auspicious conch-shell lines. He has high and broad shoulders, wide chest, well-formed head, graceful forehead, strongest jaws, and deeply embedded collar bones. His eyes are large, and his colour is of soft lustrous green. He is neither too tall, nor very short, but well formed and of symmetrical limbs. This highly beautiful and mighty Rama is supremely intelligent, and of eloquent speech. He is upright, true to his vows, modest and observer of laws. His character is highly pure. He is famous, wise and possesses the knowledge of self. He is the protector of all, defender of religion and caste-system. He is the supporter of his kinsmen and friends. He is like Prajapati himself. He is the supporter of all, and the destroyer of his enemies. He always gives shelter to his devoted followers. He is deeply versed in the Vedas and Vedangas. He is highly skilled in archery, and his valour is admitted by his dying foes. He has great fortitude. He is a genius and possesses excellent memory and is profoundly learned in all the sacred lore. He is wise, compassionate and valiant. Every one is fond of him. As the ocean is served by the rivers, he is always attended upon by all good men. He metes out equal treatment to his friends and foes. This Rama is born of Kausalya's womb, and is honoured by all. In gravity, he is like the sea ; in fortitude, like the Himalayas ; in might, like Vishnu ; in beauty, like the moon ; in forbearance like the earth ; in anger, like the doomsday fire ; in

bounty, like Kuvera, the giver of wealth ; in devotion to truth, like Dharma or Religion himself."

King Dasaratha, for the satisfaction of all people, wished to confer the crown on Rama. Finding Rama about to be installed on the throne, queen Kaikeyi, who had been previously promised two boons by Dasaratha, asked for the exile of Rama and the installation of her son, Bharata, on the throne. Bound by his promise, the truthful Dasaratha banished his dear son Rama to the forest. And Rama, for the fulfilment of his father's promise and for Kaikeyi's benefit, went into voluntary exile. Sumitra's darling, gentle Lakshmana, dear to Rama, followed him out of brotherly love.

Then, Ramchandra's darling wife Sita, exceedingly beautiful, and possessed of all auspicious signs, born in Janaka's line, the jewel of women, who is like the embodiment of Divine grace—dearer to Rama than his life, went after her husband, as the star Rohini follows the Moon. Dasaratha himself and the citizens in great sorrow followed them to a great distance.

After some time, Rama reached the city of Srīngavera on the banks of the holy Ganges, where he dismissed his charioteer Sumantra, and met Guhaka, the king of the Nishadas. Thence, after crossing deep rivers, Rama along with Sita and Lakshmana entered the forest and came to the hermitage of Bharadwaja ; following Bharadwaja's directions, Rama arrived at the Chitrakuta mountain where he raised a beautiful hut and passed his days in joy. The Chitrakuta

grew bright with the presence of the illustrious three.

When Rama left for the woods, king Dasaratha died broken-hearted, bitterly lamenting the absence of Rama. After his death, Vasistha and other Brahmanas requested Bharata to ascend the throne, which Bharata stoutly refused. Bharata then went to the forest to meet worshipful Rama. Bharata fell down at the feet of Rama and entreated him to come back, saying, "Oh Aryya! in presence of the elder brother it is not proper for the younger brother to usurp the throne. You know this custom very well, so come back and rule your kingdom." Generous Rama was pleased with Bharata's words, but he preferred to abide by his father's decree and refused to return to his kingdom. He made over his sandals as his substitute at Bharata's insistence and induced him to go back. Then, Bharata finding that all his prayers were in vain, returned to Nandigram after profoundly bowing at Rama's feet. Bharata left Ayodhya in sorrow and disgust. He placed the sandals as Rama's substitute on the throne and began to rule from Nandigram as Rama's deputy, eagerly expecting the return of Rama.

After Bharata's departure, fearing that others might intrude upon his seclusion, Rama left Chitrakuta and entered the mighty forest of Dandaka. The lotus-eyed Rama, after slaying a Rakshasa named Viradha in that forest, saw Maharshi Sharabhanga, Sutikishna, Agastya and Agastya's brother Idhmavaha.

Then, according to Agastya's instructions he

secured the bow, sword and the inexhaustible quiver of Indra.

While Rama was living in the Dandaka forest, ascetics and hermits came to him for the destruction of Ashuras and Rakshasas and Rama readily agreed to their proposal.

Then one day he cut the ear and nose of Surpanakha, a denizen of Janasthana, who could assume different forms at will. Then the Rakshasas of the place being incited by Surpanakha challenged Rama Chandra in a battle whereupon Rama slew Rakshasas, Khar, Trishira and Dushana with their host. About fourteen thousand Rakshasas were killed during his stay in Dandaka. Then Ravana, the king of the Rakshasas, hearing of the destruction of his kinsmen, flew into rage and asked a Rakshasa called Maricha to come to his rescue. Finding Ravana about to launch into an audacious venture, Maricha entreated Ravana to desist from it, and said, "Oh king ! It would not be to your benefit to enter into hostilities with mighty Rama." But Ravana, urged by fate, scorned at Maricha's words and repaired to Rama's place taking Maricha with him. Rama and Lakshmana were drawn away from Sita by Maricha's wiles and Ravana carried off Sita by force. He slew the vulture, Jatayu, that obstructed him in the way. When Rama came back, he found Jatayu slain and Sita stolen. He greatly bewailed for Sita and then set out in quest of her, after cremating Jatayu in deep sorrow. While searching for Sita, Rama came across a horrible Rakshasa called Kabandha. After slaying Kabandha,

Rama burnt his body. Then Kabandha rose from the flame to the funeral pyre in the beautiful form of a Gandharva and addressing Rama said, "Oh Rama ! Go to saintly Sabari and seek her advice." Rama then went to Sabari and according to her advice, he came to the banks of the beautiful Pompa Lake, where he met Hanuman, the Wind God's son. Acting on Hanuman's words, Rama went to Sugriva, the chief of the Vanaras or monkeys, and told him everything concerning the sad history of Sita. Hearing this tale of sorrow, Sugriva vowed friendship with Rama in the presence of sacred fire. Then on Rama's enquiry about the cause of Sugriva's hostilities with his brother Vali, Sugriva narrated everything with a sigh. Hearing all, Rama promised, to dispel Sugriva's fear by killing Vali. Sugriva who described the great prowess of Vali entertained great doubts about Rama's capacity, and pointed out the huge corpse of the giant Dundhuvi slain by Vali. Rama looked at the prostrate corpse, huge as a mountain, and with a smile threw the body hundred leagues away by a gentle push of his toe. To convince Sugriva, Rama sent a shaft which after piercing seven palms in a line and a rock, reached Rasatal or the Nether world. After witnessing these wonderful feats of strength with his own eyes, Sugriva with a contented mind accompanied Rama to Kiskindhya. After reaching Kiskindhya, Sugriva of brownish yellow colour like that of gold, began to make terrific shouts. Hearing those shouts Vali, the lord of the monkeys, after taking Tara's permission, came out and met Sugriva when at the

instance of Sugriva, Rama killed Vali with one deadly shaft and gave Vali's kingdom to Sugriva. Then grateful Sugriva summoned the monkeys and sent them in various directions in search of Janaka's daughter.

Then Hanuman at the advice of bird Sampati, crossed hundred leagues of the saltish sea and arrived at Lanka, the well-guarded city of Ravana. There he found Sita in the Asoka forest, pensive and sad. Hanuman then delivered Rama's message, and showed her a token from Rama. He told her all about the newly-made friendship between Rama and Sugriva, and cheered up hopeless Sita with messages of hope. He then smashed down the gate of the forest. Hanuman then slew five captains, seven counsellors' sons, and Ravana's son, Aksha. He was then bound by Meghnad. Knowing that he would be soon set free by the boon of Brahma the grandsire of all created things, he suffered himself to be carried to Ravana's presence. He then set fire to the whole of Lanka, excluding the Asoka forest, and afterwards came back from Lanka.

Then the mighty Hanuman appeared before Rama and after going round him as a mark of profound respect, said, "My Lord, I have really seen Janaki." Hearing this from Hanuman's lips, Rama, followed by Sugriva, repaired to the sea shore and smote the Ocean with keen shafts bright as the sun's rays. Then the God of the Ocean quickly appeared before Rama, and according to the Ocean's advice, with the help of Nala, Rama built a bridge over the sea.

By that bridge Rama went to Lanka, slew Ravana and recovered Sita. But thinking of Sita's long confinement in Ravana's place, Rama was stung with shame, and he used some harsh expressions towards Sita in the presence of all. Then chaste Sita, being unable to bear the insult any more, cast herself into fire. Thereupon god Agni appeared with Sita and assured Rama about Sita's stainless character. Thereupon Rama trembling with joy embraced his wife. Then the gods showered praises and blessings on Rama for his mighty deeds.

Rama then installed the best of the Rakshasas, Bibhisana, on the throne and revived his fallen monkey-soldiers by a divine boon. After this, Rama and Sita surrounded by friends and followers set out for Ayodhya in the heavenly chariot called Puspaka through the clouds. On reaching the hermitage of Bharadwaja, Rama sent Hanuman to Bharata, and accompanied by Sugriva Rama then started for Nandigram in the Puspaka. Arriving at Nandigram, Rama met his loyal brother and cut down his matted locks. Thus after regaining Sita, Rama got back his own kingdom. Thus, Dasaratha's son, noble Rama now rules over his people who have grown happy and prosperous in his reign. During his reign his subjects will not suffer from any disease or mental disquietitude. They will have no fear of hunger or of thieves. Cities and villages will be full of corns and wealth, and the people will live as happily as in the Golden Age. No fire or flood will devastate the land, and women will ever continue to be chaste and they will

not suffer from widowhood. He will perform hundred horse sacrifices, give away millions of cows and immense wealth to the famous Brahmanas. He will make each of the four castes stick to its own duties. Hundreds of royal families will spring from him. Having reigned for ten thousand and ten hundred years he will repair to the Brahmaloaka or the high Heaven.

Whoever will read this noble tale of Rama's deeds, sacred as the Vedas, will be free from all sins and will attain heavenly bliss with his kins. If a Brahman reads it, he will attain excellence in speech ; if a Kshattriya does it he will lord it over all ; if a Vaishya reads it, he will get abundance of wealth in trade, and a Sudra will attain greatness by listening to the tale.

CHAPTER II.

THE BIRTH OF POETRY

Having heard with admiration the words of Divine Narada, pious Valmiki with his pupils made due obeisance to him. Being thus honoured by Valmiki, Narada, after the expression of good wishes and with the former's leave, left for the heavenly regions.

Then, after a short stay in the hermitage, Valmiki came to the banks of the Tamasa, not far from the Gangetic stream. On arriving there and finding the bank of the river free from mud, Valmiki addressing his pupil Bharadwaja, standing by his side, said, "Look

Bharadwaja ! How beautiful is this spot, free from all stains of dirt. Its glassy stream is transparent like the hearts of pious men. Now, put down your pitcher and give me my bark. I shall bathe in this sacred stream.

Obedient Bharadwaja, thus being asked, presented the bark without delay. After taking the bark from his pupil's hand, Valmiki strayed about surveying the deep, extensive forest.

At the skirts of the forest, Valmiki saw a pair of healthy Kraunchas dallying in amorous sports and singing in melodious notes. At this moment, suddenly a wicked fowler appeared and killed the male bird, without any provocation whatsoever. Then, the female bird finding its mate thus slain and rolling in the dust, besmeared with blood, raised piteous cries of despair under pangs of separation from her coppercrested, amorous companion of fluttering wings. Seeing the bird thus brought down in the very act of love, Valmiki was overwhelmed with grief. His heart melted at the piteous notes of the female bird and considering it to be a highly unrighteous act, his indignation broke forth :—

“O Fowler ! Since thou hast slain one of the pair of Kraunchas while engaged in love, thou shalt never attain any fame.”

Having uttered this course, Valmiki was struck with wonder, and repeatedly asked to himself, “What have I just now uttered being afflicted with grief for the bird !”

Then, addressing Bharadwaja, the sage said, “These

words I have just now uttered are of equal feet and of even measure, and are capable of being sung in accompaniment to a stringed lyre. And since it is born of my *Shoka* (grief) let it be known as a *Sloka* (or Verse)." When the great sage had thus spoken, his pupil Bharadwaja gladly agreed to his master's words, and Valmiki felt gratified within.

Then, Valmiki after bathing in the Tamasa and performing ablutions in the stream, returned to his hermitage pondering all the way over the composition of the verse, and his disciple Bharadwaja followed him with a pitcher brimful of water.

Having reached the hermitage Valmiki took his seat and revolved in his mind all things about the verses (which came so spontaneously to his lips).

Then the four-faced god, glorious Brahma, the Creator of Heavens and Earth, appeared before Valmiki. As soon as the holy saint saw Brahma before him, he rose from his seat in reverence and stood before him with folded hands and bent head in profound obsequence. Valmiki offered the God water to wash his feet with and other things of reception. After taking his seat, the Holy one enquired after Valmiki's welfare, and asked him to resume his seat. Valmiki then took his seat before the Sire of all created things, but his mind still revolved over the incidents of the *Sloka*. Valmiki thought about the sad fate of the bird and while thus absorbed in thought, he quite automatically repeated the Verse in grief, "O wicked fowler Thou shalt never attain fame for killing the tuneful Krauncha while dallying in amorous sports."

Then Brahma spoke in joy, "O thou best of the hermits, see thou hast unconsciously made a Verse. It was done at my instance. Now, the work should no longer be delayed. Those Verses of yours shall be immortal, and I ask you, O thou Best of the Saints, to celebrate the life of Rama in your Verse. Relate the sacred story as you have heard it from Narada about pious and intelligent Rama, Lakshmana and Vaidehi and about the Rakshashas, including all that is hitherto known or unknown. Even what has been omitted by Narada, will come to your pen at the time of writing and no words of yours should contain any untruth. So long as the mountains and the seas exist on earth, the sacred history of the Ramayana shall endure, and you will enjoy a double life both in Heaven and on Earth."

Having said this, the worshipful Brahma disappeared, and Valmiki's pupils began to chant the Verse, and the more they sang, the more their wonder grew.

The great sage Valmiki, then in hundreds of melodious Verses, composed the story of the glorious deeds of Rama in pregnant metres. It behoves every one to hear the sacred lay about Rama's life and the destruction of Ravana.

CHAPTER III.

THE GREAT THEME.

The great Valmiki having heard the sacred story of Rama from celestial Narada wanted to get an insight

into its true history. He then sat on a bed of grass facing the East and after making due ablutions with water and concentrating his mind in *yoga*, he plunged himself deep into the subject. Then, through *yoga* everything became distinct to his mental eyes. He distinctly saw Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Dasaratha with his queens and counsellors talking, laughing and acting before him, as if in real life. He could then see them as clearly as he could see a myrobalan in his palm. He saw what hardships and sufferings Rama, Lakshmana and Sita underwent in their wanderings through the forests. Having thus learnt everything by *yoga*, the great Valmiki began to compose his enchanting lay of Rama, formerly told by Narada, which is pleasing to all men's ears, and in worth is like a sea of pearls.

Valmiki then repeated the story over again, e.g. Rama's birth ; his prowess ; his generosity ; his forbearance ; his truthfulness ; his fortitude ; his goodness and his popularity ; Rama's talks with the great sage Visvamitra ; the formidable bow ; his marriage with Janaki ; his encounter with Parashurama ; his installation on the throne ; Kaikeyi's malice ; Rama's exile, Dasaratha's grief, and sorrow of the people. Rama's meeting with Gubaka ; his interview with Bharadwaja ; his arrival at the Chitrakuta ; Bharata's entreaties ; Rama's offering of oblations to his departed father ; giving of the sandals ; Bharata's removal to Nandigram ; Rama's entry into the Dandaka forest ; destruction of Viradha ; his interview with Shrabhanga and Sutikshna ; Sita's companionship with

Anusuya ; Rama's meeting with Agastya ; his obtaining arms from Indra ; Surpanakha's disfigurement, destruction of Khara and Trisira ; death of Maricha ; carrying away of Sita ; Rama's lamentations ; the sight of the Pampa lake ; his friendship with Savari, his meeting with Hanuman : friendship with Sugriva ; destruction of Vali ; installation of Sugriva ; Tara's grief ! collection of troops ; the despatch of envoys ; Hanuman's meeting with Sampati ; Hanuman's crossing the sea ; his sight of Lanka ; his entry by night ; his sight of Ravana's palace and of Ravana ; Hanuman's interview with Sita in the Asoka forest ; presentation of Rama's ring to Sita ; Sita's handing a gem to Rama through Hanuman ; Hanuman's fight and burning of Lanka ; Hanuman's return, his consolation to Rama ; Rama's interview with the ocean-god ; construction of the bridge across the sea, siege of Lanka ; Rama's friendship with Bibhishana ; death of Kumbhakarna, Meghnada and Ravana and recovery of Sita ; ordeal of Sita ; Rama's return to Ayodhya in Puspaka ; meeting with Bharadwaja ; despatch of Hanuman to Bharata ; meeting Bharata ; Rama's installation to the throne ; dismissal of the forces ; Rama's rule ; his administration and renunciation of Sita, and everything else that happened in Rama's life has been treated by the revered sage.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SONG.

