AYODHYA KANDAM

CHAPTER I
THE HERO

Bharata at the time of going to his maternal uncle’s house took with him affectionate Satrughna, the self-possessed and the ever-conqueror of his foes. Having received paternal affection there, they did not however forget their old father Dasaratha too could not forget them even for a moment. All the four sons were dear to him as four arms issuing from the same body; yet amongst the four the eldest Rama was the most favourite. Rama too was foremost of the four in all accomplishments.

Rama was Vishnu himself incarnate on earth for the destruction of Ravana. Rama was peerless on earth. He was highly beautiful and free from malice, and was qualified like his father. He always addressed the people in gentle words and never used any hard expressions even when rudely addressed. In the magnanimity of his heart he would forget hundreds of evils done to him but would gratefully remember even a single act of kindness ever shown to him. In the leisure of his martial exercises, he discussed Shastras with the wise and the aged people. If anybody would approach him he would

The word Nitya Satrughana has twofold meanings, first, the ever-conqueror of his senses, and secondly the ever-vanquisher of the foes. A man’s senses are regarded as his enemies.
talk to him first. He was immensely powerful but never haughty for that. He was truthful and learned, and always honoured the aged. Rama ministered to the welfare of his subjects, and the people too were deeply fond of him. He was friend of the poor, chastiser of the wicked, and well-versed in religion and social customs and laws. He was worthy of his line, and always held the duties of a Kshatriya in high esteem. He never participated in profane and irreverent talks. Whenever questioned on anything he answered them wisely like Vrihaspati, the preceptor of the Gods. He was young, healthy and virtuous, and was dear to the people like their another self. He had mastered the Vedas and the Vedangas, and was skilful in the use of all arms, whether employed with Mantras or not. He was valiant, candid and the source of all good. He never spoke lie even in utmost peril. He was modest, reserve and always respectful towards his superiors. He was never jubilant or angry just for nothing. He sought no evil. He was free from all idleness and ever vigilant, and ever ready to scan his own faults. He knew the means of honestly amassing wealth and also to distribute it to the deserving objects of charity. He punished or rewarded the people according to the strict rules of justice. He had aged and pious Brahmins for his guide. He was highly proficient in philosophy and poetry. He knew all the arts of enjoyments but never sought pleasure at the cost of morality. He was an expert rider, a great warrior, a valiant general who could successfully lead his army against his enemy.
and was conversant with all the military manoeuvres for that purpose. He was unconquerable even by the Gods. He was not given to carping, nor was a slave of time. In forbearance he was like the Earth, in intelligence like Vrishaspati, and in prowess like Indra. Thus accomplished, Rama shone like the noon-day sun to the delight of his father and to the benefit of the people. Then the Earth desired excellent Rama as her lord.

Aged Dasaratha wished to install such Rama on the throne and he was highly glad at the prospect of seeing his son on the throne. "Certainly he is more qualified than myself and dearer to the people than I am," thought the aged king.

CHAPTER II

Dasaratha's Wish

With the object of installing Rama on the throne King Dasaratha one day told his counsellors, "I have grown old, and I feel the infirmities of age in me. Earthquakes, hurricanes, and various evils are portended by the planets and stars. For these reasons I have decided to install Rama to the throne, beautiful like the moon in its fullest glory and dear to the people. And I doubt not that the people will be greatly delighted at this."

Having decided this, Dasaratha resolved to celebrate the coronation ceremony. He, therefore, with the help of his ministers brought distinguished citizens and chiefs from different provinces, but did not send for
Janaka, the King of Mithila, nor for the king Kekaya, As he thought that they would approve the whole thing when they came to know of it.

Then, at Dasaratha's call the obedient chiefs and princes began to fill the Capital to pay homage to Dasaratha. Dasaratha then duly summoned them before him, and being seated on his throne and surrounded by the obedient prince, Dasaratha looked like Indra encircled by the Gods.

Dasaratha then addressing the august assembly said in a deep resonant voice—

"My men and courtiers, you all know that my ancestors governed this vast kingdom like affectionate fathers. Now, I propose to contribute to the welfare of the people ruled by illustrious Ikshwaku and others. Following the path of my forefathers; I have so long tried to govern to the best of my ability, being heedless of my presonal gain. I have grown old under the shade of this white umbrella.¹ I am far advanced in years, and I now yearn for rest."

"This heavy responsibility of Government is incapable of being borne even by saintly people. It requires a hero to shoulder such a burden; and I have become quite fatigued under its pressing weight. With the permission of all the Brahmans present, I intend to take rest by installing my son to the throne. My son, heroic Rama, has inherited all my qualities, nay more, he is like Indra in prowess. And I propose to invest the crown on virtuous Rama, shining like the moon

¹ Insignia of royalty.
with the constellation of Pushya. He is worthy of you in every respect, and the people of the triple world will find a worthy lord in him. I wish to do this good to the world even to-day.

“Now tell me whether my proposal meets with your approval or not? If you think that it is due to my fondness for Rama, then advise me what is better; arbitrators can discern the truth emerging from the discussions and opinions of two opposing parties.”

Dasaratha stopped, and all the princes hailed his proposal in delight, as the peacocks hail the deep blue clouds in ecstatic joy, and from them rose loud murmurs of joy. The people shook the ground by their loud acclaim.

Then the Brahmins, military captains, the princes and the citizens consulted together, and being unanimous in their approval, addressing the king, said—

“We know, your age is now over some thousand years, and you have grown old. It is, therefore, proper for you to install Rama—the heir-apparent—on the throne. We all wish to see heroic Rama riding a huge elephant under the royal umbrella.”

Dasaratha then to know their minds said, “Your ready approval, however, raises my doubts. While I am still justly governing the world, why do you want to see Rama installed on the throne?”

Then the citizens and the chiefs replied, “Because your son possesses good many noble qualities and let us recount them in your presence.

“Powerful and peerless Rama is like Indra, the
king of Gods. He has thus cast into shade even his illustrious predecessors. He is the most truthful man on earth, and indeed the best of men. Virtue and wealth are found blended only in him. He delights the people like the Moon; in patience and forbearance he is like the Earth, and in might he is the Indra himself. He is virtuous, true to his vows and free from envy. He always consoles the afflicted. He is forgiving, gentle, of sweet speech, and of grateful mind. He is beautiful and of subdued heart. He honours the old and learned Brahmans. He is unparalleled on earth. He is well acquainted with the application of all the arms that are in use amongst the Gods and the giants (Asuras). He has mastered all knowledge and knows the Vedas with all their branches. He is highly proficient in music. He is thoroughly honest and the receptacle of all good. He is never stricken with grief even when there is sufficient cause for it. When occasion arises to fight for the defence of a city or a village he never returns from the battle with Lakshmana without conquering his foes. When he victoriously returns from the fight, either on elephant or on horseback, he never forgets in his triumph to enquire affectionately about the welfare of the people whom he meets in his way. He questions them, as one would do his sons, everything concerning their children, wives, servants, pupils and the sacrificial fire. He rejoices in the joy of the people and becomes sad in their sufferings as their fathers would have been.

"He has clung first to religion. All his objects are
noble and they always produce good results. When he talks, a smile always hovers on his lips. He has aversions for all sorts of quarrels. He can argue like Vrihaspati, the teacher of the Gods. From his graceful brows and large roseate eyes it seems as if Vishnu himself has incarnated on earth. People love him for his heroic qualities. He is never elated with success. Not to speak of this kingdom, he can take charge of the whole world. Following the path of strict justice, he never shrinks from passing death-sentence to those who deserve it, but he never oppresses the innocent, rather rewards them profusely. By his magnanimity, Rama has become an object of reverence and love. Like the great Sun his presence is always felt by the people. O king! we therefore, pray for the installation of Rama. In fact, like Marichi's son, Kashyapa, you have fortunately got such a highly accomplished son. Everybody in the kingdom, whether young or old, pray for Rama's health, his prosperity and longevity. Therefore, O king, for the benefit of all, invest the crown on Rama of delicate hue as of a dark blue lotus."

CHAPTER III
ROYAL DIRECTIONS

Dasaratha was mightily pleased at the conduct of his people and chiefs. Then King Dasaratha said to Vamdeva, Vasistha and other Brahmins,

"The sacred month of Chaitra is come. The forests are adorned with blossoms and buds. Now you invest the crown on Rama."
At these words there were great shouts of joy.

Priest Vasistha then addressing the counsellors said, "By to-morrow have a sufficient supply of gold and gems. Collect in the sacrificial hall sacred medicinal herbs, wreaths of white flowers, fried rice, honey, clarified butter, each in a separate vessel, cloths fresh from the loom, fourfold forces, a lucky elephant, a pair of chowries, a chariot, arms, flagstaff, umbrella of pale yellow colour, golden pitchers, a bull with horns wrapped in gold, an entire tiger skin, and other necessary articles. Decorate the palace-gate and the entrance to the city with garlands and sandal paste and burn fragrant incense at the gates. Have sufficient supply of food, consisting of curd, milk, clarified butter, fried paddy, clean and good rice. Feed everyone sumptuously and pay the Brahmans handsomely. To-morrow, early in the morning, the Brahmans will pronounce their prayer, now invite them cordially. Set up flags everywhere. Water the streets of the city. Let well-adorned dancing girls wait in the second room of the palace. Keep food, flowers, incense and other articles of worship in temples and under sacred trees (Chaitya). Let stalwart warriors clad in armour and with long swords and shields enter the courtyard of the palace in proud march."

After giving these instruction, Vasistha and Vamdeva were engaged in priestly duties.

King Dasaratha then asked Sumantra to fetch Rama in his presence.

The rulers of the North, South, East and the West
together with the Mlechhas, Aryan princes and Mountain and Forest chiefs paid their homage to Dasaratha.

Rama then entered the palace, as lofty as a peak of the Kailash, to meet his father. On seeing Rama, Dasaratha embraced him again and again. In the court a golden seat beset with gems was set apart for Rama. Dasaratha asked Rama to sit upon that. Thereupon Rama took his seat. Then the throne glittered like the golden Sumeru, gilded by the morning rays of the Sun. As the Moon adorns the starry autumnal sky, so Rama enhanced the magnificence of the assembly by his graceful presence.

At the sight of his dear son, Dasaratha was immensely glad, as people are delighted on seeing their richly adorned images on the mirror.

Then Dasaratha said to Rama,

"You are born of Kausalya, my first queen. You are highly qualified and I love you most. You are darling of the people. You ascend the throne when the Moon will enter the Pushya constellation. I know you are virtuous, yet let me give you some advice. Though you are modest, yet be more humble and control your senses. Always replenish your exchequer, arsenal and granaries, and by justice render yourself dear to the people."

The friends of a good ruler are delighted as the Gods are pleased with nectar.

Then the friends of Rama swiftly went to Kausalya and gave her this welcome news. Kausalya was immensely delighted at the news, and bestowed sufficient
gold, gems and number of cows to the bringers of this happy news.

Rama went back to his place after bowing profoundly at his father’s feet.

CHAPTER IV

THE PREMONITION

When the citizens were gone, King Dasaratha said to his ministers,

‘To-morrow the moon will enter the Pushya constellation, and I have decided to install lotus-eyed Rama on that day.’ Turning to Sumantra he said, “Again bring in Rama hither.”

Sumantra then quickly went to Rama, who asked about the reason of his coming, and on being told that the King wanted to see him again, Rama hastily went to the King.

After entering the palace, Rama seeing his father from a distance bowed to him with clasped palms. The King then raised him from the ground and after embracing him affectionately asked him to take his seat.

Dasaratha then addressing Rama said, “O Rama! After long enjoyment of life I have grown old. I have been emancipated from my debts to the Gods, saints, ancestors, Brahmans and to the self. To-day, I make over to you the charge of my people. But I had a very evil dream, as if there were terrible thunders, and meteors were shooting in the day. Astrologers were giving out that the Sun, the Mars and the Rahu have encroached upon my star of birth. When such

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inauspicious signs are seen, evil happens to the king, and even death may occur to him. A man’s mind is generally fickle. Therefore, you ascend the throne before there be any change in my mind. To-day, the Moon has entered the Punarvasu stars and it will enter the Pushya to-morrow. I have become eager to confer on you the crown, and I shall invest you with that to-morrow. Therefore, pass the night lying on a bed of Kusha-grass with my daughter-in-law Sita by observing fast and other sacred restrictions. There are many hindrances to a good act, so let your friends guard you this night. I wish to invest you with the crown during Bharat’s absence, so that his mind may not be stained by envy. I know he is devoted to you, yet human mind is inconstant and undergoes sudden changes when there is any cause for it. Even the hearts of the virtuous are changed and disturbed by envy, anger, malice and other strong passions. You now, retire. To-morrow you will have to take charge of the kingdom."

Rama then went away and in order to inform Janaki about his father’s behest Rama entered his room but missing Janaki there he went to the quarters of his mother.

By that time Kausalya having heard the news of Rama’s installation to the throne, has entered the hall of worship with Sumitra, Sita and Lakshmana, and there being tended by Sumitra, Lakshmana, and Sita she prayed to the Eternal Spirit. She was absorbed in deep meditation with closed eyes and suspended breath. On arriving there Rama found his mother clad in silk and engaged in prayer for his welfare.
Then addressing his mother, Rāmā said, "Mother! Father has entrusted the kingdom to me and the coronation ceremony takes place to-morrow. He has asked me and Janaki to observe fast this night. You then arrange for all things that will be required for Janaki to-morrow."

Kausalya blessed Rama cheerfully, "May you live long. May you conquer your enemies. May you prosper to the delight of the friends of mine and of Sumitra. I am fortunate that I bore thee in my womb. This day, all my supplications to Lord Hari have been fulfilled. Royal splendour will ever cling to thee."

Lakshmana was seated there with clasped hands. Casting his eyes on Lakshmana Rama said, "Lakshmana, henceforward you will have to share the burden of the kingdom along with me. You are my second self. My life and kingdom are meant for you. So enjoy yourself as you like."

After greeting Kausalya, Sumitra and Lakshmana thus Rama went to his quarters.

CHAPTER V
THE JOY

Dasaratha asked Vasistha to give necessary directions to Rama and Sita. Saintly Vasistha then arrived at Rama's residence. It looked from a distance like a mass of amber clouds. Rama respectfully received the saint. Vasistha initiated Rama and Janaki into fast by Mantras. Rama, after spending some time in company of his friends, with their permission entered his quarters.
which, at that time, with joyous faces looked like a lake with full-blown lotuses, and resounding with the notes of joyous birds.

Vasishta on emerging from Rama’s palace found the streets crowded with men. People were going in batches and there were constant shouts of joy, like the roaring of the sea. All the places were filled up to their utmost capacities. All the highways were swept and watered. Garlands hung on every gate and flags were streaming from every house. The whole city was anxiously waiting for the morning to witness the Coronation Ceremony. The city wore a gay, festive look.

Vasishta waded his way through that sea of human heads and entered the castle high as a mountain peak (Himavat) and appeared before the king as Vrihaspati does before Indra.

The king stood up from the throne at Vasishta’s sight. Vasishta then informed the king that all his directions had been carried out.

Dasaratha then with Vasishta’s permission entered the inner apartment as a lion enters his den in a mountain cave. Just as the moon shines in the midst of a galaxy of stars, so Dasaratha appeared in the midst of the pearl-studded beauties of his palace.

When Vasishta was gone, Rama took his bath and worshipped Narayana, and offered oblation with clarified butter into fire, and then partook its remainder. He then lay down in collected mind with Sita on a bed of grass within the precincts of that Vishnu’s shrine.

When about two hours of night yet remained, Rama
left his bed and asked his men to decorate his house. At that time he was greeted by the chants and songs of the birds. He put on a silken dress and said his prayers to Narayan and had the Brahmins perform the Swastivachan rite. The whole city resounded with the blares of trumpets and the deep voice of the Brahman's hailing the dawn.

All the citizens then rejoiced at the news that Rama had fasted with Janaki.

Then the citizens began to decorate the whole city. Flagstaffs with fluttering, banners were raised from all temples high as the peaks and white as the fleecy clouds. They were raised in every crossing, and they streamed from every housetop, from every rich mansion, and from every shop full of merchandise, and every tall road-side tree and Chaityas were decorated with flags and ribbons. Streets decorated with floral wreathes became fragrant with the sweet scent of incense. The people feasted their eyes and ears upon dancing and songs performed by the musicians. Thinking that Rama might inspect the city at night, after his coronation, the people, by way of decoration, reared up lamp-posts in the shape of trees, and they began to discuss about Rama's coronation. Even the children in groups, when they were playing before their house-doors, talked of that. People in knots were praising Dasaratha for his noble decision in installing Rama on the throne. At last, Ayodhya resembling like a heavenly city, became loud with the huzza and noise of the outsiders that began to pour in the city by that time.
CHAPTER VI

MANTHARA

Queen Kaikeyi brought up an orphan girl whom she picked up from her maternal uncle's house. Her name was Manthara, and she served Kaikeyi as her maid.

Early in the morning Manthara ascended the terrace of the palace, white as the moon-light, to ascertain the cause of such unusual noise and demonstrations in the city.

She found the streets of Ayodhya sprinkled with sweet-scented sandal water and strewn with red lotuses and adorned with flags and festoons. Some roads led through undulating plains and some were wide for the facility of thoroughfare, and all were well-watered; and the Brahmins were making noise with garlands and sweets in their hands. She found the doorway of every temple, painted white, and the streets resounded with music, chanting of the Vedas and shouts of the people. Horses and elephants were briskly plying along the streets. Manthara was greatly surprised at the sight, and approaching a nurse clad in white questioned,

"Why Queen Kausalya is making such charities in cheerful heart? What is the cause of this great delight of the people, what the King will do to-day?"

The nurse cheerfully replied, "To-day the king will install Rama on the throne."

Malicious Manthara hearing these words of the nurse burnt in rage like a flaming log, and hurriedly descending from the terrace she entered the room of Kaikeyi, and addressing her in a reproachful voice, said,
Arise, you foolish one, why you are still lying on your bed? You know not what calamity is about to fall on you. You boast of your good fortune, while you are neglected by the King! Your good fortune is as short-lived as the waters of a summer stream.”

Having heard these hard expressions of Manthara, delivered in passion, Kaikeyi sorrowfully asked "Manthara! What evil has happened? Why do you look so much distressed?"

Then Manthara assuming an air of deeper sorrow, in angry eloquence said, "O lady, a great danger is imminent. The King will install Rama on the throne. I don't see any remedy for it. My heart is overwhelmed with grief and anger, and my limbs are burning as if in a flame. I have come here for your good. Know it for certain, I always grieve in your sorrows and delight in your joys. You are a queen and the daughter of a King. Why do you not, therefore, appreciate the loss of sovereignty? Your husband is of fair speech but he has a crooked heart. His words are sweet, but his heart is full of gall. You know him to be truthful and honest, you have therefore, been thus deceived. The King only cozen's with sweet words but he fulfils the desire of Kausalya. This crafty king has sent away Bharata to his maternal uncle's house for conferring safely the kingdom on Rama. You are awfully silly, and disregarding your own weal and interest, and as an affectionate mother you have taken in your lap an enemy as fall as a deadly snake; and what is done by a snake or enemy when left alone has been committed
to your son by Dasaratha. All his words of consolation are vain, he is going to ruin you under the plea of investing the crown on Rama. The time has come for quick decision and to act for your own good. Just save yourself, Bharata and myself from this imminent danger."

Queen Kaikeyi rose from her bed with a smiling countenance, beautiful as the moon, and hearing the news of Rama’s coronation, in gladsome heart rewarded Manthara with ornaments, and then addressing her, she cheerfully said, "What a piece of good news you have conveyed this day! Tell me what shall I give you for this happy news? Darling Rama and Bharata are both equal to me, and I have been more delighted at the news that the king is going to install Rama on the throne. To tell you the truth, there is not a happier news to me than this, and I bless you, Manthara, for conveying that to me. Now tell me what is your prayer, and I shall immediately grant you that."

Manthara then being beside herself with grief and rage, threw off the ornaments on the floor and maliciously commenced,

"O Kaikeyi, why do you display your delight on such an unjust occasion like this? Don’t you see that you will be soon cast into a sea of sorrow? Though overwhelmed with grief I cannot but laugh at your silliness in seeing you rejoicing in your calamity. Which intelligent woman can rejoice at the prosperity of her co-wife’s son, unwelcome as death itself? I am sorry for your foolish perverseness. All the
brothers have equal claim to the throne. Therefore Rama is afraid of Bharata, but know it that Rama may be the cause of Bharata's mischief.

Heroic Lakshmana is devoted to Rama, so he is not afraid of Lakshmana. Likewise Satrughna is devoted to Bharata, Rama has nothing to fear from Satrughna. In sequence of birth Bharata may set up claim for the throne, but the case is different with Lakshmana and Satrughna. Rama is vigilant, learned, conversant in the arts of peace and war and well-versed in kingly duties. Rama will surely do mischief to Bharata, and this thought is now uppermost in my mind. Queen Kausalya is fortunate. Her son's coronation ceremony will be celebrated to-day. The Kingdom now belongs to her. You will serve her with clasped hands as her maid. Like you, we shall be her maid-servants, and Bharata will be a valet to Rama. Sita will enjoy herself with her maids of honour, and your daughter-in-law will pass her days in sorrow seeing Bharata thus humbled." Finding Manthara thus averse to Rama, Kaikeyi gently recounted the accomplishments of Rama in her presence,

"Manthara, darling Rama is virtuous, accomplished, well-educated, truthful, grateful and of pure character. He is the eldest son of the King, and the kingdom rightly belongs to him. Long-lived Rama will minister to the welfare of his brothers and of the people with parental care. Then why do you grieve at this news? Bharata will get his father's kingdom a hundred years after Rama. Why do you then burn
with your own fire on this festive occasion? I always wish for the good of Rama as I do for Bharata, my son. Rama, too, loves and honours me more than he does his own mother. Though the kingdom now belongs to Rama yet it is practically Bharata’s, for Rama loves his brothers as his own self.”

Manthara then heaved a deep sigh of grief and said,

“O Kaikeyi! It is really strange that you would regard that to be an evil what is really good for you. You are going to be engulfed in troubles and sorrows, but through your foolishness you do not realise your own situation. Rama is now going to be the King, after him his son will ascend the throne. Bharata will therefore be cut off for good from the royal line. All the sons of a King are not entitled to the kingdom. Had it been so, there would have been great social and political disorders. Therefore, the sovereigns invest their crowns either on their eldest sons or upon the most accomplished ones. This is the custom. I therefore tell you that Bharata will thus be banished from the line of the sovereigns, consequently from all prosperity and happiness. It is for your good that I am taking such pains. I am sorry, you do not understand me, on the other hand, you want to reward me at the news of prosperity of your co-wife’s son! Know it for certain, Rama after safely ascending the throne will either send Bharata into exile or put him to death. Bharata is still a boy, he is quite innocent of everything, and it is you that have sent him to his mater-
nal uncle's house. Had Bharata been present at his time, certainly the King could not have been unkind to him. Attachment grows by close proximity. Look! Even the trees, creepers and shrubs embrace one another in close proximity of space. Not only Bharata is not present, but Satrughna has also gone with him. Had he been present there could have been some remedy. I have heard that once a batch of foresters wished to cut down a tree, but it was saved, being surrounded with thorny shrubs. Know it that no injury will be done by Lakshmana but surely Rama will deprive Bharata of his life. Now let Bharata proceed to the forest from his maternal uncle's house. This seems to me to be the only desirable alternative, and this will do good to you and to your friends.

"Ah, darling Bharata, you have been brought up in the lap of happiness, now Rama is your enemy. His prosperity is your downfall. O, save Bharata from his danger! Rama's mother Kausalya is your co-wife. You have neglected her being elated by the caress of your husband. Don't forget that she will now wreck her vengeance on you. What shall I say more? If Rama gets this vast kingdom with the hills and the seas, he will surely insult you along with your son. Now devise the ways and means how Bharata can be installed to the throne and Rama may be sent away in exile!"

At this the wrath of Kaikeyi was up, and she exclaimed in panting breath, "Manthara, this very day I shall send Rama into exile and invest the crown on
Bharata. Now advise me how can I achieve my object."

Then crooked Manthara replied, "I am telling you the ways by which the kingdom will be Bharata's. Just decide yourself whether you approve of them or not. Don't you remember what so often you had repeated to me? Or do you wish to hear it from my own lips?"

At this Kaikeyi raised herself a little from her luxuriant bed and asked, "Tell me now, Manthara, by what means Bharata will gain the kingdom, and not Rama?"

Manthara returned, "O Queen! there is a city called Vaijayanta in Dandakaranya in the South. There lived once an Asura named Timidvaja, otherwise known as Samvara. There was a war between him and Indra. In this war between the gods and the demons, king Dasaratha along with other royal saints went to help Indra in the field and you accompanied the king at that time. In that war Dasaratha fought most bravely and received wounds all over the body. Once he fainted in the battle-field. Seeing him thus fainted, you removed him from the battle-field and thus saved his life. The King then being highly pleased with you promised you two boons. But you then said that you would ask for them when you wished, and the King agreed to your proposal. I did not know anything about it, but I have heard it from your own lips, but I have not forgotten it. Now prevent the installation of Rama, and pray for Rama's exile for fourteen years and the installation of Bharata"
on the throne. If Rama goes to the forest for fourteen years, your son Bharata will be able to secure his position by winning half the people on his side. Go now, put on dirty rags on your person, enter the chamber of wrath and lie down there on the naked floor. But take care when the King comes to you don’t look to him, don’t talk to him, but go on weeping incessantly. I know, the King loves you dearly, he can even enter into fire for you. He will never dare to offend you or provoke your wrath. He can sacrifice his life for your pleasure. Never think that he will set aside your words. Now you think of your luck. I warn you again, never to accept gold and jewels what the king may offer you to appease your anger. Don’t be tempted by them. You just remind the King of the two boons he had promised you in the war between the Gods and the demons, and always remain on the alert to gain your object. When the King will raise you from the ground for granting your prayers, first make him swear, and then speak out your mind. O lady! Bharata’s weal will be attained by Rama’s exile. In his exile the people will lose their love for Rama, and Bharata will then reign undisturbed, and by the time Rama returns back Bharata will be darling of the people. So be bold in your insistence. This is the time to dissuade the King from his decision.”

Manthara thus succeeded in persuading Kaikeyi to accept the evil as truth, and Kaikeyi gladly agreed to her words. She, at the instigation of Manthara,
betook a wrong path, like a mare springing after her young colt and addressing Manthara said,

"You have spoken the right thing. I admire your wisdom. In intelligence you are the best of all humpbacks. You always wish me good and are devoted to my well-being. To tell the truth, I could not first understand this wicked design of the king. Oh Manthara! Here are many vicious and ugly-crooked persons on earth but you alone is beautiful among them like a lotus bent by the breeze. Your plump and heaving breast, graceful navel, lean waist, spacious hips adorned with tinkling-zones. Your face is beautiful like the moon. How well-shaped your legs and thighs are! You are tall, and when you walk you look like a veritable swan. You have all the dark witchery of Sambara Ashura in you. Policy and intelligence reside in your heart. Oh beauty! If I can send Rama to the forest and install Bharata to the throne, I shall besmear your hump with sandal paste and adorn it with ornaments of gold, and shall give you golden Tilak to decorate your face. Being clad in elegant dress and decked with beautiful ornaments you will walk like a goddess and your lotus-face will defy the beauty of the morning. You will rise in eminence to the disappointment of your enemies; and as you now attend on me, others will wait upon you."

Kaikeyi lying on her bed, like a flame of fire upon the sacrificial altar, thus praised Manthara. And she concluded by saying, "Oh Lady! it is useless to build up a dam when the water has already flown
out. Now just rise and exert yourself for your welfare. Enter the wrath-chamber soon and show your anger to the king."

Being thus incited by Manthara, gold-coloured Kaikeyi entered the chamber of wrath and throwing down the precious pearl necklace and other jewelleries from her person she sat down on the floor and said, "Oh Manthara! Either I shall die or shall install Bharata on the throne. I have no hankering for anything else, and I assure you that if the king invest the crown on Rama, I will put an end to my life."

Then Manthara said, "Surely along with your son you will have to rue if the kingdom goes to Rama. So try your level best to secure it for Bharata."

Thus being repeatedly provoked by Manthara, Kaikeyi by placing her hand on her agitated breast, said, 'Manthara! Either I die in this chamber of wrath, and you carry that news to the king, or you will hear that Rama has been sent to exile and Bharata has got the throne. If Rama does go to the forest, I have no more any need of luxury, nay, not even of my life."

Kaikeyi after speaking out her mind in these cruel words lay down on the ground, like a fallen angel. Her beautiful face was dark with anger, and her body being stripped of all ornaments appeared like the starless sky of a gloomy night. Thus Kaikeyi lay down with a smothered heart.
CHAPTER VII

IN THE CHAMBER OF WRATH

In the chamber of wrath, Kaikeyi then began to heave sighs like a panting snake. For some time she thought over the prospect of her happiness, and after deciding her course of action, she spoke it to Manthara, and her devoted maid was glad at this.

Queen Kaikeyi lay down with frowning brows and eyes red with anger. The ground being strewn with her garlands and ornaments (which she had cast off) shone like a bright starry firmament.

In the meantime king Dasaratha after giving necessary directions for the installation of Rama entered the inner compartment of his palace. Thinking that Kaikeyi has not yet heard the gladsome news of Rama's coronation, he entered Kaikeyi's quarters to convey that happy news, as the moon unwittingly enters the white clouds in the sky rendered frightful by the presence of the Rahu¹ in them. Dasaratha saw hump-backed and other dwarfish women straying about hither and thither. At some parts of the palace, parrots, peacocks, Kraunchas and swans were cackling in joy. Somewhere sweet musical instruments like lyres and flutes were being played. There stood beautiful groves and painted houses interspersed with trees bearing fruits and flowers all round the year.

There stood tall Champaka and red Asoka trees.

¹ The shadow of the earth that is cast upon the moon at the time of the eclipse is called Rahu.
There were raised platforms and seats of ivory, gold and silver. In some parts there were beautiful ponds and lakes. Rich food and drink were stored and other precious stones. After entering the inner apartment which looked like an earthly paradise, he was at that time under the influence of passion. Dasaratha missed Kaikeyi in her bed-chamber. Formerly Kaikeyi never stayed out at that time.

Dasaratha did not know that Kaikeyi was intent upon Bharata’s installation. Finding Kaikeyi not in her room, he, as on previous occasions, enquired of a warder about her, and the warder with a sacred look and clasped hands said that the queen being angry had entered the chamber of wrath.

At these words Dasaratha grew highly anxious and entered the chamber of wrath with an agitated heart. On entering, Dasaratha found her lying on the ground who was wont to lie on milk-white downy beds. His heart at this sight began to be consumed with sorrow. The old King seeing his beloved youthful wife lying on the ground, like an up-rooted creeper, like a goddess hurled down from the heaven, like an illusion to bewitch one’s heart, like a doe caught in a trap, or like an elephant struck down by a hunter’s shaft, was taken by painful surprise and he began to pat on her body out of affection and love.

1 It does not mean a Harem, for there was no such thing at that time. It is purely a Mahomedan institution introduced to India after the Mahomedan conquest. It simply means a quarter occupied by the ladies.
Then the doted King addressing the lotus-eyed beauty, said, "Tell me why you are angry, I know nothing of its cause. Who has insulted or dared to abuse you? Why do you make me unhappy by lying on the dust? I always pray for your welfare. Then why are you lying there like an ill-starred person when I am still alive? I have got many skilful physicians under me and have rewarded them amply. Tell me what is now ailing you; the doctor will cure you of that. Darling! I am ever devoted to you. Now tell me frankly whom you wish to favour or who has incurred your displeasure? Don't torture your body so. Myself and my men are always obedient to you. Now tell me, which innocent man you want to put to death, or which guilty person will be set at liberty? Which poor fellow is to be made rich, or which rich man will be deprived of his riches? I never dared to act against your will. Tell me your wish, and I shall try to fulfil your desire even at the sacrifice of my life. You know that I am ever devoted to you, so never doubt about the attainment of your object and on my honour and truth I swear that I shall carry out your desire. Lands to the utmost verge of the earth that is lighted by the sun belong to me. Dravira, Sindhu, Souvira, Sourashtras, Dakshinapatha, Anga, Banga, Magadha, Matsha, Kashi, and Koshala are all under my rule. All wealth, crops and animals of these provinces are mine. Just ask for what you want of them. Don't torture your delicate body any further. Rise up and tell me the cause of your tears. Like the
sun drying up the dews by its rays. I shall remove all apprehensions from your heart."

CHAPTER VIII
KAIKEYI SPEAKS

Being thus assured by these sweet words of Dasaratha, she opened her lips to torment her husband with unexpected pain. She said, "My Lord! None has insulted or abused me. I have resolved something in my mind, and you will have to fulfil my desire. If you are really earnest in seeing me happy, then for my confidence you must first bind yourself by an oath, or I shall not disclose my intentions to you."

