

Volume 1

ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA
of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Canto 1: Bāla-Kāṇḍa

Original Text, English Transliteration &
Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes

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NOTE:

This English rendering of the epic Book 'ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNĀSA' of Goswami Tulsidas is in 7 Volumes.

The present volume no. 1 has the First Canto of the Book: viz. Baal Kand.

The subsequent volumes will have the following Chapters corresponding to different Cantos of 'ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNĀSA':

Volume 2: Chapter 5.2 / Canto 2: Ayodhya Kand

Volume 3: Chapter 5.3 / Canto 3: Aranya Kand

Volume 4: Chapter 5.4 / Canto 4: Kishkindha Kand

Volume 5: Chapter 5.5 / Canto 5: Sundar Kand

Volume 6: Chapter 5.6 / Canto 6: Lanka Kand

Volume 7: Chapter 5.7 / Canto 7: Uttar Kand

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman too who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural literature so rich in its devotional quotient.

“He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!” [Joseph Henry Gilmore, 1862.]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA

Of

Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Original Text, English Transliteration &
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VOLUME 1

Preface

The Essence & Spirit of ‘Sri Ram Charit Manas’

The classical epic known as the “Sri Ram Charit Manas” (pronounced “Śrī Rāma Carita Mānasa”) was written by Goswami Tulsidas (birth: Hindu Samvat 1589/1532 A.D; death: Samvat 1680/A.D. 1623), who was a great saint-poet of India and a prolific narrator of the divine Story of Lord Ram, for besides the Ram Charit Manas he had also written other wonderful books on the theme of the Ramayana.

The ‘Sri Ram Charit Manas’ is a masterpiece of devotional literature ever written in India; it’s the greatest devotional piece of literature written in the vernacular. Basically it is an ancient Story that describes the life, time and deeds of Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of the Supreme Lord God in a human form.

This Book, ‘Sri Ram Charit Manas’, has no parallel in the world of devotional and spiritual literature with regard to the beauty, charm and magnificence of its poetry, the melody inherent in its verses and style of composition, as well as for the immensity and depth of its devotional message, the countless gems of wisdom and practical advice for leading a good life of righteousness and auspiciousness that it contains, and for the fountain of spiritual and metaphysical knowledge that sprouts from its pages.

One fascinating and singularly magical aspect of Ram Charit Manas is that it has been interpreted and explained by countless teachers in their own way throughout its existence, but still there seems to be no end of the way it can be interpreted and explained in a newer way, for no one interpretation, explanation or exposition seems to be complete, leaving the Epic Book open to further exploration.

Another wonderful and wondrous aspect of Ram Charit Manas is that it is equally charming for a person whether that person is narrating the story himself, or is hearing it being narrated by someone else. This is evident when we see the case of Lord Shiva; he was the creator of this divine story, and he had narrated it first to his consort Uma, and then to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund¹. But later on we learn that Lord

Shiva becomes a listener himself, and enjoyed it thoroughly: he visits the hermitage of the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to hear it², as well as to the hermitage of sage Agastya to do so on another occasion³. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, ¹Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30; ²Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 55—to Doha no. 57; ³Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48.]

Though it is written in the vernacular language—precisely a language called ‘Avadhi’, which was, and is still, spoken in a geographical region of India where the holy town of Ayodhya is situated—the Book nevertheless has a universal appeal and such a matchless charm that it is routinely sung or recited in temples as a standard spiritual text. Its mass appeal lies in the simplicity of its language, the devotion for Lord God that it ignites in the heart of the reader and the listener, and the versatility of the style of composition of its verses which makes it possible to sing them in different Raagas (classical musical tunes of India) in accordance with the wishes of the singer.

This Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is a poetic rendering in the Avadhi dialect of the well-known and famous classical Story of the ‘Ramayana’ which tells the story of Lord Ram, a manifestation of the Supreme Being in a human form. It is an exceptionally captivating and fascinating book that has been adapted by many cultures and translated into many languages. Though there are many versions of the Ramayana, but Tulsidas builds his own Story of the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ by primarily referring to sage Valmiki’s version of the Ramayana, and sage Veda Vyas’ version known as the Adhyatma Ramayan.

The name ‘Ram Charit Manas’ literally means ‘the deeds done by Lord Ram (“Ram” + “Charit” = deeds done by someone that define his life) as they are conceived and enshrined in the heart and mind (“Manas” = heart and mind) of a devotee’. Who was this ‘devotee’ in whose mind and heart this grand and divine story was first conceived, and who then reverentially enshrined it there as one would consecrate a deity in a temple, or like a lotus flower that blooms in a lake, free from all surrounding pollutions?

Well, the answer is that this divine, holy and revered Story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’ was first revealed in the heart and mind (the “Mana”) of Lord Shiva while he was meditating upon his revered deity, Lord Ram, the Lord whom Shiva worshipped, adored and glorified. Indeed, Lord Shiva is the Great God, the ‘Maha-Deva’, reputed for his excellence of spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation, who first conceived this glorious Story of his revered and beloved Lord Ram inside his Mana while he was once contemplating on the Lord and doing Japa (constant repetition) by using the holy name of ‘Ram’ as a Mantra (spiritual formula) for this purpose. This filled Lord Shiva with profound ecstasy; he remained in a transcendental state of consciousness, known as ‘Samadhi’, as he was engrossed in drinking the ambrosia of bliss and beatitude that spouted in his inner-being when the Story of Lord Ram revealed itself to him, and for a long time Shiva remained oblivious to everything else around him. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 58.]

By-and-by he thought that such a great and rare source of spiritual joy and bliss should not be locked up secretly in a personal cellar, but it ought to be shared selflessly

with the world for the general good of all living beings. So therefore, he unlocked the doors of his heart and revealed this divine story of Ram Charit Manas to his consort, goddess Uma or Parvati, then to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund, from whom it was heard by sage Yagyawalkya, who in turn revealed it to sage Bharadwaj, and from there this magnificent ambrosia that grants spiritual bliss and joy to the reader and the listener alike percolated down to the rest of the world through many generations of sages, saints, bards and minstrels in the form we know it today. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

The word ‘Manas’ in the nomenclature of this book is often times also referred to as a ‘lake’. It is because like a lotus flower that sprouts in a lake but remains clean even if the lake has polluted water, as no dirt is said to stick to the petals of the lotus, so is the case of Ram Charit Manas—that it remains eternally holy, divine, pure and sublime irrespective of the quality of the heart and mind of the person who reads, recites or hears it.

Ram Charit Manas is not merely a story of a great prince of the dynasty of kings that ruled over the mighty and prosperous kingdom of Ayodhya, but is a story that defines eclectic human values of love, compassion, kindness, gentleness, magnanimity, benevolence, sacrifice, renunciation, steadfastness in the face of adversity, commitment to duty, devotion, service, servitude, truth, tolerance, self-restraint, resilience, brotherhood, honesty, modesty, propriety, probity, nobility in thought and conduct, righteousness and wisdom—in brief, a long list of virtues and qualities that would make a person into a good and exemplary, if not a perfect, human being.

The story of Lord Ram has taught us all these values by the virtue of many examples that we come across in the course of our reading of the Ram Charit Manas, and not merely as abstract concepts and precepts that are difficult to implement. The Lord’s life teaches us many stellar virtues, such as, for example, to remain calm and composed in the face of the gravest provocation, to learn self-control in the face of the greatest of temptations, and to treat this life in the world where it is surrounded by strife and turmoil with an attitude of equanimity, fortitude and maturity.

A thorough study of this magnificent book Sri Ram Charit Manas and implementing its teachings in our daily lives will not only help us to be as perfect a human as we can possibly become, but also give us immense reward by way of spiritual and mental peace, bliss and happiness, virtues which are, after all, the objective of all human endeavours.

This book gives immense solace and succour to the soul; it acts as a soothing balm for the tormented spirit. It lights the way for spiritual seekers on their path towards emancipation, liberation and deliverance as easily as it helps a person to understand the intricacies and complexities of human thoughts, behaviour and relationships in the mundane mortal world in which he lives. It not only helps us to realize the practical realities of life but also guides us by showing solutions to vexed problems much like a ‘guide book of life’.

Reading it, studying it, and discussing it would make a person feel fulfilled and happy. It not only makes him practical, but spiritual as well.

In short, we can say that Sri Ram Charit Manas is a holistic guide for an all-round development of a person—for it not only shows him how to tackle different issues in the secular world, but also enlightens him at the same time as how to attain spiritual beatitude and felicity while going about his chores in the world. It therefore acts a guidebook from the perspective of practical life in this world, as well as from the spiritual angle.

Sri Ram Charit Manas is a divine story that is ageless and timeless. It is sung with equal devotion and fervor by the learned savant as by the laity; it appeals to the old as much as it does to the young. It is one book that has been preached, discussed and analyzed, line by line, by legends of teachers, preachers and scholars, but still no one could claim that he could even scratch its surface, let alone explain it or understand it exhaustively. It is, at the same time, a holy book of the same stature as a sacred scripture, as well as a classic epic story retold.

It is read by an individual silently and in solitude as a means of study and obtaining spiritual bliss, and is recited by a huge congregation with the same reverence as one witnesses during a Holy Mass, and the magic is that in both the cases it enthalls, captivates and enchants the mind and the spirit of the narrator as well as the audience.

Those who simply sit quietly to hear this divine story being sung or narrated by others derive equal bliss and succour as those who have an actual book of Ram Charit Manas in their hands even as the recitation is done by the scholarly preacher or the leader of the congregation, or the singer who sings the verses in a melodious tones.

Remember: Music has no barriers of language or geography; so is the case with Ram Charit Manas, because if its verses are sung by a good singer, then it casts such a magical spell on the audience that everyone is held mesmerized by its charm.

These aforesaid unique characteristics of Sri Ram Charit Manas gives it a universal appeal that transcends generations, cultures and periods of time, making it one-of-its-kind of a masterpiece of literature ever written in India.

The story of Lord Ram is a story of the Supreme Being in a form that is comprehensible to the mind and intellect of even the ordinary and the humblest of creatures. It had its origin in a very subtle form like the cosmic sound known as 'Naad', which is the vibration of Consciousness in the vast and fathomless expanse of the cosmos. Then, just as this creation progressively became grosser and grosser in a step-wise manner, and the abstract cosmic sound called the Naad gradually crystallized itself in the form of words and languages that were understandable and related directly to every individual member of this creation, the divine story of 'Sri Ram Charit Manas' containing the glory and the message of the Supreme Lord too became more and more understandable as it transformed itself from the abstract nature of the cosmic vibration of Consciousness that was first revealed in the heart of Lord Shiva, into more meaningful form as a divine story to which even the ordinary creatures of this creation could easily relate to.

The Genesis of the Story of Sri Ram Charit Manas:

As to the genesis of this story, we learn that it was first revealed in the heart of Lord Shiva who represents the Supreme Being in his cosmic form. This is why Lord Shiva is honoured by the scriptures with the title of “Maha-Deva”, the Great God. But it was too abstract for comprehension by the rest of this creation. So therefore, the Lord decided to codify his message in the form of a ‘story’, the “Sri Ram Charit Manas”, and first divulged it to his divine consort Parvati who represented Mother Nature from whom the rest of this visible creation came forth. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

Now, after this first revelation at the beginning of creation, the divine story spread throughout this creation as it developed in a step-by-step manner just like the holy river Ganges descended from the heaven to earth. Let us examine how.

Shiva told it to the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.] Kaagbhusund was a ‘bird’ (a crow) by his physical body. This is very significant: A bird flies in the air; it can as easily live on the surface of the earth as it can reach the highest reaches of the sky. From the perspective of metaphysics therefore, it represents a level of spiritual existence that lies between the subtlest and the grossest, symbolized by the heaven and the earth respectively. Thus, Kaagbhusund is a metaphor for all those exalted, self-realised and enlightened souls who had attained an exemplarily high level of spiritual evolvement, but had yet not qualified for complete godhood. Therefore, Lord Shiva telling the story of Sri Ram Charit Manas to Kaagbhusund symbolically refers to the second step in the revelation of the divine message of the Supreme Being to those highly exalted and spiritually evolved souls who would understand its true meaning and import, who had the intellect and wisdom to be able to delve deeper into its core and extract its essential message in the right spirit.

The next step came with sage Yagyawalkya learning it from Kaagbhusund. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

Yagyawalkya was the most exalted, highly erudite, the most learned and the most respected of all the ancient sages and seers of the time. He was most qualified amongst all his peers to grasp this knowledge. [Refer: Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahman 8, verse no. 12, and Brahman 9, verse no. 27.]

Yagyawalkya was competent to understand its heavenly knowledge. He then used his own language to transfer this knowledge to others in a language and in a way they could themselves understand. This would enable his disciples to spread the glorious story and its divine message to the rest of the world so that every creature could benefit from it. Thus, Yagyawalkya told it to sage Bharadwaj who lived on the banks of three holy rivers where a huge congregation of sages and seers assembled every year. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 47.]

In this annual event, there were discourses on spiritual, metaphysical and religious themes, and surely enough Sri Ram Charit Manas was preached and discussed. This helped to spread this story far and wide, because all the great sages, seers and saints

who assembled there and heard it, went back to their own places and retold it to their own line of disciples and assemblies that gathered at their respective places. And so the divine story of Lord Rāma spread far and wide in different languages and in different ways because each sage had his own way of disseminating this knowledge. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

We also find that besides telling this story to sage Yagyawalkya, as noted above, the crow saint Kaagbhusund had told this story to other birds too, and the most prominent amongst them was Garuda, the mount of Lord Vishnu. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Uttar-Kanda, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 62.]

Lord Shiva had already told this story to Parvati and Kaagbhusund. But he thought that he must do more to spread this holy message, and must check that it is being correctly told to others. So, once he had gone to sage Agastya and heard the story of Ram Charit Manas being narrated by the sage to reassure himself that story is being told correctly, unadulterated, un-tampered and without interpolations. Lord Shiva was satisfied with what he heard, and as token of his happiness he had abided in the sage's hermitage for some time and engaged with him in spiritual discourse. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48.]

Now, the question that is left unanswered in Ram Charit Manas is this: From whom did sage Agastya hear this story? Most probably it was during one of the religious congregations that were held regularly at the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.]

It was during one such occasion that sage Bharadwaj had requested sage Yagyawalkya to stay back and narrate the story of Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, to him in a private audience after the rest of the sages had gone back. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.]

Then we also learn that this story was heard by other sages such as Valmiki and Narad. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3.] Now, Valmiki represented the sages who lived on earth, and Narad represented sages who could reach even the heaven (because Narad was a sage who lived in heaven and could roam any where in this creation).

Whereas the other learned sages and seers taught and preached this Holy Book “orally” to their juniors and disciples who had attended their teaching sessions or discourses, sage Valmiki took the wise step to “write it down” in the form of the epic “Ramayana” that helped this story to be preserved in a standardized form that won't be susceptible to distortions or interpolations in the future, as well as to help it reach the farthest corners of the world, thereby enabling even those who could not attend oral teachings or recitations of the epic to have access to this story, at a place and time of their convenience.

But here again there was a problem. Valmiki wrote in Sanskrit which was the language of the scholar and of the higher echelons of society. Ordinary men and women were prevented from accessing it because of the language barrier.

The Lord God saw this obstacle in the propagation of his message. As it has been happening in history, the Lord sends someone as his ‘messenger’ when he deems it fit to do so. This messenger comes down to earth with a divine mandate, finishes his job in spite of un-surmountable obstacles which would break the spirit and will of the mightiest of men, and once the Lord’s task is done, this messenger goes away.

One such person was Goswami Tulsidas. The Supreme Lord felt that if his message is to reach the common man and have a wider reach then it has to be in a language this man understood. Sanskrit didn’t fit the bill as it was limited to the high and the mighty, not the laity. So, the Lord God got this divine nectar-like story written in the language of the common man, the language he spoke and understood. It was “Hindi”, and more specifically a form of Hindi that even the humblest man could speak, the local dialect called “Avadhi”.

Tulsidas himself learnt this story of Sri Ram Charit Manas from his teacher. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, Doha no. 30 ka, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

Every sage or saint narrated it according to his understanding and abilities, and therefore each of these narrations had its own uniqueness. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

Just like the holy river Ganges descending from the lofty peaks of the Himalayas first as a single stream and then branching off to many tributaries as it cascades down to the plains, the story of Sri Ram Charit Manas descended from Lord Shiva’s heart and spread over the whole world through a chain of legendary sages and saints. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3; (ii) Doha no. 30 ka along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow this Doha.]

The immense spiritual importance, its significance for a seeker, the divine nature and the profound glory of “Sri Ram Charit Manas” have been narrated in the book itself by Tulsidas (refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38), a reading of which is self-explanatory and highly illuminating.

The fact remains that Sri Ram Charit Manas is like an ocean of ambrosia; it is endless, it is timeless and it is beyond the reach of the mind and the intellect. There should be no doubt about it because Lord Ram, the personified form of the Supreme Being is himself beyond description and comprehension. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

It must however be noted that Goswami Tulsidas, the author of the epic “Sri Ram Charit Manas” was a very wise and clever man. This erudite saint knew the doubting mentality of the world and the skeptic nature of the people who would read his

Ramayana in the future: that they would be highly cynical of him and charge him of being biased in favour of his chosen deity Lord Ram by raising Ram to a high pedestal of divinity that he perhaps does not deserve by twisting or tweaking the story to suit his purpose.

So Tulsidas played his cards carefully, and with prudence, by clearly asserting that he is merely re-telling the story of Lord Ram that has been already told by ancient sages and seers from time immemorial, and that he is not doing it to prove his scholarship or poetic skills but only to find peace for his soul as well as to purify his mind and speech. This established his objectivity in the narration. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iv) Doha no. 35 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-13.]

Therefore, instead of telling the story of Ramayana directly in the first-person-narrative style, he has clearly said that he is narrating what sage Yagyawalkya had said to sage Bharadwaj, what Lord Shiva had said to Parvati, and other exalted sages such as Veda Vyas. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal-Kanda, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

But of course Tulsidas has interspersed his own narration with nuggets of advice and wisdom based on his own experiences and understanding of the ancient scriptures, which add immense shine and depth to the narration, making it similar to the Upanishads and the Purans because “Ram Charit Manas” has the characteristics of both. While on the one hand it resembles the “Purans” as it narrates a divine ‘story of the Lord God in one of his incarnations as Lord Ram’, on the other hand it resembles the “Upanishads” because it contains a huge treasure of spiritual and metaphysical knowledge for which the Upanishads are so famed.

So this in brief is an introduction to the spiritual classic known as “Sri Ram Charit Manas”: a grand and magnificent Story of the Supreme Being in his human form as Lord Ram, the Story of the Lord as he lived amongst us like one of us; a Story that has the potential to grant spiritual bliss, beatitude and joy to even the most lowly and the humble, to those who don’t have the mental ability to fathom the depths of metaphysical knowledge enshrined in the Upanishads, nor have access either to the Purans or expert Gurus (teachers). Since the ultimate goal of all spiritual endeavours is to attain bliss, happiness, beatitude and felicity, Ram Charit Manas fits the bill perfectly as it provides all these rewards without any effort.

Amongst all the books that my dear Lord Ram had inspired and motivated me to write—nay, he actually used me as a pen to put into writing what the Lord had wished to be written for the good of all—this holy and revered Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is my Magnum Opus, along with the 108 Vedic Upanishads that I have written in English. It goes without saying that this Book is a fruit of the Lord’s grace and love

for me, and it also goes without saying therefore that I can never ever claim any credit for its writing. I have tried to be as diligent and careful as I could to avoid errors, both of omission and of commission, but still, being after all being an ordinary human being, it cannot be ruled out that errors must have crept in inadvertently. Hence, I beg my esteemed and honourable readers to overlook such minor issues that may be present in a voluminous Book of this magnitude, and instead focus their attention on reading and enjoying the text with its heavenly aura, enjoying the emotional peace and happiness that this reading provides, and partaking of the succulent fruit of spiritual bliss and joy that this tree bears, a fruit whose juice is as sweet as nectar, and which grants abiding peace, beatitude and tranquillity to the soul of the seeker.

Finally, I submit this effort of mine at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram as well as the holy feet of Lord Hanuman whom I revere as a Guru, and once again request my esteemed readers to please forgive me for any inadvertent and un-intended mistakes or errors that I may have made in my writing because I am after all a human being who is apt to commit mistakes. So, please enjoy the Story and drink the spiritual nectar that drips from it, sidestepping small pebbles by way of unintentional commissions and omissions that I may have made during the course of my writing that you may encounter on the path of reading this book.

Amen!

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia.
(Author)

Place: Ayodhya.

Date: Vijaya Dashmi, 25th October, 2020.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA
Of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Original Text, English Transliteration &
Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes

Preamble to Śrī Rāma Carita Mānasa

“jaba jaba hō'i dharama kai hānī. bāṛhahiṃ asura adhama abhimānī. 6.
karahiṃ anīti jā'i nahim baranī. sīdahim bipra dhēnu sura dharanī. 7.
taba taba prabhu dhari bibidha sarīrā. harahiṃ kṛpānidhi sajjana pīrā. 8.”

{Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121.}

“Whenever Dharma (i.e. the glorious, positive virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, and nobility of conduct and thought, and the high moral values they stand for) suffers in this creation due to the dominance of unscrupulous evil elements symbolized by the haughty and arrogant Demons who do everything that is diametrically opposite to what Dharma stands for, and begin to tyrannize the world intolerably, as a result of which everyone suffers, from the humblest of creatures such as the cows as well as the followers of Dharma such as the Brahmins, to the most powerful ones such as the Gods as well as Mother Earth who can't stand against the ruthless onslaught and the might of the cruel Demons—on all such occasions the most merciful, compassionate and gracious Supreme Lord of this creation assumes different forms to manifest himself in this mortal world to remove the cause of sufferings of those who are on the right path, and to provide them with succour, solace and deliverance from the horrors created by their tormentors, the Demons, by eliminating the latter, thereby restoring peace and order in the world.

To wit, whenever goodness and positive forces in the world that are collectively represented by Dharma were in the decline due to the dominance of negative and evil forces symbolized by the Demons, whenever Dharma was being trounced and trampled underfoot the domineering Demons—on all such occasions the Supreme Lord of the world was obliged to intervene to restore balance and bring about peace and harmony in his creation by eliminating those elements that were disturbing peace and playing havoc with law and order in the world.”

“rāma bhagata hita nara tanu dhārī. sahi saṅkaṭa ki'ē sādhu sukhārī.”

{Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

“Lord Ram had been so gracious that he had accepted the gross body of a human being for the sake of his devotees, for their pleasure, happiness and satisfaction, and

while himself suffering from various troubles as a consequence, he had made them feel fain by bringing happiness and joy to those who were pious and holy.”

“rāma janama kē hētu anēkā. parama bicitra ēka tēm ēkā. 2.”

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.}

“Verily indeed, the occasions when the Supreme Lord was obliged to come down personally in the form of Lord Ram to take charge of restoring peace and order in this mortal world by eliminating the trouble makers known as the Demons, were many; in each one full cycle of creation and destruction of this world there happened to be some event which compelled the Lord to manifest himself as Lord Ram. And since the cycle of creation and destruction goes on moving endlessly, the causes and reasons and the processes whereby Lord Ram had manifested himself in this mortal gross world varied from one age to another, and each is more wondrous and strange than the others preceding or following it.”

“dōhā.

suṭhi sundara sambāda bara biracē bud'dhi bicāri.
tē'i ēhi pāvana subhaga sara ghāṭa manōhara cāri. 36.
caupāī.

sapta prabandha subhaga sōpānā. gyāna nayana nirakhata mana mānā. 1.
raghupati mahimā aguna abādhā. baranaba sō'i bara bāri agādhā. 2.”

{Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 36 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}

“In this holy and divine Story of Lord Ram, (known as Ram Charit Manas), the four primary discourses, rich in spiritual and metaphysical wisdom, that have been narrated to form its framework, are like the four banks of a beautiful lake filled with ambrosia of bliss and beatitude.” [These four discourses are the following: Lord Shiva and Parvati; sages Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj; the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garuda; saint poet Tulsidas and other saints and sages that narrated this story subsequently.] (Doha no. 36)

This divine story of Lord Ram has been arranged into seven chapters (called the Kandas), and they represent the seven steps that lead to the nectar of spiritual bliss present in the center of the symbolic lake represented by this holy story. When one sees these steps and the lake that they lead to with eyes of wisdom, one's Mana (heart and mind) is filled with delight unbound, --- (Chaupa line no. 1)

--- For he realizes that the water of this holy lake is accessed by reading the full story having seven chapters that narrate the infinite glories and greatness of Lord Ram, because they expound upon the divinity and holiness of the Lord in a finite and comprehensible way so as to make the Supreme Lord, whose primary form is invisible, cosmic, infinite and without any attributes, become easily accessible to a devotee in a way he can relate to in the gross, mortal world in which he lives. (Chaupa line no. 2)”

AMEN!

The above quotations from the holy book ‘Ram Charit Manas’, by way of an epigraphy, aptly sum up the theme of this divine Story of Lord Ram.

The name of the Book RAM CHARIT MANAS is best translated as follows—“It is the holy lake containing spiritual ambrosia in the form of the divine story describing the life, times, deeds and acts of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being on earth, a divine story that has the mystical ability to give immense bliss and peace to the soul of the reader and the hearer alike”.

How will the world benefit from the Lord’s divine manifestation if its record is not maintained in an authentic manner, and then it is not made known to the world at large by those who had this knowledge? Therein comes the importance of various scriptures and oral traditions. The written word is far better and reliable than the oral word, because the former is definite, certain, abiding and eternal, one that can be passed from one generation of teacher-student to the next and further on in its pure original form, without distortions and tampering, as opposed to the oral word which suffers from many intangible forms of weaknesses as it relies heavily on the vagaries of the gross body of both the teacher as well as the disciple, and the uncertainty and the reliability of the powers of memory, hearing, speaking and comprehension of both the speaker and the listener, as these elements used in transmission of knowledge vary from person to person.

So therefore, the importance of the written version of Lord Ram’s divine story in the form of Ram Charit Manas can never be undermined or overstated, especially when it is the version that Lord Shiva had himself conceived in his Mana, and then narrated it to his consort Parvati.

Why was the Supreme Being obliged to come down to earth as Lord Ram? The answer is this: Whenever goodness and positive forces in the world that are collectively represented by Dharma were in the decline due to the dominance of negative and evil forces symbolized by the Demons, whenever Dharma was being trounced and trampled underfoot the domineering Demons—on all such occasions the Supreme Lord of the world was obliged to intervene to restore balance and bring about peace and harmony in his creation by eliminating those elements that were disturbing peace and playing havoc with law and order in the world.

And the occasions when the Supreme Lord was obliged to come down personally in the form of Lord Ram to take charge of restoring peace and order in this mortal world by eliminating the trouble makers known as the Demons, were many; in each one full cycle of creation and destruction of this world there happened to be some event which compelled the Lord to manifest himself as Lord Ram. And since the cycle of creation and destruction goes on moving endlessly, the causes and reasons and the processes whereby Lord Ram had manifested himself in this mortal gross world varied from one age to another, and each is more wondrous and strange than the others preceding or following it.

Another prominent reason why the Supreme Lord had to come down to this mortal world in the form of a human being was to oblige his devotees and fulfill their wishes,

for these pious souls wished to have access to their beloved Lord and worship him in a way that was easy for them to do, a form of the Lord they could identify and correlate with in the physical world they lived in and were accustomed to, because life was short and precious moments could not be frittered away in the uncertainties and difficulties associated with following the arduous path of accessing the same Lord by metaphysical knowledge that though would lead to the Lord but was too complex and abstract for them to actually benefit from.

This Holy Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ written by Goswami Tulsidas, a sixteenth century saint-poet of India, is matchless in its beauty of writing and lucid in its presentation of the subject matter. It describes the life and times of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, who came down to earth for a variety of reasons. Though there are so many versions of this classical story but the present book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ by Tulsidas has found no match anywhere.

It is highly respected, adored and revered not only in India but also in all other parts of the world where Hindus live and where this divine story of the Lord has reached by its other renderings. Its specialty lies in the simplicity of language, its depth of wisdom, its comprehensive coverage of eclectic philosophies of metaphysics, spiritualism, devotion, theology and such other tenets and doctrines as are enshrined in the many Hindu scriptures of India. The miracle of Tulsidas is that he weaves so many esoteric and enigmatic concepts effortlessly in his writings, and in a way this holy story of Lord Ram presents to the reader an easily readable and very simple packaged version of the great philosophies of the Upanishads and the Purans that are otherwise too difficult for the common man to comprehend fully.

The entire book is rich with spiritual and metaphysical wisdom, and if read carefully one gets to know the essence of Hinduism and the great teachings of its scriptures that have made it so profound and robust in this world that ever since the dawn of civilization and inspite of continual attempts to uproot it, it still remains the treasure trove of spiritual truth, wisdom and enlightenment.

The story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, as we have noted above, was meant to be a holy book dedicated to the Supreme Being, a book which was to serve the creature in his pursuit of spiritual peace and happiness, to help him find succour and solace in times of worldly troubles when he needs some emotional and sentimental support to help keep his spirits high and overcome a sense of hopelessness and distress which seemed to drown him, the emphasis of this book was on spiritual and metaphysical aspects, intended to give the reader a beacon of hope and solace amid the surrounding darkness, to tell him that he ought not to feel lonely and forgotten as his beloved Lord Ram is always there to help him and stand by him.

Again, since profound theological, spiritual and metaphysical philosophies of the Upanishads and other scriptures are beyond the reach and understanding of the common man, Ram Charit Manas uses the simple tool of story telling that would be easy to understand, but in order to serve its real intention of helping the creature in the spiritual field, it seamlessly weaves into the structure of the story itself all the necessary tenets of spiritualism and metaphysics that a common person would need to know.

In spite of the fact that Ram Charit Manas is written by Tulsidas in Avadhi, which is an offshoot of the main vernacular language of India, i.e. Hindi, it still commands exceptional respect and adoration from people of all walks of life speaking myriad of tongues. No other single book that tells a divine story of the Supreme Being's various manifestations or incarnations or revelations has ever commanded this reverence and got such laurels.

This Holy Book narrates the epic divine story of Lord Ram that is popularly known as the Ramayan. Its main stress is on complete devotion for, faith in and submission to the Lord. Generations after generations of devotional preachers and orators have flourished on this single book.

It is a household name in India, and is recited and sung in numerous versions, evoking deep devotion and immense love for the Lord in the heart of all those who listen to it, read it and sing it. The uniqueness of Ram Charit Manas is that it is written in a style that the whole story can be sung in different ways in different Raagas (tunes, notes and metres of music). Even if one does not understand the meaning of its words, it still captivates the mind and the heart by its natural holiness and the divinity that effuses out of the sound of its words much like the warmth and the freshness of the sunlight that one feels after the dark coldness of the winter night. Another wonder is countless preachers have been preaching and interpreting each of its lines for generations but still no one has come to the final conclusion as to what the verses and hymns actually mean, and newer meanings are found and newer interpretations are being done constantly.

In the field of devotional Hindu literature it holds the same place as the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Purans, and equally revered and honoured. In fact, those who follow the path of Bhakti, i.e. the path of devotion and submission for the Lord, like to call it the 'fifth Veda'. The beauty of its lyrics and music is indeed spell-binding as well as a provider of spiritual ecstasy, bliss and peace that is so much sought after by all spiritual seekers.

The divine story of the Supreme Being who incarnated on this earth as a human being in the form of Lord Ram is no ordinary story of some great king or emperor who ruled this world. This magnificent story has a divine element in it; it is sublime by its inherent nature, and it is holy inasmuch as it possesses a mystical power that would provide the listener and the reader alike with the spiritual reward of 'Mukti', or liberation and deliverance from this entangling world of delusions and its endless cycle of birth and death along with its interminable horrors. Listening, telling and reading this divine story, with due concentration and faith, is equivalent to meditation and contemplation because the mind and the heart get totally involved and remain engrossed in the details of the fascinating story and its wonderful mysteries as they unfold slowly in all their resplendent colours and splendourous glories.

In this era known as 'Kaliyug', marked by grossness of everything, where spiritualism has been relegated to backstage, and truthful Gyan (gnosis; spiritual knowledge of the Truth as envisioned and explained in the Upanishads) has been all but eclipsed, being overshadowed by false knowledge that is cleverly wrapped up and marketed as Gnosis, this book Ram Charit Manas acts like a lighthouse for a seeker who seeks a means that would help him to steer the ship of his life in a direction that would grant

his soul the spiritual reward of peace, bliss, beatitude and joy, much like the beacon of the aforesaid lighthouse that guides a ship through rough seas and helps its crew to avoid a shipwreck. To wit, the story of Ram Charit Manas is a single-window remedy of all spiritual ills and ailments that afflict a creature, and being a 'story' rather than dry and abstract metaphysical philosophy, it caters to the needs of even the lowliest and the humblest of creatures in this mortal world. It is like a vast and fathomless ocean, for the more one dives into it the more gems he is sure to discover in it. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 35; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precedes Doha no. 47; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 53; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 129—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

Meaning and Structure:

The name 'Ram Charit Manas' itself has many meanings. It means for instance 'a holy lake ('Manas') in which is filled the ambrosia of spirituality and devotion in the form of the divine story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, that describes the Lord's enigmatic deeds and mysterious actions ('Charit') on earth'.

It also means the heart and mind (Mana) of Lord Shiva where this divine Story that describes the life and time of Lord Ram, and the deeds done by him during his lifetime on earth (Ram Charit), was first revealed, almost spontaneously like an underground spring of nectar that emerges from the bowels of the earth to provide succour and solace to all the creatures on earth.

This story originally unfolded like a lotus opening its petals in the heart of Lord Shiva when he was meditating on the Supreme Lord known as Brahm, the Supreme Being who is also known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma or Soul of creation. Then Lord Shiva contemplated deeply, analyzed it, distilled its spiritual nectar in the crucible of his mind and intellect to extract the essence or the ambrosia that would be for the good and welfare of this world, and would provide the creatures of this world an easy way to attain liberation and deliverance, called 'Mukti'.

In this cosmic vision, Lord Shiva's heart and mind are collectively called the 'Manas', because the word 'Mana' in Hindi means the heart, the mind and the sub-conscious. This Manas was filled with the nectar of devotion and love for Lord Ram, the most compassionate, benevolent, gracious and munificent Supreme Being. From this lake emerged the divine lotus in the form of the story of Lord Ram which Lord Shiva first revealed to his divine consort Parvati or Uma.

Step by step, this story descended to the earth for the benefit of human kind. Besides Parvati, Lord Shiva had revealed it to the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund. The latter had narrated it to Garuda, the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu, as well as to sage Yagyawalkya, who in turn told it to sage Bharadwaj. Tulsidas says that he is narrating the same story that sage Bharadwaj had heard. However, Tulsidas heard it from his own Guru (teacher) in Sukarkhet. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30

ka and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-5; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63-to Doha no. 125 Ka.]

We also find that there is one more great sage named as being a narrator of Ram Charit Manas, and he is sage Agastya. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48.]

If we closely examine this sequence of narration, we make a very fascinating discovery. It has ‘seven stages or steps’ of narration—viz. (1) Shiva to Parvati; (2) Shiva to Kaagbhudund; (3) Kaagbhusund to Garud; (4) Kaagbhusund to Yagyawalkya; (5) Yagyawalkya to Bharadwaj; (6) A chain of sages and seers down to the Guru of Tulsidas; and (7) Guru to Tulsidas.

The last two stages, i.e. steps 6 and 7, can be interpreted in a different way also—viz. step 6 = Guru to Tulsidas; and step 7 = Tulsidas to the rest of the human race.

However, sage Agastya is the mysterious ‘missing link’ because we don’t know for certain from whom he had heard it, except that Lord Shiva had once gone to his hermitage to hear the story being narrated by the sage. Probably, and we can only make a guess in this connection in the absence of any solid proof, Lord Shiva had gone to hear the story from sage Agastya to make sure that the divinity of the holy story of Lord Ram that Shiva had first conceived in his Mana (heart and mind), where the Lord keeps it reverentially like one would consecrate a deity in a shrine because it constantly reminds Shiva of his beloved Lord Ram, is being retold and preached in the correct manner, without any tweaking and tampering and interpolations. After hearing the story of Ram Charit Mana from sage Agastya, Lord Shiva was satisfied. [Refer: Sri Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kanda, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48.]

This is the reason why there are ‘seven’ Cantos or Kands or Chapters in the Ram Charit Manas. The idea is that the divine nectar of the story of Lord Ram reached us human beings in a stepwise manner. Once fully told in a common man’s language which Tulsidas did, it became accessible to one and all, to the entire humanity irrespective of a man’s intellectual abilities and mental caliber. The original versions of the divine story of Lord Ram, popularly known as the ‘Ramayana’, were in the classical language of Sanskrit, making them out of reach of the common man. But Tulsidas opened the gates to this divine lake by narrating the whole story in a lucid, extremely attractive and musical style so that it can be read and be on the lips of even the lay person.

A lake is accessed by means of steps; one cannot benefit from its clean and pure water by just looking from the top. The ambrosia of devotion and spiritualism—the nectar of love and affection for the loving God known as Lord Ram that leads the creature to attainment of eternal peace, bliss, felicity and beatitude—that is present in this holy lake represented by the divine story of Lord Ram is reached by coming close to it step by step, and finally taking a dip in it. This is symbolically depicted in the form of the ‘seven Chapters or Kands’ of the holy book ‘Ram Charit Manas’.

It is believed that Tulsidas had used the word ‘Sopaan’, meaning ‘a step’, to name the seven chapters of the book. The word ‘Kand’, on the other hand, means a section or

division. It was preferred because the story was divided into seven chapters based on the general geographical area where a particular set of main events of the story unfolded.

For instance, the first Chapter is called 'Baal Kand' because it describes the background of the story, the reason why the Supreme Being had to take birth as a human being on earth, the actual birth, the childhood days, and marriage of the Lord like an ordinary human being.

The second Chapter is called 'Ayodhya Kand' as it describes those events in the entire story that have their focal point in the city of Ayodhya, the capital city of the dynasty in which Lord Ram was born.

The third Chapter is called 'Aranya Kand' as it describes the Lord's going to the forest and his stay in it for a prolonged period of time during which he was relatively peaceful before the unfolding of the horrifying events starting from the abduction of Sita, the Lord's wife, that finally culminated in the war of Lanka and the killing of the demons and their king Ravana. The word 'Aranya' means 'forest'. It was a dense forest, and it was here that Sita was abducted by Ravana. This area of the forest was unique in the sense that while on the one hand great sages and hermits lived here to do austerities and penances, and on the other hand it was infested by cruel demons, vampires and ogres.

The fourth Chapter is called 'Kiskindha Kand' as it describes those events that took place in the general geographical area in the south of the country that was known as Kiskindha. This was the kingdom of the monkey race. Here Lord Ram befriended the monkey race who helped him in the next phase of the story.

The fifth Chapter breaks from this general trend of naming the chapters according to the general place or the geography of the area where those developments that are narrated in a particular Kand took place. This Chapter is called 'Sundar Kand'. The word 'Sundar' in Hindi usually means something that is beautiful, good to hear and look at, or charming. Ironically, when we read the contents of this Chapter, we find there is nothing 'beautiful' in it, because here the violence of war starts, and the golden and magnificent city of Lanka was burnt and reduced to a smouldering hulk by Hanuman. Therefore, what is so 'beautiful' and 'charming' in this episode?

Well, there are many interpretations. We shall discuss them in detail when we come to read this Chapter later on. But briefly, the most prominent ones are these:

First, Sita was discovered in this Chapter, and this marked the turning point in the landscape of hopelessness, depression, misery and dejection that stared in the face of Lord Ram, for prior to this Chapter the Lord had failed to get any hint of his lost wife, and obviously he was overcome with profound sadness. This news that Sita has been found, and that a single messenger of the Lord, i.e. Hanuman, had wreaked havoc on the demon army during his confrontation with it inside Lanka, indicating that when the whole army of monkeys and bears, which Lord Ram planned to assemble, brings its might to bear on the demon army of Lanka, then surely the latter will stand no chance against the former, which implied victory for the Lord. These two developments were welcome news and encouraging for all, like the ray of sunlight breaking through dark clouds of gloom and doomsday.

The second reason for naming this Kand as ‘Sundar’ is remarkable as much as it is little known: The demon kingdom of Lanka was situated on a great mountain named ‘Trikoot’, a mountain with three summits. [Tri = three.] Sita was held captive in a garden on the third summit of this sprawling mountain-complex. This garden was the ‘pleasure garden’ of the kings of the demon race, and was ‘beautifully’ laid out and ‘pleasing’ for the senses. Hence, this summit was called ‘Sundar’: pleasing, beautiful and charming. The action described in this fifth Chapter took place here; so naturally this Chapter was named ‘Sundar’ in line with the naming of the rest of the Chapters of the book, which is according to the general geographical area where the major part of the developments narrated in a particular Kand took place.

The sixth Chapter is called ‘Lanka Kand’ obviously because it describes the war of Lanka and the conquest of the demons by the Lord. The entire episode described in this Chapter occurred in Lanka, so the naming is appropriate.

And finally, the last Chapter, the seventh one, is called ‘Uttar Kand’; it is the concluding Chapter of this book. The naming of this Chapter has the following reasons:

One, Lord Ram would proceed to his capital of Ayodhya from Lanka, and Ayodhya was located in the ‘northern direction’, i.e. the ‘Uttar’ direction from Lanka. Two, this Chapter is rich in metaphysical and spiritual content, because here we read about Lord Ram giving discourses and answering questions asked by some of those who were close to him. We also find that the entire second half of this Chapter is dedicated to a discourse between the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud, the heavenly mount of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former for spiritual guidance. This particular discussion is exceptionally enlightening and contains profound spiritual and metaphysical knowledge explained in a simple language, with great stress being laid on the importance of the virtues of Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) and its infallible ability to grant spiritual bliss and beatitude to a seeker.

Hence, this last Chapter is almost like the Upanishads, and it marks the culmination of a seeker’s quest for spiritual knowledge. It marks that phase in life when a person would turn away from the material world and head towards the Lord. It is his symbolic journey to the higher plane of existence, the ‘northward’ journey to an exalted life as opposed to the southward journey to a lower level of existence, i.e. a movement in the ‘Uttar direction’.

Three, since this book is not a usual story of some great king named Ram, but a holy book dedicated to the Supreme Being, it assumes a place of honour and is entitled for reverence and glory that scriptures deserve. And it is a tradition that the last part or canto of any ancient scripture is called ‘Uttar’, just like its beginning is called ‘Purva’.

Four, the seventh Chapter is called ‘Uttar Kand’ also because it ‘answers’ (‘Uttar’) all the spiritual queries related to different aspects of Lord Ram’s story that a seeker may have. Indeed, the very purpose of including the discourse between Kaagbhusund and Garud in this Kand is to answer an aspirant’s questions regarding any doubts that he may have vis-à-vis the Story of Lord Ram.

So we see that these are some of the reasons why the seventh Chapter is named ‘Uttar Kand’.

There is yet another way of interpreting the ‘seven chapters’ of the Ram Charit Manas. They represent the seven divine ‘Puris’ or abodes which are regarded as great

pilgrim centers in Hinduism. These seven cities and their symbolic representation in the seven Kandas of the book is as follows—

(1) Baal Kand represents Ayodhya Puri (because it is in this city that the Supreme Being came down to be born as Lord Ram).

(2) Ayodhya Kand represents Mathura Puri (where Lord Krishna's maternal uncle Kansha had ruled; the parallel is used because in both the cases of Lord Ram and Lord Krishna these cities caused immense problems for them created by their respective rulers).

(3) Aranya Kand represents Maya Puri (because the word 'Maya' means 'mystical and magical powers', and it symbolizes the forest where lived great mystics and sages who had mystical powers, as well as demons etc. who had magical abilities to assume any form they wanted).

(4) Kiskindha Kand represents Kashi Puri (which is the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva, and the parallel with this Kand is because Lord Ram met Hanuman, who is regarded as a manifestation of Rudra, one of the forms of Lord Shiva, here in this Kand).