When Rama got back his kingdom Valmiki composed a wonderful poem consisting of twenty-four thousand slokas. Having composed the poem, Valmiki thought of the means of communicating it to the world. When he was thinking about the means of its publication on earth, came in Kusa and Lava, two royal princes, dressed in hermit's dress and touched his feet. Valmiki, seeing those two brothers pure in character, endowed with sweet voice and good memory and capable of appreciating poetry, taught them to interpret the Vedas, and along with it the whole of the Ramayana dealing with the destruction of Ravana and of Sita's life in full.

The two brothers were beautiful like Gandharvas and were exceedingly sweet-voiced. They mastered all the notes of music. They looked like Rama, as his twin shadows. Then the two brothers, Kusa and Lava, learnt by rote the entire song of the Ramayana with all the involutions of tone, melody, measure and time, suggesting various emotions as ; pity, anger, heroism, love and sorrow. One day, Kusa and Lava bearing all auspicious marks on their beautiful persons, began to chant the great song in an assembly of pure-minded hermits, and when they heard the song, the pious ascetics were seized with delightful surprise and began to bless the boys again and again. Some in their admiration for Kusa and Lava, said, "O, how sweet is the music ! how charming is the verse ! all the

exploits of Rama happened long, long ago, but they seem to be reacted before our eyes."

Then to the delight and admiration of the assembly, Kusa and Lava began to sing in sevenfold notes of music, and the ascetics became loud in their praises as they heard the song. Then, some one in ecstasy stood up and presented to Kusa and Lava a pitcher ; some one in delight gave them a bark ; another, a dark deer-skin ; some presented sacred threads ; some Kamandulu ; some, a twisted manju ; some, the seat of an ascetic ; some, a loin-cloth. One gave them an axe ; one, a piece of red cloth ; one, a rope to tie their matted locks ; another, a rope for tying faggots ; some, sacrificial vessel ; some, hermit's stool made of fig-tree ; and some one cried in joy, "May you live long." Thus blessed the truthful ascetics, and then they said in a body, "Wonderful is the story that has been composed by Valmiki ; it will be a source of inspiration to all later poets, and you have beautifully sung the thing, pleasing both to the ear and to the heart, conferring longevity and prosperity on the hearers."

Thus Kusa and Lava gained reputation and praise everywhere by their songs and musical performance.

On one occasion, these sweet singers were seen by Rama in a street of Ayodhya. Rama then brought them by sending his men. When they came, Rama was seated on a throne of gold. His brothers stood by him, counsellors and other retinue surrounded the king. Beholding the minstrels, Rama said to Lakshmana ;

"Come, listen to the story composed in excellent measure, and fraught with lofty thoughts and deep melody."

Then the singers began to sing in clear melodious strain, raising their sweet voices to high pitch, rivalling the notes of Vina. And that song of theirs moved the assembly in ecstasy. Then high-souled Rama remarked, "These minstrels, though look like ascetics, yet they bear on their persons the signs of royalty, and the song relates to my deeds which will perpetuate my history for ever.

CHAPTER V

AYODHYA

The Ramayana treats of the history of the victorious sons of Ikshwaku who ruled through countless years from the days of Manu.

In this line, King Sagara was born who dug the sea and whom sixty thousand proud sons followed in march.

We two shall recite the noble song at length. Now listen to the story with delight.

On the banks of the Saraju lies extended the great kingdom of Kosala, rich in corns and gold, where the people pass their days in peace and happiness. And famous Ayodhya is its capital. In bygone days, the city was built by Manu, the ruler of men.

It is twelve (leagues) yojanas in length and three in breadth. It is the fairest city on earth, and is adorned with squares and palaces. It is well-watered,

its spacious roads are sprinkled with full blown flowers, and are lined with shops and stalls. Its gates stand at even distance. In one part of the city live the artizans ; in another part, arms and implements are stored. It contains high terraces with flags streaming in the air, and guarded with various arms. Its ramparts are protected by deep moats and fortified with various kinds of iron weapons. The city is thus inaccessible to all. There are gardens, theatres for females, and mango groves in the city. Merchants and traders from various countries have come to live in the city for trade.

There are seven storied houses, elephants, horses and chariots constantly ply along its streets—a rich city beyond comparison. In every street are heard sounds of lute, drum, tabor, flute, chanting of the Vedas, and ringing of archer's bow. Wise and learned Brahmins live in the city.

CHAPTER VI

KING DASHARATHA

There, in this city, once reigned king Dasharatha like Indra, the Ruler of Heaven, commanding all royal resources, and under his rule people were happy, virtuous and prosperous. All men and women were of excellent character. None of them was atheistical or untruthful or illiterate. No man or woman was devoid of grace. The city abounded in spirited horses from Kambhoj, Vahlika, Vanayu and Sindhu, and in huge elephants from the Vindhya mountain and the

Himalayas. The Kshatriyas obeyed the Brahmins, the Vaishyas were respectful towards the Kshatriyas, and all were served by the Sudras.

CHAPTER VII

COUNSELLORS

King Dasharatha had two priests, saintly Vasistha, faithful to advise, and Vamdeva versed in the Vedas and sacred lore. He had other counsellors, viz. Suyajna, Javali, Kashyapa, Gautama, long-lived Markandeya and Katyayana.

King Dasharatha had eight ministers famous for their sagacity and devotion and their names were Dhrishti, Vijaya, Surashtra, Rashtravardhan, Akopa, Dharmapala and Sumantra. Peace reigned in cities and provinces. They could keep their counsels, judge of things, were well-trained in the arts of administration and policy. Surrounded by these wise counsellors Dasharatha ruled the earth, gathering informations by means of spies, and protecting the people by his might. He never met a foe who was either his equal or superior.

CHAPTER VIII

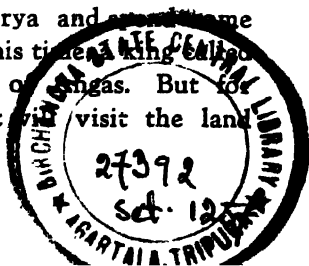
SUMANTRA'S ADVICE

The high souled Dasharatha, having no issue, pined for the birth of a son to perpetuate his line. Once, he thought in his mind, "Why do I not celebrate a horse-sacrifice for (obtaining) a son?" He then, with

the advice of his counsellors decided to perform Aswamedha sacrifice and called together his spiritual guides with Vāsistha at their head.

The Brahmins approved of the king's intention and said in a body, "O king, since with the object of obtaining an offspring thou hast decided so nobly, you will surely get sons after your mind."

Then the king replied, "Do (then) procure the necessary sacrificial articles, according to the instruction of my spiritual preceptors, and let loose a horse guarded by a competent person, and one of the chief family priests prepare the sacrificial ground on the north bank of the Saraju. The ceremony cannot be celebrated by every king. Particular care should be taken that it may not be defective on account of any omission. The Brahmins then embraced the monarch and retired with his permission. Hearing all about the sacrifice, the King's charioteer Sumantra said, "Listen Sire, to a story of old which I have myself heard. The Saint Sanat Kumar foretold how in your ancient line a son would be born, The seer said, "Kashyapa has a son named Vibhandaka, and he will get a son called Rishyasringa. He will be brought up with wood-land deer and will pass his days in the woods, and will know nothing except following the behests of his father. It is said, Oh king, that he will practise two modes of Brahmacharya and spend some time by the sacrificial fire. By this time King Lomapada will sit on the throne of Angas. But for the king's sin, plague and drought will visit the land



and the King will ask the priests to find out some remedy for it. The Brahmanas then will advise him to bring Vibhandaka's son by any means and to bestow his daughter Santa with due honours on him. Hearing this, the King will ask his priests and courtezans to bring Rishyasringa to him. But they will beg to be excused from fear of Vibhandaka. Then they will devise many crafty plots. Then it will be planned that young damsels expert in all sorts of blandishments, will be sent attired in hermit's dress to beguile the holy hermit with amorous wiles ; and the unsuspecting youth seduced by them will leave his father's cottage. Then when Rishyasringa will leave his peaceful retreat and come to the city the troubles of the King will come to an end, and Rishyasringa will be married to Santa. Now I have related what Sanat Kumar had communicated before."

King Dasaratha then exclaimed in joy, "Tell me how they brought the holy hermit to Angas ?"

CHAPTER IX

RISHYASRINGA

Thus asked by the King, Sumantra replied, "The priests said to Lompada, "Rishyasringa has been brought up in the woods and is engaged in religious austerities and is quite ignorant of woman and sensual pleasures. Let, therefore, most beautiful girls be sent to him and they will seduce him hither."

Then the courtiers acted according to the instructions of the priests and sent fascinating courtezans to

the forest, and they stopped at some distance from the hermitage.

It happened, however, that one day, Vibhandaka's son, who never strayed from his father's retreat, while strolling about leisurely came to that spot and beheld those young beauties.

Then, to allure the youthful hermit, the bright young girls with their scented tresses tied with floral wreaths, began to sing and dance and feigned all amorous things. The whole forest became reverberated with their music, anklets' silvery chime, and sweet cuckoo notes.

Rishyasringa gazed on them in wild surprise, and he felt a hitherto unfelt strong impulse in him. They marked his amazed look and the girls came near to him and said,

"Whose son art thou ? Why do you live alone in this wood ? We are eager to know the truth."

The young ascetic's eyes gloated upon their lovely forms. A strange longing arose in his mind and he replied,

"My father is holy Kashyapa's son, Vibhandaka, and I am called Rishyasringa. Our hermitage is close-by. Please come to our cottage ; I welcome you, gentle beauties."

They then gladly went to his cottage and Rishyasringa received them most warmly. He gave them water to wash their feet with and offered them fruits and roots to eat.

The damsels then broke forth with a merry laugh.

"We too have dainty fruits in store. Please taste the produce of our forest."

Then they gave him many luscious things, looking like fruits. Then the laughing damsels threw their arms round his neck, and whispered in his ears heavy tales of love, while their sumptuous breasts and delicate limbs pressed against the youthful hermit.

Then the wily girls took a hasty leave, saying that they were afraid of his ascetic father. When they were gone Rishyasringa felt distressed by their absence. He seemed to be possessed by a longing love, and roamed about the forest in restless steps. And the next day, Rishyasringa eagerly came to the spot where he had encountered the beautiful girls previously. As soon as those wily girls saw Vibhandaka's son, they came forward and said, "O Brahman! come to our cottage, there are various fruits and roots which you will have to your heart's content."

Rishyasringa felt tempted and he was thus vanquished, and brought over by the wily women. As soon as Rishyasringa was brought, Indra poured forth plenty of showers enlivening the earth and the spirits of men. The King received him with due honours and conferred on him his daughter Santa. Thus honoured by the King, Rishyasringa passed his days in the city with his beloved wife Santa.

CHAPTER X

THE INVITATION

"Listen, O foremost of monarchs, I shall tell what Sanat Kumar, the best of gods, has said." Thus

resumed Sumantra. "In Ikshaku's line there will be born a pious king named Dasaratha, beautiful in appearance and true to his vows. He will be a friend of the king of Angas who will have a virtuous daughter named Santa. At one time the famous King Dasaratha will repair to him and thus speak to him. O noble one ! I am without any issue and I wish to perform a sacrifice for it. Let Santa's husband take charge of that sacrifice. Please request him for it."

Hearing this, Lompada, after thinking over the matter will make over Rishyasringa with his wife and children for the intended ceremony. After bringing Rishyasringa, King Dasaratha, glad to heart, will make preparations for the sacrifice and with supplicating prayer will invite the best of Brahmana to conduct the ceremony. And from that Putreshti sacrifice four sons of great prowess will be born unto him."

"Thus has prophesied Sanat Kumar. Therefore, O mighty King, bring here Rishyasringa with due honours."

Dasaratha was exceedingly delighted at these words of Sumantra. Dasaratha then looked to Vasistha for advice, who gave his glad consent to Sumantra's words.

Then Dasaratha with his queens and courtiers went to Angas where he was warmly received by his friend, Lompada, the King of Angas. Lompada then introduced Dasharatha to Rishyasringa who hearing of the intimate friendship between the two, received the former with warm hospitality.

Dasharatha stopped at Angas for seven or eight

days. Then, after stating the object of his visit, addressing Lompada, he said, Let your daughter with her husband come to my city to help my sacrifice which I intend to perform there."

Hearing this his friend Lompada requested his son-in-law Rishyasringa to repair to Ayodhya with his wife, and Rishyasringa readily consented to his father-in-law's proposal.

Then Dasaratha and Lompada clasped each other's palm and embraced each other in joy. After this Dasaratha set out for Ayodhya with Rishyasringa, the foremost of Brahmanas, and sent a messenger for a public celebration. "Let the whole city be decorated, let it be perfumed with sweet incense, let the streets be well-watered and let gay banners flutter in the air."

All the people awaited his return in eager joy, and as soon as the King entered the city with Rishyasringa in his company the whole city welcomed him with the blares of conch shells and drums.

The King then took him inside his palace and accorded him due honours with rites of hospitality. In consequence of Rishyasringa's presence, the King thought that his object had been gained. And the ladies of the palace were all pleased at the sight of large-eyed Santa. Thus honoured by all, Rishyasringa and his wife passed their days.

CHAPTER XI

ON THE EVE OF THE SACRIFICE

After some time, when the sweet vernal season appeared, King Dasaratha thought of performing his sacrifice. Dasaratha then came to Rishyasringa and after bowing to the saint, he invited him to conduct the ceremony for getting sons to perpetuate his line.

The Brahman said to the king, "Let it be so. Order for necessary provisions, loose the horse and prepare the sacrificial ground on the north bank of the Sarayu." Thereafter King Dasaratha addressing Sumantra said, "O Sumantra, summon Brahmins and priests versed in the Vedas and Vedangas : Suyajna, Vamdeva, Javali, Kashyapa and the priest Vasistha. Thereupon, Sumantra bestirred himself and summoned all those versed in the Vedas. When they came, Dasaratha after showing due honours to them said,

"Having no son I have no happiness in life. Hence I intend to perform an Aswamedha sacrifice, and by the blessings of holy Rishyasringa, I am sure, I shall gain my object." The Brahmins fully agreed to his words. The King was greatly delighted at their approval and he cheerfully asked his men to make preparations for the sacrifice in accordance with the directions of the Brahmins. Then the Brahmins blessed him saying, 'May your desire be crowned with success.'

Dasaratha then bowed to them in profound respect and hurried to meet his queens. And when they heard

about the possibility of sons, their lotus-like faces brightened in joy, as lilies at the end of the frost

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT PREPARATIONS

Again when the spring appeared after a year, the king anxious for the birth of sons, resolved to perform the sacrifice without further delay. He then addressing Vasistha said,

"O Reverend Sir, Please make all preparations strictly according to the injunctions of the Sastras. Kindly see there may not be any impediment to it. You are my best friend and guide. You will have to take entire charge of the sacrifice."

Vasistha replied, "I shall do as you desire."

Then Vasistha summoned Brahmins well-versed in sacrificial things, wise, and aged people, architects, capable servants, carpenters, diggers, astrologers, artists, actors, dancers, learned and people of good character for the sacrifice of the King Dasaratha. He ordered to fetch bricks by thousands and thousands and raised a spacious structure for the accommodation of kings and princes and to furnish it with various kinds of furniture ; then to build thousands of sheds for the Brahmins, and replenish them with food and drink. Then he directed to construct separate quarters for each one of the princes coming from distant places, and sheds for citizens, soldiers and foreigners, with proper accommodation for every one and also to construct stalls for horses and elephants. Many poor and

low class people are expected to attend the sacrifice, beautiful huts should be raised for them. And whatever you may give to them you must give it with proper modesty, so that they may think themselves respectfully entertained. Don't neglect or despise any body through greed or fits of temper. Those labourers and artizans who will remain engaged in the sacrificial work should also be treated with kindness, for those who work for wages if they receive beyond their expectations, accomplish their work satisfactorily and leave nothing unfinished or illdone. So act with discretion and kindness.