The King then, with a smile, raised Kaikeyi from the ground and placing her on his lap he began, "Ah my proud beauty! don't you know that I have no dearer object than you excepting Rama on earth, and I swear by that beloved and invincible Rama that I shall accomplish what you wish. My mind, like my words, is eager to carry out your wishes. Now tell me your mind and save me from infinite misery. Never fear that I shall ever refuse to grant your prayer. By my religion I swear, I shall do your pleasure. Now speak out your heart without any hesitation whatsoever."

Kaikeyi thus seeing Dasaratha bound by solemn oath, became almost certain about the fulfilment of her desire, and thinking of Bharata's installation she, like cruel death, said the dreadful words: "You have repeatedly sworn to grant my prayer. Let it be heard by the thirty-three deities; let it be witnessed by the
sun, the moon, day and night, the sky, the ten quarters, the house-hold gods, deities, the earth, Gandharvas, the Rakshasas; let all creatures hear your vow. Let the Gods witness that a truthful king has promised to grant my prayer.” Having thus complementing the King for her own interest, Queen Kaikeyi said:—

“Oh King, just remember the fight between the Gods and the Asuras and your own duel with Samvara in which you fainted from your weakness. At that time I saved your life by nursing you day and night. For that you wanted to grant me two boons, but then I did not ask for anything. Now the time has arrived for asking for them, and if you do not grant my prayer I shall give up my life for this insult.”

Kaikeyi subdued the King completely by her beauty, and Dasaratha could not set her at naught. The King bound himself by a vow for his own destruction, as a deer is entrapped by a fatal noose. Kaikeyi then said, “Instead of installing Rama on the throne install Bharata in his place, and let gentle Rama wearing deer-skin and in matted locks pass his life as a mendicant for fourteen years in the Dandaka forest. Let Bharata be crowned, and Rama go to the forest even this day.

“This is my wish and my prayer. Prove yourself true to your words and keep your prestige and uphold the honour of your line. Truth, say the sages, is highly beneficial to the people in the next world.”

Dasaratha was stunned by the speech.

“Is this a day-dream or worst confusion has seized

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my mind? Is this due to the influence of an evil
his planet, my mind has been completely unhinged?"

While thus resolving in his mind Dasaratha fell into
a swoon. When he regained his consciousness, Kaikeyi’s
words at once rose in his mind. He became distressed
as a deer at the sight of a tigress. He heaved a deep
sigh and sat upon the bare ground. He writhed like a
venomous snake suffocating under the spell of a charm.
He panted in grief and anger and cried, “Ah, shame!”
And he again fell into a swoon. He regained his senses
after a long time and broke forth smothered with
grief and anger:—

“Ah, you vile and wicked woman! O, thou
destroyer of your own clan! What mischief has been
done to you either by Rama or by me? Rama looks
upon you as his own mother. Then why are you bent
upon his ruin? In my ignorance I brought you home
like a deadly serpent for my own destruction. Everybody is fond of Rama for his virtues. For what offence
I shall forsake him? I can renounce Kaushalya,
Sumitra, royal splendour, nay, even my own life but
not Rama in any way. My heart leaps up at his sight,
and I lose my senses in his absence. The (animal) world
may live without the Sun and crops can exist without
water, but I shall not live without Rama. So at once
give up your resolve. Be graciously pleased with me.
Don’t entertain that cruel intention.

“Formerly you used to say, ‘Rama is my eldest son,
he is the most virtuous of all.’ Now I see this was only
to please my ears; otherwise you could not have been
sorry at his installation to the throne, nor could you have given me so much pain; or perhaps you have been possessed by an evil spirit, and you are speaking under its influence or you could not have been so thoroughly changed.

"Kaikeyi! You have not behaved with me improperly on any occasion as yet, nor have done me any mischief, so I cannot think that your mind can be thus changed without any extraneous cause. You told me many a time that Rama was dear to you like Bharata. Then why do you want to send Rama to the forest for fourteen years? Rama honours and tends you more than Bharata.

"There are hundreds of men and women in my palace but nobody has ever spoken ill of Rama. He has won over the people by his good deeds. He has subdued all by his love of truth, the Brahmans by his charity, his superiors by his devotion, and his enemies by his valour. Truth, purity, asceticism, learning, affection and sympathy are all found in him. How shall I say unpleasant words to him who always speak sweet words to everybody? It breaks my heart even to think of it. Kaikeyi, I have grown old, my end is near, be pleased and have pity on me. I shall give you what else you want on land or sea. Give up that evil design. I entreat you in clasped palms. I throw myself at your feet. Please save Rama and see that I may not incur the sin of renouncing the innocent one."

King Dasaratha was overwhelmed with grief. At times he fell into a swoon, and at times he wept bitterly praying as to how to get out of this ocean of sorrow. But inexorable Kaikeyi said,
"O King! After promising boons if you repent afterwards, then how will you maintain your uprightness on earth? When the Rajarshis will ask you about this, how will you answer them? Wilt thou then say that I have broken my promise to Kaikeyi to whose services I owe my life? You have said one thing just now, and you are retracting it the next moment; this act of yours will disgrace all the sovereigns of this line. King Saivyā being bound by truth (his promise) offered his own flesh to the hawk in order to save a pigeon from it. King Alaka attained excellent merit by giving his own eyes to a blind Brahman. The ocean being bound by a promise does not go beyond its shores. Just remember these noble instances. Don't break your promise. I find you have grown perverse, and by giving the kingdom to Rama you want to pass your time in pleasure with Kaushalya. Now, whether my prayer be good or bad, or whether you have promised to me truly or falsely, do not deviate from it. If you install Rama on the throne, I shall drink poison even in your presence. I shall prefer death instead of paying homage to Kaushalya. I swear by my beloved Bharata's name that I shall never be content except with Rama's exile."

Kaikeyi stopped. The King hearing such cruel words from Kaikeyi angrily stared at her but he could utter no word. In restless fear he brooded over his thoughtless promise and Kaikeyi's evil design, and like a felled tree he again fainted on the ground crying, "O Rama!" At that moment the King looked like a mad man, whose mind has been thoroughly
unhinged; he looked a (delirious) patient passing through a crisis or an exhausted python.

After regaining his consciousness he asked Kaikeyi, "Tell me who has induced you to believe in this evil as good? You are talking like a mad person, don't you feel ashamed? I did not know that your nature was so vicious. Tell me why do you ask for such a cruel thing? Why do you apprehend mischief from Rama? If you wish to do any good to the people, to Bharata, and to me, please desist from it.

"O cruel woman! How Rama or myself have offended you? Do you think that we have conspired to hurt you? Your desire, however, is not to be fulfilled. I consider Bharata as more righteous than Rama, and it does not seem at all probable that Bharata will accept the kingdom by depriving Rama. Alas! When I shall tell Rama that I shall send him to exile, his face will grow dark like the moon in the eclipse. How shall I look at that? I have just now settled everything about the coronation ceremony with friends and counsellors, how I shall withdraw my instructions like a defeated enemy. If I act so unjustly at your importunities, the monarchs coming from different quarters will say that this king of the Ikshaku race is surely a child. How could he rule for so many years? When the learned and aged people will ask me, 'Where is Rama? What shall I tell them? Even if I say this truth that I have sent Rama into exile for Kaikeyi's torments, people will not believe me.

"Alas! What will Kaushalya tell me when she will
hear of Rama's exile? How shall I answer her? In service, Kaushalya is like a maid-servant; in pleasant talks, she is like a friend; in religious practices, she is a true partner in life; in good wishes like a sister and in affection like a mother. Though she is worthy of honour, I never show her any respects out of your fear. My attachment for you has proved a source of torment to me, as unhealthy food injures a sick person. Sumittra will be greatly alarmed by the news of Rama's exile, and she will no more believe in me.

"Now, when daughter Janaki will hear these woeful news of Rama's exile and my death, she will renounce her body, like a Kinnari on the Himalayas forsaken by her Kinnara. When I shall see Janaki weeping and Rama going to the forest, surely I shall not survive long. You will then be a widow and enjoy the kingdom with Bharata. As the people find tempting wine a veritable poison when it produces intoxication after drinking, so I find you now. So long I knew you to be devoted and chaste but from your conduct I find you otherwise. To fulfil your end you cozened me with sweet words, as the hunter kills the deer after alluring it (to close quarters) by sweet songs. In fact, I have purchased my wife's happiness at the cost of my son.

"Oh how sad! how painful! I have been suffering from your words for being promise-bound to you. I suffer as a man does for his misdeeds committed in a previous birth. Kaikeyi, I am a wretch and so long I dallied with you as if with a halter round my neck,
forgetting in ignorance that it was death itself. Like a child I have caught hold of a deadly snake. I am a vicious wreck. I have deprived such a virtuous son of his ancestral kingdom. People will no doubt abuse me, and call me lustful and foolish for sending such a son to exile at the request of his wife. Rama has already grown lean by studying the Vedas, observing Brahmacharya, how will he bear the hardships of a forest life? He never disobey av or demurs from my words, and if I ask him to go to the forest he will at once say, 'Very well, let me go.' If he refuses to obey my words, it will be really good to me, but alas he will not do that. My crime is unpardonable and has become a fit object of public contempt. Death will certainly call me to its abode after Rama's departure. After Rama's exile and my death I know not into what trouble you will put my other men.

"Henceforward I shall be condemned as a drunkard. Kaushalya will surely die for want of Rama and myself, and so will Sumitra if she loses Laksumana, Satrughna and me. You will alone rule in the Ikshwaku line. If Bharata be delighted at Rama's exile, let him not perform any funeral rites after my death. For my ill-luck you came to my house, for which I shall have to bear eternal infamy.

"How will Rama walk through jungles who always rides on horse-back, on elephants, and in chariots? How will he live on pungent fruits and roots of the forest, at whose meal-time cooks (wearing ear-rings) vie with one another in preparing food and drink for
him? How will he who always wears costly apparel put on a piece of (coarse) red cloth? Ah! Women are highly deceitful and selfish. Fie on them. No, all women are not so. I only call Bharata's mother Kaikeyi as such.

"You have been created by God to plague me eternally. Why your teeth did not crumble down before you could utter such dreadful thing against thy husband and thy son?

"You are the destroyer of your own clan. You are dreadful like a sharp razor. I shall not comply with your cruel request whether you enter into fire, water, earth or drink poison."

Dasaratha began to lament bitterly and fell unconscious, as a weak patient sometimes faints when he stretches his hand to catch hold of a thing.

Dasaratha was lying on the ground like king Yayati fallen from the heaven when his virtue became exhausted. He was about to catch hold of his wife's feet for mercy but Kaikeyi was inexorable. After restoring Dasaratha's consciousness she said,

"King! You call yourself truthful and even take pride for being firm to your vows. Why do you then refuse my prayer and thus break your words?" Dasaratha angrily replied, "Ah, vile woman! How can I send my darling Rama to forest? How shall I witness all his sufferings and hardships? If I send Rama to the forest at your request, I shall be condemned as a hen-pecked husband, and my fair reputation will thus for ever be sullied."
When Dasaratha was thus lamenting bitterly, the shades of the evening began to fall. At last, the night set in, but that pretty moon-lit night could not console the king, rather it increased his sufferings more. He looked above and said with a sigh. "O starry night, do not pass away. I beseech thee in clasped palms, please do me this favour, nay, rather soon be over, for with the dawn Rama goes to the forest and my life goes after him. I shall thus be saved from the cause of seeing that cruel face, for which I have been suffering so immensely."

Kaikeyi, however, pressed again and again for sending Rama to the forest. Dasaratha again fell into a swoon.

At last, the night was over and the musicians roused Dasaratha from sleep by singing his eulogy—but in his affliction it became unbearable to him and he at once asked them to stop.

CHAPTER IX

EXHORTATIONS

When the King rose from sleep Kaikeyi again ruthlessly commenced,—

"Why do you look so sad by promising me the boon as if you have committed a great sin! It is your duty to keep your reputation and dignity unsullied by performing what you have promised. Virtuous people say, truth is the highest virtue, and it is in the interest of righteousness that I am exhorting you to keep up your promise. You know, how king Saivya attained
great merits by offering his flesh to the hawk, how king Alaka unhesitatingly plucked his own eye for a blind Brahman. Truth is eternal, truth is Brahma. Upon truth all religion is based. Truth is the indestructible Veda. It is through truth that man attains his highest salvation.

"Now, if you have any regard for religion, then follow truth. Do not deviate from your promise. I say this in the interest of your righteousness. Send Rama into exile. If you neglect it, I shall put an end to my life even in your presence."

Dasaratha grew pale at these exhortations of Kaikeyi, and after some great efforts he broke forth again, "O, wicked woman! Hereby I renounce your hand which I took mine with Mantras before the sacrificial fire. Hereby, I also renounce my son Bharata born of your womb. The night is over. Even now the people will come to me and ask me—to expedite about the installation of Rama. But since you stand in the way, Rama will perform my funeral obsequies with the provisions procured for his coronation."

Kaikeyi blazed forth at these words and said,

"What you are saying now? Send for Rama immediately, despatch him to the forest, and install Bharata on the throne, or you shan't be able to go even a step from this place."

Then Dasaratha smarting under great pain said, "I am bound by truth. My senses are about to leave me. I can protest no more. Do what you will. Only let me have a last look of Rama before my consciousness fails me."

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EXHORTATIONS

By this time the sun rose, and the auspicious hour arrived. And Vasistha with all the articles of coronation and his pupils entered the palace. In his way he found the streets well-broomed and watered; the shops full of merchandise, flags streaming from every place, and the whole atmosphere laden with the fragrance of sandal, Agaru, and incense. Signs of great festivity were to be met everywhere. And Vasistha with a cheerful heart waded his way through a joyous and eager crowd to Dasaratha.

At that time Sumantra came out of the inner apartment of the palace, and Vasistha said to him, "Go and soon inform the King of my arrival. Tell him that waters of the sea and of the Ganges have been brought in golden pitchers. Seats made of fig tree, all kinds of seeds, perfumes, gems, honey, card, clarified butter, fried paddy, Kushagrass, flowers, eight exceedingly beautiful maids, a formidable elephant, chariot yoked with four horses, swords, bow, carriage for the conveyance of men, white umbrella, white chowries, golden vase, a bull of pale yellow-colour with a big hump and bound by a golden chain, a mighty lion with four prominent teeth, a royal throne, tiger skin, sacrificial wood, fire, all kinds of musical instruments, well-adorned public women, Brahmins, Acharyas (teacher) cows and various kinds of sacred animals and birds have been collected. Prominent men of the town and provinces, and merchants with their servants have gathered. Chiefs and rulers from different quarters have been eagerly waiting to witness the coronation of
Rama. Ask the king to be ready without delay so that Rama may be installed under the Pushya star.

At this, Sumantra proceeded to the quarters of Dasaratha. At that time, Sumantra did not know what had happened in the meantime to the king. As usual he appeared before the king and greeted him with words of praise. He said, "You are the only object of our delight. As the sea, tinged by the crimson rays of the dawn, delight the eyes of the people, so you delight us all. I awaken you, as the Vedas and other sacred learning in yore awakened the self-create Lord of all for creation. As the sun and the moon in turn illumine the earth, so let me enlighten to-day. Arise, O King, to-day is the coronation ceremony of Rama. Put on your wonderful apparel and issue from the palace like the blazing sun from the golden Sumeru hill. Everything has been made ready for the coronation ceremony, and all are anxiously waiting for you. Without you we look like an army without its leader, like a flock of cattle without its keeper, so please come and give the necessary orders."

Hearing these words, Dasaratha was again overwhelmed with grief and looking towards Sumantra with a dry, pale face said, "Sumantra, this eulogy of yours pains my heart the more."

At these words, and seeing the wretched look of the King, Sumantra stepped aside a little. Finding the King quite tongue-tied with sorrow, Kaikeyi said,

"Sumantra! The King kept up the whole night in joy for Rama’s coronation. He has fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion. So, please bring Rama hither."
"How can I go without the royal leave?" said Sumantra.

At this Dasaratha said to Sumantra,
"Go, bring in Rama. I am anxious to see him."

Then Sumantra gladly went forth to fetch Rama when Kaikeyi added,
"Please bring the prince soon."

"Evidently the Queen is impatient to see the installation of Rama, and the king too is now awake, hence this hurry," thought Sumantra as he issued from the palace.

CHAPTER X
RAMA’S ARRIVAL

Brahmins versed in the Vedas, counsellors, captains, royal priest Vasistha were all waiting at the gate.

They brought all articles for the installation ceremony. Not finding the King till then, they talked amongst themselves, "Who will inform the King of our arrival? The sun is up, and we do not yet see the King."

While they were thus speaking, Sumantra met them and said that he was going to fetch Rama speedily before the King, and he again entered the sleeping chamber of the King and standing behind a curtain asked the King to rise up and meet the assembled people at the gate.

"But Dasaratha said, "Bring here Rama. What makes you to disobey my order? I am not asleep."

Hearing this Sumantra hurried from the palace. As
he reached the public road, he found it decorated with flags and flowers, and a joyous crowd had collected there and were talking about Rama.

Sumantra saw from a distance the beautiful castle of Rama, lofty and white as a peak of the Kailash. Its doors were yet closed, though the sun was up. Hundreds of daises were built about the palace, and there were several golden statues in front of the palace. Its gates were inlaid with various gems, and ornamented with wreaths of golden flowers and fine workmanship. Metallic images of tigers were kept here and there in the palace. The dazzling splendour of the palace never failed to attract public notice and being sprinkled with Aguru and Sandal it was rich with fragrance like the Dardura Hill.

The citizens were waiting outside the gate with their offerings for the coronation ceremony. As soon as they saw Sumantra coming with a car, their minds leaped up in joy.

Sumantra then entered Rama’s palace in a cheerful mind and saw various people engaged in performing auspicious rites for Rama. Many people by that time were collected and their shouts of joy filled the place with a loud noise. People clad in their best apparels were going to and fro greatly elated with joy.

Then Sumantra entered the peaceful chamber of Rama. It was guarded cautiously by faithful young men with arms, and old women clad in red cloth were seated with rattans in their hands. They all stood up at Sumantra’s sight. Sumantra then asked the warders to inform Rama of his arrival.
Sumantra was then ushered in before Rama. Rama was then dressed in an excellent apparel and was seated on a golden seat with a beautiful coverlet on it, like Kuvera, the God of wealth. His body was adorned with red sandal paste, and Janaki was seated by his side with a chowri in her hand and at that time Rama looked like the Moon in the company of star Chitra. Rama shone like the mid-day Sun in his great splendour. Sumantra with a profound bow said in clasped palms, "Prince! King Dasaratha and Queen Kaikeyi desire to see you, so please come with me."

Rama cheerfully stood up and addressing Janaki, said, "My darling, father and mother Kaikeyi are certainly talking about my installation. That dark-eyed Queen is greatly devoted to the king, and always wishes my welfare. It is, therefore, that she is making this hurry. Father will invest me with the crown today. Pass your time in pleasant tete-a-tete with your maids, I shall soon come back."

Rama said this respectfully to Janaki, and Janaki followed him up to the gate.

On reaching the gate Janaki said,

"As Brahma conferred the kingdom of heaven on Indra, so the king will to-day confer on you the kingdom after the investiture ceremony. I wish to see you put on a deer-skin and carrying the horn of an antelope in your hand after being initiated in the investiture ceremony. May Indra protect you on the east, Yama on the south, Varuna on the west, and Kuvera on the north!"
After the performance of the benedictory rites Rama proceeded with Sumantra. Issuing from his palace, as a lion from its lair, Rama saw Lakshmana standing at the gate with clasped hands, and his friends collected in the inner appartment. He greeted them with sweet words and then got upon a lofty, golden chariot covered with tiger-skin, and drawn by strong horses like young elephants. By its dazzling glare it attracted the people’s eyes. Being surrounded by a halo of glory, Rama came out of his palace as the moon emerges from the dark blue clouds, and the chariot moved swiftly with a deep rumbling noise of a cloud. At that time Rama looked like a second Indra. Lakshmana stood by Rama with a chowri in his hand. A number of elephants and horses followed the car. Music, shouts, and loud huzzas were then continually heard. Beautiful damsels clad in their best apparels stood by the windows and began to shower flowers on the head of Rama, while others standing on the ground-floor discussed things concerning Rama. Some said, Queen Kausalya has certainly been extremely delighted at Rama’s coronation. Another said, “Sita is undoubtedly a gem of women. She had certainly practised great penance in her former birth or she would not have got such a husband, as Rohini got the Moon as her lord.” At some other place, throngs of people were talking about the coronation.

Rama, at last, reached the highway crowded with people, horses, elephants, and lined with shops full of merchandise. Flags were streaming from both sides of
the road. At places, pearls and crystals were arranged in heaps or in other artistic forms. Every place was perfumed with Aguru and Sandal and was tastefully decorated with red cloth. And the wide road was strewn with flowers, fried paddy, curd, clarified butter, incense, and such other articles of auspicious rites.

Friends of Rama were exceedingly glad at his sight and they said, "Your illustrious ancestors ruled with great ability, but we hope that people will be more happy under your rule. Nothing is more welcome to us than the news of your installation to the throne."

After leaving temples, chaityas, and junctions of the roads on his left, Rama entered his father's palace. After passing through three rooms guarded by archers and another two rooms, he went to meet his father. The crowd outside waited for his return, as the ocean for the rising of the moon.

CHAPTER XI
THE INTERVIEW

When Rama appeared, King Dasaratha was seated on a sofa with Kaikeyi. He looked quite miserable and sad. Rama bowed at the feet of his father and respectfully greeted Kaikeyi.

Dasaratha then cast his eyes on Rama, and softly muttered, "Rama."

No sooner had he uttered, "Rama", than his eyes became wet with tears. He could no more look at Rama, nor he could speak with him.

Rama was greatly alarmed at this condition of the
King. Dasaratha was heaving deep sighs of pain, and looked like a tempest-tossed ocean, or like the sun under eclipse. His glory was dimmed like that of an ascetic speaking falsehood.

Rama seeing this unexpected sorrow of his father grew restless like a sea.

He asked to himself, "Why does he not look cheerful at my sight, as he was wont in the past?"

Rama then sorrowfully turned to Kaikeyi and said, "Mother, tell me, have I committed any offence through ignorance, for which father is angry with me? You please propitiate his anger and ask him to forgive me. He is ever affectionate to me, then why does he look so miserable to-day? Why does he not talk to me? Is he suffering from any physical or mental illness? Is it all well with my other mothers? I do not wish to live even for a moment by causing anger or dissatisfaction in my father's heart. Father is God himself, from whom one derives his being. Mother, have you said any hard words to him in your sullen mood? I am anxious to learn the truth. Please tell me why he has been overwhelmed with unforeseen sorrow?"

At this, shameless Kaikeyi said, "Oh Rama! The King is not angry, not anything very particular has befallen him, but he cannot speak out his mind out of your fear. You are his most beloved son, and he is unable to utter any unpleasant thing to you. But you ought to carry out what he has promised to me. Formerly, he had promised me two boons, but
now he repents like a common person because I have now asked for them. It is not unknown to honest people that truth is the root of all religion. Just see that the king may not violate truth for you, being angry with me. If you agree to carry out without questioning what he may ask you to do, then I can tell you everything. The King himself will tell you all, but if you respectfully observe what I may speak on behalf of the King, then I can tell everything."

Hearing this Rama began with a sorrowful heart, "Mother, don't talk to me like this. At the mere words cf the King I can enter into fire and drink poison. He is King, father and preceptor. I swear that I shall carry out what you ask me to do. Now tell me the desire of the King. Please know, that Rama never swerves from his words."

Then wicked Kaikeyi cruelly replied, "Formerly in a fight between the Gods and the demons, your father received wounds all over the body. It was I who saved his life by nursing him day and night. For this he promised me two boons. I do now ask for them, and I have asked for Bharata's installation and your exile into Dandakaranya forest. My boy, if you be truthful and have the slightest regard for your father's promise, then you listen to my words and fulfil your father's promise. This very day you give up your idea of installation and repair to the forest for fourteen years with matted locks and wearing bark, and Bharata will be installed with those very articles procured for your coronation. Let him rule over
Ayodhya. This is my desire. This is why the King being overwhelmed with sorrow is unable to look at your face. You, therefore carry out the King’s words and redeem him from his promise.”

Magnanimous Rama was not a bit pained at these cruel words. It was Dasaratha alone who was being distressed at the prospect of the separation from his beloved son.

Rama then calmly replied, “Very good, I shall from this place proceed direct to the forest. But I am eager to know why the King is not talking to me as he used to do in the past. Be not angry, mother, I swear to you that I shall repair to the forest as desired. What can I not ungrudgingly perform, when ordered by my father and the King? I am only sorry that the King has not himself spoken anything about the installation of Bharata. Not to speak of the royal command, for your benefit and father’s pledge I can cheerfully bestow the kingdom and my everything on Bharata. I can even give away Sita. I find the King feeling diffident and shy, please assure him.

“Why has he fixed his look on the ground, and is shedding silent tears? Even to-day envoys on swift horses will be sent to Bharata to fetch him from his maternal uncle’s house, and I shall repair to the Dandaka forest for fourteen years in an unwavering mind.”

Kaikeyi was delighted at these words and she urged on Rama saying, “Let messengers be immediately sent to Bharata. It is not proper for you to delay any
further, soon leave for the forest. The King does not speak to you from shame. Remove his miseries now. Unless you depart from his presence he won't have his food or bath.'

'O shame! What a pity!' With these words Dasaratha fainted on the golden sofa.

Raising up the King, Rama hurried about his departure to the forest as a horse spurred by a whip.

Rama then gently said to Kaikeyi.

"O Venerable lady! I do not wish to live a selfish life. I love religion like a Rishi, and there is no greater religion than to serve one's father and to carry out his orders. I can sacrifice my life for the satisfaction of my father. Now, I shall live for fourteen years in the forest just for your wish, even without the orders of the King. Since you have every authority on me and requested the King about this, it is apparent that nothing of me is unknown to you. I shall even now leave for the forest after taking mother's permission and consoling Sita.

"Now please see to Bharata's installation and to my father's comfort. Serving the father is the highest duty of the son."

At these words Dasaratha's sorrow was doubly increased, and being unable to speak he began to cry aloud. Then Rama after bowing at the feet of his father and Kaikeyi, and after going round the two out of respect he came out of the chamber.

Heroic Lakshmana having overheard everything was beside himself in rage and followed Rama with
tearful eyes. Rama never cast his eyes towards the place full of articles for his installation. He was by nature beautiful, so the loss of the kingdom could not affect the beauty of his face, as the waning of the moon does not rob it of its beauty.

There was no change in him for leaving aside the royal umbrella and his friends and relations. Nobody could see any mark of sorrow on his countenance. As the moon never sheds his lustre, so his natural cheerfulness did not leave him. Rama entered the inner quarters of the palace to convey this unpleasant news to his mother. At that time Kausalya was engaged in various festive ceremonies about the installation of Rama. Rama bore everything calmly, but he was troubled by the thought that his parents might die for his separation from them.

CHAPTER XII
THE FATAL NEWS

At last the news of his exile and the loss of kingdom spread in the inner sections of the palace, and the queens and other royal dames began to lament bitterly saying, that Rama who used to serve them even without his father's direction, who looked upon them as his mothers, who never grew angry when abused, who had sweet words for all and tried to please everybody—alas, that Rama was going to the forest. King Dasaratha was a fool or he would not have forsaken such a son.

Rama heaved deep sigh at these lamentations of
the women and at last reached his mother's quarters in front of which many were seated. They blessed Rama as soon as he arrived there. After passing through different apartments he came to his mother's chamber, where his arrival was announced to Kausalya by some women.

At that time Kausalya was worshipping Vishnu for the welfare of his son. Rama saw there grains, sweet-meats, clarified butter, garlands of white flowers, fried paddy, payasa (rice boiled with sugar and milk), sesamum peas, sacrificial fuel, filled up pitchers and other articles for offering oblations.

At the sight of Rama Kausalya came near him, and Rama bowed to her feet. She hugged Rama to her bosom and smelt his head out of deep affection. Kausalya said, "The King is true to his words, and he will confer on you the crown to-day." Saying this she offered Rama a seat and asked him to partake something.

Rama then in clasped palms said, "Mother, you know not what great calamity is suspending on you, Janaki and Lakshmana. I do not require such seat anymore, for I am just now bound for the forest. I shall start for the Dandakaranya immediately, and there shall live for fourteen years on fruits and roots. Father has ordered my exile and Bharata's installation.

Hearing this Kausalya fainted on the ground like a tree fallen by an axe. She had never suffered in life. Rama quickly raised her from the ground and brushed off the dust from her body.
Kausalya then with great difficulty said, "Oh Rama, if you were not born to-day, I would have been a sonless woman but not subject to severe sorrow as this. My only grief would have been my barrenness. I have never received any caress out of hope that all my sorrows would be over by the birth of a son. But alas, I shall now have to bear slight and insult of my co-wives, and nothing is more painful to woman than to bear the gibes of co-wives. I do not find a more wretched creature than myself, know not what will happen after your departure to the forest. Knowing that my husband is averse to me, even the maids of Kaikeyi will not spare to insult me, and Kaikeyi is always in fretful temper. Seventeen years have passed after your investiture of sacred thread. All these years I have passed in deluding hopes. I shall not be able to bear such intense sorrow. All my efforts have been in vain. My heart is now overflooded with sorrow as a stream during the rains. I am really wretched, for death will not take me to his dreadful abode. My heart seems to be made of steel or it would have broken, when I fell down on hearing the painful news. It is apparent, death never comes before its due hour. What more charm I have in my life? I shall follow you to the forest as the cow follows its calf. All my prayers to the Gods for my son's welfare have been fruitless like seeds thrown upon a barren soil." Kausalya was thus crying bitterly when Lakshmana tried to console her with fitting words.
"O, reverend lady! It is not proper that Rama should renounce the throne and go into exile. The King has grown mentally weak and old. He is uxorious and is completely under the influence of a woman. For what offence Rama should be banished from the kingdom? I have not come across anybody even amongst his enemies who can speak about his fault. He is faultless, mighty and without any greed. He has love even for his enemies. Who can forsake such a son? The King, it seems, has become indiscreet like a child. What son will obey his words, considering the conduct of the previous Kings? O worshipful one, before the people come to know the news of your exile, secure the kingdom with my help. Who can prevent your installation when I shall be by your side with my bow and arrows like unto Death itself? If I see any indication of any disturbance I shall put to death every one of Ayodhya. I shall surely kill him to-day who will take us Bharata's side.

"Know it for certain that gentleness is the cause of defeat or discomfiture. What shall I say more, if father being incited by Kaikeyi stands in the way. I shall not hesitate even to kill him. It is proper to chastise even the spiritual guide, if he loses his judgment and be vain. By seniority of birth the kingdom belongs to you. Then for what reason or precedent he can deprive you of the throne? I tell you openly that nobody will succeed in installing Bharata by opposing you and me.

"I love Rama with all my heart, and I swear by my
bow and all that is dear to me, that if Rama enters into fire or into the forest, I shall be the first to thrust myself there. I shall remove your difficulties by my prowess as the sun dispels all darkness. Yourself and worshipful Rama will witness my prowess. I shall even now kill that old father enamoured of Kaikeyi, and who has grown foolish like a child inspite of age."

Hearing these words of heroic Lakshmana, Kausalya with tearful eyes addressing Rama said,

"You have heard what Lakshmana has just now said. If you approve of it, act accordingly. You should not leave your mother in distress by listening to the unjust words of her co-wife Kaikeyi. If you are anxious for righteousness, you will be able to acquire immense virtue by serving me by stopping at home. The great sage Kashyapa attained heaven by serving his mother, remaining at home. In point of respect and veneration, I am adorable to you as the King himself. I shall never permit you to go to the forest. I would prefer to live on mere potherbs with you. I do not wish for happiness, nor want to live in your absence. If you leave me in such distressing sorrow, I shall give up my life by observing the vow of fast. Then you shall suffer for the sin of inflicting agonies on your mother, as the God Ocean was subjected to the torments of hell for inflicting-pain on his mother." Hearing his mother speaking thus, Rama gently replied,

Mother! It is beyond my power to disobey my father’s orders. I entreat you by your feet, please

1 Poor vegetable diet.
permit me to repair to the forest. Formerly, Rishi Kundu killed a cow at the words of his father, though he knew it to be a sin. In our line, the sons of Sagara dug the earth at the command of their father. Rama, the son of Jamadagni, at the words of his father decapitated his mother by the stroke of an axe in the forest. I am only following the examples of these great men. Mother, it is one's duty to obey his father. Please do not consider it impious. One does not lose his merit by obeying his father."

Then turning to Lakshmana magnanimous Rama said, "Lakshmana! I know you love me deeply. I am also aware of your valour and irresistible might. Mother is overwhelmed with grief at the news of my exile. But religion is the highest thing in the world, and that religion is based on truth. The behest of my father appertains to that truth. So when I have got the permission and order of my father and of mother Kaikeyi, I cannot desist from proceeding to the forest. I therefore ask you to give up this mean Kshatriya vanity. Please follow my words."