(5) Sundar Kand represents Kanchi Puri (in the south of India, and the symbolism is due to fact that Lord Ram had headed straight to the southern tip of India in order to cross the ocean and reach Lanka as narrated in this Kand).

(6) Lanka Kand represents Havantika Puri (which got its name from an ancient warrior race known as 'Haihayas'; the parallel is due to the fact that the demon race that lived in Lanka was also a very brave and strong warrior class).

(7) Uttar Kand represents Dwarka Puri (where Lord Krishna ruled in the last phase of his life; the parallel is due to the fact that both Lord Ram and Lord Krishna were incarnations of Lord Vishnu, and both had ruled from Ayodhya and Dwarka during the last phase of their lives on earth).

Ram Charit Manas as a 'Lake, a Pond, or a Step-well':

Now, let us examine the visualization of Ram Charit Manas as a great lake or a pond or a step-well.

(A) Any well-designed and laid-out lake or pond would have four sides. This "divine lake of Lord Ram's story" also has four sides. These are the following—

(1) North Side—this is represented by the divine discourse of the saint crow Kaagbhushund that was given to Garuda in the holy book's Uttar Kand. It should be noted that the Hindi word 'Uttar' also means 'north' in English.

(2) East Side—this is represented by the divine story as told by the Guru to Tulsidas, or by Tulsidas telling us. The eastern direction is from where the sun rises. It

is used as a metaphor for rising of knowledge and wisdom that will dispel the gloom and darkness of ignorance just like the sun removes the darkness of the night when it rises. Lord Ram's birth in this world is also compared to the rising of the sun in the east. Hence the use of this symbolism to depict the East Side of the lake.

(3) South Side—this is represented by the divine discourse of sage Yagyawalkya for the benefit of sage Bharadwaj. This was the first time that the divine story was narrated for use by the common human being—because sage Bharadwaj used to live in Prayag, also known as Triveni as it is the confluence of three holy rivers, where large number of saints assembled during annual religious functions and heard discourses and discussion on the scriptures. The 'south' direction is symbolic of the earth because the word 'south' also means 'downward direction' when seen from the sky or the heaven.

(4) West Side—this is represented by the discourse between Lord Shiva and Parvati. Lord Shiva is the concluder of creation, and he gives liberation and deliverance to the soul of the dying man by uttering the holy name of Lord Ram in his ears just before he breathes his last. The sun sets in the west symbolizing death or the end of life. The patron god of death is Lord Shiva, and he also provides spiritual liberation and deliverance to the creature by imparting wisdom and true knowledge to him. Both these functions are incorporated in this depiction of the west side of the lake as it indicates that—(i) after having heard the full story of Lord Ram, the ground is sufficiently prepared for the listener to find liberation and deliverance for his soul, and (ii) he turns away from the world and renounces its illusionary attractions, turning instead towards his inner self—which means that as far as the external world is concerned it is dark for him, and the world itself begins to treat him as being good as dead.

(B) There is yet another way of looking at this symbolic lake called 'Ram Charit Manas'. It is like a step-well or a lake or a pond that is full of ambrosia for the soul. It is surrounded by an exceptionally charming garden, with green flowering trees, verdant soft carpet of grass, cool shades and alcoves, chirping birds hopping around gleefully, and a general environment conducive to peace, tranquility, joy and delight. No matter how troubled a person is, if he enters this garden and goes down the lake to drink its sweet water, there is no trace of doubt that he will find rest for himself. As every well-designed step-well or lake or pond has four banks, called the 'Ghats', and each bank would have steps that lead to the water present at the bottom of the steps in the center of the step-well or lake or pond, the seven Kandas or Chapters or Cantos in Ram Charit Manas are like the 'seven steps' that one needs to descend to access the ambrosia stored in the 'center' of this divine and holy story, where the word 'center' refers to the core of the Story, the essence of the Story, the true meaning of the Story, the real spiritual message contained in the Story. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129; (b) Baal Kand, Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 37]

Now, according to tradition, all ancient step-wells, ponds or lakes—whose water has some mystical abilities and posses some kind of charm that can cure ailments of the afflicted who come to bathe in this water—have a presiding deity and patron saints, so is the case with the symbolic holy lake named Ram Charit Manas which too has its presiding deity and patron saints. Now, who are they?

Well, Lord Shiva is the ‘presiding deity’ in this case, because without his blessings the ambrosia in the form of spiritual bliss that comes with reading, listening to, and narrating the story of Lord Ram as revealed in Ram Charit Manas is not realized fully, and hence the spiritual reward attendant to it, viz. liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the creature’s soul, is also elusive. Even Lord Ram has explicitly reiterated this fact—that without worshipping Lord Shiva, a creature cannot please him. [Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 104; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

That said, now let us see who are the ‘patron saints’ of this glorious lake. There are primarily five of them—the saintly crow Kaagbhusund as well as sage Agasty who presides over the northern side of the lake and its steps; sage Yagyawalkya who presides over the eastern side; sage Bharadwaj the western side; and all other ancient sages, saints, minstrels of the Lord who has sing his divine glories preside over the south side, and one such example relevant for our present purpose is Goswami Tulsidas. Now, how do we come to this conclusion, and from where have we inferred this? The answer is this:

(a) The divine story of Lord Ram as it is narrated in the book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ was first revealed in the Mana (heart and mind) of Lord Shiva, making the latter the ‘Father of this story; the original Creator of this story’. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 35; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128.]

In the heaven, Lord Shiva first revealed it to his consort, goddess Uma or Parvati. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

This being the case, Lord Shiva is the patron deity of the lake symbolizing the spiritual nectar in the form of the holy story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas.

(b) The first ‘creature’, a living being, to whom Lord Shiva revealed this story was the crow saint Kaagbhusund*¹, and the latter had his hermitage high up in the northern mountains where he had once narrated this story to Garud in the ‘Uttar Kand’ of Ram Charit Manas*². The word ‘Uttar’ means ‘north’; it also implies the phase of life when a seeker is ready to accept renunciation and discard his gross body to enable his soul to attain liberation and deliverance from this mundane world. This being the case, sage Kaagbhusund is said to be patron saint of the ‘northern side’ of this glorious lake represented by Ram Charit Manas. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *¹Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30; *²Baal Kand, Doha no. 120-a; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 52; Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 62; Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 64.]

An interesting thing is to be noted here: The northern bank of this holy lake has the abode of both Lord Shiva, the presiding deity, as well as Kaagbhusund, the patron saint. How come? Well, there are three primary reasons for it: (a) both have their physical hermitages in the northern mountains, one on Mt. Kailash (Lord Shiva)*¹, and the other (Kaagbhusund) on Mt. Neel Giri, the blue mountain*²; (b) both advise the creature, a spiritual seeker, to develop love and affection for Lord

Ram, to inculcate the virtue of devotion and faith in the Lord, and to surrender oneself to the Lord unconditionally, asking for nothing in return*³; and (c) both have heard the story of Ram Charit Manas from each other, first by Kaagbhusund from Lord Shiva, and then by Lord Shiva from Kaagbhusund*⁴! [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) *¹Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58; (ii) *²Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62; (iii) *³Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Doha no. 129; (iv) *⁴Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30; and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.]

Another great sage from whom Lord Shiva had heard the story of Ram Charit Manas was sage Agastya. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48.]

So we can deduce that both the sages, i.e. Kaagbhusund as well as Agstya, were highly blessed souls inasmuch as that Lord Shiva deemed them to be qualified enough to narrate the story of Lord Ram with all its fineness and spiritual nuances that would appeal to him.

Therefore, the presiding saints of the ‘north bank’ of this symbolic holy lake known as Ram Charit Manas would be sages Kaagbhusund and Agastya both, because both of them had Lord Shiva as their audience at one point of time or another.

(c) Next comes sage Yagyawalkya. He was the greatest spiritual wise-man of his time. Sage Yagyawalkya heard the story of Ram Charit Manas from Kaagbhusund*. Since Kaagbhusund had the body of a ‘crow’, it is but natural that he must have narrated the story of Lord Ram to sage Yagyawalkya as a crow would speak. This great sage Yagyawalkya obviously had the ability to understand the language of birds, for he clearly grasped what Kaagbhusund had to say. So the first ‘human being’ who heard the divine story of Ram Charit Manas was sage Yagyawalkya. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

It was from Yagyawalkya, therefore, that the glorious story of Lord Ram, as narrated in the form of Ram Charit Manas, came to be known to the world in the human tongue, in a language that the human race would easily comprehend. It was, to speak metaphorically, the dawn of a new day of hope and salvation; it was like the rising of a new splendid sun symbolizing all the sublime spiritual virtues enshrined in the divine story of Ram Charit Manas that would have the potential to remove the darkness of spiritual delusions in the world; and like a sun, the Ram Charit Manas shewed its light over the world and helped those who were till now groping in the dark to find their path leading to bliss and happiness of the soul.

Since the sun rises in the eastern direction to remove the darkness of the night, Yagyawalkya was therefore commended for his stellar contribution to remove spiritual darkness of the human race by showing the light of spiritual wisdom via the story of Ram Charit Manas, and was thus honoured with the title of being the patron saint of the eastern bank of the symbolic lake known as Ram Charit Manas.

(d) From Yagyawalkya, the story was first heard by sage Bharadwaj in a private audience at the latter’s hermitage in a holy place known as Prayag. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 47.]

Once again, an interesting point is to be noted here. In Ram Charit Manas, the names of both these two great sages, i.e. Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj, have been mentioned in a single line side by side; first being Yagyawalkya, and then Bharadwaj. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

What is the intent? Well, the saintly poet Tulsidas implies that both these great sages have equal status, both are to be equally honoured, both are like the two ends of a horizontal line. To wit, if Yagyawalkya is to be honoured as the patron saint of the eastern bank of the holy lake symbolising Ram Charit Manas, then sage Bharadwaj occupies the opposite side of the same lake, with equal honour and dignity. So therefore, it can be safely said that the ‘west bank’ of this holy lake has sage Bharadwaj as its patron saint.

(e) The ‘north bank’ is metaphorically the most exalted and holy as it is presided over by Lord Shiva, the Great God, as well as by two exalted sages Kaagbhusund and Agastya.

The ‘east bank’ and the ‘west bank’ have sages Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj as their patron saints respectively.

Now we have the ‘south bank’ left. The saints and minstrels of Lord Ram who sang the Lord’s glories and divine stories in their own ways are the patron saints of this bank. In the context of Ram Charit Manas, however, it is the saintly poet Goswami Tulsidas and his Guru (teacher) who we can regard as the patron saints of the south bank of the holy lake. The reason is obvious: Had it not been for Tulsidas or his Guru, we would not have had this beautiful story of Ram Charit Manas with us in the first place; so they deserve being honoured for this noble contribution towards spiritual happiness and bliss that one gets by reading, listening to and narrating this holy story.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA Of Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Original Text, English Transliteration &
Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes

The Story of Śrī Rāma Carita Mānasa in Brief

A Brief Outline of the Divine Story of Ram Charit Manas

The story of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being whose cosmic form is universally known as Lord Vishnu, was conceived in the heart of Lord Shiva. When his divine consort goddess Parvati requested him to narrate it to her, Shiva revealed this story to her with the aim that it would benefit the rest of the world.

But like the Lord, his story as narrated in this classic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is also so full of mysteries. Many reasons are cited as to why Lord Vishnu had to descend to the mortal world in the form of Lord Ram, and then behaved like an ordinary human being, undergoing the travails of life on this earth like ordinary humans, instead of revealing his supernatural powers by some overt act that would indicate who Lord Ram actually was, except in such a subtle way that only a few realized and wise souls could decipher the meaning of the Lord’s seemingly ordinary deeds and unravel the secret behind them. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.]

The story of Ram Charit Manas is also known as the famous epic ‘The Ramayana’—because it narrates the story of Lord Ram and the deeds that the Lord did during his lifetime on earth.

The story of Ram Charit Manas is so-called because it has its genesis in the Mana (mind and heart) of a great devotee of Lord Ram, who was none other but Lord Shiva, while the latter was meditating and contemplating (i.e. doing Yoga and Dhyān) on his revered deity, Lord Ram. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9 and 11 that precede Doha no. 35; (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128.]

For this purpose, Lord Shiva employed the holy name of Lord Ram, i.e. the word ‘Ram’ (pronounced as Raam), as a Mantra (a spiritual formula) to concentrate his mind as well as to purify his heart*, much like a scientist who would use some specific formula for his experiment that is aimed at proving some singularly remarkable theory the truth of which he is convinced of, and the result of this

experiment is that he gifts the world with a spectacular discovery. [*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 58.]

After conceiving it in his Mana, Lord Shiva had first revealed it to his consort, goddess Uma or Parvati. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; Doha no. 47.]

Lord Shiva felt that such a gem of spiritualism as contained in the story of Lord Ram that was revealed in his Mana, and which had bestowed immense ecstasy to him, should be employed for the welfare of all living beings. So he disclosed the story of Ram Charit Manas to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

From Kaagbhusund, the story came to the exalted sage Yagyawalkya, and from the latter to sage Bharadwaj. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

Further, from sage Bharadwaj the divine story spread to other great sages and saints who heard it being narrated by him during religious congregations in his hermitage. In this way, in due course of time, Tulsidas came to hear it from his Guru, and then he himself wrote the version which we now read as Ram Charit Manas. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line no. 6-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.]

Besides this, we also learn that Lord Shiva had heard this story from sage Agastya when he visited the latter's hermitage. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48.]

So therefore, we have four sources of this story—one is Lord Shiva who is the Father and the Creator of this divine story; the second is Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow; the third is sage Yagyawalkya; and the fourth is sage Agastya.

An Outline of the Story of Ram Charit Manas:

The epic 'Ram Charit Manas' is divided into Seven Chapters or Cantos, called 'Kandas'. They are: (1) Baal Kand, (2) Ayodhya Kand, (3) Aranya Kand, (4) Kiskindha Kand, (5) Sundar Kand, (6) Lanka Kand, and (7) Uttar Kand.

Each Kanda of the story pertains to a particular phase in the life of Lord Ram, and narrates all the events associated with that phase. The naming of the Kandas also indicates which phase or time of life of Lord Ram it is dealing with. For instance, the first Chapter is called 'Baal Kand', and since the word 'Baal' refers to a young boy, this Kanda describes all the events that occurred in the life of Lord Ram till he attained adulthood, right from the time the Lord was born as a prince in the kingdom of Ayodhya, till the point of time he got married and returned home with his wife Sita.

The word 'Kand' also refers to a Chapter or a Canto of a book which is a narrative of a long story. Hence, the Kanda describes a set of events or episodes that occurred during a particular period of time in this story.

We shall learn more on this aspect as we move along with our reading.

(1) Baal Kand:

The first Chapter is called 'Baal Kand' as it centers on the period of time in the life of Lord Ram that pertained to his birth, infancy, and teens; in essence, this Chapter deals with the first phase in the life of Lord Ram.

Since the 'Ram Charit Manas' is a book that describes the divine story of Lord Ram, and in order to make this story comprehensive and complete, its author Goswami Tulsidas chose to include certain details in the very beginning of this Kanda, before he actually starts the narration of the story of Lord Ram, so that the reader becomes aware of many facts and details at the very commencement of his reading as would help him to understand better, and in the right context, many developments and events that would, by-and-by, unfold during the course of his reading.

This information would enlighten the reader about the background of the story and the events that were responsible for Lord Vishnu feeling obliged to come down to the mortal world in a human form as Lord Ram. It would also clarify some crucial points in the very beginning of the reading of the rest of the book, as it would help not only to remove future doubts but also act as a foundation upon which a structure can be built to give the magnificent story its wonderful outer contours, as well as to fill all the finer inner details, making the entire edifice, when completed, worthy of approbation. If this is not done in the very beginning, then there would be a good chance that the reader, whether a casual reader or someone who reads this story attentively to delve deeper into its many mysteries and seeks answers for them, would be confused and distracted.

Therefore, to give effect to this scheme, Baal Kand can be said to have been divided into the following four sections:

(a) The first section of Baal Kand describes the importance and significance of the Ram Charit Manas, as well as of the holy name of Lord Ram, to stress the most important aspect of this book, which is that it is not some book that chronicles the life and time of a great king of some great kingdom, but a holy book entirely devoted to an incarnation of the Supreme Being himself, who was so kind and gracious as to come down and live amongst ordinary creatures of this mortal world as Lord Ram, in a way that would make others feel that the Supreme Lord was one like them and very much accessible, and not one who is beyond reach for them. Ram Charit Manas served a great spiritual purpose as it bridged the great abyss that existed betwixt the ordinary living being in this mortal world and the Supreme Being, for this divine story of Lord Ram brought the creature very close to the Lord by showing the former the way to the latter.

(b) The second section deals with the genesis of the story and the many reasons why Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, descended to earth to assume a human form and take birth as Lord Ram. These details are necessary as they would help explain many of the things that happened in the course of Lord Ram's life which otherwise would seem odd, mysterious, and remain unexplained.

(c) The next section is where we read some events in detail: such as the story of the marriage of Lord Shiva with Uma or Parvati; the story of sage Narad's delusions that made him wish to marry in spite of the fact that he was a celestial sage who had renounced all worldly attractions; the story of king Pratapbhanu and how he was the one who became the dreaded demon king Ravana in his next life because of his greed for power and eternity; and how Lord Vishnu promised mother earth and the gods that he would come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to eliminate the evil demons who were creating horrors in this world.

(d) Then, in the fourth section, we start with the actual narration of the story of Lord Ram himself: for we read about the birth of four brothers, Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, in royal household of king Dasrath of Ayodhya; the Lord's childhood days, his going to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, from where he and his younger brother Laxman went to attend the bow-breaking ceremony held in the kingdom of Janakpur; there Lord Ram won great fame and a name for himself by breaking the stern bow that none of the greatest kings and princes of that time could break. This success was rewarded by his marrying Sita, the daughter of king Janak; in due course, all the brothers of Lord Ram were also married at the same venue. The Baal Kand ends with the marriage party of the four brothers returning to home to their capital city of Ayodhya from the brides' kingdom in Janakpur.

That said, let us pause for a while and read some interesting points pertaining to the Baal Kand. The earth was tormented interminably by the tyrannical and cruel demons. The demons were like the Devil and the Satan; they derived pleasure when other suffered. The sages, saints and hermits of the period took the earth, which had transformed itself as a cow, along and went to the abode of the creator Brahma in heaven to ask the latter to do something to save them all. The creator told them that it is beyond his means, and it is only the Supreme Being known as Vishnu who can provide a solution.

But now the question arose where to exactly find Vishnu as he is formless, invisible, and without any name and specific abode, as he is the all-pervading Supreme Lord of creation. It was decided that they should all approach Lord Shiva because he is the wisest God and will be the proper advisor.

When the group approached Lord Shiva and asked him the way the Supreme Lord can be found, Shiva replied that there is nowhere that the Lord is not present. What one needs are devotion, conviction, faith and love. So the sages, hermits, earth and Brahma together prayed to the Lord to help them and protect them. The Supreme Lord Vishnu revealed himself and assured them that he would come down personally on the earth as a human in the form of Lord Ram, and liberate earth from the burden of the cruel demons. The magnificent bonus of this incarnation would be that the many sages and hermits and ascetics and saints who had been doing long penances

and had been longing to have a first-hand communion with the Supreme Being would also get an opportunity to fulfill their cherished lifetime desires.

The creator Brahma meanwhile asked all the Gods to reveal themselves as monkeys and bears to help the Lord during his sojourn on earth as Lord Ram. After all, Lord Ram was taking the trouble of undergoing all the trials and tribulations incumbent to taking birth in this mortal world as a human being, so the gods should also chip in to do their bit to help the Lord.

Now some very pertinent question arise—(a) why did the Supreme Being, who is able to do anything by his mere wish, have to become a human when he could have simply killed the demons, the devils and the Satan by merely wishing so, and (b) why did he need the help of the monkeys and bears?

There are many answers to these questions, but here I shall give some of the prominent ones. First, the demon king known as Ravana had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to please the creator and become immortal. When the creator told him that all those who have taken birth must die some or the other day, giving his own example that his life span is also fixed though it is exceptionally long in the term of mortal creatures of the world, and so it is impossible to become immortal, Ravana asked him to grant immunity from death except at the hands of humans and monkeys. This is because he thought that if the Gods and Goddesses who were so powerful would not be able to kill him, what will the frightened and humble man and a monkey do to him. So this was the loop-hole that had to be exploited if Ravana was to be killed.

Second is that the Lord wished to show by his own example that even humans and the humble monkeys can achieve stupendous objectives and do fantastic deeds if they have the will and the determination.

Third, the Lord also wished to show by his example what sort of righteous and morally correct life one should lead amidst all the adversities and provocations in this world, and how to deal with myriad situations that a man faces in his life.

Fourth, he wished to give a message that one should not treat others with contempt because they are low down in the evolutionary ladder, because the Lord himself loved the monkeys and the bears who had helped him in all possible ways when no human being came forward to do so.

Fifth reason was that he wished to convey a message that if a soul, no matter how exalted and noble, has become a human being or has entered the body of a human being, then he is bound to have some shortcomings and drawbacks and limitations, but the trick is not to let them come in one's way of being scrupulous, righteous, noble, correct, truthful, holy and pious. This is the reason why the Supreme Being acted like an ordinary man and went through all the throes of sufferings, pleasures, pains and elations like any one of them—but still standing tall like a colossus in the human race and remembered for generations after generations while the rest of the race vanished into thin air. Therefore, if one makes a mistake, it is better not to brood and weep over it but to take positive and constructive steps to rectify the mistake and undo the past by changing one's future course of action.

And finally, the sixth reason was that the Lord wished to tell the human race, especially those who were proud of their knowledge, wisdom and expertise in certain fields, that such grand virtues and qualities were not their exclusive domain or prerogative because there were amongst the monkeys and bears such individuals who were matchless in wisdom, knowledge and expertise in technical matters. For instance we have Hanuman whose level of knowledge of the scriptures and language, wisdom, spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation was unmatched in this creation. Then there were the two monkeys who had built the bridge across the ocean, named Nal and Neel, and the old bear king Jamvant who was always consulted in matters that required an old man's experienced feedback.

Not only that, even the most reviled and abhorred king of demons, Ravana, whose physical body was an embodiment of all that is considered evil and sinful, had a noble soul hidden within this same body, a soul so spiritually evolved that Lord Ram allowed it to enter his own body and merge with his own supreme Self at the time of Ravana's death, a feat that even the greatest of ascetics and hermits could not achieve, thus proving that what is seen is often very misleading, and the truth lies somewhere else.

The story of the Lord's earthly or worldly sojourn is ripe with and full of instances from which one can learn so many practical things of life, but that is not the subject matter to be discussed presently.

So it was that the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu in his cosmic form revealed himself as a human being in the form of Lord Ram. The divine consort of Vishnu became Lord Ram's wife Sita. The close associates of Vishnu became Lord Ram's three brothers named Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan.

In some early time there was a king named Manu and his wife Satrupa. They had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to worship the Supreme Lord. When the Lord was pleased by their sincerity and commitment, he revealed himself before them. Asked for some boon as a reward, the pious couple desired to have the Lord as their son. So this was the excuse Lord Vishnu found to become their son in his incarnation of Lord Ram in order to kill the demons and free the earth and its inhabitants from the cruelty and tyranny that these devils had been perpetrating.

Manu, in due course of time, became king Dasrath, and Satrupa became his chief queen Kaushalya. The king had two other queens named Kaikeyi and Sumitra. The king had no son though he was very righteous and noble and a diligent follower of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility in thought and conduct) and Satya (truthfulness). So one day he approached his Guru (royal priest and moral preceptor) named sage Vasistha to find a solution to his predicament. The sage advised him to hold a fire sacrifice and make sage Atri as the chief priest for it, because this sage was an expert in performing such sacrifices.

The fire sacrifice was successful, and the Fire God appeared from the fire pit with a bowl of sweet pudding. He asked the king to distribute it to his queens, and they will get sons as desired by him. The king was exceedingly pleased, and did as instructed.

So on an auspicious day, the Supreme Being known as Lord Vishnu manifested as the son of Kaushalya, and eventually he came to be known as Lord Ram. Lord Vishnu's other fractions became the three brothers of Ram, and they were named Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan by sage Vasistha. On the occasion of their birth there was not only a great celebration in the city of Ayodhya, the capital of Dasrath, which lasted for a month, but even in the heavens and the rest of the places of the earth as well wherever sages and hermits came to hear this wonderful news.

The children grew amid much love and joy. They were taught in all the arts and crafts befitting princes by their learned teacher, Guru Vasistha. They made their parents, the members of the royal household staff, the citizens of Ayodhya and the Gods in the heaven very happy by their childhood deeds and pranks. The days passed on so happily and enjoyably that no one knew when it was day and when it was night, or which day of the week or month it was.

By-and-by, the four divine brothers reached their teens. Around this time, another great sage named Vishwamitra was being persistently tormented by the demons who would defile his fire sacrifice. The sage decided to bring Lord Ram to get rid of this thorn in the form of demons, because he thought that after all this was the precise reason why the Supreme Being had taken the trouble to become a human.

Sage Vishwamitra came to Ayodhya and requested king Dasrath to send Ram and Laxman with him. The king was initially reluctant because he was worried for the safety of his sons, but his Guru sage Vasistha explained him the reality and assured him that no harm would come to the boys. So Lord Ram and Laxman accompanied sage Vishwamitra and went to his hermitage.

On the way the Lord performed two miraculous deeds—one was to kill the demoness named Tadka who attacked them, and the other was to provide liberation to Ahilya, the chaste wife of sage Gautam, who had been turned into a stone due to some curse. The Lord touched the stone and this touch of his holy feet freed Ahilya of her curse.

It must be noted in this context that all the demons who were killed by the Lord were provided liberation and deliverance from their sinful bodies. This is because the truthful identity of any individual is not his physical body but his soul known as the Atma. This soul gets trapped in a body due to some reason, and when this body is shed the soul is liberated from its fetters. Usually the body of the demon, by the force of habit and inherent nature, forced these individual souls to go on committing more and more sins in an endless cycle, thereby preventing their liberation and deliverance. But when the Lord killed these demons, their souls invariably found liberation and went to heaven.

When the demons, led by Marich, attacked the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra the next morning of the Lord's arrival there, he was hit by a headless arrow by the Lord and flung far away into the middle of the ocean. The rest of the demons who participated in the attack were slayed by Lord Ram and his brother Laxman.

Then news came that king Janak is holding a marriage ceremony for his daughter named Sita, and in it the condition laid down by the king was that anyone who would lift and string a formidable bow of Lord Shiva, that the king had in his possession for

safekeeping for a long time, would become eligible to marry his daughter. Sage Vishwamitra took the two brothers Ram and Laxman and went to attend this ceremony. There, when all the assembled kings and princes failed to move the bow even an inch, Lord Ram not only lifted and stringed the bow but also broke it. This culminated in his marriage with Sita. The other three brothers were also married at the same venue, Laxman to Sita's sister, and the other two brothers, Bharat and Shatrughan, to Sita's two cousins who were daughters of king Janak's younger brother.

The Baal Kand ends with the arrival of the marriage party back to Ayodhya.

(2) Ayodhya Kand:

The second Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas is called 'Ayodhya Kand'. It relates all those events in the story that happened in the next phase in the life of Lord Ram's earthly life after his marriage, and since these events occurred in Ayodhya, the capital of the great kingdom of the same name, the Kanda is named after this city as 'Ayodhya Kand'.

The Ayodhya Kand can be divided into three broad segments as follows:

(a) The first segment describes those sad and unfortunate developments that happened in Ayodhya after Lord Ram and his three brothers returned home following their marriage, till the point of time when he had to leave the city and go to the forest for fourteen years along with his wife Sita and his younger brother Laxman.

This is a crucial juncture in the story of the Ramayana, it is the turning point in it, for had these unfortunate developments not taken place and Lord Ram hadn't gone to the forest, then we would not have had famed story of the 'Ramayana' at all, for then Lord Ram would have been one other prince who would in due course of time ascend the throne of Ayodhya to become a great king just like others in his illustrious family which had a long list of noble kings noted for their exemplary character and virtues, a family renowned the world over as the 'Ikswaku dynasty', or the family of the illustrious king Raghu and his descendants.

Now, that said, from a merely worldly perspective the reason why Lord Ram had to go to the forest along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman seems to be palace intrigue and family feud and greed for the crown of Ayodhya, wherein his step-mother Kaikeyi, who wanted her own son Bharat to get the crown of Ayodhya, and to prevent the eldest of the four brothers, i.e. Lord Ram, who had the right to the throne by the virtue of the ancient and well-established tradition of the eldest son of a king inheriting the crown, from creating any hurdles, she designed a crooked scheme, under the influence of greed and selfishness, by which Lord Ram would be exiled from Ayodhya for fourteen long years while Bharat ascended the throne and tightened his grip over the kingdom during this period, so that when the time of Lord Ram's return came, Bharat would be in a position to stoutly stop him from claiming the crown, even if it meant a war and fratricidal bloodshed.

But that is what is seen externally as the overt reason for Lord Ram's going to the forest. The real and true reason lies elsewhere. Lord Vishnu had promised mother earth and the gods that he would come down in a human form as Lord Ram to eliminate the cruel demon race which had, under its ferocious king named Ravana, unleashed a reign of terror and mayhem in the world. And therefore it was necessary for Lord Ram to leave Ayodhya and go to Ravana's kingdom in the far-off island country of Lanka to fulfill that promise. This was simply not possible if the Lord didn't leave Ayodhya.

Further, it was necessary to keep Lord Ram's true identity secret and hidden from Ravana, for had he known that Ram was none but Lord Vishnu who had come to get rid of him and his demon race, then it was sure Ravana would have either hidden himself somewhere where a human being cannot reach, or he would have surrendered himself before Lord Ram and sought mercy, in which case the Lord would have been obliged to grant him forgiveness and grace, because the Lord had a reputation for being exemplarily merciful, kind, compassionate, benevolent and magnanimous so much so that if the greatest of sinners came to him begging for mercy and forgiveness, the Lord couldn't, and wouldn't, refuse. In case that happened, the very purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down to earth as Lord Ram would have been defeated. And, given Ravana's inherent crooked nature and cunning character, it was equally sure that he would have lain low for a while till the things cooled down a bit, after which he would have unleashed his fury with a vengeance upon both the helpless creatures of earth as well as the gods of heaven. What would have happened then?

Hence, it was the need of the hour for Lord Ram to maintain secrecy about his mission; the Lord had to keep his identity and the purpose of going to the forest on his way to Lanka to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons under wraps, and towards this end it was necessary that Lord Ram proceeded to the forest quietly as if an ordinary prince had got entangled in a nasty family quarrel, as a result of which he was banished by his father at the behest of his favourite queen, the step-mother of Lord Ram.

There was one other prime but subtle reason for Lord Ram walking through the forest in order to reach Lanka to eliminate the cruel and evil demon race, for if the main reason of going to the forest was elimination of Ravana and his demon hordes, it could have been done also by declaring an open war on the demons and employing the might of the army of Ayodhya to crush the demon army. So then, what was the 'other subtle reason' for Lord Ram slowly walking to Lanka? It is this: Lord Ram wished to grant his divine grace and blessings on countless ordinary creatures of all denominations on this earth, to bless the numerous sages, hermits, ascetics and holy men and women who had been doing Tapa (penances and austerities) with the hope that one day they would get a chance to meet the Supreme Being and be blessed by the Lord, as well as to lay the foundation for a holy and divine story that would help countless other creatures who could not personally meet the Lord and be rewarded by the fruit of his grace, to derive the same spiritual reward by listening to it, by narrating it, and by singing it in the future, for all times to come. The 'story' of the Ramayana thus created would benefit endless numbers of creatures in the world and help them attain spiritual peace and solace, that would have not been possible had Lord Ram vanquished the demon race in the conventional way of one kingdom declaring an open war on another kingdom.

(b) The second segment narrates in vivid detail Lord Ram's journey to the forest, how he and Sita as well as Laxman left the city, how everyone who met the Lord along the way were greatly affected emotionally, how sympathy, love and affection for him overwhelmed one and all, how he met and befriended people by his courteous manners and good nature, about his famed meeting with the boatman and his interactions with great sages Bharadwaj and Valmiki, till the point of time when Lord Ram made Chitrakoot, a verdant part of the forest with by mountains and rivers, as his abode for some time, before moving on into the deeper recesses of the forest.

This section assumes special significance in the light of what has just been said above regarding the reason of Lord Ram going to the forest on foot. To wit, Lord Ram's travels through the land passing through villages and hamlets and remote places where he met humble people on the way and granted them all his grace and blessings, has been a source of great spiritual joy and a fountainhead of devotional emotions that spring forth when one reads about them, for this narration has the potential to provide peace and bliss to countless generations down the ages.

(c) The third segment describes what happened in Ayodhya after Lord Ram left it and went to the forest. It narrates the story of how king Dasrath died due to grief at separation from Lord Ram, of refusal of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, to accept the crown as his evil and selfish mother Kaikeyi had wished him to do, and for which she had scripted the design whereby Lord Ram had to go to the forest, of Bharat showing an exemplary character and setting a stellar example of noble virtues and behaviour by going to the forest with all his family members, a large retinue of ministers, courtiers, attendants, senior principle citizens, as well as his guru, to try and bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, of the emotional meeting and a detailed and extended conference that was held at Chitrakoot betwixt the two brothers, of Lord Ram's polite refusal to return home because of certain obligations that he had to fulfill, but at the same time assuring Bharat that he loves him immensely and there is no question of having any hard-feeling in his heart, of Lord Ram finally convincing Bharat to return home to Ayodhya with the Lord's wooden sandals as a token of the latter's presence there. This Kand ends with Bharat's reverentially putting Lord Ram's sandals on the throne of Ayodhya as a token of the Lord's personal presence, and himself retiring to a secluded place on the outskirts of the city to live like a hermit, the way Lord Ram lived in the forest, for the entire period of the Lord's forest sojourn and absence from Ayodhya.

That said, let us now briefly have an overview of the events of Ayodhya Kand.

King Dasrath was getting old, and he was eager to anoint his eldest son Lord Ram as the prince-regent and the heir-apparent of the kingdom. He approached his Guru sage Vasistha with his wish, and got a green signal from him. Preparations started in Ayodhya for the grand anointment ceremony. But the Lord had come down to earth not to enjoy the life of a prosperous kingdom but to eliminate the demons and free the earth of its burden, as also to give the numerous sages and hermits living in far flung parts of the realm the privilege of his divine view, known as 'Darshan'. So something must be done. The Gods became upset that if the Lord gets the crown then he would not be able to go the forest and fight the demons like an ordinary human, and the very purpose of his incarnation would be nullified. So they devised a stratagem by which

the goddess of wisdom known as Saraswati corrupted the mind of Manthara, a maidservant and a close confidante of Kaikeyi, one of the queens of Dasrath and the mother of Bharat.

Manthara became jealous that Ram would become a king, and she instigated Kaikeyi saying that if this happens then she would have to live like an ordinary royal instead of like a queen, and Bharat would have to live like an ordinary courtier, obeying the orders of the king Ram. So what must be done, asked Kaikeyi. Manthara advised her that she had two pending vows or promises with king Dasrath, and she should invoke them now and redeem herself. She must ask the king to appoint Bharat on the throne as a fulfillment of the first promise, and send Ram to the forest for 14 years as the fulfillment of the second promise.

So it happened that the righteous king was trapped. He did not wish to renege on his own promises as this was absolutely sinful and regarded as unethical and sacrilegious for a truthful man who had spent his lifetime upholding the principles of Dharma. So Lord Ram was exiled to the forest for the next 14 years. Though Kaikeyi had asked only Lord Ram be sent to the forest, but when his wife Sita and his brother Laxman came to know about these developments they also decided to accompany him.

Lord Ram left the city on foot along with Sita and Laxman. King Dasrath was heart-broken and he wept bitterly as never before. The city was thrown into turmoil, and the condition of the citizens of Ayodhya was no better—they could not bear that their beloved Lord should leave them and so all able bodied left the city to follow the Lord from behind, leaving the city desolate. The king sent his chief minister named Sumantra with a chariot with the intent to take him some way ahead into the forest and somehow make the Lord come back. Sumantra managed to persuade the Lord to board the chariot, but the citizens followed relentlessly. The first day's stop was on the banks of river Tamsa.

The Lord did not wish that the citizens should be subjected to more suffering, and so he asked Sumantra to drive away in the darkness of the night in such a way that the tracks got confused and obliterated so the citizens would not be able to follow them the next morning when they woke up. So the Lord went ahead on his forest exile, and the dismayed citizens had no choice but to return home.

From there they went on the chariot to Sringeripur and met Nishad, the chief of the boatman community. The next morning, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman shed whatever remnants of royal paraphernalia they still had, matted their hairs, and summoned the boatman to cross the river Ganges. Sumantra had to turn back to Ayodhya from here.

From there the Lord went to Prayag, the holy confluence of the three holy rivers, i.e. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, and visited the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj.

From the sage's hermitage the Lord moved ahead on his onward journey to the forest. All the inhabitants of the little villages and hamlets that fell on the way were awe-struck at their sight and felt very privileged that they were having a divine Darshan (view) of the Lord even while staying in their native places. In this way, thousands of ordinary men, women and children had the benefit of viewing the Supreme Lord

himself without having to undertake any arduous exercises and visiting any pilgrim places in search of the Lord.

By-and-by, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman came to the hermitage of sage Valmiki. The sage told the Lord the places he must choose to live in from the spiritual perspective, and then the physical place known as Chitrakoot situated amongst verdant forests, rivers and streams, and green mountains rich with waterfalls, where the Lord should go and live for sometime before moving ahead. So this was the place where the three—Lord Ram, his consort Sita, and his younger brother Laxman—put up a thatched hut and spent some time of the earlier period of their forest exile.

Meanwhile, when Sumantra returned to Ayodhya and informed the king that Ram, Sita and Laxman did not come back but went on ahead to the forest, the old king died of contrition, grief and shock. The Guru, sage Vasistha, sent a messenger to Bharat and Shatrughan who were at the time of the unfolding of this horrifying saga in Ayodhya at the place of their maternal uncle. When Bharat got the news that he is being urgently summoned, he and his brother immediately came back to their home city. Bharat was met with gloom and foreboding omens around him. Everywhere he glanced, he saw a somber and grave mood. When he reached the palace he learnt what horrible deeds his mother had done—his father Dasrath was dead, and his beloved brothers Ram and Laxman had gone to the forest along with Sita, his sister-in-law.

Obviously, Bharat was dumb-founded and crest fallen. He severely scolded his mother like she was a witch; he caught hold of Manthara by her hairs and dragged and kicked her, and was generally inconsolable. Sage Vasistha did his best to calm his down, and in due course Bharat performed the last rites of his dead father.

But the throne was empty and this was not good for the kingdom. So the Guru, the ministers and the courtiers tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown till the time Lord Ram came back. But Bharat flatly refused. He said that instead he would prefer to go to the forest and bring Ram back. Bharat—who till now was regarded as the villain and perceived as the chief conspirator for plotting for Ram's forest exile as he wished to usurp the crown—suddenly became dear for the masses.

So the royal entourage, accompanied by citizens, army, courtiers, queen Kaushalya, and ministers of the kingdom, started on its journey to the place where Lord Ram lived in the jungle. Bharat and Shatrughan walked on foot, spurning requests to board the chariot. Why, Bharat argued, should he sit comfortably on a chariot when his Lord had walked on foot? Walking barefoot resulted in boils developing on the soles of both Bharat and Shatrughan.

Sumantra showed them the path as far as Sringeripur where he had last seen Lord Ram, and then from there the royal party was led by Nishad who took him to the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj. Thereafter, the entourage moved on rapidly, asking the villagers and residents of the hamlets on the way about the directions that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had taken. Messengers were sent to reconnoiter, and Bharat was so nervous that he was uncertain if he would ever meet the Lord again. Eventually they reached Chitrakoot.

The two brothers Ram and Bharat met most affectionately, and so did all of them with each other. The party pitched up camp in the pleasant environs of Chitrakoot. Lord Ram and Laxman did their last rites for their dead father, and some time was spent in rest and chalking out the next strategy. The Guru sage Vasistha summoned a meeting, and Bharat went all out to plead with the Lord to forgive him and return back to Ayodhya. Lord Ram convinced Bharat that he loved him more than he can even imagine and that there is no trace of ill-will or misunderstanding in him. But he must obey the instructions of his late father to stay in the forest for 14 years, and since the father is dead now it becomes all the more mandatory to carry out his orders, for otherwise it would be tantamount to disobeying one's dead father which is an unpardonable sin. Bharat had even gone on record to offer to substitute places and stay in the forest in place of Lord Ram, but the Lord dissuaded him from it. Guru Vasistha then took Bharat aside and explained to him the divine mandate which the Lord had himself pronounced as Lord Vishnu and for which reason the Lord had come all the way down to earth. That divine work of the Gods for the wider well-being of creation and peace of its creature—which was the elimination of the demons—was far more important than suffering the absence of the Lord for such a small period of 14 years which meant nothing in the cosmic scale of time. Vasistha told Bharat that he should see the things from a broader perspective, and give up his stubbornness. Bharat saw the reason, and so he relented. The Lord gave Bharat his wooden sandals as a token of his presence in Ayodhya and its throne.

Accepting it most reverentially, Bharat took his leave and returned to the city with a heavy heart. He put the Lord's sandals on the throne, and himself decided to lead a life of a hermit. So he built a thatched hut on the outskirts of the capital, as a place called Nandigram, and began to live an austere life of a hermit. He carried his duties of the kingdom as a caretaker, and worshipped the sandals as a personified image of Lord Ram himself.

This brings us to the close of 'Ayodhya Kand'.

(3) Aranya Kand:

This is the third Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas. It is so-called because the word 'Aranya' means a dense forest, and this Chapter would narrate that phase or part of the story of Lord Ram when he left Chitrakoot and moved ahead into the deeper recesses of the forest.

The Aranya Kand can be divided into the following three segments:

(a) On his way into the denser part of the forest, Lord Ram meets great sages such as Atri, Sarbhanga and Agastya, and many other sages doing penance in the forest. Here the Lord also saw a huge mountain of bones, which on enquiry was told that these bones belonged to sages and hermits who were killed by the demons. So Lord Ram took a vow that he would eliminate this scourge and free the earth from the cruelty of the evil demons. Also, the Lord has his first encounter with the ferocious demons in this part of the forest, when he met and slayed the demon Viradha, and many others later on.

(b) The second segment narrates the events that occurred in Panchavati, a small clearing near the river Godavari, where Lord Ram stayed for some time in a hut. It was heard that Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana. It was also here that many demons were slayed by Lord Ram, such as Marich, who had come disguised as a golden deer to enable Ravana to kidnap Sita, and the two great demon commanders Khar and Dushan along with their huge army when they had come to attack the Lord at the behest of Supernakha, a sister of Ravana.

(c) The third segment of this Kanda relates the events after Sita's abduction by Ravana. Lord Ram and Laxman begin a search for her, and on the way the Lord granted deliverance to Jatayu, the old vulture who had laid down his life attempting to save Sita from Ravana's clutches, to Sabari, an old tribal woman who was a great devotee of Lord Ram, to the demon Kabandha who was actually a Gandharva (a semi-god) turned into a demon due to a curse by a sage. Finally, this Kanda concludes by narrating a meeting and discourse that was held between Lord Ram and sage Narad.

Let us now take a quick briefing of the events narrated in Aranya Kand.

After living in Chitrakoot for quite some time, Lord Ram decided to move ahead into the denser part of the forest. He had two objectives—first was that great sages, hermits and ascetics lived there and they had all done severe Tapa (penance and austerity). The Lord had to bless them all, and to do this he had to visit their hermitages in the deep recesses of the forest. The second reason was that he would find the demons there, and not in the inhabited areas where the forest was less dense and not as hostile.