Thus Vasistha concluded. Thereupon some came forward and said, "We have done everything according to your instructions and nothing has been left undone and what you now say will be carried out to the letter."

Then, Vasistha summoning Sumantra said, "Go and invite all the great rulers, and the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and the Sudras. Invite cordially the people of all provinces. Go yourself to Janaka, the truthful and valiant king of Mithila. As he is a very old ally of ours I have first mentioned his name. Then go to amiable Keshiraj, a man of character and of great virtues. Then bring with all honour the king's father-in-law, the pious ruler of Kekaya with his sons : the king's friend, Lompada the chief of Angas : the puissant ruler of Kosala ; and the highly accomplished and martial king of Maghada. According to the wishes of Dasaratha also invite the rulers of East, the kings of Sindhu, Sauvira and Saurashtra.

Summon all the rulers who are friendly to us, to attend the sacrifice with their retinues. You now send envoys to them according to the instructions of the king."

Then Sumantra in obedience to Vasistha's words, sent faithful emissaries to different rulers, and himself went to invite some of them.

After this, some men engaged in the sacrificial work, came and informed Vasistha that they had got everything ready for the sacrifice. At this, saintly Vasistha was greatly pleased and said unto them, "I charge you not to give anything disrespectfully to any body. Anything given in scorn or disrespect destroys the giver as sin."

Then after two or three days, the invited kings and princes began to pour in, with gems and other rich presents to King Dasaratha.

Priest Vasistha then informed the king of the arrival of the princes, all of whom were respectfully received. Every thing was carefully arranged for the sacrifice, and the whole place seemed to be filled with all desirable objects.

Then, according to the words of both Vasistha and Rishyasringa, Dasaratha, one day, under an auspicious star repaired to the sacrificial ground. Thereupon, Vasistha and other Brahmins with Rishyasringa at their head, began the great sacrifice and the King with his queens was initiated into it.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SACRIFICE

After a year when the wandering, sacrificial horse returned, Aswamedha Sacrifice commenced on the northern bank of the Saraju, and Rishyasringa guided its operations. All the priests duly performed their assigned parts, and after the observance of necessary Pravargya¹ and Upasads² rites. Then all the deities were worshipped ; first of all oblations were offered to Indra. Rishyasringa and other learned Brahmins began to invoke Indra and other Gods by chanting sacred Mantras of the Vedas. Then with sweet Sama hymns each deity was given his due portion of the sacrifice. Then midday ablutions took place according to Sastric rites, and the priests officiated at the third time bath of the King.

On that day no Brahmins ever felt tired, and all persons gathered there, the Brahmins, the Sudras, ascetics, monks, women, children, old and invalid people were sumptuously fed. Profuse food and drink were supplied to everybody. The Brahmins after eating to their heart's content and after praising the preparations, said, "We have been fully gratified, may all good attend upon you."

Everyday learned Brahmins performed the opera-

¹ This ceremony preceded a great sacrifice without which none was allowed to take part in the latter.

² Upasads—a ceremony of burnt offerings. A Vedic ceremony.

tions of the sacrifice according to the rules of the Sastras.

When time came for rearing the sacrificial posts or Yupas, men versed in sacrificial rites prepared six posts of Bilva, six of Khadir (*mimiosa catechu*) six of Palas (*Butea frondsa*) and one of Sleshamat (*Cardia Latifolia*) and two wide posts of Devadaru (pine). These twenty one posts, each 21 cubits or Aratnis long having eight angles and decked in twenty one pieces of cloth were firmly planted by the artizans. Being wrapped up in cloths and decked with flowers they looked like the Seven Rishis¹ of the heavens.

The Brahmins constructed the sacrificial fire-place with bricks and that fire place consisting on three sides of eighteen bricks looked like golden winged Garuda ; and for the purpose of sacrifice, horses, beasts, birds, reptiles, and aquatic animals were collected. To those Yupas or posts were tied hundreds of animals as well as the horse of the King. Then Kausalya after performing the preliminary rites with a cheerful heart, slew the King's horse with three strokes. Then with the object of obtaining a son and religious merit, she with pure and calm mind passed one night by the side of the dead, winged horse from evening till the break of the day. Then the priest led other queens, Mahishis² Vavatas³ and Parivritis to touch the horse attended by Kausalya. Then Rishyasringa made sacrifice with

1 The constellation of Ursa Major.

2 of Kshatriya caste.

3 Vavatas of Vaishya caste and Parivritis of Sudra castes.

the marrow of the horse according to the sacred rules and King Dasaratha for expiation of his sins, smelt odour arising out of the fat cast into fire. Then sixteen Rithvik priests offered the severed limbs of the horse into sacrificial fire. The horse sacrifice according to Kalpa Sutras and Brahmanas extends to three days. First day's ceremony is called Agnistome, second day's is named Uktha and the third day's sacrifice is called Atiratra. Then the ceremonies of Jyotishtoma, Ayushtoma, Abhijat, Atiratra, Viswajit, Aptoryama, were performed with due rites.

In this great horse sacrifice founded by Sayambhu, Dasaratha gave his Eastern region to the chief sacrificial priests, the Western province to Adwaryu, the Southern to Brahma and the Northern to Udgate.

The Brahmanas were greatly delighted and spoke in a body. "You alone are worthy to protect the earth, we do not want any land, our days are passed in meditation and in the study of the Vedas give us something else."

Then the chief of the Ikshwaku line gave them ten lakhs of kine, ten kotis of gold and forty of silver. They then brought those things to Vasistha and Rishyasringa, at which they were greatly pleased. Then, king Dasaratha said to Rishyasringa.

"Please bless me with the perpetuation of my line."

Then the best of the Brahmins replied, "O king four sons will be born to you to perpetuate your line."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PROPHECY

Dasaratha again said, "O holy saint, please devise some means that my race may not be extinct."

Then intelligent Rishyasringa, learned in the Vedas, said, "For your son I shall perform the famous Putresthi sacrifice according to the Mantras as laid down in the Atharva Veda. This will bless you with offspring."

Then Rishyasringa began the sacrifice according to the directions of the Kalpa Sutra. All the deities, the Gandharvas, Siddhas and other great saints appeared in person to take their due shares of the oblations offered up.

When the Putresthi sacrifice began the gods appeared before Brahma and said, "O Lord! A Rakshasa named Ravana grown mighty by your boon oppresses us all and we cannot resist him by any means. You were pleased to confer on him the boon, and we all suffer for it. This wicked minded one is tyrannising over the three worlds and is envious of others' prosperity. Blinded by power and by your boon, he is now thinking of conquering Indra, the king of gods, and is continually harassing the saints, the Yakshas, the Gandharvas, the Brahmans and the Asuras. The sun does not dare to scorch him with his rays, nor the wind ventures to blow roughly about him; even the billowy ocean does not dare to stir in his presence. We have become greatly afraid of that

wicked and horrible Ravana. Please now devise some means for his destruction."

Then the lotus-born Brahma after some thought replied, "O god ! I have found out the means of his destruction. At the time of asking the boon from me, he asked that he might not be slain by any god, Gandharva, Yaksha and Rakshasa. And I agreed to it but in disdain he did not mention the name of Man.

He may, therefore, be slain by a man. I do not see any other means of his death.

The gods were greatly delighted on hearing these words from Brahma's lips.

At this moment, effulgent Vishnu, lord of the universe, clad in yellow robes, wearing bracelets of shining gold and holding in his hands shell, discus, mace and lotus came there riding on his Eagle, as the sun rides upon the cloud, and was welcomed by the gods with hymns of praise. After he took his seat beside Brahma, the gods spoke to him :

"O Vishnú, be thou our shelter." Then Vishnu said, "Tell me how I may grant your prayer."

The gods said, "Dasaratha, the generous and powerful ruler of Ayodhya has three queens like Beauty, Modesty and Fame, but he is ever pining for sons. Divide yourself into four and be his sons by those three queens. Be incarnate as man on earth and slay in battle Ravana, the scourge of the world and invincible by the gods. In haughtiness of power, he is tyrannising over saints and denizens of the heaven.

It is for this that we have come to you. You are our only refuge."

Then Vishnu, the adored lord of all, assured them saying, "Banish all fear. For your good I shall destroy formidable Ravana with all his race, and shall rule over the earth for eleven thousand years."

The gods then sang hymns of Vishnu. After this lotus-eyed Vishnu agreed to divide himself into four and take his birth in Dasaratha's house.

The gods then said, "Come back to heaven after destroying insolent Ravana, the enemy of Indra, and the scourge of the world."

CHAPTER XV

HEAVENLY PAYASA

Then Narayana who himself knew means of Ravana's destruction asked the gods in what way he could destroy him. The gods said, "Formerly this dreadful Ravana practised great austerities and penance and thereby received boon from Brahma, progenitor of the world, that none would be able to destroy him ; but while asking for the boon he did not mention the name of man. So assume the form of man and kill Ravana who now commits ravages upon the heaven and carries away women by force."

Vishnu then agreed to accept Dasaratha as his father.

At that time, king Dasaratha was eagerly watching the performance of the sacrifice.

Then, from the sacrificial flame rose a huge dark figure with red eyes and clad in red, effulgent as the sun, and holding in his both hands a large golden cup with a silver cover containing celestial Payasa¹ within it. His voice was deep like the rattle of a drum, his body was covered with hairs like that of a lion, his face was covered with profuse beard and whiskers, and his locks of hair were glossy. His body was adorned with divine ornaments and he had many auspicious marks on him. He was tall like a mountain peak, and dreadful like fire.

That supernatural person in tiger-like haughty steps rose out of the flame, and casting his eyes on Dasaratha said, "O king, know me as being sent by Prajapati."

Dasaratha in folded hands replied, "Tell me what I may do for you?"

Then that person commissioned by Prājapti said, "O King, you have got heavenly Payasa by worshipping the gods. Give this healthy and procreating Payasa prepared by Prajapati to the queens and you will obtain your desired object through them for which you are performing the sacrifice."

King Dasaratha with a cheerful mind took the golden vessel from his hand, and was immensely delighted at receiving the Payasa, as a poor man feels on the receipt of wealth. Then the King greeted him and went round in joy. The errand being over, the divine person, vanished into the flames.

1 Rice or grains boiled with sugar and milk, akin to porridge.

As the sky appears beautiful by the rays of the autumnal moon, Dasaratha's palace shone with the bright and cheerful faces of the royal dames.

Then entering the seraglio Dasaratha said to Kausalya, "O Dear ! take this nectar-like Payasa and you will obtain a son.

Saying this Dasaratha gave her half of the Payasa and then, at the request of the king, Kausalya gave half of that to Sumitra. Dasaratha then gave the remaining half to Kaikeyi and requested her to give half of it to Sumitra. Thus Dasaratha distributed the nectar-like Payasa amongst his queens, and they were greatly delighted at this.

Shortly after, his queens grew big with child, and Dasaratha became elated like Indra adored by gods and saints.

CHAPTER XVI

THE VANARAS

After Vishnu took his birth, Sayambhu the self-existent Lord of all, addressing the Gods, said, "To help our well-wisher, Vishnu, do you create powerful creatures capable of assuming different forms at will. All those helping beings must be heroic quick as the wind, intelligent, versed in laws and in the arts of war and peace, possessing excellent bodies, and they must be invincible and indestructible like the immortals. Produce from Apsaris, Gandharvis, celestial dames, and female monkeys a powerful progeny of

apes or monkeys as I had created the King of bears, Jambumana when I yawned.

Hearing these words of Sayambhu the Gods began to procreate sons in the form of monkeys. Maharshi, Siddhas, Vidyadhar, Uruga, Kimpurusha, Tarkshya, Yaksha began to create monkeys.

Indra procreated Vali tall as the Mahendra's peak, the Sun, Sugriva ; Vrihaspati, Tarak, the intelligent of the apes ; God Kuvera, the beautiful Gandhamadan ; Viswakarma, Nala ; and Agni, Neela. Then two beautiful Gods Aswinikumar produced Maindra and Dividik ; Varun, Sushena , Parjanya, Sarava ; and Wind God, Hanumana, hard as the thunderbolt and quick as the eagle. Thus the powerful monkeys were created. These monkeys were endowed with great strength like lions and daring like tigers and could go wherever they wished. They fought by hurling huge stones and with their teeth and nails, and were accomplished in the use of all weapons. They could move hills, crush forests and stir up the sea. Thus millions of powerful Vanaras came into existence. Some of these monkeys came to live in the summit of the Rikshavna hills. Some of these monkeys took Vali as their leader ; Some, Sugriva, some Nala, some Neela and some Hanumana. And the mighty Vali protected Valluka and the Go-langula races of monkeys. Thus for the help of Rama a powerful breed of monkeys were created.

CHAPTER XVII

BIRTH OF RAMA

After the Aswamedha sacrifice was over the gods and the invited guests repaired to their respective places. Then the great saint Rishyasringa having been duly honoured by the King, left Ayodhya with his devoted wife Santa who was dearer to her lord than Paulomi to Indra. The King himself with his retinue escorted the great sage to a great distance when Rishyasringa requested the King to retire, at which Dasaratha returned with tearful eyes.

Then after the expiry of the six seasons and on the completion of the twelfth month, on the ninth lunar day of the month of Chaitra, under the star Punarvasu, with the Sun, Mars, Saturn, Jupiter and Venus at Aries, Capricorn, Libra, Cancer and Pisces; and when the Moon with Jupiter entered Cancer of the Zodiac, Kausalya gave birth to great and prosperous Rama with mighty arms, rosy eyes and scarlet lips, the joy of Dasaratha and the adored of all people. He bore all auspicious marks on his fair body. Then Queen Kausalya looked like Aditi, the mother of the gods, with Purandara in her lap. Kaikeyi then gave birth to truthful Bharata—the fourth part of Vishnu. Then Sumitra delivered twin sons. Bharata was born under the Star Pushya, when the Sun entered Pisces and the two sons of Sumitra were born under the Star Aslesha when the sun rose in the Cancer.

Thus four sons of Dasaratha were born. They were

beautiful like the stars of the heaven as Proshthapad's four-fold light. At their birth, the Gandharvas began to sing and Apsaras danced in joy, kettledrums were played in the heaven, and clouds showered flowers on earth. High festivities were held by the people of Ayodhya, and its highways became crowded with the citizens and musicians and dancers gave proofs of their skill to the public ; and the King gave liberally to all bards, astrologers and others and thousands of kine to the Brahmanas.

At the expiry of the eleventh day the King performed the naming ceremony of his sons, and Vasistha in great delight conferred the names. The eldest one was called Rama, Kaikeyi's son was named Bharata and Sumitra's first son was named Lakshmana and the last of the twin born was called Satrughna. The King fed the Brahmanas, and all rural and urban people sumptuously and gave gold and jewels to the Brahmanas.

Of the princes, eldest Rama was the delight of his father and the object of general regard. All of them were heroic, virtuous, educated and versed in the Vedas. Most puissant Rama of spotless character, like the full Moon, was the delight of all eyes. He was an expert rider, an adept in managing chariot and could ride elephants. He was a master bowman, and was ever engaged in the study of arms, and in ministering to his father's wishes.

Auspicious Lakshmana was deeply attached to Rama even from his early infancy. He was always

attentive to the wishes of Rama. He never ate anything unless Rama partook of it first. He could not even sleep without Rama's company. When Rama went ahunting Lakshmana always followed him with bow in his hand. Lakshmana's younger brother Satrugna was likewise devoted to Bharata and was dearer to the latter than life.

Like Brahma, the lord of all created beings, Dasaratha felt exceedingly happy on account of his four glorious sons.

CHAPTER XVIII

VISVAMITRA'S ARRIVAL

On the attainment of the youth of his sons, King Dasaratha thought about the marriage of his boys. When Dasaratha was thinking about the nuptials of his sons, there dropped in the great sage Visvamitra of immortal fame.

Desiring to see the King, Visvamitra said to the warders, "Go and inform the King that Gadhi's son is come."