Rama again turned to his mother and said in clasped hands,

"Oh, worshipful lady! Allow me to proceed to the forest. I entreat you, not to stand in my way. I shall come back home being absolved from the vow, as Yayati returned from the heaven. Yourself, myself, Janaki, Lakshmana and mother Sumitra should do what the King asks us to do. Now grieve no more, do not desist from the rites of installation, and from following what is right."
When Rama said all these in an undisturbed heart, Kausalya fixed her gaze on Rama and said,

"My boy, I have reared you up with affection and love, and like the King I am equally adorable to you. How can you leave me then? It is better to renounce everything else but you."

Rama grew indignant at these words and he abiding in righteousness, seeing his mother almost senseless in grief, and Lakshmana too overwhelmed with sorrow, addressed them with words worthy of him.

"Lakshmana, I am fully aware of your valour and of your deep attachment for me. But I ask you again and again not to put me into great pain by siding along with the mother, failing to understand my motive."

"When the time comes for reaping the fruits of acts done in a prior life, righteousness, wealth and objects of desire are obtained, so the act that secures all these three is most desirable like a loving and obedient wife with issue. But the performance of an act which is not conducive to virtue is not good. One should act what leads to righteousness. He who grows selfish by neglecting righteousness becomes an object of public derision. And any desire that goes against righteousness cannot be regarded as commendable or right. Our aged father is our preceptor in arms as well as in other things. Who having any regard for righteousness will not disobey his orders, though they may be given from anger, joy or lust? For this I cannot act against my father's vow. The King is our
father and he has fullest authority over us. The King is still alive and he is ready to observe truth even by forsaking his son. In this circumstances, mother, like any other helpless woman, may accompany me, if she likes. Let her, therefore, permit me to repair to the forest and bless me, so that I may come back after staying the period of vow. I cannot sacrifice good name for a kingdom. Life is not everlasting, so I would not wish to acquire even the world by any unjust means."

Thus saying the foremost of man, Rama, thought of leaving the place by consoling his mother.

But Lakshmana brooding over Rama's exile and loss of the Kingdom was overwhelmed with grief. His eyes expanded in anger and he looked like an infuriated elephant.

Gentle Rama then addressing him said, "Now do not cherish any anger, sorrow, or insult in your heart. Do away patiently and cheerfully with all the preparations that have been made for the investiture ceremony but make preparations for my repairing to the forest.

"Act in such a manner that mother Kaikeyi who was greatly alarmed at the news of my installation may be assured. I cannot overlook the sorrow that has been caused in her mind from the apprehension of mischief to her. I don't remember to have ever offended my father or mother. Father is truthful and true to his vows. He has been greatly alarmed by the thought of the next world. Let all his fears be remov-
ed. If I do not so act, father will be sorry when he will find that his promise has not been fulfilled, and his sorrows will greatly pain my heart. It is for this that I intend to leave the city immediately renouncing the throne. In my departure Kaikeyi will achieve her object and will safely install Bharata on the throne. She will be able to live happily after my exile to the forest. He who has inspired Kaikeyi with this desire has also kept her firm in her determination. I cannot offend the worshipful lady in any way. I shall immediately proceed to the forest. Fate is responsible for this loss of kingdom and my banishment. It is due to fate that Kaikeyi has been so prejudiced against me, or she would not have been so intent on inflicting miseries on me. You know I have never made any invidious distinction between the mothers. Kaikeyi too never made any difference between myself and Bharata. It is, therefore, nothing but destiny that has made her to press cruelly for my banishment. Kaikeyi is an accomplished, good-natured lady. Why should she at all use unpleasant words before her husband unless goaded by fate? What is beyond comprehension or unthinkable is Destiny. Rulers of created beings, even Brahma and other Gods, cannot override fate. It is this inexorable fate that has brought about change in Kaikeyi’s mind and my loss of kingdom. Who dares stand against destiny known to us only through its consequences, but otherwise unknown? Destiny is the mysterious root cause of all happiness, sorrow, fear, anger, loss, gain, subjection and deliver-
ance. It is due to destiny that great ascetics sometimes succumb to passion or anger. It is only for destiny, works already begun are suddenly interrupted and unforeseen events follow.

"Lakshmana! If you can now console yourself with this thought for this interruption to the installation, you will hardly have any cause for regret. Cast off your sorrow by following my advice and dissuade others to take any part in my installation. Water brought for my coronation will do the bathing ceremony necessary for being initiated to the vow of asceticism. Nay, I must not look to these things. I shall myself draw water from a well and take my bath for my initiation to forest-life.

"Don't be sorry, brother, because I could not secure the throne. Of kingdom and forest I would prefer the last. Now you see how powerful is destiny. You shouldn't, therefore, any more blame younger mother and father smitten by fate."

CHAPTER XIII
Lakshmana's Reply

Rama having said this, Lakshmana was suddenly placed between grief and joy. He thought for sometime with a downcast look, and then knitting his brows in a frown, began to breathe hard like a panting snake. At that time it was hard to look at his face which grew terrible like that of an angry lion. Then after throwing his arms, as an elephant does its trunk, with
a shrug of his shoulders and looking at askance returned:

'arya! You have been eager to go to the forest for two reasons—to avoid transgression of virtue and to set your example before the people to enable them to stick to their honour. But you are labouring under a delusion. Had it not been so, you would not have spoken like this. You can easily overcome your fate, then why do you sing hymns of praise to worthless and wretched Destiny? The King and Queen Kaikeyi are highly vicious, how can't you then be sure about their viciousness? Don't you know that many people only feign righteousness? Look! How the King and Kaikeyi for selfish motives are deceitfully forsaking a son like you! If their intentions were not to cheat you by fraud, they would not have set up obstacles after making preparations for the installation.

"If this story of the promised boons were true, why it is not given out before the preparation made for the installation? It is, however, highly unjust to install the younger by overriding the elder. I can't brook this heinous affair. You will kindly forgive me what I may say from sorrow. I hate that religion that has fascinated you so much and produced this vacillation. You are capable of action, then why should you obey the words of the luxurious King? Promising of boons is a mere plea to thwart your installation. But my great sorrow is that you do not admit it to be such. This virtuous tendency in you is certainly reprehensible. People will speak ill of you if you repair to the forest leaving the kingdom without any just cause."
"The King and Kaikeyi always try to do mischief to us. Nobody except you is willing to carry out their wishes. They have put obstacles to your installation, but you consider it to be fate. I entreat you to give up this evil faith. Such destiny does not commend to me. Those who are weak and powerless follow destiny, but those who are heroes and whose valour is praised by the people, never pay any heed to destiny. He who can conquer fate by his manliness is never cast down by sufferings or loss. Arya, to-day the world will witness the prowess of both manliness and fate. Those who find your installation thwarted by fate, will see that fate defeated by my manliness. To-day, I shall assail fate like an unrestrained infuriated elephant and conquer it by my might. Not to speak of King Dasaratha alone, but even the whole world won't be able to prevent your installation. I shall send them to the forest for 14 years who has sanctioned your exile. I shall root out the hopes of the King and of Kaikeyi for the installation of Bharata at your cost. Surely destiny will not bring that amount of happiness to him who will stand against me, as the miseries to be inflicted by my unbearable might.

"Oh, Arya, if you repair to the forest after thousand years, your sons will then occupy the throne. It is desirable to retire into solitude by following the examples of the former Kings, by making over the kingdom to his son when he is incapable of governing the people as his own children. Don't refuse the throne fearing that you may lose it again for the fickleness of the King."
I swear to protect your kingdom or I may not attain the region of the heroes after death. I shall guard your throne as the shore guards the sea. Now get yourself initiated with auspicious rites. If the princes and rulers stand in the way, I shall alone be able to subdue them. These arms of mine are not intended only to contribute to the beauty of my person, this bow is not meant for an ornament, this sword and shafts are not meant for felling and carrying woods. Don't think it to be so. These four are meant for the destruction of enemies. If Indra, the carrier of thunderbolt, now stands against me, I shall hack him to pieces by this sword flaming like the lightning. Who will be able to resist me when I shall appear on the field with bow in hand and putting on the glove of lizard skin for the protection of the fingers? My shafts will pierce through the vital parts of men, elephants and horses. I shall display my feats of arms for destroying the supremacy of the King and for establishing that of mine. The hands that are besmeared with sandal paste, wear bracelets, distribute wealth and maintain friends and relations, will perform deeds worthy of them, by suppressing all those who wanted to put obstacles to your installation. Now tell me which of your enemy will be severed from his life, wealth and friends? I am your servant, just order me and I shall try to bring the whole world under your sway."

Hearing these words of Lakshmana, Rama the chief of the descendants of Raghu, consoled him again and again and by repeatedly wiping off tears from Lakshmana's eyes said,
"I think the best course for me is to obey my father's orders."

Then Queen Kausalya finding Rama bent upon carrying out his father's wishes, said with a voice choked with tears.

"Alas! How shall he who is born of the king and of me live on mendicancy? Certainly, Destiny is all-powerful or why should Rama be sent into exile?

'My boy! As fire in the summer burns all trees and plants, so this flame of sorrow is consuming my heart; your absence will fan that flame, miseries are its fuels, tears are its oblations, and the vapour of cloudy thoughts is its smoke. I shall follow you wherever you may go, as the cow follows its calf."

The foremost of men, Rama, hearing his afflicted mother speaking thus, said,

"Mother! The King has already been duped and put into great miseries by Kaikeyi. I am now going to the forest, and if you accompany me the King will surely die.

There is nothing more cruel for a woman than to desert her husband. Don't entertain this odious thought. You should serve father so long he lives. This is your duty!"

At this Kausalya of auspicious look gracefully said,

"To attend upon and to serve one's husband is no doubt the highest duty of women."

Virtuous Rama finding his mother approving his words, said, 'Mother! The King is your husband,
and my father the foremost object of reverence; besides he is the master of all, and it is my duty as well as yours to carry out his words. And I assure you that I shall come back after fourteen years.”

Affectionate Kausalya sorrowfully replied, “I shall not be able to live amongst the co-wives in your absence. If the King has ordered your exile to the forest, take me along with you.”

Thus saying Kausalya began to cry bitterly. But Rama being unmoved said.

“So long a woman lives, her husband is her only master. The King can, therefore, treat with us in any way he likes. Bharata is virtuous and of sweet speech; he will surely try to please you in every possible way. Now please see that the King may not be overwhelmed with sorrow in my absence. My absence will be unbearable to him, please see that nothing fatal happens to him. It is your duty to minister to the aged King. The woman who does not serve her husband even though engaged in fasts and other religious rites, shall fare badly in the next world, but one attains heaven by serving her husband. Even to her who does not feel inclined to worship or bow to the Gods, the best thing is to serve her husband. This is the duty of a woman as prescribed by the Vedas and the Smritis. Dost thou now in expectation of my return pass your time by doing religious acts. After my return you will reap its fruits if the King survives.”

Being thus consoled by Rama, Kausalya said with tears, “Since you have so resolved, it is beyond my
power to dissuade you. Perhaps it is impossible to avoid the inevitable separation. Good betide you. All my miseries will be over when you come back, it is destiny that is sending you to the forest without caring for my entreaties. Go but come back safely. Heaven knows whether I shall ever witness your return."

CHAPTER XIV
KAUSALYA'S LEAVE

Kausalya then subduing her sorrows performed several rites for the welfare of Rama. Then addressing Rama, she said, "You go now, but please return soon. Let virtue, which you have so cheerfully decided to follow, protect you; let the gods, whom you every-day adore, protect you in the forest; let the weapons of wise Visvamitra defend you; may you be protected by your devotion to truth and to your parents; may the sacred fuel, sacrificial grass, holy altars, mountains, trees, lakes, birds, snakes and lions protect you. Let Sidhvas, Visvadevas, Maruta, ascetics, Pusa, Bhaga, Aryama, the Lokapalas,¹ six seasons, months, days, nights, Srutis, Smritis, Skanda, Soma, Vrihaspati, Saptarshi, Narada and others protect you. When you will go to the forest, may Heaven, Sky, Earth, Air, movable and immovable things with their presiding deities protect you there. Cruel Rakshashas and Pic- hasas live in the forest. Let not monkeys, scorpions, reptiles, insects, elephants, tigers, bears, hogs, buffa-

¹ Ruler of various regions. Pusa = sun, Bhaga = moon; Aryama = spirit of the ancestors.
loes do you any injury. May no cannibal hurt you for my prayers; may Sukra, Soma, Surya, Kuvera, Yama, Agni, Dhuma and Mantras uttered by Rishis, and the Lord of Creation protect you."

Large-eyed Kausalya then began to worship the gods with perfumes and garlands of flowers, and for the well-being of Rama she got the Brahmins to offer oblations to the fire. After the offering of oblations she gave the Brahmins, Madhuparka\(^1\) and they uttered blessings on Rama.

Then Kausalya blessed Rama saying, "May that blessing betide you which in the day of yore crowned Indra at the destruction of Vitra." Thus saying Kausalya blessed Rama by placing grains on his head, besmeared his body with fragrant substance and by uttering Mantras she tied in his hands well-tested amulets and a twig of auspicious 'Visailya Kārani.'

She embraced Rama again and said in a faltering voice, choked with tears, 'You may now go where you like; I shall be glad to see you coming back after attaining your object in healthy body, and my prayers protect you.'

Rama then bowed to his mother and after going round her left the place for Janaki's quarters.

**CHAPTER XV**

**JANAKI**

Here Janaki did not know anything about Rama's exile. She was rather steeped in joy for Rama's

\(^1\) Madhuparka = a cup containing curd, clarified butter and honey.
installation. After worshipping the deities in due form she was waiting for Rama, when Rama entered with his head hanging down in shame.

Seeing her husband quite anxious and sad, she tremulously rose from her seat, and Rama's internal sorrows could no longer remain concealed before Janaki. They were quite evident from his looks and gestures.

Finding Rama thus cast down, Janaki sorrowfully said, "Why is this change in you? To-day the Pushya is joined with the moon, and the planet Vrihaspati is presiding over this union. The day has been declared auspicious for your installation by wise Brahmans, then why do you look so sad? Why your charming countenance has not been placed under the shadow of a white umbrella with hundred spikes? Why the servant do not fan you with chowries white as the swan and the moon? Why the birds and panegyrist do not sing your praise? Why the Brahmans versed in Vedas do not sprinkle curd and honey on your head? Why the citizens and villagers and chief courtiers do not follow you in their best costumes? Why the best chariot has not been yoked with four swift horses? Why mountain-like dark elephant does not proceed before you? Why do not the servants carry golden seat ahead of you? When all things are ready for the installation, why your face has grown pale and why that sweet smile is no more visible?"

Rama then gently returned, "Janaki, worshipful father has banished me to the forest. Let me tell you
the trend of events that has led to this destiny of mine”.

“Truthful father once promised two boons to queen Kaikeyi. When the King thought of installing me on the throne, Kaikeyi reminded him of his promise and asked for my exile for fourteen years. The kingdom now belongs to Bharata. The King was bound by truth and could no more swerve from it. I am now going to the forest. I have therefore come to see you once. Take care, do not praise me in the presence of Bharata, for those who are wealthy cannot bear another’s praise. Bharata is now the king. It is your duty to please him. I am going to the forest for my father’s vow. Don’t be anxious, when I repair to the forest; pass your days by observing religious vows and fast. Rise every day early in the morning, worship the gods properly, and bow down at the feet of my father. My mother has been greatly afflicted with sorrow and in her last stage you should serve her respectfully. All my mothers used to love me and feed me equally, and you should bow to them every day. You should look upon dear Bharata and Satrughna as your sons. Bharata is now the lord of our family and the kingdom; don’t injure him in any way. Kings are propitiated by devotion and service, but become angry if any thing occurs on the contrary. I therefore ask you to live here following Bharata’s wishes and commands. I am now going to the forest, and my request to you is that you should not neglect any of my aforesaid words.”
Then sweet-tongued Janaki replied with an offended air, "Why do you think me so mean that you speak thus? It is difficult to restrain laughter at your words. Your words are unworthy of a hero versed in the sacred lore. They are infamous. To speak the truth, it is not proper to listen to them.

"My Lord! Father, mother, son, brother, daughter-in-law, all of them reap the consequences of their own acts: it is wife alone that shares in the fate of her husband. When you have been ordered to go in exile to the Dandaka forest, my banishment too has, in fact been ordained. Not to speak of other relations, a woman cannot alone save herself; husband is her mainstay in this world as well as in the next. A woman should always take shelter at the feet of her husband, though he may be deprived of heaven-like lofty position. Father and mother have advised me to follow the husband in prosperity as well as in adversity. If you repair to the forest, I shall go in front of you and make path by treading the thorns under my feet. Don't be angry that I could not comply with your request. Take me with you as the travellers take the remnants of their drink along with them. I have committed no such offence to you that you want to leave me here. I do not care for all the wealth of the world but your company. You must not protest against what I wish to do in this matter.

"My lord, I have been eager to serve you like a nun in the forest, inhabited by tigers and deer, and rendered fragrant by the sweet perfume of flowers."
I desire to bathe everyday in lakes and pools strewn with full-blown lotuses and rendered vocal by the notes of swans and other aquatic birds. I shall tend you in the deep forest full of wild animals and carry out your wishes as I would do in my father's house. I shall without any fear visit the mountains, lakes and other wild scenery with you. I know you will be able to maintain me even in the forest. Not to speak of me, you are capable of shouldering the burden of an unlimited number. I shall not therefore leave your company, nor you will be able to dissuade me anyhow. I shall go ahead of you and when hungry shall feed upon wild roots and fruits, and shall never trouble you for better food. I shall feel no sorrow in thus passing a long time with you.

"My Lord, I am fully resolved. If you leave me now, I shall put an end to my life. Please comply with my request, take me along with you and you will never feel inconvenience for that."

Virtuous Rama thinking of the hardships of a forest-life was not willing to take Sita with him and he tried to dissuade her with consoling words.

Rama said, "Janaki, you are born in a noble family and you have virtuous instincts in you. You wait here in my expectation and observe religious practices. I shall then be happy. I am telling you this considering what is good for you. You give up your resolve. The forest-life is full of hardships and miseries. There, roarings of the lions from the mountain caves being mingled with the sounds of the cataracts will deafen
the ears. Fierce animals prowling fearlessly in the forests will attack us at our very sight. There the rivers are muddy, and full of crocodiles and sharks, which even the infuriated elephants cannot easily cross. The paths are tangled with thorns and creepers, and drinking water is not always available. There, after a day's sojourn you will have to lie down on a bed of mere leaves cast from the tree, and shall have to appease your hunger by picking up fruits that have fallen on the ground from their stalks. In the forest, one has to fast, wear matted locks and barks and has to adore the Gods and the Spirit of the ancestors everyday and to receive the guests hospitably. And observing the rules of asceticism one has to bathe thrice daily and offer flowers on the sacred altar by culling them with one's own hand. Strong blasts of wind blow there day and night shaking the long grasses and the branches of thorny trees. There, the nights are pitch-dark and various kinds of reptiles roar there freely.

"Sometimes big pythons living in the beds of the rivers with zigzag course like that of a stream obstruct the way. There you will have to bear always the bites of scorpions, insects, flies and mosquitoes. So forest is full of miseries. There you will have to devote yourself to penance and have to be bold even in the presence of objects of fear. I therefore tell you that there is no happiness in forest-life and I dissuade you from going there. Forest-life won't suit you, and I clearly foresee that there are great possibilities of danger to you."

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Then Sita broke forth in tears, "My Lord, since love for you goads me to proceed forward, the evils enumerated by you are of little consequence to me. I know, every one is afraid of you; so the lions, tigers, elephants, and Yaks will run away at your sight. Let me now take leave of my superiors and accompany you. Separation from you will be unbearable to me, and I shall surely commit suicide. The miseries that you have now spoken about forest-life have no force. A woman cannot live without her husband. This is what you yourself have said at the time of instructing me. Hence the best possible course for me is to accompany you. Besides, I have heard from the astrologers in my paternal house that it is destined that I shall live in the forest, and from that time I have been desirous of living there. Their prediction must be fulfilled, and time has come for its fulfilment. You permit me, and let the words of those Brahmans be true. A man who has not succeeded in subduing his senses may suffer if his wife be not with him in the forest. But you are above all temptations and frailties. I have heard that when I was a girl, a virtuous woman came to my mother and told about my banishment in the forest. Her words cannot be false. I have been extremely desirous of going to the forest. And before this I had requested you on several occasions to take me to the forest, and you too agreed to that. This is why the forest-life appears so agreeable to me. Husband is the highest god to the wife, so I wish to follow you cheerfully. Not to speak of this world, even in the
next world your company will be dear to me. I have heard from famous Brahmans that she who has been given away to another with religious rites as wife, will belong to him even in the next world. For what reasons you are unwilling to take your devoted wife with you? I feel happy in your happiness, sorry in your sorrows and am solely devoted to you. I, therefore, humbly entreat you to make me your companion. If you do not take this unfortunate self with you, I shall surely put an end to my life either by drinking poison or by entering into fire."

Thus Janaki entreated, but Rama did not consent to her words. Sita was then overwhelmed with grief, and tears flooded her bosom.

Then afflicted Sita tauntingly remarked with a laugh, "If father knew that you are a man only in form but in nature a woman, he would not have certainly conferred me on you. People say that in prowess Rama is more unbearable than the blazing Sun. But this is a false talk.

"Why are you so sad? For which fear you are willing to leave your devoted wife? Know me as devoted to you as Savitri to Satyabana, the son of Dyumatsena. I have never seen another man's face even in thought, like one bringing shame to her line.

"I shall, therefore, accompany you. You have married me knowing me to be chaste and I have been long living in your abode. Is it proper for you to band me over to another person like one living by the sale of his wife?"
"My Lord, you may live here being obedient to that Bharata, whose welfare you always wish, for whom you have been deprived of your kingdom. But you won't be able to persuade me to do so. I tell you again and again that I shall accompany you and live with you, be it for penance, be it in the forest, or in the heaven. I do not waver for a moment. When I shall go after you I shall feel no exhaustion from walking but will feel as if lying on a luxurious bed. I shall feel the pricks of Kasa, Kusa, Sara, Isika and other thorny weeds and thistles as soft as linen and deer skin. I shall consider the dust that may cover me, being raised by the storm, as the best sandal paste. When I shall lie down on the green grass of the forest, it will be more pleasant than the variegated blanket spread over a bedstead. Fruits, roots and leaves that you may gather for me, be they scanty or profuse, I shall relish them as sweet as nectar. I shall enjoy myself with the fruits and flowers of the six seasons. I shall not be anxious for my parents nor shall ever think of home.

"I won't trouble you in the least because I shall live far off from these things. I, therefore, entreat you to take me along with you. Please know it that your presence is a heaven unto me, and your absence is hell. What to speak more, I won't find any evil in forest-life. If you do not take me with you I shall never live here under the subjection of Bharata. My lord, if you go to the forest, it will be impossible for me to survive your separation. Not to speak of fourteen years, I won't be able to bear your separation even for a moment."
Janaka’s daughter was extremely pained by Rama’s dissuasion as a young she-elephant smarts in pain when pierced by poisonous shafts. After lamenting thus bitterly, she deeply embraced her husband and began to cry aloud. Her eyes began to shed long confined tears as an Arani wood emits fire. Crystal drops of tears began to roll down her cheeks, and the moon-like beautiful face of the large-eyed damsel grew pale like a lotus torn from its stem.

Rama finding Janaki almost fainting in grief, threw his arms round her neck and consoling her said, “O worshipful lady! I do not crave even heavenly bliss by giving you pain. Of course, like the self-create Brahma, I have nothing to fear from, nor that I am unable to protect you: but as I did not know your mind, so I did not agree to take you with me.

“Now I find that you are fully resolved to accompany me to the forest, so I cannot leave you, as one possessing self-knowledge cannot forsake generosity. Formerly many royal saints repaired to the forest with their wives and I shall follow their examples. You now follow me as the queen of light Suvarchala follows the sun. When father being bound by truth asks me to repair to the forest, I can no more sit idle. The duty of the son is to obey his parents, and I don’t wish to 1

1 A piece of wood by which fire was produced, by rubbing it against another piece of wood at the time of sacrifice. In the Rig Veda one piece as has been described as male (Pururava) and the other piece as female (Urvashi). Thus fire was produced by their friction.
live by violating that supreme duty. Destiny is beyond the range of experience; it can be adored only by meditations and prayers. But father is living-God and and it is not proper to slight him for unknown destiny. By worshipping the father one in fact worships all, and wealth, virtue and objects of desire are gained by it. There is no higher sacred duty than this. Devotion to truth, charity and sacrifice are not equal to this duty.

"Those who obey their parents attain heavenly and other excellent regions. Therefore to carry out the behest of my truthful father is my duty and religion. I was not at first inclined to take you to the Dandaka forest, but since you are resolved, I must take you with me. My darling, you have decided what is best, and it is worthy of our line. Now make arrangements for repairing to the forest. Distribute alms to the beggars and jewels to the Brahmanas. Give to the Brahmanas your valuable ornaments, clothes, toys, be utiful beds and other articles that belong to you and me, and distribute the remainder amongst the servants. Get yourself immediately ready. There shouldn't be any more delay."

Janaki then being delighted by Rama's permission began to give away everything in charity in cheerful
CHAPTER XVI
LAKSHMANA'S ENTREATIES

Lakshmana who had been there from before began to weep hearing the conversation between the two, and considering that Rama's separation would be quite unbearable to him he caught hold of Rama's feet and entreatingly said,

"Arya! If you are thus resolved to repair into the forest full of wild animals, then I shall go ahead of you with bow in my hand, and you will roam about with me in charming parts of the forest. Being separated from you, I do not wish for heavenly bliss or immortality, nor all the wealth of the triple world."

Rama finding Lakshmana too eager to follow him dissuaded him again and again with consoling words. But Lakshmana was resolute, and said, "Formerly you asked me to follow you, but why do you prevent me now?"

Then gentle Rama told him, "Lakshmana! You are virtuous, sober, and always follow the right path. I love you dearly. You are my friend, and obedient to me. If you accompany me to the forest, then who will look after Kausalya and Sumitra? He who could do so is under Kaikeyi's influence. When Kaikeyi will secure the kingdom, there will be no end of miseries to the co-wives. And Bharata after his installation will side with his mother, and he will never think about Kausalya and Sumitra. This is why I ask you to

1 The words are intended to dissuade Lakshmana and do not represent Rama's real opinion.
remain here somehow and maintain them. Great merit is acquired by serving the superiors; you, therefore, take charge of my mother on my behalf. If we all leave her thus she can’t be happy by any means.”

Lakshmana then humbly replied, “O hero, Bharata will maintain Kausalya and Sumitra from fear of you. I shall surely kill him if he slights them from haughtiness or any evil motive. Moreover, Kausalya who has made grants of number of villages to her servants, can maintain thousands like us and will have enough to maintain herself and my mother. Now, you please give me leave to follow you. It does not mean any violation of duty; besides my desires shall be fulfilled. I shall go before you as your guide with stringed bow, a hoe and a basket in my hands. Everyday I shall procure for you wild roots and fruits on which the ascetics live. You will enjoy yourself with Vaidehi in the hills and I shall do everything else whether you be awake or asleep.”

Rama was greatly pleased with Lakshmana’s words and said, “You then take permission of your near and dear ones. At the sacrifice of Janaka, high-souled Varuna presented me two sets of formidable bows and weapons; namely, impenetrable mails, inexhaustible quivers and arrows and two swords glittering as the sun. I have kept these in the house of my preceptor. Please go and fetch them quickly.”

Then heroic Lakshmana took leave of his relations and speedily brought forth the arms from the preceptor’s house. Rama was glad at this and he asked
Lakshmana to distribute his riches to the Brahmanas and other dependants, asked him to fetch swiftly worshipful Sujajna, the son of Vasistha, as he wanted soon to repair to the forest after greeting him duly.

Lakshmana then went to Sujajna's house and asked him to come to Rama.

Sujajna then appeared, and Rama stood up with Sita and greeted the Brahmana versed in the Vedas, and effulgent like a flame of fire. After offering him excellent ornaments, bracelets, ear-rings, pearl-necklace stuck with golden threads, and other jewels, Rama conveying Vaidehi's wish to Sujajna said, "My friend! Go and give this necklace and collar to your wife, Janaki, my companion in forest life, also presents to your wife a girdle, bracelets, armlets and a bedstead inlaid with various gems.

"Please accept them. And I offer to you the great elephant called Satrunjaya which I got from my maternal uncle. Please take it."

Sujajna accepted the presents and blessed them whole-heartedly. Rama then asked Lakshmana to offer to sages Agastya and Visvamitra gold, silver and thousands of kine with meet adoration, and to give silken cloths, maid-servants, conveyances to the preceptor and Taitiriya portion of the Veda who came everyday to bless Kausalya.

"Worshipful Chaitraratha," said Rama, "is our charioteer and counsellor. He has grown very old. Give him sufficient jewels, precious cloth and a sufficient number of cattle. There are number of
Brahmacharis under my protection studying Katha portion of the Veda. They are always engaged in their studies. Therefore they cannot attend to any other work. They have great desire for good food but they are indolent. Give them eighty camel-load of jewels, thousands bulls, and a large number of cows for milk, and clarified butter. Many such Brahmanas come to my mother. Give thousand gold coins to every one of them to the satisfaction of the mother.”

Lakshmana then like Kuvera, the god of wealth, distributed riches to the Brahmanas. But the servants began to weep seeing them thus getting ready for the forest. Rama along with Lakshmana gave liberally to the poor and the needy.

At that time, in that part of the country there lived a tawny-coloured old Brahman named Trijata born of Garga’s line. He had to earn his bread by digging the earth with spades and ploughs. His young wife suffered immensely on account of her husband’s poverty. Hearing that Rama was distributing riches to the poor, she went to the Brahman with her young children and said, “Now lay aside your spade and plough and listen to what I say.

“Prince will repair to the forest to-day, and for that he is distributing riches to the poor. Go and see Rama and you will surely get something.”

Then Trijata, effulgent as Bhrigu and Angira, covering his body with a piece of torn cloth swiftly proceeded to Rama’s palace and appearing before Rama said,
“Prince! I am a poor man and I have got a number of children. I have to earn my living by digging the earth. So please cast a look of mercy on me.”

Rama then sportively said, “I have quite a number of cows and I have not as yet distributed even one thousand of them. Just throw your rod as far as you can and you shall get as many cows that can occupy the space covered by your rod.”

At this, Trijata quickly tightened the cloth round his waist and firmly grasping the stick in his hand hurled his rod which fell on a herd of cattle on the other bank of the Saraju.

Then virtuous Rama sent all the cattle extending up to the other side of the Saraju to Trijata’s hermitage, and after embracing Trijata said,

‘Don’t take any offence. I only said this in joke to see to what distance you could throw your rod. Now please tell me if you have anything to ask. Don’t feel diffident, I am always willing to serve the Brahmanas with my riches.”

Then Trijata being exceedingly delighted by getting a number of cows went away to his place by blessing him profusely.

Heroic Rama then distributed his wealth amongst the Brahmanas, servants, beggars and his friends.
CHAPTER XVII

THE GRIEF

Thus after distributing their wealth, Rama and Lakshmana, in order to see their father, left the place with Sita. Two maid-servants carried before them the arms that were decorated with flowers and sandal paste by Sita herself.

The streets were overflowing with crowds. It was difficult to pass through them; therefore, many getting upon the terraces of their houses, and of seven-storied mansions cast painful looks on Rama. And seeing Rama, Lakshmana and Sita walking on foot they burst forth in sorrow, 'Alas! He who was followed by four-fold forces now walks accompanied by Sita and Lakshmana alone. Rama has tasted the amenities of life but for his righteousness he could not go against the wishes of his father. And every passer-by to-day beholds Sita who could not so long be seen even by the birds of the sky. Summer's heat, winter's chill, rains will soon mar the beauty of her body now adorned with red sandal paste. King Dasaratha seems to have been possessed by an evil spirit or he would not have sent Rama to the forest. Not to speak of a son that has won over the love of all people, who forsakes even a worthless son?

"Absence of malice, generosity, learning, goodness, self-restraint, and the control of the senses are the six virtues that adorn Rama.

"The people will surely be greatly afflicted in hi:
absence, as fishes and other aquatic animals become distressed when the waters of a tank are dried up by the burning rays of the sun. On account of his sufferings all will suffer, as the fruits, flowers and leaves of a tree become withered when its roots are severed. Let us, therefore, leave our houses, fields and gardens and follow Rama, and like Lakshmana let us with our wives and friends take the same path treated by Rama. After this, the household deities will no more reside in the land, all religious institutions will be destroyed. Cattle, paddy, and treasures concealed under earth will be dug out and stolen. Dirt and filth will cover the courtyards, and rats will roam about freely; no more smoke will rise from the blazing hearth, and all earthen wares will be broken. We shall leave our country and let Kaikeyi possess it. Then, the forest where Rama repair will turn into a city and the deserted city into a forest. We shall live in happiness with Rama in the forest. Let now Kaikeyi with her son and friends uninterruptedly rule over the land.”

Rama heard the people lamenting thus, but he was not least moved by that, but in cheerful countenance he proceeded onward to meet his father.

Rama then arriving at his father's palace sent information through Sumantra, who found the King dark and overwhelmed with grief, as the sun under the eclipse, or fire covered with ashes, and intimated him about Rama's arrival. The King then asked Sumantra to bring there all his wives living in that part of the palace as he wanted to meet Rama with all his wives.
Thereupon, Sumantra summoned all the wives of the King. Then three hundred and fifty wives surrounding Rāma's mother Kausalya appeared before the King.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita were then ushered in before the King.