So the Lord went into the next area of the forest and met a number of sages and killed a number of demons. Thus, he met sage Atri, and Sita paid her obeisance to the sage's wife known by the name of Anasuiya. The Lord proceeded further and killed the demon Viraadha. Then he met sage Sharbhanga, and took the vow of killing the demons when he saw a heap of bones and upon enquiry was told that it was of the sages killed by the demons. Moving ahead, the Lord met sage Sutikshan, and then sage Agastya.

Further ahead came the real horrifying part of the forest, called Dandakaaranya. It was most inhospitable and dense. The Lord met Jatayu, the vulture, and befriended him. The Lord decided to spend sometime in a clearing of the forest, and put up a small thatched cottage in a place called 'Panch-vati'.

A demoness named Supernakha became enamoured by the Lord, and disguised as a beauty she approached the Lord with the proposal of marriage. The Lord got her nose and ears chopped off by Laxman. Enraged, the demoness complained to her brother, the demon Khar. He gathered an army of demons led by himself, Dushan and Tirshira, and attacked the Lord. After a fierce battle, all the demons were killed.

Wonderstruck with incredulity, Supernakha went to complain to the king of demons, i.e. Ravana who ruled the demons from his capital of Lanka which was a golden city situated in the middle of the ocean. Ravana was surprised, as Khar and Dushan were no ordinary demons and they had the strength matched only by himself. So surely their killer cannot be an ordinary human. But their killing was an affront for him, and

he just could not take it lying down. But at the same time he did not have the courage to face this human enemy from the front because with the killing of Khar and Dushan he had become suspicious.

So he decided to adopt a stratagem and lure them to his fortress at Lanka. He went to Marich (who had earlier been flung by the Lord when he had gone to defile sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice) and forced him to become a golden deer so that Ravana could steal Sita in order to settle scores with Ram for deforming his sister Supernakha.

As this decoy golden deer frolicked near the hermitage of Lord Ram in Panch-vati, Ravana hid and waited for his chance to pounce upon Sita. The Lord knew everything in advance. So he sent Laxman to the forest to fetch wood and asked Sita to enter the 'fire' to maintain her purity because now approached the crucial moment for which the Lord had come to the forest. When Sita saw the golden deer, she asked the Lord to go and fetch it for her. The all-knowing Lord willingly got up and went deep in the forest behind the deer. Finally when he was far enough so that Ravana could get a chance to carry out his mischief, the Lord killed the deer. At the last moment of his life, Marich called out aloud the name of Laxman first and then softly the name of the Lord, 'Ram', and found his emancipation and salvation.

As was destined, when Sita heard the name of the Laxman being called out, she thought that the Lord was in danger and needed help. And despite of Laxman assuring her that no harm can ever come to the Lord, she forced him to go in the direction from where the name was heard. Finding the hermitage unguarded, Ravana appeared as a mendicant and begged for food. Sita stepped out to oblige him, when he suddenly showed his true form and seized her. Putting her forcibly on the chariot, he went towards Lanka by the air, with a distraught, wailing and lamenting Sita held in captivity. On the way, the vulture Jatau tried to stop him and a fierce battle raged between the two. But ultimately Ravana cut off Jatau's wings, and the poor bird fell on the ground, repeating the Lord's holy name 'Ram' and holding his last breath for some more time so that he can see the Lord and convey the message of Sita's abduction by Ravana before he dies.

Meanwhile, when Ram saw Laxman coming, he was alarmed, and knew that something was seriously amiss. When the two brothers returned to the hermitage, Sita was gone. At first Lord Ram pretended that he has lost all hopes and courage, and wished to end his life. Like an ordinary man he wailed and wept for her. This was part of the human drama that the Lord had to play to perfection so that the demons are not forewarned that the Supreme Being has come to eliminate them. Otherwise they would surrender themselves and the Lord would be forced to forgive them to uphold his reputation of being merciful and kind. But should this happen, the entire trouble of coming to the earth would be of no use, and though the Lord would be compelled to forgive the demons if they come seeking pardon they would revert to their old ways after sometime. The Lord's promise to the earth and the Gods that he would rid the world of the torment from the demons would not be fulfilled. So it was prudent and wise to play safe and let them believe that he was an ordinary human prince sent to the forest due to fight over the share of some kingdom!

Gradually after the initial shock, the Lord regained his composure, and the two brothers now set out in search of Sita. They came to the place where Jatau lay wounded. The Lord washed his wounds with his own hands and lock of hairs, and Jatau told him all that he had witnessed. Then Jatau died while being caressed by the Lord himself. The Lord then performed his last rites himself.

Moving ahead, Lord Ram met and killed a demon named Kabandh. Then he came to the lonely hermitage of the old woman named Shabari. She gave him motherly love and some fruits to eat, and then left her mortal body by the self-lit fire of Yoga to find emancipation and salvation. The Lord performed her last rites as he would have done for his own mother.

Sabari had advised the Lord to proceed in the direction of a mountain known as Rishyamook where lived the exiled monkey king Surgiv with his companions such as Hanuman and Jamvant.

So Lord Ram and Laxman proceeded in the direction of this mountain. On the way, the Lord had a meeting with the celestial sage Narad, and a discourse was held betwixt them. This brings us to the end of ‘Aranya Kand’.

(4) Kishkindha Kand:

The fifth Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas is called Kishkindha Kand. The reason for this nomenclature is that the geographical area where the next set of events took place lay within the territorial jurisdiction of the kingdom of Kishkindha. It was the ancient kingdom of the monkey and bear races. Much like the kingdom of Ayodhya with its capital bearing the same name, the kingdom of Kishkindha too had a capital bearing the name of the kingdom, i.e. it was also called Kishkindha.

From a practical point of view, we can visualize it as a very old kingdom of ancient forest-dwelling people whose physical appearances and habits and practices and culture were so pre-historic and outdated, and away from normal yardsticks or criterions that civilizations more evolved than them employed to judge other people, that they were branded as ‘monkeys and bears’. In reality therefore, the inhabitants of Kishkindha were not actually ‘animals’ the way we understand the terms monkeys and bears, but were members of an ancient civilization who could not adapt themselves to changes that occurred elsewhere in the world as the latter evolved over time. The probable reason for this failure to change and adopt and improve was that this kingdom was in a remote part of the land, to the south, in the midst of a dense forest, and separated by mountain ranges from the northern parts of the landmass where large cities and developed kingdoms were present, one such being the kingdom of Ayodhya. On the south too there was the mighty ocean, which acted as a natural barrier that prevented any new ideas of development coming in to influence the inhabitants of Kishkindha. The effect was that the citizens of Kishkindha lived in a virtual time capsule or a time warp where changes didn’t happen as would normally be the case under ordinary circumstances.

Though the inhabitants of Kishkindha were primitive by the standards of other more evolved societies, but nevertheless they weren’t animals, as is abundantly clear from

one single proof of it: they could speak and understand the human tongue. This is obvious from the very fact that they could freely converse with Lord Ram, a human prince, and vice versa. Not only that, some of these inhabitants of Kishkindha were well educated and well-versed in Sanskrit, the langue-franca and the universal language of the world of that day, too, like we have English today. This is evident when Lord Ram meets Hanuman; the latter conversed with the Lord in immaculate Sanskrit—apropos: Adhyatma Ramayan, Kishkindha Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 17-18 where Lord Ram himself acknowledges this and tells Laxman about it.

It is quite possible, and natural also, that these people were bi-lingual; they would speak in their native tongue amongst themselves, but when interacting with others from a different place they would use Sanskrit, the universal language, much in the same way we do today.

The Kishkindha Kand can be divided into roughly two segments as follows:

(a) The first segment narrates how Lord Ram meets Hanuman and befriends Sugriv, the exiled prince of Kishkindha, whom the Lord would help to get his rights back and be appointed as the king of this kingdom. Then, for sometimes during the rainy season, Lord Ram took rest at the nearby Mt. Prabarshan.

(b) The second section describes how a large number of monkeys and bears, called from all the directions of the world, was dispatched everywhere in search of Sita, and how one such group consisting of Angad, Hanuman, Jamvant etc. reached the shore of the southern ocean where they were informed by an old vulture named Sampati that Sita was held captive in Lanka. After this, a conference was held to decide who would go there.

Let us now briefly read the major developments of Kishkindha Kand as follows:

At the Rishyamook mountain, Lord Ram met his greatest devotee known as Hanuman. By his physical body he was a monkey like the rest of them, but we must not forget here that all of them were gods who had come down to earth to help and support Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram when the Lord would launch his final assault on the demons. Hanuman was none but Lord Shiva himself.

At the behest of Hanuman, Lord Ram made friends with Sugriv, the exiled brother of Baali (also pronounced as Vaali in Sanskrit texts), the king of the monkey race. When the Lord learnt about the injustice done to Sugriv by Baali, he interceded on Sugriv's behalf and killed the latter. Then Sugriv was made the king of Kishkindha.

After Sugriv's appointment as king, Lord Ram retired to a nearby mountain known as Parbarshan to wait for the rainy season to end, and then huge groups of monkeys and bears were dispatched in all the directions of the earth to find out about Sita. Since the Lord is all-knowing, he knew beforehand that this task would be accomplished by Hanuman alone. So he summoned him and gave his personal finger ring as a token for Sita so that she is convinced of the identity of Hanuman when he met her.

The group in which Hanuman was went in the south direction, and finally they reached the shore of the ocean. Faced with the formidable ocean as an obstacle, the

group became distraught and concluded that they have come to a dead-end. It so happened that the elder brother of Jatau, the vulture named Sampati, lived in a cave in a nearby mountain. He came out upon hearing the commotion and told the group that he can see across the stretch of the ocean and see Sita seated under a tree in a garden in Lanka. This city was mid-way in the ocean, and was approximately 100 Yojans (800 miles) from the shore. So obviously anyone who could make this giant leap can go there.

After much deliberation it was decided that the only member of the group who has the ability to go and come back alive was Hanuman. The bear king Jamvant encouraged Hanuman to show his true mettle and do this great task of the Lord for which he has taken birth as a monkey in the first place.

Hanuman immediately assumed a colossus form, and invoking the holy name and the divine blessing of the Supreme Lord Ram, he prepared to leap across the ocean.

This brings us to the end of ‘Kishkindha Kand’.

(E) Sundar Kand:

The next phase of the glorious story of Lord Ram is known as Sundar Kand. This is the fifth Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas.

The word ‘Sundar’ means beautiful. Why this Kand is called ‘Sundar’ is discussed in great detail at the beginning of this Chapter, but presently we shall see a few salient points as follows:

(i) Lanka was built on a mountain known as ‘Trikoort’—one with three summits*¹. Lanka was a mountainous landscape, and these three summits were rather plateaus instead of being triangular tips. Now, the summit to the north was called Subel, and it was here that Lord Ram’s army landed when it crossed the ocean from the north of the island of Lanka*². On the central summit was built the city of Lanka, the capital of the demon race. The third summit was on the other end of the island, somewhere to its south. Here, Ravana, the king of the demon race, had constructed a beautiful garden and forest for recreation purposes; it had lush green parks, fruit trees, flowering plants, water bodies, palaces and pavilions etc. that were meant for pleasure and enjoyment. Sita was incarcerated here. Since this place was immensely ‘beautiful’, the summit where it was located too came to be known as Mt. Sundar. And since the actions described in this Kanda took place here, the Kanda is also named ‘Sundar Kand’.

{*¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 28.

*²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.}

(ii) The other prominent reason for naming this Kand as ‘Sundar’ is this: Till this point of time, gloom and hopelessness dominated the emotional horizon of Lord Ram, for Sita had not been found yet, and chances were remote of seeing her again even if she was discovered because it may mean some kind of dangerous adventure which

may or may not succeed. This Kanda removed Lord Ram's distress and sense of helplessness—for not only Sita was found, but a single messenger of the Lord, i.e. Hanuman, had proved, by his valourous deeds, that vanquishing her oppressors, the demons led by Ravana, was not much of an issue. Say, if a single messenger of Lord Ram, i.e. Hanuman, could single-handedly trounce the might of the demon army and burn Lanka unopposed, a city that was well guarded and protected by the so-called invincible demons, how easy would it be when the whole army of the monkey and bear race came to weigh its might on the demon army; where would it stand?

To wit, what was a while ago a hopeless situation was now full of hope. This was a 'beautiful development', so to say, and hence the Kand is named Sundar Kand.

That said, let us quickly have a brief glimpse of the main events in this Kanda as follows:

It was decided that Hanuman would go to Lanka to meet Sita and bring back her news. So he leapt across the ocean. On his way to Lanka, Hanuman met the demoness named Sursa who could catch the shadow of anything flying overhead, and overcame her with his wit. Then he landed on the shore of Lanka, the capital of the demons that was ruled by their ruthless king Ravana, the one with ten heads. At this time, Hanuman was in a very small form, like that of a mosquito.

At the entrance of the city of Lanka, Hanuman met Lankini, the demoness appointed as a gatekeeper, and punched her so hard that it left her bleeding profusely. She then allowed him to go in, prophesying that the end of the cruel demons was now at hand.

Once inside the city, he roamed around in search of Sita and came to the dwelling of Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana but a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Vibhishan and Hanuman met each other, became friends, and the former told the latter the place where Sita was confined. It was a garden known as the Ashoka Vaatika or the garden of Ashoka trees.

Hanuman entered the garden and hid himself behind a thick foliage of the tree under which Sita sat brooding, being overcome with grief. At the opportune time Hanuman dropped the signet ring of Lord Ram that he had brought along. Sita picked it up, and thus the two—Hanuman and Sita became acquainted with each other. Hanuman reassured Sita that her days of grief were soon to end as the Lord would come as soon as he goes back to him with the news of his meeting with her. Sita was extremely happy and relieved.

Then Hanuman took leave from Sita, and on the pretext of eating fruits he ruined the garden of Ravana by destroying its trees and littering the place. Ravana heard of the destruction and was greatly alarmed at the stranger's temerity. He sent his army under the command of his son Akshaya Kumar to catch the intruder and bring him to his court, but in the ensuing scuffle, Hanuman killed Ravana's son.

Then Ravana dispatched his valiant son Meghanad to catch Hanuman and bring him to the court, which he later successfully did. At the court, Hanuman tried his best to plead with Ravana to avoid confrontation with Lord Ram by giving Sita back to him, but Ravana flatly refused. The ill-witted demons tried to mock at the Lord by

deforming his messenger, and so they decided to burn his tail. This was a god-sent opportunity Hanuman was waiting for to settle accounts with the demons, so as soon as the cloth that was wrapped around his tail and soaked in oil was set alight, he escaped from their captivity and went on a rampage in the city, dragging and swaying the fiercely burning tail behind him. This resulted in a huge fire, and the golden city of Lanka was reduced to ashes.

Hanuman then jumped into the ocean to douse the flame, took his last leave from Sita, and then jumped across the ocean to come back to this side of the ocean where his other companions were waiting anxiously for his return.

The party went jubilantly to report the success to Lord Ram, who was overwhelmed with joy and happiness. There was cheer and rejoicing everywhere. A huge army of monkeys and bears was assembled forthwith and the Lord started on for the final phase of his forest exile to conquer Lanka and kill the fierce demons led by Ravana, thereby fulfilling the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the tormented earth, to the worried sages and seers, and to the terrified Gods that he would rid them of their fear and tyranny of the demons.

The formidable army reached the shores of the ocean. The Lord first tried not to embarrass the deity of the ocean by crossing it forcefully without permission, so he tried to please the deity by prayers and other means. But when the Lord found that it was useless to plead further, he drew his arrow to dry up the whole ocean. Terrified, the ocean god relented and begged forgiveness. He advised the Lord to build a bridge across the water, and so the 'great bridge' was constructed to enable Lord Ram and his mighty army to cross over to Lanka.

The huge army which seemed to stretch till the horizon finally crossed the ocean, some walking over the bridge, some jumping over the back of the countless marine creatures who had come to the surface to watch the spectacle, some simply leaping to the other side, and some riding on the back of their friends and companions. It was a huge tide of monkeys and bears sweeping on the shores of Lanka. Thus, in this wondrous way, the Lord landed in Lanka.

This is the end of this fifth phase of the story called the 'Sundar Kand'.

(F) Lanka Kand:

Then we move on to the sixth Canto or Chapter of the story; it is known as the Lanka Kand. This Chapter is a story of unmatched and unparalleled strength, valour, gallantry and courage, leading to victory and fame. The evil forces represented by the demons were finally vanquished and eliminated by forces representing goodness and righteousness symbolized by Lord Ram and his army that attained its glory by being successful in this endeavour.

Lanka Kand can be divided into four major parts as follows:

(a) The first part is that which narrates the construction of the bridge across the ocean so that Lord Ram's mighty army could land on the soil of Lanka; consecration of

Lord Shiva's Lingam (symbol) by Lord Ram to pay homage to the former; the conferences that were held in both the opposing camps, of Lord Ram and Ravana, to chalk out the strategy to deal with the impending war; and the many attempts that Ravana's wife Mandodari made to avert the war.

(b) In the second part we read that Lord Ram sent Angad, the prince of the monkey race, as his emissary to the court of Ravana in a final attempt to see if a solution can be found without bloodshed. We read in detail what transpired between Ravana and Angad, and how all efforts of Angad failed to convince Ravana to make peace with the Lord.

(c) The third part of this Kanda narrates the horrors of the ferocious War of Lanka in which one after another all the evil demons were killed. The war saw the death of Kumbhakaran, the younger brother of Ravana, Meghanad, the virtually invincible son of Ravana, and finally Ravana himself who died after a protracted battle with Lord Ram.

(d) Finally, when the war was over, Vibhishan was made the king of Lanka, Sita was united with Lord Ram, and the Lord boarded the Pushpak plane, along with Sita and Laxman, as well as chief monkeys and bears, and also Vibhishan, to head back home to Ayodhya.

Now let us read some more details about Lanka Kand as follows:

Having landed on the shore of Lanka, Lord Ram made a last ditch attempt to avoid bloodshed by sending Angad, the son of Vali and the nephew of Sugriv, as his messenger of peace to Ravana. A verbal duel followed between Angad and Ravana, and Angad planted his feet on the ground, challenging Ravana to move it. Should he be able to do it successfully, Angad promised him, it will be deemed that Lord Ram has lost the war, and if not, than Ravana be damned. All the courtiers of Ravana's demon court tried their might but could not move Angad's feet as much as an inch. Finally Ravana came himself, and then Angad rebuked him, saying 'you wretched one; why do you kneel before me? Had you done it before Lord Ram, your whole clan would have found redemption.'

After Angad's peace mission failed, the ferocious war finally broke out. One by one all the demons were killed. During the course of the war, Laxman was wounded and Hanuman had to go the Himalayas to fetch the herbs which were used to bring Laxman back to life.

The last demon to die was Ravana himself, and as soon as he fell there was an uproarious cheer in the heavens. Vibhishan was crowned as the new king of Lanka, and Sita met her beloved husband Lord Ram. The dead monkeys and bears who had fallen during the course of the war were all revived by the rain of Amrit (ambrosia of life) that Indra, the chief of the Gods, rained from the sky, and the fallen demons too benefited as they all went to the heaven instead of to hell.

Lord Ram finally made his departure from Lanka for his own city of Ayodhya aboard the air plane known as 'Pushpak'. Besides Sita and Laxman, he was accompanied by his monkey and bear companions, as well as Vibhishan.

This is the end of the ‘Lanka Kanda’ which is also known as the Uddha Kand or the War Kand.

(G) Uttar Kand:

The Uttar Kand is the seventh and the last Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas. It marks the last phase of the story of the Ramayana. The word ‘Uttar’ refers to the final phase of life, or the second half of a long narrative. Hence the name of this Kand, as it marks the end of the Lord’s first phase of his worldly sojourn and the beginning of the second phase when he began to rule the world as its king and emperor after having killed all the demons and fulfilling his promise to the earth, the sages and seers, and the Gods.

The word ‘Uttar’ has other connotations too: Since Lord Ram traveled ‘northwards’ from Lanka to reach his own kingdom of Ayodhya, this part of the story is called Uttar Kand—a term meaning the north. ‘Uttar’ also means the last part of a long story. In ancient tradition, the last chapter of a scripture contained a synopsis of the spiritual theme discussed in the main part of the text; so is the case with Ram Charit Manas too where this Chapter is primarily dedicated to highlighting the spiritual benefits of the story of Lord Ram, and what this story essentially teaches us. Towards this end, we find that it includes discourses that Lord Ram himself gave, and that which were held betwixt the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud, the king of birds, wherein profound metaphysical and spiritual principles were discussed and explained in simple language.

Uttar Kand can be said to be divided into the following three segments:

(a) Lord Ram’s arrival in Ayodhya to a warm and tumultuous welcome; the celebrations in Ayodhya and Lord’s ascension to the throne of the great kingdom to be appointed its King and Emperor; departure of Lord Ram’s guests from Kishkindha, Lanka and Sringeripur who had come with the Lord aboard the Pushpak plane.

(b) Description of the rule of law, and all round peace and harmony that prevailed in Ayodhya under Lord Ram; and the regular discourses that Lord Ram gave to his subjects on various spiritual and metaphysical topics.

(c) The meeting and the subsequent discourse that was held betwixt the great saintly crow named Kaagbhusund and Garud, the king of birds, where profound spiritual and metaphysical principles were discussed.

That said, let us have a bird’s eye view of the main events of Uttar Kand as follows:

Hanuman was sent by Lord Ram to inform Bharat that the Lord is returning from his forest exile. The news spread like wild-fire in the city of Ayodhya, and the city erupted in a spontaneous emotion of joy. Bharat, and virtually everyone in the city, rushed jubilantly to the outskirts where the Pushpak plane came down to land on the ground. There was an emotional reunion betwixt the four brothers, as well as betwixt

Lord Ram and all those who had gone to welcome him back home. It looked as if a sea of mutual affection and love had broken its dykes to sweep away everyone who was present there.

After initial welcoming and hugging, cheer and applause, the euphoric crowd of exhilarated citizens accompanied Lord Ram as he entered the city: the city of Ayodhya which had looked worn out, withered and gloomy just a while ago suddenly became vibrant and lively once again. Mass celebrations and festivities were held in all the directions, on earth as well as in heaven, and they lasted for almost six months. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 15.}

During this period, on an auspicious day and time, Lord Ram was crowned as King-Emperor of the mighty kingdom and empire of Ayodhya.

The Lord ruled most righteously and according to the laws of Dharma (ethics, righteousness, probity, propriety, morality) and Satya (truthfulness). His rule was exemplary and there was happiness and prosperity everywhere. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

Tulsidas has ended his story-telling here. The saint could not bear to write more and describe how Lord Ram, who was so dear to his heart and the essence of his life, would one day leave this mortal world and go back to his divine abode in the heaven as is usually done by other narrators of this epic story, such as sages Valmiki and Veda Vyas in their versions of the Ramayana. So Tulsidas decided to stop the story here. Symbolically, Tulsidas made Lord Ram live on this earth amongst us for all times to come.

To wit, all other versions of the Ramayana, such as those written by sages Valmiki and Veda Vyas, have elaborately described the final phases of the Lord's earthly sojourn, and how he had left his mortal coil (i.e. his physical body) to ascend to the heaven, but our Tulsidas preferred not to think of the Lord ever leaving us alone. So he ended his narrative in Ram Charit Manas with the crowning of Lord Ram on the throne of Ayodhya. So shall it be; we shall cherish the divine idea that Lord Ram is always present amongst us !

Since the main objective of Ram Charit Manas was to act as a beacon of spiritual hope and a source of solace to the tormented soul of the creature yearning for peace and beatitude, as well as to serve as a guide to show the world an easy path to attain nearness with the Supreme Being and fulfill the soul's eternal desire for deliverance, salvation and emancipation, a fine spiritual dialogue betwixt Kaagbhushund and Garud is included in the later half of Uttar Kand. This discourse is soaked in spiritual and metaphysical philosophy that is delivered in very a simple and effective way, and in a language that is easy to understand.

This brings us to the end of Ram Charit Manas.

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ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNASA

Of

Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Original Text, English Transliteration &
Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes

Main Characters in the Story of Śrī Rāma Carita Mānasa

We shall now have a brief introduction of all the major characters mentioned in the devotional classic 'Ram Charit Manas'. For the purpose of convenience, we shall learn about them in accordance with the Kanda or Chapter where they are mentioned for the first time.

(1) Baal Kand:

(i) Lord Shiva: He is the third god of the Trinity who is responsible for conclusion of creation. Lord Shiva is believed to be the greatest devotee of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the wisest amongst the gods. He is the patron deity of ascetics (Yogis) and practices strict renunciation and austerities.

The story of Ram Charit Manas was first conceived in Lord Shiva's 'Mana', i.e. in his heart and mind, while he was meditating and contemplating upon Lord Ram, using the holy name of the latter, i.e. the word RAAM (Rām), as a Mantra (spiritual formula) for the purpose. Lord Shiva always remains in a meditative posture, constantly remembering his beloved Lord Ram and mentally worshipping him. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

This is the primary reason why this divine story of Lord Ram is called 'Ram Charit Manas', for it means 'a narrative of the deeds of Lord Ram that were first revealed in the Mana' of Lord Shiva. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 35.]

Shiva is also honoured by the epithet of 'Maha-deva', meaning the 'Great God', because of his exemplary wisdom, erudition and sagacity, as well as high level of self-realisation and enlightenment. Lord Shiva and Lord Ram had mutual respect for each other so much so that Lord Shiva is also known as 'Rameshwar'. This word has a dual meaning: it means Lord Shiva for whom Ram is the Ishwar, the Supreme Lord, as well as Lord Ram for whom Shiva is the Ishwar. Later on in the story of the Ram Charit Manas, Lord Ram has himself affirmed this relationship, saying that if anyone wishes to please him then he must first please Lord Shiva. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 104; (b) Lanka Kand,

Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.]

In order to spread the nectar of spiritual bliss and the joy of feeling blessed by hearing the divine story of Lord Ram, Lord Shiva decided that it ought to be revealed and not kept secret in his heart and mind where it was first conceived. So the gracious Lord told the divine story of Ram Charit Manas to his consort goddess Uma or Parvati, and later on to a sage known as Kaagbhusund, a saintly crow. Thence, this glorious story was heard and narrated by a chain of illustrious and wise sages, from whom it then spread, by-and-by, to the rest of the world. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 36.]

(ii) Sage Narad: He is a celestial sage and a son of the creator Brahma. Narad is a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, and has free access to every corner of the universe. Once he fell into the trap of Maya (delusions and worldly infatuations) and wished to marry. Lord Vishnu prevented Narad from falling prey to this temptation, but the sage was so offended that he cursed the Lord to become a human being and suffer the agony of separation from his beloved so that he can understand how a lover feels when he is denied access to his beloved. This was the reason why Lord Vishnu had to suffer separation from Sita when she was abducted by Ravana. However, Narad soon realized his mistake, that the Lord prevented him from marrying for his own good, so he relented and asked for forgiveness. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 129.]

(iii) Sage Yagyawalkya: He was the greatest sage of his time, renowned for his expertise in metaphysical and theological knowledge. [Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, Canto 3, Brahman 1-9; and Canto 4.]

He was the one who had heard the story of Ram Charit Manas first from Kaagbhusund, and then narrated it to sage Bharadwaj. Thus, it can be deduced that the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, that was previously unknown to the human race as it was narrated in an esoteric language, first by Lord Shiva who obviously spoke in a language known only to gods, and then by sage Kaagbhusund who spoke in the tongue of a crow, was first revealed in the 'human tongue' by sage Yagyawalkya. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30.]

(iv) Sage Bharadwaj: He was also a great sage who had his hermitage in the holy place known as Prayag, the confluence of the three holy rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. Regular religious gatherings were held at his hermitage, and it was on one such occasion that he heard the story of Ram Charit Manas from sage Yagyawalkya. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.]

Later on, Lord Ram also met this great sage when the Lord was on his way to the forest. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106.]

(v) Sage Agastya: He was another great sage of that time who is mentioned in Baal Kand. His other name was ‘Kumbhaj’. Lord Shiva had himself heard the story of Ram Charit Manas being narrated by sage Agastya when he visited his hermitage. It is this narration that sage Yagyawalkya refers to when he himself narrates the story of Lord Ram to sage Bharadwaj. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48.]

Lord Ram had met sage Agastya and received his blessings during his journey through the forest. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 13.]

(vi) Sage Vasistha / Vasistha: He was a son of creator Brahma, and the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya. By the virtue of the latter occupation, sage Vasistha was also a Guru (teacher and preceptor) of the family of kings of Ayodhya, and hence of king Dasrath as well as Lord Ram and his three brothers. His wife was Arundhati. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 189; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 9; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.]

(vii) Sage Vishwamitra: Another great sage of his time and a rival of sage Vasistha, he was the one who took Lord Ram and Laxman from Ayodhya to his hermitage in the forest to eliminate the demons who were constantly defiling his fire sacrifice. Later on, sage Vishwamitra took the two brothers to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony organized by king Janak. It was during this ceremony that Lord Ram married Sita, the daughter of Janak, by breaking the formidable bow that was the sole condition set for Sita’s marriage. Lord Ram’s three brothers too were married simultaneously at the same venue. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 210.]

(viii) Sage Sringsi: This sage was called by sage Vasistha, the chief priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya and a family advisor to king Dasrath on religious matters, to preside over the fire sacrifice that he advised the king to perform when the latter pleaded with him that he wishes to have sons as there was no heir to the throne though he had become very old. Sage Sringsi was an expert on such matters; he was well-versed in the Mantras (religious formulas) and the processes involved in such fire sacrifices. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 189.]

(ix) Sage Parashuram: He was the son of king Gaadhi and born in the illustrious family of sage Bhrgu. He was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, and famously known as ‘sage with the battle-axe’. Parashuram is believed to be the one who had vanquished the pride of the greatest kings of the world by defeating them in numerous battles. He was very short-tempered and got provoked by the slightest of asides. In Baal Kand, he makes his angry appearance during the bow-breaking ceremony because he had become vengeful at the news of the breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow, for he worshipped Lord Shiva as his patron deity. An acerbic oral spat took place at the venue of the ceremony betwixt the sage and Laxman, the younger brother of Lord Ram, but anon the sage calmed down and paid his homage to Lord Ram when he realized that the Lord was none but Lord Vishnu himself in that form, after which the sage retired to

the forest to do Tapa (penances and austerities) to atone for his loss of grace due to his angry and irreverent behaviour vis-à-vis the Lord. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

The sages mentioned herein above are the ones whose names appear in Baal Kand. Besides them, we also come across ‘Ahilya’.

(x) Ahilya: She was the wife of sage Gautam who had cursed her, due to some misunderstanding, to become a stone. When the sage realised his mistake, he blessed Ahilya that she would be freed of this curse when Lord Vishnu visits her in his manifestation as Lord Ram and touches her stone-form with the tip of his foot. In due course of time, it so happened that Lord Ram visited her abandoned hermitage while on his way to Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra and brother Laxman to attend the bow-breaking ceremony being organised there for the wedding of Sita, the daughter of king Janak of that kingdom. When Lord Ram was told about this mysterious stone figure by sage Vishwamitra, the Lord touched her with his toe, and this freed Ahilya of her curse. She offered prayers to Lord Ram and went back to her husband, sage Gautam. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211.]

Now we shall briefly mention the demon king Ravana and his brothers, and who they were in their previous life, because Baal Kand describes the origin of the demon race, and ascribes the reason for Lord Ram’s birth to this race, for Lord Vishnu descended to the mortal world to eliminate the horrors perpetrated by Ravana and his race of cruel demons.

(xi) King Pratapbhanu: He was a great king of an ancient kingdom known as Kaikaye. His father was Satyaketu, and his younger brother was Arimardan. When Satyaketu became old, he handed over the reins of the kingdom to Pratapbhanu, the elder son, and retired to the forest to do Tapa. Pratapbhanu was a brilliant king and most valorous. He and his younger brother conquered all their rivals and established a mighty empire. But the more he succeeded and prospered, the more his greed for power and authority increased proportionately so much so that he wanted to become invincible and unopposed in this world, as well as immortal. This greed led to his downfall. It so happened that one of his vanquished kings hid in the forest, disguised as a hermit, waiting for an opportunity to exact revenge. He had befriended a fiend, who promised to help. Once it so happened that Pratapbhanu got lost while hunting, and while wondering in the forest reached this false hermit’s place, seeking shelter for the night. The hermit recognized the king, but the later failed to see through the veil of deceit and realize who the hermit was. By-and-by, during conversations in the night to while away the time, the hermit convinced the king that he possessed great mystical powers and he could fulfill all desires of the king. Pratapbhanu fell in the trap, requesting the pretentious hermit to grant him the boon of invincibility and immortality. Seizing the golden opportunity, the cunning hermit advised the king that he should hold a great feast and invite all the Brahmins to it, for the hermit told him that he would disguise himself as a cook and enter the kitchen where he would cast his magical charm on the food served as well as on the guests so that all those who participated in the feast will be under the sway of Pratapbhanu. The hermit told the

king that if the Brahmins became obedient to him, no one would be able to kill him or subdue him in this world.

Pratapbhanu was taken for a ride by his delusions, and driven by the fiat of fate too, that he believed the deceitful hermit into thinking that the impossible could happen. Eventually, a great feast was organized by the king as advised, and large numbers of Brahmins were invited. Meanwhile, the crooked hermit, with the aid of his fiendish friend, managed to add meat into the food served, which made the Brahmins furious, and they cursed the king that he and all his family members as well as the subjects of his kingdom would become ‘demons who eat flesh’. This is how Ravana and the rest of the demon race came into existence. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176.]

(xii) Ravana: As narrated herein above, king Pratapbhanu became Ravana in his next birth. Ravana had ten heads and twenty arms. Pratapbhanu’s younger brother Arimardan became Ravana’s younger brother Kumbhakaran; and the king’s chief minister named Dharamruchi, who was pious, wise and righteous, became Ravana’s youngest brother named Vibhishan, who inherited the character of his previous life and remained a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 176.]

The three brothers did Tapa to please the creator Brahma, who granted them boons they desired. Ravana wished that he should not die at the hands of anyone, except human beings and monkeys, because he thought that if he becomes so strong that gods couldn’t harm him, then how would an ordinary human and a monkey matter to him. Request for this boon by Ravana reflected the desire that he had in his previous life as king Pratapbhanu, when he had a similar wish to become invincible and immortal. Brahma was aghast at this request, but he had no choice except to grant this boon as he had promised Ravana that whatever the latter desired would be granted. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 177.]

When Brahma approached Kumbhakaran, he was astonished to see the latter’s colossus body, and thought that if he is allowed to eat daily then he would consume all food soon and the entire creation would die of hunger. Hence, Brhama persuaded the goddess of speech, known as Saraswati, to delude Kumbhakaran, who wished to sleep soundly for six months at a stretch and wake for one day, before resuming his long bout of sleep. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.]

Meanwhile, Vibhishan asked for devotion for Lord God. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 177.]

After getting their desired boons from Brahma, the three demon brothers returned home and in due course of time Ravana established the famed ‘demon kingdom’ with its capital in the island city of Lanka. Emboldened by his boons, Ravana unleashed a reign of terror and horror in the corners of the world, vanquishing gods, ruthlessly terrorizing all other creatures, and cruelly crushing all opposition in this world. Mother Earth was horrified at this behaviour, and she, along with all the gods and

great sages and ascetics, approached Lord Vishnu to provide succour to them, at which the Lord promised to come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the demons. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.]

Ram Charit Manas also narrates that in his previous life, Ravana was one of the chief guards at the gate of Lord Vishnu, and his name was ‘Jai’, while Ravan’s brother Kumbhakaran was ‘Vijai’, the other guard. Due to a curse by a Brahmin, both Jai and Vijai became demons for three consecutive births. In their third such birth, Jai became Ravana, and Vijai became Kumbhakaran. [Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 122—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 123.]

A brief introduction of Ravana is given by Angad, Lord Ram’s emissary, in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 20.

The life and times of Ravana and his brothers Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan have been described in (i) Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas, Uttarkand, Cantos 1 and 2; (ii) Valmiki’s Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 9-34; (iii) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 1-139; and (iv) Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos 176-183.

The life of Meghanad, the son of Ravana, is described in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga (Canto) no. 12; Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13.

A brief introduction of Ravana is given by Angad, Lord Ram’s emissary, in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 20.

The Atharva Veda’s *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 18 describes the meaning of the word ‘Ravana’ as follows—

“Since the demon had abducted Ram’s consort (Sita) from a ‘Van’ (pronounced as *won* or *one*; meaning a dense forest), he was called ‘Ravana’. [The first letter of the word *Ram* and the word *Van* are combined to form the name of the demon as ‘Ra+van = Ravana’.]

There is another interpretation. ‘Ravana’ also means—‘the one who makes others weep, cry, lament and wail due to the severe pain, misery, torments, terror and sorrows inflicted upon them’ (for Ravana’s actions had made Sita suffer, weep and wail). [Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 16.]

Further, he made a lot of noise or false claims, or he used to brag haughtily about his achievements, his strength and powers as well as of his invincibility and lordship over even the heavens. Wherever he went, he behaved most wildly and acted like a savage, making a lot of din and clamour to spread fear and terror.

So, the first part of his name *Ravana* comes from the word *Rav* for ‘fuss, noise, chatter, clamour, nuisance and din’. Thus, he became famous as ‘Ravana’ because he made a lot of noise and false claims.

According to one story, once Ravana got on his chariot and flew above Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Shiva. Nandi, the mount of Shiva, told him to stop, but the arrogant Ravana did not pay any heed. So Nandi blocked his path in the sky. Peeved and feeling insulted, Ravana scooped up the entire mountain and put it on his shoulder to throw it somewhere. Lord Shiva used his might and pressed the mountain with his big toe. This crushed Ravana under the weight and the pressure, and he began to yell. He remained for a thousand years crushed under the weight of the mountain and continued to pray to Lord Shiva to free him. At that time Shiva

cursed him—‘you have been wailing for so long under the weight of the mountain and you are in the habit of making others wail by your cruelty, so your name will be Ravana, or ‘the one who wails himself and make others wail too’.’ This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13, verse nos. 84-85.

Other demons mentioned in Baal Kand are the following:

(xiii) Marich and Subahu: They were commanders of a large detachment of demon troops appointed by Ravana to prevent sages from performing fire sacrifices. They were deployed in the forest area where great sages such as Vishwamitra etc. lived, somewhere between the city of Ayodhya and Janakpur. When Lord Ram and his brother Laxman stood guard at sage Vishwamitra’s fire sacrifice, these two demons attacked the venue, and during the battle that followed, Lord Ram killed Subahu and flung Marich to a far away island in the middle of the ocean, while Laxman decimated the rest of the army. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 210.]

Later on, it was Marich who was forced by Ravana to assume the form of a deer with a golden hide so that the demon king could divert Lord Ram’s attention and abduct Sita. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 27.]

(xiv) Tadka (pronounced Tādkā): She was a ferocious female demon who attacked Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra while they were going from Ayodhya to the sage’s hermitage. Lord Ram provided deliverance to her soul by freeing it from the evil gross body of a demoness in which the soul was trapped by killing it. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209.]

Now, let us read about the great family in which Lord Vishnu took birth as Lord Ram. It was an illustrious family of great kings who ruled over a famous and prosperous kingdom by the name of Ayodhya. Presently we are concerned with king Dasrath in whose household Lord Ram was born. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 188 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

(xv) King Dasrath (pronounced in Sanskrit as Daśaratha): He was the king of the kingdom of Ayodhya, which was also known as ‘Avadh’. He headed an empire that covered a major part of north India of those days. Hence, he was also called a ‘Chakravarti King’—i.e. one whose rule extended over a wide swathe of land that had a huge parameter or circumference (“Charka” = a circle).

In his previous life, king Dasrath was known as Kashyap, and his chief queen Kaushalya was Kashyap’s wife Aditi. The couple had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) with a desire to have the Supreme Being as their son. To fulfill this wish, Lord Vishnu had promised them that he would take a birth in their household, in their next birth, as Lord Ram, which the Lord fulfilled in Kashyap’s present life as king Dasrath. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 187.]

According to another version, also mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, the first human couple named Swayambhu Manu and his wife Satarupa had a son named Uttanpaad. It is believed that the human race owes its origin to this couple. In their old age, the pious couple handed over the affairs of the world to their son and retired to the forest to do Tapa, and when Lord Vishnu revealed himself before them and asked them to seek anything they wished, the couple prayed to the Lord that they wished to have a son in his likeness, at which the Lord replied that since it was impossible to find someone who would resemble him in the remotest, so it would be better if he himself manifested as their son. Lord Ram was thus born to this pious couple in their next birth as king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 152.]

The lineage of the kings of the Ayodhya dynasty is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Canto 70. It is as follows: Brahma, the creator > Marichi > sage Kashyap > Viwaswan > Vaiwaswat Manu (the first human king) > Ikshwaku (after whom the family of Lord Ram got its name, as the Ikshwaku dynasty) > Kusi > Vikusi > Baan > Anaranya > Prithu (the great king after whom the earth came to be known as Prithivi) > Trishanku > Dhundhamaar > Bhuvanaascha > Maandhata > Susandhi > Dhruvsandhi > Bharat (after whom the modern India was named 'Bhaarat') > Asit > Sagar (after whom the ocean was called Saagar; because it were his sons who had dug the earth to create the hollow filled with water that came to be known as the ocean) > Asamanj > Anshuman > Dilip > Bhagirath (who is credited for bringing the heavenly river Ganges to earth) > Kakushtha > Raghu (the great king after whom the family of Lord Ram is also oftentimes named as the Raghu dynasty) > Pravridha > Shankan > Sudarshan > Agnivarna > Shighran > Maru > Prashusruk > Ambarish > Nahush > Yayaati > Naabhaag > Aja > king Dashrath > Lord Ram.

The above list has 40 names if we include the creator Brahma.

(xvi) Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi were Dasrath's three chief queens. Kaushalya was the eldest, Sumitra the middle wife, and Kaikeyi the youngest of the three. But the king was enamoured with Kaikeyi the most. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 190.]

(xvii) Lord Sri Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan were his four sons. Ram was the eldest of the four brothers and the son of Kaushalya; Bharat was the son of Kaikeyi, and Laxman and Shatrughan were the twin sons of Sumitra.

The four brothers were assigned their respective names by sage Vasistha. The significance of these names are as follows [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it] :-

'Ram' meant 'one who was an like an ocean of a eternal and fathomless virtues of bliss, happiness, felicity and beatitude, and in whom the entire universe dwells as if it was merely a single pore of his body'.

‘Bharat’ was ‘one who takes care of the welfare of the world by providing for all its necessities, and who protects the world and looks after its well-being’.

‘Laxman’ signified ‘one who was an embodiment of all imaginable good virtues, was very dear to Lord Sri Ram, and who supported the world’.

‘Shatrughan’ was ‘one who could vanquish all enemies; one whose mere remembrance can enable a person to overcome his adversary’.

Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being¹, while his other three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, were personifications of Lord Vishnu’s virtues and the duties he carried out as the Supreme Lord of the creation—viz. to take care of the world and provide for all its needs as represented by Bharat, to support it and enable it to be self-reliant as represented by Laxman, and to eliminate all those elements who acted as enemies of the Lord’s creation and its subjects as represented by Shatrughan.

According to sage Veda Vyas’ ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, Uttar Kand, Canto 10, verse nos. 57-58, Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent who supports the world on his thousand hoods, Bharat was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu’s Chakra (serrated discus, Vishnu’s weapon), Shatrughan of Shankha (conch which Vishnu always held in his hand), and Lord Ram of Lord Vishnu himself. Sita, Lord Ram’s wife, meanwhile was goddess Laxmi, the consort of Vishnu, personified.

(xviii) King Janak: He was the king of Janakpur, the capital of a kingdom of the same name. It was situated at the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range. His daughter Sita was married to Lord Ram. His other daughter Urmila was married to Laxman. The two daughters of his younger brother Kushketu, i.e. Maandavi and Srutkirti, were married to Bharat and Shatrughan respectively. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 325.]