At this warders hurried to the Royal chamber and informed the king of the arrival of the saint.

As soon as Dasaratha heard of this, he with his priests hastened to meet the ascetic as Indra goes to meet Vrihaspati,¹ the heavenly priest, and offered him Arghya.² Having accepted the Arghya saintly

1 In one reading there is Brahma, in another, it is not Indra but Vasava.

2 Mark of hospitality and honour.

Visvamitra enquired about the welfare of the kingdom, about the royal exchequer, cities, provinces and the Royal family. Visvamitra then asked,

"Are the subordinate princes obedient to you ? Are your enemies vanquished ?"

"Are all the duties to man and gods being properly discharged ?"

He then enquired about the welfare of Vasistha and other saints.

When Visvamitra was seated, King Dasaratha most respectfully said,

"O great saint, you are welcome like nectar itself, like rain after drought, like the birth of son to an issueless man, like the recovery of a lost thing, like joy at the time of great festivity. Have your journey been safe ? May I know your wishes ? It is my good luck that you have come to my house. Formerly by great austerities you first attained the status of a Rajarshi¹, then that of Brahmarshi². I have been already sanctified by your presence. Pray tell me the object of your visit, so that I may gladly do your biddings. You should not feel any hesitation. Surely great merit will accrue to me by your auspicious presence."

CHAPTER XIX

VISVAMITRA'S SPEECH

Hearing these words of Dasaratha, Visvamitra, with his hair standing on end in joy, cheerfully said,

1 A royal saint.

2 A Brahmin saint.

"O King, you are born in a great and illustrious line, saintly Vasistha is your councillor. These words befit you alone on earth. Now I shall tell you the object of my coming. O King, recently I have begun a sacrifice. But before it has been completed two formidable Rakshasas called Maricha and Subahu, who can assume any form at will, have impeded the sacrifice by throwing flesh and blood on the sacrificial altar. Having seen the rites thus disturbed I have left the place in despair. All my labours have been in vain.

"At the time of sacrifice it is not proper to curse any body so I could not give vent to my wrath against those Rakshasas. O King, therefore, place your eldest son Rama in my charge. Being protected by me, he will be able to destroy those Rakshasas by his divine prowess. By my blessings he will be famous in the three worlds. Do not fear. Maricha and Subahu won't be able to stand before him. They are no match for Rama. I assure you, they will be slain by Rama. Myself, Maharshi Vasistha and others know his might. If you desire to acquire great merit and fame and if Vasistha and other councillors agree, then place lotus-eyed Rama in my hand. I want him for my work. Rama too has passed his boyhood. So allow Rama to accompany me and to remain with me for ten nights during my sacrifice. Please see that the time of my sacrifice be not over. Don't be nervous or sad. Good will ensure to you."

Hearing these words King Dasaratha fell into a swoon as if from a great shock of sorrow.

CHAPTER XX

ĀSARATHA'S REPLY

King Dasaratha on regaining his consciousness sorrowfully said,

“O saint ! Rama is only about sixteen. He is not yet fit to fight with the Rakshasas. I am master of millions of troops I shall go with my army and fight with those rovers at night. I shall myself protect your sacrifice with bow in my hand, and shall fight with the Rakshasas till death. Rama is too young and inexperienced, he has not yet acquired proficiency in arms or in war. Moreover, the Rakshasas are very cunning fighters So, I don't think Rama is a fit match for them. Besides O Saint, I cannot bear Rama's absence even for a moment If it is your intention to take Rama then please also take me with my forces along with him. O Kusika's son, I am ~~nine~~ ten thousand years old. I have obtained Rama after great woe. Of the four sons, Rama the eldest, is the delight of my heart. So please, do not take him. Besides who are these Rakshasas ? Whose sons are they ? Who helps them ? By what means these cunning warriors will be slain ? Please tell me everything.”

Maharshi Visvamitṛa replied, “I have heard, there is a mighty Rakshasa named Ravana born in the line of Maharshi Pulastya. Having obtained boon from Brahma, he is tyrannising over the three worlds with his Rakshasas. He is Maharshi Visrava's son and brother of Kuvera, the lord of wealth. He disdains

from pride of disturbing the sacrifice himself. So he has commissioned Marich and Subahu for the purpose. Marich and Subahu at his instance are disturbing my sacrifice."

Thereupon Dasaratha said, "O Saint, I won't be able to fight against that wicked Ravana. It is my great misfortune. Astonishing is the prowess of Ravana, so I have heard. Not to speak of man, even the gods cannot stand his might. I can't fight against him or his forces. And whether you take my army or my sons you won't be able to stand before him. My beautiful Rama is first of tender years, secondly, he knows very little about battle. So how can I venture to send him along with you? Marich and Subahu then are the sons of Sunda and Upasunda and are frightful like death itself. So I can't allow Rama to accompany you. If you wish, I may with my men go and fight against those powerful Rakshasas. If you do not agree to it I entreat you to give up Rama."

CHAPTER XXI

VISVAMITRA'S ANGER

Having heard this Visvamitra flew into rage and addressing the King, he angrily commenced,

"At first you promised to grant my prayer, now you are backing out. In fact, such a thing I never expected from one born in Raghu's line. For this act of impiety your dynasty will be extinct. If you want to break your words and desire the destruction of your

race then tell me so and let me go to my own place and you enjoy yourself with your friends."

Even the gods became frightened at this great outburst of Visvamitra's rage. Seeing the three worlds in trepidation with fear, sage Vasistha said to Dasaratha,

"Born in the famous line of Ikshwaku you should be like virtue's self. You must not deviate from duty. People know you to be righteous so keep your promise. If you do not stick to your words, your merits will come to an end. Doesn't matter, whether Rama is skilled in arms or not, the Rakshasas won't be able to do any harm, since Visvamitra himself will protect him, as fire protects the heavenly nectar. Therefore, send Rama. Rama is Justice incarnate on earth. He is the wisest and mightiest of all, he is the protector of all religious penances and is skilled in weapons. But this fact is little known. And the great sage you see before you is not less mighty. Formerly when this great sage ruled over his kingdom, God Siva gave him some divine arms. They are born of Krisaswa and of Projapati Daksha's daughters, Jaya and Suprabha. They are of different forms. Kusika's son is quite conversant with their use.

He is a great sage ; the past, present and future are known to him. Therefore, do not hesitate for a moment to send Rama with him. Visvamitra himself can destroy those Rakshasas, it is for the benefit of Rama that he wants him."

Dasaratha was greatly delighted by these words of Vasistha.

CHAPTER XXII

MANTRAS

Then Dasaratha with a glad heart sent for Rama and Lakshmana. Kausalya and the King himself performed all the auspicious rites. Priest Vasistha began to chant auspicious mantras. Dasaratha after smelling Rama's head, in cheerful mind made him over to Visvamitra.

Seeing lotus-eyed Rama follow Visvamitra, gentle breeze free from dust, began to blow softly, tambour was sounded in the sky, flowers were showered from above, and conch-shells were blown from every part of the city. The raven-locked Rama and Lakshmana followed the saint with bows, quivers, swords, and gloves for the protection of the fingers. In fact, their beauty produced a halo (of glory) around them.

After proceeding over half a league from Ayodhya and arriving at the right bank of the Saraju, Visvamitra addressed Rama in a sweet voice, "Rama, my boy, make ablutions with this water of the river. No more time should be wasted now."

I shall initiate you into the Mantras of Vala and Ativala. This will remove all the fatigue of fever of a long journey and your look will not be in any way changed. Whether you sleep or remain unguarded Rākshasas won't be able to defeat you by surprise. If you practise this mantra in the form of Japa, none in the three worlds will be equal to you in strength or intelligence.

With the help of these mantras you will be able to overcome all difficulties. You will never be troubled by hunger or thirst. These Vala and Ativala lie at the root of all knowledge ! They are the daughters of Brahma. I wish to confer them on you, since you are worthy of them. You have got virtues no doubt, yet you will be greatly benefited by these Mantras.

Then mighty Rama after due oblations received the Mantras and on receiving them Rama looked resplendent like the autumnal sun.

At the advent of night, Rama performed all the duties of a pupil towards Visvamitra. Then Visvamitra passed the night on the bank of Saraju. Rama and Lakshmana lying on the unaccustomed bed of grass, did not feel uncomfortable on account of Visvamitra's sweet conversations.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE JOURNEY

When the night was over, sage Visvamitra said, "My boy, the night is over. It is time for morning service. Now leave your bed."

At these words of Visvamitra, Rama and Lakshmana left their pallet, had their bath and performed their Sandhya. Visvamitra then proceeded with them. In their journey, Rama and Lakshmana saw the confluence of the Saraju with the Ganges, flowing in three courses, on the banks of which were the hermitages of the ascetics and saints who had been practising religious austerities for thousands of years. They were

greatly delighted at the sight, and pointing to a particular hermitage, they asked, "Whose hermitage is this ? Who lives here ? We are curious to know."

Then Visvamitra answered with a smile, "Listen, to whom the hermitage belonged in the past. That god Ananga whom the people call Kama, once lived in flesh and blood, and this asylum belonged to him. It so happened that once Siva, the great Lord of Kailash, after breaking his meditation (*Samadhi*) was going in company with the gods, when foolish Kama dared to disturb his mind. Thereupon, the God Rudra eyed him in wrath and the poor Kama was at once reduced to ashes. Henceforward Kama came to be known as Ananga. Pious sages live in these hermitages. We shall pass our night at this confluence of the Ganges and the Saraju."

When Visvamitra was thus addressing Rama, the ascetics of the forests became aware of their presence by virtue of their *yoga*, and they soon appeared before them and received them with warm hospitality and offered *arghya* to Visvamitra.

At last. the day waned and they performed their evening prayer. Visvamitra with Rama and Lakshmana retired for rest. And Visvamitra entertained the ascetics along with Rama and Lakshmana by his pleasant talks.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TARAKA

On the following morning after due ablution, Visvamitra arrived at the bank of the Ganges, where the ascetics brought a fine boat and said, "With these two princes get upon the boat and cross the Ganges". After doing due honour to them, Visvamitra, with Rama and Lakshmana, began to cross the Ganges flowing towards the ocean. While they were steering along the stream, they heard a tremendous noise. Reaching the mid-stream Rama and Lakshmana grew eager to ascertain the cause of the sound due to the dashing of the waves against the boat." Hearing this Visvamitra replied :—

"O Rama, there is an excellent lake in the Kailash created by Brahma. As it was created out of Brahma's mind (Manasa), it is known as the Manasā Lake. The sacred Saraju that flows by Ayodhya rises from that lake and this loud sound issues from the place where it falls into the Ganges. Look ! how the waves of the Ganges and the Saraju break against the boat. Bow down to the sacred streams with a devout mind."

Thereafter, Rama and Lakshmana landed on the right bank and proceeded along it with quick steps. In their journey Rama saw a deep and dreadful forest. He then addressing Visvamitra said, "How dense is this forest filled with the humming noise of the crickets and abounding in ferocious animals. Various kinds of birds are screaming frightfully day and night. Lions tigers, elephants, wild boars are prowling about here

and there. Dhava, Sal, Bignonia, Patalas, Badaris, and other kinds of trees are to be found everywhere. Which forest is this ?

Visvamitra replied, "Listen, O Kakustha, to whom belongs this terrible forest. Formerly there were two flourishing cities called 'Malada, and 'Karush' built by heavenly architects. Formerly, at the time of the destruction of Vritra, Indra here incurred sin for killing a Brahmin, and here the Gods and the ascetics, soothed the king of gods with the waters of the Ganges, and Indra being pleased conferred a boon, in consequence of which these two places attained great prosperity afterwards.

Then after a lapse of years a Yakshini was born who could assume different forms at will. Her name is Taraka. She was the wife of Sunda. She devastated these two localities. She possessed the strength of thousand elephants. Her son is called Maricha. She has a capacious mouth and strong arms. Taraka is the terror to all. She is now about half a yojana away. We shall have to pass through that forest, and we rely upon the strength of your arms. For no body else but you can destroy this dreadful Taraka.

CHAPTER XXV

THE STORY OF TARAKA

Hearing this, Rama said, 'O Sir, I have heard that Yaksha possess little strength or prowess. How could this woman then possess the strength of thousand elephants ?' Visvamitra replied, "Listen, how she

has come to possess this great strength. Formerly, there was a mighty Yaksha named Suketu but he had no issue. He was pure, and used to practise great austerities. Brahma was highly pleased at this, and conferred on him a daughter endowed with the strength of thousand elephants. She is Taraka. When Taraka attained her youth, she was married to Jambha's son Sunda. After some time, Taraka gave birth to a son, named Maricha. This Maricha was born as Rakshasa in consequence of a curse.

Once, the great saint Agastya destroyed Sunda. After the death of Sunda, Taraka with her son determined to take revenge on the saint. Taraka in anger ran to devour Agastya. At this, the saint cursed Maricha saying, "Do thou become a Rakshasa." He also cursed Taraka saying, "Since in frightful form you have come to devour a man, you be a Rakshasi of terrible form."

Thus cursed by Agastya, Taraka laid waste this fair region, where Agastya is engaged in meditation and sacred rites. Do thou, therefore, O descendant of Raghu, destroy the terrible Rakshasi for the welfare of Brahmanas and cows. Now in the three worlds none but you dare to slay this cursed Yakshi. Nor should you shrink from killing her in the interest of the four orders of castes, simply from the consideration that is a woman. An act may be cruel or sinful, yet it should be performed by a ruler for the protection of his subjects. This is the eternal rule of conduct for those who are engaged in the act of administration.

O Kakustha ! kill this wicked Taraka as in the days of yore Indra slew Virochana's daughter Manthara when she tried to destroy the world. O Rama formerly Vishnu also destroyed Kavya's mother, the devoted wife of saint Bhrigu when, at the request of the Asuras, she desired the destruction of Indra. Gods and princes have killed many wicked women. Therefore, Rama banish your prejudice against woman-slaughter and kill this wicked one."

CHAPTER XXVI

DEATH OF TARAKA

Hearing this Raghava with folded hands replied "O mighty saint, at the time of coming, father has asked me to obey you in all your commands. So I shall kill Taraka in the interest of all people."

Saying this, Rama took up his formidable bow and twanged the bow-string, resounding the whole forest with its sound. At this sound the denizens of the forest were greatly perturbed and Taraka too, at first, was greatly amazed and then in great anger rushed in the direction from which the sound proceeded.

Beholding that colossal, hideous figure Rama addressed Lakshmana and said :—

"Look you Lakshmana ! how terrible is that Yakshini ! Her very sight strikes terror even into the hearts of the brave. She possesses all the spells of a witch. I shall cut her nose and ears, but I have not the heart to kill her since she is a woman."

As Rama said this, Taraka in extreme wrath rushed

towards him with uplifted arms and thundering roars.

Thereupon, Visvamitra said, "May victory attend the descendant of Raghu.

Instantly Taraka raised a cloud of dust from the ground and began to shower a fusillade of stones. Thereupon Rama in anger, with his shafts, cut off the hands of Taraka. And when she was roaring in agony, Lakshmana lopped off her nose and ears. Thereupon she assumed various forms and began to shower stones being invisible to the sight. Seeing Rama and Lakshmana exposed to a regular fusillade of stones, Visvamitra said, "O Rama, banish thy aversion to woman-slaughter. She is highly wicked and impious. Therefore, kill before dusk, for Rakshasas grow most formidable when darkness sets in."

Rama then smothered the Yakshi with his shafts, but still the dreadful Yakshi rushed towards Rama. Rama then pierced her breast with arrows, and she dropped down dead. At her destruction the gods, with Indra at their head, blessed the great saint Visvamitra and both Rama and Lakshmana from above and asked Visvamitra to confer on Rama the heavenly arms as he was worthy of them, and the great work of the gods would be accomplished by him.

CHAPTER XXVII

HEAVENLY ARMS

After the night was over, Visvamitra said to Rama, "I have been greatly pleased with you. May all good

crown your life. I shall now confer on you some celestial weapons. with the help of which you shall be able to conquer everything at ease."

Having mentioned the names of various weapons Visvamitra sat facing the East deeply absorbed in meditation. Then those heavenly arms appeared and said, "O Rama ! We are your slaves. You may do with us as you like."

Rama with a cheerful mind touched them and said, "Appear before me when I remember you."