Then the King, as he saw Rama from distance coming towards him with raised palms, instantly rose from his seat and tried to embrace him, but he fainted on the ground. Rama, Lakshmana and others then ran to his help. At this there rose a cry from the women and they began to strike their foreheads and breasts with their palms in sorrow, and thereby a jingling sound of the ornaments was produced.

Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in tearful eyes placed the King on the sofa. When the King regained his consciousness, Rama said with clasped palms,

"I now intend to proceed to the Dandaka forest. You are lord of us all, please cast a merciful look on me."

"I have tried again and again to dissuade Lakshmana and Sita by cogent reasons, but they are determined to accompany me, so please permit us to repair to the forest."

At this King Dasaratha replied,

"My boy, I have lost my senses by conferring boons on Kaikeyi. You therefore, occupy the throne by putting me into chains."

Hearing this Rama hastened to reply in joined

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1 In the original it is by tying me down which in fact means imprisonment.
hands. "May you live for thousand years more and rule the earth. I have no hankering for the throne. I shall come back after fourteen years, by fulfilling your pledge."

At that time Kaikeyi to induce the King to agree to Rama's words secretly beckoned to Dasaratha. At that signal Dasaratha broke forth in tearful eyes.

"Go forth, my boy, fearlessly for the good in this world as well as in the next. May you have peace and happiness. Come back after the expiry of fourteen years.

"You are truthful and righteous. It is not possible to change your mind. But I request you that for the sake of your mother, you please stop this night here. I shall keep you all the time before my eyes and shall dine with you. Then after the night is over, repair to the forest in the morning. You have undertaken to embrace arduous forest-life for my welfare in the next world. But I swear to you that I have not the slightest desire to send you to the forest. But that wily and cruel Kaikeyi who is like smouldering fire hidden in ashes has prevented your installation.

"You are suffering on account of her. My boy You are the best of my sons, and there is no wonder that you will endeavour to carry out my words."

Then Rama said, "Father, I shall reap greater blessings to-day than kingdom. Please confer it on Bharata and prove yourself truthful. Please do not doubt me. I do not hanker for the throne either for my own happiness or for that of any dear ones of mine. Do
not shed any more tears, nor be much anxious for me. I shall live happily in the forest where deer roam in herds and sweet birds sing. I shall come back again after fourteen years. All are crying for me, it is your duty to console them but if you yourself be overwhelmed with grief who will pacify them? Do not be sorry for me. I do not wish to possess kingdom or even dear Janaki by proving yourself untruthful to the world. May you live in peace, now permit us to repair to the forest"

Dasaratha deeply embraced Rama and again fainted from extreme sorrow. Thereupon all the queens excepting Kaikeyi began to weep. Sumantra too fainted in grief but he regained his consciousness soon, and being beside himself in towering rage he grinded his teeth. His face grew dark and with red hot eyes and shaking his head addressing Kaikeyi said, "The ruler of the earth, King Dasaratha, is your husband. When you could forsake such a husband, you are up to anything. You shouldn't have insulted your husband. It is the duty of the woman to act according to the wishes of her husband. You are bent upon to alter the time-honoured law of succession to the throne. How pious men will live in this kingdom? Strange! That the earth was not rent asunder at your conduct. Who can foretell the consequences of your act? Who clings to a bitter Nimba tree by cutting down a mango tree? Nimba never grows sweet, however much you may pour water at the root of the tree. And it is not untrue that sweet juice is not extracted from the
Nimba, however much one may try. You are like your mother, and I have heard that your mother was addicted to vice. Hear me why I say so.

"Formerly, a sage conferred on your father, King Kaikeya, a boon by which he was able to understand the language of beasts and birds. One day Kaikeya was lying on his bed when a gold-coloured Jrimbha bird made certain sounds at which your father laughed heartily, knowing the intention of the bird. Seeing your father thus laughing without any cause your mother grew angry and said, 'Tell me why are you laughing? if you do not disclose the cause of your laughter, I shall commit suicide.' King Kaikeya replied, 'If I disclose to you the cause of my laughter, I shall instantly meet with death.' Then your mother said, 'I don't care whether you live or die; you must tell me the reason of your laughter and henceforth you must not laugh at me.'

"Then the King went again to the saint who had conferred on him the boon and told him everything. The saint said, 'You must not disclose the secret to your wife, even if she dies.' At this your father abandoned her instantly. It is said that a boy inherits the qualities of the father and a girl those of the mother. I entreat you not to behave like your mother. I entreat you to act according to the wishes of the King, and save us all. If Rama goes to the forest you will incur great public odium."

But Kaikeyi remained quite unmoved.
CHAPTER XVIII

THE PARTING SCENE

King Dasaratha greatly repented for his promise and he said in tears heaving a deep sigh, ’O Sumantra, please despatch fourfold forces to the forest for serving Rama, and with them send damsels of clever speech, and rich merchants with their merchandise, and also those wrestlers who live under Rama and wrestle with him. Give them best arms, cars and fowlers well-acquainted with everything of the forest. Let all the citizens go to the forest. They will forget the city by hunting, drinking wild honey, and by seeing rivers and streams. Let the servants carry into the forest all that is contained in the treasury and in the granaries. The prince will live happily by performing sacrifices and paying the Brahmanas sufficiently. So send all articles of enjoyment with Rama. After this Bharata will reign in Ayodhya."

At this Kaikeyi’s face grew dark and she said, “If all things of enjoyment be despatched to the forest, then what Bharata will gain by receiving an empty kingdom—like a cup of liquor drunk to the lees?”

Thereupon, Dasaratha angrily replied, “Why did you not mention these things at the time of asking for you Rama’s exile to the forest?”

Kaikeyi then flaming in wrath asked the King to send Rama to the forest, as the King Sagara turned out Asamanja from the city.

At this, an old friend of the King named Sidhyartha said that Asamanja was a cruel tyrant, he used to
amuse himself by throwing children in the waters of the Saraju. The people grew angry at this, and they saw the King in a body and asked whether he wanted them or Asamanja. Thereupon, the King sent Asamanja with his wife into exile to the forest. Virtuous Sagara deserted Asamanja because he was unruly, whereas Rama is absolutely guiltless like the moon.

Hearing this Dasaratha said, "You see, O vicious woman, the words of Sidhyartha do not appear very pleasant to you. I shall, however, go with Rama. You remain here and rule with Bharata."

Then Rama entreatingly said, "Father, what shall I do with troops, since I am going to the forest by renouncing all luxury? After giving away the elephant in charity, it is useless to grieve for its tether. I shall give every thing to Bharata. Somebody fetch me bark, hoe and a basket for going to the forest."

At this Kaikeyi herself brought a bark-garment, and she shamelessly said,—

"Rama, I have brought you the bark, now put it on."

Then Rama put off his fine clothes and put on bark, the ascetic's garb. Lakshmana too in the presence of the father put on the ascetic's dress. But Sita clad in silk became much alarmed at the sight of the bark-garment meant for her, as a doe gets frightened at the sight of a noose, and in tears she sorrowfully asked her husband, "O Lord, how the ascetics living in the forest put on their dress?" Thus being embarras-
ssed, Sita, stood in shame by throwing one end of the bark on her neck and holding the other end in her hand. Seeing this Rama hied to her and tied the ascetic garb round her. Finding Rama thus fastening on Sita the ascetic's dress, all the women burst into tears and they said, "Janaki has not been ordered into exile, as you have been by the King. So long you do not come back, we shall soothe ourselves by seeing Sita. So you go with Lakshmana. Sita can't go with you like a nun. We know you are virtuous and you won't agree to stop here, but we request you to leave Janaki here."

But Rama did not desist. At this, Vasistha, the priest of the clan, addressing Kaikeyi broke forth in tears, "Ah, you vile woman, your desires overstep your sense of honour. You have duped the King but you are now going to the extreme. Sita, however, cannot go to the forest. She will occupy the throne in Rama's place, for wife is the better half of a man. So Sita will rule over the earth being the half of Rama's self. If she accompanies Rama to the forest, then we shall all repair to the forest—even the warders of the palace will leave for the forest. Bharata and Satruighna will follow Rama putting on bark-garments. Then this deserted city will turn into a dreary forest where even the necessities of life will not be available. That will not be reckoned as a kingdom where Rama is not the King, and the forest where he will live will turn into a prosperous kingdom. Bharata will not accept the kingdom, since the King confers it under compulsion, and if
he is begotten of Dasaratha, he will not fail to act as his son towards you. He will not swerve an inch, in dealing with you, as is proper, for your ungenerous conduct. So you have really injured your son by praying for his throne. There is none in this world who is not partial to Rama. You will witness it today. Beasts and birds will follow Rama, even the trees that are rooted to the ground have turned towards the direction of Rama. So take off that bark from Sita and deck her with excellent ornaments. The garb of an ascetic is not her proper dress. You have asked only for Rama’s exile, what harm is there if she lies with him in good apparels. Let her take with her good clothes, cars and servants."

But Janaki did not desist at these words. She was bent upon to put on the ascetic’s dress. When the daughter of Janaka having her husband living, put on the ascetic’s weeds, like a destitute one, all cried shame on Dasaratha. Dasaratha was greatly mortified at this and heaved a deep sigh of sorrow; then addressing Kaikeyi said, “Kaikeyi, Janaki is a tender girl brought up in the lap of happiness, let her not put on the bark-garment. This exile of Janaki has been brought by you through your ignorance. But your desires will ruin you as the flowers of a bamboo destroys the bamboo itself. Are you not satisfied by sending Rama to the forest? You will be doomed to hell for your conduct.”

Rama then with a bent look addressing Dasaratha said,—
“Father, my magnanimous mother Kausalya has not spoken anything ill about you, after hearing the news of my exile. She has not as yet suffered any sorrow. She will be greatly pained at my separation. I commend her to your charge. She does not like my absence even for a moment, please see that she may not die for me.”

Dasaratha and his queens seeing Rama dressed like a hermit lost their senses in sorrow. Dasaratha could not even look at Rama and became dumb with sorrow, and after some time when he had regained his power of speech, he began to lament bitterly.”

Dasaratha then asked Sumantra to escort Rama in chariot to the outskirts of the city, and asked the treasurer to fetch excellent clothes and ornaments for Janaki sufficient for the period of her exile. The treasurer shortly returned with ornaments and dress. Then high-born Sita put on those ornaments, and thus being adorned the whole room became radiant with her beauty as the sky is crimsoned by the glittering morning sun. Kausalya then after embracing her and kissing her head said,—

“My daughter, the woman (though she may be the object of every one’s affection) who fails to serve her husband in adversity is reckoned as unchaste. The nature of such a false woman is that she enjoys happiness at the time of her husband’s prosperity, but in adversity she accuses the husband of many things, nay more, even deserts him. She is untruthful, and gets irritated even at trivial things, because her
mind is not attached to her husband. Fickle-minded women do not care for rank or lineage; they are won over by ornaments or dress; they are ungrateful, and have little regard for righteousness, and they never acknowledge their faults even when pointed out. But those who are obedient to their superiors, truthful and pure, regard their husbands as the supreme agents for moral and spiritual well-being. Now, though Rama has been sent into exile, do not neglect him. Whether he be rich or poor, you must always revere him. "As a God."

Janaki then replied in clasped palms, "I shall surely obey your words. I know how one ought to behave with her husband. I am inseparable from righteousness as the brightness from the moon. A woman can never be happy even with hundred sons, without the husband. Her life is then like a lyre without the strings, or a chariot without its wheels. The gifts of the father, mother and the son are limited. It is only the husband's gifts that are unlimited; nobody can give so much. Who will not serve her husband? Why should I slight my husband? Husband is the highest God to a woman."

Kausalya was mightily pleased at Janaki's words.

Then Rama assured his mother saying that he would come back with Lakshmana and Sita after fourteen years. Then addressing the women there Ramá said in clasped hands, "Mothers, if on account of living together I have ever ever unwittingly ill treated any one of you, please forgive me today."
At this all the women burst into bitter cries, and the palace which was once resounded with musical notes became reverberant with their lamentations.

Then Rama with Lakshmana and Sita in clasped palms bowed at Dasaratha's feet, and after going round him, he bowed to his mother.

Lakshmana first bowed to Kausalya and then to his mother Sumitra. Sumitra after kissing his head said,—

"My boy, though you are attached to all, yet I ask you to repair to the forest. Your brother is going to the forest. You must, therefore, be vigilant in all things. You must regard Rama, whether in prosperity or in adversity, as your true lord. It is just that the younger should obey the elder. Now go to the forest, look upon Rama as you should look upon your father, on Janaki as your mother, and on the deep forest as Ayodhya."

Then Sumantra humbly asked Rama to get upon the car.

Then, first of all, Sita cheerfully ascended the golden car glittering as the sun.

Then Rama and Lakshmana got upon the chariot after placing upon the car various arms, coats of mail, baskets and ornaments and clothes given to Sita by their father.

And the car began to move swiftly with a deep rumbling noise as soon as Sumantra whipped the horses swift as the wind.

Loud cries rose from every quarter and extreme tumult seized the city. Men and women, the young
and the old, all began to run after Rama, as thirsty travellers, oppressed by the sun, run after water.

They entreated Sumantra in tearful eyes to drive slowly, saying, "Let us once more see the lotus-face of the prince as we shall soon be deprived of it for a long time. Perhaps, his mother Kausalya's heart is made of iron, or it would have rent to pieces by sending such a son to the forest. Blessed is virtuous Janaki for following him like a shadow. As the sun's rays never leave the peak of Sumeru, so she is never separated from Rama."

In the meantime, Dasaratha with his wives came out of the room to have a last look on Rama. At that time being cast down with sorrow Dasaratha looked like the moon under the eclipse.

All the time Rama urged Sumantra to drive quickly, whereas the citizens clamoured to stop the car. Their tears drenched the street! They were almost senseless with grief; and tears fell from the eyes of the women, as collected rain-drops fall from the agitated lotuses being shaken by the movement of fishes. King Dasaratha fainted at the sight, and a great tumult rose from the people.

When Rama cast his eyes behind, he found his father and mother following the car on foot, being stricken with grief. As a tied up colt cannot see its mother, so Rama bound by truth could not look to his mother. But the sight of their sufferings became unbearable to him. He urged again and again Sumantra to drive more swiftly. But Kausalya ran
after the car, as the cow after its calf and she began to cry aloud taking the names of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in turn. Dasaratha asked to stop the car, whereas Rama urged to move on, and Sumantra sat confused. At this Rama said:

"Sumantra, if the King takes you to task after your return, tell him that you could not hear him on account of the tumult. But delay will cause me greater pain."

Then Sumantra drove the car at greater speed. Then the citizens and members of the royal family stopped by respectfully, going round Rama in their thoughts, and following him in mind in the direction towards which Rama went.

Then the counsellors persuaded Dasaratha to desist. Dasaratha with a sorrowful mien and perspiring body stood eagerly looking at Rama.

When Rama was gone, woeful cries rose from the palace. Dasaratha was greatly distressed by hearing these cries. Darkness and despair seemed to seize the land. Everybody was smitten with sorrow and began to think of Rama.

So long the dust raised by the chariot could be seen, Dasaratha stood motionless gazing at it. But as soon as it was out of sight, he fainted on the ground.

Then Kausalya raised him from the ground and walked along with him by holding up his right hand, while Kaikeyi walked on his left.

Seeing Kaikeyi, Dasaratha burst forth, "Ah, vile-
woman, don't touch my body, I don't like to see your face. You are no wife to me. If Bharata be delighted by getting the kingdom, then his gifts on my funeral obsequies will not reach me in the next world.”

Thoughts of Rama began to consume the King, and he again and again turned back to behold the track of the car. Thinking that perhaps by that time Rama had reached the outskirts of the city, in tearful eyes he marked the hoof-prints of the horses hurrying Rama away to the forest. And at last, with a broken heart he entered the palace as the sun enters a bank of clouds, and in absence of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, the whole palace looked empty like a hollow deep.

CHAPTER XIX
PEOPLE'S REGRET

The citizens of Ayodhya all loved Rama dearly, and they did not cease to follow Rama even when Dasaratha desisted. They ran after his car.

Rama then eyeing them with affection said, “Show the love and regard you have for me, in greater measure, at my request, to Bharata. That son of Kaikeyi is good-natured, and he will surely contribute to your good and happiness. Though young in years he is old in wisdom, he has great might yet he is tender-hearted, he will be able to remove all your fears. The qualities that should adorn a king are possessed in a greater degree by Bharata than by myself. He will be a worthy ruler of you. It is your duty now to obey him in every respect.”
But the people in tearful eyes entreated Rama to be the King. Meanwhile, old Brahmins stricken with age, pursued his car and asked Rama to desist. Rama then with Lakshmana and Sita got down from the car and respectfully persuaded them to stop. The Brahmins said, "We shall follow you in a body, since you honour us most. We shall protect your head in the Sun with our umbrellas white as autumnal clouds, obtained from the sacrifice of Vajapeya. We shall carry our learning and Vedic lore to the forest and our wives will attend to your domestic duties. We entreat you by knocking our grey heads on dust not to repair to the forest. All creatures love you and are dissuading you from proceeding to the forest. Look, the tall trees rooted to the earth, thus being unable to follow you, are dissuading you by deep murmuring sound produced by the wind. Look even the birds have ceased from their quest for food."

When the Brahmins were thus speaking, Rama saw the banks of the Tamasa from a distance.

On reaching the banks of the Tamasa, Sumantra unyoked the horses; and as soon as the horses were unharnessed, they began to roll in the dust.

Rama then sat on the beautiful bank of the Tamasa, and looking at Janaki he said to Lakshmana, "My boy, this is the first night of our exile in the forest. But don’t fell aggrieved. The people of Ayodhya are sorry for us, for they love us deeply. I am extremely sorry for my father and mother. Surely they have become blind with tears. Virtuous Bharata will no
doubt console them, and I feel greatly relieved by thinking of the amiable qualities of Bharata. Lakshmana, you have done good by accompanying me, or for the protection of Janaki I would have to take another’s help. Let us pass the night on this bank. There is plenty of wild fruits here, but I have resolved to take nothing else but water this night.”

Rama then asked Sumantra to look after the horses and Sumantra gave them sufficient quantity of grass.

Seeing the night about to set in, Rama with the help of Lakshmana prepared a bed, and lay on it with Sita. Then finding Rama asleep, Lakshmana repaired to Sumantra and talked about Rama.

CHAPTER XX
NIGHT IN THE PALACE

King Dasaratha came back to his palace stricken with grief and remorse, ‘How Rama, accustomed to rest his head pleasantly on a pillow, and fanned by beautiful women, will sleep under a tree and lay his head on a piece of wood or stone? How will he bear the hardships of a forest-life? Such thoughts pained the King greatly and he asked the sentries in a faltering voice to take him to Kausalya’s quarters. When the warders did so, Dasaratha entered the room hanging down his head in sad dejection. He was oppressed by the gloomy look of the room, as the sky appears cheerless without the moon, and he cried, “Ah, Rama! How could you leave your parents. Ah, they are happy who will survive to witness your return.”
At midnight Dasaratha said to Kausalya, "I do not see you, please touch my body with your palm. My power of vision has gone with Rama."

Then Kausalya aggrieved for her son, said, "My Lord, crooked Kaikeyi having vented her venom will now freely roam about like a snake that has cast off her slough. If Rama had stopped at home and lived on alms, or if I had made him Kaikeyi's slave, even that would have been better. But sent by you to the forest at Kaikeyi's words, what privations he will be subject to! Will such a time ever come when my sorrow will be over by seeing Rama returning with Lakshmana and Sita? Certainly, I had formerly committed great sin by cutting off the udders of cows thus preventing the calves from drinking their mother's milk, and it is for this that I have been deprived of my son. I cannot live without my son."

Then virtuous Sumantra consoled her, saying, "O worshipful lady, your son is a prince among men, why do you weep so bitterly? Your son has gone to the forest to fulfil the pledge of his father, and he will reap immense benefit in the next world. Lakshmana will minister unto Rama, and I tell you that considering Rama's heroism and good qualities, there is no doubt that he will return from the forest and regain his Kingdom. And Rama will be installed on the throne with the Earth, Vaidehi and the Goddess of victory. Banish your sorrows, evil cannot touch Rama. You will again see your son, like the new-risen moon bowing at your feet, and you will shed tears of joy like drops of rain from the clouds."

At this Kausalya's grief was somewhat assuaged.
CHAPTER XXI
FRIENDSHIP WITH GUHAKA

Rama passed the night on the bank of the Tamasa and he rose from sleep at dawn. He then addressing Lakshmana said, "My boy, the people have left their homes for our sake. They are resolved to take me back. Let us, while they are asleep, get into our car and leave this place quickly."

Lakshmana agreed. Rama then asked the charioteer to yoke the horses. Sumantra soon got the chariot ready. Rama got upon it with Sita and Lakshmana and in a short time left behind the Tamasa full of eddies and set out towards the north.

When the day dawned, the citizens began to cast tearful glances all round, but even the dust raised by the wheels of the chariot could not be seen.

"Ah, cursed is sleep!" They broke forth in one voice—"It is for sleep that we have missed that broad-chested and mighty armed hero. How could he leave us since he looked after us, as an affectionate father looks after his sons? Here we shall die or proceed towards the north to meet death. Sufficient dry woods are available on the banks of the Tamasa, we shall prepare a funeral pyre and then cast ourselves into it. What is the good of living without Rama!"

Then the citizens for some distance followed the track of the car, and when it could no more be traced, they returned to the city with tearful eyes. When they came back, all were overwhelmed with grief. People gave up rejoicing. Merchants did not open their stalls.
or spread their stores. In every family all the members were smitten with sorrow and householders even neglected their everyday duties.

All the women cursed Kaikeyi and said, "Blessed are Sita and Lakshmana, for they have followed Rama. Blessed are the rivers and ponds in which Rama will bathe. The mountains will greet him as a welcome guest. Trees will contribute to his comfort by providing him with beds of leaves. The mountains will present him with choicest fruits and flowers and crystal water for drink. Rama will witness trees with wonderful blossoms and buds with swarms of bees hovering on them. Where Rama is, there is no defeat or fear."

The day thus passed in sorrow, the sunset, as if being unable to see the sorrows of the people. And the whole of Ayodhya looked like a starless night.

Meanwhile, Rama in order to fulfill his father's promise had cleared a long distance. The day dawned on his way. After saying his morning prayers, Rama entered into a different province, and proceeded along, witnessing ploughed fields, flower-gardens and villages on both sides of the road. The car was moving very fast; but Rama was insensible to its motion being absorbed in delight at the sight of natural beauties. When the villagers saw Rama they cursed both Dasaratha and Kaikeyi. Thus Rama reached the last limits of Koshala. Then after crossing the sacred stream Vedasruti, Rama proceeded towards the south. After some distance he crossed the Gomati flowing into the ocean. He then crossed over the Syandika resounding
with the cackling notes of the swans and the ducks. Here Rama pointed out to Sita the regions which Manu made over to king Ikshwaku.

Then addressing Sumantra, Rama said, "When shall I again be back and hunt among the flowery woods on the banks of Saraju with my parents? Of course, I have no great love for hunting but since it has been sanctioned by the host of saintly kings, I cannot condemn it as something forbidden."

Rama then turned towards Ayodhya and said with clasped palms, "Ah, my beloved city, governed by the Raghus, I bow to thee and to all the deities that protect thee and live in thee. I shall greet you again as also my parents, returning from the forest after being absolved from the debt of vow."

Rama then raising his hands, addressing the people said, "You have shown sufficient regard and love for me. You must not suffer any more. Now go back and allow me to proceed to my destination."

Thereupon, the people returned after saluting Rama. They again and again stopped on their way to have a look of Rama. But their eyes were not gratified on seeing Rama again and again.

At last Rama vanished out of their sight like the evening sun, and left behind the kingdom of Kosala inhabited by generous people, where the Vedas are continually chanted, which abounds in tanks and mango-groves and is rich in wealth, cattle and grains, and is crowded with hamlets, each worthy of a monarch's care.

Rama then reached prosperous Sringaverapura.
 beautified with gardens. There he found the sacred Ganges flowing with a deep murmuring sound. There the crystal water of the Ganges as cool and transparent like gems, and beautiful hermitages stood on its banks. At some places the river was dashing furiously against rocks and stones. Somewhere it was laughing in foams, at some places it was flowing like a braid of hair, and somewhere it was full of eddies. At some places, ducks and cranes were making noise on sandy tracts, while at some other places the trees stood in a row like a garland and lilies and lotuses were floating on the stream. Rama at the sight of the Bhagirathi said, "Look Sumantra, at a short distance from the river there stands an Ingudi tree adorned with blossoms and leaves. We shall put up there."

Lakshmana and Sumantra agreed, and the car quickly drove near the tree. Rama, Janaki and Lakshmana got down from the car. Sumantra then unyoked the horses and came near Rama for serving him.

There lived at that place a powerful king of the Nishadas called Guhaka. Hearing that Rama had arrived in the Nishada\(^1\) kingdom, Guhaka with his aged ministers and friends came to Rama and after expressing his deep sorrow and embracing him said, "Friends, you should consider my kingdom as your Ayodhya. Now tell me what shall I do for you. It is only through good fortune that one gets such a welcome guest."

Saying this, the Nishada King brought Arghya and

\(^1\) Most probably a Non-Aryan people whose chief occupation was hunting, and untouchable to the high-caste Hindus.
delicious fruits and asked, "Friends, had you a pleasant journey? This Nishada kingdom is yours and we are your servants. Now please accept this food and drink, beds and also fodder for your horses."

Rama hearing these words said, "Oh Nishada King, I have been well-received and extremely glad that you have come from a distance to show your affection for me."

Saying this, Rama deeply embraced Guhaka and said, 'It is due to my good luck that I find you hale and hearty with your friends and relations. Is everything safe with your kingdom and forest? The things you have presented me out of love I cannot accept. For I shall have to live like an ascetic by wearing bark and living on roots and fruits. So I cannot accept anything but fodder from you for the horses. These horses are dear to king Dasaratha, and I shall think myself entertained if they are cared for and fed."

Rama then said his evening prayers and after it was over, Lakshmana brought drinking water for Rama. After drinking water Rama lay down with Janaki on the ground. Lakshmana then after washing their feet took shelter under a tree.

Finding Lakshmana keeping up the night for protection of Rama, Guhaka sorrowfully said, "Prince, soft bed has been prepared for you; just take your rest, we can bear all hardships at ease. I will with bow in hand and with my men guard my friend reposing with Sita. I always roam in the forest and there is nothing unknown to me." At this Lakshmana replied, "Oh
Nishada King, I know, you are virtuous, and when you have taken the responsibility of protection, there is nothing to fear from. But look the chief of the Raghu's line is lying on the ground with Janaki. Then what necessity is there for my sleep. He is our eldest, and father got him after long prayers as a divine favour. Surely, the king won't survive long after sending Rama to the forest, and soon the earth will be widowed by his death. O, Nishada chief! I don't think Kausalya, Sumitra and Dasaratha are still alive. If it is so, they won't survive this night. My mother may live by looking up to Satrughna; but Kausalya will die for her son. I know not what will happen to father in absence of his eldest son. He will die, and Kausalya after her. They are fortunate who will be able to perform the funeral rites of my father, and live in Ayodhya—my father's capital beautified with fine terraces, gardens, wide roads, magnificent palaces, and inhabited by happy and healthy citizens and where there is plenty of horses, elephants, cars and courtesans. Alas! Heaven alone knows whether father is alive or not—"

At break of dawn Rama said, "Lakshmana, the night is over, the cuckoos are singing in the wood and the cries of peacocks are being heard. Let us now cross the Ganges." Then addressing Sumantra Rama said, "Go back to the King soon, my journey by the car must now end.

'Henceforth, I shall walk on foot and enter the deep forest. Just see that father may not be too much
distressed for me, and after conveying my deep res-
pects,—please tell him on my behalf that I am not sorry
for my exile from the city, or for habitation in the
forest. After the expiry of fourteen years he will find
us with Janaki again.

"After saying this to my father and mother, convey
the same to my other mother and Kaikeyi. Give
Kausalya our respect and tell her that everything is
alright with us. Also tell the King to fetch Bharata soon
and install him on the throne. Please also tell dear
Bharata that he should behave with our mothers as
he will behave towards the king and to look upon
Sumitra and Kausalya as he will look upon Kaikeyi." 
Sumantra then said with tears, "I now find that virtue,
gentleness, candour are not rewarded in this earth."

Rama then persuaded Sumantra to leave him and
go back to the city.

Sumantra then burst forth in tears, "How shall I go
back with the empty car? Permit me to follow you.
After the expiry of the period of exile, I shall return
with you to Ayodhya in this car. Living with you I
shall not feel the length of time.

Rama then said, "I know you love me, but you
must go back. On your return mother Kaikeyi will
be confirmed about my banishment. But so long you
do not go back, she will doubt it and suspect the
righteous King. My prime motive is that Kaikeyi may
enjoy the kingdom of Bharata. You therefore go back
for me and for my father."

Rama then asked Guhaka to fetch him a boat for
crossing the Ganges. At this the king of the Nishadas said to his men, "Bring without delay a good and a strong boat furnished with a rudder and steered by a helmsman."

When the boat was brought, Guhaka asked, "Get up on the boat and tell me what more shall I do for you?"

Rama said, "Guhaka, I have gained my object through your help. Now, put my things on the boat." Saying this Rama put on his coat of mail, took his bow and sword, began to descend the bank with Lakshmana and Sita. At that time Sumantra approached Rama and said with joined hands, "Prince, tell me what am I to do now?"

Rama then touching Sumantra by the right hand said, 'You now speedily return to the king. You are a friend of the Ikshaku line. Father has been greatly mortified by my absence. Just console him and tell him that he will find us again in the capital after fourteen years. Tell him that we are not least sorry for leaving the city for the forest. Please see that king may not be unhappy in any way."

Sumantra then shed bitter tears and stood mute with a sorrowful heart.

Ramchandra then turning to Guhaka said, "Guhaka, it does not seem proper to me to live in a forest inhabited by men. I should now live in a hermitage and should be properly dressed for that. I shall repair to the forest like an ascetic with Sita and Lakshmana. Please bring me the gum of a Banian tree for producing the matted hair of an ascetic."
Then the Banian gum was brought. The two brothers then matted their locks and put on bark-garments, whereupon they looked like two Rishis.

At the time of departure, Rama addressing Guhaka said, "My friend! There are good many difficulties in administering a kingdom, so you should always be vigilant about your army, exchequer, forts and provinces." Reaching the edge of the Ganges, Rama asked Lakshmana first to help Janaki to get upon the boat and then to get into it himself. This being done, Rama boarded the boat. Then the boat began to move swiftly being pulled by the oars.

Lakshmana and Janaki bowed to the Ganges, and when the boat reached the mid-stream, Janaki with clasped palms said, "O Ganga, may the prince through your grace safely fulfil the vow. May he return with us after passing fourteen years in the forest. After returning safely I shall worship you to my heart's content. You are the consort of the Ocean, and you cover the regions of Brahma. O Goddess! I bow to thee. If Rama returns safely and gets back his kingdom, I shall distribute for you through Brahmanas thousands of kine, horses, jars of wine and pillao. I shall worship the gods that dwell in your bank and the holy shrines and the sacred places of pilgrimage that stand on your banks.

The boat soon reached the right bank of the Ganges.

1 An Indian delicacy—rice cooked with clarified butter and various rich spices, along with meat or fish wrongly supposed to have been introduced in the Mahomedan rule.
Then landing from the boat Rama said to Lakshmana, "Be careful for the protection of Sita, be it, in solitude or in society of men. You walk ahead and let Sita follow you. I shall go after you protecting you both. It is necessary to protect each other. To-day Janaki has entered that forest where there is no human habitation and where the ground is uneven and full of pits and holes. Janaki will experience the hardships of a forest-life even from this day."

Rama then reached the rich province of Batsa, rich in grains. Rama then killed boars and deer and taking their sacred meat entered the forest in the evening.

After saying his evening prayers, Rama spoke to Lakshmana, "This is the first night that we are going to spend outside the city. You should not feel uneasy for that. Henceforth, we shall have to be vigilant at night. It rests with us to protect what Sita possesses, and also to secure her what she doesn't possess. Come, let us ourselves collect grass and leaves and prepare a bed on the ground and somehow lie down on it."

Lying down on a bed of leaves under a banian tree, Rama said, "Brother, surely the King is passing a miserable night. Kaikeyi's desire has been fulfilled. From this incident it seems to me that lust is the most powerful passion in man—even stronger than greed for gold. He that follows lust forgetting all other interests brings miseries on him like King Dasaratha. Kaikeyi may now slight Kausalya and Sumitra. Your mother will be greatly afflicted for us. So go back to Ayodhya to-morrow morning. I shall alone go with
Sita to the Dandaka forest. Mother Kausalya will suffer much on my account. Hence no woman bring forth an unworthy son like me. What service have I rendered to my mother?