(xix) Sita: The eldest daughter of Janak, and the wife of Lord Ram. It was her abduction by the demon king Ravana that led to the famous war of Lanka around which the story of the Ramayana is built.

According to sage Veda Vyas’ ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’, Uttar Kand, Canto 10, verse no. 58, Sita was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu.

(2) Ayodhya Kand:

(i) Manthara: The favoured maid of Kaikeyi who became jealous when she heard that Lord Ram was to be anointed the prince regent of Ayodhya. She instigated her mistress Kaikeyi to compel king Dasrath to redeem the two promises that the king had made to her some time in the past, but were still pending. Under this mischievous plan, Manthara told Kaikeyi to ask for two boons: one was to send Lord Ram to the forest for fourteen years, and the second boon was to ask king Dasrath to install her own son Bharat on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 23.]

This precipitated in the sad saga that led to calamitous events: king Dasrath died, Bharat refused to accept the crown, the kingdom was plunged into an era of gloom and uncertainty, and Lord Ram, his wife Sita and his brother Laxman went to forest for fourteen years, where Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana, which eventually led to the epic war of Lanka.

(ii) Sumantra: He was the chief minister of the kingdom of Ayodhya and a close confidante of king Dasrath. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. Doha no. 5.]

(iii) Nishad (pronounced as Niṣād): He was the chief of the boatmen community; Lord Ram had met and befriended him on his way to the forest, as well as on his way to Ayodhya from Lanka. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 88; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 121.]

(iv) Kevat: The boatman who took Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita across the river Ganges as they headed for the forest. Kevat refused to accept any charges for rowing the Lord across, and for the love and affection that Kevat showed to him, Lord Ram blessed him with the spiritual reward of having undiluted devotion. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 100—to Doha no. 102.]

(v) Kol and Kirata (Kōla and Kirāta): They were the tribals who lived in dense forest. Lord Ram was served by them when he went to Chitrakoot. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137.]

(vi) Sage Bharadwaj: Lord Ram met this sage after he crossed river Ganges and reached Prayag, the holy place where the three rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati converge. Sage Bharadwaj had his hermitage here. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.]

(vii) Sage Valmiki: Lord Ram visited the hermitage of this great sage during his journey into the forest. It was on the advice of sage Valmiki that Lord Ram stayed in Chitrakoot, a very pleasant part of the forest amidst mountains and situated on the banks of river Mandakini, a tributary of river Ganges. It was during Lord Ram's meeting with sage Valmiki that the learned sage had enumerated the various symbolic places where the Lord should reside to bless his devotees. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 132.]

(3) Aranya Kand:

The word 'Aranya' means a forest. After leaving Chitrakoot, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman moved ahead and entered the denser parts of the wilds, those parts of the forests that were far away from any kind human habitation, and were infested by demons and wild beasts, had undulating hills and mountains as well as water bodies, and where sages, hermits and ascetics lived to carry on with their spiritual pursuits undisturbed, in a secluded environment of solitude and peace, places where they could live in harmony with Nature.

(i) Jayanta: He was the son of Indra, the king of gods. Like his father, he too was crooked by nature, unnecessarily provoking Lord Ram for no reason. Once Jayant assumed the form of a crow to tease Lord Ram as he reclined to relax, as well as to test the prowess of the Lord. Jayanta came hurriedly and pricked Sita's foot, which started bleeding. Annoyed at this unwarranted provocation, Lord Ram decided to punish him. So the Lord shot a blade of grass instead of an arrow to show Jayanta his miraculous powers. This blade of grass followed the stupid crow wherever he went to hide; no one gave him shelter against Lord Ram. Finally, sage Narad advised him to go and surrender before Lord Ram and ask for forgiveness. Lord Ram excused him, but since the symbolic arrow shot by him must hit some target, the Lord made the grass hit the crow's eye, thereby blinding him in one eye but sparing his life. It is believed that since that time, crows are abhorred by all, and that they can't see with one eye. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.]

Lord Ram met some of the greatest sages of the time during his journey through the denser parts of the forests. The prominent ones who the Lord met in Aranya Kand are the following:

(ii) Sage Atri: He was the first sage Lord Ram met after leaving Chitrakoot. The sage offered his obeisance to Lord Ram, and Sita paid her respects to the sage's wife named Anusuiya, who instructed her on some of the stellar qualities that a virtuous woman must possess. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

Sage Atri is an ancient sage credited with the composition of the 5th Mandal of the Rig Veda Samhita. His name appears in other places in the Rig Veda Samhita also

(10/137/4 for instance). His disciples assumed his name as their surname and came to be known as Aatreyas.

The sage is classified as a 'Maharishi' because he was one of the senior and the most exalted sages of his time. He is listed as a member of the Sapta-rishis, the cluster of seven celestial sages. Therefore, according to mythology, he is also a member of the Sapta Rishi Mandal, or the cluster of seven stars known as the Great Bear.

He is said to be one of the ten Manas-putras or mental born sons of the creator Brahma. Therefore, he was one of the Prajapatis or progenitors of mankind also. He is said to have given protection to the Sun God against the demon Svarbhaanu who caused the solar eclipse by composing a 'fourth' hymn against the curse of the eclipse, the other three being the usual liturgy of prayers offered during the eclipse to save the Sun God from this curse. He is said to be chief priest of the five ancient tribes of Vedic period settlers called the Panch-janas. When he was tortured by the demons, he was rescued by the Ashwini-kumars.

Atri's wife was the famous hermitress named Anusuiya (meaning one who has no jealousy against anyone). She was the daughter of Kardama Prajapati and a stellar instance of chastity and virtuousness as a wife and a hermitress. According to mythological accounts, sage Atri and his chaste wife Anusuyia were childless, and having a desire to have a son they prayed and did severe penance. All the three gods of the Hindu Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder appeared before the couple and requested them to ask for a boon. Upon the couple's request, all the three Gods became their sons. Brahma became the sage known as Chandra representing the Moon God, Vishnu became the wise and enlightened sage Dattatreya, and Shiva became the angry sage Durvasa.

During his forest sojourn, Lord Ram had visited him in the Dandakaaranya forest where the sage preached him the nuances of Dharma (Ramanya by Valmiki, Aranyakand, 117). He was an authority on Dharma (tenets of righteousness, probity and propriety) and has been quoted in the Manusmriti (3/16) and the epic Mahabharata (in its Anushaashan Parva, 65/1).

A separate text called the 'Atreya Dharma Shastra' is attributed to him. It has nine chapters that deal with Daan (charitable donations and gifts), Japa (prayers) and Tapa (austerity and penances). Other texts attributed to him are the 'Atri Smriti' and the 'Atri Samhita'. The latter has roughly 400 verses and deals with the principles of Dharma.

The Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4 was revealed as an answer that sage Yagyavalkya gave to sage Atri when the latter approached the former to enquire about the secrets of the Atma. Incorporated in this answer is the importance of Kashi (Varanasi) as the Avimukta Kshetra—i.e. the place on earth that provides spiritual Mukti to the dying person.

(iii) Sage Sarbhanga (also pronounced as 'Sharbhanga'): After taking his leave from sage Atri, the next great devotee-sage Lord Ram met was Sarbhanga. He was a disciple of sage Agastya. At the time the Lord met him, the sage was so lost in meditating upon Lord Ram and the ecstasy that it granted him that for some time he

remained completely oblivious of the presence of the Lord right in his front. Lord Ram was greatly moved by the sage's affection and devotion for him, and their meeting was exceptionally emotional. When Lord Ram asked the overwhelmed sage what boon he wished to be granted, the sage said he wished nothing but undiluted and eternal devotion for the Lord, which of course was granted to him. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12.]

(iv) Sage Agastya: The next great sage Lord Ram met was sage Agastya, also known as Kumbhaj. It was sage Agastya who had advised Lord Ram to go to Panchavati on the banks of river Godavari to spend some time there so that the sages, hermits and ascetics living in the vicinity could be blessed by the Lord's divine presence. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 17 that precedes Doha no. 13.]

Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a 'Brahm-rishi' or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as 'Kumbha'. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vasistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

According to legend, sage Agastya had dried up the ocean by drinking it in three gulps. He had used the joint palms of his hands to scoop up the water to gulp it down.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the

Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

There are three versions of how Agastya had drunk the ocean. Let us read them in brief now.

(a) Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

(b) This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

According to this legend, the ocean had washed away the items of worship that sage Agastya had arranged for his routine religious rituals. Agastya became peeved and drank up the ocean. When the gods prayed to him to forgive the ocean, the kind sage obliged and refilled it in the form of his urine. That is the reason why the ocean is bitter and salty like urine.

(c) The third version is this: Sage Agastya once took pity on a bird whose eggs were washed away by the ocean. The grieving bird was trying to dry the water of the ocean by picking drops of it in its beak. Then the sage decided to punish the ocean by drinking it up.

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had

pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is “Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye”.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term ‘Agastya’ became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as ‘Agastya’, and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a ‘bright star’ and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the ‘Agastya Sanhita’ which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.

Now, we come to prominent demons that Lord Ram encountered in Aranya Kand:-

(v) Demon Viradha (pronounced as Virādha): He was the first demon the Lord encountered after entering the wildest part of the forest. The Lord slayed in

immediately, and granted his soul deliverance from the evil body of a demon. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 7.]

(vi) Female demon Supernakha (pronounced as *Śūrpaṇakhā*): She was a sister of Ravana, the king of the demon race. She was so enamoured by the charm of Lord Ram that she proposed to marry him. At this unscrupulous behaviour of hers, the Lord got so annoyed that he got her nose and ears chopped-off at the hands of Laxman to not only punish her but also to send a signal to Ravana that the Lord has arrived to challenge the demon king's authority. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 17 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-20 that precede it.]

(vii) Demons Khar and Dushan: They were the cousins of Supernakha and commanders of the demon army deputed by Ravana to take care of the forest known as 'Dandakaranya', the most inhabitable part of the wild. When Supernakha reported to them that she has been deformed by Lord Ram, the duo attacked the Lord with a huge army of demons. In the ensuing battle, both were slayed. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.]

This was the second full-scale battle that Lord Ram had with the ferocious demon army, the first was at the time of protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra in Baal Kand where Subahu was eliminated and Marich flung away to a remote island around Panchavati, Chitrakoot in central India.

(viii) Demon Marich (*Mārīca*): The demon whom Lord Ram had flung away to a remote island during his encounter with the demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra. Marich was forced by Ravana to become a deer with a golden hide so that Sita could be distracted. Seeing this unique deer, Sita asked her husband Lord Ram to go and bring the deer for her. When the Lord went away, Ravana abducted Sita. Marich was eventually shot down by Lord Ram, but as always the compassionate Lord granted him emancipation and salvation. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Doha no. 27.]

(ix) Demon Kabandha: He was a hideous demon shaped like an octopus, with limbs protruding from a ball-like rounded body. In his previous life he was a Gandharva, a demi-god who is believed to be a musician of heaven. He was cursed by sage Durbasa to become a demon. Lord Ram granted him deliverance too. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.]

(x) Jatau (pronounced as *Jaṭāyu*): The great and courageous vulture who had intercepted the chariot in which Ravana was taking away Sita to Lanka. Jatau tried his best to free Sita, but his wings were cut by the abductor, Ravana. Jatau fell to the ground, wounded. He was spotted by Lord Ram and Laxman. Before dying, Jatau had told the Lord that the demon king had taken Sita away. Lord Ram did his last rites himself, an honour that is rare, an honour usually reserved for one's father or very near kith and kin, and which makes Jatau immortal in the echelons of exalted souls

that had the privilege of being granted deliverance, emancipation and salvation by the Lord himself. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Doha no. 32.]

(xi) Sabari (pronounced as Śabarī): She was an old woman who had served sage Matanga. She was blessed by the sage that she will have a divine communion with Lord Ram, an incarnation of the Supreme Being, which would give her final deliverance. Sri Ram had visited her hermitage while searching for Sita. It was she who directed him to Kishkindha where the Lord befriended the monkeys who helped him to conquer Lanka and rescue Sita. During their meeting, Lord Ram enjoyed fruits that the old lady gave him as refreshment. Lord Ram treated Sabari like his own mother, and he preached her the famous 9-fold path to Bhakti (i.e. the nine forms of devotion for Lord God). Like Jatau, Lord Ram did the last rites of Sabari himself, and granted her eternal beatitude and felicity. Sabari had advised Lord Ram to proceed to lake Pampa on his way to Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey and bear race beyond the Dandakaranya forest, where the Lord would meet Sugriv, the monkey chieftain, and he would help the Lord further. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.]

(xii) Sage Narad: Before exiting the Dandakaranya forest and entering Kishkindha, Lord Ram was approached by the famed celestial sage Narad when the Lord reached the banks of a lake named Pampa as advised by Sabari, and decided to take some rest before moving ahead to Kishkindha. Narad had some questions which the Lord answered to his satisfaction. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46.]

(4) Kishkindha Kand:

This is the fourth Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas. ‘Kishkindha’ was the land of the monkey and bear race. It lay betwixt the kingdom of Lanka to the south, and the Dandakaranya forest and the inhabited part of the mainland beyond it to the north.

It was here that Lord Ram met Hanuman, Sugriv, Angad, Jamvant etc. who would physically help the Lord not only to trace Sita but also in the form of a huge army that the Lord needed to launch a military campaign to free her and eliminate the cruel demons led by Ravana in Lanka.

After leaving lake Pampa, Lord Ram and Laxman neared Mt. Rishyamook over which Surgiv, the younger brother of Baali, and a disinherited prince of the kingdom of Kishkindha, lived in exile with his trusted companions, including Hanuman.

(i) Hanuman: He became one of the greatest devotees of Lord Ram. When Lord Ram and Laxman were wondering at the foot of Mt. Rishyamook, Sugriv sent Hanuman to find out who they were. Hanuman came to Lord Ram disguised as a young Brahmin, and eventually they both recognized each other, realising that a strong emotional bond existed betwixt them from time immemorial. Hanuman took the two brothers to Sugriv and forged a bond of friendship betwixt Lord Ram and Sugriv, with Hanuman and the Fire God himself being a witness. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 4.]

Later on, it was Hanuman who crossed over the mighty ocean to go to Lanka alone, discover Sita and meet her, have a direct first confrontation with Ravana, burning Lanka, and returning to Lord Ram to report everything. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 33.]

During the war of Lanka, when Laxman was seriously wounded and lay unconscious on the battle-field, Hanuman had first brought the medicine man named Sushen, from inside the city of Lanka, to diagnose Laxman's ailment and prescribe the right herb, and had then gone to the remote northern mountains to bring the needed medicine, where, unable to find the correct herb, he had uprooted the entire mountain block and carried it aloft on his hand all the way to Lanka, a singularly glorious and stupendous feat of courage, resolution, strength of arms, ability and agility performed by an individual in the annals of history of unique achievements by anyone anywhere in the world. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

Hanuman was also believed to be a son of the Wind God, hence called 'Maruti'. Later on in the war, he had brought the herb to revive Laxman when he was wounded in the battle-field. Hanuman also played a pivotal role in the epic war and the final conquest of Lanka and the defeat of the demon army.

(ii) Sugriv: He was the younger brother of Baali, the king of Kishkindha. Sugriv was thrown out of the kingdom due to certain misunderstanding betwixt the two brothers. He lived in exile on top of the Rishyamook mountain where Lord Ram and he became friends. He was reinstated on the throne of Kishkindha, and in return he had helped Lord Ram in finding out about the whereabouts of Sita and rescuing her by lending his huge army of monkeys and bears to the Lord. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Doha no. 11; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 22—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 35.]

(iii) Baali/Vaali (pronounced as **Vāli**): The king of Kishkindha and the monkey race. He was also the elder brother of Sugriv whom Lord Ram met and befriended on Mt.

Rishamook. Since Baali had wrongly beaten Sugriv and not only disinherited him from his right as a prince but had also snatched Sugriv's wife, Lord Ram slayed him for his reckless and unrighteous behaviour. As was his nature, Lord Ram also granted Baali with the spiritual reward of deliverance, emancipation and salvation. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.]

(iv) Angad: He was the son of Baali, and in due course of time he became one of the favourites of Lord Ram. At the time of his death, Baali had entrusted Angad's safety into the hands of Lord Ram, requesting the Lord to take care of Angad by holding him by his hand and looking after his welfare in the same way as he would do for his very own and faithful servant. After his father's death, when his uncle was made the king of Kishkindha, Angad was appointed as a prince and the heir-apparent of the kingdom by Lord Ram, which meant that after Sugriv's death, Angad would become the next king. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10; Doha no. 11.]

Angad was loved by Lord Ram no less than the Lord loved Hanuman. The Lord chose Angad to be his emissary to the court of Ravana in a last attempt to avoid the ruinous bloody war of Lanka, and like Hanuman earlier, Angad trounced the vanity and pride of the demon king, thereby breaking the morale of the demon army prior to the commencement of the epic war of Lanka. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 35-a.]

Lord Ram acknowledged Angad's abilities and intelligence when the Lord openly praised him for these qualities. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no.17.]

Besides this, Angad fought alongside Hanuman in the war, and the two proved to be the most formidable, valiant and powerful warriors during the progress of the war. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 45; Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 6-8 that precede Doha no. 47.]

(v) Jamvant: He was the chief of the bear community, old in age, and a wise person who was always consulted before any action was taken. It is believed that he was a manifestation of the creator Brahma. It was on his advice that Hanuman was selected to go across the ocean to search Sita in Lanka. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-12 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 30.]

During the war itself, Jamvant had shown his mettle by fighting extremely ferociously and valiantly, tackling Ravana and thrashing him violently when the fierce demon king, furious in war, had managed to beat to the ground even Hanuman who was one of the most powerful warriors in the army of Lord Ram. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-15 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 98.]

(vi) Nala and Neela: They were amongst the senior commanders of the monkey forces. These two brothers were expert builders, and the bridge across the ocean was constructed by them. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2

that precede Doha no. 60; and Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.]

During the war too, the two brave and valorous brothers fought most gallantly like their peers, Angad, Hanuman, Jamvant, Dwivid etc., and like Angad and Hanuman who formed redoubtable comrades-in-arm vis-à-vis their enemies in the battle-field, Nala and Neela too were close to each other and proved themselves formidable in all actions that took place during the war. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43; Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 65.]

There are instances in the war of Lanka where the four most valorous warriors of Lord Ram's army, i.e. Hanuman, Angad, Nala and Neela, have gallantly fought a battle with the demon army by standing side-by-side to each other. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 73.]

(vii) Sampaati (pronounced **Sampāti**): He was an old vulture and an elder brother of Jatau. He lived on the shore of the ocean. When the team of monkeys and bears reached the shore of the ocean and did not know what to do to find Sita, it was he who had told them that she was present in Lanka, an island in the middle of the ocean. Anyone who could go there will find her. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 29.]

(viii) The Hermitress: The team of monkeys and bears who went in the south direction in search of Sita soon became very thirsty, but there was no water to be found anywhere. Searching frantically here and there, Hanuman eventually descried the mouth of a cave where he espied many kinds of water-birds entering and exiting cheerfully. Deducing that it meant there was water somewhere inside the cave, the group trooped in. Deep inside the cave they saw a hermitress in a meditative posture. Her name was 'Swayamprabha', i.e. one who was radiant with self-generated spiritual energy. When the group introduced itself to her, she told them about herself and her desire to go and meet Lord Ram, and she also told them the way out of the blind cave. She then went to have a divine view of Lord Ram, and thence went on to the northern mountains to do Tapa (austerity and penance) at a place called Badrivan. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 25.]

(5) Sundar Kand:

This is the fifth Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas. In this Kanda, Hanuman entered Lanka disguised literally 'as a small mosquito', but in practice it means he entered Lanka in a diminutive form, a size that was very small as compared to the colossus frame of the demon inhabitants of the city-state of Lanka.

As to the question why is this Kanda called ‘Sundar’, a discussion has already been made earlier in the previous chapter nos. 2 and 3, titled ‘Preamble’ and ‘The Story of Ram Charit Manas in Brief’ respectively, and would be more elaborately discussed when we arrive at the Sundar Kand itself in due course of our reading of this fascinating Story.

Since Lanka was the kingdom of the Demon Race, it is obvious that all those who Hanuman met here were demons. But not all were evil creatures; some amongst them were good souls who had become demon by body just because king Pratapbhanu had been cursed that all the subjects of his kingdom would too become demons alongside himself. As a consequence of this ridiculous curse, even the good citizens of the great king’s kingdom were forced to become demons by body even though they retained their earlier goodness in their hearts as inheritance brought forward from their previous lives. Hence, Hanuman encountered two types of demons in Lanka—one who were truly bad and real demons, i.e. evil and vile, and others who were good in their hearts but had to follow the rules of Nature which ordained them to behave like a demon irrespective of what they felt inside their hearts. Examples of the former category of demons were Lankini, Trijata, Mandodari, Suk, Malyawant etc. Examples of the evil demons were obviously the rest of them, and the chief in this category was Meghanad, the son of Ravana. Vibhishan was a controversial figure, as on one hand he is praised for his devotion and loyalty for Lord Ram, and on the other hand he is reviled as a traitor and betrayer of his family, race and country. A detailed note regarding him is appended against his name herein below in this section.

(i) Ravana and his brother Kumbhakaran, however, offered a paradox—for they were ruthless demons outwardly, epitomizing all the vices, evils, cruelties and all forms of negativities that are synonymous with the word ‘demon’, but inwardly their souls were holy and pure, yearning for deliverance, salvation and emancipation. Perhaps this is the primary reason why both of them attained oneness with Lord Ram by having their souls enter the holy body of the Lord, to merge with the Lord’s Supreme Soul, to attain final beatitude and rest for themselves as they had always wished for. The compassionate Lord Ram granted their wish to them because the Lord is all-knowing, and he does not judge a creature merely from his external behaviour, but gives equal weight to the creature’s internal feelings and thoughts, for more often than not exterior is very misleading and false. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 (in case of Kumbhakaran); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103 (in case of Ravana).]

(ii) Mainak (pronounced as Maināka): The patron deity of the ocean asked this mountain to lift itself midway in the ocean so that Hanuman can take some rest before proceeding ahead to Lanka. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 1 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

(iii) Sursa (pronounced as Sursā): She was the mother of sea-serpents and lived in the ocean. When Hanuman was on his way to Lanka, flying over the surface of the water,

Sursa was asked by the gods to test Hanuman's abilities. She blocked his way, but Hanuman easily outwitted her. She was pleased at his intelligence and wit, and blessed him with success in his endeavour. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it.]

(iv) The Female Demon of the ocean: This demoness lived underwater in the depth of the ocean and had the magical ability to catch the shadow of anyone flying overhead. She tried her trick over Hanuman, and was slayed by him. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 3.]

(v) Lankini: After landing in Lanka, the first demon Hanuman met was a female guard of the gates of the fort of Lanka. Her name was Lankini. She had the enviable ability to see anyone entering the gates secretly. When she challenged Hanuman, the latter punched her so hard that a single blow made her swoon and bleed from her mouth. Lankini then recalled what Brahma had once told her, and realized that this intruder is a messenger from Lord Ram. So she allowed Hanuman to enter the city without further creating a hue and cry. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 5.]

(vi) Vibhishan (*Vibhīṣaṇa*): The younger brother of the king of demons, Ravana. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, and by extension of Lord Ram. When Hanuman was searching for Sita in the city of Lanka, it was he who told him about the garden where Sita was help captive. Later on, he was insulted and kicked by his elder brother Ravana when he tried to persuade his brother to become reasonable and give Sita back to her husband. It was due to this humiliation that he joined sides with Lord Ram. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 41.]

The character of Vibhishan is a controversial one, for though it is undeniable that he was a pious soul devoted to Lord Ram, yet it cannot also be overlooked that he was a traitor and a betrayer of his family, race and country. If Ravana can be accused of committing a great crime of kidnapping a gentleman's chaste wife, in this case Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, Vibhishan had committed a graver and more serious crime of treason and betrayal by divulging all the secrets of Lanka and its army that enabled Lord Ram and his forces to finally defeat the demons. Had it not been for the turn-coat Vibhishan's help, the course of events during the war of Lanka would have been completely different than what they actually were, and in all probability the rout of Ravana and his demon army would not have been as complete as it actually was.

When Hanuman had failed to trace Sita in Lanka, it was Vibhishan who had told him where to find her¹; it was Vibhishan who had told Lord Ram the reality of the sound of thunder and dazzle of light that emanated from the direction of the fort of Lanka when the Lord's army landed on the shore of the demon kingdom, at which the Lord shot an arrow that fell Ravana's crown and cut-off his wife Mandodari's ear-rings, an attack that was unprovoked and uncalled for, but was meant merely to insult and

humiliate the demon king²; as the war progressed, Vibhishan divulged all the secrets of the preparations being done by the demons to fight Lord Ram's army and gain victory in the war³, such as about the arrival of Kumbhakaran and fire sacrifices being done by Meghanad and Ravana to win⁴; and finally the secret of Ravana's long life by pointing out to Lord Ram that it lay in his navel, resulting in the Lord shooting an arrow at this part of the demon king's body and bringing about his death⁵.

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 5; Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 13 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 39.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 65 (arrival of Kumbhakaran); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 75 (Meghanad's fire sacrifice); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 85 (Ravana's fire sacrifice).

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 102.]

(vii) Ravana: The great king of the demon race and seemingly an invincible ruler of Lanka, the capital city of the demons. He had kidnapped Sita, and was finally killed in the epic war. We have already read in detail about him under the heading 'Baal Kand'.

(viii) Meghanad: He was one of the bravest demon in the race, next only to his father Ravana in bravery, courage, strength of arm, valour, gallantry, dare-devilry, resolution, resilience, and all other such traits that are considered as adornments of a great warrior. It was Meghanad who succeeded in capturing Hanuman when the latter destroyed the royal garden of Ravana. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 20.]

Later on in Lanka Kand, Meghanad had to fierce duels with Laxman, where he fell Laxman by seriously wounding him during the first round, but was subsequently killed by Laxman in the second bout. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 49—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 54; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Doha no. 76.]

(viii) Trijataa (Trijaṭā): The demoness deputed by Ravana to keep a close watch on Sita. She became sympathetic towards her ward Sita, and had always encouraged the latter to keep her hope alive, for then one day she would succeed in being reunited with her beloved Lord Ram. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.]

She was a daughter of Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana and a great devotee of Lord Ram. Her mother was Sarama, the wife of Vibhishan.

(ix) Mandadori: She was the wise wife of Ravana who had tried on several occasions to persuade her husband to return Sita to Lord Ram in order to avoid a ruinous war, but the demon king was so stubborn that he paid no heed to her. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (b) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (iii) Doha no. 35-b—to Doha no. 37.]

(x) Demon Suk / Suka: He was a trusted spy of Ravana and was sent by him to spy on Vibhishan, Ravana's younger brother whom the demon king had kicked out of Lanka and who decided to go and seek refuge with Lord Ram. Suk was so highly impressed by Lord Ram's compassionate and lovable nature that he had a turn of heart. When he returned to report back to Ravana, he chided the latter sternly and requested him to end hostility with Lord Ram. Ravana kicked him too, and like Vibhishan Suk also went to Lord Ram to seek the Lord's blessings. In his previous life, Suk was a great sage, but unfortunately he was cursed by sage Agastya, which resulted in his becoming a demon. By Lord Ram's grace Suk was freed from that curse, and resuming his earlier form he went to his previous hermitage to continue with his spiritual exercises as before. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

(xi) Malyawant: He was an old and wise demon minister of Ravana. He was one of the few pious souls in Lanka who had tried to persuade Ravana on several occasions to give Sita back to Lord Ram and end hostility with the Lord. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49.]

(6) Lanka Kand:

Lanka Kand is the sixth Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas. It describes all the developments that took place after Lord Ram's army crossed the ocean and landed on the soil of Lanka, the kingdom of the demons. The famed War of Lanka has been described here in vivid detail. The Kanda ends with victory for Lord Ram, his reunion with Sita, Vibhishan ascending the throne of the kingdom, and finally Lord Ram leaving for his capital city of Ayodhya onboard the plane called Pushpak, along with Sita and Laxman, and selected chiefs of both the monkey and bear army, such as Sugriv, Angad, Jamvant, Nala, Neela etc., as well as the demons led by Vibhishan.

(i) Kalnemi: His name appears later on in Lanka Kand, when Ravana approached him to go and block Hanuman's path when the latter was on his way to bring the herb required to revive Laxman. Kalnemi was slayed by Hanuman. At the time of death, Kalnemi uttered the holy name of Lord Ram, as a result of which he found deliverance and emancipation for himself. [Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai

line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

(ii) Some of the other great demon warriors mentioned in Lanka Kand, besides the close family members of Ravana, such as Ravana, Kumbhakaran, Vibhishan, Malyawan and Meghanad who have already been described earlier in the respective Kandas where they are first mentioned, and hence being skipped here, are the following: Durmukha, Sur-ripu, Manuj-ahaari, Bhat, Atikaaye, Akampan, the hefty one (Bhaari), Mahodar, etc. [Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 62.]

(7) Uttar Kand:

This is the seventh and the last Canto or Chapter of Ram Charit Manas. It is so-called for the following primary reasons:

(a) From Lanka, Lord Ram headed to his capital of Ayodhya aboard the Pushpak plane, and since Ayodhya was to the ‘north’ of Lanka, the chapter that describes all those events that followed the Lord’s victory in Lanka and when he proceeded northwards, is called Uttar Kand, for the word ‘Uttar’ means ‘north’.

(b) Since this book Ram Charit Manas is a holy book, instead of being a mere narration of some great prince’s heroic deeds and exploits, for it describes the story of Lord Ram who was the Supreme Being himself in a human form, and also because this book contains numerous instances where laws of Dharma (principles of good conduct and righteousness) as well as those of spiritualism and metaphysics are expounded and shown by practical examples, it is in the likeness of a scripture, and classical scriptures had their last Canto named as Uttar Kand, or Uttarasrdha, meaning the second half or the concluding part of a treatise where profound principles are once again reiterated and summarized before ending the book.

This observation is particularly true with Ram Charit Manas as the second half of its Uttar Kand narrates the discourse of the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund, which is one of the finest examples of a discourse on spiritual values, especially those related to having devotion and love for Lord God as the easiest and the best practical way to attain beatitude and eternal bliss.

(i) Sage Kaagbhusund: He was a saintly crow, deeply devoted to Lord Ram, and a pious and holy soul. The second half of Uttar Kand is entirely devoted to him. Kaagbhusund had his hermitage in the northern mountains where he regularly preached on spiritual matters, with emphasis on subjects related to devotion and affection for Lord Ram as a means to attain liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, a path that grants eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity to a creature.

Towards this end, he used to recite and discourse on the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas. Even Lord Shiva himself had once heard this divine story of Lord Ram being narrated by Kaagbhusund.

The episode of Kaagbhusund is high in its spiritual and metaphysical quotient, and in a way it is an exposition in a simple language on the essence and the glorious spiritual virtues for which the story of Ram Charit Manas is so famed and revered. In the midst of so many paths to one spiritual goal that have been prescribed by myriads of teachers and schools of philosophies, leading to a lot of confusion and distraction, the advise of sage Kaagbhusund is like a one, single window solution to all questions that a spiritual aspirant may want answered. To that end, this episode is aptly called ‘Kaagbhusund Ramayana’—as it is entirely devoted in explaining the spiritual importance and significance of the divine story of Lord Ram, and how a creature can benefit from it, what it teaches him, and in the middle of all confusion in this mortal world, which is the safest and the easiest path for him to follow in order to attain emancipation and salvation for his soul, and enjoy eternal peace, beatitude and bliss.

The discourse of Kaagbhusund is the most glorious part of Ram Charit Manas as it epitomises the best of spiritual nectar that one can expect to derive by reading the divine story of Lord Ram. The spiritual message of this divine story has been filtered and condensed and presented in its pristine pure form by this saintly crow for the welfare of all living beings, in a language devoid of metaphysical jargon, and in a way that can actually be practiced in one’s routine life.

From this perspective, Ram Charit Manas is a singularly remarkable narrative of the life and time of Lord Ram as compared to all other such narratives, because its crowning glory is the episode of Kaagbhusund, which gives this narrative the hue of an Upanishad, an authoritative scripture on spiritual, theological and metaphysical matters related to Lord Ram.

The episode pertaining to sage Kaagbhusund is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. that precedes Doha no. 55—to Doha no. 130.

(ii) Garud: He is the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu. Though he was always close to Lord Vishnu and was fully acquainted with the divinity and greatness of the Lord, yet once he was confused by Lord Ram’s ordinary human-like behaviour, doubting the authenticity of the Lord and falling prey to delusions so much so that he was completely confounded and lost his peace of mind, becoming restless and unsettled. So he approached Lord Shiva to remove his perplexities, at which the Lord directed him to the hermitage of Kaagbhusund. The discourse that followed forms the subject matter of the so-called ‘Kaagbhusund Ramayana’ that forms the second half of Ram Charit Manas as noted herein above.

All the rest of the characters named in Uttar Kand have appeared elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, chiefly in Baal Kand and Ayodhya Kand, and briefly introduced there itself.

ŚRĪ RĀMA CARITA MĀNĀSA
Of
Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

Original Text, English Transliteration &
Exhaustive Exposition in English with Explanatory Notes

श्री गोस्वामी तुलसीदास जी कृत
श्रीरामचरितमानस

ŚrīRāmaCaritaMānasa
By Gōswāmī Tulasīdās

प्रथम सोपान
prathama sōpāna

Canto 1

(बालकाण्ड)

(Bāla-Kāṇḍa)

Summary: The Baal Kand (pronounced “Bāla-Kāṇḍa”) is the 1st Canto of the Holy Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’. This Canto opens with verses that offer prayers and obeisance to different gods, goddesses and deities as well as saints and pious souls to invoke their blessings, and at the same time prayers are also offered to non-saints, unholy and evil souls so that they do not create unwarranted hindrances and problems out of jealousy, malice, ill-will and ego.

Then we move on to verses that extol the holy name of Lord Ram and the importance of the Lord’s divine story, enumerating their many spiritual benefits and rewards, as well as their divinity and holiness, and their metaphysical significance and importance vis-à-vis spiritual welfare of a devotee.

This is followed by a brief narration of the Genesis of the Story of ‘Ram Charit Manas’, how and by whom it was first conceived, and how it then passed down to us in its present form, which we are reading.

Then comes an outline of the different causes which obliged the Supreme Being to manifest himself in a human form as Lord Ram.

Then we read in detail the story of Lord Shiva’s marriage with Parvati, which is followed by three other narratives that tell us the reason why the Supreme Being assumed the form of Lord Ram. The first story in this respect is that of sage Narad getting deluded so much that he cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being; the second story relates to king Manu and Satrupa doing severe Tapa (penances) with a

desire to have the Lord as their son; and the third describes the fascinating story of an upright and famous king named Pratapbhanu who became the demon Ravana due to certain developments arising out of his ill fate when he was cursed unwittingly by Brahmins to become a demon along with his entire family and subjects.

These stories, along with many other things and narratives that are part of this holy book and so finely woven into the texture that they embellish the narrative with countless gems of spiritual wisdom and metaphysical principles that gel perfectly with the overall flow of the story, one such example being the discourse of saintly crow Kaagbhusund that he gave for the benefit of Garuda, the heavenly mount of Lord Vishnu, that make Ram Charit Manas a unique narration of the famed story of Lord Ram that is otherwise universally known as the 'Ramayana'.

After this introduction, a sort of a preamble, which covers almost a half of Baal Kand, starts the actual narration of the story of Lord Ram, i.e. the Ramayana, which our learned poet Goswami Tulsidas chose to call 'Ram Charit Manas' as, to begin with, it originated in the heart of Lord Shiva in some ancient time, and even today it finds a place of immense honour and great reverence in the heart of pious souls and saintly persons, as well as devotees of the Lord, giving them profound spiritual peace, happiness and joy, as well as a feeling of bliss, blessedness, felicity and beatitude wherever they are, and in whatever situation or condition they are in, in this mortal world, thereby paving the way for their deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

In this Canto no. 1 called 'Baal Kand', we read about the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan; celebrations that mark their birth; the Lord's childhood days and the joy he gave to everyone present during those times. Then we read how sage Vishwamitra took Lord Ram and his brother Laxman to his hermitage so that they can protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by demons who worked under the command of their king Ravana of Lanka. Having successfully carried out this mission, the sage took the two brothers to Janakpur to attend the Bow-breaking competition that would lead to the marriage of the successful candidate with Sita, the princess of that kingdom. As it turned out, none of the famous and mighty kings and princes of earth, who had all assembled at the venue upon hearing of the famed beauty of Sita to try their luck in marrying her, failed to move the formidable Bow, thereby losing the chance to have her as their bride. Then, on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram broke the Bow effortlessly. The city of Janakpur erupted in a spontaneous outburst of joy and cheer.

Then we read that for a brief while things seemed to turn hostile to Lord Ram, the victor, because sage Parashuram, a great devotee of Lord Shiva to whom this great originally belonged, upon hearing that his Lord's bow has been broken by someone at Janakpur, came angrily to punish the offender as he took it as an affront to Lord Shiva. An angry spat that was interspersed with taunts and sarcasm followed between the sage and Laxman, but at the end, after all his anger was vented out and he could do no harm to either Laxman or Lord Ram in spite of his fretting and fuming ferociously, the sage relented and realized that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being as he thought him to be, but a manifestation of the Supreme Being who had come down to earth to fulfill certain divine mandate for the well and good of the entire creation.

The sage asked for forgiveness and went away. Then the ceremonies and celebrations, which were abruptly halted due to the sage's angry intervention, resumed once again. Messengers were sent to Ayodhya to invite Lord Ram's father, king Dasrath, to come to Janakpur with his party to attend the wedding ceremony of

his son Lord Ram. A grand marriage procession left Ayodhya and was warmly received by king Janak of Janakpur. Then we read in detail about the marriage ceremony and its different rituals, the mass celebrations and euphoria that prevailed at that time. Not only Lord Ram but all his three brothers were also married simultaneously at the same venue. So it was a rare occasion for festivities and celebrations. With this marriage, a grand alliance was established between two mighty kingdoms of that time, one was Ayodhya, the kingdom of which Lord Ram and his brothers were princes and Dasrath was the king, and the other was Janakpur of which Sita and her sisters were the princesses and Janak was the king.

Finally, the four grooms and their respective brides, along with the grand marriage procession led by king Dasrath and the royal priest Vasistha and sage Viswamitra, left Janakpur and arrived at Ayodhya to a rousing welcome.

The Canto ends with a brief narration of grand celebrations at Ayodhya, thanksgiving, distribution of liberal gifts, and the general atmosphere of happiness and joy that prevailed all over the city and the royal household during the days that followed. Sage Vishwamitra took leave of king Dasrath and went back to his hermitage.

INVOCATION

वर्णानामर्थसंघानां रसानां छन्दसामपि । १ ॥

मङ्गलानां च कर्तारौ वन्दे वाणीविनायकौ ॥ २ ॥

ślōka.

varṇānām-ārtha-saṅghānām rasānām chandasām-api. 1.

maṅgalānām ca kartārau vandē vāṇī-vināyakau. 2.

[Goswami Tulsidas, the saint-poet, starts the narration of his Holy Book named ‘Ram Charit Manas’ with the following invocation:]

‘I pay my obeisance to and express my deepest reverence for Goddess Saraswati (the patron goddess of speech; “vāṇī”) as well as Lord Vinayak (Lord Ganesh, the deity who removes all hurdles that may obstruct success in any endeavour, and the patron god of writing; “vināyaka”), who preside over a vast body of pristine pure knowledge of the Truth of Divinity, hitherto existing in an abstract and unknown form, that has been made intelligible and brought within the reach of all by the means of words and their component units known as the letters or the alphabets of the language, which are manifestations of the primordial sound containing that knowledge, and the further arrangement of such words into phrases, sentences and verses conforming to different forms of classical composition, so that they convey the correct meaning that is intended (and not distort the original knowledge and put it out of context), to give a definitive body and form to the original knowledge that was transcendental and too sublime and subtle to be accessed directly by anyone without these aforesaid aids.

I (Tulsidas) pay my deepest reverence and greatest obeisance to these two deities, Saraswati and Ganesh, because it is by their grace and magnanimity that the

truthful knowledge of the divine has now been made known and intelligible by the means of the ‘spoken word’ as well as the ‘written word’, over which these two deities preside, for the general good of the world (and their grace has made it possible for me to write the Holy Book titled Ram Charit Manas). (Shloka line nos. 1-2)

[Note—The great saintly poet Goswami Tulsidas was about to pen his magnum opus called ‘Ram Charit Manas’. It was to be an unmatched classic in the realm of devotional literature ever written in the vernacular, a book which would be unique and an exceptional exposition on the profound principles of spiritualism and metaphysics explained by means of the traditional ‘story telling method’, which would make such principles easily comprehensible to one and all.

It was done with the singular noble objective of opening the door to the knowledge of the truth of the divine, a door to the fountain of spiritual nectar that was to be thrown wide open for the benefit of even the humblest and the most ordinary of persons who do not have the wherewithal to access traditional scriptures because of many factors, one of them being the barrier of the language, and the other being the profundity and density of their discourses that scared away the ordinary person who found himself out of his wits to come to grasp with them.

Thus, before he started writing and putting his pen to paper, Tulsidas gives his due respects to Goddess Saraswati, the goddess of speech, and thanks her, because it was by her grace and blessings that this great poet ‘heard’ the story of Ram Charit Manas from his Guru (teacher) when the latter ‘narrated’ it to him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line nos. 1-2 of Doha no. 30-a, and line no. 1 of the next Doha no. 30-b.}

As is obvious, to narrate anything, the faculty of ‘speech’ is needed; this faculty is the vital bridge that helps the body of knowledge to be transmitted from the teacher to the disciple. Saraswati presides over this means of transmission, the faculty of ‘speech’; hence Tulsidas thanks her and expresses his gratitude to her for entitling and enabling him to access this source of sublime nectar of spiritual bliss and beatitude, which he now wishes to pass on to others for all to benefit from it, for such fountains of pristine pure spiritual nectar should be made available to all, and never kept under wraps selfishly.

Now, it’s alright to have great knowledge, to be exceptionally enlightened and wise, and become an expert in all spheres of spiritual, metaphysical and theological gnosis, but say, what use is this knowledge if it remains locked up and sequestered in the secret confines of the mind of the wise teacher if it is not revealed by transmitting it to his disciple or student, so that the latter, and through him the later generations, can benefit from it?

It would be like the case of letting an oil lamp burn inside a cupboard, with its door closed. By-and-by, when the oil runs out, the light of the lamp would go out on its own, only to leave dark soot blackening the inside the walls of the cupboard, with no good done to the outside. Had the doors of the cupboard been open while the lamp burnt with its brilliant light, there would have been no soot accumulating inside the cupboard to blacken its walls, and at the same time its light would have given so many others the opportunity to do some constructive work in its illumination while the lamp burnt brightly.

So is the case with knowledge: a wise teacher is one who shares the knowledge he possesses with others, and not let it perish with him when he dies. Therefore, Tulsidas first pays his respects to Goddess Saraswati to make this happen; he thanks her to enable his teacher to transmit the divine knowledge of Lord Ram to

him through the means of the story of Ram Charit Manas that his teacher had narrated to him, and then he prays to the goddess to bless him so that he can himself transmit the same knowledge, without committing errors of omissions and commissions, to the next generation, and from then onwards to all the future generations.

Knowledge is transmitted by two primary methods: the ‘oral word’ and the ‘written word’. Knowledge that is transmitted by the oral method has its own limitations; it is limited to the teacher and the student; the words through which the knowledge is transmitted by the teacher can be misheard or not heard at all by the student, so that when later on in life the student himself becomes a teacher one day, the original knowledge which his own teacher gave him gets distorted when it is transmitted to this next generation of students, simply because the new teacher had inadvertently misheard or had missed hearing an important component of the knowledge while his teacher was teaching it to him earlier. The obvious consequence of this is that the primary form of the pristine pure body of knowledge gets diluted and polluted and corrupted, albeit inadvertently and unintentionally, but nonetheless defiled and lost of its pristine purity for the future generations, with no one to correct it later on as the source of this knowledge, the first teacher, is dead and gone.