Thus pure Rama having received those heavenly weapons, addressing Visvamitra, said, "Please teach me how to use these heavenly arms ; how to apply them and how to withdraw them." Visvamitra then taught him the Mantras about their use.

Having acquired skill in the use of heavenly arms Rama again proceeded along his journey, and on the way he saw a pleasant and beautiful forest, and out of curiosity he asked Visvamitra whose hermitage it was.

Visvamitra replied, "It was formerly the hermitage of Vamana, and here he attained his spiritual bliss and therefore the place is known as Siddhasram."

In the days of yore Lord Vishnu dwelt here for many thousand years. At that time, Virochana's son, Vali, the famous Danava king, ruled over the three worlds by conquering Indra and other deities by his might. At one time, king Vali performed a great sacrifice. Then the gods with Agni at their head, approached Vishnu and requested him to do a thing for the

benefit of the Gods before Vali's sacrifice was over. They said, "People from various quarters are going to the sacrificial place for arms and having their prayers granted, and Vali, too, gives whatever one begs of him. Therefore, for the benefit of the Gods please assume the form of a dwarf."

When the Gods thus implored Narayana. Kashyapa with Aditi was observing a long vow and time came for receiving boon from Vishnu.

Vishnu then appeared before Kashyapa, and Kashyapa said, "Myself, Aditi and other gods pray that you may incarnate as my son in the womb of Aditi."

Then Narayan was born in Aditi's womb as a dwarf or Vamana. Vamana appearing before Vali asked for ground measured by three steps and under the plea of asking for alms he covered the three worlds by three foot-steps. Having thus restrained Vali he again made Indra the lord of the world, and here dwelt Vamana, and myself out of reverence towards him have selected the spot as my hermitage. Here you will have to slay those wicked Rakshasas who come here to disturb the sacrifice. This hermitage is as much thine as mine."

Saying this, Visvamitra entered the forest with Rama and Lakshmana, like the moon emerged from mist the Punarvasu stars.

Rama then asked Visvamitra to begin his sacrifice, that very day. Rama and Lakshmana having passed the night peacefully left their beds early in the morning.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FIGHT WITH THE RAKSHASAS

Rama and Lakshmana asked Visvamitra in the morning to indicate to them when they would have to resist Maricha and Subahu. As Visvamitra was engaged in sacrifice he remained silent, at which other hermits said, "As the sage is now engaged in penance, he will observe silence for six consecutive days and nights. So you protect the forest for these six nights."

At these words of the hermits, Rama and Lakshmana clad in armour and with bows in hand guarded the forest day and night. Thus five days passed and on the sixth day Rama said to Lakshmana, "You must now always be on the alert."

The sacrifice was going on, and Visvamitra and other priests were reciting the Mantras, Kusha, Kasha¹, flowers, and drinking vessels were arranged round the altar, and the sacred fire was lit upon it. As in the rains, the sky grew cloudy and loud with thunder, so the Rakshasas began to pour in, in great haste and noise. Maricha and Subahu began to rain drops of blood on the sacrificial altar.

At this Rama cast his eyes upwards and finding the Rakshasas rushing in a body, addressing Lakshmana said, "I don't like to kill these poor Rakshasas now but shall drive them off by the Manava weapon, as the wind chases off the clouds."

The Manava weapon rolled back the Rakshasas with Maricha into the sea, and then with Agneya-Astra

1. Sacred grass used in sacrifice and other sacred rites,

(fire-arms) Rama killed Subahu in the fight. At this all the hermits were greatly pleased and began to honour Rama like Indra, the conqueror of Gods and Asuras. Visvamitra then performed the sacrifice without any further disturbance. After the performance of the ceremony, Visvamitra blessed Rama and praised him for his prowess. Thus after slaying the Rakshasas Rama and Lakshmana passed the night in the forest.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE BOW

In the morning Rama and Lakshmana appeared before Visvamitra beaming like fire and said, "Please command what more we are to execute," Then the ascetics with Visvamitra replied, "A great sacrifice is to be performed by Janaka, the king of Mithila. All of us as and you will witness there a wonderful bow. In the days of yore this bow was given to King Devarat by the Gods. Not to speak of men, Gods, Gandharvas, Asuras and Rakshasas cannot put string to that bow.

"Many mighty princes formerly came to examine its strength but none of them could put string to the bow. Janaka has got this bow from the Gods as a reward of his sacrifice. He now worships that bow as his deity with flowers and incense. You will behold that wonderful bow and also sacrificial rites of Janaka"

Then at time of setting out for Mithila Visvamitra addressing the sylvan gods said, "My object has been

gained. I am now proceeding towards the north to the Himalaya regions on the banks of the Bhagirathi."

Ascetics and other denizens on the banks of the forests—beasts and birds—escorted Visvamitra to a great distance. In the evening Visvamitra reached the banks of the river Sone.

CHAPTER XXX

GENEOLOGY OF VISVAMITRA

After the performance of the evening services Rama said to Visvamitra, "Please tell me which place is this. I feel curious to know."

Visvamitra said, "In ancient times there was a saintly king named Kusha. He was the son of Lord Sayambhu. Kusha's wife was Bhaidharbhi. Four sons like unto himself in prowess, were born to him. They were named Kushambha, Kushanabha, Amurtaraja and Vasu.

"Once Kusha called his sons before him and told them to learn the art of governing the people and thereby acquire the merits of a Kshatriya.

After this, the four sons founded four seats of Government.

"Kushambha founded the city of Kaushambha; Kushanabha, the city of Mahadaya; Amurtaraja, Dhamanaranya and Vasu, the city of Girivraja. This Girivraja with its five hills and the river belong to Vasu. This river Sone is also known as the Maghadhi, because it has issued from the province of Maghada. Flowing between the five hills it looks like a garland

of flowers. Look, how its extended banks are rich with corns.

"Ghritachi was Kushanabha's wife. Hundred daughters were born unto her. In time they attained their youth. Once these young girls, beautiful as lightning in the rains, were sporting themselves with songs and dancing in the garden. Being charmed with their beauty, like stars in a cloudless sky, the Wind-god appeared before them and sued them for their hands, saying, "Be my wives and you will enjoy long lives. Human youth is transient but I shall confer eternal youth and immortality on you."

The girls burst forth in a mocking laugh at these incoherent words of the Wind-god and said, "You know the hearts of all creatures. We also know thy might but why do you insult us thus? We are the daughters of King Kushanabha. We may rob you of your quality and rank, but we refrain from it as we shall then lose our religious merits. O foolish one! May that time be yet distant when, to the insult of our virtuous father, we shall ourselves choose our husbands. Father is our master. We shall accept that person as our husband on whom father will be pleased to bestow us."

"At this, the Wind-god became highly enraged. He broke their limbs and bent their frames by entering into their bodies. The girls then returned home with their ugly forms and began to weep bitterly. Kushanabha was greatly pained at the sight of his daughters and enquired about the cause of their miseries. The

girls then narrated everything about their mishaps with the Wind-god.

At this, Kushanabha was greatly pleased, and he praised them for their great forbearance. "Forbearance," said he, "is charity ; forbearance is truth ; forbearance is sacrifice ; forbearance is fame ; forbearance is religion. The whole universe rests on forbearance."

"Kushanabha then thought about their marriage and consulted with his ministers.

"At that time a Brahman named Chuli was engaged in great religious austerities, and one Gandharva woman called Somada—Urmila's daughter - attended on him. After some time, the ascetic, was pleased with Somada, asked what he could do for her. Somada then gratefully said, "I ask for the birth of a virtuous son through your grace. I am still a maid and you be pleased to fulfil the desire of my heart."

"Then ascetic Chuli being pleased with her, conferred on her a mind-begotten son called Brahmadatta. Brahmadatta founded the great city of Kāmpilya. King Kushanabha thought of giving his daughters to this Brahmadatta. When at the time of marriage, Brahmadatta touched the hands of his brides all their ugliness and crookedness of forms were at once removed, and they got back their former beauty. After marriage Brahmadatta returned with his wives to Kāmpilya.

"After this, Kushanabha performed the Putresthi sacrifice for the birth of a son. When the sacrifice

was begun, King Kusha addressing Kushanabha said, "My boy, you will be soon blessed with a virtuous son named Gadhi, and you will become famous on account of Gadhi."

Then, after some time, a highly virtuous son named Gadhi was born to Kushanabha. Oh, Kakustha, that pious Gadhi is my father. I am called Kaushika, because I am sprung from Kusha's line. I had a sister born before me, and her name was Satyavati and she was married to Richika. Following her lord she ascended Heaven in person, and my generous sister Kushiki assumed the form of a river for the welfare of all creatures. My sister is now a noble river issuing from the Himalayas. Out of affection for my sister, Kushiki, I live in the vicinity of the Himalayas. It was for the purpose of completing the sacrifice that I came to Siddhasram. I have told you the history of my life. Now you retire to sleep. The trees stand motionless, the birds of the air and beasts of the field are hushed in silence. The sky is illumined with bright stars like blooming eyes."

Rama and Lakshmana then retired to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE ORIGIN OF THE GANGES

In the morning, Viswamitra roused Rama and Lahshmana from sleep and set out for their journey, After walking a long distance they saw the sacred Janhavi, visited by swans and cranes. They then bathed in the stream and offered oblations to the Gods

and to the manes of their ancestors. Rama then asked Viswamitra, "Oh, holy sire ! I wish to hear how the Ganga flowing in three directions and embracing the three worlds falls into the ocean—the lord of rivers."

Viswamitra replied, "Oh Rama ! Himavat (the Himalayas) is the foremost of mountains and hills. Two lovely daughters were born to him, Menaka, the beautiful daughter of Meru, was the beloved wife of Himavat, and Ganga is her eldest daughter. Her second daughter is known as Uma. Once upon a time the Gods in a body besought Himavat for Ganga flowing in three directions. Thereupon for the welfare of the three worlds he conferred on them his daughter flowing at will and sanctifying all beings. The Gods then went away with Ganga. The other daughter adopted a stern vow and practised asceticism. Himavat married Uma to Rudra. Oh Raghava ! These daughters of Himavat are worshipped by all,"

Rama and Lakshmana then requested Viswamitra why Ganga flowed in three directions. Thereupon Viswamitra said, "In days of yore the blue-throated God, Mahadeva, was in union with his Sakti Uma but that union was unbroken though hundred years of the Gods had passed away. The Gods became naturally anxious : they then prayed to Mahadeva. Rudra being pleased, restrained his divine energy and cast the germinal seed on earth. The earth overflowed with that divine energy. Fire and Wind then entered into it and developed into a white hill and a forest of glossy Sara reeds. And in this Sara jungle mighty Kartikeya

sprang from Fire. Uma then cursed the Gods in anger saying that since she failed in getting a son their wives would be issueless. She then cursed the earth that she would have various forms and many would lord over her and she would never experience motherly affection. Seeing the Gods thus distressed, Byomkesa went towards the west and engaged himself in religious meditation. I shall now tell you the sacred history of Bhagirathi. When Pashupati was engaged in austerities with Parvati, Gods approached Brahma and asked for their Commander-in-chief which the latter had previously promised. Then the lotus-born Brahma replied,

“The curse of Uma will not fail. Therefore, a son from Fire will be born in the Mandakini, the celestial Ganges. That son will be your Commander-in-chief. The elder sister Ganga will acknowledge the boy as her younger sister Uma's son, and he will be most dear to Uma. The gods then asked Fire to throw the energy of Pashupati into the Mandakini and the celestial stream assumed the form of a beautiful woman and bore the energy in her womb. Ganga being overwhelmed with that divine energy, cast it off near the Himalayas, at the words of Fire. As it came out of her it glittered like a mass of molten gold and in consequence of his exceeding lustre all objects near about were turned into gold and silver. Distant objects were turned into copper and iron, and its excreta lead. In this way various metals came into existence. My boy, gold is therefore, known as Jatarupa, because

it derived its effulgence from another. As soon as the energy was cast, a son was born. Indra and other Gods said, "Oh Kirtika, this son will be called Kartikeya and will be famous in the three worlds." Kartikeya sucked (the breasts of) six stars—his six mothers, and thus Kartikeya was brought up. He is highly beautiful in person, and he conquered the Danavas by his might. Oh Rama ! who worships this Kartikeya, is blessed with longevity and with sons and grandsons, and he lives with him after death "

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DESCENT OF THE GANGES

Maharshi Kaushika resumed—"A pious king named Sagara once ruled over Ayodhya. He had two wives named Keshini and Sumati. Keshini was the daughter of the king of Bidharva, and Sumati of Maharshi Kashyapa. To obtain a son, king Sagara with his wives repaired to the Himalayas and began to do religious penance. Maharshi Bhrigu lived near that place. Sagara used to worship him. Saint Bhrigu was greatly pleased with Sagara and blessed him saying that he would obtain both fame and sons ; and that one of his wives would deliver sixty thousand sons and the other only one. Then, after a length of time, the elder queen Keshini brought forth a son called Asamanja, and Sumati was delivered of a gourd, and when it burst open, out of it came sixty thousand sons of Sagara. These sons in time attained beauty and youth, and Asamanja got a son by the name of Angshumana—

beloved by all men. Long after this, king Sagara thought of performing a sacrifice. The sacrifice was held in the region between the Himalayas and the Vindhya mountains. Prince Angshumana followed the sacrificial horse, but Vasava assuming the form of a Rakshasa stole away the horse. At this, the priests asked the king to bring back the horse, or else the sacrifice would be defective and it would bring misfortune. The king then asked his sixty thousand sons to search the whole world encircled by the oceans, and even to delve the earth to find out the horse. They then began to roam about the earth but failing to find out the horse they began to delve the earth several *yoyanus* in length and breadth. The earth thus being cruelly rent sent forth loud groans. Thus the earth was dug for sixty thousand *yoyanus*. The sons of Sagar dug all around Jambudwipa. Thereupon the Gods, the Asuras, Gandharvas and Pannagas appeared before Brahma and said how the sons of Sagara were creating havoc for the sacrificial horse. The Grandsire then addressing them said, "Earth belongs to Vasudeva. As she is his wife, and assuming the form of Kapila, he always protects the earth, so the sons of Sagara will be destroyed by the wrath of Kapila."

The Gods then departed rejoicing at Brahma's words.

Having excavated the earth far and wide, the sons of Sagara returned to their father and reported of their failure in finding the horse. Sagara then asked his sons

again to delve the earth. The sons then again rushed towards the depth of the earth. As they dug deeper and deeper they came across the elephant of the quarter called Virupaksha, huge like a mountain, holding the earth on its head. When this mighty elephant from fatigue shakes his head, then occurs earthquake ! They then penetrated the east and the south, and in the southern quarter they saw another mighty elephant named Mahapadma, holding the earth on its head. Likewise they beheld in the west the great elephant Sumanansa ; similarly in the north they saw Bhadra, white as snow, holding the earth on him. Then Sagara's sons began to dig the north-eastern quarter¹ in rage, and they came across Vasudeva in the form of Kapila, and they found the sacrificial horse close by him. They then in their rage rushed towards Kapila, thinking that the latter had stolen the horse.

At this Kapila was greatly enraged and uttered a terrible roar and the sons of Sagara were at once reduced to ashes.

Seeing the delay of his sons, king Sagara asked his grandson Anshuman to search for them. Prince Anshuman after enquiries arrived at the spot where the sons of Sagara were reduced to ashes. He was overwhelmed with grief at the sad fate of his uncles and wished to offer oblations of water to them, but he found no water there. Then he saw Vinata's son Garura, maternal uncle of the sons of Sagara. Garura then addressing

1. The site is now identified near the place where the Ganges falls into the sea.

Anshuman said, "Do not lament. Their destruction was for the welfare of all creatures. They have been reduced to ashes by Kapila. So do not offer them water but perform their watery rites with the sacred water of Ganga. These ashes on being watered by Ganga, those sixty thousand sons will go to heaven. Therefore, go back with the sacrificial horse and complete the sacrifice of your grandfather."

Mighty Anshuman then returned with the horse and narrated to the king everything faithfully. The king then finished the sacrifice in sorrow. The king after reigning for thirty thousand years ascended the heaven but he did not see who brought the sacred Ganga on earth.

When Sagar was bowed with age, the people elected Anshuman to the throne. Anshuman proved to be a great ruler. Anshuman's son was the celebrated Dilip who was a great king. After conferring the kingdom on Dilip, king Anshuman retired to the Himalayas, where after practising religious austerities for thirty-two thousand years he ascended the heaven. Prince Dilip was greatly mortified when he heard about the unnatural death of his ancestors and he became anxious for their salvation. After some time a son named Bhagirath was born to virtuous Dilip. Dilip died leaving the kingdom to Bhagirath after a reign of thirty thousand years.