Then finding Rama to be silent Lakshmana observed, “Arya, surely Ayodhya looks gloomy like a moonless night. I cannot live without you. I do not care for my parents or heaven, being separated from you.” The forests were devoid of human beings, and there was none about. So the three lay down fearlessly as lions on lonely mountain peaks.

CHAPTER XXII
HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJA

As the sun rose in the east they rose from sleep, and proceeded towards the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna, and in their way they beheld various landscapes and flowery trees.

When the day declined, Rama said to Lakshmana, “Look, smoke is rising from the direction of Prayaga. Perhaps some ascetic lives near. We have certainly arrived near the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna. The deep rumbling noise is distinctly heard.

In the evening Rama reached the hermitage of saint Bharadwaja, putting the beasts and birds of the asylum into fright. They found the great anchorite seated with his disciples. Rama after saluting the sage with Lakshmana and Sita, said, ‘Sir, we are the sons of King Dasaratha. I am Rama and he is Lakshmana. The auspicious daughter of Janaka—the saintly king—is my
wife. In obedience to the mandate of our father we are now repairing to the forest." Hearing this the ascetic welcomed Rama with Arghya and offered him a bull\(^1\) and various kinds of fruits and roots and drinking water, and assigned to him a place of rest.

Then Bharadwaja and other hermits sat round Rama and Bharadwaja said,

"Rama, We have heard that you have been banished for nothing. However, live in this beautiful secluded place."

Rama replied, "There are cities and human habitations near about it. People will then easily see me and Janaki, and they will then often come to us. For this reason the place does not appear to be much commendable to me. Name me some lonely place where Janaki may live happily."

Bharadwaja said,—There is a mountain called the Chitrakuta, twenty miles away from this place. Plenty of Golangulas, bears and monkeys live there. The hill is sacred. Many old saints have attained heaven by devoting themselves at that place to meditations for hundreds of years. It seems to me the Chitrakuta will be pleasant to you, or if you like you may live with me in my hermitage."

Rama passed the night with Sita and Lakshmana in the hermitage.

\(^1\) It alludes to the custom when the Hindus were in the habit of taking beef. When a notable guest came, the host often offered him a calf or a bull for his entertainment.
In the morning, Rama asked Bharadwaja's permission to proceed to the Chitrakuta.

Bharadwaja said,—"The Chitrakuta is the best place for you. You will get plenty of fruits, roots and honey there. It abounds in trees. There you will always hear the notes of cuckoos and the cries of peacocks. You will be delighted by seeing with Sita the mountain scenery."

Then Rama made arrangements for going to the Chitrakuta. After performing auspicious rites for the welfare of Rama, sage Bharadwaja said,

"After reaching the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna proceed along with the Jamuna flowing to the west. After going some distance you will find a place of pilgrimage, from that place cross the river in a raft. There stands a very high Banian tree called Shyam, with yellowish green leaves. It is surrounded by various trees and many hermits live under it. You bow down to that tree with clasped palms, and rest under its shade. You will then come across a blue forest on the banks of the Jamuna. I had been to the Chitrakuta many a time. This is the route to go there. It is a beautiful sandy place and there never occurs any forest-fire.

Rama then proceeded according to the directions of Bharadwaja. Rama crossed the swift stream of the

The sanskrit word Goghna means a traveller or a guest who was entertained by the slaughter of a cow or a bull. Allusion to it is to be found even in so late a production as Bhavabhuti's Uttar-charita.
Jamuna by preparing a raft with dry woods, covering it with grass. Mighty Lakshmana made a seat for Sita with cane and branches of the rose-apple. Then Rama made his dear, bashful wife, glorious like the Goddess of Fortune, to get upon the boat, and placed beside her, clothes, ornaments, hoe and the basket covered with a goat skin. Then Rama and Lakshmana got upon the boat.

When the boat arrived at mid-stream, Sita prayed to the sacred stream. By that raft they crossed the rapidly flowing daughter of the sun, heaving with waves. Then they entered a forest on the bank of the Jamuna.

Vaidehi bowed to the great Banian tree known as Shyam. And as Sita saw various kinds of trees, shrubs and hitherto unforeseen creepers with fruits and flowers, she questioned Rama out of curiosity, at which Lakshmana brought her promptly diverse kinds of fruits and flowers. At that time Sita was mightily pleased at the sight of the crystal-watered Jamuna resounding with the notes of cranes and ducks.

After walking about two miles Rama and Lakshmana killed a number of deer, took their meat and passed the night on the even bank of the river.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE CHITRAKUTA

When the night was over, Rama gently roused Lakshmana from sleep.

"Lakshmana, just hear how sweet the birds are chirping; it is time for our departure."
After bathing in the Jamuna they waded their way to the Chitrakuta. On the way Rama, pointing the woods to Sita, said,

"Look Sita, how on account of flowers blossoming in the spring, the Kinsuka tree seems to be garlanded and appears to be encircled by a flame (for its red flowers). Behold the Bhallatak and the Bel are bent down with fruits and flowers and big honey-combs hang almost on every tree. Datyaher and peacocks are crying in shrill notes, and the ground is covered with flowers fallen from the trees. There is the Chitrakuta (at a little distance) loud with the notes of wild birds and where elephants roam about in herds. Lakshmana, we shall live happily in the valley of the Chitrakuta."

After walking a short distance they reached the Chitrakuta mountain, and Rama said, "Lakshmana, here we shall get plenty of food, and its water is delightful to the taste. Probably we won't have to toil here to support ourselves. A good many hermits live here. It is a fit place for our abode. Let us then settle here.

Then they arrived at the hermitage of Valmiki and introduced themselves to the great saint. Valmiki\(^1\) too welcomed them hospitably. Then Rama asked Lakshmana to build a cottage with strong woods. Lakshmana thereupon erected a beautiful hut with wooden walls on four sides and a thatched roof. Rama

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\(^{1}\) These lines conclusively prove that the original poem of Valmiki has undergone great changes at different hands and in different ages, and the whole epic has been overrun with interpolations.
then said, "Let us now procure venison to perform a sacrifice for sanctifying the house. Those who want to live for a long time, they ought to perform the rite. Therefore quickly kill some deer and bring their meat. It is proper to abide by the rules of the Shastras."

Lakshmana brought the venison, and Rama said, "You go and cook the meat and I shall perform the ceremony."

Lakshmana then threw the meat into fire, and when it was well roasted and free from blood, he informed Rama that he had cooked a black deer. Rama then performed the ceremony and after worshipping the Gods he entered the cottage. And after that he offered sacrifices to Rudra, Vishnu and Viswadevas. After this Rama took his bath in the stream and erected chaitya and sacred altar as befitting the cottage. Rama then with Janaki and Lakshmana entered the cottage. And Janaki lived happily there. She was immensely glad in seeing the Malyavati stream furnished with good bathing places and visited by wild fowls and deer. She forgot the sorrow of her exile from Ayodhya to the forest.

CHAPTER XXIV
SUMANTRA'S RETURN

When Rama crossed the Ganges, Guhaka sorrowfully returned to his place, and learnt from envoys of Rama's visit to Bharadwaja at Prayag, and his journey to the Chitrakuta.

Sumantra, then at the words of Guhaka, yoked the
horses to his chariot and proceeded towards Ayodhya with a broken heart.

On the third day, at dusk, Sumantra reached Ayodhya and found it sad and silent like a deserted city. Seeing Sumantra coming back, the citizens ran after the car, crying, "Where is Rama?"

Sumantra then said, "I have come back at the command of Rama from the bank of the Ganges. I know nothing more about him."

Then the citizens burst into tears, thinking that Rama had already crossed the Ganges. Sumantra heard the women bitterly lamenting for Rama, standing by the side of the windows. Sumantra then entered the palace covering his face with a piece of cloth. As he passed through seven apartments crowded with prominent people, women on the roof of the palace began to cry for Rama and they cast dim look from their large, glassy, tearful eyes. Royal dames descended from the palace and broke forth with their voices softened in grief.

"Ah! Sumantra went forth with Rama but why has he come alone? We know not how he will console Kausalya. Seeing Kausalya still alive, it seems life is full of sorrow, and death does not come when prayed for."

Sumantra on entering the eighth room found the King, pale and cast down with sorrow, seated in a yellow-coloured room. Then Sumantra, after making proper obeisance to the King, reported Rama's speech to the King and Dasaratha fainted from grief.
Kausalya and Sumitra then raised the King and began to weep. Kausalya said to Dasaratha, "Why do you not talk to him who has brought message from him? Do you now feel ashamed by sending Rama into the forest? Why do you not talk to Sumantra? That Kaikeyi whom you fear is not here. So speak to him freely."

Kausalya then herself fainted on the ground and loud cries rose from the palace.

When after being fanned, Dasaratha regained his consciousness, he asked Sumantra to come before him. Sumantra then, covered with dust, appeared before the King, and Dasaratha questioned him with sigh.

"Tell me where is now my righteous Rama? What food he takes? Unaccustomed to privations how he is bearing all such hardships? How he sleeps on the ground? How he is passing his time in the forest full of ferocious animals and poisonous snakes? How did they walk on foot with delicate Janaki with them? You are happy as you have seen them last. What did Rama has said? What Lakshmana has said? And what Sita has said? Tell me everything about Rama; I shall sustain my life with those tidings."

Then Sumantra in clasped palms said, "O, great King, righteous Rama bowing down his head and with joined hands said, 'Sumantra! Convey my words at the feet of my father, and my greetings and news of my welfare to all the royal ladies. Tell mother Kausalya that I shall stick to the path of virtue, and she shall properly worship the Fire in the fire-worshipping hall and minister unto the feet of my father, and
also bear himself properly in her behaviour towards my other mothers. A king is adorable though junior in age, so she should honour Bharata as the rightful sovereign. Convey my good wishes to Bharata and tell him that it is not proper to depose old father. So let him continue to be the King and let Bharata rule on his behalf.

"Rama paused and then with tearful eyes said to me, 'Sumantra, you should look upon my mother as your own mother.'

"Lakshmana angrily wanted to know the cause why the King banished his son? And Sita hitherto unacquainted with sorrow began to shed silent tears. I then returned with the empty chariot. At Sringverapura I stayed long with Guhaka in the expectation that Rama might again send for me. At the time of returning, the horses began to shed hot tears and they could not carry the car as before. In thy kingdom, even trees full of blossoms and buds look sad for the calamity that has befallen Rama. The rivers and pools have become hot and their waters unclean; the lotuses have closed their petals, and the woods and grass have withered up. Fishes and aquatic birds are submerged in water, all animals are listless, even the beasts of prey do not roam about, and the forest appears to be dumb and stupefied with grief on account of Rama. The flowers both on land and water do no longer possess their former fragrance and freshness, and fruits have become tasteless. The bowers are lonely and the birds are mute, and the gardens do not

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look at all charming. O King, when I entered Ayodhya none greeted me, and the people sighed for Rama. They began to shed tears in grief when they beheld the Royal car returning without Rama. The people of Ayodhya have become dejected and are heaving windy sighs. Every one is cheerless, even the horses and elephants have become spiritless. Ayodhya appears to be as wretched, as Kausalya deprived of her son."

Hearing the words of Sumantra, the King Dasaratha addressed him in a voice choked with grief, "I do not consult with aged people capable of offering advice when I promised for Rama’s banishment being exhorted by Kaikeyi; without consulting my friends and courtiers I have at the request of a woman rashly done this thing. It seems to me that this calamity has befallen us surely through the influence of Destiny for the purpose of destroying this line."

"Sumantra, if I have done you any good, please take me to Rama. I am dying for him, Ah! Where is now that pearl-toothed hero? My end is near and I am dying like a destitute."

Dasaratha then spoke to Kausalya, "I have fallen into an ocean of grief for absence of Rama. The sighs are its waves and eddies, movements of arms are fishes in it, crying is its deep murmuring sound, Kaikeyi its submarine fire, and the words of Kuvja are crocodiles and sharks, the promised boons are its shores and its width is the exile of Rama, tears like rivers are rushing to it. Ah! I pine for Lakshmana and Rama."
Dasaratha fainted again and Kausalya began to tremble in all her limbs like one possessed by an evil spirit and implored Sumantra again and again to take him to Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. Sumantra then consoling her said, "Rama is living in the forest with an undisturbed mind, and Sita is enjoying her forest-life with him, and self-possessed Lakshmana is engaged in ministering to their good. The beauty of Sita, like the shine of the moon, has not lost its lustre on account of inclement weather, sun-shine or fatigue. Her feet are not now dyed with lac but they are naturally of purple hue, as if painted with lac dye, and looked like lotus buds. She still now wear ornaments and with her tinkling anklets imitates the swan in her gait. Don't be overwhelmed with sorrow for them."

Kausalya then with tearful eyes turned to Dasaratha and accused him for banishing Rama without any just cause. She asked, "How the eldest brother will enjoy the kingdom, once ruled over by the younger one? The tiger does not touch food gathered by another. And who is the best of all men cannot have an inclination for things already tasted by another. Clarified butter, Kusha, sacrificial cakes, stakes of wood, once used in a sacrifice, cannot be used in another. So how Rama will accept the kingdom once enjoyed by Bharata like Soma, when the best body of the liquor has been drunk? As the fish destroys its own brood, so you have ruined Rama. A woman has got three great stays in life, the first is husband, the second is son and the third is her
relatives, and you are no more mine as you have sent Rama into exile."

Dasaratha was overwhelmed with grief and thought about the cause of his miseries. After a deep and long thought he found out the cause, and he remembered how through ignorance he had committed a sinful act by killing a hermit boy, hitting him with a shaft—aiming at him from the direction of the sound. Dasaratha then addressing Kausalya said, "Oh Lady, you are affectionate even towards your enemies, be pleased with me. Virtuous women regard their husbands as living gods, be they accomplished or not." Kausalya began to shed tears like a cloud in the rains and apologised for her harsh words and said:

"My Lord, I have regard for religion and I know you are truthful. I have used unpleasant words being beside myself with sorrow for the absence of my son"

"Wisdom and patience are destroyed by sorrow, so there is no enemy like sorrow. This is the fifth night that Rama has left for the forest, but it seems, as if, five years have elapsed. There is an ocean of sorrow in my heart."

CHAPTER XXV
ANDHA MUNI'S TALE

Night came, Dasaratha fell asleep, but his sleep was soon broken by the thoughts of Rama, and the recollection of his sinful act—killing a hermit's son—rose in his mind. Dasaratha then spoke to afflicted Kausalya.

"O Queen, a man reaps the consequences of his
acts, good or bad, according to the nature of his deeds. He is a child who does not calculate about the probable consequences of his act before he actually does it. I was a fool in cutting down the mango tree and watering at the root of a useless Palas, so I have been rightly disappointed. Now hear me why such a calamity has fallen on me."

"When in my youthful days, I learnt the art of archery, I could then hit a thing from the mere direction of its sound without seeing the thing itself. The people, therefore, called me 'the piercer of the sound.' During these days, I committed a great sin through ignorance, but a poison never ceases to act because a child has drunk it through ignorance."

"When I was a prince, and before my marriage with you, once I set out for hunting in the lustful rainy season. When the sun retired to the south by drying up the sap of the earth, intense heat declined and humid clouds were seen hanging on the horizon. Peacocks, chatakas and frogs began to croak in joy. The branches of the trees were being shaken by force of the wind and rain, and the birds, with the surface of their wings wet with rain, with great difficulty took shelter in them. The mountains overflowed with rivulets and streams, and their waters being mixed up with mineral substances and ashes flowed in snake-like zigzag course. At that time, I felt a great desire for hunting, and thereupon, to kill buffaloes, elephants and other beasts that might come to water for their drink at night, I repaired to the bank of the Saraju in my car."
"At last, everything was enveloped in darkness and I heard in the waters of the Saraju a gurgling sound like that of filling water into pitcher, as is often produced by an elephant when it drinks. I then took up a deadly shaft from my quiver and sent it towards the direction from which the sound proceeded. As soon as the arrow went flying, I heard the groans and cries of a man! He was, in truth, a hermit! He was struck in the heart and fell into water. Then the injured man said, "I am a hermit, why have you struck me with an arrow? I came to the lonely river to fetch water at night. What have I done? I live on wild fruits and roots and do nothing that may pain anybody. This is a highly reprehensible act. I am not, however, sorry for my own death, but I am sorry for the distress that will befall my old parents. I am their only support. Who will maintain them in my absence? Thus all of us have been struck down by one shaft. Who is that greedy boy that has killed us thus?"

"Queen, as I heard these piteous words from the hermit-boy at night, my bow dropped down from my hand. I was overwhelmed with dark apprehension and sorrow, and slowly proceeded towards the spot. On coming there I found an ascetic struck by the arrow. His matted locks were dishevelled, he was besmeared with blood and dust, and the pitcher with water was lying on the ground.

"When the hermit saw me standing before him, he said, 'I am a denizen of the forest. I came to the Saraju to fetch water for my parents, why did you
strike me? In one shaft you have killed me as well as my blind father and mother. They are weak and thirsty and surely they are anxiously waiting for me. Father doesn't know that I am thus lying on the ground. Even if he comes to know of it what will he do? He is blind and cannot walk. So you yourself go to my father and give him the information. But take care that he may not destroy you. Try to appease him, so that he may not curse you in anger. Your arrow has struck my heart as the river strikes against a sandy coast, and it is giving me great pain. Just extract it from there.'

"When the hermit-boy asked me to extract the arrow I was in a dilemma. If the arrow remained there, it would give him more pain, but if I drew it out, he would die immediately.

"At last the hermit-boy began to sink. His eyes were turned up and his limbs became listless. Seeing me thus overwhelmed with grief the ascetic with great difficulty said, "O King, remove from your mind the idea that you have killed a Brahman, for I am not so. I am born of a Vaisha father and a Sudra mother.

"I then extracted that arrow from his heart and he began to roll in agony and he gave up his life by fixing his sacred look on me. I was overwhelmed with great sorrow.

"I was struck with deep remorse and greatly repented for my act, and long thought what was the best thing to do. At last, I took up the pitcher filled with water and went to the hermitage. There I found
the blind and infirm hermit-couple, like helpless birds with their wings clipped. There was nobody else who could move them from one place to another. At that time they were talking about their son. Though I had destroyed all their hopes, still they were waiting for their son's return with water. I was already extremely distressed with sorrow and remorse, but on entering the hermitage I felt myself more wretched.

"The old hermit hearing the sound of my foot-steps mistook me for his son and said, 'Why are you so late, my boy? Bring the water soon, your mother was greatly anxious for your delay in the river. You are our only support, and the eyes of the blind. Our lives depend upon you. But why are you silent? Why don't you reply to my words?'

"I was greatly alarmed at this, and concealing my real feeling I said with difficulty:

"O sage, I am Dasaratha of Kshatriya race. I am not your son. I have committed a very hateful act and I am extremely sorry and repentant for it. Sir, I was waiting at the banks of the Saraju for killing elephants and other animals that might come for drink at night. Then I heard a gurgling noise. I thought that an elephant was drinking water, and hit an arrow aiming at the sound. But coming on to the edge of the river I found a hermit-boy lying on the ground. At his words I took out the arrow from his heart, and he died lamenting for his old parents, as soon as the arrow was drawn out. O sage, I have killed your son without my knowledge. What has been done cannot be undone. Now command me what I am to do."
"The sage could have reduced me to ashes then and there but he forbore and said, 'O King, if you did not come to inform me, your head would have crumbled down from your shoulders. Not to speak of a Kshatriya, such an impious act committed with knowledge could have dragged down Indra from his throne. You are still alive because you have committed the act through inadvertance, or you would have been destroyed with your family. However, take us to the place where my son is lying prostrate."

"Then I took them to the bank of the Saraju and made them touch the body of their son, whereupon they fell upon the dead body of their son and began to cry bitterly."

"The hermit said, 'Why don't you greet us to-day? Why are you lying on the ground? Are you angry with us? Cast your eyes on your mother. Why don't you embrace her and talk to her? Henceforth whose sweet chanting of the Shastras shall I listen to? Who will offer oblations into fire in the evening and bathe us? I am old, infirm and absolutely helpless. Who will now procure me fruits and roots? How shall I maintain your mother? I ask you not to go alone to the abode of Death. To-morrow we all three shall go there. We shall soon die in your absence. I shall go to the region of Death and speak to Death himself, and ask him to excuse me. Alas! you are innocent and sinless, but this sinful Kshatriya has killed you. But through my force of truth you will attain the happy region attained by the heroes after death. Dost thou
attain the same state as has been attained by the emperors Sagara, Saiva, Dilipa, Janmejaya, Nahusha and Dhundhumar. Yours will be the blissful state that is obtained after death by the study of the Vedas, penance, devotion to a single wife, gift of lands and thousands of kine, serving the guru, or by the observance of religious rites and fasting. But he who has killed you will attain evil state after death.'

"Thus saying, the ascetic with his wife performed the watery rites for their son.'

"After this the pious son of the hermit assuming a celestial form ascended the heaven with Indra and consoled his old parents saying that he had attained the highest heaven by serving them and asked them to come to him without delay.'

"Thereafter the hermit with his wife performing the watery rites of their son said, ‘Oh King, kill me now. You have killed my only son so I won’t feel any pain of death, but hear my curse. As I die from the grief for the death of my son, so you will die from grief for your own son.’”

"The hermit after cursing me got into the funeral pyre with his wife and ascended heaven thereby.'

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1 Strict monogamy was held in great esteem. Siva thus blesses Parvati, “May you obtain a husband solely devoted to you.”—Kalidas.
CHAPTER XXVI

DASARATHA’S DEATH

"Oh Queen, the sin I have committed through ignorance in my childhood has now revived in my memory, and as unhealthy food produces disease, so this evil act will produce its due consequence."

Dasaratha paused and again burst forth in tears, "Oh Queen, surely I shall die of this intense grief for my son. I can no more see anything, please touch my body. It is not possible to meet any one after death. I could survive, if Rama touched me now. I have behaved improperly towards Rama and I justly suffer for it. Oh Queen, I can not see you any more, my memory is failing and I am finding the angels of death hovering about me and urging me towards the dreadful abode of death. Alas! I shall no more see Rama. As the sun dries up drops of water, so absence of Rama is scorching my soul. I consider them to be (as lucky as) gods who will witness Rama’s face after fourteen years of exile, with eyes expanded as tho lotus-petal well-drawn brows, beautiful teeth and graceful neck and countenance as beautiful as the autumnal moon. I feel, I am rapidly sinking, and my senses can no more feel sound, taste or touch. For want of consciousness my senses are becoming benumbed, as the light of the lamp grows dim for want of oil. As the impetuous current of a river destroys its bank, so this internal grief will bring about my end. Oh Rama, my darling! Where are you now? Oh Kausalya, I do not see you any
more. Ah, Sumitra! Oh cruel Kaikeyi!" Thus lamenting the King breathed his last at midnight in the presence of Kausalya and Sumitra.

When the night was over, eulogists, bards, genealogist and singers came to the palace and began to sing the praise of the King and the palm-players began to strike their palms by reciting the deeds of the previous Kings. At the sound of their claps the birds, perched on the trees, were roused from sleep and began to chirp. The Vinas began to be played and pure-charactered woman skilled in service came there, and persons acquainted with the rites of bath brought water in golden pitchers perfumed with Harisandal scent. For auspiciousness, chaste women and virgins brought Ganges water, wearing apparel, and ornaments and cows for being touched. All waited with those articles for the King till the sun-rise. But they grew apprehensive as they were disappointed by delay.

Then the ladies that were near about Dasaratha tried to rouse the King by gentle words, but they found no beating of his heart or pulse. They were greatly alarmed about the King's life and began to tremble like the blades of grass. They then concluded, perhaps last night's apprehension of the King came to be true.

Being prostrate with grief for the King, Kausalya and Sumitra fell unconscious. Rama's mother was lying by the King by contracting her body. She looked pale and dark like a star, hid in darkness. Sumitra's face was stained with tears.

Finding them in a swoon other women began to cry,
and after some time Kausalya and Sumitra came to their senses. They rose from the bed but when they touched the body of the King they shrieked and fell on the ground again.

Kausalya rolled on the ground and being covered with dusts she looked like a star dropped from the sky.

Kaikeyi and others lost their senses by incessantly crying for their husband.

All were frightened by the cries that rose from the palace. Dasaratha in his death looked like an extinguished fire, and as a dried up ocean.

Kausalya then took Dasaratha's head on her lap and addressing Kaikeyi said in tearful eyes, "Now you attain your object of desire and enjoy the kingdom by getting rid of all your thorns. You have destroyed the clan of Raghu, and Kuvja is at the root of it. You know not through your greed you have taken poison administered by another."

The counsellors seeing Kausalya crying thus by embracing the dead body of the King, they removed the body from that place according to the direction of Vasistha and other Brahmins and preserved the body carefully by immersing it in oil, for there was no son to perform the funeral obsequies of the King.

The counsellors placed the corpse in a vat full of oil and they burst forth in tears saying, "Oh King, we have already lost sweet-speeched and truthful Rama, why have you then left us so? We have been all stranded by your death."

The city looked gloomy in absence of the King. Men and women cursed Kaikeyi and shed tears for the King. Thus the day declined in sorrow.
CHAPTER XXVII
VASTHBA’S ADVICE

When the long night of sorrow was over, the great saint Markandeya, Vamadeva, Kasyapa, Gautama, Jabali and other Brahmins came to the royal court and discussed various matters concerning the administration with the ministers.

They being unable to decide anything themselves submitted to Vasistha:

"King Dasaratha is dead. Rama has repaired to the forest with Lakshmana and Sita. Bharata and Satrughna are now in their maternal uncle's house at Rajagriha. It is incumbent to install one of Ikshaku's line on the throne, or the kingdom will precipitate into ruin in the absence of a King. Where there is no King, the clouds do not rain there, seeds are not sown, the son does not obey the father, nor wife the husband, and it is always difficult to protect their wealth and women. Great mischiefs ensue to the people. In a kingless country nobody feels inclined to build a house, or to construct a garden, or to gather in assemblies. In a kingless realm, Brahmins cease to perform their sacrifices, and all festivities end there. Actors, dancers desist from showing their skill, and social progress ceases there. In a kingless country businessmen are disappointed in their expectation of wealth, and persons versed in ancient lore give up reciting those things for want of an audience. In a kingless city, young maidens decked in gold do not go to the garden in the evening.
for their sport. In a kingless country cowherds and cultivators do not sleep at night by keeping their doors open, nor pleasure-seeking people go out in their swift cars in the company of bright women. In a kingless country merchants are afraid to move with their merchandise to distant places and no one can hear the clappings of persons engaged in archery. In a kingless city, big tuskers of sixty years old do not ply along the streets with tinkling bells round their necks. In a kingless country one cannot protect what he has, nor can he procure what he does not possess. In a kingless country, the learned do not discuss the Shastras, and pious people have little heart for offering Dakshinagarlands or sweets for the worship of deities. In a kingless city princes besmeared with sandal and aguru do not appear like vernal trees.

"A kingdom without a king is in fact a river without water, a forest without grass, a cow without a cow-herd. In this state it is difficult to preserve one's life and men destroy each other as the fish do among themselves. The atheists who are punished for slighting religion raise their heads in this state of anarchy. The King is the eye of the people; as the eye protects the body from injury and contributes to its welfare, so the King protects the people. He is the protector of truth and religion and upholder of social dignity. If there were no King—a judge of right and wrong, there would be no distinction between things as when enveloped in utter darkness. In a kingless country disputants can not decide their points. As smoke
reveals fire, and pinion a chariot, so King Dasaratha represented the kingdom through him. Now he is dead. We therefore ask for your advice.”

Vasistha hearing these words said, “Bharata, upon whom the King has conferred the kingdom, is now residing at his maternal uncle’s place with Satrughna. Let us send envoys on swift horses to him.”

Vasistha then addressing the envoys named, Siddhartha, Vijaya, and Asakenandana said, “Remove your sorrow, go to King Kekaya with silken apparels and ornaments and tell Bharata on my behalf to come immediately to Ajodhya where his presence is urgently wanted but take care don’t speak about Rama’s exile and Dasaratha’s death.”

Then the envoys being furnished with the necessaries left for Kekaya, as directed by Vasistha. After crossing the Malini they proceeded by the west of Apartala and went towards the north of Pralamva.

Then crossing the Ganges at Hastinapura and arriving at Panchala, they went westward through Kurujangal and on their way they saw vast expanses of water strewn with full blown lotuses, and met translucent streams. After crossing the Saradanda they bowed to the Satyopayachana tree on its bank and then entered the city of Kulinga.

After passing through Teyobhibhavana, they arrived at Abhikala. They then crossed the Ikshumati. They then went through Vahlilia towards the Sadaman hill. There they saw the foot-prints of Vishnu, and then passed the Vipasha and the Shamali streams. They met on their way elephants, lions, tigers, deer and various other animals and after proceeding some distance they reached the city of Girivraja.¹

¹ Modern-Rajgirh near Patna.
CHAPTER XXVIII

Bharata

That very night the envoys entered the city, Bharata had a bad dream towards the dawn and he became anxious for it. His friends tried to remove his anxiety by their conversations.

Some one played on the lute, some caused the dancing girls to dance before Bharata, some read mirth-provoking comedies, but Bharata could not join them in their jollity.

At last, a bosom-friend of his asked, "My friend, why do you look so indifferent inspite of the attempts of your friends to cheer you up?"

Bharata said, "Hear me, why I feel anxious to-day. Towards the end of the night I saw my father in a dream. He looked pale, and I saw him falling headlong from a mountain peak into a filthy pit and I saw him floating on that dirty stream and drinking oil from the hollow of his joined palms with a laugh. I then saw him diving into oil with an oily body, after partaking with a bent down head, rice mixed with oil again and again. I also beheld as if the ocean had grown dry, the moon has fallen on the ground; as if the earth had been enveloped in darkness, burning fire had abruptly been extinguished, the earth riven, trees and mountains destroyed with smoke, and the tusks of the elephant on which the King rides had fallen into pieces! And I saw my father clad in sable clothes seated on a dark iron seat, and dark, tawny

1 In the original—a lake full of cowdung.
women were beating him. He was driving fast, wearing a red garland, towards the south in a car yoked with asses. Women clad in red were laughing at him, and grim-visaged Rakshasis were dragging him by force. I had such an awful dream towards the close of night. Now, it is certain that one of us either the King, Rama, Lakshmana, Satrughna or myself must die. The smoke of the funeral pyre of the person is soon seen to rise, who is seen in a dream driving in a car yoked with asses. I have grown anxious for this, this is why I am not greeting you with my speech. My throat has become perchéd. Though at present I do not find any cause of fear, yet I am apprehending danger at every step. I have got a grating voice, and feel my life as vapid. And my heart is not at ease at this quite unexpected dream, and my apprehensions about the King can not be allayed."

When Bharata was narrating his dream to his friends, the fatigued envoys entered the well-protected, beautiful city of Rajagriha and appeared before King Kekaya and Judhajit, and after receiving their hospitality they came to Bharata. After greeting him duly they said, "O Prince, Vasistha and the ministers enquire about your welfare, and they have asked you to set out immediately, as there is a very urgent matter which may be defeated by delay, and you will have to attend to that. We have brought costly apparels and ornaments, present them to your maternal grandfather and maternal uncle."

Bharata, after accepting the articles asked, "How
is the King doing? Are worshipful Rama and Lakshman safe? Is everything all right with virtuous Kausalya and Sumitra? How is my mother Kaikeyi proud of her attainments?"

The envoys humbly replied, "They are all doing well. Now Kamala, the goddess of fortune, craves your presence, please ask to get your chariot immediately ready."

Bharata then went to inform his maternal grandfather and said, "Envoys have come for me. I shall now go to my father and shall come back again when you send for me."

Then King Kekaya kissing Bharata's head replied, "Kaikeyi has obtained the happiness of getting a worthy son in you. I give you leave to go. Communicate to your parents, Vasistha, Rama, Lakshmana and others that we are doing well."

After this, King Kekaya presented to Bharata excellent elephants, variegated blankets, deer-skins, domesticated dogs, big and strong like tigers and endowed with formidable teeth. He also gave him two thousand beads of gold, and sixteen hundred horses, swift asses, and also a number of servants for Bharata's retinue.

But Bharata grew highly anxious on account of his evil dream and for the hurry of the envoys. With Satrughna, Bharata then set out from his quarters after greeting his maternal grandfather, Juhajit and other relations.

After a journey of seven nights Bharata arrived in
front of Ayodhya. And at the sight of Ayodhya, Bharata spoke to his charioteer.

"Look, there is the famous city of Ayodhya. But from a distance it appears to be cheerless to-day. It is a crowded city, but how is it that it looks like a deserted one! Even the soil of Ayodhya seems to be dark. Formerly, there was a great din in the city, but everything, seems to be hushed in silence to-day. Formerly, pleasure-seeking people used to enter these gardens in the evening and leave them in the morning but they seem to be in mourning for their absence. O charioteer, the city appears to me like a forest to-day. I do not see important persons going through the streets on their elephants or horses. Bowers and other abodes of pleasure where inebriated lovers meet, seem to be solitary and silent! Leaves are falling off from every roadside tree, and the sweet notes of birds are no more to be heard, bracing air seems no more to blow laden with the perfume of sandal, Aguru and incense. Why musical instruments have ceased to be played? I find ominous signs all around. My heart acheth at the sight."