Herein comes the importance of the ‘written word’: once the body of knowledge is written down, it takes on a definite, concrete form; the ideas intended to be conveyed during the transmission of this knowledge take a form of certainty as they are passed on from generation to generation without getting distorted and confused. At the most, the written word can be interpreted and explained by different teachers in different ways, but the original is still retained in its pristine pure form which any earnest seeker of Truth can rely on if he is not satisfied by what others interpret it to mean, in which case he has the option of studying the original Text himself to arrive at the Truth in a conscious manner.

So the written word is the second step, and the more robust one, in the transmission process of the Knowledge of the Divine. Lord Ganesh is the deity who presides over this aspect of transmission of knowledge—the ‘written word’. Lord Ganesh is invoked here by Tulsidas to bless him so that all his hurdles in writing the divine story of Lord Ram in the form of Ram Charit Manas are removed; that he can put into words what he wishes to say with respect to the glories of Lord Ram in the best possible way by employing proper words, and then playing around skillfully with such words as poets are adept at doing so as to finally craft a beautiful story that would be exceptionally charming, as to enthrall the mind and captivate the heart of one and all in this world who would either read it, preach it, recite it or sing it.

Tulsidas prays to Lord Ganesh to help and guide him along in this holy endeavour, in choosing the correct words, arranging them in the correct order, and in general aiding him to compose this great Holy Book dedicated to Lord Ram exactly as it ought to be, without committing any error of commission and omission.

To wit, the wise poet Tulsidas seeks the blessings of both Saraswati and Ganesh to ensure that no hurdles come to interfere with his pious enterprise, as he is about to do something extremely profound that is beyond his personal ability to do, for he finds himself incompetent for it if he is not helped in this holy enterprise by the divine forces of Nature, represented by these two deities who always help noble and virtuous souls in their pious exercises.

Further, Tulsidas hopes that the future generations would benefit spiritually from the divine story of Lord Ram that he is sitting down to write. So he prays first to goddess Saraswati to bless him so that the book Ram Charit Manas would be written in such a manner as to enable teachers of future generations to transmit the divine

knowledge it contains flawlessly to their students when they preach it, as well as when the great poets, bards and minstrels would sing the divine glories of Lord Ram in a charming manner, employing melodious tunes and soulful terms to captivate the mind and the heart of their audience for all times and generations to come. And then Tulsidas prays to Lord Ganesh in the same breath to bless him so that he can write in an excellent way, flawlessly and smoothly like the flow of the current of the river that no one can stop, and that carries along with it all that comes in its way, especially because it is a divine story of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, whom even Lord Ganesh, as well as his father Lord Shiva, revere so much.

That said, we come to the next important point worthy of paying attention in these verses. It is said here that Tulsidas has paid his obeisance to the ‘word, letters, phrases and verses along with the meaning they convey’ that form the basis of Ram Charit Manas, even before he mentions goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh for the purpose of expressing his obeisance.

Well, the reason for doing it is simple and obvious: The knowledge of the divine, and the spiritual bliss that is derived by this knowledge, is made possible only when that knowledge, which primarily is extremely subtle, sublime and transcendental, as well as too abstract for the common mind, is transmuted into a form that is more easily accessible and intelligible, a form that can be easily understood, a form that can be conveyed by a person who has this knowledge to someone who wishes to have it, and in a manner that can be easily comprehended and grasped by the mind of the recipient.

And to enable this to happen, to enable transmission of divine transcendental knowledge and spiritual truths from the mind of the wise man to the mind of the seeker, the medium of the word is needed. These words must be able to convey the right meaning and the correct idea that are intended to be conveyed, and not otherwise by mixing it all up, for then the whole purpose of the exercise would be defeated.

To wit, the choice of the correct word, and the way these words are arranged and presented, are vital elements in truthful transmission of knowledge, whether the divine or the secular. If the word is so important, the letters that form the building blocks of such words, are obviously equally important, for without the letter of the alphabet there is no word in any language, and without the word, knowledge can not be transmitted.

The selection of the ‘correct word’ is very crucial so that it can convey the ‘correct meaning’. At the same time, a word may mean different things in different contexts; sometimes a single word encompasses a wide swathe of emotions, and the same word used in different contexts and settings give different hues of ideas about its background. So therefore, Tulsidas requests goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh to help him in the correct choice of words, and then arrangements of these words in verses so that the ideas and messages intended to be conveyed by him are done in the correct way, without getting distorted and lost in the maze.

The reader is requested to see note no. (4) and no. (5) that have been appended to verse nos. 3-4 herein below for more elaboration on the importance of the concept of the word and verses.]

भवानीशङ्करौ वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणौ । ३ ॥

याज्ञ्यां विना न पश्यन्ति सिद्धाः स्वान्तःस्थमीश्वरम् ॥ ४ ॥

bhavānī-śaṅkarau vandē śrad'dhā-viśvāsa-rūpiṇau. 3.

yābhyām vinā na paśyanti sid'dhāḥ svāntahstham-iśvaram. 4.

I (Tulsidas) pay my respects to Goddess Bhavani and Lord Shiva (the divine couple, Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Bhavani, also known as Uma and Parvati) who are embodiments of the virtues of faith, belief, conviction and reverence, for without their grace and blessings even the greatest of mystics and ascetics are unable to perceive the presence of the Ishwar (the Supreme Being) in their own hearts (in a subtle form as their Atma, which is their true self and pure consciousness that is an embodiment of bliss and happiness). (Shloka line nos. 3-4)

[Note—(1) Tulsidas pays his obeisance to Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani, the divine consort of Shiva, because Shiva is the most enlightened of the gods, for which reason he is honoured by the epithet of ‘Mahadeva’, the Great God. Lord Shiva is also the greatest devotee of Lord Ram, and without worship of Shiva it is not possible to please Lord Ram as the Lord has himself affirmed¹; Lord Shiva constantly meditates on the holy name of Lord Ram and remains engrossed in it²; it is Lord Shiva in whose Mana (heart and mind) the divine story of Lord Ram was first revealed, a fact that lent the story the name of ‘Ram Charit Manas’—i.e. the story describing the deeds done by Lord Ram as revealed in the Mana of Lord Shiva; it is Lord Shiva who is the first teacher of the divine story of Lord Ram because he had first preached it to his wife Uma³.

{¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 2; Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Later on in our reading of the Ram Charit Manas we shall come across a verse where Tulsidas has paid his due respects to Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani simultaneously, treating Lord Shiva as his eternal Guru, and the divine couple as his father and mother respectively. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 15.}

(2) Since Lord Shiva was the Progenitor and the Father of the divine story of Lord Ram that came to be known as Ram Charit Manas, because it was in his Mana that the story was first revealed, it is proper and fit to pay due reverence to him first before moving ahead with the narration of the same story, to honour and remember Lord Shiva’s singular contribution towards the spiritual goal of making the divine story of Lord Ram available to one and all in this world.

It is also necessary in order to invoke the blessings of Lord Ram himself, because without worshipping Lord Shiva one cannot please Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.}

The third reason is that Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani are the parents of Lord Ganesh who has been shown due respect in the previous verse no. 2. So it

becomes necessary to honour Ganesh's parents, Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati, to avoid displeasing him.

Lord Shiva is the patron deity of ascetics and mystics. He is the most enlightened, the wisest and a self-realised deity. Lord Shiva remains in a perpetual mode of bliss and ecstasy that is derived by meditating upon Lord Ram, as it enables him to focus his attention on his Atma, which is his pure self and the cosmic consciousness that resides within his own heart. This focus on the pure self that is cosmic consciousness personified gives Shiva a sense of bliss and ecstasy as it helps him to establish a direct communion with the Supreme Consciousness represented by Lord Ram.

To wit, if there is anyone who has truly understood and realized Lord Ram and has known the truth about him, it is Lord Shiva. So obviously he deserves his due worship and honour on this single count itself.

As for his consort, goddess Bhavani, she deserved praise as it was she who was first blessed with the good fortune of hearing the story of Ram Charit Manas directly from Lord Shiva. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Lord Shiva had abiding faith in the divinity of Lord Ram, and there are numerous instances in Ram Charit Manas that reiterate it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chand line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 111—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119.}

This makes Lord Shiva the best teacher of Ram Charit Manas, one who is fully competent and absolutely capable to teach the profound spiritual secrets of this holy story, and expound on the divinity of Lord Ram like no one else.

Lord Shiva, hence, is the patron deity of Ram Charit Manas, whose blessings must be sought if one were to properly and correctly understand the story of Lord Ram, not only the physical part of it, but also to comprehend the great spiritual and metaphysical messages that it contains in general, as well as about the divinity of Lord Ram in particular. Lord Shiva, in this sense, occupies the same importance as Saraswati has for being the patron goddess of speech and expression, and Ganesh for being the patron god of writing and the written word—for without the blessings of them all, one would miss the essence of the nectar that is being made available to him.

But what about Lord Shiva's consort goddess Bhavani, also known as Uma or Parvati; why is she being praised here alongside Lord Shiva? This is a very interesting question that needs to be addressed.

As we progress with the reading of our story of Ram Charit Manas we shall discover, by-and-by, that Lord Shiva's consort had developed serious doubts about the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram in spite of the fact that she had accompanied her husband, Lord Shiva, when the latter had gone to the hermitage of sage Agastya where a lot of time was spent discussing the story of Lord Ram and its divine aspects, for she thought that Lord Ram was a mere human prince sent to the forest by his family due to some internal squabbling, and in the forest his wife Sita was abducted by a demon, so he was wondering here and there frantically searching for her. Lord Shiva tried his best to dissuade her from falling in the trap of delusions and doubting the holiness and divinity of Lord Ram, for what the latter seems to be doing was a part of the greater scheme that the Supreme Being had himself devised as a device to get rid of the evil forces of the world represented by the demons led by Ravana, and to restore peace, harmony and goodness in the world, so that the creatures of the Lord's

creation, who had been tyrannized by the cruel forces symbolized by the demons, can at last live in peace and harmony.

But unfortunately, as was the fiat of fate, Shiva's consort would not pay heed to what her learned husband advised; perhaps the Supreme Lord had wished it to be so for the larger good of the world and mankind, for had Parvati not disbelieved Lord Shiva and continue with her stubbornness, this wonderful ambrosia in the form of the story of Ram Charit Manas, a story that has the inherent ability of granting spiritual bliss, joy and beatitude to those who read it, recite it, hear it or sing it, would never have been made available to us, because Lord Shiva eventually took pity for his consort and agreed to tell the story of Lord Ram to her in a way that would remove her doubts and give her peace of mind and heart.

It so happened that once she approached him again with her doubts vis-à-vis Lord Ram and his worldly deeds that had stumped her and caused so much bewilderment to her since long so much so that she had lost her peace of mind, requesting Lord Shiva to remove them by retelling the story of Lord Ram, that the Lord had conceptualized in his mind earlier, in detail to her, explaining all its intricacies, and expounding on its profound metaphysical and spiritual aspects.

Lord Shiva therefore felt obliged to sit down and calmly preach the story of Ram Charit Manas to her, while she listened in rapt attention, this time shunning her stubborn attitude of incredulity, and becoming ready to accept the Truth. So by-and-by the whole story of Lord Ram, that was hitherto confined in the Mana (heart and mind) of Lord Shiva, was revealed to Parvati, and once this great river that grants spiritual fulfillment and eternal bliss leading to attainment of ecstasy was come to be known to the world in the form of Ram Charit Manas, a divine mission of Lord Shiva was fulfilled too without his being aware of it—for now the Lord realized that his consort's delusions was a blessing in disguise, because in the process of enlightening her about the truth of Lord Ram, a symbolic holy river in the form of the eternal story of Lord Ram had been allowed to flow out from the confines of his Mana and spread out over the whole world to provide the tormented souls of all its creatures with a means that would grant them succour and solace, and help them enjoy spiritual peace, bliss and beatitude, for all times to come.

Towards this end, as we now realize, we are obliged to Lord Shiva's consort Parvati as well as Lord Shiva himself, for it was on her insistence that Shiva was obliged to discourse on the holy story of Ram Charit Manas in detail, and it was this path that the symbolic river in the form of this story of Lord Ram took to descend down to us in the way we know it today, in order to enable even the common man to access the sweetness of spiritual bliss and ecstasy that comes through hearing, reading, reciting and singing of this divine story just like the way a thirsty man with a parched throat finds unbound joy and experiences ecstasy when he finds a source of cool, sweet, nectar-like water in an oasis in a desert at a time when he yearns for it like never before.

And therefore we are obliged to pay our obeisance to goddess Bhavani at the same time as Lord Shiva because it is due to them both that we have had access to this divine and holy story of Lord Ram in the form of 'Ram Charit Manas'—to Shiva because he was the chosen Lord in whose pure mind and heart this divine story was first revealed¹, and also because he selflessly revealed it for the general good of the world², and to his consort Bhavani for diligently pursuing her quest for Truth and striving to remove her doubts about Lord Ram and his divinity by insisting with Lord Shiva to tell her the story of Ram Charit Manas in detail³.

{¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-13 that precede Doha no. 35.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 30.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 47; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 54; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 113; (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 114—Doha no. 115; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 130.}

(3) Let us examine a bit more the contribution that Lord Shiva made in the spreading of the divine story of Lord Ram. We shall take a simple day-to-day example to understand it.

Suppose we have pure gold in a molten form. One day an expert goldsmith has an inspiration, and he crafts a wonderful piece of ornament or any other decorative piece of item such as a statue from it. This product enhances the value of pure gold manifold times; the product is so singularly beautiful and charming and appealing to the senses that it begins to attract lovers of rare artifacts as well as connoisseurs of art. To wit, this finished product has brought to the fore the intrinsic beauty and value of the metal known as ‘gold’ that were hitherto hidden from view and unknown to the common man.

The goldsmith, who had the first inspiration to create a wonderful piece of ornament from molten gold, contemplated for some time as to what shape he would like the product to have. He finalizes in his mind the design of the product that he plans to produce for the world, and begins to love it in his own heart. Everything was fine and going smooth, but a hurdle came along. He needed a way or a medium to put into practice the design of the golden ornament that he visualized in his mind; he puts his heart into finding a solution to this problem, and wonders how the molten gold can now be given the shape that he has designed in his mind, so that what he envisages in his Mana (mind and heart) can be actually reproduced to perfection in the ornament that he plans to create, so that it is a perfect reflection of what he had conceived in his mind.

At this point he takes the help of a mould, a cast in which pours the molten gold, so that when the metal cools down and firms up, the invisible form of the ornament he had designed in his mind finally takes a tangible, visible form. Then he polishes it and gives it a final shape, ready for display. The goldsmith wishes to be sure that his life-time effort is perfect in every respect, exactly as he had wished it to be; so he quietly listens while experts make their own commentaries about this ornament. This aspect has been elaborately explained in note no. (4) herein below.

Now, as is the way of this world, many other craftsmen take a cue from the first goldsmith and mould their own pieces of jewelry and other decorative items from molten gold. Though all these products are basically gold and nothing but gold, and all of them are beautiful and charming in their own individual rights, yet it may so happen that the one originally created by the first goldsmith is exceptional, for its beauty and charm are phenomenal and beyond measure, something that none of the other products of gold created by other craftsmen could duplicate.

From this metaphor of the ‘golden ornament moulded from molten gold’, we can easily understand the role of Lord Shiva, the importance of the words and the verses as narrated in the previous verse nos. 1-2, and the contribution of all other

preachers and teachers of the divine story of Lord Ram, first in the revelation of this story, and then in its manifold versions as it spread in all the corners of the world in due course of time.

Here, the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram is like the pure molten gold that filled the Mana of Lord Shiva. The presence of Lord Ram in Shiva's heart gave the latter great bliss and made him ecstatic. Then Shiva, being a generous God, was inspired to be magnanimous and charitable by sharing this priceless knowledge of the Divinity with the world, instead of keeping it under lock in his own Mana, for it would be selfishness on his part to keep it secret. But how would he do it; how would he reveal the story of Lord Ram to others? For this revelation, Lord Shiva needed a medium, and since the knowledge of the divine that was to be transmitted was exceptionally abstract, sublime and subtle, he needed a viable medium that would help his efforts bear fruits. Further, Lord Shiva's aim was to benefit the whole world by the revelation of the story of Lord Ram, so he needed a medium suited to this gross material world, where access to that which is sublime and subtle is too difficult, if not impossible.

So here Lord Shiva took the help of sound waves to transmit to others the knowledge of the Divinity, the story of Lord Ram and his holiness that was enshrined in his mind and heart. As has been pointed out herein above, this world needed a tangible method to make use of such sound waves, and so Lord Shiva devised a device of using a tangible form of sound waves in the form of letters and their meaningful arrangements in the form of words and verses to transmit the desired knowledge that was primarily transcendental.

To wit, the words and phrases became the 'mould' that Lord Shiva used to cast and give shape to the vast repository of spiritual transcendental knowledge that was present in his lake-like heart filled with the nectar of spiritual bliss and beatitude, which in our example is the priceless 'molten gold' in its purest form filling a secret chamber hitherto unknown to and not accessed by anyone.

The word and phrases shaped the divine transcendental knowledge that Lord Shiva had, and which he desired to reveal, to give it a final form, a specific format known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', just like the molten gold, which had no particular shape in the beginning, once poured into the mould, took a definite form known as the 'ornament' as envisioned by the goldsmith.

Then, once the world came to know about the existence of a lake consisting of an endless supply of molten gold, say, who would not like to have his share of such a priceless treasure? Naturally, many other prospectors would go to explore this reservoir of gold. That is also what happened with the story of Lord Ram: many teachers and preachers down the ages used their own skills to mould the same story of Lord Ram that Lord Shiva had conceptualized first in accordance with their own skills and interpretations of it, thereby creating myriads of variations of the Ramayana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14; (ii) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 120-b; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122.}

(4) As we have observed in the beginning of this discussion, the creation of the original creator, i.e. Lord Shiva and his creation 'Ram Charit Manas', remained a singular masterpiece of spiritualism and its many forms with no parallel in this world. Since he wished to be sure that the divine and holy story of his revered deity Lord Ram remained pristine pure, and unadulterated by way of interpolations and distortions, as he had first conceptualized it in his Mana, Shiva decided to test it by

visiting hermitages of great sages to personally hear it being told and preached. This explains why Lord Shiva, after first revealing the story of Ram Charit Manas to his consort Uma¹, had gone to hear it being preached by sage Kaagbhusund at his hermitage², and once again to hear it from sage Agastya³.

{¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48.}

These three planes at which the story of Ram Charit Manas was revealed—first by Lord Shiva directly to Uma, then by Kaagbhusund to Garuda, and then by sage Agastya to Shiva himself—are very interesting in themselves, as they corroborate our observation that the divine knowledge originating in the Mana of Lord Shiva was transmitted by way of sound waves at different levels. Well, let us see how.

Sound travels in waves, and they have frequencies; medium as well as the receiver of sound also decide which sound is heard and which is not. For instance, all forms of sounds are not audible by us humans; there are certain frequencies that we are unable to hear but a bird can pick it up, say to communicate with each other. Similarly, we also can't hear the radio waves, but a radio receiver does, and when the same receiver converts the incoming sound in a way that suits our ears, we hear the 'radio speak in our tongue'!

The first revelation of the story of Lord Ram was done by Lord Shiva in the heaven to his consort goddess Parvati or Uma. This was done at a very subtle level, where the primary form of sound must have been employed, such as the one that is used by gods in heaven. Lord Shiva realized that this will not do; this communication was limited to him and his wife, what about others? They will not benefit from this holy story's revelation.

So then he told this story to a saint named Kaagbhusund who was in the form of a crow. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.} The crow flies in the air, it represents that middle level of existence that falls between the subtlest in heaven and the grossest in this mortal world symbolized by life on earth. Higher up in the sky there is great calmness and no pollution from other forms of sound waves that clutter the immediate environs of the earth. Since a bird can fly, it represents a midway state of existence of consciousness that is higher than the gross, but lower than the subtlest. Birds don't use a refined language consisting of words and sentences which we humans use to communicate; they do so by means of simple sounds, unique to a species of bird. But nevertheless, the sound of birds is audible to us humans, whereas the sound in which gods communicate is inaudible. So therefore, Lord Shiva employed a grosser form of sound wave, something like a series of sounds that birds use to speak with each other, to tell the story of Lord Ram to Kaagbhusund. Once Shiva went to the hermitage of Kaagbhusund to hear him preach the story of Lord Ram to other birds, and the Lord was satisfied as to its purity and the original form being retained, which is why he sent Garuda to hear the same story from Kaagbhusund. It's very obvious that Shiva wouldn't have sent Garuda to Kaagbhusund if he was not satisfied with the latter's preaching of Ram Charit Manas. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 60—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

Meanwhile, the story of Ram Charit Manas began to spread in the world. How did it happen: of course by means of the spoken word. When a great sage named

Yagyawalkya learned that the saintly bird Kaagbhusund has been blessed by Lord Shiva with this divine story, and that Shiva was satisfied in the way the saintly crow preached it, he decided to go and hear it himself. Once fully enlightened about the holy story, Yagyawalkya in his turn told it to sage Bharadwaj, and from him it spread to others when the story was preached in large religious congregations. By-and-by, this story was heard by Tulsidas' Guru, from whom this our great saint Tulsidas got to know it, and then decided to unlock the door to this eternal source of spiritual nectar by writing the book "Ram Charit Manas" which we are about to read now. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.}

Now, when Lord Shiva came to know about its widespread fame and acclaim, he decided to ascertain for himself if the divine story of Lord Ram which he had first told Uma still retains its pristine purity and holiness after it has reached the human tongue, he decided to visit the hermitage of sage Agastya, a 'human being', to hear it personally, and the Lord was fully contented with what he heard. So Lord Shiva blessed sage Agastya and the two shared many intricate details pertaining to Lord Ram, and other spiritual and metaphysical matters. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no.48.}

(5) Another point to note is this: Since Lord Shiva employed the medium of 'words' and 'their meaningful arrangements as verses' to transmit the divine knowledge of Lord Ram by revealing it in the form of the story of Ram Charit Manas, and it would not have been possible to do so without the aid of words and verses, the learned poet Tulsidas has first honoured the 'words' and the 'meaningful phrases or verses formed from these words' in the previous verse nos. 1-2 before honouring Lord Shiva himself in the present verse no. 3—because the proper words as well as the verses with the correct meaning had enabled Lord Shiva to fulfill his wish to preach the holy story of Lord Ram to the world exactly in the pure form he had envisioned to do, which he wouldn't have been able to do without such an aid.

To wit, the words and verses, the medium by which the knowledge of the divine story of Lord Ram was transmitted in the form of Ram Charit Manas, deserve precedence and the first place in the list of honours bestowed on those who have contributed to its revelation.]

वन्दे बोधमयं नित्यं गुरुं शङ्कररूपिणम् । ५ ॥

यमाश्रितो हि वक्रोऽपि चन्द्रः सर्वत्र वन्द्यते ॥ ६ ॥

vandē bōdhamayaṁ nityaṁ guruṁ śaṅkara-rūpiṇam. 5.
yamāśritō hi vakrō 'pi candraḥ sarvatra vandyatē. 6.

I bow my head and pay my respects to the Guru (teacher, preceptor and guide) who is an embodiment of eternal wisdom, enlightenment and gnosis like Lord Shiva is¹, for the Lord is so gracious that even the crooked moon (the crescent moon) finds its glory and fame when it is used as an ornament to adorn the lock of hairs on the head of Lord Shiva². (Shloka line nos. 5-6)

[Note—¹Here, the teacher or the preacher, who teaches or preaches the profound metaphysical truths pertaining to the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram as expounded

in the Upanishads in the course of narrating and explaining the intricacies of the story of Ram Charit Manas, is being honoured.

A learned teacher plays a crucial role in the process of transmission of knowledge in its correct and pure form, without distortions and interpolations. The wise teacher deserves honour and respect because without him the vast repository of knowledge of any kind, whether secular or divine, would remain locked up at its source, without benefiting anybody, much like the holy river Ganges which would have served no purpose if it was left locked up in the higher reaches of the Himalayas and not brought down to the plains to irrigate the land and make it productive, besides giving the population a great source of sweet water, for this helped great civilizations to thrive on its banks.

The learned and wise Guru occupies a stature similar to that of Lord Shiva, because like Shiva who is an embodiment of all virtues and wisdom, who is enlightened and self-realised, and who had revealed the divine secrets of Lord Ram by narrating and explaining the subtle meaning of the story of Ram Charit Manas to his consort Parvati, the Guru too carries out the same function in relation to his disciple or student. The disciple may not be aware of anything pertaining to Lord Ram and his divinity, and though he might have read or heard the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the book Ram Charit Manas, but it might be limited to just that—one other story that he heard or read like many others in life. In all probabilities, he may have missed the profound spiritual messages and remain oblivious of the great spiritual secrets that are contained in Ram Charit Manas, because they need a wise teacher to bring them to the fore, to explain them in a simple and comprehensible language. So herein comes the importance of the Guru and the crucial role he plays in dissemination of knowledge, and it is this reason why a Guru is being honoured in verse no. 5.

²The next point to note is the metaphor of the crescent moon that has been cited here in verse no. 6. What does it signify in the context being discussed? Well, let us see.

The crescent moon has lost its shine and beauty; it is of no use for the poet describing the beauty of Nature. But when the same ‘crooked’, or the crescent moon, is put by Lord Shiva on his forehead as an ornament to adorn the thick lock of hairs that form a crown on his head, the same deformed moon, which is shorn of its shine and beauty, becomes praise-worthy and looks adorable. Likewise, the disciple achieves his glory and fame by coming in contact with a wise and learned Guru, even though the disciple may have had many inherent faults inside him. The disciple gets respect by the virtue of his communion and association with a pious and holy Guru, because in due course of time the latter is bound to leave his lasting good impression on the former, just like being associated with Lord Shiva even the crooked moon gets its honour.

Earlier in verse no. 3 and the note added to explain it, we have seen how goddess Bhavani became honourable although in the beginning she had been overcome with delusions and doubted the divinity of Lord Ram in spite of her learned husband trying his best to convince her of Lord Ram’s holiness. Here she represents that ‘crooked moon’ which is out of shape and devoid of its shine, which no one would like to praise.

Normally she did not deserve any respect, but eventually she got it. It was because of her association with Lord Shiva that Bhavani became honourable in due course of time when she finally regained her exalted stature after being convinced of the divinity of Lord Ram as Lord Shiva had patiently preached the story of Ram Charit Manas to her. Likewise, by remaining in close proximity with a learned Guru,

even the dullest of disciple would one day imbibe some of the holiness that his Guru represents just like the case when by constantly living in a garden in the proximity of flowers, a gardener and his clothes too begin to smell pleasant to others.

These two verses are in praise of the learned and wise Guru, for the latter is a bridge between the darkness of ignorance and the light of knowledge.]

सीतारामगुणग्रामपुण्यारण्यविहारिणौ । ७ ॥

वन्दे विशुद्धविज्ञानौ कवीश्वरकपीश्वरौ ॥ ८ ॥

sītārāma-guṇagrāma-puṇyāraṇya-vihāriṇau. 7.

vandē viśud'dha-vijñānau kavīśvara-kapīśvarau. 8.

I (Tulsidas) bow my head and pay deep obeisance to the most exalted and learned Poet (a reference to sage Valmiki, the ancient bard who was the first to have penned the story of the Ramayana)¹ as well as to the most exalted and enlightened Lord of Kapis (a clear reference to Hanuman)², both of whom are embodiments of pure wisdom and are well-versed in the highest form of gnosis, who live in and move around in a symbolic forest represented by the countless divine virtues and glories of Lord Ram, by meditating upon the Lord and contemplating on the various spiritual interpretations of the Lord's divine story. (Shloka line nos. 7-8)

[Note—¹It is not specifically mentioned here which exalted and learned Poet the author of Ram Charit Manas refers to, but in all probability it is sage Valmiki, the first sage who had actually 'written' the story of Lord Ram in the form of the Ramayana. All other sages, such as Kaagbhusund, Yagyawalkya, Bharadwaj and Agastya mentioned in the Ram Charit Manas itself, had been preaching this holy story by the 'oral method'—i.e. in the form of discourses given during regular or special sessions held to narrate the story of Ram Charit Manas.

Since our own narrator, Goswami Tulsidas, is about to 'write' the same story, he decides to pay his due respects to the ancient sage Valmiki who had done the same thing for the first time. In a sense, sage Valmiki is the Father of the written version of the story of Lord Ram. Later on in the story of Ram Charit Manas, a specific verse is dedicated to paying respects to sage Valmiki. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no.14.}

Not only Valmiki, but Tulsidas has offered his respects to all the many poets and bards who have ever narrated the story of Lord Ram down the ages in any form they thought fit. He bows his head to all such bards of the past ages as well as those who will come in the future. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-11 that precede Doha no. 14.}

What is the difference between Valmiki's story and Tulsidas' story of Lord Ram? For one, Valmiki wrote it in Sanskrit, a language of the scholarly and educated class, while Tulsidas wrote it in the Vernacular, the language of the masses. Obviously, the latter version was embraced by even the lowly and the common man, fulfilling the main objective of Lord Shiva: which was, that this holy story should reach the masses and become a source of spiritual bliss and deliverance of the ordinary creature. That is why Tulsidas has named his narration 'Ram Charit Manas', because it is meant to fulfill Shiva's wish.

This is why Tulsidas has used simple, day-to-day language in his narration, and yet the narrative contains profound Truths pertaining to theology, metaphysics and spiritualism, which makes it a unique narrative.

Secondly, the Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas lays great stress on the virtue of 'Bhakti', i.e. devotion for Lord God, as a simple means to attain spiritual bliss and beatitude, as well as emancipation and salvation of the soul. This is also why Tulsidas invokes Lord Hanuman in this verse, because the latter is an embodiment of the virtue of Bhakti. Hence, Hanuman's blessings are needed to succeed in actually reaping a spiritual reward and benefiting by reading or hearing the story of Ram Charit Manas because Hanuman would bless the reader or the listener with the virtue of 'Bhakti for Lord Ram' after enabling him to be fully enlightened about the divinity and holiness of the Lord.

We won't fail to note here that due respects are being paid to all exalted beings concerned, starting from the most subtle and the high, and gradually coming down the steps of the hierarchy. So, first goddess Saraswati and Lord Ganesh were offered worship (verse nos. 1-2), then Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani (verse nos. 3-4), then the learned Guru (verse nos. 5-6), and now the illustrious Bard or Poet and Lord Hanuman.

²Hanuman is honoured by Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas elsewhere also for his ability to destroy all sorts of evil tendencies by reducing them to ashes like a fire destroys a forest; Hanuman is also an embodiment of the highest form of wisdom and enlightenment; even Lord Ram has lauded him and praised his glories; and the Lord resides in Hanuman's heart as a revered deity. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 17 along with Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes it.}

An interesting question arises here regarding Hanuman, the Lord of the Monkeys "kapīśvarau", in the context of the present verse. Why is he equated with the great Poet or the Bard who penned the story of the Ramayana, instead of dedicating a separate verse to him, or even putting him one verse ahead of the Bard? Well, there are two reasons for it: One is that both Hanuman and Valmiki were contemporaries; they both lived at the same time when Lord Ram lived on the earth. Lord Ram had visited Valmiki's hermitage in the same trip to the forest when he met Hanuman. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124; (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.}

The second reason is that both sage Valmiki and Hanuman had preached Bhakti for Lord Ram as a means of spiritual attainment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 132 (with respect to Valmiki); and (ii) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8; Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it (with respect to Hanuman).}]

उद्भवस्थितिसंहारकारिणीं क्लेशहारिणीम् । ९ ॥

सर्वश्रेयस्करिं सीतां नतोऽहं रामवल्लभाम् ॥ १० ॥

udbhava-sthiti-sanhāra-kāriṇīm-ṣṭhalēśa-hāriṇīm. 9.

sarva-śrēyaskarīm sītām natō 'ham rāma-vallabhām. 10.

I honour and pay my obeisance to Sita who is very dear to Lord Ram (as his beloved consort). She is the Mother Goddess representing the cosmic Shakti (the dynamic cosmic energy) that is responsible for the origin (creation) of this universe, as well as its sustenance and final conclusion. She is the divine goddess who eliminates all miseries and torments of the creature; and she is the one who looks after well-being and good of all in this creation. (Shloka line nos. 9-10)

[Note—A very similar verse is found in Atharva Veda's Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse no. 3 in praise of Sita.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 18 where also Sita has been praised and offered obeisance.

From the perspective of the Upanishads, Sita was a manifestation of the cosmic Shakti, i.e. the cosmic powers that control all aspects of creation, from its beginning, through its sustenance, till its end. These dynamic powers are visualized in the form of a Goddess, known as the 'Mother' Goddess because all other entities in this creation owe their origin to this single force of Nature.

Lord Ram in his primary form is the Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, and Sita in her primary form is the dynamic powers of this Brahm. Brahm does anything by employing this power, and therefore, if we say that Brahm is the Supreme Father of this creation, then obviously Sita, representing Brahm's Shakti, is the Supreme Mother.

When Parvati once went to test Lord Ram's divinity, she saw a magical scene, that wherever she glanced she would see Lord Ram and Sita on a vast canvas of cosmic proportions, with myriad gods and goddesses serving them. This had convinced Parvati that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human prince she had thought him to be, but indeed the Supreme Being as Lord Shiva had said. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 56.}]

यन्मायावशवर्ति विश्वमखिलं ब्रह्मादिदेवासुरा यत्सत्त्वादमृषैव भाति सकलं रज्जौ
यथाहेर्भ्रमः । ११ ॥

यत्पादप्लवमेकमेव हि भवाञ्जोधेस्तितीर्षावतां वन्देऽहं तमशेषकारणपरं रामाख्यमीशं
हरिम् ॥ १२ ॥

yanmāyāvaśavartim viśvam-akhilam brahmādi-dēvāsura yatsatvād-amṛṣaiva
bhāti sakalam rajjau yathāhēr-bhramaḥ. 11.

yatpāda-plavamēkamēva hi bhavāmbhōdhēs-titirṣāvatām vandē 'ham
tamaśēṣakāraṇaparam rāmākhyamīśam harim. 12.

[In these two verses, the learned poet Tulsidas offers his greatest respect and deepest of reverence to Lord Ram who is actually the Lord of creation known as Lord Hari, another name for Lord Vishnu who represents the all-pervading, all-encompassing and the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, whom the Upanishads refer to as 'Brahm', the supreme cosmic Consciousness.

First we shall read the two verses together for ease of reading, and then paraphrase them separately for better understanding and analysis.]

I pay my respects to and worship the Supreme Being, the Supreme Lord of the creation whose name is Lord Ram, the Lord who transcends all reasons and causes for being himself, but who is the reason and cause of everything else that has come into being in this creation (i.e. he is beyond all comprehension and logic), who is almighty and all-able Lord of the universe, whose grace can eliminate all sorrows and miseries, and whose cosmic powers known as Maya (the exclusive cosmic powers of the Lord that is so illusive that it defies all understanding and is beyond logic and comprehension) holds its sway over the entire creation, controlling every aspect of it, for even the great Gods such as the creator Brahma as well as the mighty non-gods known as Asurs (i.e. the Demons) are under its influence, and it is due to its magical powers that the gross world becomes visible and appears to be true and real though the fact is otherwise, just like the case of a lifeless piece of rope creating a sense of morbid fear when a onlooker mistakes it for being a dangerous snake due to misunderstanding and error of perception.

Verily indeed, for those hoping to cross this vast and seemingly intractable ocean-like gross world of transmigration, where the creature is trapped in an endless cycle of birth and death, Lord Ram's holy feet that resemble the petals of the lotus flower, are like the buoy that help them float and get across it (and prevents them from drowning in this symbolic ocean full of turbulent waves and whirlpools). (Shloka line nos. 11-12)

{Now, let us paraphrase these two verses separately and see what they mean as follows:-

The Supreme Lord, under the sway of whose Maya (which refers to the exclusive cosmic powers of the Lord that is so illusive that it defies all understanding) the whole creation exists, including the greatest of gods such as the creator Brahma and all the other gods of all denominations, as well as the non-gods known as the Asurs, gives the impression of reality and life to this otherwise gross, mortal, lifeless, inane and illusionary world by pervading everywhere in it in a subtle and invisible form (as the all-pervading consciousness that makes the lifeless appear to have life in it) in the same way that one erroneously imagines that a length of lifeless rope is a live snake (because of one's delusions and error of judgment about its reality¹. (Chanda line no. 11)

For those (wise creatures) who wish to cross this vast and endless ocean of delusions and its manifestation symbolized by the gross mortal world of transmigration (with its endless whirlpools and waves representing the creature's endless numbers of births and deaths), for them Lord Hari's holy lotus like feet are like the proverbial buoy (by taking the help of which a person escapes the fear of getting drowned) that would help them cross this maze of delusions and its accompanying spiritual miseries.

The Supreme Lord Hari who is beyond all causes himself but at the same time is the cause of everything in existence, who is beyond all delusions himself but at the same time is the Lord of Maya, who can eliminate all sorrows, miseries, troubles and misfortunes (of the world and its creatures), and whose name is 'Ram (rām)'—I worship with the greatest respect and offer my deepest reverence to that Lord Ram

who is no one else but a manifestation of the almighty, the all-pervading and the Supreme Lord of creation known as Lord Hari².* (Chanda line no. 12)}

[Note—¹This verse praises the cosmic form of Lord Ram as ‘Brahm’, the supreme cosmic Consciousness that is the cause of everything in existence, from the grossest to the subtlest. This creation originates in Brahm, and at the end it merges in Brahm. Brahm, in the primary form as ‘consciousness’, is what lends life to this otherwise lifeless world. When we see life around us in this world, we think that the world is for real because, and neither imaginary nor false, because we can see it, feel it, hear its sounds, taste its multiple tastes of all hues, and enjoy its comforts and pleasures. But we forget that what we think to be a living world is because of the presence of ‘consciousness’ in it as well as inside our bodies, enabling the latter to perceive the former. If this primary element of ‘consciousness’ is removed, both the world as well as its perceiver would be dead. What makes the body of a creature alive is an invisible entity known as the ‘Atma’, which in its primary form is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Atma.

The existence of the cosmic Consciousness as the source of life in this world will be easily understood by a simple and common observation. A person while alive is a ‘living entity’ who sees, hears, tastes, feels and thinks, but what happens when the same person ‘dies’? His body is the same; it is right here before us, and the world around him is also the same. So what is the difference between a living being and a dead body? It is an invisible and subtle element that makes this difference—and it is known as the ‘Atma’, the ‘consciousness’ present in the body of the living being that is not present in the dead body. That is why when a person dies, we say ‘he has passed away’. Who has ‘passed away’; the physical body is lying before us, right before our eyes; it has gone nowhere. So surely the pronoun ‘he’ or ‘she’, referring to the true identity of a person, refers to something that is beyond the physical body; and that something is the pure cosmic ‘consciousness’ known as the Atma that resides in the gross body. As long as the Atma dwells in the body, the person is alive and the world matters for him; as soon as the Atma exits, nothing matters.

This is the ‘great delusion’ that is created by Maya. The ignorant creature thinks that the world is real, and so he remains indulgent in it: enjoying it or suffering from it. Likewise, he thinks that his body is his true identity, forgetting that it is his Atma which is his ‘true self’ and not the gross body, and so he is affected by all the external impulses that are perceived by the organs of perception in his gross body. Once he becomes enlightened about the metaphysical ‘truth’ of existence, he rises above all delusions pertaining to this mundane gross world, and begins to see Brahm as the only reality everywhere, which is a liberating factor for the creature—because then there is no fear of the world, there is no fear of getting trapped in the maze of delusions pertaining to the temptations of this world, no falsehood would make him affrighted like a person getting unduly agitated and terrified out of his wits by seeing a length of lifeless rope and thinking it to be a live snake which will bite him anytime.

This is the simple and straight meaning of this verse. The world, with its countless problems, exists because of Maya, the delusions that surround the creature. So the only way to overcome all such imaginary problems is to overcome the Maya. And who controls this Maya? It is under the control of the Lord of Maya, Lord Hari, the Supreme Lord of creation whose other name is Lord Ram. So therefore it follows that to overcome Maya and all the problems it creates, one must approach Maya’s Lord, i.e. Lord Ram, for by the Lord’s grace Maya would no more trouble the

creature, and so the creature would be able to symbolically cross over the vast ocean of delusions created by Maya.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 117—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 118; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 74, where the concept of Maya and the great problems it creates for the creature have been elaborately discussed.

²Here the cosmic form of Lord Ram has been praised. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15-a (where Mandodari has described Lord Ram's cosmic form); and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81-b (where Kaagbhusund has described the Lord's cosmic form).

The cosmic form of Lord Ram is also known as 'Brahm', the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness that has no specific attributes on one hand, but all qualities and virtues in this creation owe their origin to him. This Brahm is absolute and pure Consciousness, and is free from all delusions and its effects. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no.116; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no.119.}

There are two Upanishads of the Atharva Veda tradition, viz. 'Ram Rahasya Upanishad' and 'Ram Tapini Upanishad', which are the twelfth and the thirteenth Upanishads respectively, that elaborately describes the essence of Lord Ram, expounding on the Lord's cosmic form known as Brahm. It goes on to explain how the Lord's name 'Ram' is equivalent to 'OM', the cosmic sound produced by the cosmic vibrations generated by the supreme Consciousness, that is said to be the origin of every aspect of creation.

*In the last part of this verse we read the following words: "tamaśēṣakāraṇaparaṁ rāmākhyamīśaṁ harim". Now, let us analyze these complex words by breaking them into their component, single words.

The word 'tama' means darkness or grossness; 'śēṣa' means something that remains, as well as Lord Sheshnath, the celestial serpent that is believed to hold the world on its hood; 'kāraṇa' meaning the cause and reason of anything; 'paraṁ' meaning supreme, beyond which nothing exists; 'īśaṁ' meaning the Lord; it is also universally used to refer to Lord Shiva; and 'hari' meaning Lord Vishnu. Meanwhile the word 'ākhya' means to report and explain the meaning of anything.

Hence, we can also interpret the last line as follows: "I pay my respects to and worship Lord Ram who is Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu), the Supreme Lord who has created this world. I pay my respects to and worship Lord Ram who is also revered by Lord Shiva, the Lord who brings about the conclusion of this delusory world. I pay my respects to and worship Lord Ram who is Lord Seshnath as he supports this creation and protects it." In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 92 which endorse the view expressed here.]

नानापुराणनिगमागमसङ्गतं यद् रामायणे निगदितं क्वचिदन्यतोऽपि । १३ ॥

स्वान्तःसुखाय तुलसी रघुनाथगाथाभाषानिबन्धमतिमञ्जुलमातनोति ॥ १४ ॥

nānāpurāṇa-nigamāgamasam' mataṁ yad rāmāyaṇē nigaditaṁ kvacid-an
'yatōpi. 13.

svāntah-sukhāya tulasī raghunātha-gāthā-bhāṣānibandhamati-mañjulam-
ātanōti. 14.

[In these two verses, the learned poet-saint Tulsidas, who mentions his name in verse no. 14 in order to avoid any confusion regarding the author of these verses as well as what he proposes to write subsequently, submits that the divine story of Lord Ram he now proposes to write contains within the ambit of its narrative all relevant information from various scriptures pertaining to the theme of the book, which is the story of Lord Ram and his divinity, which the poet has collected from various sources and then filtered and collated all such knowledge to arrange them at one place in the form of Ram Charit Manas. Hence, the learned reader would have the benefit of reading all the scriptures and accessing all their combined knowledge pertaining to the transcendental Truth about Lord Ram by studying Ram Charit Manas attentively.]