Pious Bhagirath was without any issue. In order to bring Ganga on earth Bhagirath practised severe austerities in the locality of Gokarna.

At last, Brahma was pleased with his penance and appeared to grant him a boon. Bhagirath then said with folded hands, 'If you are pleased to grant me a boon may Sagara's sons receive oblations of water from me, and their ashes be saved by the water of Ganga. May they thereby attain heaven.'

Brahma replied, "O mighty Bhagirath, noble is thy end. Let your desire be fulfilled and good betide you. You ask for Hara's service for Ganga's fall, the earth won't be able to bear."

Bhagirath then prayed to Siva for a year. Pashupati then said to Bhagirath, 'I have been pleased with you. I shall hold the mountain's daughter on my head.' Then Ganga with great impetuous force precipitated herself from the sky on Siva's head. And Ganga thought of carrying away Sankara by her dash. At this Sankara grew angry and he thought of confining her. And O Rama! when Ganga fell on Rudra's tangled locks resembling the Himavat, in spite of her endeavours she could not disengage herself from the matted lock and reach the earth! She thus remained confined for many years. Bhagirath then again threw himself into severe austerities. Thereupon Siva was greatly pleased and cast off Ganga towards the Vindu lake. As she was let loose, seven streams branched off from her. Three streams flowed towards the east while the Suchakshu, the Sita and the Sindhu followed Bhagirath's chariot. The royal saint went ahead and Ganga followed him. Then the celestials looked upon Ganga descending on earth. All in joy witnessed the descent of

the Ganges as it followed the course of Bhagirath's car.

In her course, Ganga flooded the sacrificial ground of the great saint Jahnu. At this Jahnu drank her up in wrath. Thereupon the Gods and others began to pray to Jahnu. The saint being thus propitiated released Ganga through his ears. Therefore, Ganga is known as Jahnavi or Jahnu's daughter. Then Ganga again began to flow in the wake of Bhagirath's car and having reached the ocean she entered the subterranean region. And when the sacred waters of the Ganga overflowed the heaps of ashes of Sagara's sons, their sins were washed off and they at once attained heaven.

Then Brahma spoke to Bhagirath, "O most puissant of men ! Sagara's sons have been delivered and they shall live for ever in heaven. This Ganga shall become your eldest daughter and be known as the Bhagirathi. She is also known as Tripathaga because she flew in three directions. Do thou now here offer oblations of water to your grandsires. Your mighty ancestors Anshuman and Dilip had failed to bring Ganga on earth. For having brought Ganga thou shalt also attain heavenly regions. Good betide thee."

Bhagirath then offered oblations to the sons of Sagara and returned again to his capital. O Rama, I have told you the story of Ganga's descent. Whoever recites this sacred story attains the favour of his ancestors and Gods and whoever listens to it has all his desires fulfilled, his sins are removed and he attains longevity and fame."

They then passed their night on the bank of the Ganges.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE RISE OF NECTAR

On the following morning, they crossed the Ganges and reached the city of Vishala. Rama wanted to know something about the city. The great ascetic Visvamitra said, "O Rama, listen to what befell this city. In ancient times, in the Satya *yuga*, the sons of Diti and Aditi thought as to how they could be immortal and be free from disease and old age. Then it struck their minds that by churning the ocean of milk they would obtain Amrita or nectar. They then began to churn the ocean with the Mandara hill as the churning rod and Vasuki as the cord. After churning for thousand years the serpent Vasuki began to vomit virulent poison and bite the rock with its fangs. Thereupon rose a deadly poison like fire and began to scorch the whole universe. Then the Suras and the Asuras ran to great Sankara, crying, "Save us, save us, O Rudra!"

Then Hari appeared before Mahadeva and said, "As you are the foremost of the Gods, what has first come out of the ocean is due to thee. So receive the first offering in the form of poison."

Finding the Gods in distress, Siva drank the dreadful poison, as if it were nectar, then, leaving the Gods, went away.

The celestials then resumed their churning. But after some time suddenly the Mandara hill began to sink into the subterranean region. Hrishikesha then assuming the form of a tortoise supported the hill on his

back, and taking hold of the top of the hill by his hand began to churn the deep. Another thousand years elapsed. Then arose Dhanwantari, the father of medicines, bearing in his hands a stick and a *Komandalu*. After him rose the beautiful damsels called Apsaras—so called because they emerged from water. As neither the Suras nor the Asuras accepted them, they became public wives. Then arose Varuni, the daughter of Varuna and the Goddess of wine (Sura) and she looked for acceptance. She was not accepted by the Diti's son, so they are called Asuras. And as Aditi's sons accepted her, they are known as the Suras. Then rose Uchaisrava, the best of horses, and Kaustabha, the best of gems ; and last rose Nectar. Then ensued a great fight over the Nectar between Aditi's and Diti's sons, and many Asuras were killed in the affray. In this havoc Vishnu appeared in the form of an exceedingly beautiful woman, stole away the nectar and destroyed Asuras who ran after him.

The sons of Diti thus being slain, Diti was greatly mortified with grief and prayed for the birth of a son for the destruction of Indra, and began to practise great austerities. As she was engaged in austerities, the thousand-eyed Indra attended on her and served her with great devotion and respect. Diti was greatly pleased with Indra and she said to him that after ten years she would deliver a son who would be a brother to Indra and not his foe. One day, when worshipful Diti was sleeping in her bed, Indra cut the foetus in her womb into seven parts with his thunder. At this

the foetus began to cry, at which Indra asked it to be silent saying, "Don't cry"—(Ma ruda). Diti then rose from sleep and said, "Don't kill it ; let the seven parts of the embryo be the guardian deities of the wind. They will be known as Marut, as you have said Ma ruda (Don't cry). Hearing this, Indra bowed to Diti and worshipped her. This is the place where Indra attended on Diti. O Rama, powerful Ikswaku had a son by the name of Vishala, this city of Vishala was built by him. Vishala's son is Hem Chandra. Hem Chandra's son Suchandra, and his sons were Srinjaya, Srinjaya's son was Sahadeva, his son Kushaswa and his son Somadatta now rules over the city."

Hearing of the arrival of Visvamitra and Rama, the king of Vishala welcomed them with great hospitality. Visvamitra narrated to him the object of their travel. After passing the night at Vishala they reached Mithila the next day. The ascetics were greatly delighted at the sight of Mithila. While surveying the city Rama witnessed an old, solitary, but beautiful hermitage.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AHALYA

Rama then asked, "O worshipful Sir ! The hermitage looks like a deserted one. I wish to know all about this."

Visvamitra said, "This hermitage once belonged to the great saint Gautama. He used to practise austerities here with his wife Ahalya. One day when

the sage was absent, Indra the lord of Sachi, entered the hermitage in the guise of Gautama, and addressing Ahalya said, O, my enchanting beauty ! Amorous ones do not wait for their monthly courses, so you satisfy my desire now."

Perverse Ahalya knowing that it was Indra who had come in the disguise of the ascetic, agreed to his proposal. After enjoyment Ahalya said to Indra, "My desire has been satisfied, now take me away from this place, and protect myself and yourself from the wrath of Gautama."

Indra replied, "I have been gratified, now let me go to my place."

With these words Indra through fear of the ascetic left the cottage with hurried steps. Thereafter the mighty sage Gautama, after bathing in the holy waters and after the performance of oblations, with Kusha grass and faggots in hand appeared before the cottage like a flame of fire. At his sight Indra's face darkened. Seeing Indra thus stealing away from his cottage in the garb of an ascetic he cursed him in anger, "Since you have enjoyed my wife assuming my form, you will be sexless." Addressing Ahalya, Gautama said, "You will live in the hermitage, unseen by others, your bed will be in ashes ; you will feed only on air ; and your remorse will be unbounded. Thus you will live for many thousand years. When Rama, the son of Dasaratha, will come to this forest, you should minister unto him with the rites of hospitality without covetousness. Then you will be absolved from your sin, will

back your former form and will be re-united with me."

With these words Gautama left his hermitage and went to the Himalayas for meditation.

Indra with great trouble and with the help of the Gods got back his manhood after a long time.

Then Rama with Lakshmana entered Gautama's hermitage after Visvamitra, and found Ahalya had acquired greater beauty in consequence of asceticism, too dazzling to be gazed upon even by the Gods. It appeared as if, the Creator with great care created this paragon of womanly beauty. She was wonderfully beautiful like a flame in the midst of smoke, like the full moon enveloped in mist, or like the glare of the Sun hidden behind the clouds. Ahalya remained concealed till the expiry of her curse. But as soon as she was absolved from it, she became visible to all. Rama and Lakshmana then bowed to her, but Ahalya remembering Gautama's words caught hold of their feet and offered them Arghya and water and received them with warm hospitality.

Then flowers were showered from above and Gods praised her for her piety. Maharshi Gautama came to know all this through his Yoga. He returned to his hermitage and began to practise religious penance with Ahalya with a cheerful heart.

CHAPTER XXXV

VISVAMITRA

Then Rama and Lakshmana with Visvamitra proceeded towards the north-east, and arrived at the

sacrifice of Janaka. Rama was struck with the splendour of Janaka's sacrifice. Many Brahmans and ascetics assembled there from various quarters.

When the royal saint Janaka heard of Visvamitra's arrival he hastened to receive him with his priest Satananda and other Brahmins versed in the Vedas, and offering Arghya to Visvamira said, "To-day, by the grace of the gods my sacrifice has been crowned with success, since you have graced the occasion by your hallowed presence."

Janaka then respectfully asked Visvamitra, "Who are these two godlike youths, equipped with swords, bows and quivers? They appear mighty as gods! As the sun and the moon shine in the sky, so they have brightened up the place. There is great resemblance between the two. Whose sons are these raven-locked youths, and why have they undertaken such a tiresome journey?"

Visvamitrā replied, "O King, they are the sons of king Dasaratha." Visvamitra then related all that happened in the journey, viz., the destruction of the Rakshasas, and the removal of Ahalya's curse.

Then the virtuous Satananda, the eldest son of Maharshi Gautama observed, "I am extremely grateful for (the news of) the removal of my mother's curse. Did she worship you with fruits and flowers? Did you accept my father's hospitality?"

Eloquent Visvamitra replied, "Nothing has been left undone. Your mother has been re-united with your father, like Renuka with Jamadagni."

Then Satananda addressing Rama said, "Since mighty Visvamitra, the foremost of the ascetics, is your protector, you are the most fortunate man in the three worlds. I shall now relate to you how this great ascetic of wonderful deeds, Visvamitra, has attained highest Brahminhood."

In ancient time there was a king named Kusha. His son was Kushanabha. Kushanabha's son was Gadhi. This holy and mighty Visvamitra is Gadhi's son. This learned saint long ruled over his kingdom. Once upon a time this sage began to sojourn over the earth with his army. At length, the mighty conqueror Visvamitra reached the hermitage of Vasistha, green with plants and trees, and adorned with fruits and flowers and visited by birds and deer. Pious ascetics lived in that holy hermitage ; some of them lived only on water, some on air, some on leaves only ; and some on roots and fruits. Visvamitra was greatly pleased at this sight. Visvamitra then went to Maharshi Vasistha and enquired after his welfare. Then after mutual greetings sage Vasistha pressed the king to accept his hospitality. Thereupon Visvamitra said that enough hospitality had already been shown by his kind words, but Vasistha insisted upon Visvamitra's receiving his hospitality with his men and army. Visvamitra at last consented.

Sage Vasistha then summoned his patri-coloured, sinless, sacrificial cow, Savala, and addressing her said, "The King with his army is my guest, so you entertain them with proper food and drink. You fulfil my desire

and gratify them with all delicacies. Therefore, procure sufficient food without delay." At these words of Vasistha, the cow Savala produced various eatables gratifying to the palate. She produced sugar-canes, fried rice, excellent wine called Gani, costly drinks, various kinds of food, rice, Payasa, soups, Dadhikulya wine, and other palatable food with silver dishes (for serving to the guests). Visvamitra was greatly pleased at this hospitality, and after expressing his thanks he asked for the cow saying, "I shall give you a million of cows, please give your Savala in exchange of them. Your sacrificial cow is indeed a rare gem. The King by right is entitled to all gems, so you confer this Savala on me. According to law I am entitled to it."

At this Vasistha said, "I cannot part with Savala for millions and millions of cows, nor for all the gold and silver you propose to offer. This cow follows me like the reputation of a noble man. I live by her and I perform my sacrifices with her help. I tell you sincerely Savala is my everything. Its very sight fills me with joy. Therefore, I cannot give you the cow."

Visvamitra then again implored for the cow and promised him rich provinces, thousands of elephants, horses, golden chariots and various kinds of jewels in exchange. But Vasistha again stoutly refused. Visvamitra finding the ascetic thus unyielding then took the cow forcibly. Then the cow thought with tears, "Has the saint really forsaken me? Why the royal servants drag me thus?"

Then Savala tore herself off from the King's

servants and ran to Vasistha and said, 'Have you forsaken me? Royal servants are taking me away by force?'

Vasistha then sorrowfully answered, "No Savala, I have not forsaken you. You have done no harm to me. The King is taking you by force from me. My power is not equal to his might. Look, he has elephants, horses, chariots and a vast army. He is a Kshatriya and a ruler of the earth. Moreover, he is my guest and it is not proper to injure the guest."

Then Savala humbly said, "O saint, Kshatriya's power is of course much, but greater is the might of a Brahmana; the power of a Brahmin is supernatural and it exceeds that of a Kshatriya. Though Visvamitra is exceedingly powerful, yet he is not a match for you. I can work wonders like Brahman. Please permit me, I shall baffle all the attempts of this wicked king and humble his pride to the dust."

Vasistha then told Savala to produce soldiers to destroy Visvamitra's army. Savala then produced (by her supernatural powers) a number of Palhavas by her lowing. And Visvamitra began to destroy those Palhavas in rage. At this Savala produced the terrible Yavanas along with the Sakas.¹ They were formidable in power and were armed with sharp swords and axes. They were yellow-coloured and were clad in yellow dress. Visvamitra in great rage began to hurl weapons

1. This accounts for the origin of the different races of people who clashed with the Indians in later times.

at them. Thereupon the Yavanas, the Kambojeans and the Barbarians became sorely afflicted.

Then Savala again created a fresh army. From her thundering roars came into existence the Kambojeans, resplendent as the sun ; from her udder sprang the Barbarians ; from her private parts came the Yavanas ; from her anus the Sakas ; from the pores of her hairs sprang the Haritas and the Kiratas. These soldiers began to destroy Visvamitra's army.

At this hundred sons of Visvamitra with their weapons rushed towards Vasistha. At this Vasistha uttered a terrific roar and all the sons of Visvamitra were reduced into ashes. Seing his sons thus destroyed Visvamitra was overwhelmed with shame. He then returned to his capital with a broken heart and after installing the only surviving son on the throne, repaired to the Himalayas and began to practise great austerities to please Byomkesha to ask for a boon.

After a length of time, God Mahadeva appeared. Visvamitra then asked for a bow and arrows with their mysterious Mantras. Being thus endowed with divine arms Visvamitra again in haughtiness attacked Vasistha's hermitage. At the approach of Visvamitra, the ascetics living in that forest began to run away in fear, though Vasistha assured them and ask them to stop. Visvamitra then hurled his formidable weapon against Vasistha. But Vasistha in rage destroyed all his arms and defeated him. Visvamitra was thus vanquished by Brahminical power. "Shame on Kshatriya's power. I must anyhow attain Brahminhood."

Great Visvamitra was deeply mortified at this defeat. Then having resolved to perform severe austerities, he repaired to the south with his queen. There he passed his days in religious meditations living on fruits and roots. During that period four sons called Habispanda, Madhuspanda, Drihanetra and Maharatha were born to him. Thus thousand years rolled off, then Brahma—the grandsire of all created beings—appeared and said, “O king ! You will be counted as a royal saint, and henceforward you will be known as a Rajarshi.”

Then Visvamitra hung down his head in shame and thought, “Even after such austerities the gods consider me only as a Rajarshi. I shall, therefore, practise more severe austerities to attain Brahminhood.” Having thus resolved he again engaged himself in severe penance.