Saying these, with an anxious and depressed heart, Bharata entered the city through the Vaijayanta gate.

At his sight the sentries stood up and after saluting him followed him out of respect. Bharata asked them to return to their posts, and he said to his charioteer:

"Why the envoys betrayed such indecent haste? I have dark misgiving in my mind. My anxiety is growing more intense. I see around me all inauspicious
signs. Temples are not decorated with wreaths and flowers. The courts are unclean. Merchants have closed their shops, all business seem to have stopped. I find the people no more gay as before, but sad and anxious."

With these words Bharata entered the palace and he was greatly shocked by the cheerless look of the great city.

With a depressed heart and downcast look Bharata entered his father’s quarters but missing him there he went to his mother.

CHAPTER XXIX
BHARATA AND KAIKEYI

Kaikeyi seeing her son returned home, rose from her golden seat in delight, Bharata too bowed to her on entering the room.

Kaikeyi then embraced him and after kissing his head asked him fondly, "Tell me, my boy, when you left your maternal uncle’s place? Don’t you feel fatigued by the journey? How are your maternal grandfather and uncle doing? Were you not happy in your stay there?"

Lotus-eyed Bharata replied, "Mother, seven nights hence I left the city of my maternal grandfather. Your father and brother are doing well. My men have been borne down with fatigue in carrying the presents of King Kekaya to me. I have, therefore, come ahead of them. However, I now ask you one thing. Why the emissaries of my father have brought me so hurri-
edly here? Your golden bedstead appears to be vacant. Father often lives in your quarters but why I do not find him to-day. I want to bow down at his feet, tell me where he is now. Is he now in mother Kausalya's palace? I do not find any one of the Ikshaku family in good spirits. What is the cause of this?"

Thereupon, Kaikeyi being exceedingly delighted at the prospect of Bharata's kingdom said, "My boy, that performer of sacrifices, the refuge of the good, the King has attained the inevitable end of all creatures."

"Ah alas!" Bharata exclaimed in sorrow and fainted on the ground with outstretched arms.

Then Kaikeyi finding her son prostrate on the ground, like a cut down tree, raised him up and affectionately said, "My boy! Why are you lying on the ground? Just arise. A cultured man like you is never overwhelmed with grief. Your intelligence never leaves you as brightness never leaves the solar disc."

Bharata, wept long, rolling on the dust. Then addressing his mother, Bharata said,

'Mother, I went to maternal uncle's house with the happy thought that father would install Rama on the throne, but I see everything has been altered. Mother, my father has died of what disease in my absence? Alas! Where is he who used to brush off dust from my childish limbs? Happy are they who performed the last rites of my father. However, now inform Rama immediately of my arrival, he is my brother, a friend, and father to me. I am his devoted servant. I shall bow down at Rama's feet, he is my
refuge. Now tell me what were the last words of the King. I am most eager to hear them."

Kaikeyi said, "Your father breathed his last, saying, 'Alas, Rama! Alas, Lakshmana! Alas, Sita!' And smarting under the grip of death the King said, "They are happy who will witness Rama returned to Ayodhya with Lakshmana and Janaki."

Bharata asked, "Mother, where is virtuous Rama now putting up with Sita and Lakshmana?"

Then Kaikeyi thinking that Bharata would be glad at the news of Rama's exile, said, "My child, the prince clad in bark has repaired to the Dandaka forest with Lakshmana and Sita."

Bharata was fully acquainted with the customs of his family and at these words he grew apprehensive about the conduct of Rama and anxiously asked,—

"Has Rama robbed a Brahman or his property? Has he injured any innocent man, whether rich or poor? Did he take any fancy on another's wife? Now tell me, why he has been banished to the Dandaka forest."

Then his proud, volatile mother cheerfully observed, "Rama has neither robbed a Brahman, nor he has injured any innocent person. He has not even eyed anybody's wife, but my boy, hearing of his installation I prayed to the King for Rama's exile and your installation on the throne. The king had promised me two boons previously, so for the observance of truth he has conferred the kingdom on you. Rama is now in exile with Sumitra's son and Sita. The King
died being separated from his son You now ascend the throne. I have done all these for you. This city and the kingdom now belong to you. Shake off your sorrows. Perform the funeral rites with the help of Brahmanas versed in rituals and then ascend the throne."

CHAPTER XXX
BHARATA'S REPLY

Hearing these shocking words Bharata with deep remorse said, "Alas! At one and the same time I have lost my father and father-like brother. What shall I do with the kingdom? You have banished my brother and killed my father and thus caused immeasurable grief by adding insult to the injury. You are destroyer of our clan. You have strewn the path of happiness of this family with thorns. Virtuous Rama used to love and respect you as his own mother. Even farsighted mother Kausalya looked upon you as her sister and you have sent her son into exile. What benefit you have thereby gained? You are too greedy. Perhaps you know not how I looked upon Rama? How shall I protect the kingdom without Rama and Lakshmana? I would not have hesitated to abandon you, if Rama did not look upon you as his mother. How could you have such a wicked intention, foreign to our family traditions? In our family it is the eldest son that ascends the throne while others remain under him. It now appears that you are not conversant even with the laws of sovereignty. How could you
being born of a king have forgotten this? Your intentions, however, will never be fulfilled. I shall immediately bring back Rama and shall live as his slave."

Bharata began to growl like a lion in grief and anger.

Bharata again resumed in wrath, "You cruel woman! Leave the kingdom at once. You are impious and you have no right to weep for your husband. What great offence Rama and Dasaratha had committed to you that you have sent one to exile and another to death's door? You have committed such a great sin by banishing Rama to the forest that I am afraid I shall incur public odium for being your son. You have put me into eternal disgrace. You are my enemy in the form of my mother. Don't utter my name with those lips. It is for you that I have become fatherless and an object of public derision.

"To what pit of hell thou art condemned for depriving virtuous Kausalya of her son? Don't you know that eldest Rama is dear unto all? A son born of the limbs of his mother comes from her heart, therefore he is dearer to her mother than all other relations."

"Just listen to a story. Once upon a time the celestial cow Surabhi while going through the heavenly region beheld two of her sons yoked to the plough. Seeing them fatigued on account of ploughing the field until noon, she became extremely sorry and began to shed tears. At that time Indra was passing below her and drops of her tears fell upon Indra's body. Indra then looked up and found Surabhi weeping."
Indra grew highly anxious at this and enquired whether the Gods are well, and as to why she was weeping. Surabhi replied that there was nothing to say about the Gods but pointing to her sons she said, "Look here, how my two sons are labouring hard in that undulating field. I have been greatly distressed by their sufferings. There are no dearer things than one's issue."

"From that time Indra realised son to be the dearest thing in life and entertained great regard for Surabhi. Now consider if Surabhi inspite of innumerable sons could be so sorry as that what would be the condition of Kausalya having one son only? You will have to suffer for the sin of robbing her of her only son. Now after performing the obsequies of my father I shall bring back Rama from the forest and I shall myself embrace the forest life. I shall consider myself fortunate and my stain will be removed, if I succeed in bringing back Rama to Ayodhya."

Bharata then began to breathe heavily with anger and sorrow, and he threw away all the ornaments from his body. And he fell down like the banner of Sakra after the festivity was over.¹

¹ Sometimes great festivities were held in honour of Indra-worship. When the festivities were over, the flag-staff that was raised in honour of Indra was pulled down.
CHAPTER XXXI
Bharata and Kausalya

On regaining his senses after a long time Bharata said to the ministers casting a tearful look on his mother, "I did not hanker for the kingdom nor I deputed my mother for it. I was living far away with Satrughna, so I could not even know that the King made arrangements for the installation of Rama, nor I was aware that Rama has thus been sent into exile with Lakshmana and Janaki."

When Bharata was taking his mother to task, Kausalya hearing the voice of Bharata told Sumitra, "Bharata, the son of crooked Kaikeye, has come. Bharata is far-sighted and I wish to see him once." Saying this Kausalya in trembling gait repaired to Bharata. At that time Bharata being desirous of seeing Kausalya, was proceeding with Satrughna to her quarters. Kausalya met him on the way and embraced him in tearful eyes and then addressing Bharata said, "You hankered after kingdom, now enjoy it without any thorn. Your mother has obtained the kingdom for you by extremely cruel means. I know not what she has gained by sending away Rama to the forest. Now let her send me there where Rama with navel of golden hue resides. Or, I shall myself go there with Sumitra or you take me there where Rama is engaged in religious meditations. This vast kingdom now belongs to you."

When Kausalya used these hard words Bharata felt
pained like one whose sores are pricked with a needle and he fainted at Kausalya's feet.

After regaining his consciousness Bharata said with folded palms, "Oh worshipful lady, I don't know anything about it. I am quite innocent of this. Then why do you censure me for this? Don't you know that I have great and unflinching devotion and affection for Rama? What shall I say more, the person according to whose wish truthful Rama has gone to the forest, though his (or her) intelligence be refined by the Shastras, will be a slave to vice and sin. May he commit that sin which is incurred by one answers the calls of nature facing the sun or kicks a sleeping cow. May he reap that sin which is incurred by a master who does not pay his servant after the work is done, or attempts to injure the king who governs his subject like his son, or the sin that befalls a king who does not govern well by taking a sixth part of the income of his subjects, or the sin that befalls a man who denies Dakshina after the sacrifice. May he who has sent long-armed, broad-shouldered Rama, bright as the sun and the moon to the forest not live long till Rama's restoration to the throne. May he who has approved of Rama's exile may feed on Payasha, Krishara and goat's flesh which have not been offered in sacrifice. Oh noble lady, may he who has approved of Rama's exile live in luxury but without any issue and without getting a desirable wife. May he incur the shame that befalls a person who kills a king, a woman, a boy or an old
man, or the demerit of a person who forsakes a trusted servant. Let him who has sent Rama to forest maintain his family by selling lac, iron, honey, meat and poison. May he beg for his bread like a nomadic, clad in rags and holding a skull in his hands. May he be addicted to wine, woman and dice, may he be overwhelmed with passion and anger. May he be robbed of all his wealth by robbers, may he incur the demerit as he who sleeps both in the morning and in the evening, and may he reap the sin that is reaped by an incendiary or who commits adultery with his preceptor's wife, or who wrongs his friends. Let him be addicted to all sorts of evils and let him suffer from infirmity and poverty being saddled with a big family. He will disregard his own chaste wife close by him after ablutions at the end of her monthly course, and will incur the demerit like him who kills a cow having a young calf. He will reap the sin like one who fouls drinking water, administers poison, refuses drink to a thirsty person having water in his possession, or who quarrels with others about their respective faiths and gods as well as he who listens to those disputes."

Kausalya, then, said, "Oh my son, your words pain me more. I know you have not swerved from virtue, and for this reason you will attain the noble region of pious men."

Thus saying Kausalya took Bharata on her lap and began to weep bitterly. Bharata's heart was rent with sorrow and he began to heave repeatedly deep sighs.
CHAPTER XXXII

THE CREMATION

When the day dawned Vasistha said to Bharata, "O prince! It is useless to lament any more. Now it is time to cremate the body of the King; therefore, make arrangements for it."

Bharata then bowed to Vasistha and placed the body on the ground, raising it from the oil vat. Dasaratha's face was pale and he looked as if buried in sleep. Seeing the body of the King thus prostrate on the ground, Bharata broke forth being overwhelmed with grief.

"O King! What wrong thou hast committed by banishing Rama and Lakshmana during my absence! I have been already deprived of Rama, now where have you gone leaving this poor soul? Rama has gone to the forest and you too are dead. Who can now devote himself to the task of protecting what the people possess and in securing what they do not? Oh! Father, the earth has been widowed by your death, and the city looks like a gloomy moonless night."

Vasistha, seeing Bharata bewailing thus, said, "Oh prince, don't be overwhelmed with grief but perform the funeral rites of the King with an undisturbed mind."

Then Bharata at the words of Vasistha asked the Ritwigs, Priests, and Acharyas to make haste. Ritwigs and Priests began to offer oblations into the fire that had already been brought out from the fire chamber.
Then the servants in sorrowful hearts carried the body of the King to the bank of the Saraju in a car. A large number of people went ahead distributing gold, silver and cloths. In the meantime the funeral pyre was prepared with Incense, Sandal, Aguru, Sarala, Padmaka, Devadaru and other fragrant things. The Ritwigs placed the body of the King in the funeral pyre and began to utter "mantras" offering oblations into the fire for the purification of the King in the next world. Singers of Samaveda began to sing the Sama-hymns. The queens and the aged people came in their litters, went round the King with the Ritwigs and were crying like Crouchis.

Then the queens bathed in the Saraju and performed with Bharata the watery rites for the dead and entering the city they passed ten days in great privations, by lying on the ground at night.

CHAPTER XXXIII
THE FUNERAL RITES

After the passing of ten days, Bharata performed Sradh Ceremony of the King and on the twelfth day for the welfare of the King in the next world, Bharata performed Sapindakaran ceremony of the second month, and for the spiritual welfare of his father conferred on the Brahmans profuse wealth, food, goats, cows, servants, horses and cars.

On the thirteenth day Bharata came to the bank of the Saraju to gather the ashes of his father and was overwhelmed with grief began to cry aloud on seeing
the crimsoned spot covered with ashes and embers where the bones of his father had been reduced to ashes and thus occurred the dissolution of his body. Bharata fainted in sorrow. People raised him up as they do the fallen banner of Indra. Satrughna too became mad with sorrow seeing Bharata thus smitten with grief. He walked up and down with restless steps saying. "We are now overwhelmed in that sea of sorrow that owes its origin to Manthara, and whose fierce monster is Kaikeyi. Where hast thou gone leaving tender-hearted Bharata? Who will now look after us? Strange that the Earth was not rent into pieces after losing her virtuous lord like you! Alas! You are dead and Rama has gone to the forest, how can we live then? I shall cast myself into flames and shall never return to Ayodhya in a fatherless and brotherless state, but will repair to the forest."

The people were greatly distressed hearing Bharata and Satrughna lamenting thus, and the two princes rolled on the earth like two bulls in agony having their horns broken.

Then Vasistha raised Bharata from the ground and addressing him said, "O prince, this is the thirteenth day since the cremation of your father. The only thing remains to be done is to collect his bones. Why do you delay then? It is not proper for you to be overwhelmed with grief since hunger, thirst, grief, ignorance, infirmity and death are inevitable in human life."

Then Bharata and Satrughna wiped off their eyes and looked like a banner of Indra sullied by wind and rain.
CHAPTER XXXIV
THE RESOLUTION OF BHARATA

Then Sumitra's son, Satrughna, finding Bharata resolved to go to Rama, said, "There is no doubt that Rama who gives shelter to all in distress, is our refuge. A woman has sent such Rama to the forest. Worshipful Lakshmana is powerful, why did he not deliver Rama by subduing father? The King who takes to unrighteous course at the words of a woman deserves to be suppressed even from the moral point of view."

When Satrughna was saying this to Bharata, the hump-backed came near the door, wearing royal robes, besmearing her limbs with sandal paste, and adorning her body with ornaments; and for having put on a girdle round her waist she looked like a female monkey tied with a rope.

Seeing that vicious hump-backed at the door Satrughna dragged her by force and said to Bharata—

"Here is that vicious hump-backed wench, the cause of Rama's exile, and father's death. Do with her as you please."

Satrughna, always obedient to Bharata's words addressing the inmates said, "This sorceress has brought miseries to our father and brothers. Let her now feel the consequence."

Saying this, Satrughna, took the hump-backed by force, and she began to resound the house with her piteous cries. Her maids got frightened at Satrughna's
anger and fearing a similar fate took shelter under Kausalya.

Satrughna began to drag Manthara by force and all her ornaments fell from her body, and the floor of the room, with scattered ornaments, looked like the autumnal sky strewn with the stars. Satrughna began to oppress Manthara by force and to abuse Kaikeyi in harsh words. Kaikeyi was greatly alarmed at this and sought protection of Bharata.

Then Bharata seeing Satrughna beside himself with rage said, “A woman should not be killed, so forgive her. I would have killed Kaikeyi, but Rama would despise me as the murderer of my mother. So if you kill this hump-backed woman, he won’t speak with us in derision.”

At these words Satrughna desisted from the reproachful act and let Manthara off. As soon as Manthara was released, she threw herself at Kaikeyi’s feet and began to cry piteously.

On the morning of the 14th day, a large number of people collected and said to Bharata—

“King Dasaratha who was our supreme Lord, has gone to heaven by banishing Rama and Lakshmana, so you be our King from to-day. The kingdom, though it is now without a King, won’t come to ruins if the counsellors act with united opinions. The counsellors are waiting for you with all the articles of coronation, so ascend the throne and save us from miseries.”

Bharata seeing the articles of coronation said, “Eldest son should ascend the throne, that is the custom
of our family. So you should not request me about it. Worshipful Rama should ascend the throne and I shall myself repair to the forest and live there for fourteen years. Now ask my army to get ready, I shall myself bring back Rama from the forest. I shall carry with me the articles of coronation and shall have him crowned in the forest and shall bring him thence as fire from the place of sacrifice. I shall never fulfil the desire of this so-called mother. Let the artizans prepare my way for the forest. Let them level the uneven paths, and let men capable of going to difficult and inaccessible places accompany me."

Hearing Bharata speaking thus all the people collected there said, "May you be prosperous since you have so nobly resolved to confer the throne on the eldest." And they shed tears in joy.

CHAPTER XXXV
Bharata's Journey

Then carpenters, wood cutters, expert diggers, builders, cobblers, cooks, perfumers, makers of machines and bamboo made articles, people acquainted with geography, active servants, and forward guides started in advance. When throngs of people rushed out in joy, they resembled like the waves of an agitated ocean heaved up by the full moon. The pioneers with axes and spades went ahead and made paths by clearing the jungles. They cut down many trees, shrubs and rocks, and planted trees where there was none. They levelled many high grounds and filled many
deep ditches. Some built bridges, some bored earth and rocks for water and pounded stones into fine dusts. They dug well with raised diases in waterless places. And the way of his army lay through many white plastered pavements, through woods bearing blossoms and rendered vocal by the notes of wild birds. The road was decorated with flags and flowers, and sprinkled with sandal showers. Thus it appeared like a heavenly path.

Those who received orders of pitching tents, set their tents under auspicious stars in the places abounding in sweet fruits, and decorated them profusely. The tents were then surrounded by moats and were decorated with images of sapphire.

Somewhere palaces were built, ramparts with dovecots were raised and seven-storied towers were raised, on both sides of which stood various kinds of trees and tanks with crystal water and full of fishes.

Towards the end of the night preceding the day on which Bharata was to be consecrated for the coronation ceremony, eulogists began to sing praises of Bharata. Kettle drums were struck by golden sticks and hundreds of conch shells were blown to announce the break of the day. Then Bharata rose with a sorrowful heart and asked to stop the music saying, "You must know that I am not the King."

Then addressing Satrughna he said, "You see they have been incited by Kaikeyi in these unjust things. Father has gone to the next world leaving me to infinite miseries, and he who is our master has been
banished to the forest. There would not have been such a chaos if he were here."

While saying this, Bharata was overwhelmed with grief.

Then Vasistha versed in statecraft entered the court, ornamented with gold and gems and sat down upon a golden seat adorned with an elegant cover. He asked the warders soon to fetch Bharata, Satrughna, counsellors and captains. Then intelligent Bharata entered the court full of educated people, rendered bright by the brilliance of their dress and ornaments, which looked like a full moon autumnal night.

Seeing Bharata entering the court, Vasistha said,

"King Dasaratha has repaired to Heaven by conferring the earth full of wealth and corns on you. Now get yourself crowned and rule the kingdom."

Prince Bharata was overwhelmed at Vasistha’s speech and thinking of Rama he replied in a voice choked with tears—

"How a man like myself can usurp the throne of virtuous Rama, and being born of King Dasaratha how shall I rob one of his kingdom? This kingdom and myself belong to Rama. Oh hermit, it is not proper for you to speak to me thus. Eldest Rama, like Dilip and Nahusa, is the best of us all. If I follow this unrighteous course leading to Hell, I shall be a stain to the Ikshaku line. I do not in any way approve of the wrong committed by my mother, and from here I bow down to Rama with my clasped palms. He is the real King of this kingdom and I must follow him."
The courtiers then shed tears in delight at these words of Bharata.

Then Bharata addressing the people said, "If I cannot bring Rama from the forest, I shall live with him like Lakshmana. I shall have to make all necessary arrangements in your presence to bring him back. I have already despatched in advance honorary labourers, active servants and guards. Now I shall set out myself."

Saying this, Bharata, attached to his brother, asked Sumantra to announce his departure to the forest and to mobilise his forces for that. The people and the chieftains were extremely glad at the proposal of bringing back Rama. And wife of every soldier cheerfully spurred her husband to make haste in the matter. The captains sent troops to Bharata in swift conveyances.

Bharata then asked Sumantra to fetch his car soon, and to tell the captains to draw up the forces in marching array.

When the day dawned, Bharata, eager to meet Rama, started in his car, and before him proceeded the counsellors and the priests. Thousands of horses and elephants followed him. Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra gladly accompanied him in glittering cars. The citizens embraced each other in joy and eagerly awaited the arrival of Rama, dark as a cloud and the remover of world's grief. "As the sun dispels all darkness, so his very sight will remove all our sorrows," they said.

Then, famous merchants, jewellers, potters, wea-
vers, smiths, sawers, workers with peacock-feathers, glass makers, perforators of gem, workers in ivory, wool growers, armourers, persons expert in mixing cement, perfumers, goldsmiths, shampooers, physicians, helpers in bath, incense makers, wine-sellers, washermen, tailors, actors with a number of gay women, cooks, fishermen, persons versed in the Vedas, virtuous Brahmans followed Bharata in carts being attired in their best apparels, daubed in red unguent powder.

After passing a long distance they arrived at Sringaverapur on the bank of the Ganges. There Guha, the Nishada chief, was ruling the province with his kinsmen. Then Bharata's army came to the Ganges full of chakravakus. Bharata asked his men to halt there and he wished to perform Tarpan for the spiritual good of his father. After disposing his men Bharata thought of the means by which he would be able to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya.

CHAPTER XXXVI
THE MEETING WITH GUHA

Guha seeing a vast number of people and a mighty force collected on the bank of the Ganges said to his kinsmen, "Look, there is a vast sea of troops, indeed I do not see its end. From that huge Kovidara tree in the flag streaming from the chariot, it seems foolish Bharata has come. Perhaps he will first enchain us or kill us first and then will kill exiled Rama. He has intended

1 The word is Mayuraka—it may mean, peacock catcher, peacock dancer or worker in peacock-feathers.
to kill Rama for securing complete possession of the kingdom. Rama is both my liege and friend. Now clad yourselves in your armours and wait on the bank of the Ganges. Let my strong retainers get themselves ready to throw obstacles at the time of Bharata's crossing the Ganges. Let hundreds of Kaivarta youths accourt ed in mail wait in readiness in five hundred boats. If Bharata has no evil design against Rama, his army may safely cross the Ganges."

Having given these directions to his kinsmen, the lord of the Nishadas went to meet Bharata with meat, fish and honey.

Seeing Guha coming to Bharata, Sumantra said, "Look prince! Rama's dear friend Guha is coming with his kinsmen. Let him come to you. This old chief knows everything about the Dandaka forest and he also knows where Rama and Lakshmana are now residing."

Bharata at once agreed to Sumantra's proposal.

Then the Nishada-chief cheerfully approached Bharata and addressing him said, "O prince, you may consider this country as your home. You have deceived us not by sending any message beforehand. Now I place all my resources at your disposal, please make yourself comfortable in the house of your servant. The Nishadas have stored wild fruits, fresh and dry meat, and woodland meal, and I pray let the army sup here to-night and set out on the next morning.

Bharata replied, "My men have been already enter-
tained by your kind wishes, now tell me by what way I shall reach the hermitage of Bharadwaja.”

Then Guha replied in folded palms, “The Nishadas are acquainted with all these places, they will go with you and I shall myself accompany you. Now tell me with what intention you are going to Rama? To tell you the truth, the sight of your vast army has rather filled me with great apprehension towards Rama.”

Hearing Guha speaking thus, Bharata replied in sweet words, “Let such time never come when I may commit any mischief to Rama. He is my elder and adorable like my father. I am now repairing to the forest to bring back Rama. I tell you the truth, don’t doubt me even for a moment.”

The Lord of the Nishada was greatly delighted at these words and said,—

“O prince, since you have renounced the Kingdom obtained without any effort, all glory be unto you. I don’t find anybody like you on earth. Your fame will for ever spread in the three worlds, since you have intended to bring back Rama from miseries.”

When they were thus talking, the sun grew dim at the approach of night.

Bharata was greatly pleased with Guha’s hospitality and retired to bed with Satrugha. Anxious thoughts about Rama began to corrode his heart, as fire burns a forest-tree, hidden in its hollow. As the snowy Himalayas thaw with the heat of the sun, so perspiration bathed his body. He was oppressed by the heavy burden of sorrow, as if he was then seized with mental fever.
Guha tried to console Bharata, and in course of his conversations he spoke about the good qualities of Lakshmana, stating that when he assured Lakshmana about his friendship and love for Rama and offered himself and his men for the protection of Rama at night, Lakshmana thankfully declined his service and undertook the task himself, saying that he had no need of comfort or rest since the best of heroes was lying on the ground with his wife; and when Lakshmana was bitterly lamenting for the misfortune that has befallen Rama and Ayodhya, the night was over; they then matted their locks and crossed the Ganges through his help.

Hearing this Bharata was deeply buried in thoughts, and shortly after he fainted in grief. At this the Nishada chief grew pale and began to shake like a tree in earthquake. Satrughna, who was close by, began to shed tears by embracing Bharata. Kausalya and other queens then came near Bharata and began to cry aloud.

Kausalya said with tears, "My boy! Are you ill? The Royal family now depends on you. Rama and Lakshmana have gone to the forest. I have sustained my life only by seeing you. The King is dead and you are now our protector."

Bharata soon recovered his senses and asked Guha with tearful eyes, "O Nishada chief, do tell me where worshipful Rama passed the night with Sita. Upon which bed they lay? Which food they took?

Guha then narrated everything and said, "O prince,
I procured various kinds of fruits and provisions for Rama, but when I offered them to him, he, accordingly to the Kshatriya custom, instead of accepting the presents returned everything, saying with entreaties, ‘My friend, it is our duty to give and not to take anything.’ Then Lakshmana brought water from the Ganges, and after drinking that he fasted with Sita, and Lakshmana drank the remnant left after Rama’s drink. Then they said their evening prayers with a devoted heart. After the prayer, Lakshmana gathered Kusha grass and prepared bed for Rama, and when Rama and Janaki lay down, he retired from the place after washing their feet. O Prince, this is the Ingudi tree beneath which Rama passed the night with his wife on the grass.”

Hearing these words Bharata saw the bed used by Rama near the Ingudi tree, and then addressing his mothers said, “Look, here noble Rama passed his night, lying on the ground. It was certainly not worthy of him who is born of the great King Dasaratha. How can he now lie on the ground who passed his nights on beds furnished with soft skins and excellent clothes? How does he who was in the habit of sleeping in high mansions, in delightfully cool apartments—coloured like pale clouds—with golden floor and silver wall, provided with elegant beds, decked with profusion of flowers, perfumed with sandal and Aguru, and resonant with notes of the parrots: and who was roused every morning with sweet music, by the jingling sounds of the anklets of female attendants, and by the
songs of praise by captives and bards, now lies on
the ground? It is difficult to believe that Rama now
lies on the ground. It seems like a dream. It seems
nothing is mightier than Fate. Here is the bed
that still bears the impress of Rama's limbs for
changing his sides on it. Look, how the grass over
the hard soil has been crushed by the pressure of his
limbs. Sita probably lay on this bed, for here and
there are still found scattered grains of gold. Surely at
the time of lying down Sita's cloth somehow stuck to
it, for silken fibres are still attached to it. Husband's
bed is always pleasant to the wife, or how could such
a delicate lady lie on it? Ah! Blessed is Lakshmana
for following Rama at such juncture. The King is
dead, Rama has gone to the forest, and the earth
seems to be quite helpless like a boat without a helms-
man. From to-day I shall observe the vow of a forest-
life, and shall gladly pass fourteen years in the forest
by wearing barks, matted locks, and by living on
fruits and roots and sleeping on the ground. Satru-
ghna will live with me and worshipful Rama with
Lakshmana rule over Ayodhya. Let him be crowned
by the Brahmans. May my desire be fulfilled through
Providential grace."

Bharata passed the night on the bank of the Ganges. In the morning he roused Satrughna from sleep and told him to get ready for the journey. At daybreak, Guha came and enquired about Bharata's welfare. Bharata after answering his questions asked to help him to cross the Ganges with his men.
At this, Guha came back quickly and roused his men in helping Bharata to cross the Ganges. Shortly, his men fetched five hundred boats. Besides these Guha brought a magnificent barg, called Swastika furnished with oars and pinions. Its inside was covered with a pale yellow-coloured blanket worked in gold. And the Nishadas were playing music on its deck. Bharata then got upon the boat with Satrughna. First of all, priests and protectors got upon it, then Kausalya and other queens boarded the boat. At the time of departure the troops set fire to their temporary sheds.

The boats then swiftly reached the other bank of the Ganges. Some ferried women, some horses, some bullocks and some precious cars.

CHAPTER XXXVII
IN THE HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJA

In due time Bharata put off his arms and dress, and putting on a piece of silken cloth he went on foot with the counsellors, placing Vasistha in front of him. Coming near the hermitage, he dismissed his counsellors and entered the asylum after Vasistha.

On seeing Vasistha, Bharadwaja rose from his seat and sent his pupils to fetch Arghya. Bharata then bowed to the saint. Seeing Bharata in company of Vasistha, Bharadwaja understood him to be king Dasaratha's son. Having offered the guests water to wash their feet and fruits to eat, Bharadwaja enquired after the welfare of Ayodhya. He knew that Dasaratha was
dead, so he did not ask anything about him. Then Vasistha and Bharata questioned Bharadwaja about the welfare of fire, pupils, trees, deer and birds.

After answering all these, he asked Bharata about the cause of his visit and whether he intended any mischief to Rama.

Bharata hearing Bharadwaja’s words replied in a voice choked with tears.

“I am undone, if you, too, put such questions. No injury will be done to Rama by me. I am not least pleased with the action of my mother. I have come to bring back Rama by paying my homage to his feet: Please banish all your doubts from your heart. Tell me where Rama stoppeth now.”

Bharadwaja then joyfully returned, “This is quite worthy of you. Being born in the line of Raghu, control of senses, righteous instincts and serving the superiors are your duties. I knew your intention from before, but I asked you this just for the confirmation of your reputation. I know Rama. He is now living with Lakshmana and Janaki in the Chitrakuta hills. You go there to-morrow, but spend the day in my hermitage.”

Bharata then stayed there for Bharadwaja’s hospitality and thanked him saying that he had already offered to him what could be procured in the forest. Bharadwaja then wanted to entertain Bharata’s army and asked why he had left them behind? Bharata replied, “O Saint, it is in fear of you that I could not bring my army along with me. Be he a king or a prince, he
should carefully avoid encroaching upon the hermitage of an ascetic. Horses, elephants, and men that have come with me cover a large tract of ground. I have left them behind fearing that they might cause disturbance to the hermitage."

Bharadwaja then asked Bharata to order his army to come to his hermitage. Bharata did as directed.

Bharadwaja then entered the chamber of sacrificial fire, and having rubbed his lips twice with water invoked God Vishwakarma for the entertainment of the guests.

"I invoke you, O Vishwakarma, expert in all works, for the entertainment of my guests. I also invoke the three rulers of the world, like Indra, for it. Let all the streams that flow towards the west in zig-zag course appear hither. Let some of them run with Maireya liquor, some with refined wines, some with cool waters sweet like sugarcane juice. I invoke all the gods and goddesses, Gandharas, Ghritachi, Vishachi, Misrakeshi, Alambusha, Nagdatta, Hema and Soma residing in the hills. I also invoke the fairies that go to Indra and lotus-born Brahma to come with Tamvarus. And let the wonderful forest that exists in the north Kuru, whose leaves are ornaments and attires, and whose fruits are beautiful damsels, appear here. Let God Soma give the different kinds of food, meat, wines and other drinks and beautiful garlands."

Maharshi Bharadwaja by virtue of his penance and asceticism employed his voice in uttering the Mantras orthoepically in consonance with Siksha. He then
ceased and prayed for the appearance of the deities, facing the west.

Then the gods thus invoked began to appear one by one. Sweet Zephyr began to blow by carrying perfumes from the Malaya and the Dardura Hills, and clouds began to rain flowers. Heavenly music was heard; the Apsaras began to dance and the Gandharvas to sing. Sounds of Vina were being heard. Sweet music seemed to ascend the sky and penetrate the earth. Troops of Bharata in astonishment surveyed the wonderful deeds of Vishwakarma. A square plot of level ground extending five leagues on all sides was covered with lustrous green grass, like blue sapphire, and on it stood Bels, Kapithwas, Jackfruit trees, Lemons, Amalakis, Mangoes and other trees bent down with fruits. Pleasant Chaitraratha forest was transfigured from the north. There arose white edifices with four sections; stables for horses and elephants; mansions furnished with beds, and seats, various kinds of provisions, garlands, cleansed vessels and apparels. Bharata then entered one of those palaces with counsellors and priests.