The esoteric knowledge of the transcendental Truth pertaining to the Supreme Being as has been expounded and espoused by various scriptures, such as the Purans (ancient histories), Vedas and sub-Vedas, as well as all other scriptures of all denominations, and other sources besides these, all such knowledge has been collated and given a definitive shape by way of writing the story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas (literally meaning 'the deeds of Lord Ram that have revealed themselves in a subtle form by way of a chronicled story of the time and life of Lord Ram in the Mana, the heart and mind, of someone who was exceptionally exalted, wise, enlightened and self-realised'—a obvious reference to Lord Shiva here).

Tulsidas says that he has done this, i.e. he has penned the story of Ram Charit Manas and given it a definitive shape by writing it down in the form of poetry, for the purpose of his own happiness and joy, to help his inner-self attain bliss and beatitude that comes by doing so. (Shloka line nos. 13-14)

[Note—By implication, he says, he has not written Ram Charit Manas to gain any fame and name as a poet, but to find peace for himself within, for the time spent in writing the holy story of Lord Ram would be a sort of meditation and contemplation for him, when he would be focusing his attention and all the faculties of his mind and body on Lord Ram so as to write this book coherently, for any distraction would not make it possible. He does not feign to be a great poet, but stresses here that he is fain to write it as a means to attain internal bliss and a feeling of blessedness inspite of realizing his limited abilities and knowledge.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 31.

Tulsidas' humility comes out remarkably clearly in the following verses, amongst others, of Ram Charit Manas: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Doha no. 9; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 10; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29-c.

He also praises all poets, of the past as well as of the future, those who were learned and expert in their profession as well as those who were novices and wrote for mere pleasure, i.e. poets of all denominations who had and would in the future penned any verse in honour of Lord Ram and his divinity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 14 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-11 that precede it.

Why did he write Ram Charit Manas, and from where did he get its script; is it his own creation or is he simply paraphrasing some great poet of the yore? Tulsidas has himself given the reason for it in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Maas where the Purans, Vedas, sub-vedas and other scriptures, collectively called 'Puran, Agam-Nigam' have been cited: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 95; (v) Doha no. 237; (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 293.

The word 'Puran' means ancient scripture; it generally refers to mythological histories.

Aagam: These are ancient sacred books that teach the Truth in all its aspects. The word usually applies to the scriptures known as the Vedas. The Aagam is typically divided into four parts, known as the 'Padas' (pronounced as Pādas) as follows: (i) The Gyan Pada or Vidya Pada, where deep metaphysical and philosophical concepts are elucidated; (ii) The Yoga Pada, where Yoga or meditation and its practice is discussed to purify the mind and the body; (iii) The Kriya Pada, which details physical diagrams, postures and structural forms to be used in meditation as well as in temple construction and making of icons that represent the deity to be offered worship through meditation; and (iv) The Charayaa Pada, which are expositions on sacraments and codes of conduct to be followed by a spiritual aspirant.

So, the word 'Aagam' refers to the Tantra Sastras which deal with esoteric knowledge and forms of worship of the Supreme Being in his various forms, such as the three chief deities known as Shiva, Vishnu and Shakti, and it relies on occult practices using special Mantras that are specific to a particular deity.

Thus, in accordance to the deity to be worshipped, the Aagams are divided into three chief categories, viz. Shiva-aagams, Vishnu-aagams, and Shakti-aagams that are dedicated respectively to Lord Shiva who is the concluder of creation and the third God of the Trinity, Lord Vishnu who is the caretaker and protector of creation and the second God of the Trinity, and Shakti which is the personified form of cosmic dynamic power and energy of the Supreme Being that is employed to regulate the various functions of creation.

Amongst these three categories of Aagams based on the deity they are dedicated to, the ones pertaining to the Shakti are called 'Tantra Shastras', because they employ occult practices and esoteric formulas for worship purposes.

Meanwhile, the Vishnu-aagams are called 'Samhitas', and they prescribe that Lord Vishnu is the Supreme Being himself; and the Shiva-aagams are twenty-eight in number and stress that Lord Shiva is the Param Pati and the Param Purush, the Supreme Father and the Supreme Male of creation.

Nigam: This word is used to mean the Vedas, the primary sacred scriptures. The word means 'that through which the Absolute Truth is known or ascertained clearly'. In this sense, the art of logically explaining anything, as is the practice followed in the exposition of the Upanishads, is called a Nigam.

There are four primary Vedas, viz. the Rig, Saam, Yajur and Atharva. The Yajur Veda has two sub-categories, viz. the Shukla Yajur Veda and the Krishna Yajur

Vedas. The metaphysical and spiritual Truth contained in these primary scriptures are expounded in the form of treatises called the Upanishads, also known as Vedanta, of which there are one hundred and eight in numbers—Rig Veda has ten Upanishads; Saam Veda has sixteen Upanishads; Krishna Yajur Veda has thirty-two Upanishads; Shukla Yajur Veda has nineteen Upanishads; and Atharva Veda has thirty-one Upanishads.

Further, the Vedas have many sub-vedas, known as the ‘Up-vedas’. The Rig Veda has the sub-veda known as ‘Ayurveda’ dealing with medicinal herbs; the Sama Veda has ‘Gandharvaveda’ dealing with the art of song and dance; the Yajur Veda has ‘Dhanurveda’ that deals with archery and the science of weapon and warfare; and Atharva Veda has ‘Artha shastra’ that deals with political science, governance and economy.]

सो०. जो सुमिरत सिधि होइ गन नायक करिबर बदन । १ ॥

करउ अनुग्रह सोइ बुद्धि रासि सुभ गुन सदन ॥ २ ॥

sōraṭhā.

jō sumirata sidhi hō'i gana nāyaka karibara badana. 1.

kara'u anugraha sō'i bud'dhi rāsi subha guna sadana. 2.

[This verse is in praise of Lord Ganesh¹, the God whose blessings are invoked at the beginning of any endeavour to ensure its success. Here, Tulsidas offers his obeisance to Lord Ganesh and requests the latter to bless him so that his wish to write the holy story of Lord Ram by way of a composition known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is fulfilled and brought to fruition without facing any hurdles.]

He, by remembering whom one achieves success in all endeavours, who is the leader and chief of all followers, subordinates and devotees (of Lord Shiva), who has the physical form of an elephant, --- (Sortha line no. 1)

--- May that Lord God (i.e. Lord Ganesh), who is a treasury of wisdom, intelligence and all excellent virtues, be pleased with me and bless me (so that I can successfully narrate the holy story of Lord Ram in the form of a composition known as Ram Charit Manas that I am about to write). (Sortha line no. 2)

[Note—¹Lord Ganesh is a son of Lord Shiva and is worshipped first when one begins any noble enterprise; Ganesh has precedence over all other gods in all forms of worship.

An entire Upanishad belonging to the Atharva Veda is dedicated to the theme of Lord Ganesh, and it is called the ‘Ganapati Upanishad’.

Lord Ganesh is also called ‘Ganapati’ and ‘Vinaayak’. ‘Ganapati’ means the Lord of Ganas, i.e. the chief of the followers, subordinates and devotees of Lord Shiva; and ‘Vinaayak’ means one who eliminates all obstacles and hurdles.

Other names of Lord Ganapati are enumerated in the Ganapati Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition as follows:—Lord Ganesh (refer verse no. 8); Ekdanta or the Lord with one tusk, Vakratunda or the Lord with a bent trunk (refer verse no. 10); Vraatpati or the one who is the chief amongst the Gods, Ganapati or the chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva, Pramath-pati or the chief of a special category of attendants

of Lord Shiva, known as Pramaths, who give immense misery to those who are sinful, Lambodar or the one with a big abdomen; pot-bellied, Vighna-Vinaayak or the one who destroys all hurdles and misfortunes, Sri Varadmuti or the one who is an embodiment of blessings and grants whatever boons one desires, and Shiva-sut or the son of Lord Shiva (refer verse no. 15).

The Lord derives his name Gajaanan or Gajpati or Gajamukh from the root word 'Gaj' meaning an elephant, and 'Ja' meaning an origin or birth. Hence, these names indicate that the Lord has taken birth in a form that has the head and body like that of an elephant. The elephant head stands for the macrocosm, while the rest of the body which resembles that of a human stands for the microcosm. These two aspects of this creation are not separate from one another but form a composite unit just like the head and the body of Lord Ganesh are not separate from one another but form one composite body of the Lord, though the head represents an animal (an elephant) and the rest of the body represents a human being.

In other words, one is regarded as learned, wise and enlightened only if he is able to see the Supreme Being even in the oddest and the most unconventional form of life in this creation. One must see the Lord in a healthy man as much as in a deformed and a handicapped individual; one must see the Lord in an animal as much as in a human form.

Another connotation is the following—the word 'ga' implies 'gati' or fate and destination of creation, and 'ja' means birth or origin. Hence, the word 'Gajpati' means the Lord from whom the rest of the creation has taken birth, and in whom the creation would finally collapse and merge at the end.

He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise.

In Goswami Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Sita has prayed to Lord Ganesh and addressed him with the titles of 'Gan-naayak', and 'Var-daayak'. [Refer: Ram Charit Mana, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 257.]

Now, let us examine the meaning of these two titles.

The word "Gan-Naayak" literally means 'the chief of the attendants', the 'commander', 'the god in charge of other junior gods'. Being the son of Lord Shiva, the obvious meaning is that Ganesh is the chief or the commandar of all of Shiva's attendants. But this title of being a 'Gan-naayak' has a greater significance and far-reaching importance than this shallow meaning of just being the chief of Shiva's household attendants when we couple it with the other title of being a 'Var-daayak', one who graciously grants boons. It is as follows:—

He has an unchallenged and immaculate reputation as the God who fulfills any desire the worshipper has when he offers his worship to him. He is universally adored and offered worship on a priority basis before one offers worship to any other god because not only is he the greatest in the pantheon of gods but also because once he is pleased with the worshipper then all other gods are easy to please; none of them would ever think of denying what the worshipper wishes if Lord Ganesh has agreed to fulfill his wishes.

This fact is metaphorically depicted in his being appointed as the 'chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva'. Lord Shiva the greatest of the three senior-most gods, i.e. the three gods of the holy Trinity consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder. It is this reason why Shiva is honoured

by the title of a 'Maha-Deva', the Great God. All other gods are his juniors, i.e. they attend to the wishes of Lord Shiva. Therefore, Ganesh's anointment as the chief of Shiva's attendants is a symbolic way of making him the 'chief of all the gods who are junior to Lord Shiva'.

The two wives of Lord Ganapati are said to be Buddhi and Shiddhi who are personifications of the virtues of intellect and the glories that come with achievements.

One of the sub-Purans or Up-purans, known as 'Mudgal-puran' which is named after sage Mudgal is dedicated chiefly to the narration of the nine main incarnations of Lord Ganapati, or Lord Ganesh who is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and is the chief deity who is worshipped first during any religious ceremony or auspicious activity. This Up-puran was probably written between 900-1100 A.D. The nine incarnations of Ganapati mentioned in this sub-Puran are the following—Vakradanta, Ekdanta, Mahodar, Gajaanan, Lambodar, Vikat, Vighna-raaja, Dhumra-varna, and Yoga. Besides these nine incarnations, it also lists 23 more forms of Lord Ganesh.

He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise.

The Tripura Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse no. 15, describes the Mantra of Lord Ganesh which highlights his exalted nature and superior stature amongst all the gods, while Canto 4, paragraph no. 12 describes its importance for the worshipper.

The Mantra is "Ganaanam Twa Ganpatim Havaamahe Kavim Kavinaamupasra-vastabham; Jyestha Rajam Brahanam Brahamnaspata Aa Naha Srinva-nnutubhiha Seed Saadanam". [Briefly it means—'I pay my obeisance and respect to Lord Ganesh who is the most senior amongst all the attendants of the Lord and even the Gods. He is most exalted, wise and learned. He is like the biggest king or emperor amongst those who are enlightened about Brahm, and is Brahm himself personified. There is no one better or senior than you. Be gracious upon me; be pleased with me. I bow before you most humbly and submit myself before you.']

When this hymn is being said, the worshipper should prefix and suffix it with the Beej Mantra of Ganesh, which is the Sanskrit letter 'Ga' (as in gum) with a Bindu (dot) on top, and pronounced as 'Gam/Gan(g)' (pronounced as gum or gun(g)).]

The Tarak Mantra of Lord Ganapati is 'OM Gum/gun(g)' according to the Ganapati Upanishad, verse no. 8.

Now let us understand the symbolism of the various parts of this God. His large ears imply that the Lord hears everything, from every corner, and from everyone; the Lord is extremely receptive and gathers information and knowledge from all available sources. He is a good listener, a virtue that makes him a good teacher, because one has to learn first and it is only then that he can teach others. The large size of the ear that resemble a winnow-basket or a hand-held fan indicate that the Lord is able to blow away useless pieces of information and accept only the useful ones like the case of the winnowing basket or the hand-fan that is used to blow away chaff and retain the grain.

His large head stands for great intellect and mind.

He has two tusks—one that is full stands for the Truth that is perfect, complete, priceless and beautiful. The other tusk that is broken indicates an imperfect

world that is incomplete, worthless, and not as good as it seems to be. Since the two tusks are part of Lord Ganesh's body, the implication is that both the Absolute Truth as well as the not-so-absolute truth is a part of the universal whole known as Brahm. In other words, the perfect world of spiritual truth represented by the full tusk, and the imperfect world of material sense objects represented by the broken tusk are part of the same universal Truth known as Brahm. The fact that the intellect helps one to discriminate between the right and the wrong only when there is a choice is indicated by the two tusks—one that is full indicates the correct and the straight path, and the one that is broken implies the crooked and the wrong path.

The bent and long trunk has the following connotations—(i) it stands for OM, the cosmic sound that reverberates ('trumpets') in the ether that fills the space of the sky where the entire creation is harboured; (ii) since the trunk emerges from the head of the elephant and it can uproot big trees and clear the path ahead for the elephant, the implied meaning is that the Lord employs his mind and intellect to get rid of the greatest of delusions and ignorance and other spiritual obstacles or hurdles, no matter how crooked they may be, that come in the way of seekers of Truth.

His wide mouth indicates a good appetite, and this stands for his ability to accept a wide range of knowledge. It also means that the Lord can speak on a wide range of topics with the greatest of ease and with the highest level of erudition and expertise at oratory.

His big belly stands for his endless appetite for knowledge and wisdom which he assimilates with ease. Being a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, it also means that the Lord harbours the entire creation inside his own self. His big belly stands for the immense size of the universe.

Ganesh has four arms indicating the four components of the Anthakaran, called the inner-self. These are Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankaar (ego, false pride etc.)

One of his hands holds a Paasha (snare; rope) which stands for worldly attachments and entanglements that the Lord is able to control. The second hand holds an Ankush (goad) which stands for the ability to exercise control over the sense organs and natural urges. The third hand holds a Modak (a ball of sweetmeat) which stands for the spiritual rewards. And the fourth hand is held in the Var Mudra which is used to bless his devotees and give them fearlessness.

His mount is a small mouse. The mouse is notorious for stealing grain and ruining the store. Hence it is a metaphor for all the evil and negative qualities in a creature that are demeaning for his soul and lead to his ruin, and the fact that the Lord sits on the mouse shows that the Lord helps one to overcome them; or the fact that the Lord is able to overcome and subdue all the negativities of creation. The 'small' size of the mouse indicates that even a small negative trait in us can rob us of all the other good we have like the small rat can ruin the greatest of harvest or a huge granary.

The mouse is fond of sweets and grains. This indicates that the Lord is fond of good virtues and qualities of creation, and he searches them out from all the corners of creation like the mouse that goes on rummaging for grain and sweetmeats throughout his life.

The Ganapati Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, which is the twenty-fifth Upanishad of this Veda, is entirely dedicated to him. It is propounded therein that Lord Ganpati resides in the inner-self of all living beings as their Atma, the soul and the pure consciousness. It then goes on to explain the meaning of the word Ganapati, how to meditate upon the Lord, the Mala-Mantras dedicated to him which are used to turn the beads of the rosary while doing Japa (repetition of the holy Mantras), the

spiritual rewards of such meditation and contemplation, some special Mantras of the Lord which helps the worshipper fulfill his desires and attain fruits of his efforts, the benefits of reading this eclectic Upanishad, and the rules to be followed while doing so as well as for preaching this Upanishad to others. The visible form of Lord Ganapati has also been described in this Upanishad (verse no. 11-14).

The image of Lord Ganapati is described in verse nos. 11-12 of the Ganapati Upanishad as follows—

“verse no. 11 = The Lord (Ganapati) has one tusk and four arms. He holds a ‘Paash’ (a snare) and an ‘Ankush’ (a goad) in two of his arms, while the third is held in the ‘Abhaya Mudra’ (the posture that grants perpetual fearlessness to his devotees) and the fourth in the ‘Var Mudra’ (the posture that grants boon of wish fulfillment to his devotees). He holds a flag with the insignia of a rat/mouse (11).

“verse no. 12 = His countenance is red like blood. His abdomen is large (big and pot-bellied). His ears are also large like the hand-held winnowing fan. He is covered in clothes of red colour.

His body is covered by a paste of red-coloured perfume. He is duly worshipped with red coloured flowers (12).”

The famous Book of Prayers written by Goswami Tulsidas, known as “Vinai Patrika”, has the first verse (i.e. verse no. 1) dedicated to Lord Ganesh.]

मूक होइ बाचाल पंगु चढ़इ गिरिबर गहन । ३ ॥

जासु कृपाँ सो दयाल द्रवउ सकल कलि मल दहन ॥ ४ ॥

mūka hō'i bācāla paṅgu caṛḥa'i giribara gahana. 3.

jāsu kṛpām̐ sō dayāla drava'u sakala kali mala dahana. 4.

The merciful and gracious Lord by whose grace and blessings even the dumb becomes an expert orator, even the lame can ascend the highest mountain¹, --- (Sortha line no. 3)

--- And the Lord who can burn (destroy; neutralize) all the sins of Kaliyug (the present age of spiritual decline, perversity and moral degradation), along with their horrible consequences—may that great and exalted Lord be gracious and kind upon me, and bless me. (Sortha line no. 4)

[Note—¹It is not clear to which ‘Lord or God’ these verses are dedicated. If we take into account the previous verses where Lord Ganesh was being offered prayers, then obviously these two verses refer to him.

But at the same time it is also possible that these verses are dedicated to Lord Vishnu who is being offered prayers in the next set of verses that follow, i.e. verse line nos. 5-6.

Or, it is also very likely that they are dedicated to Lord Shiva as he is the one who had first conceived the holy story of the book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ in his heart and mind, and is offered prayers in verse line nos. 7-8 herein below.

Since no name of any particular deity is mentioned here, it is equally possible that these two verses are dedicated to Lord Ram himself, the Lord to whom this entire

book is dedicated. This possibility is greater than the rest because Lord Ram is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, and is also revered by both Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva.

The verses that precede these present two verses are dedicated to Lord Ganesh, and the ones that follow are dedicated to Lord Vishnu. So therefore, these two verses praising an un-named Lord are a sort of a bridge between two important deities, Lord Ganesh and Lord Vishnu. To wit, this prayer is dedicated to that Lord God who is revered by Lord Ganesh and is also the one who is no different from Lord Vishnu—and obviously he is none but Lord Ram.

The greatness and majesty of Lord Ram and his authority is far superior to all the gods and other great entities in this creation taken together—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.

It is to be taken specific note of here that Lord Ram is being praised here for being the Supreme Lord whose ability to take care of and protect the world is equivalent to countless Lord Vishnus taken together, as well as countless Lord Shivas as far as conclusion of creation is concerned—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 92.

But it is also said elsewhere that Lord Ram is a manifestation of Lord Vishnu—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it. Lord Vishnu represents the cosmic power and authority of the Supreme Being that are concerned with taking care of, protection and sustenance of this creation—for whenever the creation is subject to sufferings and miseries that no other power in the world can remove, it is Lord Vishnu who comes down in various forms to help the creatures by removing the cause of their torments.

Besides ‘sustenance and protection’ of this creation, the Supreme Being has other functions too—such as ‘creation’ and ‘conclusion’ of this creation among others functions. So the wise Lord decided to make things easy for himself by assuming three distinct forms known Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the sustainer and protector, and Shiva, the concluder; these three primary forms of the Supreme Being, also known as ‘Brahm’, formed the three Gods of the Trinity. This is a stellar example of ‘delegation of authority’ by Brahm, whereby he authorized these three Gods to carry out their respective responsibilities and duties within their domain, without interfering with each other. This clearly delineated areas of function and proper regulation of the activity of the world, with accountability and responsibility.

So by saying that Lord Ram embodies in himself the power and authority of countless Vishnus, it is meant that the Lord is verily Brahm, the Supreme Being, himself; Lord Ram is a visible manifestation of Brahm whose cosmic form is expounded in the Upanishads, and we read about it in Ram Charit Manas too—refer: (i) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 95; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81-a.

Further, there is an interesting set of verses in Ram Charit Manas which are very pertinent here as they perfectly resonate with and fits in well with the idea expressed in the present verse we are reading. What do they say? Well, Lord Shiva tells his consort Parvati that: “Lord Ram is the Lord who walks without having a physical leg, who hears everything without possessing a physical ear, who does everything without having a physical hand, who feels and touches without having a physical body, who sees without any physical eyes, and who smells without having a nose; such are the Lord’s magical and mystical deeds that they defy comprehension and logic as they seem very strange, outlandish and superhuman to an un-initiated

person who does not know the Truth of the Lord”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 118.

Refer also to one of Tulsidas’ other classic books on Lord Ram, known as ‘Vairagya Sandipani’, where in verse no. 3 magical powers of Lord Ram are mentioned, powers that are clear indications of the Lord’s primary cosmic form as the supreme Consciousness known as ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being who “hears without ears, sees without eyes, tastes without tongue, smells without nose, and feels without a skin”.

So therefore, the deity being offered this prayers and requested by Tulsidas to bless him in his writing endeavour is surely and certainly Lord Ram, though the Lord is not mentioned by name specifically.]

नील सरोरुह स्याम तरुन अरुन बारिज नयन । ५ ॥
करउ सो मम उर धाम सदा छीरसागर सयन ॥ ६ ॥

nīla sarōruha syāma taruna aruna bārija nayana. 5.

kara'u sō mama ura dhāma sadā chīrasāgara sayana. 6.

[These verses are dedicated to Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram.]

The Lord whose countenance is dark, whose eyes resemble fully open lotus flowers of a red hue, and who reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshir-Sagar¹—may that gracious Lord dwell in my heart. (Sortha line nos. 5-6)

[Note—¹This is an obvious reference to Lord Vishnu who has all these characteristics. The Lord’s dark complexion symbolizes the vastness of the sky, for he is indeed the all-pervading Lord who is as infinite as the sky. Just like the sky that encloses everything in existence, for all heavenly bodies are embedded in the sky and there is nothing beyond it, so likewise everything that exists in this world is embedded in the Lord’s cosmic body, and nothing exists outside of him.

The lotus flower is not only beautiful but also considered pure as it remains free from all impurities and dirtiness of the water that surrounds it in the pond where it grows. Likewise, Lord Vishnu remains aloof and free from all worldly delusions and other spiritual contaminants that pollute the world which he has to take care of in his role as the ‘protector and sustainer of creation’.

The ‘Kshir-Sagar’ is the celestial ocean of milk symbolizing the cosmic ether where the Supreme Being reclines in his meditative posture. This primary form is known as Brahm, and it represents the cosmic Consciousness that is the primary cause of everything that came into being. The colour of ‘milk’ is white, symbolizing purity and holiness. Hence, the dwelling of Brahm is as pure as milk that has yet not been adulterated or polluted by other factors.

By inviting this pure and holy form of Lord Vishnu to reside in his heart Tulsidas wishes that his own heart, his inner-self, should be as clean and untainted as the Kshir-Sagar where the Lord resides eternally.

And how does Lord Vishnu recline on the surface of this Kshir-Sagar? According to Purans, he reclines on the coiled body of Lord Sheshnath, the celestial serpent who has a thousand hoods and is said to support the world by holding it aloft on them. Likewise, Tulsidas prays that the Lord would hold his spirits and enthusiasm

high and not let him feel dejected or depressed while he is writing the holy story of Lord Ram.

The charming and most captivating form of Lord Vishnu has been described in Ram Charit Manas elsewhere too—for instance, Baal Kand, Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148, where the Lord has revealed himself before Manu and Strupa to bless and reward them for their doing severe Tapa (penance and austerity) with the wish of having a physical view of the invisible Lord.]

कुंद इंदु सम देह उमा रमन करुना अयन । ७ ॥
जाहि दीन पर नेह करउ कृपा मर्दन मयन ॥ ८ ॥

kunda indu sama dēha umā ramana karunā ayana. 7.
jāhi dīna para nēha kara'u krpā mardana mayana. 8.

He whose countenance is like that of the jasmine flower as well as the moon (i.e. white, due to ash from the fire sacrifice that the Lord rubs on his body)¹, who always lives with and moves about with Uma (the goddess who is a consort of Lord Shiva), who is a treasury of compassion, mercy and kindness, and who has affection for the humble and the lowly—let that Lord (Shiva), who had crushed the ego and haughtiness of Kamdeo Cupid², show grace and mercy upon me. (Sortha line nos. 7-8)

[Note—¹This verse is dedicated to Lord Shiva as is clearly evident from the fact that his consort, goddess Uma or Parvati, is mentioned here as being his constant and inseparable companion.

Lord Shiva's body appears to be grey in colour—because the Lord lives like an ascetic and rubs the ash of the fire sacrifice on his body, giving it a greyish colour.

Then the Lord wears the crescent moon on his forehead, and the moon's diffused moonlight spreads over his body, further enhancing the grey colour of the sacrificial ash smeared on his body as one would see the colour of the ash in the light of the moon during the night. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 106.}

²The patron god of love and passion, known as Kamdeo or Cupid, had once tried to disturb Lord Shiva's meditation by shooting arrows of flowers at him and enticing him with all the weapons of passion and lust that he had in his arsenal. Shiva got angry, and he opened his third eye, located on the Lord's forehead just between his eyebrows, and burnt Kamdeo with the fire of wrath that spewed forth from it. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Lord Shiva is often times referred to as an enemy of Kamdeo, or one who destroys passions and lust. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107.}

We shall be reading this entire episode in the course of our reading of the wonderful story of Ram Charit Manas when we come to it by-and-by.]

बंदउँ गुरु पद कंज कृपा सिंधु नररूप हरि । ९ ॥

महामोह तम पुंज जासु बचन रबि कर निकर ॥ १० ॥

banda'um̐ guru pada kaṅja kṛpā sindhu naraṛūpa hari. 9.
mahāmōha tama puṅja jāsu bacana rabi kara nikara. 10.

[This verse is dedicated to the wise Guru, who is a moral preceptor, a teacher and a guide who enlightens his disciple, student or ward about the truth of anything, enabling the latter to become wise himself, and reach the goal of his search with proper guidance and help from the Guru.]

I offer my obeisance to the Guru, and worship his holy lotus-like feet, for he is an ocean of the grand virtues of graciousness and kindness, is a personified form or a living embodiment of Lord Hari (the Lord God) himself, and his wise and enlightening words are like the rays of the brilliant sun for the purpose of eliminating the darkness created by a horde of gross ignorance and delusions (that surround the creature, leading him astray from the path of Truth). (Sortha line nos. 9-10)

[Note—After offering obeisance to chief Gods, Tulsidas now offers his respect to his Guru without whose guidance and help he couldn't have had the knowledge of the story of Lord Ram he is about to pen. It will be noted that the praise of the Guru and his blessings that enabled the learned poet to write this holy book is continued in the verses that follow too—from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 2.

A wise and learned Guru's help is necessary for a seeker of Truth, and for that matter, for anyone who wishes to acquire any kind of knowledge, secular or religious. A school teacher, a college professor, and even one's parents are Gurus in their own rights because each of them shows the child the way to live in this world and acquire skills and knowledge that would help it to stand on its own two feet when the child grows up and has to face the roughness and the rudeness of this world himself.

In the spiritual field, the Guru shows the seeker the right path that he ought to follow in accordance with his aptitude and natural inclinations, from amongst the countless paths prescribed in the scriptures, which would otherwise be like a dense forest through which navigation would be well-nigh impossible and make one lose one's path if there is no expert guide to hand-hold him through the complex maze.

In this aspect, a Guru is like the 'sun' which removes the darkness of the night symbolized by ignorance and delusions, collectively called 'Moha'. In the night one is not able to see anything, one is not able to see the path ahead, and so gets lost. As soon as day breaks and the sun appears, its light lights up the world and shows the traveler the path ahead. Likewise, the Guru is the wise teacher who shows the spiritual aspirant the right path to his destination.

In the case of Tulsidas, he is very obliged and indebted to his Guru and thanks him much for enlightening him about the finer spiritual and devotional aspects of the story of Lord Ram, explaining to him its subtle nuances and pointing out many sublime metaphysical principles quietly incorporated in it, spiritual ideas and philosophies that would grant happiness, bliss and beatitude to his soul, and to all those who would read his story later on, instead of just re-telling of the story of a prince of Ayodhya known as Lord Ram by quoting other poets and scriptures as part of his basic education like so many other students do in a routine manner during the

course of their traditional system of education where they are made to learn by rote without even understanding what they reading.]

चौ०. बंदउँ गुरु पद पदुम परागा । सुरुचि सुबास सरस अनुरागा ॥ १ ॥

अमिअ मूरिमय चूरन चारू । समन सकल भव रुज परिवारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

banda'um'guru pada paduma parāgā. suruci subāsa sarasa anurāgā. 1.
ami'a mūrimaya cūrana cārū. samana sakala bhava ruja parivārū. 2.

[After the preliminary invocations and offering of prayers as done in the foregoing Shlokas and Sorthas, Tulsidas now proceeds with the text of Ram Charit Manas, but before he starts with the actual narrative he begins by once again offering his respects to his Guru, and then to all other living beings of all denominations, small and big, high and low, holy and god-like as well as evil and demon-like, in order to ensure that they are kept in good humour, expecting the noble spirits to bless him in his divine mission, and to pray to the evil spirits not to create any hindrance in his path if they can't help him in a constructive way, as the evil elements are likely to become jealous and overcome with malice if they are not properly appeased in the very beginning of any enterprise. After that, Tulsidas seeks the blessings and goodwill of other learned poets and bards, of the past and the present and the future. This helps Tulsidas to assert his humility and affirm his deep faith in Lord Ram as he feels that since what he is about to write is a holy book totally and completely dedicated to Lord Ram, he is absolutely certain that he would get everyone's blessings and support. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 15.}]

'I pay my respects to the holy feet of my Guru¹ which is like a symbolic lotus flower that contains nectar granting bliss and fulfillment of wishes. This nectar is flavoured with the taste of blessings; it is fragrant with the sweetness of affection; and it is succulent with the juice of love.

[To wit, I pay my obeisance at the holy lotus-like feet of a Guru who is like an ocean of mercy and grace, who is like a personified human form of Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Lord), and whose words of wisdom are equivalent to the brilliant rays of the sun so far as removing the darkness of ignorance is concerned.

I pay my obeisance to the holy feet of an illustrious Guru and offer my thanks to him for granting me the privilege of getting access to the nectar of spiritual bliss and happiness that drips from his lotus-like feet. This nectar is extremely delicious, fragrant and succulent (i.e. it provides succour to me and helps me to feel contented just like a bee feels when it gets access to the nectar of the lotus flower)². (1)

The dust of the feet of the Guru is like a magical powder having the mystical power to destroy the whole family of moral and spiritual ailments that torment a creature in this mortal gross world of transmigration.

[To wit, the auspicious dust of the holy feet of the Guru is like a medicinal powder made from the herb known as Sanjivani³ that helps to eliminate all sorts of torments and miseries associated with life in this vast ocean-like mundane world of grossness and pain, as it helps alleviate a disciple's spiritual and temporal problems,

and dispel all his doubts and confusions. The Guru's blessings help allay the many fears that overwhelm a person in this mundane existence, where he seems to be at sea had it not been for the Guru who acts as a buoy as well as a lighthouse for support and guide him through.] (2)

[Note—¹A Guru is expected to be a saintly person with a pious disposition, a person who has some stellar qualities and excellent virtues, which are enumerated in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38 where Lord Ram himself enumerates them briefly; as well as in (ii) Tulsidas' book called 'Vairagya Sandipani', in its verse nos. 8-42 which are very comprehensive in this respect.

In the present verses which we are currently reading now, Tulsidas pays his homage to his Guru by bowing to the latter's feet, saying that by the blessings of the Guru all fears arising out of spiritual ignorance and worldly delusions are got rid of. For a spiritual aspirant, the Guru is like a loving parent who is always concerned with the ward's good, welfare and happiness.

In traditional system of medicine, the doctor prepares a power by crushing and mixing different herbs to prepare a concoction that is aimed to cure the patient's disease. Likewise, the wise and erudite Guru would prescribe the right spiritual practices to his disciple and show him the moral path whenever the latter needs guidance and support in complex situations that vex him, so that the latter can overcome all his emotional problems, attain internal peace and stability, thereby enabling him to live a life of contentedness and happiness, and reach his desired goal calmly, amidst the turmoil that surrounds him in this world where everything seems to be in a flux.

One serious illness is enough to kill a man, but the problems associated with this mundane existence are countless—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 121-a.

What are these spiritual, moral and emotional problems, or so-called diseases, that afflict a person in this world and keep him agitated? Well, the saintly crow Kaagbhusund was asked this question by Garud who had gone to his hermitage to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and remove certain doubts he had about the Lord's divinity and truth. Kaagbhusund lists the prominent ones in his answer given to Garud, and also stresses that they can be taken care of by the grace of Lord Ram as well as the Guru—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71 (grace of Lord Ram); (ii) Chaupai line no. 28 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 122 (grace of the Guru as well as Lord Ram).

²To wit, when one serves the Guru and worships his holy feet with the same faith and reverence as one would have for the Lord God, for it has already been said in the previous verse that a Guru is a living form of the Lord, then surely the Guru would be obliged to grant his blessings and divine grace upon the disciple even as the Lord does for his devotee. The dust of the feet of an enlightened and wise Guru is compared here to the pollen that falls from the lotus flower. It provides happiness and bliss to the worshipper in the same way as the nectar does to the bee.

³The Sanjivani herb is a rare medicinal plant that can revive even a dying man. It rejuvenates the spirit and injects a fresh lease of life.

Here it means that when a person finds himself in a quandary in this world, when he is utterly perplexed and confused due to circumstances, when he sees darkness all around him, when he sees no friend in this world who would help him, show him a way, and stand by him, when he thinks he is virtually doomed and marooned in a hostile and selfish world —at that time he can turn to his Guru for support, guidance, advice, solace and succour. A Guru would give him a selfless and wise advice; he would apply a soothing balm over his troubled mind and wounded heart.

From the spiritual and metaphysical perspective, there are no greater torments and fears as the ones that this mortal world of transmigration presents. It's a vicious trap from which one finds it almost impossible to escape. In this situation, the Guru helps one to see the path that would lead to his freedom and emancipation. It is like a good and compassionate doctor who would not only prescribe the correct medicine to his patient but also ensures that the patient duly takes his doses and is on the path of recovery. If the need so arises, the compassionate doctor would personally tend to the patient's wounds and nurse him back to complete recovery. The grateful patient can never sufficiently thank his doctor! A Guru's role in the spiritual field is almost like it; that is why the metaphor of the Sanjivani herb is cited in this verse. Whereas the doctor can heal only the physical body of the suffering man, the Guru can heal his spiritual and emotional wounds.

To wit, by worshipping the holy feet of the Guru the worshipper receives his blessings, and this in turn rejuvenates his inner-self by eliminating all sorts of consternations, fears, confusions, doubts and delusions that are tormenting him endlessly. These negative emotions are a part and parcel of life in this gross mundane world, and the remedy for this misery is found in the form of blessings that come to a person when the Guru is pleased. It is because the Guru is one's best friend and associate, and he is also qualified and skilled enough to show the person a way out of his problems in a very practical way.

A wise and true Guru is like a person's anchor in this tumultuous world where one finds it too difficult to hold ground and find one's mooring. The Guru is also like a symbolic lighthouse that warns a ship of any danger that may lurk underground inasmuch as that he faithfully alerts his disciple of any pitfalls that he may encounter in his journey through life, whether in the spiritual field or the humdrum affairs of the world, showing him a way out of any predicament that he may find himself in. A Guru would illuminate the path for his disciple with the light of knowledge, and should the disciple need the Guru would be there to assist him to reach his destination.]

सुकृति संभु तन बिमल बिभूती । मंजुल मंगल मोद प्रसूती ॥ ३ ॥

जन मन मंजु मुकुर मल हरनी । किँँ तिलक गुन गन बस करनी ॥ ४ ॥

sukṛti sambhu tana bimala bibhūtī. maṅjula maṅgala mōda prasūtī. 3.

jana mana maṅju mukura mala haranī. ki'ēṁ' tilaka guna gana basa karanī. 4.

The dust of the feet of the Guru is as holy and sanctified as the ash smeared on the divine body of Lord Shiva, and therefore it grants auspiciousness and happiness to a person who rubs it on his own body¹. (3)

This dust from the feet of the Guru can remove the stain on the symbolic mirror of a person's mind and heart²; it can be used to make a mark on the forehead (called the Tilak) as it would attract all the good virtues and enable the disciple to master them³.

[To wit, this dust removes the spiritual dirt clinging to the mirror represented by the devotee's heart and mind. If it is used to mark the three lines of the Tilak on the forehead then it helps (the disciple) to overcome the effects of the three Gunas and invites a host of good values and qualities.] (4)

[Note—¹The auspicious dust of the Guru's august feet is equivalent to the holy ash that is smeared on the divine body of Lord Shiva, and is therefore equally reverential. It is a producer and a bestower of all welfare and happiness upon the worshipper; it grants him joy and blessings.

If a devotee uses the dust of the feet of his Guru to be smeared on his body then it would be equivalent to smearing the ash of the sacred fire sacrifice that Lord Shiva smears over his own body. To wit, the dust of the Guru's feet is as holy and auspicious as the ash of a fire sacrifice.

The idea is that just like ordinary ash of firewood becomes holy when it is applied by Lord Shiva on his divine body, the ordinary dust of the earth becomes sanctified and holy when it comes in touch with the feet of the revered Guru, and hence can be used as a holy powder equivalent to the ash one gets from Lord Shiva's temple which is used for rubbing on a devotee's body.

²The mind and the heart of a man are like a mirror of his thoughts and feelings. By being exposed to this deluding world of material attractions and sensual pleasures, his heart and mind become corrupted as he is driven away from his spiritual goal and sucked in the vortex of this gross mundane world which churns him round and round, leaving him perplexed and deluded. Just as coarse sand is rubbed on a mirror to remove oil stains from it, so likewise the dust of the Guru's feet can be symbolically used to rub off the moral degradations and perversions from the inner-self of a spiritual aspirant. To wit, if a person surrenders himself before a true and wise Guru, it is quite sure that he will be able to clean his inner-self and restore its spiritual shine.

To wit, just like the case when one can see an object clearly when the mirror is scrubbed clean, the worshipper is able to remove all delusions from his mind and free his heart of all worldly attachments by the grace of the Guru so much so that now he can experience the bliss of self-realisation that comes with experiencing the presence of the Atma, the cosmic Consciousness that is known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Conscious Being, in his own bosom.

Once all veils of ignorance are removed, once the thick layers after layers of numerous faults and impurities and taints are scrubbed off, the spiritual aspirant is able to witness the inherent blissful and peaceful nature of the 'truthful self' known as the Atma within his own self. This is the aim of all spiritual practices—to realise the Truth and Reality by overcoming all delusions and ignorance.

This verse draws from the popular way of cleaning mirrors. A tarnished mirror, or any other smooth surface like it, is made to shine once again if sand or some ash is spread over its surface and then rubbed with a clean piece of cloth.

³The 'Tilak Mark' consists of three lines drawn on the forehead. They act like a lightning conductor put atop tall buildings; it attracts the bolt of electricity that strikes during severe thunderstorms and lets it pass through it to the ground, without harming the building itself. Just like the 'lightning rod' put atop a building attracts the

lightening of the clouds, or the antenna of a radio receiver attracts relevant signals of the frequency to which the radio is tuned, the Tilak mark made from the dust of the Guru's feet would help the disciple to attract all the good virtues around him, while at the same time repel all negative forces that may harm him.

The Tilak mark is an auspicious sign marked on the forehead, just above the root of the nose and between the eyebrows. It normally has three vertical lines in the shape of a tuning fork or a trident. These three lines represent the three Gunas—the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna. These three basic and inherent qualities are present in all living beings, and their mutual ratio and activeness would determine an individual's character, nature, habit and temperament, his overall personality, and the way he deals with the world and circumstances of life. Among the three, the best is the Sata Guna, the worst is the Tama Guna, and in between lies the Raja Guna.

In a symbolic manner, the Tilak mark—or shall we say the 'trident'—helps one to remind him that he is supposed to remain vigilant and overcome his tormentors in the form of the different Gunas that constantly cause mental restlessness and emotional problems for a living being, pulling him this way and that, and leaving him exasperated and bewildered. A disciple is reminded that his Guru is always there to watch him like a commander of an army who may not be physically present at all times but his token presence is enough to keep huge battalions disciplined. The purpose is nevertheless served.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3 where king Dasrath has praised the holy dust of a Guru's feet when he went to meet his own Guru, sage Vasistha. Dasrath said: "He who puts the dust of his Guru's feet on his own head is able to conquer the whole earth in a symbolic manner".

We read in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 352 that when Lord Ram and his three brothers returned home after their marriage, their father Dasrath and his queens had put the dust of sage Vishwamitra's feet on their heads as a mark of great respect to the latter. The sage had been instrumental in getting the four brothers married to the princesses of Janakpur.]

श्रीगुर पद नख मनि गन जोती । सुमिरत दिव्य दृष्टि हियँ होती ॥ ५ ॥

दलन मोह तम सो सप्रकासू । बड़े भाग उर आवड़ जासू ॥ ६ ॥

śrīgura pada nakha mani gana jōtī. sumirata dibya drṣṭi hiyaṁ hōtī. 5.
dalana mōha tama sō saprakāsū. baṛē bhāga ur āva'i jāśū. 6.

The nails of the Guru's feet are like self-illuminated gems¹, the mere remembrance of which enables a disciple to have the divine light of wisdom inside his inner-self.

[To wit, the nails of the feet of the Guru have the sublime shine resembling that of priceless gems so much so that their light illuminates the subtle heart of the worshipper as soon as he remembers them.] (5)

This divine light has the ability to eliminate the darkness of Moha (spiritual delusions and attachments with the world and its sense objects) that eclipses the inner self of the disciple. Fortunate is he whose heart is illuminated with this light (of wisdom).

[To wit, this light of knowledge and self-realisation that springs forth spontaneously in the subtle heart of the spiritual aspirant is able to dispel and eliminate completely all traces of darkness of ignorance and delusions that had earlier shrouded his inner-self. He is very lucky and fortunate in whose heart this light shines brilliantly.]² (6)

[Note—Remember: The Guru has already been treated as being a personified form of Lord Hari, or Lord Vishnu—refer: Sortha line no. 9 herein above that precedes these Chaupais. So therefore, the learned poet says that one ought to worship his Guru with the faith that he is worshipping the Lord God in that form, instead of an ordinary person.

¹A certain category of gems are said to be self-illuminated, for they effuse light on their own, and so they are visible even in complete darkness. The obvious idea here is that by following the advice of a wise and learned Guru, the disciple becomes wise and enlightened himself so much so that the light of Truth begins to shine spontaneously inside his heart and mind, thereby removing all forms of darkness arising out of ignorance and delusions that had covered his inner-self with a thick veil and eclipsed his wisdom previously. The disciple, in due course of time, becomes self-realised, enlightened and wise, acquiring spiritual wisdom from his Guru much like a mirror that reflects the light of the candle placed in front of it. Verily indeed, such a person is very lucky. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 259.