At that time, king Trisanku of Ikshawku’s line thought of performing a sacrifice in order to attain heaven in his material body, and spoke about it to Vasistha. But Vasistha refused to perform the ceremony, as the idea was absurd. At this king Trisanku approached Vasistha’s sons and asked them to help him by performing the sacrifice.

But Vasistha’s sons grew angry at this and cursed him saying that he would become a *Chandala*. And when the night was over the King attained Chandahood. He became as dark as blue, his skin grew rough, his hair grew short, his body was besmeared with ashes, and he wore a garland of dirty chips collected from the cremation ground. Finding the king thus reduced to

a Chandala his ministers and followers ran away from him. Trisanku then went to Visvamitra. Seeing the king thus reduced to such a miserable plight, Visvamitra was moved with pity and enquired about him. Trisanku then related how instead of attaining the object of his desire he had met with such dire calamity, and he concluded saying, 'O best of ascetics ! Intending to perform a sacrifice I have failed to enlist the sympathy of my spiritual preceptor. I do now find that Fate is always supreme, valour is nothing. Destiny overtakes all. Therefore, grant thy favour on him whose all endeavours have been frustrated by Fate. I have no other refuge.'

Having heard these words of the King, Visvamitra's heart was moved with pity and he took up his cause. Saint Visvamitra then asked his pupils to bring all the ascetics and saints together including Vasistha's sons. But Madodaya and other sons of Vasistha said, 'How can Gods and Rishis take part in the sacrifice of him who is a Chandala and has a Kshatriya for his priest ?' Hearing this from his disciples, Visvamitra inflamed in rage, uttered a terrible curse that those insolent sons would be reduced to ashes and for seven hundred births would roam over the world feeding on dog's flesh and gathering dead man's cloths. They would be known as Musthikas despicable and of wicked practices ; then addressing the assembled hermits Visvamitra said, "This descendent of Ikshwaku is virtuous and generous. He has come to me for shelter. He wants to go to Heaven with his mortal body. So please be engaged with me in

the sacrifice." The sacrifice then began and Visvamitra after a length of time invoked all the Gods to receive their shares of the sacrifice but the celestials refused to come. Thereupon Visvamitra waxed angry and said to Trisanku, "O Lord of men ! I shall by the power of my asceticism send you bodily to the heaven and through my virtue you now ascend the heaven."

At these words, Trisanku, began to ascend bodily into heaven. Seeing Trisanku, thus ascending into heaven, Indra said, "O Trisanku, go back. You have been cursed by your spiritual guide ; therefore, fall headlong from it." Trisanku then began to fall headlong from heaven, crying into Visvamitra, "O, save me, save me." Hearing this distressful cries, sage Visvamitra cried in wrath, "Stop." And then like a second Prajapati he created another constellation of the seven Rishis and other stars in the southern sky. "I shall create another Indra," exclaimed Visvamitra in rage, "or the world will be without an Indra." Thereupon, the gods and the saint humbly said, "O high-exalted sage, this king has been cursed by his preceptor, so he doesn't deserve to ascend the heaven in mortal frame."

Visvamitra then replied, "O Gods, I have promised to send Trisanku to heaven in person. I can't prove false to my vow. So either Trisanku must dwell in heaven in person or the stars created by me will ever continue to exist."

The gods then said, "Let it be so. The stars created by you will shine in sky outside the Zodiac circle, and

Trisanku with bent head will live there like an immortal, and all these luminous bodies shall follow Trisanku as if he has attained heaven." Virtuous Visvamitra agreed to this. After the Gods were gone Visvamitra addressing the ascetics said, 'Lo ! an interruption to penance has been created by Trisanku in the south. So let us repair to the west and carry on our rites in the sacred pilgrimage of Pushkara.' Visvamitra then went to the west and began to practise great austerities. By that time Ambarisha, the king of Ayodhya, was performing a sacrifice, and Indra at the time of sacrifice stole away the sacrificial animals. At this, his priest told the king either to secure those animals or purchase a man in their stead. Then Ambarisha went in search of those animals and arrived at the hills of Bhrigutunga. There he found the son of Maharshi Richika with his wife and children, and after stating everything he asked for a son of his, and promised him millions of cows in exchange. At this Richika replied, "O King, I cannot sell the eldest in any way." Then his wife said, "The youngest is my darling, I can't part with him." Hearing the parents thus speak, the second son Shunashefa said, "Father is not willing to sell the eldest, mother doesn't want to dispose off the youngest ; it, therefore, seems that I am the only saleable son, so you take me with you."

Ambarisha then took him in his chariot by giving millions of cows and sufficient gold.

At mid-day, King Ambarisha reached Pushkara. There Shunashefa found his maternal uncle Visvamitra

engaged in meditation. At his sight Shunashefa afflicted with thirst and hunger, begged Visvamitra to give him shelter. Then Visvamitra assured him and asked his own sons to assume the forms of the sacrificial animals in order to save the hermit's son from Ambarisha. At this Visvamitra's sons tauntingly remarked, "You want to save another's son at the cost of your own ones! It is as good as to feed upon one's own flesh out of commiseration towards other creatures." At this Visvamitra grew angry and cursed his own sons as he did the sons of Vasistha. Then addressing Shunashefa Visvamitra said, "You now put on a zone of Kasha grass, a garland of red flowers, besmear your body with red sandal and pray to Agni close to the Vaishnavi sacrificial stake. I give you two hymns, which you should chant at the time of Ambarisha's sacrifice and your life will be saved."

Shunashefa then with a devoted heart took those Vedic Gathas (songs).

When Ambarisha arrived with Shunashefa, Shunashefa like a sacrificial animal was tied to the sacrificial post. Shunashefa then began to chant those Vedic hymns and to pray to Indra, Agni and Vishnu. Indra was then pleased with Shunashefa. He blessed him with a long life, and thus Shunashefa was saved.

After thus saving Shunashefa's life, Visvamitra again engaged himself in deep meditation and severe austerities at Pushkara. After a lapse of time Brahma appeared and said, "From this time you will be reckoned as a saint." But Visvamitra continued his rigid

austerities. At one time the heavenly nymph Menaka was bathing in the sacred waters of Pushkara. Visvamitra was bewitched by her fascinating beauty and took her to his hermitage. Visvamitra passed ten years with Menaka, but it soon became evident to him that his penance had been broken. He was then stung with remorse and shame and thought that it was a deep-laid game of the Gods. Menaka was greatly frightened by the saint's change and stood before him in folded hands. But Visvamitra assured her in sweet words and commenced his austerities again. Brahma again appeared before him and greeted him as Maharshi. Then Visvamitra respectfully said, "You have not confirmed on me Brahminhood because I have not as yet succeeded in conquering my senses." Brahma replied, "If your mind be not disturbed even in presence of temptations you will know that you have subdued your senses. Therefore strive after that."

Then Visvamitra again commenced severe austerities. He prayed with uplifted arms feeding on air ; in summer, he surrounded himself with five fires ; in rains he remained in uncovered place ; and in winter, day and night he stood immersed in water. Thus passed thousand years.

Thereupon Indra, the king of Gods, was greatly alarmed by the austerities of the great sage and planning some mischief of Visvamitra he summoned Rambha before him. Rambha pleaded to be excused for she dared not disturb the penance of the Rishi. Indra then encouraged her saying that Cupid and

Spring would help her in her mission. Then the beautiful nymph, Rambha, descended on earth and began to sing rapturous songs in accompaniment of cuckoo's notes. Visvamisra was, at first, greatly delighted at hearing this, but he immediately saw through the deep game of Indra and he cursed Rambha in extreme rage, condemning her to be turned into marble and remain as such for ten thousand years. Unfortunate Rambha was turned into stone and Indra and Cupid ran away in fear. But Visvamisra was struck with remorse for thus losing his temper. He found that for his lust and anger he could not attain his object. He then left his northern quarters and came to the east, and engaged himself in severer austerities and was absorbed in meditation. He remained listless and silent like a hillock for thousand years. Then after the expiry of a thousand years he wished to break his fast and he was about to take his food, Indra came in the disguise of a Brahmin and asked for food. Sage Kausika willingly gave him all and remained himself without any food. Visvamisra then suspended his breath and again plunged himself in meditation for thousand years.

Then all the celestials and other immortals approached Brahma and said, "The world will be scorched by the fire of his penance unless his prayer is granted. Even the kingdom of Heaven must be given to him if he wants it, or the creation will be destroyed."

Then Brahma and other Gods appeared before Visvamisra and said, "We have been greatly pleased with your penance. You have attained Brahmanhood

by penance. You will live long and from this day you are a Brahmana.” Visvamitra then said, “If I have attained Brahmanhood in truth, together with longevity, let myself be duly acknowledged by Omkar and Bashatkar and the Vedas and by Vasistha, Brahman’s son, the foremost amongst those learned in the Vedas and in the Dhanur Vidya (science of wielding bows) or I shall again devote myself to meditation and penance.”

Then at the request of the Gods, friendship was struck between Vasistha and Visvamitra and the Gods in a body declared Visvamitra a Brahman.¹ Thus Visvamitra attained Brahmanhood. He is the foremost of the Rishis and is like the embodiment of religion itself.

Thus said Satananda : King Janaka then expressed his gratitude for Visvamitra’s presence in his sacrifice, and accorded him warm hospitality.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE GREAT BOW

On the following morning after greeting Maharshi Kaushika with Rama and Lakshmana, Janaka said, “Tell me now what is your pleasure. I am at your command.”

Visvamitra replied, “These two famous Kshatriya princes want to see the formidable bow kept in your palace. Be pleased to show it to them.”

¹ Visvamitra—like Vasistha, a great Vedic Rishi and is the author of many famous hymns and Mantras of the Rig Veda.

Janaka then said, "Please, first of all listen to the history of the bow. In ancient times, at the time of Daksha's sacrifice, the God Siva in wrath wanted to destroy the Gods for depriving him his due share of the sacrifice. The Gods then in fear began to pray to Siva to appease his wrath. Siva then being pacified by their prayers made over the bow to the Gods. The Gods then gave the bow as a trust to my forefather King Devarata, the eldest son of Nimi. Since that time the bow is with us.

"One day, as I was ploughing the ground for sacrifice, at the time of the turning of the ploughshare I found a girl, and as I got her in clearing the field for sacrifice, I have named her Sita.¹ This earth-born child has been brought up in my house as my daughter. I have made this vow that I shall marry her to him who will be able to put string to this bow of Hara. In course of time Sita has attained her marriageable age. Many kings and princes came to sue for her hand, but since valour is her marriage-dowry I have not conferred her on any one of them. Kings came to inspect the Hara's bow and I also showed them the bow, but they could neither raise the bow nor put string to it. The kings and princes at their discomfiture grew angry and they in a body besieged Mithila for carrying away my daughter by force. I resisted them from inside the fortress for about a year, after which my resources were at an end. I became greatly despondent at this

1 Sita means a furrow. As she was found out when ploughing the ground for sacrifice, she was called Sita.

and prayed to the Gods. Then the Gods, in their mercy, gave me an army. I then again renewed my fight with the kings, and, at the end, those wicked princes ran away from the field after sustaining a heavy defeat. I shall now show that eventful bow to Rama and Lakshmana, and if Rama can put string to that bow, I shall confer my daughter on him." Then Maharshi Kausika asked Janaka to point out the bow to Rama.

Then Janaka ordered his counsellors and men to bring that Siva's bow, adorned with garlands and sandal paste. The bow was placed in an iron box on an eight-wheeled carriage. It was drawn with difficulty by hundreds of stalwart men.

Then Janaka said, "This bow was worshipped by my forefathers. Not to speak of man, even the celestials cannot raise the bow or put string to it."

Then Kaushika said to Rama, 'My child, behold the bow.'

Rama then taking out the lid of the case saw the bow and examined it with his hand. He then asked what he would do with the bow. Would he raise it and bend it then and there? On Janaka's and the sage's replying in the affirmative, Rama, at ease, took up the bow and began to bend it in order to put a string to it, and the bow was broken into two pieces with a thundering crash, and the whole place shook as if in an earthquake. And all, except Visvamitra, Janaka, Rama and Lakshmana, fell unconscious on the ground!

Then all doubts about Janaki's marriage were removed from Janaka's heart.

Janaka then addressing Visvamitra in folded hands said, "I have witnessed the prowess and valour of Dasaratha's son Rama. It is an astonishing feat. I never dreamt that such a thing could happen. Now my family will be famous by the union of Sita with Rama. Now my promise has been fulfilled and I want to marry Sita to Rama. So please permit me to send envoys to Ayodhya and fetch King Dasaratha with due honours and respect, and also to send him the news that Rama and Lakshmana are safe."

Visvamitra gave his assent. Janaka then summoned his men and sent them to Ayodhya with a letter communicating everything therein.

The envoys of Janaka reached Ayodhya after great fatigue passing three nights in their journey.

Then they were admitted before the king by the sentries. Appearing before King Dasaratha who looked like an immortal, they began in a sweet and gentle voice, "My Lord, Janaka, the King of Mithila, with his counsellors and priests repeatedly enquires after the welfare of you and of your staff and followers. And with Kaushika's permission the King of Mithila addresses you thus :—"You know the vow that I took formerly, that is, to confer my daughter on him who would succeed in bending the bow, which had baffled the efforts of so many kings previously. But that daughter of mine has been won by your son, who has arrived here with Visvamitra. O mighty king, that heavenly bow has been broken into two pieces in the presence of a large assembly of people. I shall confer

on high-souled Rama my Sita, and in this way I wish to be absolved from my vow, for which I crave your kind permission. You therefore, be good enough to arrive here speedily with your priests. It behoves you to see me absolved from my vow, and also witness the marriage of your sons.' Thus the lord of Videha, permitted by Visvamitra, asked us to communicate to you."

Hearing these words of the envoys, Dasaratha was exceedingly glad and readily consented to the proposal, at which all praised the king for his decision. The king then cheerfully said, "Our journey begins even from to-morrow."

When the night was over, Dasaratha spoke to Sumantra, "Let the officers in charge of the royal treasury take plenty of money and jewels, and start in advance under proper escort. Let the army march. Let Vasistha, Vamdeva, Javali, Kasyapa, Markandeya, Katyayana and other Brahmans start on horseback or in palanquins. Janaka's envoys asked me to start quickly ; you, therefore, yoke the horses to my chariot."

King Dasaratha then started after due preparations and his army followed him in march. After four days' journey all arrived at Mithila.

On Dasaratha's arrival Janaka after according him a warm welcome said, "Had you a safe journey ? It is my good luck that has brought you here. Now you enjoy the pleasure of seeing your two sons married. I am also grateful for Maharshi Vasistha's presence, surrounded by the priests as Indra by the Gods. Now to

my good luck all obstacles in the path of my daughter's marriage have been removed. I feel myself fortunate in having an alliance with the line of Raghu. Tomorrow morning after the completion of the sacrifice you perform the marriage ceremony along with the saints and priests."

Dasaratha said, "I have heard that a gift should be ratified by acceptance. So what you say will be accomplished."

Then they passed the night merrily. Next morning, Janaka said to his priest Satananda, that he wanted to have his brother Kushadhwaja living in the city of Sankadhya, standing on the banks of Ikshumati with its ramparts guarded with pointed weapons, to come and join in the ceremony. Competent persons were then sent to fetch Kushadhwaja, who also soon came to Videha at the mandate of Janaka.

CHAPTER XXXVII

RAMA'S MARRIAGE

Highly effulgent Janaka and his brother Kushadhwaja, after having taking their seats, asked minister Sudamana to fetch King Dasaratha with his sons and counsellors with all the honour due to their high rank. Sudamana then went to Dasaratha's camp and invited him to come to Janaka's court, whereupon King Dasaratha with his priests and counsellors went there. Dasaratha then addressing Janaka said, "Sage Vasistha is our family priest. With the permission of Maharshi Visvamitra and other sages he will narrate to you the genealogy of my line."