At that time twenty thousand women sent by Prajapati, and another twenty thousand sent by Kuvera, adorned with pearls and gems appeared on the scene and created a flutter by their beauty. Then came another twenty thousand damsels from the heavenly Nandana forest. Gandharva king, Narada, Tamvaru and Gopa began to sing before Bharata. Misrakeshi and other heavenly damsels began to dance. Heavenly
IN THE HERMITAGE OF BHARADWAJA

wreathes and flowers were seen in heaps at Prayaga. The Bel tree played upon Mridanga, Vibhitaka kept time and Aswatha tree began to dance! Sinsapa, Amalaki, Jamvu trees and Mallika creepers appeared in the forms of women and they began to say, "Those who drink, let them drink; those who are hungry, let them feed sumptuously on well-dressed meat and sweets. Seven or eight women sometimes took a man on the bank of the river, helped him in bath, some shampooed his limbs and some offered him drink. Thus Bharata’s hosts were entertained, and each one enjoyed to his heart’s content. No body had any dirty linen on him but each one was dressed in clean white clothes. No body looked sad or dirty but each one was bright and joyous, and every one gazed in wonder at gold and silver dishes decorated with flowers and filled with clean white rice. Those vessels contained fruit-juice, flavoury soups, curries and meat of goats and boars. Wells were filled with Payasha and the trees began to distill honey. Tanks were filled with wines and smoking venisons, meat of deer, cocks, peacocks were kept in heaps. Vessels for rice, curries, and hundred thousands golden washing bowls were kept there. Pitchers were filled with curds. Tanks were filled with butter, milk and sugar. Bathing tubs contained scented astringent powders, scented grass, like Kalka, and other articles of bath were deposited there. Sticks for cleansing teeth, sandal paste, bright mirrors, sandals,

1. An out and out miracle—quite difficult to understand. It may be a poetical hyperbole for a grand entertainment.
combs, brushes, collyrium-pots, umbrellas, bows, mails, beds, seats, and drinking troughs for horses, elephants and asses were all kept in readiness. The whole thing appeared like a wonderful dream, and every one was deeply astonished at this, and Bharata’s troops passed their time like gods in the Nandana. The soldiers soon became intoxicated with wine, and garlands of flowers lay scattered, trampled and crushed. Bharata was greatly pleased with the hermit’s hospitality, and being desirous of meeting Rama appeared before Bharadwaja. Bharadwaja asked whether he had a pleasant night and whether his troops were satisfied or not. Bharata said that he and his people were more than satisfied and asked how far from there lay the hermitage of virtuous Rama?

Bharadwaja said, “About five miles from this place there is a hill called the Chitrakuta situated in a deep forest. Its woods and streams are quite pleasant. The river Bhagirathi flows by the north of this mountain. Your brother is living there by erecting a thatched hut. Proceed some distance along the southern bank of the Jamuna and then turn to your left and if you proceed along it you will find Rama.”

Hearing this, Kausalya and Sumitra bowed to the saint’s feet and Kaikeyi, despised by all and overwhelmed with shame, after bowing to the saint stood at some distance, with a sad mien near Bharata. Bharadwaja then wanted to know fully about his mothers. Bharata replied,

“Whom you find emaciated with fast and sorrows is
my father's queen—the mother of Rama; and she who stands with a dejected look like a branch of withered Karnika flowers is Sumitra. Heroic Lakshmana and Satruughna are her sons. And there stands dishonourable¹ Kaikeyi, for whom Rama and Lakshmana have been banished into the forest and who is the cause of King Dasaratha's death. Though she looks honourable in appearance, she is foolish, proud, irritable and cruel. This sinful woman is my mother. My misfortunes have been brought by her."

Thus saying, Bharata began to heave deep sighs with red hot eyes like a panting serpent.

Then noble Bharadwaja said, "Don't blame your mother. This exile of Rama will surely produce good at the end to all."

Then Bharata after taking leave of Bharadwaja asked his men to get ready for their departure. At his orders the vast army was at once on its move and it proceeded along the western bank of the Ganges, by startling beasts and birds of the forest by fright. And the wild animals stampeded in fear in different directions. Thus they covered a great distance.

CHAPTER XXXVIII
THE FOREST-LIFE

Bharata then nearing the Chitrakuta said, "From what I have heard it seems that we have arrived at the place spoken by Bharadwaja. This is the Chitrakuta

¹ Arya—means honourable. Anarya—dishonourable. Thus how, in course of time, the distinction between the conquerors and the conquered came to be expressed.
and the Mandakini flows at its feet. There stretches deep forest, dense like clouds far and wide, and its peaks are now being trampled by my huge elephants. Trees standing over them are shedding their flowers like clouds pouring gentle rains. Look, Satrughna, these tracts belong to the Kinnaras; and deer, like autumnal clouds, are bounding in the air. The soldiers bearing shields have decked their heads with flowers like Southerns! Dusts raised by the hoofs of horses have darkened the sky, but for my benefit the wind is fast clearing them away. This terrible forest, devoid of human beings, to-day appears to me like populous Ayodhya! Let my army now retire and make search for Rama and Lakshmana."

Bharata's men on entering the forest found a column of smoke rising from the woods. Thereupon they came to Bharata and said, "It is impossible to find fire where there is no human habitation, so we assure you that Rama and Lakshmana now reside in this forest, or some ascetics like Rama." Bharata then asked them to observe silence and wait there. Bharata then proceeded towards the rising smoke taking Sumantra and Dhriti with him.

At that time, Rama who had been residing at the Chitrakuta for some time, said to Janaki to cheer her up, "Janaki! at the sight of these beautiful hills I don't so much feel for the loss of kingdom, nor so keenly for the separation from friends. How beautiful are the hills, the resort of wild birds all round the year, how high are its cliffs as if piercing the blue sky,
how rich with minerals, for which the hills appear richly variegated in colours, some parts look silvery white, some purple, some look yellow like Manjistha, some blue like sapphire, some glittering like crystals, and some like Ketaki blossoms, and somewhere star-like lustre of mercury is seen. How tigers, bears and innocent deer roam about the forest. How it abounds in magnificent trees. Kinnara pairs live happily in these valleys. Close is the sporting-ground of the Vidyadharis. Excellent clothes and arms hang from the branches of the trees. Here is a waterfall, there is a rivulet, there is a fountain, and the mountain looks like an elephant emitting temporal sweat. Sweet breeze delights all by wafting fragrance of flowers from the caves. Janaki, if I live with you and Lakshmana even for a long time in this forest, sorrow will never overtake me in any way. I feel great delight in this beautiful hill abounding in fruits and flowers and in tuneful birds. Don't you feel happy at these sights, pleasing to the body, mind and speech? My forefathers have assigned forest life as best suited for the attainment of salvation,—the only balm for all world’s sorrows and anxieties after death. Look, how vast crags of the various hues are scattered all round, some parts of the mountain appear like pretty gardens, and some like hourxes even. At night, the minerals\(^1\) glow with their own energy (lustre), like flames of fire.

\(^1\) Oshadhi—it means annual plants but here it is doubtful whether the world signifies them or it means medicinal herbs or gems and minerals.
These are the beds (haunts) of pleasure-seeking people, they have been made with coverlets of Sthagaras, Punnagas, Birch leaves and lotus petals. Look, how they partook of fruits, how scattered lie the crushed garlands of lotuses. It seems that Chitrakuta has risen high by penetrating the earth. Its peaks are highly beautiful and they surpass in beauty Vamvankasava, Kuvera’s city, and the city of Indra and north Kuru. If I pass these fourteen years with you and Lakshmana by following righteous path, then I shall surely obtain happiness for observing the custom and duties of my race."

Then lotus-eyed Rama emerging from the Chitrakuta addressing Janaki or moon-like face said, “My darling, here flows the Mandakini. Its banks are most beautiful. Swans and cranes always croak on them, and various fruits-bearing and flowery trees stand on them. Its descent is really beautiful. Look, how the thirsty deer drinks its muddy water near the bank. Look the ascetics with matted locks and bathing in the river and anchorites with raised hands are worshipping the sun. The tops and branches of the trees, crowned with fruits and flowers, are swaying in the wind. It seems as if the hill itself is in dance. Look, how hosts of flowers being moved by the breeze are kissing the crystal stream of the Mandakini. The sight of the Chitrakuta and the Mandakini appears much more delightful than city-life. Virtuous saints daily bathe in this stream, so bathe with me as my companion and gather red and white lotuses from there. Just consider
the hill to be Ayodhya and the Mandakini as the Saraju. Virtuous Lakshmana is obedient to me, and you are also favourably disposed towards me. So I feel myself immensely happy. Bathing thrice in this river and living on wild fruits and roots and drinking honey in your company, I do not even crave for the kingdom of Ayodhya."

Saying this Rama began to walk with Janaki over the Chitrakuta, blue as the collyrium dye.

Thus Rama showed to Janaki wild woodland sceneries, and as they turned towards their cottage, Rama found a beautiful cave in the slope of the mountain, in a shadowy recluse. Its floor was strewn with minerals and paved with stones. It was situated in a shadowy vale where the trees were bent down with blossoms and fruits and gay birds sang all the time.

Rama gazed with wonder and pointing the cave to Sita, said,—

"O, Vaidehi! Do you like that beautiful place? Then let us rest here for a while. Look at that block of stone, so square, so smooth as if it was set for you. Look, how yonder flowery shrub, like a kesara tree, overshadows your head."

Then Janaki, in soft and tender accent, that betrayed her love, said,—

"O flower of Raghu's line, my pleasure is to do thy will. It is enough for me to know your wish. You have indeed wandered long."

Thus saying in gentle tone, obedient Sita of spotless beauty and graceful limbs, went to the stone. But immediately Rama turned to his spouse and exclaimed,
“Look, Sita, this flowery vale seems to be the pleasure haunt of sylvan gods and goddesses. Look, how the pines torn by the tusks of elephants distil their gums: how the whole forest has grown resonant with the sweet notes of the cuckoo, Bhringaraj and other melodious singers of the wood. Look, how the creeper has twined delicate tendrils round the blossoming mango tree, so you throw your arms round me when there is none nearby.”

Thus saying Rama embraced his spouse, and loving Sita—beautiful as the Goddess of wealth and beauty—reclined on her husband’s arms, and a mighty thrill of joy ran through his frame.

Rama in loving cares dubbed his finger in vermillion-like soft mineral dye of the rock and put a lovely circular mark on Sita’s brow which seemed to gleam as the morning sun, whereupon Sita looked like the beautiful goddess of dawn.

Rama then overflowing with joy plucked some blossoms from the kesara tree and with them he decked the lovely tresses of Sita.

Thus after resting a while on the rocky ledge, Rama proceeded with Maitheli towards a pleasant shade where various kinds of creatures were straying about. Sita finding a monkey coming near her clung to Rama in fear and her royal consort soothed her by lacing his mighty arm round her slender waist, and scared away the ape; and from that close embrace the red gleaming mark on Sita’s brow was printed on Rama’s expanded chest. And when the monkey fled
away, Sita seeing that red mark stamped on Rama's chest gleefully burst forth in a ring of laughter. Then seeing at a distance a bunch of bright Asoka flowers shaking in the breeze, as if the tree was in flames, Sita fondly said, "O pride of Raghu's line, let us bend our steps thither where the red Asoka blooms."

As divine Siva with his holy consort Uma roams through the vast regions of the Himalayas, so Rama strayed about with Sita in that delightful forest, and the happy pair sported themselves to their hearts' content and in their delightful sports each one put a crown of flowers upon the other's head.

Then, after strolling the green woods, surveying the lovely spots there, they returned to their snug cottage where every thing was kept tidy and quite handy by Lakshmana out of deep brotherly love. Lakshmana hurried to meet them in the way, showed Rama the day's hunt—the ten black deer killed by poisoned darts, and their well-dressed meat. Rama was greatly pleased at this and addressing Sita said, "Look, my darling, this venison is fresh and sweet to the taste, and it has been well-roasted too, now supply us with your gifts."

Sita then cheerfully spread the woodland meal and honey before the brothers. After Rama and Lakshmana finished their meals and washed their mouths, Janaki took her own repast.

The remaining venison was set apart for being dried, and Rama told Sita to scare away the crows from it. But Rama, to his great amusement, found Sita much
distressed by a bold crow. No sooner it was scared away, it again greedily came near the meat. Sita chased the crow again and again, but all in vain, it rather threatened to strike her with its beak, wings and claws. Rama laughed finding Sita thus annoyed by the crow, and her cheeks were glowing with rage, her lips quivering in anger, and frowns darkening her lovely brow.

Rama rebuked the bird for its impudence, but apparently it paid no heed to Rama's words, but flew again at Sita. At this, Rama fixed an arrow with mantras to his bow and aimed at the crow. The bird sprang upon its wings, but the magic shaft followed wherever it flew. The crow then flew back to Rama and fell at his feet and pleaded for its life.

Rama hearing the bird entreating for its life said, "Finding Sita much distressed I took her side and set this arrow with mantras to take your life, but since you ask for forgiveness and to spare your life, I shall grant thy prayer—I must protect the suppliant. But my shaft is never discharged in vain, so give up some part of your body in exchange of your life."

Thinking that it was better to live than to die, the crow yielded an eye and the arrow at once struck the crow in the eye. Sita in deep amazement stared at this. The bird then flew away where it liked.

Thus being refreshed, Rama pointed to Sita the lovely rill running beneath the hill.

Meanwhile Bharata's army drew near. Rama saw a cloud of dust raised by a marching army, and heard
a deafening uproar and finding the wild animals running to and fro. He said, "Hark, Lakshmana, a terrific noise like the rumbling of a thunder-cloud is being heard in the woods, and deer, elephants, buffaloes and lions are scampering away in fear. Just ascertain its cause. Has any king or prince come hither for hunting? Or it is due to the ravages of some ferocious animal? Quickly ascertain the cause."

Thereupon, Lakshmana soon climbed upon a flowery Sal tree and began to survey all round.

Lakshmana, at last, saw a vast army marching towards the east, and addressing Rama said, "O worshipful Lord, please put out the fire now and enter the cave with Janaki. Now put on your armour and get yourself ready by fixing string to your bow and have the arrows near at hand."

Rama said, "First try to ascertain to whom belongs this host."

Then Lakshmana answered flaming with rage, "My Lord, Kaikeyi's son, Bharata, in order to remove all thorns from his side, has come to kill us. The Kovidara flag of the chariot is visible behind the yonder big tree. People are merrily marching towards us. Either let us take shelter in the mountain, or wait here with bows in our hands. To-day I shall see Bharata, the root cause of our sufferings and for whom you have lost your throne. He is our enemy and he deserves to be killed. It will not be sinful to kill him who first injures. I shall kill this Bharata and then you will rule over the earth. Greedy Kaikeyi will to-day find
her son slain at my hands, like a tree riven by the elephant's tusk. To-day, I shall kill even Kaikeyi with Manthara. I shall cast my anger on the army, as people set fire to woods. I shall pay off the debt to my bow and arrows by killing Bharata to-day."

Rama finding Lakshmana thus angry addressed him in pacifying words, "When mighty Bharata has himself come, what is the use of bows and arrows? I have vowed to observe my father's pledge, then what shall I gain by killing Bharata? What is kingdom to me? Whatever can be acquired by the destruction of friends, relations and of near and dear ones, is like a poisoned food to me which I will never partake. And I swear to you, that religious merit, wealth, objects of desire and earthly possessions that I may want are for you all, and I swear by my sword, that if I wish for the kingdom, it is for the happiness and maintenance of my brothers. Lakshmana, it is not difficult for me even to possess this sea-girdled earth, but I do not crave even for Indra's state by unrighteous means. What more? If I wish for any happiness depriving you all, may fire reduce that to ashes then and there. It seems, dear Bharata after returning from his maternal uncle's house to Ayodhya has been greatly mortified at the news of our exile, so he has come here to see us just out of deep love. Don't ascribe any other motive to his presence here. He does not wish us any harm even in his thoughts. Lakshmana, why are you apprehensive about him? Never utter any harsh
expression against him. If you speak anything rude against Bharata, it will in fact be against me. I know not how even in times of peril the son can slay his father, or a brother his brother as dear as one's own life. If you have said all these for kingdom, then I shall ask Bharata in his presence to confer the kingdom on you. He will never disagree to my word, if I say this."

When virtuous Rama said this, Lakshmana was overwhelmed with shame, and with diffidence said, "Perhaps father has come to see you."

Rama too finding Lakshmana confounded with shame said,—

"So it seems and he has come to take us back, for he knows that we, who are accustomed to pass our days in ease and luxury, are now suffering from the hardships of forest-life. But why I do not see his white royal umbrella? It feels my heart with great misgivings. Now get down from the tree."

In the meantime, in order to avoid all disturbance, Bharata asked his army to take their quarters at different places of the hill.

Then Bharata asked Satrughna to look for Rama and Lakshmana with Guha and others, and he would walk on foot with priests and counsellors and that his mind would know no rest or peace till he found out Rama.

Bharata then walked through the flowery woods and then climbing up a Sal tree he found smoke rising out of Rama's cottage. At the sight of smoke Bharata concluded that Rama must have been living there and
was overwhelmed with delight at this thought. It seemed to him as if he had crossed a turbulent sea. He then proceeded with Guha towards the asylum of Fama. At the time of setting out, Bharata said to Vasistha to fetch his mothers without delay. Bharata then proceeded with Satrughna in hurried steps being eager to meet Rama. Sumantra who too was pining for Rama followed Satrughna.

After proceeding some distance Bharata saw a cottage of leaves like the hermitage of a monk. He found fuels and flowers in front of the cottage, and heaps of dry dung of deer and buffaloes kept for the prevention of cold.

Bharata then cheerfully pointed out to Satrughna, “We have arrived at the place indicated by Bharadvaja, perhaps the Mandakini is close by. I find barks suspended from the trees, and it seems to me that they have been set up by Lakshmana to mark the path as he has to leave the cottage sometimes at unusual hours. There arises dense smoke of fire which the anchorites carefully preserve in the forest. I shall soon get sight of saintly Rama devoted to his superiors.”

Bharata then reaching the bank of the Mandakini said, “Cursed is my life, worshipful Rama is passing his days in meditation and yoga. He has been suffering all these for me. I won’t be able to bear this odium. I shall throw myself at his feet and shall also entreat Janaki and Lakshmana by holding their feet.”

When Bharata was thus regretting, he saw from a distance the beautiful, sacred cottage of Rama, covered
with the leaves of Sala, palms and Ashwakarna. He found there the formidable bow plated with gold, like the famous one of Indra, the accomplisher of mighty deeds and bringer of death to the enemies. As the Nether region looks resplendent with snakes, the quiver was full of sharp arrows flaming as the sun. There were swords in golden sheathes, shields and gloves\(^1\) spangled with gold. There stood a spacious altar and fire was burning to its north east. Bharata saw all these and at last found lotus-eyed and fire-like effulgent Rama seated on a skin like God Sayambhu, with Sita and Lakshmana in the cottage. He was clad in bark and a black deer-skin and wore matted locks on his head.

Bharata thus seeing the ruler of the earth broke forth in grief, “Alas, who was attended by the courtiers is now surrounded by herds of wild deer! He is now clad in bare skin who used to wear costly apparels! Who was decorated with beautiful garlands is now wearing matted locks on his head! The body that was besmeared with precious sandal is now stained with dirt! “

“He who used to perform great sacrifices with what great hardships is now observing religious rites! Alas! He is suffering all these for me. Shame upon my hateful self.”

Saying this, Bharata approached Rama with a perspiring body, and before he came to close quarters

\(^1\) Finger protector—the words is Angulitrans in the original.
he fell down on the ground being blinded with tears. As he fell down he exclaimed.

"O Arya!" But his voice was choked. He silently stared at Rama. He again attempted to speak but could not. As he uttered "Arya" his voice was again choked.

Then Satrughna with tearful eyes adored the feet of Rama. Rama embraced him and began to shed tears. As the sun and the moon meet Sukra (Venus), and Brihaspati (Jupiter) in the sky, so Rama and Lakshmana met Sumantra and Guha. The denizens of the forest began to shed tears at the sight of these four princes.

CHAPTER XXXIX
MEETING WITH RAMA

Here Bharata was lying prostrate on the ground with folded palms. His face was dark with sorrow, his locks were matted, and he was clad in bark and was incapable of being gazed upon like the Dooms-day sun. When Rama recognised the great hero, he embraced him and took him on his lap. Rama then questioned him with great care.

"My boy! Where is father now? You shouldn't have come here while he is alive. I meet you after a long time since your stay in your maternal uncle's house. Now, tell me why have you come to this deep jungle? Is father alive, or has he gone to the other world being afflicted with sorrow for my separation? You are still a boy, has the kingdom been wrested
from your hands? Dost thou not minister to the wishes of our father? Is our righteous father—the performer of Rajasuya and the Ashwamedha sacrifices—in good health? Does our family priest Vasistha receive due honours?

"Are Queen Kausalya and Sumitra doing well? Is not worshipful Kaikeyi passing her days in happiness? Does not noble Sujaina conversant with rituals perform your ceremonies? Do not intelligent people look after the sacrificial fire? Do they not inform you in due time about the sacrifice? Don't you show proper respect to the deities, father, father-like preceptors, the old, the physicians and to your employees? Do you slight preceptor Sudhanva who is versed in polit'y and in the use of weapons, employed both with mantras and without? Have you engaged high-born, valiant, wise, and self-controlled persons as your counsellors who can like you read the import of signs? If counsel is well kept by wise counsellors, then success attends in everything. I hope, you are not subject to sleep, and you rise in proper hour, and decide about the means of attaining your objects towards the end of night. I think you consult yourself and others in your actions and keep your decisions always secret, and always quickly perform things that can be easily done and which are conducive to public weal. The frontier chiefs no doubt know what you have accomplished, or what is about to be completed, but they do not know what remains to be done. They cannot even guess or infer by reasoning what you and your counsellors wish to keep secret. Dost thou not wish for a single wise man instead of thousands of fools? In times of financial difficulties, wise people help us in every way, but if the king be surrounded by hundreds or thousands of fools, he cannot depend upon a single person. In short, even a single capable minister may secure immense prosperity to the king. My boy, don't you appoint best men to the highest offices, mediocres in
middling situations, and low class people for low work?

"Don't you entrust most responsible works to ministers who are men of character, above bribery and have been holding the office through hereditary succession (from father to son)? Do people even when severely punished show any disrespect towards you? Do the priests scorn you, as women hate lustful people who use force against them? He, who does not put an end to an unfaithful servant clever in polity, or a valiant warrior covetous of riches, is himself ruined in turn. Do you not follow this policy? Don't you appoint an intelligent, high-born and a devoted warrior as your General? Don't you honour those men of rank who are well-versed in militarism and have given proofs of their prowess before the public? Don't you pay your army regularly and provide them with their rations in due time? Do you make any delay in this? If salaries and rations are not given in proper time, the employees get annoyed with their master, and then all sorts of troubles follow. Are the chiefs of the clans devoted to you? Are they prepared even to die for you? Do you employ educated citizens, possessed with presence of mind and boldness of speech, as your emissaries? Have you gathered informations through spies about eighteen expedients of others and fifteen of your own? Do

1 A sound piece of military administration. Hunger, they say, is the mother of socialism.

2 The following are the persons alluded to here:—

you slight the enemy who comes again, though driven off before?

I think, you do not concern yourself with atheistic Brahmans. All those puerile persons proud of their learning can only bring evil to others, and inspire of the existence of excellent religious literature, they vainly engage themselves in barren sophistical arguments. Are you not defending Ayodhya—the land of our ancestors provided with strong city-gates, and full of beautiful palaces, inhabited by the noble and energetic Aryan people, and where there is plenty of elephants, horses, tanks, temples, chaityas, jewels, and corns, whose border lands are, wel-cultivated, and where there is good society, where men and women are happy and gay, and where festivities are always held, where there is no room for malice or wickedness, and where there is no ferocious animal, where cultivation is carried with waters of the river? Is not that wealthy province free from all disturbing elements? Do not cultivators and breeders enjoy your favour? Do not the people follow their vocations and live in happiness? Do you not maintain them by preventing their evils and doing good to them? It is your duty to protect all who are living under your jurisdiction. My boy, are the women-folk safe through your care? Don't you honour them? Do you confide any secret to them? What interest do you take in the collection of animals? There are many forests in the kingdom full of elephants. Don't you look after them? Don't you rear mares and female-elephants? Don't you enter the court in royal robes? Don't you travel along the streets even rising early in the morning? Do the servants approach you fearlessly or they keep themselves away? You see, a middle course between too much familiarity and inaccessibility is good. Are the forts well provided with wealth, corns, water, arms, machines, artizans and soldiers? Is not your income greater that your expenditure? Do you give anything
to the undeserving? Are you not open-handed in the worship of deities, in the performance of rites to the deceased ancestors, in the services of guests, Brahmins, warriors, and friends? Do you punish from covetousness a good man accused of a crime without having him tried first and without finding him guilty by a competent judge versed in the Shastras? Do you set free from motives of gain a thief arrested with stolen property and confronted with interrogatories? Do not your counsellors impartially judge between parties whether rich or poor, when they are involved in disputes? When false cases are not justly tried i. e., when there is a failure of justice, the tears of the innocent bring about the ruin of the princes. Haven't you won over children, the aged, the physicians and important persons by liberal gifts? Do you oppose righteousness for gain or for the gratification of your senses? Have you eschewed atheism, untruthfulness, inattention, anger, procrastination, evil company, idleness, gratification of the senses, consultation with one person about the kingdom, consultation with wicked persons, divulgence of plans, non-performance of an action already decided upon, non-commencement of work in the morning and setting out all enemies at one and the same time—all these fourteen evils? Have you understood the value and consequence of the Ten vargas (things),\(^1\) five vargas\(^1\), four vargas\(^2\),

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The attention of the reader is invited here, this will give him an idea of the administration of that time, also of its material prosperity.

1 Ten vargas:—(1) Hunting, (2) Gambling, (3) Sleeping in the day, (4) Vilifying, (5) Addiction to women (6) to wine, (7) to dancing, (8) to singing, (9) to playing upon musical instruments, (10) And purposeless rambling.

1 Five kinds of fortresses:—Jala Durga (water fort), Giri Durga (hill fortress). Venu Durga (forest), Harin Durga (fortress full of corns and deer (cattle), and Dhanwan Durga (fortress inaccessible in summer).

2 Four kinds of administrative policy by which to govern the kingdom:—(1) Equity, (2) Liberality, (3) Difference (Divide and rule) and (4) Punishment.
seven⁶, eight vargas⁴, and three vargas⁵ Have your mastered the three⑥ and learnt the art of polity? Have you attained victory over the senses and over evils both superhuman and committed by men?

Have you attained six virtues? (a) Do you perform what is to be done by a king? (b) Do you pay attention to (c) twenty Vargas, to (d) Prikritis, to (e) Mandala, (f) Jatra, (g) Punishment and (h) the two yonis—Peace and war?"

"Don’t you perform the rites enjoined by the Vedas? Don’t you find them to fructify? Are all the wives barren? I hope your learning has not been in vain. Do you act in the manner I have just now


4 Agriculture, commerce, fortress, bridges, capture of elephants, mines, ores, revenue. Some say eight kinds of manifestations of anger as, frowning, etc.

5 (1) Interest (2) Desire and (3) Virtue.

6 The Vedas—At first the Atharva Veda was not included in the division of the Vedas.

(a) (1) Peace, (2) War, (3) Marching and halting, (4) Seeking peace, (5) Sowing dissensions, (6) and Seeking protection.

(b) As to rescue the frightened from the cause of fear, to protect the honourable from insult, etc.

(c) Twenty classes of people with whom friendship or love should not be contracted, viz. :—Children; invalids; old people; one who has been excommunicated by his kinsmen; cowards; ferocious persons; the greedy; the irritable; a man with too many advisers; one with too many foes; the unrighteous; too much wordly persons; one smitten by Providence; slanderer of gods and Brahmanas; almost a dead person etc.

(d) Prikritis were five in number :—Ministers, (2) Treasure, (3) Territory, (4) Fortress, (5) Chastisement.

(e) Twelve classes of chiefs capable of declaring war, concluding peace and of observing neutrality.

(f) Fivefold marching (Manoeuvres) of the army at the theme of battle.

(g) Administration of criminal justice.

(h) Yonis—sources—here the expression means peace and war.
spoken to you? These are conducive to longevity, fame, wealth and virtuе. You are no doubt following the examples of our forefathers. I presume, you do not alone enjoy all the dainties yourself, but distribute them among friends who wish for them. Now, mark, my darling, the king, the chastiser of people, can enjoy the earth, yet he can also attain heaven after death by justly governing the people.”

After giving such advices in the forms of questions to Bharata Rama asked, “Now tell me why have you come to the forest leaving the kingdom wearing matted locks and deer skin? Tell me everything unreservedly. I am anxious to hear them.”

CHAPTER XL
Bharata’s Reply

Bharata somehow subduing his grief said with joined hands:

“O Arya, father after performing a terrible thing at the instigation of Kaikeyi has died of grief for his son. To speak the truth, this sinful act has been committed by mother, and instead of getting the kingdom she has obtained widowhood, and has been condemned to eternal perdition. O worshipful one, I am your servant, be pleased with me and enjoy your kingdom like Indra—the King of Gods. People and widowed mothers have come to you, please do them favour. You are the eldest, and you are to be invested with the crown, so according to custom and morality you should take back your kingdom and thus fulfil the desire of your friends and kinsmen. Let earth cease to be a widow by getting back you as her lord. With my counsellors I entreat you by your feet. I am your brother, pupil and servant, be pleased with me. These ministers hold their offices from generation to generation according to the law of heredity; they had never
been slighted, so it behoves you not to override their wishes.”

Saying this Bharata fell at Rama’s feet with tearful eyes.

Then Rama embracing Bharata said, “How can a man true to his vows and born of a noble line, do a sinful act just for a kingdom? You are not to be blamed for my exile, and do not also blame your mother through ignorance. Superiors can act as they like in relation to their sons and wives; sons and disciples should always be obedient. The king has enough authority either to send me to exile or to confer the kingdom on me. Mother is as worshipful as the father, and when they have sent me to the forest, how can I act otherwise? Go back to Ayodhya and rule the kingdom and I shall live here in the Dandaka forest. This is the wish of the King, now it is your duty to obey that; you should go back and enjoy what has been assigned to you. What has been ordained by that Indra-like noble lord is certainly for my good. The kingdom does not appear covetable to me.”

Bharata replied, “O noble one, I have already violated morality and custom, then what do I care for the duties of a king? It is an immemorial custom in our family that the younger should not ascend the throne in presence of the elder. So come back with me to Ayodhya and ascend the throne for the benefit of our race. The King whose acts are righteous, though people may regard him as a human being, to me he is a god. When I was in Kekaya and you were in the forest, father shuffled off his mortal coil. As soon as you set out with Janaki and Lakshmana from Ayodhya, father died of intense grief. Now please get up and perform his last rites. I have already performed them. You were the most favourite of father, may the things offered by you reach the eternal region of Pitriloka. Alas, the King greatly pined for your sight and he died of grief for your separation.” Hearing these
shocking words—terrible as thunderbolt—Rama fell prostrate stretching his arms on the ground, like a flowery tree fallen down by an axe.

Then his brother and Janaki finding Rama lying like an elephant fatigued with the sports of upturning the earth with its tusks began to sprinkle water with tearful eyes to restore his consciousness.¹

Slowly Rama regained his consciousness. He then began to shed tears and mournfully said to Bharata:

"Father has gone to the heaven, what shall I do by returning to Ayodhya? Who will govern the city widowed by the death of the King? I am indeed born unfortunate, I could not be of any service to my father. I could not perform his funeral rites who gave up his life for me. Bharata, you Satrughna, you are fortunate, you have performed the last rites of our father. Even after the expiry of the period of exile I shall not return to lordless Ayodhya. Father is dead, who will now advise me as to what is right and what is wrong? From whom I shall now hear those sweet words of encouragement which I used to hear when I succeeded in performing a thing successfully?"

Rama then approached full moon-like Sita with tearful eyes and addressing her said with a grief-stricken heat, "O Sita, your father-in-law is dead, O, Lakshmana, you have become fatherless. Brother Bharata has brought this cruel news."

On hearing of father-in-law’s death Sita’s eyes grew dim with tears, and for that she could not see her beloved Rama. Rama after consoling Sita said to Lakshmana:

"My boy, bring me Ingudi fruits, and a new bark. I shall now go to the Mandakini and perform the

1 The preceding speech of Rama seems to be an interpolation, for as soon as Rama heard of the death he fainted in grief and Sita too began to shed bitter tears. This chapter has been omitted by Mr. Griffith—Translator.
watery rites of my father. Let Sita proceed first, you
go after her, and I shall follow you. At the time of
mourning this is how one should proceed according to
the Shastras."