This is symbolism only. It simply means that when one worships the Guru's holy feet his mind and heart should be focused on its subtle and holy aspect, its sublime and spiritual value, and not on its grosser physical appearance such as the colour of the skin of the feet, whether they are wrinkled and chafed due to old age and hardships of life, if the nails are healthy or rough and brittle, etc. Just as a pearl or piece of diamond, for instance, has a subtle glow and smoothness that is inherent to them inspite of the fact that its origin is in an oyster and the ocean or in the dark bowls of the earth respectively, the nails of the feet of the Guru also enables the worshipper to illuminate his inner self with the light of 'consciousness' that comes from within.

The 'consciousness' lives in the subtle space of the heart of the spiritual aspirant in the form of an ethereal entity that is known as the Atma, the soul. This Atma is self-illuminated, and its realisation makes the inner-self of the worshipper glow with the light of self-realisation like the inherent shine of a priceless piece of gem. This is possible by the grace and blessing of a Guru.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 159 where Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, says: 'He who has devotion and affection for the lotus-like feet of his Guru is respected and lauded by the Vedas as well as the whole world which regards him as the most fortunate one.']

उघरहिं बिमल बिलोचन ही के । मिटहिं दोष दुख भव रजनी के ॥ ७ ॥

सूझहिं राम चरित मनि मानिक । गुप्त प्रगट जहँ जो जेहि खानिक ॥ ८ ॥

ugharahim̐ bimala bilōcana hī kē. miṭahim̐ dōṣa dukha bhava rajanī kē. 7.
sūjhahim̐ rāma carita mani mānika. guputa pragaṭa jaham̐ jō jēhi khānika. 8.

With the aid of the knowledge that he receives from his Guru, a disciple's internal eyes of wisdom represented by the abilities of his mind and heart to see the subtle truth and the reality of anything are opened wide, making him able to see things in the correct perspective¹.

This removes all causes of misery and grief arising out of being associated with this gross, mundane and perishable world of material sense objects, which is like being freed from the endless fear of ghosts and phantoms of the dark night². (7)

Further, as a result of this wisdom (acquired by the mind and the heart), one is able to see the truth and understand the reality of Lord Ram, both in the hidden form as well as in the evident and apparent form, in whatever form and wherever it is narrated when one reads the Lord's story as described in Ram Charit Manas³. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, with the help of the knowledge that he gains from his association with the wise Guru, a disciple is able to overcome all delusions and ignorance vis-à-vis his own 'self' as well as the world surrounding him. He begins to understand who he truly is, that the gross body of his is not his 'true self', for the latter is his pure consciousness known as the Atma that lives inside the gross body, and that the world around him is gross and entangling, almost like a trap for him as it would catch hold of him and suck him in an endless vortex of pain, misery and grief if he allows himself to be lured by its material attractions just like a fish gets caught by the bait dangled by the fisherman and regrets later on.

²Refer to verse no. 6 herein above. With the light of knowledge acquired by the blessing of the Guru, all sorts of confusions and doubts arising out of delusions and ignorance, and symbolizing the darkness of the night, are removed, which otherwise act like imaginary ghosts-of-the-night that continuously torment a spiritual aspirant.

What are these fears: the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72.

As soon as this light of spiritual awakening, self-realisation, true knowledge illuminates one's heart, the subtle eyes of wisdom and enlightenment open spontaneously. This in turn removes all the fears and horrors arising from the darkness of night symbolized by this mortal world of transmigration and its delusions that are like the terror of a huge roaring ocean that a man faces in the pitch darkness of the night.

A man sees many imaginary ghosts and phantoms in the darkness of the night, but as soon as daylight dawns, they vanish, and all fears and terrors arising from these phantoms go away automatically. Similarly, as soon as wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment sprouts in the inner-self of the spiritual aspirant, all his fears having their genesis in the darkness of ignorance run away. By the grace of the Guru his disciple is able to see the reality of things because the light of knowledge provided by the Guru removes the dark veil that surrounds the truth.

The mortal gross world is likened to an ocean here, the mere sight of which instils fear in the heart. When a person faces the horrifying prospect of having to cross a huge obstacle in the form of the heaving and surging ocean with its huge dark waves looming menacingly on the horizon and the roar of the ocean as if it would devour

anyone who dares to challenge its might, the sight of a sturdy ship is very heart-warming and reassuring. Likewise, when a person has to cross this world of transmigration which is no less awesome and fearsome than a mighty ocean, the support and help of an illustrious Guru is of no less importance than that of a great ship to cross the physical ocean!

³In order to actually spiritually benefit from the story of Ram Charit Manas, a person ought to take the help of a learned and wise teacher so that all his doubts are answered, and he is made aware of the many subtle points pertaining to Lord Ram and his greatness, divinity and holiness that he would miss if not enlightened about them by a wise man. A good and learned Guru will highlight the many sublime aspects of the story that would otherwise lie hidden and unknown if not brought to light, just like the case of a hidden treasure of priceless value that would be useless if it remains buried in darkness and not seen by a person in the light of a torch.

The grand spiritual benefits of this self-illuminating light of wisdom and enlightenment that begins to shine in one's inner-being upon self-realisation attained by the blessing of the Guru, accompanied by the ability to see things that have a subtle, sublime and ethereal existence (as opposed to those that have gross and mundane existence in this physical gross material world) due to the grace of the Guru, enables the seeker to see and understand the esoteric secrets of the divine story of Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Being), and be privileged enough to be able to peer behind the exterior to have a divine glimpse the glittering gems, large and small, of profound spiritual value that lie embedded in the holy story of Lord Ram that are normally hidden from view.

To wit, by the grace of the Guru a disciple is able to understand the real meaning of the story that narrates the time and life of Lord Ram, and see the reality behind the apparent worldly deeds of the Supreme Being when he manifested himself in the form of a human prince known by the name of Lord Ram.

The idea here is that by the grace of the Guru a disciple is able to get at the bottom of the teaching of the scriptures that would otherwise baffle him. He is able to separate the grain from the chaff, and draw meaningful message from the scriptures. Obviously only an expert can tell him these things, and this expert is his learned and wise Guru who satisfies all queries and removes all doubts.]

दो०. जथा सुअंजन अंजि दृग साधक सिद्ध सुजान ।

कौतुक देखत सैल बन भूतल भूरि निधान ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

jathā su'anjāna anji dṛga sādḥaka sid'dha sujāna.

kautuka dēkhata saila bana bhūtala bhūri nidhāna. 1.

[The ability to see and understand the subtle aspects of the truth and reality of Lord Ram that are ordinarily imperceptible but nevertheless incorporated in the story of Lord as narrated in the holy book called Ram Charit Manas is made possible by the grace of the learned Guru.]

It is just like the case of a magical eye ointment that is applied by expert clairvoyants and those with mystical abilities that enables them to see things not visible to the

naked eye, so much so that they can see secret treasures hidden inside mountains and hills, in forests, and under the surface of the earth (which others can't). (Doha no. 1)

[Note—It is like the case of some magical eye ointment having some mystical or occult powers that, when applied over the eye, enables a person to see some secret and esoteric things that are normally not visible to the naked eye, such as being able to see wonderful treasure troves of wealth that is hidden from view on mountains and forests and in the deep bowls of the earth.

To wit, with the grace of the Guru the disciple is able to learn many secrets of life and spiritualism that are not easily known and understood. Here the metaphor of the forests, the mountains and bowls of the earth is used because priceless herbs, gems and precious metals are found on mountains, forests and in mines dug deep into the earth, about which only experts can know. Without the help of an expert one may not be aware of them even if one perchance happens to see them right before his eyes; he won't be able to recognise them nor determine what their worth is.]

Here, the countless spiritual and metaphysical principles that would benefit the seeker of Truth who reads the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the book 'Ram Charit Manas', as well as the many facts about the divinity and truth nature of Lord Ram that are incorporated in the story but which remain hidden as they are not so obvious and apparently not understood by the common reader, are compared to the secret treasure hidden from view in the side of mountains, deep inside forests, and even underground.

The Guru highlights them and focuses the attention of the disciple on these profound principles and truths which usually miss the eye of the mind by unraveling their secrets and explaining their significance and importance to the eager disciple. To wit, the disciple is able to see and learn the many hidden secrets of the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas with the help of his Guru and his blessings, just like a clairvoyant is able to see and disclose the presence of a secret treasure to his faithful follower by applying some mystically empowered ointment on his eyes that enables him to see what is ordinarily invisible, so that the privileged follower would then take it out and benefit from it.

The guidance and the wisdom given by the learned Guru to his disciple are like the mystical ointment that enables the mystic to see priceless treasures that normal persons can't see.]

चौ०. गुरु पद रज मृदु मंजुल अंजन । नयन अमिअ दृग दोष बिभंजन ॥ १ ॥

तेहिं करि बिमल बिबेक बिलोचन । बरनउँ राम चरित भव मोचन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

guru pada raja mṛdu mañjula añjana. nayana ami'a dṛga dōṣa bibhañjana. 1.
tēhiṃ kari bimala bibēka bilōcana. barana'um' rāma carita bhava mōcana. 2.

The dust of the feet of the revered Guru is like the medicinal eye-ointment that fully cures the eye of its various ailments because once the Guru's benevolent grace is obtained by the disciple all his doubts and bewilderments are dispelled for good, and he is able to see the Truth and the Reality clearly, without any kind of distortion, which removes all confusions of his mind¹. (1)

[Tulsidas says—] By symbolically applying this holy dust of the Guru's feet on my eyes of wisdom, I hereby start my narration of the divine and holy story of Lord Ram, a story that can help destroy all the fears and consternations arising from this mortal world of transmigration with its endless chain of problems and miseries that torment the creature and keeps him yearning for freedom from them². (3)*

[Note—¹Just like a patient suffering from blurred vision due to some eye disease is unable to see things clearly but is freed from his problem by the application of an eye-ointment prescribed by an expert ophthalmologist, likewise the guidance and advice given by a learned Guru helps the seeker of Truth and spiritual aspirant see what he has set out to find in the spiritual field, clearly and unambiguously.

Previously the reader may have read the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas with the intention of learning the truth of Lord Ram and gain from its profound spiritual messages, but many kinds of doubts and confusions arose in his mind regarding the truth of Lord Ram and his divinity and holiness, which kept on lingering because of the lack of his ability to clearly see, understand and analyse the secret meaning and subtle spiritual messages that are incorporated in the story, leaving him perplexed, and this disturbed the peace of his heart.

But when he approaches a wise and enlightened Guru who explains the subtle nuances of the story with its profound spiritual and metaphysical import, the disciple feels exhilarated and fain, and he exults in his newly acquired wisdom as it makes him feel fulfilled. The knowledge given by the Guru makes the vision of the disciple clear as he is now able to see things in the right perspective and understand the reality of Lord Ram as a personified form of the Supreme Being though his physical form and deeds were like that of an ordinary human being, and why the Lord should be worshipped, revered and honoured, as well as the importance of the virtues of devotion and love for the Lord.

This verse line must be properly interpreted and understood. The 'eye' referred to here in this verse is the subtle inner-eye of the mind and intellect, and not the physical eye of the gross body. It is not the physical organ of the gross body that is known as the eye with which one sees the grosser aspects of the equally gross world of material sense objects, and therefore the 'disease' mentioned in this verse also does not refer to some physical disease that afflicts the physical organ of sight known as the eye.

The 'disease' here is the spiritual problems arising out of delusions and ignorance that prevents the creature to see the Truth and Reality. Worshipping the holy feet of the Guru and focusing the mind on the dust of his holy feet acts like a medicine for this subtle disease. It enables a person to develop wisdom and ability to see what is wrong, unethical and unrighteous, and segregate it from what is wise, righteous, ethical and correct. It opens the eyes of wisdom, erudition and discrimination that allow the man to see and examine the surrounding world intelligently and analytically. It is like removing cataract from one's eyes when suddenly he begins to see the whole world clearly, brightly. The auspicious reward of worshipping the holy feet of the Guru is that this empowers the spiritual aspirant to have the ability to have deep insight into the reality of the world and its existence with eyes of wisdom that can see behind the shroud of delusions that surround the entire world like a thick veil of smoke, preventing clarity of sight.

²Tulsidas says "Using this dust like an eye-ointment, I (Tulsidas) clean my eyes of wisdom and erudition so that I may be able to narrate the wonderful, the sublime, the

holy and the divine story of Lord Ram that is known as Ram Charit Manas. This divine story is able to free its listener from the snare of this mortal world of transmigration that is like a huge ocean known as ‘Bhavasagar’”.

The learned poet says that he has been able to see the spiritual merit and experience the mystical abilities of this story of Lord Ram by the grace of his Guru, and this wisdom has enabled him to overcome all his worries about the welfare of his Atma, his soul. It has granted him abiding peace, happiness, joy, succour and solace; now he is free from all fears that had been tormenting him all along like it is the case of all living beings in this mortal, mundane world who are concerned about their fate in this life and the life hereafter.

Tulsidas says that he is so peaceful now, and so completely assured of deliverance, emancipation and salvation that he has decided to share this eclectic knowledge with the readers of this story of Ram Charit Manas that he will narrate anon, with an assurance that they too would benefit and feel blessed like him if they not only read and understand this holy story of Lord Ram properly but also have full faith in its mystical powers, the spiritual blessings that it grants, and its ability to bestow all-round happiness and welfare to the devotees of Lord Ram.

*This verse marks the end of prayers meant to honour the learned Guru.]

बंदउँ प्रथम महीसुर चरना । मोह जनित संसय सब हरना ॥ ३ ॥
सुजन समाज सकल गुन खानी । करउँ प्रनाम सप्रेम सुबानी ॥ ४ ॥

banda'umṁ prathama mahīsura caranā. mōha janita sansaya saba haranā. 3.
sujana samāja sakala guna khānī. kara'umṁ pranāma saprēma subānī. 4.

[The verses that follow now are in honour of saintly and pious persons.]

At first (to begin with), I bow to and pay my respects to the revered feet of those who are literally like living gods (or personified forms of gods) on this earth (mahīsura)¹.

They are able to eliminate all doubts and vexations arising out of Moha (delusions and worldly infatuations) that cause so much fear for a creature². (3)

I most reverentially and with the most polite words I can command pay my respects to the entire community of saintly and pious people who are like a treasury of good virtues and noble character³. (4)

[Note—¹The Brahmin community is usually referred to with this epithet of ‘mahīsura’, literally meaning “living gods on earth”. It is because they are expected to have stellar qualities and excellent characters, possessing noble virtues and truthful knowledge that makes them exalted and senior amongst all living beings in this world. They act as guides and advisors to the rest of the society, meaning that they are no less important than a Guru for the world at large.

²So therefore, it follows that like the individual Guru these Brahmins too help the world by showing the people correct path, help solve their spiritual problems and

doubts, and to teach them the scriptures not only in the literal way but also by expounding upon the hidden spiritual and metaphysical philosophy they contain.

To wit, what the individual Guru is to his disciple vis-à-vis removal of the latter's ignorance and doubts, the Brahmins are to the world at large, and so they are equally worthy of reverence.

A detailed list of what constitutes 'Moha' has been given in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71-a.

And how long does Moha live in the inner-self of a creature, troubling him and ruining his peace? Well, it is till Lord Ram is not enshrined in the heart of the creature, because obviously there cannot be darkness in a chamber if there is light in it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 47.

But for this, the person must be convinced about the divinity of Lord Ram, and that the Lord is not an ordinary man but the Supreme Being himself in a personified form. For developing this faith and conviction, a proper understanding of the story of Ram Charit Manas is essential.

³This verse is remarkable in as much as it includes within its ambit 'all those who have saintly and pious qualities', irrespective of which class in the society they belong to. This is the greatness of Tulsidas' broadness of vision to define who is a praise worthy person, as well as who can be a devotee of Lord Ram: he says that he can be 'anyone' who has stellar qualities of mind, heart and character, who is wise, enlightened and self-realised, who has love and devotion for Lord Ram, who believes in the Absolute Truth as envisioned in the scriptures themselves rather than the distorted version of it as propagated by selfish elements.

Those persons who love the company of good people like saints and sages, who have affection for and faith in the Guru who himself follows the path of righteousness and auspiciousness, who serve Brahmins as representatives of the gods on earth, and who have special affection and love for Lord Ram—such persons are eligible to hear story of Lord Ram. [Others would mock at it and find faults with it.] Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

साधु चरित सुभ चरित कपासू । निरस बिसद गुनमय फल जासू ॥ ५ ॥

जो सहि दुख परछिद्र दुरावा । बंदनीय जेहिं जग जस पावा ॥ ६ ॥

sādhu carita subha carita kapāsū. nirasa bisada gunamaya phala jāśū. 5.
jō sahi dukha parachidra durāvā. bandanīya jēhim jaga jasa pāvā. 6.

The auspicious and glorious lives, deeds and conduct (subha carita) of (true) holy saints and pious people (sādhu) are pure and untainted (subha carita) like the life of the cotton plant (kapāsū). The reward of such a life, howbeit tasteless, insipid and unattractive (nirasa), is nevertheless huge and full of virtues (bisada gunamaya)¹. (5)

This cotton plant allows itself to undergo immense hardship so that the faults, shortcomings and infirmities of others can be hidden.

[To wit, when a cloth is made with this cotton, it is used by others to cover themselves, their bodies, and make many others things of daily usage such as bed-sheets, towels, napkins, cotton sheets used as shrouds or to wrap other things, and so on. So the cotton plant does not mind its own sufferings because it gives comfort and protection to others.]².

Verily, this is the reason why such saintly souls (whose lives are compared to the cotton plant) are praised, honoured and revered in this world³. (6)

[Note—¹The cotton plant produces fruits that are tasteless, white in colour, fibrous and dry; no one enjoys such fruits. Likewise, saints and truly holy men are not attached to this world of illusionary charm; they have renounced all worldly pretensions and do not wish to waste their time and energy in worthless talking, thinking or pursuing matters of the mundane world. As such, ordinary people do not find them as a good company; they do not look charming to people who wish to delve in matters related to the world and its numerous material objects.

But albeit such saints seem without any charm, they are nevertheless full of virtues and excellent qualities that have great spiritual value and are worthy of praise. Like the colour 'white' of the cotton, they are pure at heart and their deeds are holy as well. Their detachment from the material charms of the world and seemingly dry and emotionless nature resembles the fruit of the cotton plant.

The stellar qualities and excellent characters of saintly souls, and the benefit of having communion with them are enumerated in Ram Charit Manas elsewhere too, viz. in its Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 71; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 128.

They are also enumerated in (a) Tulsidas' book 'Vairagya Sandipani', verse nos. 8-61; and (b) extolled in Narad Bhakti Sutra, verse no. 69 as the basis for developing the virtue of Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord God.

²The cotton suffers a lot when it is passed through the ginning machine which separates the cotton from its seed, then it is pulled and stretched into a thread, spun into a yarn, and weaved into cloth of various textures. All this puts the cotton through a lot of toils, pains and sufferings, but it never complains. It is rather happy that its sufferings would help others to cover themselves with clothes that would be made from this cotton.

³Likewise, truly holy men find happiness in serving others and providing for their welfare even if it means they have to suffer hardships themselves.]

मुद मंगलमय संत समाजू । जो जग जंगम तीरथराजू ॥ ७ ॥

राम भक्ति जहँ सुरसरि धारा । सरसइ ब्रह्म बिचार प्रचारा ॥ ८ ॥

muda maṅgalamaya santa samājū. jō jaga jaṅgama tīratharājū. 7.
rāma bhakti jaham' surasari dhārā. sarasa'i brahma bicāra pracārā. 8.

An assembly or gathering of saints and holy people especially, and the community of saints and pious people in a general way¹, is a provider of auspiciousness, blessedness, joy and happiness to all. In all sooth, this community is like a living

embodiment of ‘Triveni’, which is regarded as the ‘King amongst pilgrim sites’ (tīratharājū)², in this mortal and mundane world.

[To wit, the spiritual benefits that one gets by visiting so many religious places can be got by the company of saints. People visit pilgrim places to clean their inner selves, do penance for sins, and derive some spiritual peace and happiness. This same benefit is availed in the company of saints.] (7)

In this assembly of saints and pious people (which is like a walking ‘tīratharāj’ in this mundane world), the holy river Ganges symbolized by ‘Bhakti’ (devotion; surrender; submission; faith) for Lord Ram, and the holy river Saraswati symbolized by thoughts and discourses of Brahm, the Supreme Being, the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Self, flows³. [One gets a spiritual environment in the company of saints. This is marked by the devotion and enlightenment.] (8)

[Note—¹In a religious congregation a large number of saints and holy people collect at a single place. This helps to bring together at one place a good collection of great virtues, excellent qualities and noble characters that these saints possess. On the other hand, they live scattered as a community, and it becomes very tedious and impossible for a person to visit every saint and pious man worth his name, for it may not be possible for him to have knowledge of each individual saint of great quality.

Besides this benefit of an assembly of saints vis-à-vis their general community, the other benefit is that one can easily compare the different virtues and characters that the gathered saints possess, which makes it all the more easy to assess them individually and see how they learn from one another, how they strive to overcome their shortcomings without any sign of inferiority or superiority.

While a visit to an individual saint is surely rewarding, but this reward has its limitations because that particular saint may be exalted on one or two counts of virtues but may be lacking to some degree in another virtue. It is also time consuming for a spiritual aspirant if he goes hunting for virtuous saints, wandering from one place to another, for in all probability he may miss to meet them. These shortcomings are done away with when all great saints collect at one place. It helps the spiritual learner because he has the best teachers and guides at one place.

Now, this assembly of saints and holy souls is compared to ‘Prayag’ because just like the latter is a ‘confluence of three great holy rivers’, bringing with them their religious benefits and spiritual rewards at one single place, the assembly or gathering of saints ‘showcases at one place, in a concentrated form, all the finest of virtues and characters that they possess’. If one of these saints is deficient in one virtue, then this deficiency is compensated by another saint. The beneficiary of such a show of the best of spiritual talents at one place is the seeker himself, because he is able to make a wise and considered choice, and decide for himself which of the virtues best suits him and his temperament. It also helps these individual saints as well, because it helps them to identify their own shortcomings and take necessary steps to overcome them.

²The pilgrim site by the name of ‘Triveni’ is known as the ‘King of pilgrim sites’ (tīratharājū) because three holy rivers have their confluence there. These are (i) river Ganges, (ii) river Saraswati, and (iii) river Yamuna.

Briefly, river Ganges is an embodiment of the virtues of Bhakti (devotion) as it emerged from the toes of Lord Vishnu and was held on the head of Lord Shiva before it descended to earth to provide liberation and deliverance to those who had no other means of salvation. River Saraswati is named after a goddess of the same name

who stands for 'Gyan' or knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment. Hence, river Saraswati embodies these virtues.

River Yamuna (cited in Chaupai line no. 9 herein below) is the daughter of the Sun God who sustains life in this world, and he inspires the creature to do deeds during the time the sun shines in the sky. The sun also is a symbol of 'light' that removes darkness, the darkness of ignorance and delusions. So therefore, Yamuna symbolizes those saints who do their duty in this world like other ordinary creatures, but with a thought on what is good and what is bad, which deed is righteous and which is to be avoided. Such saints may look engrossed in the affairs of the world, but internally they are pure and holy and tranquil. Their company helps a person to learn how to go about one's life normally, while still gaining spiritual blessedness.

The first river 'Ganges' is called the river of Gods, and it is highly praised in the scriptures as very spiritually purifying, and is considered as the holiest amongst the three. It is said that by bathing in its waters a sinful person can literally wash off his sins, i.e. easily atone for them.

In this verse, 'devotion for Lord Ram' is likened to this holy river, and its significance is clear: one can easily find liberation and deliverance from sins and troubles of the soul that one encounters while living in this gross world by having devotion for Lord Ram who was a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, just as it is easy to clean one's body by taking a dip and rubbing off the dirt from one's body in the crystal clear waters of a great river.

This eclectic spiritual virtue of 'devotion for Lord Ram' is invariably practiced in the community of saints. So when a person comes in contact with saints, he feels the positive energy flowing freely; he lives in this spiritually clean and positive environment. He sees how these saintly people are happy and carefree; he observes their lifestyle and conduct. This sets and acts as an example for him, and true to the adage that 'one becomes like the company one keeps', a person who is fortunate to come in contact with saints undergoes transformation for good.

³The second river is Saraswati. This river represents knowledge and wisdom about the Truth of existence, and about one's own 'self' which is not the gross body but the 'pure conscious Atma'. 'Saraswati' is the patron goddess of knowledge, wisdom, awakening and intellect; this river is named after her as a symbolic representation of the virtues that are the hallmarks of Saraswati.

This virtue of having true knowledge, enlightenment, self-realisation and so forth, is an added bonus and a complimentary virtue to the first virtue of devotion. True saints and holy people are wise enough to take the help of both these two tools for their spiritual good and elevation.

They never waste their time talking about the affairs of the gross, perishable and deluding world of material sense objects and their transient charms and comforts and pleasures. On the contrary, they discuss means to purify their inner self and attain self-realisation. Both 'devotion' and 'contemplation on the Truth of existence, of the self and the Atma' go hand in hand, as two complimentary tools for one's spiritual welfare, liberation and deliverance from this gross world and its delusions, attainment of a state of bliss and beatitude, and the final salvation and emancipation of the 'self'.

Since both these virtues—(i) devotion for Lord God, and (ii) self-realisation and enlightenment about the Atma, the 'true self' of a creature which is not his gross and perishable body, but pure, sublime and subtle Consciousness—are needed for one's spiritual welfare, and the community of saints practices them in a wholesome manner, and therefore for a spiritual seeker the community of saints is the best place

to learn about these eclectic and glorious virtues, and to see them being practiced first hand.

The idea in this verse is that when saints gather at a place, one sees two types amongst them—(i) one who is like river Ganges, and (ii) the other who is like river Saraswati. The first sorts of saints have pure devotion for Lord Ram, and by their communion one is able to learn this virtue, its benefits and practice. The second sorts have self-realisation and knowledge of the Truth, and their company helps one to be enlightened about these virtues, their spiritual benefits, and how to practice this path towards fulfillment of spiritual goals.]

बिधि निषेधमय कलि मल हरनी । करम कथा रबिनंदनि बरनी ॥ ९ ॥

हरि हर कथा बिराजति बेनी । सुनत सकल मुद मंगल देनी ॥ १० ॥

bidhi niṣēdhamaya kali mala haranī. karama kathā rabinandani baranī. 9.
hari hara kathā birājati bēnī. sunata sakala muda maṅgala dēnī. 10.

The revered river, who is the daughter of the Sun God (i.e. river Yamuna, which is the third river of the trinity of holy rivers), symbolises the virtue (wisdom) that enlightens a saint about which of the different deeds he should do and which he should avoid. This virtue helps the saint to eliminate the sins that are associated with the era called ‘Kaliyug’, the present period of evil and sinful life¹. (9)

At such a congregation of saints and pious people, there is a confluence of noble virtues, and freely flowing discourses about divine stories of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu) and Lord Har (Lord Shiva) which are like the rivers (Ganges, Saraswati and Yamuna) that converge at Triveni (the *tīratharāj*) with their swift currents symbolising their abilities to wash away sins and evil nature of a person who bathes in them². (10)

[Note—¹A wise and enlightened saint can differentiate between righteous and unrighteous deeds. He will endeavour to do the good deeds, while avoiding those which his sub-conscious tells him are bad for his spiritual welfare. River Yamuna is given a special name here—as being the ‘daughter of the Sun God’. The hidden implication is that this river represents the inherent quality of the sun that it lights up the world and removes its darkness. It is a metaphoric way of saying that the wisdom that river Yamuna stands for enables the saint to see things in the light of knowledge and wisdom. In the bright light of the sun a person is able to see all things distinctly, so likewise by the blessings of river Yamuna a person is able to distinguish between the good and the bad.

The ‘sun’ represents life with all its dynamic activities—because it is during the daytime that every individual gets up and does whatever he is supposed to do in this world. On the other hand, night is dark, and it represents the darkness of delusions and ignorance that makes a creature virtually stunned into inactivity, and this is evident when he shuns all activities and goes to bed, lying motionless as if knocked unconscious, stupefied and numbed. The light of the sun removes all lethargy and delusions, and the same creature regains vitality and energy to do all his pending work as soon as he sees the sun rise and show its light to him.

As we have observed, true saints therefore have three eclectic virtues: (i) devotion, (ii) truthful knowledge, (iii) and the ability to use this knowledge in practice by using the light of wisdom and prudence.

There are four eras according to Hindu scriptures. The fourth era is known as 'Kali-yug'. It has the word "Kali", meaning 'dark; black', as a part of its name. This implies that this era is especially marked by dark deeds that are collectively called sinful. This is why this river also looks dark in colour because it represents the deeds done by a creature during Kaliyug. But this is the external feature of this 'holy' river, for albeit it is dark in colour yet it provides holiness and purity internally. How come? It is because it represents that light of wisdom and discrimination that enables the creature to distinguish between deeds that are righteous, good and noble, and deeds that are not.

So a saint who embodies the virtues of river Yamuna goes about his daily life like ordinary men, but he carefully selects what deeds he does and what he avoids. Therefore, by observing their lives and conduct, the learner spiritual seeker gets to know and see in practice how to live in this world and do one's duties diligently, while still reaping spiritual rewards by remaining aloof from the world and free from its entanglements.

These saints who embody the virtues symbolised by river Yamuna show how one can skip all spiritual and moral faults, taints, shortcomings, smears and scars that will degrade his Atma, his soul, and drag him into the quagmire of worldly affairs that would rob him of his peace and happiness even while remaining involved in one's worldly duties.

²At 'Triveni', the rivers come from different directions, but converge into a single body of water. Metaphorically it means that different saints tell the divine stories of the Lord God in different ways and style, highlighting their different aspects and glorious messages, but when the hearer hears them, he is able to stir them into one homogenous story about the divine Lord and his glories in his inner-self, in his mind and subconscious, thereby helping him to extract the best of rewards from all of them by mingling them into one.

Just like bathing in the holy waters of these revered rivers is believed to wash away the sins and evil tendencies of a person, listening to the discourses of saints and holy men at this pilgrimage site known as Triveni helps to dispel all spiritual doubts and their attendant perplexities that cause so much mental unease to a spiritual aspirant, thereby not only granting him peace but also showing him the right path ahead.

These discourses from countless teachers are exceedingly helpful for the seeker of truth because each speaker explains a fundamental principle in his own way and in the way he has himself understood it, but it is quite possible that the idea which he tries to convey is not properly understood by the audience, so then when the listener gets an opportunity to hear the same subject being spoken of by a wide variety of speakers, it is certain that at least one of them would be fully understood by the listener. Besides this benefit, if still any doubts linger, the spiritual aspirant can have an appointment with the teacher he thinks would be best suited for answering his questions and have a direct intercourse with him. No better opportunity to remove doubts, get proper advice and solve spiritual problems can be had as during a large religious congregation where experts in the field assemble at a single place.

There is another benefit of attending such religious congregations. It enables the seeker of truth and a spiritual aspirant to have access to a large number saints and

sages at a single place, which helps him find the correct answers to his queries and get these answers double-checked. It is also helpful because then he won't have to go to different places in search of a right teacher who can enlighten him about the subject he wishes to be learn or certain specific questions he wants answered clearly and unambiguously.

Further, the chance to hear many preachers at a single place aids a person to select the right Guru who could help him in his spiritual pursuit by taking into account the individual's personal temperament and aptitude, for such religious congregations provide a vast choice and makes the task of searching a right Guru very easy for the spiritual aspirant as compared to going to any single learned teacher by knowing about him through word-of-mouth and relying on references from others, for it is probable that this teacher may not be the right one for the individual concerned just like the case of a chronically ill patient for whom only a particular doctor's medicine works well though there is no dearth of doctors or hospitals in the world.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.]

बटु बिस्वास अचल निज धरमा । तीरथराज समाज सुकरमा ॥ ११ ॥

सबहि सुलभ सब दिन सब देसा । सेवत सादर समन कलेसा ॥ १२ ॥

baṭu bisvāsa acala nija dharamā. tīratharāja samāja sukaramā. 11.

sabahi sulabha saba dina saba dēsā. sēvata sādara samana kalēsā. 12.

In the community of saints (here meaning in all individual saints), the faith and trust that each one of them has in the spiritual path that he has chosen to follow, and his steadfastness in that spiritual path (which is the sacrosanct principle of life for him, his “dharamā”) are like the ‘Vat tree’ (the banyan tree) that is strong, has deep roots, and a long life.

[To wit, the noble virtues that these saintly people possess are qualities that are permanent in them and are deeply ingrained in their character, like the Banyan tree which has deep roots and literally an eternal life as it lives through countless centuries.]

The noble and virtuous actions and deeds of saints are like the working of the royal court of ‘Tīratharāja’, the King of holy places.

[To wit, just as only noble people are admitted in the court of a great King, so only those saints who possess noble qualities are allowed to remain in the community of saints. It is not a place for imposters and mavericks. Therefore, their actions and examples of life are reliable.] (11)

This communion of saints, pious souls and noble people is a blessing that can be accessed by all; people from all geographical areas and communities, of whatever belief and faith, can benefit from their knowledge and communion with them at all times. By respectfully serving such saints and begetting their blessings, by following their examples and advice, all the internal torments and sorrows that one suffers from can be easily eliminated.

[This is because one would learn to lead a noble life and inculcate good qualities, have spiritual wisdom and enlightenment, which all lead to internal peace, happiness, calmness, solace and comfort.] (12)

अकथ अलौकिक तीरथराऊ । देइ सद्य फल प्रगट प्रभाऊ ॥ १३ ॥

akatha alaukika tīratharā'ū. dē'i sadya phala pragata prabhā'ū. 13.

This confluence of holy virtues at the symbolic holy place called 'Triveni', the King of pilgrim places (tīratharā'ū) has so great an importance that it cannot be described in words, and neither is it visible in physical terms.

[To wit, the 'Triveni' that is described in the foregoing verses only has a symbolic form. It is used as a metaphor to highlight the importance of the combined virtues of saints and holy people that serve as an example for all spiritual aspirants to follow in their own lives.]

The assembly or congregation of saints grants quick spiritual rewards, and albeit it is only a symbolic form of Triveni (confluence of holy rivers that symbolise flow of abundant good virtues), but these rewards are tangible. (13)

[Note—It is only for the purpose of emphasizing the importance of a community of noble saints and the immensity of spiritual rewards one gets in their company that the holiest of pilgrim places known as Triveni has been cited in these verses. It is merely a metaphor and example.

So, just like the case that a visit to Triveni bears fruits that are manifold times more than visiting many individual holy places during one's pilgrimage, attending a congregation of saints has far greater benefits than searching them out individually.]

दो०. सुनि समुझहिं जन मुदित मन मज्जहिं अति अनुराग ।
लहहिं चारि फल अछत तनु साधु समाज प्रयाग ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

suni samujhahim jana mudita mana majjahim ati anurāga.
lahahim cāri phala achata tanu sādhu samāja prayāga. 2.

Those wise people who cheerfully hear about and understand the symbolism and significance of this holy place known as 'Prayāga' (whose other names are Triveni and Tirtha-raj) that represents an assembly of great saints and holy people, take a dip in the waters of this holy place¹ with great faith, affection and reverence, and such people are able to get the four rewards of life as a human being¹ during their lifetime. (Doha no. 2)

[Note—¹This refers to the practice of taking a ritualistic dip or a bath at the confluence of the three holy rivers at the pilgrim site known as 'Prayag' or 'Triveni' as a religious duty that is said to help the pilgrim to wash off the negative effects of his sins, and atone for them. The implied meaning here is that a spiritual aspirant should join a community of saints and live with them for some time to observe their lifestyles and learn from their virtues, seeking guidance whenever needed, and endeavouring to gradually transmew oneself from what one is at present into a noble person who walks on the same path as shewn by these saints to him.

The analogy of the confluence of three great holy rivers and taking a dip into them as a means of obtaining spiritual merit with the communion of saints is very significant. One gets actual benefit and merit by taking a dip or a bath in any holy place, not only at Triveni, only if he mends his old evil and sinful way of life. Otherwise this is a completely futile exercise, and a waste of money and time going on a pilgrim, if one does not become determined to change himself.

Remember: Taking a bath at a pilgrim place merely as a ritual without sincerely following its subtle requirements for purification of the inner self is equivalent to taking a bath in an ordinary pond, or better still in one's home, because the waters of these rivers at pilgrim places are dirty and full of microbes if one thinks that its physical touch will do some magic. It will make him sick instead.

This bath is a symbolic way of washing one's past and cleaning one's self. So the real cleaning comes when no new dirt is allowed to stick to the inner-self. Similarly, merely meeting saints and sages won't help. The real benefit comes if one follows in their footsteps.

²The four rewards of leading a meritorious life as a human being are the following: (i) 'Artha' = material well-being; (ii) 'Dharma' = a life of virtues and nobility that begets respect; (iii) 'Kaam' = fulfilment of desires; and (iv) 'Moksha' = liberation and deliverance of the soul from this body and the world.]

चौ०. मज्जन फल पेखिअ ततकाला । काक होहिं पिक बकउ मराला ॥ १ ॥

सुनि आचरज करै जनि कोई । सतसंगति महिमा नहिं गोई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

majjana phala pēkhi'a tatakālā. kāka hōhiṃ pika baka'u marālā. 1.
suni ācaraja karai jani kō'i. satasaṅgati mahimā nahim gō'i. 2.

The rewards or benefits of taking a bath in this symbolic holy place (Prayag; Triveni that represents an assembly of saints) is seen soon, and is so astounding and wondrous as if crows mysteriously get transformed into cuckoos, and cranes into swans¹. (1)

Let no one be astonished with such transformations, for the glory and mystical powers of saints are tremendous and are not hidden from anyone. (2)

[Note—¹These two instances of a crow getting converted into a cuckoo and a crane into a swan are used in a metaphoric way to emphasise the ability of saints to transform even the most sinful and vile person into one who is honourable and like themselves.

Both the crow and the cuckoo are black in colour, but while the former (the crow) is a hated bird not only for its harsh crowing voice but also because it feeds on flesh of cadavers, the latter (the cuckoo) is a loved bird that sings sweetly and eats plant products like other ordinary birds. The cuckoo is a pet bird of poets.

Similarly, both the crane and the swan have white colour, but their habits and characters are diametrically opposite. The crane is a flesh eating bird, catching fish by standing on one leg in water like a hermit, a posture that cheats the onlooker who may think that the bird is meditating by standing mid-stream; the swan also lives in water but is regarded as a symbol of purity. The swan is a vehicle of goddess Saraswati

because it is a symbol of purity though it may live in a surrounding of polluted water of the lake. The swan is a favourite bird with teachers who teach on metaphysics and spiritual philosophy.

Further, the colour of the two sets of birds chosen by Tulsidas also is significant. One set of birds is ‘black’ skinned and the other is ‘white’. It implies that all the people of this world, no matter to which continent or country they belong and which tone of colour their skin has, would universally benefit by their association with saints.

Another reason for selecting a crow and a crane to represent bad and evil people is this: the crow has no pretensions of piety or holiness like the crane which stands mid-stream on one leg like a meditating hermit, only to dive at an innocent and unaware fish and pick it up for food in its beak. To with, this means that there are two sorts of people in this world: one sort that is overtly evil and does not hide its wickedness like the crow, and the other sort is like the crane who are deceitful and cunning, fooling the world by their pretentious exterior of holiness. But both are radically changed when they come in contact with true saints.

Just as this transformation seems magical and astonishing, the change that is brought about in a person with his association of saints is also great and unbelievable.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 38 (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 5; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 281; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 302; (c) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 1; and (d) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 112—where the wickedness of a crow and a crane have been underlined.

A similar idea is expressed in Tulsidas’ book of prayers called ‘Vinai Patrika’, in its verse no. 185, stanza no. 3.]

बालमीक नारद घटजोनी । निज निज मुखनि कही निज होनी ॥ ३ ॥

bālamīka nārada ghaṭajōnī. nija nija mukhani kahī nija hōnī. 3.

Great sages like Valmiki¹, Narad² and Agastya³ (known as “ghaṭajōnī” because he was born in a pitcher) have narrated with their own mouths about their lives, and how they were transmewed into exalted sages due to contact with great saints⁴. (3)

[Note—¹Valmiki was a highway robber and hunter in his early life. Once he met the seven celestial sages called the ‘Spata-rishis’ who prevailed upon him to change his lifestyle. So, when Valmiki paid heed to their advice, he was transformed into a great sage and poet.

²Narad was the son of a maid-servant in his previous birth. By his good fortune he came in contact with holy men who imparted spiritual wisdom to him and their advice and example made Narad into a great devotee of the Lord. In his next birth, he was born as mind-born son of the creator Brahma.

³Agastya was the son of Varun, the Water God. He was conceived in and took birth from a pitcher. Another great and renowned sage Vasistha (who later became the teacher and court priest of Lord Ram and his father king Dasrath of Ayodhya) was

also born from the same pitcher. This embryonic association of Agastya with another great sage Vasistha made him an exalted sage himself because now both were like brothers as they shared the same incubator, the pitcher.

⁴Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 14; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 19 where all saints who have sung the glories of the Lord God and helped in the spreading of Lord Ram's message are being offered reverence and respect in a general way.]

जलचर थलचर नभचर नाना । जे जड़ चेतन जीव जहाना ॥ ४ ॥
मति कीरति गति भूति भलाई । जब जेहिं जतन जहाँ जेहिं पाई ॥ ५ ॥
सो जानब सतसंग प्रभाऊ । लोकहुँ बेद न आन उपाऊ ॥ ६ ॥

jalacara thalacara nabhacara nānā. jē jaṛa cētana jīva jahānā. 4.
mati kīrati gati bhūti bhalā'ī. jaba jēhim jatana jahām' jēhim pā'ī. 5.
sō jānaba sataśaṅga prabhā'ū. lōkahum' bēda na āna upā'ū. 6.

Any creature, whether it is an inhabitant of the water (all sorts of aquatic animals), of the land (terrestrial animals of all species and families), or of the air (birds etc.), whether it is animate or inanimate (such as animals that show dynamic movement, or plants as well as those animals that do not show any apparent movement), anywhere in the world [4]---

---whosoever amongst them who has ever got or acquired at any time (jaba jēhim pā'ī) in their lives, any sort of wisdom (mati), glory, fame and acclaim (kīrati), spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation (gati), material prosperity, welfare, or any other good for themselves (bhūti bhalā'ī), by any method or means in this world (jēhim jatana jahām') [5]---

---all of these great and laudable achievements ought to be deemed as the eclectic fruit or reward of good company with saints and holy people.

Verily and forsooth, there is no other means prescribed either by the Vedas or by traditional wisdom in the world by the virtue of which these glories can be achieved. [6] (4-6)

[Note—If a person wishes to acquire good set of virtues and characters that would make him praise worthy in this world, the best and the easiest way for him or her is the company of pious and holy saints. But one should be committed and sincere in his pursuit of true knowledge and a desire to inculcate good virtues, for it is only then that he would closely observe the life, conduct, characters and behaviour of saintly people, try to learn from them and practice these noble virtues in his own life to actually benefit from the company of such great souls. Otherwise it becomes an exercise of mere scrutiny to find faults with these men and prick holes in them and their character. For remember, no matter how excellent a person may be, after all he is a human being, and can't therefore be cent percent perfect. The trick is to pick up and learn the good things, and discard the things that seem not too good.

To wit, a word of caution has to be added here: one has to be discerning and wise if one were to benefit from examples of others or their teachings, for blindly following anyone or any idea would often produce undesired consequences. In this context, the reader should refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 6 which explicitly stresses this point.

The central idea of these verses is that all living beings, whether they are birds and insects, creatures of the water and subterranean world, animals living on land, human beings, including those who live in remote parts such as forests, and even inanimate elements such as rivers, mountains, earth and trees—all have a right to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation for their souls. This is the singular glory of Lord Ram's divine story, that whosoever hears it becomes entitled to its inherent rewards. This idea is clearly hinted when we read that all those who had the opportunity to see Lord Ram or came in contact with him while he was wondering in the forest, were blessed with the feeling fulfillment, and all became eligible to attain the most exalted state of existence that a soul yearns for. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 136; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 137; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 138—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

बिनु सतसंग बिबेक न होई । राम कृपा बिनु सुलभ न सोई ॥ ७ ॥
सतसंगत मुद मंगल मूला । सोइ फल सिधि सब साधन फूला ॥ ८ ॥

binu satasaṅga bibēka na hō'ī. rāma krpā binu sulabha na sō'ī. 7.
satasaṅgata muda maṅgala mūlā. sō'ī phala sidhi saba sādhana phūlā. 8.