Then Vasistha began, "O King ! From the Eternal Brahma who is beyond the range of human perception and stands above all proofs or inference, has come the indestructible God Brahman. Brahman's son is Marichi ; Kashyapa was born of Marichi ; Kashyapa's son is Vivaswat. Manu was born of Vivaswat and this Manu is known as Prajapati. Manu's son was Ikshwaku. This Ikshwaku was the first King of Ayodhya. Ikshwaku had a son named Kukshi. Kukshi's son was Vikukshi, and Vikukshi's son was mighty Vana. Vana's son was Anaranya. Anaranya's son was Prithu and Prithu's son was Trisanku. Trisanku had a son called Dhundhumar who was a famous king. Dhundhumar's son was Yuvanashwa, and Yuvanashwa's son was Mandhata. Mandhata's son was Susandhi. Susandhi had two sons, Dhruvasandhi and Prasanjit. Famous Bharata was born of Dhruvasandhi. Bharata's son was Asita. Haihayas, Talajanghas and Sasavindas rose against Asita and defeated and crushed Asita who fled to the Himalayas with his two queens and he died after some time. It is said that both of his queens were pregnant and each of the queens administered poison to the other to destroy the foetus. In that mountain lived sage Chyayban, son of Bhrigu. Asita's wife Kalindi went to saint Bhargava and prayed for the birth of a son. Bhargava was pleased and said that a mighty and beautiful son would be born along with poison.

Kalindi was a widow and in due time delivered a beautiful boy along with the poison that had been administered by her co-wife. The boy was named

Sagara as he was born with poison. Sagara's son was Asamanja, Asamanja's son was Anshuman. Anshuman's son was Dilip and Dilip's son was Bhagiratha. Bhagiratha's son was Kakustha and Kakustha's son was Raghu. Raghu's son was Provindha. He was turned to a carnivorous Rakshasa. He was afterwards known as Kalmashpada. Kalmashpada's son was Sankhana. Sankhana's son was Sudarsana and Sudarsana's son was Agnivarna. Agnivarna's son was Shighraga; and Shighraga's son was Maru. Maru's son was Proshusruk, and Proshusruka's son was Ambarisha.

Nahusha was born of Amrarisha, and Nahusha's son was Yayati; Yayati's son Nabhaga and Nabhaga's son was Aja¹ and Aja's son is king Dasaratha. Rama and Lakshmana are the sons of King Dasaratha. They are truthful, virtuous and mighty and for them we solicit your two daughters. You bestow your daughters on worthy bridegrooms."

After Vasistha's word, king Janaka in folded palms said, "At the time of daughter's marriage it is the duty of a person born in a noble family to speak of his ancestry. So kindly listen to the geneology of my line. There ruled a mighty king named Nimi. Nimi's son was Mithi, and Mithi's son was Janaka and from him all the descendants born in our line are called Janaka. Janaka's son was Udavasus, Udavasus's son was Nandivardhana and his son was Suketu. Suketu's son was Devarata. Devarata's son was Vrihadratha, and

1 Kalidas gives a different geneology. He says Dilip's son was Raghu. Raghu's son was Aja and Aja's son was Dasaratha.

his son was Sudhriti, and Sudhriti's son was virtuous Dhristaketu. Dhristaketu's son was Haryashwa. Haryashwa's son was Maru, Maru's son was Pratindhak ; Pratindhak's son was Kitiratha, and his son was Devamirha. Devamirha's son was Vivudha. Vivudha's son was Mahidhraka. Mahidhraka's son was Kirtirata, and Kirtirata's son was Maharoman. Maharoman's son was Swarnaroman and his son was Hraswaroman. He had two sons, eldest of the two is myself and the younger is my brother Kushadhwaja. Our aged father after making over the kingdom and Kushadhwaja to my care retired to the forest where he laid down his mortal frame. After his demise I am now looking after the kingdom.

After some time a powerful king named Sudhanwa came from Sankshya and demanded the bow of Hara and Janaki, which I refused. Then there was a heavy fight between him and myself, in which Sudhanwa was killed and defeated. After Sudhanwa's death I have installed my heroic brother Kushadhwaja to the throne of Sankshya. Now I shall confer my two daughters in a contented mind—nymph-like beautiful Sita on Rama and my second daughter Urmila on Lakshmana. Do thou, O king, perform the ceremony of Godana and offer oblations to the manes of your ancestors for Rama and Lakshmana's marriage. To-day the inauspicious star Magha is in the ascendant, on the third day the marriage will be celebrated under the auspices of the Uttara Phalguni star. Now for the future good of Rama and Lakshmana, give away in charity cattle and gold.

Then Saint Visvamitra with Vasistha's leave said, "No other clan can be compared with that of Ikshwaku or Videha. This union between Rama and Sita and Lakshmana and Urmila is desirable in every respect. Now I have something to say, please listen to my words. Your virtuous brother Kushadhwaja has got two beautiful daughters ; we solicit them for Bharata and Satrughna. All the sons of king Dasharatha are handsome and valiant as the Gods. So do not hesitate for a moment." At these words, King Janaka addressing Visvamitra and Vasistha in clasped hands said, "I consider my family honoured, since you mighty sages wish for such an alliance. Let, therefore, the daughters of Kushadhwaja be married to Bharata and Satrughna. Day after to-morrow is an auspicious day for marriage as the Uttar Phalguni star will then be on the ascendant." Then addressing saint Vasistha, Janaka observed that like king Dasaratha henceforward he and his brother should also be counted as disciples of Vasistha.

King Dasaratha was immensely pleased with Janaka's words and after good wishes he repaired to his camp to perform Sraddha rites of his ancestors. On the following morning King Dasaratha performed the Godana (gift of cows) ceremony by giving away four lakhs of cows with their horns covered with gold, each with a calf and a bell-metal vessel for milking her.

On the day of Godana ceremony, Bharata's maternal uncle, Yudhajit, son of Kekaya, appeared before Dasaratha and informed him that he had come to see Bharata, failing to find him in Ayodhya. King Dasaratha warmly received the honourable guest.

On the following morning, Dasaratha headed by the priests and saints entered the sacrificial ground. Then in the auspicious moment called Vijaya, Rama appeared, accompanied by his brothers, adorned with various ornaments with saintly Vasisha and other sages who had all performed the rites appertaining to the marriage

Then Vasistha coming to Janaka informed him that King Dasaratha, after performing the pre-nuptial rites was waiting at the gate with his sons. At this Vaideha said, 'How is it that the King is waiting at the gate for his permission ? He can easily enter his own house. O great sage ! My daughters after performing all the auspicious rites pertaining to the marriage, are waiting at the foot of the altar like flames of fire, and I have been expecting you every moment. Now perform ceremony without delay."

Dasaratha, then, entering with his sons and Vasishta spoke to Videha, "O master, now perform the marriage-ceremony of Rama, the darling of all." Then Vasistha with Satananda and Visvamitra constructed an altar according to the injunctions of the Shastras. It was decked all round with scented flowers and painted water-pots, with ears of barley attached to them, golden ladles, sprays, cups and censers with incense burning in them, conches, spoons, wreathes, vases, Arghyas, fried paddy and *akshatas* dyed with turmeric juice, were arranged round the dias. Vasistha with *mantras* spread Durvas (grass) of equal length on the altar. Then he duly lighted the sacrificial fire and made offerings to it. Then bringing Sita richly adorn-

ed with ornaments and jewels, and placing her before Rama and the sacrificial fire, King Janaka said, "O Rama ! Sita is my daughter and from this day she becomes your partner in life. Take her by the hand ; good betide you. Let her be chaste and devoted, and she will follow you like your own shadow." Saying this, Janaka spread holy waters sanctified by *mantras* upon Rama's hand. The Gods and saints praised the union. Kettle-drums began to be played and flowers were profusely showered.

After conferring Sita on Rama, addressing Lakshmana, Janaka said, "Come forward ; O Lakshmana, accept Urmila and take her by the hand." Then addressing Bharata, Janaka said, "O Bharata, you accept Mandavi", and to Satrughna he said, "You take Srutakirty. Do not delay and be united with your wives."

Then the four sons of Dasaratha taking the hands of the four brides in their own, went round the sacrificial fire on the altar, with King Janaka and other saints. The marriage ceremony was thus performed. Heavenly music was heard from above and flowers were showerd from the sky. Then Dasaratha's sons went round the fire three times and afterwords with their wives retired to their camps.

On the following morning, saint Visvamitra after greeting Dasaratha and Janaka repaired to the Himalayas. King Dasaratha, too, made arrangements for returning to Ayodhya. King Janaka then gave many thousand cows and a number of fine blankets, heaps of

silken cloths, well-adorned elephants, horses, infantry as guards of honour, and profuse gold, silver, pearls, ruby (corals) as dowries to his daughters. He also gave hundreds of servants and maids of honour to each of his daughters.

Then Dasaratha with his sons and armies started for Ayodhya. After some time the birds began to utter fierce cries in the sky and the beasts on the land began to proceed towards the south. At this ominous sign Dasaratha asked Vasistha what it indicated, and his heart was trembling with dark apprehensions. Vasistha assured him that the cries of the birds were ominous, but the direction in which the beasts were going was assuring of peace. When they were thus engaged in conversation, suddenly a furious storm broke out, and it uprooted mighty trees by its violence. The sun was hidden in utter darkness.

Nothing could be seen in that pitch darkness. Soldiers were blinded by a cloud of dust and began to stumble on the ground.

At that hour only saint Vasistha and other sages and King Dasaratha with his sons retained their composure.

At that moment, the Destroyer of the Kshatriyas, the son of Bhrigu, Jamadagni, with matted locks and axe on his shoulder, holding in his hands sharp arrows and a shining bow appeared on the spot like Byomkesa, slayer of Tripura Asura. King Dasaratha saw Jamadagni, unassailable as the Kailas mountain, unbearable

as the Doomsday-fire burning with his own fire and incapable of being looked at by the unrighteous.

At his sight, Vasistha and other Brahmins talked amongst themselves. "Would the son of Bhrigu enraged at the death of his father again exterminate the Kshatriyas? Would he again be engaged in the act of destruction?"

The Rishis then greeted the son of Jamadagni with Arghyas and sweet words. Rama too accepted their offerings of worship.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

RAMA AND PARASHURAMA

Parashurama then addressing Rama, the son of Dasarath, said, "I have heard of thy valour and also about the breaking of the bow, I have, therefore, come hither with another bow. First of all, give proof of your strength by fixing arrow to this formidable bow of my ancestors. If you succeed in that I shall fight duel with you."

Then king Dasaratha with a sad look said, "You are Brahmana, your wrath has amply been gratified by destroying the Kshatriyas, so please do not threaten the boys. You are born in the virtuous line of the Bhargavas, given to the observance of vows and the study of the Vedas. You have renounced arms with a vow in presence of Indra, and adopting a life of renunciation you have conferred the Earth on Kashyapa, and retired to the Mahendra hill. Now have you

come for my ruin, for if any untoward thing happens to Rama I shall surely die ?”

But without paying heed to Dasaratha's words the son of Jamadagni addressing Rama said :—

“These two formidable bows have been made by Vishwakarma with great care. One of the two at the time of the destruction of Tripura Asura, the Gods gave it unto Tramvaka. But, O Kakustha, you have snapped that into two. The second one was given to Vishnu.

“Once upon a time the Gods wanted to ascertain who was more powerful between Vishnu and Siva, and with that intent they fomented a quarrel between the two. Then there took place a formidable contest between the two. Then Vishnu uttered a roar which rendered the bow of Siva quite soft and useless. and thereupon Mahadeva remained inert and listless.

“Gods then acknowledged Vishnu as the more powerful of the two, and they prayed for peace at which the contending Gods were pacified. Then Rudra made over the bow to Rajarshi Devarat of Videha. This bow of Vishnu was made over to Bhrigu's son Rishika, and Rishika gave it to my father Jamadagni. And when my father renounced that bow, sinful Arjuna, the ruler of Haihai, killed my father. Hearing of this sad death of my father I destroyed the Kshatriyas in anger. Then after conquering the whole world, I gave it to Kashyapa as Dakshina¹ after

1 Dakshina —a priest's due who officiates in any sacrifice.

the sacrifice. Having made this gift, I repaired to the Mahendra Hill but hearing of your snapping of the Siva's bow, I have directed my steps hither. O Rama, You are conversant with the code of Kshatriya gallantry. You take this excellent bow and put on shafts to it, and if you succeed I shall fight a duel with you."

Hearing these words, Rama on account of his father's presence, gently said, "O hero ! I have heard of your heroic exploits to avenge your father's death. Honourable revenge is worthy of a hero and so I acknowledge your valour. But I am a Kshatriya and you have insulted me by regarding me weak. I shall not brook this. Thou shall witness my prowess to-day."

Saying this, Rama in anger took up Bhrigu's bow together with the arrows and then fixing a shaft in the bow addressing Jamadagni's son said, "You are a Brahmana and especially for Viswamitra you are an object of my respect. I, therefore, refrain from aiming this fatal shaft at you. Of the two alternatives—your aerial course or the high state attained by your asceticism—tell me which one shall I destroy ?"

Seeing the bow in Rama's hand the celestials assembled in the sky to witness his wonderful trial of strength and in their presence Jamadagni's power passed to Rama. At this Jamadagni became powerless and kept steadily eyeing Rama.

Then Parashurama gently said, "When I gave away the Earth to Kashyapa, he told me to remain no longer in his dominions. According to those words since then I have never spent a night on Earth. O Kakustha,

therefore. you should not destroy my unrestrained power of locomotion. I shall now retire to the Mahendra Hill. You destroy with that arrow the regions I have acquired by my asceticism. The moment you have taken up the bow I have recognised you to be the Purushottama himself, the indestructible Vishnu. May good betide you. You are matchless in the world. You are the Lord of the three worlds There is nothing to be ashamed of at my defeat in your hands. You withdraw that formidable shaft and let me repair to the Mahendra Hill.'

At these words, Rama shot the arrow and it destroyed the regions earned by Parashurama's austerities. The whole sky then at once became clear. The celestials and saints praised Rama for his valour. Parashurama honoured Rama by going round him and then went towards the Mahendra Hill.

After Jamadagni's departure Rama made over the Vaishnavi bow to Varuna, the Lord of water, and addressing his father, stupefied with fear, said, "Father! Jamadagni is gone, so let our army now march towards Ayodhya."

King Dasaratha was greatly relieved at these words, and he, embracing Rama in affection, smelt his head again and again, and considered the whole thing as a second birth after death.

King Dasaratha then reached Ayodhya with his army. The streets of Ayodhya were watered and decked with beautiful floral decorations and banners and flagstuffs, and began to be resounded with the

notes of trumpets. Citizens were standing with auspicious things in their hands. There were immense crowds everywhere. Every face brightened at the sight of the King.

Then the citizens and the Brahmans flocked out of the city to receive the King and Dasaratha entered his favourite palace, snow-white as the Himayalas. Then the Queens, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, with auspicious ceremonies, received the brides clad in silk and sanctified by sacrificial fire. They took the brides inside the palace and made them bow to the household deities and to persons deserving respect.

After the auspicious rites and reception were over, the brides retired to seclusion and enjoyed there the company of their husbands.

The sons of Dasaratha then with their wives passed their days in the service of their father.

After some time, one day, King Dasaratha said to Bharata that his maternal uncle Yudhajit had come to Ayodhya to take him to the place of the King Kekayas. At this Bharata together with Satrughna departed for their maternal uncle's house with Yudhajit.

After the departure of Bharata and Satrughna, Rama, with utmost regard to the wishes of his father always in his heart, did welfare of the people ; and at his instance various good works were done to the public. Following the injunctions of the Shastras Rama observed all the duties due to his mothers and other superiors.

King Dasaratha was exceedingly delighted at this conduct of Rama. The Brahmans, the merchants and

other citizens grew particularly fond of him. Amongst the sons of Dasaratha, truthful and mighty Rama was the best as the Self-create is the highest of all the created beings.

Thus great Rama passed twelve years in happiness with Sita. He was intensely devoted to Sita, and Sita too could not bear a moment's separation. Royal saint Janaka bestowed Janaki on Rama according to Brahma form of marriage¹, and Rama became greatly attached to her beauty and good qualities. Janaki was dutiously devoted to Rama. Rama understood her heart, and Janaki, beautiful as the goddess Lakshmi, also knew Rama's heart. As Vishnu, the Lord of the Gods looked happy and his grace was enhanced by receiving Kamala, so Rama looked more charming with extremely beautiful Sita.

THE END OF THE BALAKANDAM

1 Manu mentions eight forms of marriage :—Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Gandharva, Asura, Rakshasa and Paishacha. Of these the last four were disapproved forms of marriage. In Brahma marriage the bride is given to a bachelor versed in the Veda who is to be sought out and invited by the bride's guardian to accept the bride offered to him.