Then ever-serviceable Sumantra took Rama by the
hand to the bank of the Mandakini consoling him all
the way. Bharata and others also arrived there. Rama
then facing the south and taking water in the cavity
of his joined palms said with tearful eyes, "Father,
you have now repaired to heaven, may this clear
water offered by me produce your satisfaction there."

Then Rama with his brothers came to the margin
of the Mandakini and placing the Pindas of Ingudi
mixed up with Jujube fruits on a bed of grass, said
with tears, "Father, accept this Pinda and partake of
it. We are now residing in the forest and we live
upon such food, and what one partakes, he can offer
it to the manes of his ancestors."

Rama then left the bank of the river and following
the same route by which he previously came, he
ascended the hill, and arriving at the door of his
cottage, he took Bharata and Lakshmana by the two
hands. At that time their grief for their father seemed
to be renewed and they began to cry aloud, resounding
the hill with their cries like the muffled tears of a weep.
At this Bharata's party grew alert and thought they
probably. Bharata had met Rama and they were now
crying for their dead father. Then they ran towards
the direction of the sound and the whole forest shook
with their hurried steps.

On arriving at the cottage, the followers of Bharata
found sinless Rama seated on the ground. At that
sight their eyes were filled with tears and started
abusing Kaikeyi and Manthara. Rama stood up at
their sight and embraced them affectionately and then

! The order of procession was the yout-
least last and first children then women.
bowed at his feet. They then burst into loud lamentations, and every one considered Rama so recently exiled as his dear one for ever residing in a foreign land.

In the meantime Vasistha was coming along with the queens. The queen was slowly proceeding on foot along the bank of the river, and on seeing a bank's descent (ghat) built for the use of Rama and Lakshmana, to get into the Mandakini stream, Kausalya broke forth in tearful eyes. Pointing the same to Sumitra, and other co-wives she said, 'Look, Sumitra, this is the bank's descent of those unfortunate who have been deprived of their kingdom. Your son Lakshmana, unknown to laziness personally carries water for Rama along these flights. It is a menial work, but it does not degrade, since he does it for his elder, yet this toilsome work is unworthy of him.'

Seeing the Ingudi Pindas on grass, Kausalya said, 'Look, Rama has offered here Pindas to the noble lord of the Ikshwaku line. What a poor offering to the lord of the earth who used to enjoy all the dainties of the world? How will he feed upon Ingudi fruits? Nothing can be more painful than this. But I wonder why my heart was not rent into two at this painful sight?'

Other queens with great difficulty consoled Kausalya, but when they saw Rama in the forest like an angel dropped from the heaven, they broke forth in loud sobs.

Rama immediately stood up at their sight and bowed at their feet. They then with their soft palms began at brush off the dusts from his back. Lakshmana then greeted them with a sorrowful heart. They treated Lakshmana as they had done with Rama. At last, Janaki, grown lean with the hardships of forest-life, touched the feet of her mothers-in-law, stood silent with tearful eyes. At that sight Kausalya burst
into tears and embracing her as her own daughter exclaimed in grief.

"Alas, how is she, who is the daughter of the king of Vedaha, daughter-in-law of king Dasaratha, and wife of Rama, bearing these hardships in the forest? My daughter, the sight of your face which now looks like a withered lily, like a crushed lotus, like gold covered with dusts and like the moon hidden in the clouds, scorches my heart as fire burns a log of wood."

Then Rama bowed to fire-like-effulgent Vasistha, as Indra does to Vrihaspati, and sat down after the latter took his seat. After this Bharata, his ministers, captains and priests sat behind them with folded palms. Every one burnt with curiosity to hear what Vasistha would speak to Rama.

The night however, passed in their lamentations for their father, and when the day dawned they went to the Mandakini, and performed their morning services there—(Homa and recitation of the Sabitri Mantras) and after that they silently came back to Rama.

CHAPTER XLI
THE PERSUASIONS

Bharata, then addressing Rama, said before all:

"My Lord, the kingdom by bestowing which on me, father wanted to pacify my mother, I do now make over to your hands. Enjoy the kingdom free from all thorns. Who, excepting you, can now protect the kingdom torn asunder like a dam breached by strong currents of water during the rains? As the mule can not imitate a horse, or a common fowl the king of birds, so you should know me (to be the same; in comparison with you. Happy is the man upon whom depend others for their sustenance, but unhappy is he
who depends on others for his own support. Let all
people witness you duly established on the throne." 
Every one praised Bharata for his noble words.

Then gentle Rama replied, "My boy, a created
being does not enjoy any independent existence, he has
no freedom of will, he can't act as he likes, he is
subject to death. Everything is perishable, every rise
has its fall, where there is composition, there is decomp-
osition, there is life as well as death. As a ripe
fruit has on other course but to fall, as an edifice
standing on massive pillars grows weak when dilapi-
dated with age, so a man grows feeble and the night
that hath passed away will not return back, as the stream
of the Jamuna flowing towards the ocean does not
recede in its course. As summer's heat continually
dries up the water of a tank, so ever-fleeting days and
nights rob people of their longevity. Whether you be
stationary in one place or roam about hither and
thither, your life must run to its end. So think about
yourself and don't bother about others. Death
accompanies you in your walk, sits down when you sit,
he travels long distance with you, and returns with
thee. With age a man grows weak, his skin is wrink-
led and his hair turns grey. Now tell me how can
you prevent these? Man rejoices at the rise of the
sun and he feels delighted at the approach of night,
but he does not understand that his life by this time
has been shortened. People are delighted at the advent
of a new season, but they do not understand that with
the revolution of seasons their longevity has been
shortened. As in the vast ocean one piece of wood
comes in contact with another (by the force of the
current, i.e., by mere accident) but in time becomes
separated, so you should understand a man's association

1 In the original Death draws him both here and after.

2 When literally translated it stands thus:—As a ripe fruit has
other fear than fall, so a man who is born has no other fear than
death.
with wealth, wife and children. It is impossible to get rid of this eternal chain of birth and death. He who laments for another’s death cannot, however, prevent his own.

“As a traveller follows another seeing him going ahead of him, so we shall have to follow our predecessors. Why should then a man mourn for another when he cannot alter his own inevitable end? Seeing life ebbing fast like the flow of a stream which cannot be called back, man should engage himself in search of happiness since happiness is the end of all. Our virtuous father after performing many meritorious sacrifices has repaired to heaven. It is not proper to mourn for him. He has attained heavenly bliss by casting off his infirm body, so we must no more weep for him. In all circumstances, intelligent people subdue grief, lamentations and tears, so be not overwhelmed with grief, go back to Ayodhya and reside in the capital. This was the wish of our father and let me pursue my own duties here. He was our father and it is not proper to disobey his commands. You ought to honour him. It is our duty to obey our superiors who wish for our ultimate good. Father has attained heaven by his own merits, you may rest assured. Now attend to your own duties.”

Thus saying Rama lapsed into silence.

Then Bharata returned,—“My noble lord, who is like you in this world? Sorrow cannot afflict you, nor pleasure can buoy you up. You are an ideal to the aged people, though you consult them in times of doubt. To you, life and death, good and evil are all equal. You have nothing to grieve for. In fact, one who has acquired self-knowledge like you is not moved by any calamity or sorrow. You are truthful, wise and divine in nature, the mysteries of life and death are not unknown to you, so even intense sorrow cannot overpower you.
"What my mean-minded mother has done in my absence in a distant land had not the least approval of mine, so be with me. It is for religious consideration that I have not as yet taken the life of this sinful woman. How would I commit such a nefarious act being born of illustrious Dasaratha? King Dasaratha was our father, king and preceptor, so I should not speak anything ill of him, but was this right (being cognizant of what is right and what is wrong) to act in this manner at the instigation of his wife? It is said that 'when one's end is near, his sense becomes perverted.' From the conduct of the King this adage seems to be true. However, now rectify the wrong that has been committed either through anger, ignorance or wrecklessness. The son is called "Aptaya" because he saves his father from fall, so be thou a true son.

"It is not becoming of you to perpetuate the wrong done by father. What he has done is most unjust and highly reprehensible. So be gracious to comply with my request. How ill-matched is Kshatriya valour with forest-life, and matted locks with sovereignty? How monstrous, it is not at all becoming of you to pursue such a perverse line of action. Governing the people is the duty of a Kshatriya, but which Kshatriya by putting aside this Kshatriya morality will adopt a dubious and an arduous course resorted to by old people? But if you are inclined to arduous duties, then adopt the onerous duty of governing the four orders of people according to custom and morality. Virtuous people say that of the four orders the life of a householder is the best, then why do you intend to abandon

1 Four orders of life according to the old Hindus were:—
Brahmacharya (celibacy), Garhasthya (householder), Vana-prashta (retiring to the forest by eschewing worldly life), Bhikshu (mendicancy). Manu says, the life of a householder is the best, for he can attain the merits of other orders by discharging faithfully the household duties as all creatures depend on air, so all other orders are subordinate to Garhasthya order.
that? My lord, in attainments and in age I am a boy to you. Who can govern in your presence? I even lack in common sense. I cannot live without your help, so you rule over the earth. Vasistha and other Ritwikas versed in Mantras, with the subjects will present you the crown even here. After the coronation ceremony, go back to Ayodhya like Indra, the ruler of heaven. Absolve yourself from the three-fold debts, viz., to the gods, to the ancestors and to the Rishis; lighten the miseries of your enemies and increase the pleasure of your friends, and rule over me. Rescue our revered father Dasaratha from sin by removing the disgrace of my mother Kaikeyi. I throw myself at thy feet and entreat you again and again and do me this favour. If you retire to another forest without granting my prayers, I tell you that I shall go along with you."

Bharata bowed down and thus entreated, but Rama did not acquiesce in his words; he was determined to carry out the mandate of his father. So he was both pleased and pained by Bharata’s entreaties. Then all praised Bharata for his noble speech, and they all entreated Rama again and again.

Rama then returned, “Bharata, you are born of King Dasaratha, and what you have proposed is worthy of you. But father at the time of marrying your mother promised to the king of Kekaya that he would bestow the kingdom upon the son born of that marriage. Then he promised your mother two boons being pleased with her nursing at the time of the war between the Gods and the Asuras; therefore your mother asked for the two boons, my exile and your installation to the throne. I have come to the forest with Janaki and Lakshmana to redeem father from his pledge, so you should also without further delay accept the kingdom for observance of truth. Even for my satisfaction you should redeem father from his obligation and should greet your mother. Hear me,
my boy, in Gaya high-souled Gaya at the time of sacrifice to please his departed ancestors, recited this Vedic hymn:

"He who saves his father from the hell named Put is called Putra, and he who saves his father from all sorts of difficulties is also a Putra (or a true son). The wise people pray for many sons because at least one of them may go to Gaya (to offer pindas). Bharata, such was the belief of the former kings. So go back to Ayodhya and get yourself installed and rule over the people for their welfare with the help of Satruighna and the Brahmanas. I shall shortly repair with Janaki to the Dandaka forest. You rule over men, let me rule over the animals here. Go back with a contented mind and I shall too set forth to the Dandaka with delight. Let white umbrella shade your head. I shall take refuge under the cooler shadow of these forest trees. As Lakshmana is of great help to me, Satruighna will be of great help to you. Thus let us fulfil the vow of our father."

Then sage Javali observed, "Rama, you are intelligent and wise but let not your intelligence lead you to discomfits like that of an ordinary person. Now mark, who is whose friend? Who is entitled to a thing by virtue of his relation? Man is born alone and dies alone. He is an insane person who becomes affectionately attached to another, as his father or mother. As at the time of setting out for a foreign land, a man resides outside his village, and on the next morning he leaves it (without remorse) you should know such is a man's relation with his father, mother, house and wealth. Good people never become attached to these. Therefore, it is not becoming of you to renounce the ancestral kingdom at the request of your father, and to live in this dense forest full of perils. Go back to prosperous Ayodhya, and the city is waiting for you..."

1 The Sanskrit verb 'trayati' means to save. Put (hell) and not tra.
like a woman wearing a single braid of hair. You will pass your days happily like Indra, the ruler of Gods. Dasaratha was nobody to you, so you were none to him. He was other than your father; you are also other than his son. So act as I tell you to do. Father is regarded as a mere instrumental cause of birth. In fact, the germinal seed which mother holds in her womb during her course is the true cause of generation. Now, King Dasaratha has gone to a place where every man is bound to go at last—it is his nature—but you are spoiling everything by your foolishness (perverse intellect). I am really anxious for those who, disregarding all tangible duties and works that lie within the province of perception, busy themselves with (unsubstantial) virtue alone; they after suffering various miseries here on earth are at last annihilated by death. You find people to perform Astaka Srdh in honour of their dead ancestors, but this means only sheer waste of rice, for who has ever heard that a dead man can eat? If food taken by one could nourish another's body, then feed one on behalf of a person living in a distant country. But does this serve the man living in a distant land as his food—does he feel gratified by it? Certainly not. The injunctions about worship of Gods, sacrifice, gifts and penance have been laid down in the Shastras by clever people, just to rule over people and to make them submissive and disposed to charity. Therefore, O Rama, content yourself with this idea that there is no after-world, nor any religious practice for attaining that. Follow what is within your experience and do not trouble yourself with what lies beyond the province of human experience. Bharata is entreaty ing you, take common sense view of the thing approved by all and accept the monarchy.”

1 The custom was that a woman was not to go near her former lover discarded all her clothes, and even the hairdresser did not touch her uncombed hair.
But this speech of Javali failed to produce any change in Rama's mind, and he observing the rules of piety returned: "O Sage, what you have just now said for my interest, though this appears like a desirable course of action is not indeed so (it looks like duty, but it is not). He who is vicious and walks along a wrong path and preaches against the doctrines of the Shastras is not honoured by good people. One's conduct shows whether one is high-born or low-born, whether he is valiant or vain, pure or impure. If I act according to your advice, various mischiefs will ensue. Your view is most unliberal. Acting according to your precept, a mean-charactered fellow may appear as honourable, the vicious may appear as pure, and the inauspicious one may look like auspicious. I shall be condemned by the virtuous and shall be guilty of violating the family custom if I adopt this reprehensible course of action as my duty. I can not then hope to attain the blissful state (after death) for the fulfilment of a vow, and the subjects following my example will go on astray. So what you have said does not appear to be commendable to me.

"The immemorial royal polity, where kindness plays a prominent part, is based upon truth. Wonderful is the potentiality of truth; all the world is being held by it. Gods and Saints honour truth greatly; truthful people attain Brahma-loka; love of truth is at the root of all religions. Truth is God, and religion is based upon it, nay everything rests on truth. There is nothing greater than truth. The Vedas, enjoining Sacrifice, Charity, Homa and Penance are founded upon truth. The earth (wealth), reputation and fame crave for him who is truthful. So from all considerations it is desirable to be truthful. I shall renounce that so-called religion, or Kshatriya morality that is followed by the low, mean-minded, cruel and greedy people. One may commit three kinds of sins, either by his body, or by his mind, or by his speech. One man maintains his family, another goes to hell, and another is honoured by the gods in
heaven. My father was devoted to truth. Why should I disobey that which he laid upon me, being bound by truth. To him I am bound by truth, and I shall not breach the bridge of truth through ignorance, covetousness, anger or pride. I have heard that Gods and ancestors do not accept any offerings of an untruthful man. This devotion of truth is the highest of all spiritual faiths. Noble men have always borne its burden. Therefore I have become anxious to follow it. Now, what you have explained to me with your reasons appears to be quite hateful to me. How can I agree to Bharata's proposal after accepting my decree of exile by vowing before my father? Kaikevi was greatly pleased when I bound myself by truth. How can I now displease her? I shall henceforth pass my days by leading a chaste and pure life by subsisting on fruits and roots, to the satisfaction of the Gods and ancestors. Having come to this field of action one should do what is good, but not what is only desirable. Agni, Vayu and Soma have attained their lofty positions by their own meritorious acts. Indra, the king of Gods, has obtained his heavenly kingdom by the performance of hundred sacrifices, this is why he is called Satakraatu.

"O Sage, truth, religion, penance, charity, sweet speech, worship of gods, hospitality towards the guests are the ways that lead to heaven; the Brahmanas have assigned them to be means of salvation. Your words are quite antagonistic to the Vedas and religion, and Father was to be blamed for appointing you as a priest. As a Buddhist is punishable like a thief, so an atheist deserves to be punished, and an atheist is to be shunned, as condemned by the Vedas, and wise people should not talk with him. Better Brahmanas than you practise this religion and perform sacrifices, penances and other rites. In fact those who are religious, generous, and affectionate are honoured in this world."

When Rama said this with some temper, Javali

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1 It is clear, it is an interpolation. The original Ramayan was certainly compiled long before rise of Buddha.
humbly replied, "Rama, I am neither an atheist, nor am I an advocate of atheism, and it is not true that there is no after-world after death. I become a believer or an atheist as occasions demand. Time has come when one should grow an atheist, and I have said all these just to induce you to leave the forest, but now I withdraw my words for your satisfaction."

Then saintly Vasistha seeing Rama somewhat irritated said, "My boy, Javali is quite conversant with the final departure of human beings to the other world and their re-birth. He has said these just to persuade you to return to Ayodhya. Rama, you are the descendant of King Dasaratha; it is your duty to ascend the throne and rule over the kingdom. It is the custom amongst the Ikshwakus that the eldest should ascend the throne, and it is not proper for you to violate that time honoured custom. So you rule over the earth like your father Dasaratha.

"My boy, three persons are adorable on earth—father, mother and the preceptor. Rama, I am your preceptor as well as that of your father, and you will attain spiritual merits by obeying my words, and also by the act of protecting your friends, relations, people and the princes under you. It does not behove thee to disregard the words of your aged mother—pious Kausalya, nor to slight the repeated requests of virtuous Bharata for your return."

Rama, hearing these words of Vasistha, replied. "O Sage, Father and mother do their utmost to feed their children, and to keep them healthy and clean they encourage them to play and always use sweet speeches towards them. Their debts can never be repaid. So I cannot disobey the words of my procreator, father."

"Then Bharata looked greatly depressed and said, Sumantra, spread Kusha grass on the ground, I shall fast here so long Rama is not pleased. As a Brahmin creditor sits at the door of his debtor for the recovery
of his money, so I shall lie down before this cottage covering myself from head to foot, and shall abstain from all food."

Sumantra, though ordered, looked at Rama's face. Thereupon, Bharata himself spread Kusha on the ground, and lay down on it.

Then Rama said, "What have I done that you will starve yourself to death? This a custom prevalent amongst the Brahmanas but not amongst the Kshatriyas. So rise up and give up this arduous vow."

Bharata then looked round and addressing the citizens said. "Why are you not saying anything to Rama?"

They replied, "What you have said is in no way unjust, and the earnestness which magnanimous Rama is showing for carrying out the wishes of his father appears to be equally just. This is why we have so long remained silent."

Then Rama said, "Bharata, you have heard what these good friends have just now said. Judge yourself their words. Just rise up, touch my body and then take water."

Bharata then rose from the ground and addressing the courtiers said, "Gentlemen, hear me, and listen to me, my counsellors, I do not crave for this kingdom, nor have I instigated mother for it, nor did I know that Rama would have to take shelter in the woods if it is decided by him to live here in obedience to father's mandate, then I shall live fourteen years in the forest as his substitute."

Rama was greatly astonished at Bharata's words. Then addressing the citizens and villagers he said, "You see, neither I nor Bharata should annul any gift, sale, or mortgage effected by our father during his life-time. So it will be highly disreputable on my part to appoint a substitute of mine to live in the forest. Nothing unjust has been done by Kaikeyi, nor father has done any wrong. I know Bharata, he is full of forgiveness
and also full of respect towards the superiors. On my return from the forest, I shall share the kingdom with him. Brother Bharata, I have acted as mother Kaikeyi has asked; do thou now absolve father from the obligations of his promise."

When Rama and Bharata were thus talking, heavenly and royal Saints and Gandharvas appeared on the scene. They praised both the brothers most lavishly and said, "He is blessed who has two righteous sons like you. We have been greatly delighted by your words." Then thinking about the destruction of Ravana they persuaded Bharata, saying, "O hero, you are born of a noble family, and you are wise and famous. If you care for the reputation of your father, then agree to what Rama has said. We also wish that he should be absolved from his obligations by carrying out his promise."

Thus saying they went to their respective abodes.

Bharata once more entreated Rama saying, "O Arya, fulfil the desire of Kausalya. It won't be possible for me to rule this vast kingdom, or to please the subjects. As the cultivator anxiously waits for rain, so all the people are eagerly waiting for you. Therefore accept the kingdom and then give it up to whomsoever you please."

Saying this, lotus-eyed Bharata, dark as a cloud, threw himself at the feet of Rama and entreated him again and again.

Rama took up Bharata in his lap, and said in a sweet voice like that of a singing swan, "My boy, you have attained that state of mind which is only natural and which is the fruit of education and culture. Now do your duty with the help of wise counsellors and friends. The moon may lose its beauty, the Himalayas its snow, the ocean may overstep the limits of the coast, but I shall never refrain from fulfilling the promise of my father. My darling, don't mind, what your mother has done--either for her love for you or from covetous-
ness. You should honour and respect your mother as one ought to."

Hearing these words of Rama, resplendent with energy like the sun, and beautiful like the moon of the second lunar day of the month, Bharata said, "O, Arya, now take off from your feet those sandals wrought in gold. These shall protect what the people possess and procure them what they want."

Then Rama took off the sandals and offered them to Bharata. Bharata took them with a profound bow and said, "I shall dedicate the kingdom to these sandals, and for fourteen years I shall wait in expectation of you by wearing bark and subsisting upon fruits and roots and shall live in the outskirts of the city with matted locks, but if I do not find you on the first day of the fifteenth year, then I shall surely cast myself into flames."

Rama agreed to Bharata's words, and embracing him in deep affection said, "Myself and Janaki conjure you to protect mother Kausalya. Never be rude to her."

Saying this Rama with tearful eyes looked at Bharata.

Then Bharata placing those bright sandals on the head of an elephant, went round Rama. Then Rama steadfast as the Himalayas in piety, after paying his respects to Vasishta, took leave of Bharata, Satrughna, counsellors and the people in succession. At that time the voices of Rama's mothers were choked with tears. Rama too after paying homage to them with sobs entered the cottage.

CHAPTER XLII

Bharata's Return.

Then Bharata carrying Rama's sandals on his head, got upon a chariot with Satrughna and set out with sage Vasishta, Vamadeva and Jvali.
After covering a long distance they arrived at the hermitage of Bharadwaja and on being questioned, Bharata said how even after repeated entreaties Rama refused to accept the kingdom and that he was taking with him the glittering sandals of Rama to install them on the throne.

Bharadwaja was mightily pleased at this news and said that death could not annihilate Dasaratha since he had left such a virtuous son like him. Bharata then proceeded towards Ayodhya with his host. He crossed the rippling Jamuna and the Ganges and passed through Sringaverapur and then entered Ayodhya, resounding the streets by the deep rumbling noise of his chariot, but was pained by the deserted look of the city which appeared gloomy like a moonless night. It looked like the planet Rohini, bright with the lustre of the moon, when she is forlorn on account of her lover being afflicted with Rahu (the enemy of the moon). The busy hum of the city was hushed, and it looked like a solitary dial after the sacrifice was over, and it looked as if a star fell from the heaven on the extinction of its light, or like a flowery creeper with mad bees humming over it but scorched by a sudden forest-fire. The shops and stalls were closed, the streets were deserted and were full of dirt. On the whole it presented a wretched view like an uncovered and unclean drinking place with all the wine drained and strewn with broken vessels.

Bharata then addressing Sumantra broke forth in grief: "Sumantra, why that music is not heard in Ayodhya as was heard before? Why there is intoxicating smell of liquor, and not fragrance of garlands and sweet incense of Aguru and Sandal? Why there is no deep rumbling noise of traffic in the city? Its former gay appearance is over. In fact, the splendour of Ayodhya has left the city along with Rama. It has no beauty now. When shall Rama come back like a grand carnival, like rain in the summer, and will gladden the hearts of the people?"
Bharata then keeping his mothers in Ayodhya said to Vasistha and others, "I shall go to Nandigram and I invite you all there. I shall suffer there the pangs of separation from my brother. Father has gone to heaven, and worshipful brother is in the forest; nothing is more painful than this. Now just for the kingdom I shall be waiting for Rama, for Rama is the real king."

Then Vasistha and others observed, "What you have said out of brotherly love is really commendable and quite worthy of you. You are honest and bear great love for your brother. Who will not approve of your words?"

Bharata then asked the charioteer to yoke horses to the chariot and after greeting his mothers he got upon the car with Satrughna, and proceeded to Nandigram with counsellors and priests. Even the citizens, though not invited or asked, began to follow Bharata. Bharata then entered Nandigram carrying the sandals on his head. Then addressing the priests, Bharata said, "Worshipful Kama has bestowed the kingdom on me as a trust. These sandals inlaid with gold will govern the kingdom."

Then after bowing to the sandals, turning to the people, he said, "Speedily hold the royal umbrella over it—it is the representative of Rama. Rama has consigned the kingdom as a trust to me, so I shall have to protect it till his return. When he will come back, I shall myself with my own hands put on these sandals to Rama's feet and after reconveying everything to him I shall pass my days in his service and then be absolved from sin."

Thus saying Bharata with matted locks installed the sandals on the throne and out of deep respect himself stood by it by holding the umbrella and chowri in hands. Bharata then carried on the government as its subordinate, and whenever anything was brought, he first formally presented it to the sandals and then it was kept in deposit in the treasury.
CHAPTER XLIII
LEAVING THE CHITRAKUTA.

Rama while living in the Chitrakuta one day found the ascetics greatly agitated. Rama grew anxious on account of this and with great humiliation he asked their chief, 'O venerable one, have you found me in any way deviating from the practices of former sovereigns that might cause disturbance to your minds? Has Lakshmana committed any wrong through carelessness? Is not Janaki devoted to your service? Has she neglected her duty for her attachment towards me?'

Then an aged ascetic said that there was no fault on the part of Sita or of anybody, but of late a Rakshasa—a formidable rover of night—was creating disturbances and thereby interrupting their religious practices and penances. For this the hermits were getting themselves ready to go to the beautiful hermitage of Sage Kanwa and asked Rama to accompany them if he liked and repeatedly requested Rama to leave the place.

After this Rama had little inclination to live in that place for various reasons. At that place the memories of his mothers, brothers and relatives began to haunt him off and on. Besides the place was rendered dirty by Bharata's host. Rama then decided to leave the place and left for the hermitage of saint Atri with Janaki and Lakshmana.

Sage Atri received Rama, Lakshmana and Janaki with warm hospitality. The famous sage then called his virtuous wife Anusuya, devoted to penance, and asked her to receive Sita, and turning to Rama said, "My boy, when people were suffering immensely from a ten-year drought, this pious Anusuya created fruits and roots and even caused the Ganges to flow in the Asylum by her psychic power. She passed ten thousand years in penance. Once sage Mandavya cursed the
wife of a monk saying that she would turn a widow as soon as the night would be over, but this devout lady rendered one night long as ten nights by her psychic power. She is gentle and pure. Let Janaki go to her."

Rama then turned to Sita and said, "Princess, you have heard what the sage has said, and have to go to that pious lady for your benefit."

Thereupon Sita went to Anusuya. She was all hoary with age and was trembling like a plantain tree in the breeze. Janaki mentioned her name and after bowing at her feet she enquired about her welfare in joined hands.

Seeing Janaki, Anusuya remarked, "Janaki, you know what is righteousness; therefore by forsaking your relations, wealth and vanities you have followed Rama in exile. She who loves her husband, whether living in the city or in the forest, whether he be attached to her or ill-disposed towards her, attains great spiritual bliss. Whether the husband be a libertine or wayward or be indigent, he is always adorable to a wife of noble character. I do not know of a more constant friend than husband, like the merits acquired by penance. Those who crave for their husbands only for carnality are harlots (in their hearts) and they are incapable of judging merits and demerits of such acts. An ill-charactered woman like that is apt to fall into vices and reap infamy. But those who are good and qualified like you are adored in heaven. So you should follow your husband in everything."

Janaki then gently replied, "There is nothing strange that you will teach me thus. O worshipful lady, I also know that husband is always an object of respect to the wife. The wife should unhesitatingly devote herself to his services, even if the husband be of bad character, but what shall I say in his case, who is self-controlled, accomplished, steadfast. constant, just, and devoted to his parents? Rama loves and honours his other mothers like Kausalya. Rama looks upon her as his mother on whom Dasaratha ever cast his glance. I have not for-
gotten the advices imparted to me by honourable Kausalya on the eve of my coming to this dense forest, nor I have forgotten what mother asked me to observe at the time of marriage in the presence of sacred fire. In fact, my friends and relations have installed into my heart that devotion to the husband is the highest virtue of a wife. Savitri is adored in heaven for this devotion, and you too have attained such merit by this devotion. Rohini, the foremost of women, never for a moment appears in the sky without the moon. In fact, many chaste and devoted women have attained heaven by their virtues."

Anusuya was greatly delighted at Sita's speech and kissing her head the venerable lady said, "My darling, by my penance I have acquired great powers, I want to grant you some boons. Now tell me what will please you? Tell me your desire."

Sita was greatly astonished at this and replied with a sweet smile, "Lady, I am more than thankful that you have been pleased with me (for your kindness towards me)." Anusuya was still more pleased with these words of Sita and said, "My daughter, I have been exceedingly delighted at your words. I shall now attain a desire of mine. Take this beautiful garland, apparel, these ornaments, and cosmetics. With these you will appear exceedingly beautiful in person. These are worthy of you, and they will be never tarnished by use. Janaki, by daubing your body with this paint, you will enhance the beauty of Rama sitting by his side, as goddess Kamala graces Narayana by her presence."

Then Sita after accepting those affectionate presents sat by her side. Then the ascetic woman asked, "My daughter, I have heard that Rama got you as wife in Swayamvara, now tell me everything about it." Then Janaki replied, "O worshipful lady, hear me then. There reigns a virtuous king named Janaka in Mithila. He found me one day while ploughing the field. He was then levelling the ground for sacrifice. I was found lying on the ground covered with mud. He was greatly
astonished finding me in that situation. As he had no issue of his own, he affectionately took me in his lap. At that moment a voice from above said, "O king, from this day she will truly be a daughter unto you." King Janaka was greatly delighted at this, and from that time he began to prosper.

"He then placed me in the hands of her queen anxious for a child, and she brought me up with motherly affection. In course of time I gained my marriageable age. My father grew anxious and felt distressed like a poor man who has lost his money. Even if the father of the girl be an influential person like Indra, he has to suffer many indignities at the hands of his equals and inferiors! When he failed to procure a desirable bridegroom for me, he thought of holding a Swayamvara. Formerly, God Varuna had given to Royal saint Devarat a formidable bow with excellent quiver and arrows. The bow was a heavy one which the kings could not raise or bend, and my truthful father promised to confer me on him who would be able to put string to this bow. Thus passed many a day.

"Then sage Visvamitra came to witness father's sacrifice in Mithila with Rama and Lakshmana in his company. Thereupon Rama wished to see the bow and he bent it within the twinkle of an eye, nay he broke it into two! Then my truthful father was about to bestow me on Rama by holding up a vessel of water. But gentle Rama did not agree to marry without his father's consent. Father then brought my father-in-law, king Dasaratha from Ayodhya and bestowed me on Rama. I have got a beautiful sister named Urmilla, she has been married to Lakshmana. Since then I am devoted to my husband."

Having heard this, the pious wife of Atri kissed Sita's head and said, "I am glad to hear all these. Now the sun is on the decline. The birds are returning to

1 Sprinkling of water with Mantras is necessary in every solemn occasion.
their nests after a day's quest for food, chirping sweet
notes in their flight. . The monks after evening bath are
returning in wet barks with pitchers of water on their
shoulders. Look, columns of smoke—reddish like
the hue of a pigeon's neck—are rising from the sacri-
ficial fire. Trees of thin foliage appear dense in dark-
ness. The hermitage deer are reposing on the dais.
Animals that rove in night are going to and fro.
Nothing is visible at a distance. The night is come. The
moon has ascended the sky clothed in light. The stars
have become visible. Janaki, now I permit you to go
and minister to your husband. You have gratified me
by your sweet speech, now oblige me by putting on
these ornaments."

Then Sita—beautiful like the daughter of a god—
adorned her person with those ornaments and went
to Rama after bowing at the venerable lady's feet.
Rama was delighted at the sight of these affectionate
presents and Lakshmana too was immensely pleased at
this warm hospitality.

Rama passed the night in the hermitage of Atri.
In the morning after bath, he asked the monks about
the path to go to another forest. The ascetics finding
Rama and Lakshmana about to start said, "Prince,
that part of the forest abounds in ferocious animals and
blood—thirsty Rakshasas. These Rakshasas are cannibals
and they feed upon the flesh of the ascetics. Do you
suppress them? This is the path through which the
ascetics gather fruits. You will be able to enter into
dense forest through this route."

Thus after being warned by the ascetics, and after
having received blessing from them, Rama entered the
deep forest with Lakshmana and Janaki, as the sun
entered a bank of heavy clouds.

THE END OF AYODHYA KANDAM.