Indeed, true wisdom and the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad cannot be learnt without the company of and association with good and virtuous people (because such company or association is a practical method to learn these virtues and see them in action)¹. And such a fortunate opportunity of having contact, company or association with good, saintly and holy men (known as “satasaṅga”) is not possible without the grace of Lord Ram (i.e. without the blessing of Lord God)². (7)

Verily, ‘satasaṅga’ is the root of all happiness and joy, of all welfare and well-being, both spiritually and temporally.

Such contact with virtuous people is akin to having fruits for all endeavours because it culminates in spiritual successes (by way of attaining bliss, peace, liberation and deliverance) as well as temporal gains (by way of general improvement in one's character, actions, behaviour, thinking and lifestyle that brings in fame and reputation).

All other methods are merely like flowers (as they may look very attractive and colourful, and may also give temporary fame and signs of happiness, but they do not provide any solid nourishment to the soul and neither are they permanent). (8)

[Note—¹This verse underlines the importance of having correct knowledge and truthful wisdom to succeed in one's spiritual endeavours. In fact, this is necessary for success in any enterprise whatsoever.

²Lord Ram's grace is essential for getting the chance to meet good teachers who would show the right and the correct path to the devotee, and remove all his confusions and doubts. Hence, a devotee should pray to the Lord to guide him to a wise and enlightened Guru.

Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 136/10.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 2; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; (c) Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 69 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iv) Doha no. 123; (v) Doha no. 125-b, along with Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede it; (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 127; (vii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 128.

The point here is that all these verses lay stress on the importance of communion with saints and holy people if one wishes to seek spiritual welfare as well as true wisdom and enlightenment. Such interaction with pious souls proves to be good in all respects.]

सठ सुधरहिं सतसंगति पाई । पारस परस कुधात सुहाई ॥ ९ ॥

बिधि बस सुजन कुसंगत परहीं । फनि मनि सम निज गुन अनुसरहीं ॥ १० ॥

saṭha sudharahim satasaṅgati pāī. pārasa parasa kudhāta suhāī. 9.
bidhi basa sujana kusaṅgata parahīm. phani mani sama nija guna
anusarahīm. 10.

Even the wicked, evil, mischievous and unscrupulous creatures are modified and transmuted for good under the positive and auspicious effects of contact with and company of saints and virtuous people just like iron that is converted into gold by the mere contact with the 'pārasa mani', or the 'philosopher's stone'¹. (9)

On the other hand, if virtuous and saintly people come in contact with evil and wicked people by ill fate or unfortunate circumstances, they still are able to maintain their noble virtues and characters instead of being tainted by the evilness of their unfortunate company just as the 'Mani' (gem) present on the hood of a special class of serpents is not affected by the poison present in the body of the host snake². (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37 where a similar idea is reiterated. When someone comes in contact with a holy and pious person, the latter's positive energy and auspicious aura leaves a lasting impression on the former so much so that if this contact is sustained then one day the former becomes a changed person and more in likeness to the holy person with whom he has come in contact than his own previous self. It is like the case of an axe used to cut sandalwood; though the axe hits the sandalwood with the intent to harm it by cutting it, but the mere contact with the latter leaves its sweet aroma on the blade of the axe. Similarly, though a wicked man may intend harm to a saintly person, but his contact with the latter leaves a positive impression on him so much so that in due course of time the wicked man regrets his actions and feels the urge to beg

forgiveness; not only this, but the wicked man may even have a change of heart and gets transmuted into a gentleman.

²A special species of snake secretes a thick sap from the cells of the skin on its hood. This viscous secretion solidifies and glows in darkness. It is believed that these snakes see their path in its light when they move out from their holes in search of food. The idea is that albeit the snake is very poisonous, the gem manages to retain its glow and shine; it is not darkened by the thick dark poison present in the body of the snake although the Mani is a product of the secretion of the cells of the same snake.

In like manner, virtuous saints are able to maintain their virtuousness inspite of the evil company that surrounds them. But howbeit, the wicked company that surrounds them gains by its association with these saintly people just as the snake gains its sight in the presence of the Mani.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

बिधि हरि हर कबि कोबिद बानी । कहत साधु महिमा सकुचानी ॥ ११ ॥
सो मो सन कहि जात न कैसें । साक बनिक मनि गुन गन जैसें ॥ १२ ॥

bidhi hari hara kabi kōbida bānī. kahata sādhu mahimā sakucānī. 11.
sō mō sana kahi jāta na kaisēm. sāka banika mani guna gana jaisēm. 12.

Even the Creator (Bidhi; Lord Brahma), Hari (Lord Vishnu), Har (Lord Shiva), expert poets and scholars who are wise and well-versed in the knowledge of qualities that are deemed to be excellent and exemplary, feel hesitant to speak of the immensity of glories and the profound effects of wonderful characters and noble virtues of such saints and pious people (11),-----

-----then say how can I (Tulsidas) ever enumerate them or tell about them fully just like the case of a vegetable hawker who can never be expected, by any count, to ever be able to tell the value of a priceless gem. (12)

[Note—Tulsidas just gives a hint of the greatness of saints and holy men, and the rewards one can get by being associated with them, by keeping their company, and having contact with them. For in all sooth and without gainsay, their greatness and goodness are so huge and immeasurable that even the most learned and wise amongst men would be unable to describe them fully. To wit, the stellar virtues and spiritual qualities of saints and pious people are so great that it is impossible to list them.

A vendor of vegetables will not be able to judge the price of a gem if he finds one, for his skills at judgment of the quality and price of a thing is limited to vegetables, and he is not competent and qualified to decide the quality or price of a gem; this falls in the realm of a jeweler. So likewise Tulsidas says that he is not an expert to give a lecture on the qualities of saintly persons and define their characters exhaustively except to say that they are great and honourable in every respect, and worthy of emulation.]

दो०. बंदउँ संत समान चित हित अनहित नहिं कोइ ।

अंजलि गत सुभ सुमन जिमि सम सुगंध कर दोइ ॥ ३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

banda'um^o santa samāna cita hita anahita nahim^o kō'i.
an̄jali gata subha sumana jimi sama sugandha kara dō'i. 3 (a).

I (Tulsidas) bow my head most reverentially before saints and holy men of immaculate virtues and noble characters, who practice the virtues of equanimity and evenness of mind under all situations (*samāna cita*), who have no friend who will favour them nor any enemy who could harm their interests (“*hita anahita nahim^o kō'i*”; because they treat everyone alike and see the same Atma or pure consciousness in all of them)—just like the case of the flower that lends its sweet fragrance equally to both the hands: one hand that had torn it away or plucked it from its natural habitat in the tree (i.e. the hand that caused injury to the flower and caused it immense pain and misery by forcibly pulling it out of its natural home on the tree, thereby depriving it not only of its natural shelter but also a source of its nutrition and chance to live its life fully and peacefully, spreading its natural beauty and fragrance all around), as well as the other hand that holds it softly, lovingly and caringly in its palm, the hand that picks up the flower that falls on the ground and fears being trampled upon. (Doha no. 3 a)

[Note—Two situations are compared here vis-à-vis the flower. One case is when someone who is selfish and heartless would mercilessly pluck the flower from the tree just because he develops a fancy for it, without bothering how much pain he is causing to the flower by pulling it out of its natural habitat. Then soon this cruel person would throw this flower away once his lust is satisfied, and let it perish on the ground.

The second case is that of a kind person who would hold the flower softly in his hands, appreciate its beauty and fragrance, admire the glory of its creator, the Lord God, and leave the flower as it is on the tree; if by chance he sees a fallen flower he would pick it up tenderly and keep it safely with him till it dries up on its own.

In both the cases it is observed that the hands that touch and hold the flower acquire its sweet fragrance in equal measure, because the flower has a natural habit of blessing all those who come in contact with it by lending its pleasant scent to them, irrespective of the nature of the person who holds it, and without distinguishing between anyone. To wit, whether or not the holder of that flower had been its tormentor or benefactor, the flower lends its pleasant scent equally to both of them.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37.

Similarly, a saintly person wishes good of all people; he harbours ill-will against none. He would equally bless a person who means harm to him and a person who would love to serve him. A saintly person practices equanimity, evenness of mind, fortitude, calmness and composure under all circumstances, favourable or otherwise. For him, there is no foe or friend, for he understands that the true identity of all living beings is their Atma, their pure self which is eternal and pure consciousness, and not their external gross body that is mortal. So therefore, all notions of being a friend or a foe of anyone are meaningless for saints as these notions are limited to the gross, physical, mortal body and its relationship with an equally gross mortal world, and not to the Atma.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 227.]

संत सरल चित जगत हित जानि सुभाउ सनेहु ।
बालबिनय सुनि करि कृपा रामचरन रति देहु ॥ ३ (ख) ॥

santa sarala cita jagata hita jāni subhā'u sanēhu.
bālabinaya suni kari kṛpā rāmacarana rati dēhu. 3 (b).

True saints are of a pure and simple heart, without any kind of deceit, conceit or pretensions whatsoever. They are universally a well-wisher of the world at large, and never think of any harm to it.

Recalling their kind and gracious nature as well as their natural affection for all the creatures, wishing for the good of all without exception and distinction, Tulsidas says that he is inspired and encouraged to pray to them so that they can hear his earnest child-like plea and grant him the boon of having steady and robust devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram (who is the revered deity of Tulsidas). (Doha no. 3 b)

[Note—Tulsidas asks saints and noble-hearted persons that they should please bless him with the boon of having love and affection for his dearest Lord Ram in order to live upto their reputation of being king, gracious and benevolent towards one and all. He seeks no other blessings except this one, and being exalted and realized souls, who naturally are endowed with spiritual powers, it is not difficult for them to grant him his wishes.]

चौ०. बहुरि बंदि खल गन सतिभाएँ । जे बिनु काज दाहिनेहु बाएँ ॥ १ ॥
पर हित हानि लाभ जिन्ह केरें । उजरें हरष बिषाद बसेरें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahuri bandi khala gana satibhā'ēm̃. jē binu kāja dāhinēhu bā'ēm̃. 1.
para hita hāni lābha jinha kērēm̃. ujarēm̃ haraṣa biṣāda basērēm̃. 2.

Tulsidas says—‘Now I bow my head sincerely (bandi --- satibhā'ēm̃) to those who are wicked (khala gana) (so that they leave me alone in peace, do not create unnecessary nuisance for me, and let me move ahead in my endeavour to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram), because they have a natural habit of and a propensity for creating trouble and mischief for others without rhyme or reason, even to those who are their well-wishers and cause no harm to them (jē binu kāja dāhinēhu bā'ēm̃). (1)

[Now, Tulsidas enumerates the negative qualities of those people who are classified as ‘non-saints’—i.e. those who are wicked, wild, pervert, sinful, evil, deceitful, jealous, full of vices, mean and lowly.]

Non-saints are wicked people who are evil and pervert. In their view, harming the interest of others is equivalent to getting profit for themselves. They get immense

pleasure when others are uprooted or destabilized or ruined, and feel grief and become miserable if others are established, become prosperous, are happy and cheerful. (2)

[Note—It is to be noted that Tulsidas has clearly stated the reason why he is praying to those who are called ‘Non-Saints’. He wants to keep them in good humour and pleased so that they don’t feel offended that Tulsidas has neglected them and insulted them by not bowing before them even as he has prayed and bowed to others. Non-Saints are egoist, hypocrites and haughty, and they easily get angry if they feel someone has not offered them respect. So Tulsidas thought to himself that there is no use of unnecessarily creating a problem if it can be avoided. It is wiser not to provoke people who come under the category of being ‘non-saints’ and inviting their wrath; what harm is there if a little pretension of showing false respect to them by bowing one’s head before them can help in avoiding a confrontation with them wicked rascals.

But then he thought that if he does not clarify his position then it would give a wrong signal to posterity. So he lists the negative traits of Non-Saints, saying in effect that it is not that he does not know that such people are bad and evil by every imaginable count, but it is wiser to keep them pleased and at bay by false praise so that they do not create a ruckus and throw a spanner in the wheel of some noble endeavour. What great purpose would be served by stoking their hurt ego and inviting their wrath unnecessarily?

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 40; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 17-20 that precede Doha no. 121.

In the opening verses of his epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, Tulsidas has praised everyone and has prayed to one and all seeking their blessings and good wishes so that he is able to fulfill his mission of narrating the glorious and divine story of Lord Ram, the Lord dearest to his heart, successfully and without any unwarranted obstacles. During this process of humbly seeking everyone’s patronage and blessing Tulsidas has also bowed and prayed to those who are wicked and evil, i.e. the ‘Non-Saints’.

Now, on the face of it this seems extremely odd and incredulous that a great saint like Tulsidas would even think to pray to and praise those who come under the category of Non-Saints. But this is a very clever and wise move by the erudite and prudent poet as he wants to keep those who are wicked and evil-in-heart in good humour by pretending to offer his respects to them, lest they feel side-lined and insulted by him and therefore do their best to harass and torment him no end, and do whatever they possibly can do to stop him from achieving success in his endeavour. Tulsidas has expressly said this thing while offering his obeisance to the wicked and the vile, the Non-Saints, when he says that these people find great pleasure in tormenting others for no rhyme or reason, and so it is wiser to keep them happy with the purpose of keeping them at bay instead of antagonizing them by either neglecting them or criticizing them outright.

But even while praying to such Non-Saints Tulsidas has pointed out their negativities and evil character, saying in effect that he wished to keep them pleased precisely for these reasons—for otherwise they would unleash their horrifying acts against him, and causing unwarranted torment and hindrance in his work.

For our purpose this helps us to understand the evil nature and the pervert character of Non-Saints. Hence, let’s start reading them in these verses.]

हरि हर जस राकेस राहु से । पर अकाज भट सहसबाहु से ॥ ३ ॥
जे पर दोष लखहिं सहसाखी । पर हित घृत जिन्ह के मन माखी ॥ ४ ॥

hari hara jasa rākēsa rāhu sē. para akāja bhaṭa sahasabāhu sē. 3.
jē para dōṣa lakhahim sahasākhī. para hita ghr̥ta jinha kē mana mākhī. 4.

They are like ‘Rahu’¹, the trunk-less head of the demon who devours the sun and the moon to cause the solar and the lunar eclipses respectively, for the good name and fame of Lords Hari (Vishnu) and Har (Shiva).

[Lord Vishnu is the second god of the Trinity responsible for sustenance of creation, and Lord Shiva is the third god of the Trinity responsible for conclusion of creation. These two gods are regarded as the senior most in the pantheon of gods. Hence, this stanza means that wicked and un-saintly people do not like the good name and fame of the Lord to spread, and they do everything within their might to obstruct them and ridicule them.]

They are like the very powerful and strong demon called Sashastra Bahu² (the one with a thousand arms) when it comes to harming the interest of other creatures.

[To wit, they use thousands of ways and countless stratagems to torment others and see that they and their interests suffer. They derive sadistic and animal-like pleasure in doing so.] (3)

They see even minor faults of others with a thousand eyes.

[To wit, they magnify even inconsequential shortcomings in others. They literally use the magnifying glass to scrutinize each and every action, word, behaviour and other aspects of the other person’s life so that they can pounce upon him at the first slip that he makes, and are ever eager to prick holes in others and find one fault in them which they blow out of proportion as an opportunity to humiliate him, ridicule him and cause discomfort to him. As already said earlier, they derive sadistic pleasure in doing so, in spite of themselves being full of gaping black holes and vices of all kinds.]

For anything that is good for the welfare of others, they act like an insect that falls in clarified butter to ruin it.

[The good of others is compared to clarified butter here, and wicked people to the insect. By falling in the butter, the insect has nothing to gain, but it nevertheless falls in it just to ruin the butter even if this means its own death. Likewise, wicked and pervert people would allow themselves to suffer if it also means suffering for others.] (4).

[Note—¹Rahu and Ketu: The legend has it that Rahu was the eldest son of the demon Viprachitti and his wife Shinghikaa. His younger brothers were Ilvala, Vaataapi, Narak amongst others. When Lord Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful Mohini, was distributing the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit to the Gods during the episode of the churning of the ocean as told in the Purans, Rahu assumed the form of a God and surreptitiously entered the lines of the Gods to take this Amrit. When his cheating was discovered, Vishnu cut-off his head with his weapon called the Chakra Sudarshan (a circular saw-like discus). But it so happened that before the head was severed Rahu had already drunk some Amrit, and so did not die. His head and torso became two independent entities. The former was called ‘Rahu’ and the latter ‘Ketu’.

Since the Moon God and the Sun God had betrayed him, Rahu takes revenge by devouring them periodically to satisfy his hunger. He devours them when they are in their full glory—viz. he devours the Moon God during the full moon night, and the Sun God only during the day time, either when the sun rises or during its journey across the sky, but never at sunset when the sun is already losing its radiance and is on the decline.

Again, since the head of Rahu was severed from the neck, hence both the Moon God and the Sun God re-emerge from the lower end of the head after they have been devoured by the mouth of Rahu. This is why the moon and the sun appear to be getting gradually cut-off from view from one end of their discs, symbolizing their gradually entering the mouth of Rahu as the latter begins to devour them. Then for some time they remain dark or obstructed from view symbolizing the period when they remain inside the mouth of Rahu. Finally, they gradually regain their original shape symbolizing their ejection from the lower end of Rahu's neck where it was severed from the trunk.

Thus we see that the mythological origin of the solar and lunar eclipse can be traced to this event of the churning of the ocean and the demon Rahu getting his head cut-off because he had cheated Vishnu in an attempt to drink Amrit. But having already drunk this elixir, he could not die; the head became Rahu and the trunk became Ketu (a comet). Because of this enmity, Rahu extracted a boon that he would eat the sun and the moon periodically when he felt hungry, which, according to mythology, he does during the solar and lunar eclipses respectively. The sun or the moon enter his mouth (the beginning of the eclipse), and emerge from his severed throat (marking the end of eclipse).

The story of Rahu appears in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Chapter 8, Canto 9.

Actually however, the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse is due to the earth's shadow falling on the moon's surface when it comes in the path of this shadow during its revolution around the earth. This scientific fact was known to the great Rishis (sages and seers) who had preached the Upanishads, and it is clearly mentioned in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says "When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon's curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event, and the darkness on the moon's disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments."

Similarly, the solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the shiny surface of the sun and the view from earth, thereby blocking the former's view from the latter's surface.

The elongated torso of Rahu came to known as 'Ketu' and it is recognized as the comet in modern science. That is why sighting of the comet is regarded as a bad omen.

Both Rahu and Ketu are placed amongst the nine planets. They represent the two nodal points where the celestial equator cuts the ecliptic.

In iconography, Rahu is depicted as just a head or even as a snake's hood.

²Sahastra Bahu: The story of ‘Sahastra-baahu’ in brief is as follows—There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’. He was the son of king Kritvirya whose kingdom was known as Anup; its capital city was known as Maahismati and it was situated on the southern bank of river Narmada.

In his early life he was a very righteous and conscientious person, a man of upright thoughts and noble conduct. After the death of his father when the court ministers wished to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom, he refused, saying: ‘Kingdom leads a king to hell if he cannot live upto the expectations of his subjects and rule according to the principles of Dharma (righteousness and probity). The main source of income of a king is ‘tax collected from his subjects’, but if this tax is collected in an improper way, and if it is not utilized for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma which say that the main use of state revenue is to ensure that traders are given all facilities and protection for carrying out legitimate trade, are not looted by thieves, the subjects of the kingdom are given due protection and their interests are always kept ahead of everything else, and so on and so forth. So unless I acquire such powers and abilities by doing Tapa (penance), I will not accept the throne.’

When Sahastrabahu said this, the great sage Garg advised him that if he indeed wishes to do Tapa and acquire mythical powers to rule the vast kingdom in accordance to Dharma then he should go and serve Lord Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Dattatreya lived in a cave of Mt. SahyaParvat and did Tapa there (Markandeya Puran, Canto 18). So, Sahastrabahu went to Lord Dattatreya and began serving him diligently for a long period of ten thousand years.

According to Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12, when Dattatreya was pleased with his service and austerities, he granted him four boons: (i) First, the king asked for one thousand arms. (ii) Second, he wished that no one in his kingdom would even dare to think in an unrighteous and sinful way. (iii) Third, he wanted to conquer the whole earth and rule over it. (iv) Fourth, that if he has to die then it must be in the battle-field at the hands of a warrior who is superior to him in every way.

According to Markandey Puran, Canto 18, verse nos. 14-18, the king was granted ten boons as follows: (i) The powers and authority to rule over his subjects without acquiring sins. (ii) The ability to know the thoughts of others. (iii) No one should be able to face in the battle-field (i.e. he should become invincible). (iv) During a war he should have a thousand arms so as to fight his opponent with all of them at once. [This is also mentioned in Harivansha Puran, Canto 33, verse no. 14.] (v) He should have unhindered access to all places in the sky, water, earth, mountains and the nether world. (vi) If he has to die then it should be at the hands of someone stronger than him. (vii) If by chance he goes astray and falls on the wrong path, then he must have a chance to get good advice and company of saintly persons (i.e. he must be given an opportunity to mend his ways). (viii) He must have illustrious persons as his guests so that he can serve them and get their blessings. (ix) His wealth should never diminish even after liberal charities and giving of alms regularly; there should be no shortage of wealth in his kingdom. (x) The virtue of Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God) should be firm and perpetual in him.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 115, verse no. 12, it is said that by the grace of Dattatreya the king acquired an air-plane made of gold; that he ruled over the entire earth; and that no one could stop his chariot. He was a great Emperor who conquered

the whole world and made liberal charities. He is also regarded as a great scholar of Tantra Shastra.

He was so powerful and mighty that when he bathed in the ocean and thrashed it with his thousand arms, he could turn the tide backwards. He would splash the water so heavily that marine creatures were tossed into the air like ninepins. [Brahm-Vaivarta Puran, Ganesh Khand, Canto 23-27.]

But the Laws of Creation are such that every good thing has to come to an end one day; nothing is eternal and permanent in this mortal gross world. This also applied to Sahastrabahu. As time passed, he became extremely haughty and cruel. He started subjugating even the Gods so as to remove all challenges to his authority and power. It is said that he ruled for eighty-five thousand years before he was killed by sage Parashuram.

Once he was asked by the Fire God for alms, and the noble king could not refuse. The Fire God used this grant to burn everything and cause havoc everywhere, because he was certain that Sahastrabahu would not stop him. During this burning spree, the Fire destroyed the hermitage of sage Aapava (who was later on known as sage Vasistha according to Brahm Puran during its description of the race of Yayaati). The sage cursed king Sahastrabahu that his arms, relying upon whose strength the Fire God had destroyed his hermitage and was wreaking havoc on earth, would be cut by sage Parashuram. [Refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 49, verse nos. 35-45; and Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12.]

One day, he was wandering along the shore of the ocean and out of his pride and haughtiness he covered it with thousands of arrows. The Ocean assumed a form and appeared before him to plead that he stop showering arrows into the water as all the marine creatures that live in the water would die. Sahastrabahu accepted the prayer but asked the Ocean to tell him about someone who could face him in battle, as he was itching for a face-off with anyone who could claim to be stronger than him as he wished to conquer the opponent and become an unchallenged warrior in this world. The Ocean told him to go sage Jamdagni whose son Parashuram would be fit opponent for him and would welcome him in battle. [Refer: Mahabharat, Ashwamegh Parva, Canto 29.]

Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. [This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Ashwamegha Parva, Canto 29.]

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.]

तेज कृसानु रोष महिषेसा । अघ अवगुन धन धनी धनेसा ॥ ५ ॥

उदय केत सम हित सबही के । कुंभकरन सम सोवत नीके ॥ ६ ॥

tēja kṛsānu rōṣa mahiṣēsā. agha avaguna dhana dhanī dhanēsā. 5.
udaya kēta sama hita sabahī kē. kumbhakarana sama sōvata nīkē. 6.

They are as vicious, stern, fierce, crude, rude, vengeful and scorching as the raging fire, and are comparable to the God Yam¹, the god of death, as regards their anger and wrathfulness. They have a rich treasury of evil virtues of sins and vices so much so that they are comparable to Kuber, the treasurer of gods who has immense wealth at his disposal, in this respect. [To wit, in vengefulness and anger they are compared to the Yam, and in the quantity of sins and vices they have they are like Kuber.] (5)

Their ascendance in this world is like the appearance of the comet² which is an evil omen heralding ruin and destruction for all others in this world. Therefore, it is better for them that they keep sleeping like the demon Kumbhakaran³ (who was a brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, and slept for months together which was a sort of blessing for others, because when he woke up once in a while he ate everything he laid his hand upon, creating widespread ruin and shortage in the kingdom).

[Unholy and un-saintly people are better off remaining dormant and in oblivion, because if they are given any chance to become active and influential, it would be detrimental for the welfare of the rest of the society.] (6)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is ‘mahīṣēsā’. It means ‘the God who is the lord of a buffalo’, or ‘the God who rides a buffalo’. Yam, the god of death, is the one who rides a buffalo, and his angry, wrathful, vicious, stern and uncompromising temperament is just like that of non-saints.

Another interpretation of this word is that it refers to a ferocious demon named ‘Mahisasur’ or the demon with the body of a wild buffalo. He was a ferocious demon so-called because he had the form of a huge wild buffalo, or could assume this form at his free will. He was the son of the demon Rambha; his mother was named Mahishi. In Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurān, 6/18/16, he is said to be the great grandson of the demon Hiranyakashipu.

He did severe Tapa (penance; austerity) on the summit of Mt. Hemgiri and obtained a boon from Brahma (the creator) that he would not be killed by anyone except a woman. The demon thought that if no male can kill him no matter how strong his opponent is, it is well nigh impossible for a woman to face him for he considered woman as physically weak and meek who could be easily subdued and conquered by him if she ever dared to challenge his might. After acquiring this boon he became extremely ruthless because he felt no one would ever kill him. So he

conquered the heaven and the Gods; enslaving them and usurping their power and authority, and declaring himself as the 'lord of the world'.

When the Gods prayed to the Mother Goddess to eliminate this demon, she assumed the form of Goddess Kalika Devi, the 'Goddess of Death'. In the fierce battle that ensued between her and Mahisasur, a description of which is given in Markandeya Puran, Mahisasur Vadha, Canto 3, the Goddess finally slayed him.

Mahisasur is regarded as an embodiment of anger, cruelty, viciousness, wrathfulness and vengefulness as well as pride, ego and haughtiness. So therefore non-saints are also compared to him. Like this demon, the non-saints cause immense misery to one and all, and they are difficult to control.

His story also appears in 'Devimahatamya' which is considered as a part of Markandeya Puran, Chapters 78-90. However, it is also believed that Devimahatamya is an independent work that was later on inserted in the Markandeya Puran. It is also known by two other names: viz. Durgasaptashati and Chandi. This work has three parts known as (i) 'Pratham-Charit' that has chapter no. 1 and deals with the greatness of goddess Mahakaali; (ii) 'Madhyama-Charit' that has three chapters, 2, 3 and 4, and deal with the greatness of goddess Laxmi; and (iii) 'Uttama-Charit' that has chapters 5 to 13 and deal with the glories of goddess Maha-Saraswati.

It is in the second part, i.e. 'Madhyama-Charit', that the story of Mahisasur is narrated. It is said here that the demon was slayed by Goddess Durga who rides a lion.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 20 that precedes Doha no. 121. It says the same thing.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177. When Kubhakaran, the younger brother of the demon Ravana, did severe Tapa, and Brahma, the creator, appeared before him to grant him a boon, he saw the colossal body of Kumbhakaran and thought that if he ate daily then the whole earth would begin to starve. So Brahma instructed the goddess of wisdom known as Sarada or Saraswati to confuse and delude Kumbhakaran's mind, and so he asked for a stupid and absurd boon—which was that he should enjoy sleep for six continuous months! And the day he woke up he ate so greedily and voraciously that the earth faced a crisis of food for a long time thereafter. How voracious his appetite was, and how ferocious and colossal he was is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 65, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 67—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 71 that describe the scene of the battle at Lanka where Kumbhakaran fought Lord Ram and was finally slayed by the Lord.]

पर अकाजु लगी तनु परिहरहीं । जिमि हिम उपल कृषी दलि गरहीं ॥ ७ ॥
बंदउँ खल जस सेष सरोषा । सहस बदन बरनइ पर दोषा ॥ ८ ॥

para akāju lagi tanu pariharahīm. jimi hima upala kṛṣī dali garahīm. 7.
banda'um' khala jasa sēṣa sarōṣā. sahāsa badana barana'i para dōṣā. 8.

Even as hail destroys the harvest though it is ruined itself in the process and dies (i.e. dissolves and go to waste after ruining the standing crop), such evil and un-saintly

people enjoy causing harm to others and obstructing their interest and well-being for no rhyme or reason, and even it means that they have to die for it¹.

[To wit, wicked people would die to cause harm to others. They find sadistic pleasure in tormenting others and inflicting misery upon them. Earlier it was merely said that they derive pleasure in harming or troubling others, and here it is emphasized that not only this, they are so wicked, cruel, mean and evil-minded that they won't mind suffering themselves if it creates problems for others.] (7)

I (Tulsidas) treat such people as the thousand-hooded serpent called Seshnath, and pay my respects to them.

[This is said in sarcasm. Tulsidas compares them to the celestial serpent known as Seshnath who is said to have a thousand tongues. He says that this huge dragon-like serpent pours venom and spouts fire from its mouth, and anyone daring to go near it would be scorched to death. So non-saints are like this dragon. Nay, non-saints are worse than an ordinary poisonous serpent, for they are like a thousand-hooded dragon. When they open their mouth to speak, the words that come out are like the scorching fire spouting from the mouth of a dragon. They spit abuses and mouth sinful words which are a thousand times more irritating and pricking than the bite of a serpent. So Tulsidas says that it is better to bow before them and avoid them from a distance lest they would scorch him with their ferocious fire-spewing venomous tongue!]

They have the habit of highlighting and shouting loudly with thousands of mouths about the faults of others. [To wit, they rarely think about their own faults, but exaggerate those of others.] (8)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 100; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 19 that precedes Doha no. 121.]

पुनि प्रनवउँ पृथुराज समाना । पर अघ सुनइ सहस दस काना ॥ ९ ॥
 बहुरि सक्र सम बिनवउँ तेही । संतत सुरानीक हित जेही ॥ १० ॥
 बचन बज्र जेहि सदा पिआरा । सहस नयन पर दोष निहारा ॥ ११ ॥

puni pranava'um̃ pṛthurāja samānā. para agha suna'i sahasa dasa kānā. 9.
 bahuri sakra sama binava'um̃ tēhī. santata surānīka hita jēhī. 10.
 bacana bajra jēhi sadā pi'ārā. sahasa nayana para dōṣa nihārā. 11.

Again, I (Tulsidas) treat them as king Prithu¹ because they have thousands of ears to hear about faults and shortcomings of others.

[King Prithu had sought a boon from Lord Vishnu that he may have thousands of ears to hear the greatness and the glories of the Supreme Being. But these wicked people enjoy hearing wicked things, and they are all ears for wild gossip, back-biting and tattling.] (9)

Similarly, I treat them like Indra, the king of Gods, who derives pleasure in drinking ambrosia, because like Indra these wicked people derive pleasure in drinking wine and other intoxicating drinks.

[To wit, whereas Indra and other Gods like to drink nectar and other good drinks, people who are non-saints like to indulge in intoxicating drinks and eat things that are generally not worthy to be eaten.] (10)

They always like to use words which are harsh and rude just like the weapon of Indra that is known as Vajra. [This weapon of Indra is said to be extremely harsh and merciless. Similarly, the words that non-saints use for others cause immense pain to them.]

And when it comes to observing and closely analyzing the faults of others, they have thousands of eyes ready for it (just like the so-called thousand eyes of Indra)².

[Indra was cursed to have thousands of holes in his body as symbolic eyes because he had cheated sage Gautam's chaste wife Ahilya. These holes were shaped like eyes so that the world could know about Indra's promiscuous nature. Likewise, evil people use their faculty of sight to see wrong in other people and in everything else in this world. Again, like the Indra drinking the lowly wine in spite of his being the king of gods and having an easy access to the ambrosia meant for the gods, these wicked and lowly people enjoy things which are not regarded in high esteem. They are born as humans, but do not use this once in a lifetime opportunity to do something good and constructive for their own spiritual welfare as well as for the others. Instead, they enjoy wallowing in the muck and the junk of this world and its material objects, spending their lifetime scheming against others, plotting how to harm them, finding immense pleasure in gratifying their sense organs and satisfying their lust and passions.] (11)

[Note—¹King Prithu was a great ruler who ruled according to the laws of Dharma (laws of righteousness, probity, propriety and noble thought and conduct). He was a religious man who is credited with making the earth habitable and civilized by establishing great towns and cities and a civilized society in a planned manner. All the Gods were pleased with him. His story appears in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 4/15-20. Once Lord Vishnu appeared before him and asked him to request for a boon of his choice. Prithu said: 'Oh Lord. I don't want heaven. If indeed you are pleased with me then grant me a boon that I may hear your glories and stories of your divinity and greatness with a thousand ears.' [Refer: Srimad Bhagvat Mahapuran, 4/20/24.]

Citing this example Tulsidas says that wicked people are like King Prithu, but with a difference. While Prithu wished to hear about the Lord God with his thousand ears, those who are non-saints revel in hearing wicked things and dirty gossip without end.

²Indra is the King of Gods, but unfortunately he is extremely passionate and lustful. The reason is that from the metaphysical point of view he personifies the sense organs of a creature that are always eager for gratification and yearn for sensual pleasures of this gross material world. According to mythology, Indra was once cursed by sage Gautam to have a thousand holes all over his body because he had deceitfully had sex with the sage's wife named Ahilya by assuming the form of her husband. The sage said: 'You see nothing but a vagina everywhere; so let the world see your body punctured by a thousand holes symbolising the vaginas you yearn for.'

Citing this instance, Tulsidas says that non-saints are like Indra because they enjoy seeing unholy things and find endless pleasure in indulging in sensual things of the world.]

दो०. उदासीन अरि मीत हित सुनत जरहिं खल रीति ।
जानि पानि जुग जोरि जन बिनती करइ सप्रीति ॥ ४ ॥

dōhā.

udāsīna ari mīta hita sunata jarahim̃ khala rīti.
jāni pāni juga jōri jana binatī kara'i saprīti. 4.

It is a natural habit of wicked and evil minded people that they become jealous, develop malice towards, and become indignant upon hearing something good about others, or about their welfare and good fortune, irrespective of the fact that such persons may have nothing to do with them, are not even remotely related to them or concerned with them, or may be their friend or enemy. Taking this habit of theirs into consideration, I (Tulsidas) thinks it proper to join my hands (palms of the hands) to pray to them (to leave me alone in peace). (Doha no. 4)

[Note—Tulsidas says that evil persons are living devils; their hearts are workshops of Satan. They are inclined to see negative side of everything, and think that every person is evil like them, whether that person is their enemy or a friend, or even those who are neutral towards them, persons who will cause them no harm even in the remotest possibility.

To wit, no matter how good others do to them, they will always be suspicious of their benefactors; nay, they will even think of harming the latter at the first opportunity. Their character is absolutely opposite to that of a saintly person.]

चौ०. मैं अपनी दिसि कीन्ह निहोरा । तिन्ह निज ओर न लाउब भोरा ॥ १ ॥
बायस पलिअहिं अति अनुरागा । होहिं निरामिष कबहुँ कि कागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mair̃ apanī disi kīnha nihōrā. tinha nija ōra na lā'uba bhōrā. 1.
bāyasa pali'ahim̃ ati anurāgā. hōhim̃ nirāmiṣa kabahum̃ ki kāgā. 2.

I (Tulsidas) have done my bit by praying to them and showing my respect to them, entreating them to be kind to me and spare me any trouble. But (I know for certain that) they (non-saints and wicked people) would not defer from their path; they would not restrain themselves and refrain from doing what they are accustomed to do (which is to torment others endlessly for no rhyme or reason)¹. (1)

Say, would a crow ever become a non-meat eater (i.e. a vegetarian) even if one rears it carefully and feeds it fondly with the choicest of food². (2)

[Note—¹To wit, although a wise person may be careful not to offend wicked and non-saintly person and might also show superficial respect to such people just to keep them in good humour, yet these rascals pay no heed to his kind overtures and remain true to their habit of causing distress and misery to others. Tulsidas means that though he has done the incredulous thing of bowing his head to non-saints in the hope that

they would leave him to have his peace, yet he is quite certain that they would continue to haunt him because it is their dismal nature to remain ungrateful and unobliging.]

²A crow is a carnivorous bird, and it is its inborn and natural habit; meat is its natural food. So no matter how hard one tries, but as soon as a crow sights a piece of flesh it would pounce upon it. Likewise, non-saintly persons cannot forgo their natural habit and propensity to torment others and cause misery to them even if one does one's best to please them and keep them happy.

To wit, a wise person must not expect anything from a non-saint except evil and rebuke.]

बंदुं संत असज्जन चरना । दुखप्रद उभय बीच कछु बरना ॥ ३ ॥
बिछुरत एक प्रान हरि लेहीं । मिलत एक दुख दारुन देहीं ॥ ४ ॥

banda'um̃ santa asajjana caranā. dukhaprada ubhaya bīca kachu baranā. 3.
bichurata ēka prāna hari lēhīm. milata ēka dukha dārūna dēhīm. 4.

[In these verses, Tulsidas has compared Saints and Non-Saints by judging them against each other in a judicious manner like a true judge by using the same sets of criteria or similar parameters for both to determine why and how one is good for the society and the other is bad. He sort of pits the Saint against the Non-Saint and lets us judge for ourselves their usefulness or otherwise for us. It ought to be noted here that the distinction between a Saintly person and a Non-Saintly person is made solely on their inherent character, qualities and virtues, either positive or negative, but not at all on their birth, caste, creed, religion and lineage. This is very important as it gives a secular, balanced and an unbiased method of judgment that is based entirely on merits and qualities of a person with no other factor interfering in arriving at the final verdict.]

Tulsidas says—‘I bow at the feet of both the saintly people as well as those who are un-saintly. Both give pain and grief—but there is a difference between the two. (3)

What is the difference between a saint (i.e. person who is holy, pious, noble, righteous, truthful and spiritually enlightened and wise) and a non-saint (i.e. a person who is the opposite of a saint; he is wicked, cruel, sinful, pervert, corrupt, evil, selfish and gross by nature)?

Well, the difference is that when the first (i.e. the saintly person) leaves someone, it gives sorrow of separation; no one wants a saint to go away; their company provides happiness and a positive energy to one and all. On the other hand, when the second type of person (the non-saint; the wicked and the pervert) meets someone then he immediately causes a lot of pain and trouble to the latter.

[To wit, pain and grief of separation is felt when a saint leaves someone, while meeting a wicked person becomes a cause of grief and sorrow the instant he is met.]
(4)

उपजहिं एक संग जग माहीं । जलज जोंक जिमि गुन बिलगाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

सुधा सुरा सम साधु असाधू । जनक एक जग जलधि अगाधू ॥ ६ ॥

upajahim̄ ēka saṅga jaga māhīm̄. jalaja jōṅka jimi guna bilagāhīm̄. 5.
sudhā surā sama sādhu asādhū. janaka ēka jaga jaladhi agādhū. 6.

Both a saint and a non-saint are born in the same way in this world, and both live in the same world. But while the former (the saint) is like a beautiful lotus flower, the latter (the non-saint; the wicked and the pervert, the sinful and the corrupt) is like a blood-sucking leech¹. (5)

A saint is like the ambrosia that helps one to overcome the fear of death and provides a remedy for all the worldly torments, while the wicked non-saints are like wine which is the cause of all problems faced by a person. Both are born in the same world which is like a vast ocean². (6)

[Note—¹The lotus grows in a dirty pond, but it is so inherently pure by nature that the dirty water does not stick to its petals. The lotus is universally treated as a metaphor for purity, beauty, cleanliness, immaculacy and holiness. On the other hand, the leech is a parasite; it thrives on the blood of others. Likewise, the saintly people are a blessing for the world, and they adorn it and add beauty and purity to it. On the contrary, the un-saintly and wicked people are a burden for the world and a wart on the face of the society.

²Both the ambrosia and the wine are sweet to drink; both are liquids. But while the ambrosia helps to uplift the creature and provides his soul with invigoration and renewed spiritual energy, the wine saps whatever energy he possesses and throws him into a tailspin of hallucinations and moral degradation. The same principle applies to a saint and a non-saint. The world is compared to an ocean because it is vast and most difficult to overcome. It tosses and traps the creature like the heaving ocean full of whirlpools and huge waves. The ocean is cited here especially because the ambrosia and wine are believed to have been first produced during the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons in some ancient past.

To wit, both types of people, i.e. a saintly person as well as a non-saintly person, are born in the same world, in the same time frame of history, and most often even in the same household. We have many examples of this. We have Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, who was extremely cruel and evil, and his brother named Vibhishan who was righteous and pious by his very nature. We have Hiranyakshipu, the evil demon king, and his own son Prahalad who was an ardent devotee of Lord God. Then we have the Kauravs and the Pandavas in the epic Mahabharat—both had opposite characters.

So we see that it is not necessary that brothers born of the same father will have the same character and nature. Both the types of people, the saintly ones and the non-saintly ones, are born in the same world, and hence the ‘world’ is their common parent. Tulsidas has cited the instance of poison and wine as well as ambrosia which were produced during the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons in some ancient time. They had the same source of birth (the ocean) and cause (its churning by the gods and the demons), but their effect was diametrically opposite to each other. While ambrosia is life-giving and holy, poison and wine are killers.

To wit, saints and non-saints are to be judged and distinguished based on their character, qualities, nature and virtues, and not by their birth or caste or creed. This fact is explicitly mentioned in the next verse.]

भल अनभल निज निज करतूती । लहत सुजस अपलोक बिभूती ॥ ७ ॥
सुधा सुधाकर सुरसरि साधू । गरल अनल कलिमल सरि ब्याधू ॥ ८ ॥

bhala anabhala nija nija karatūti. lahata sujasa apalōka bibhūti. 7.
sudhā sudhākara surasari sādihū. garala anala kalimala sari byādhū. 8.

Those who are good, noble and righteous on the one hand and those who possess the opposite qualities on the other hand, acquire a good or bad name and reputation that are in accordance with their respective nature, virtues, qualities and character.

[To wit, saints and holy people acquire good name, fame and reputation because of their exemplary good virtues, while the evil and wicked person gets bad name and infamy because of his own character and not due to some else's fault.] (7)

Saintly persons are like the ambrosia (that is life-giving and invigorating), the moon (which has a soothing effect after the heat of the sun) and the holy river Ganges (which provides water to all and is regarded as a river that has descended from the heaven, and therefore its water is regarded as sanctified and can grant liberation to the creature if he worships it with due reverence).

[To wit, contact with saintly persons is rejuvenating for the spirit and gives joy to the heart and mind.]

Non-saintly persons, on the other hand, are like poison, or fire (that ruthlessly burns everything that comes its way) and a polluted river whose water is so filthy and stinking that it better to avoid even touching it.

[To wit, contact with non-saintly persons undermines one's goodness and casts a dark shadow over whatever good qualities that one may have.] (8)

गुन अवगुन जानत सब कोई । जो जेहि भाव नीक तेहि सोई ॥ ९ ॥

guna avaguna jānata saba kōi. jō jēhi bhāva nīka tēhi sōi. 9.

Everyone knows the good virtues and the positive effects of the ambrosia, the moon, the holy river Ganges, and the company of saints and pious people. Similarly, everyone also knows the horrifying effects of coming in contact with poison, fire, the countless rivers symbolizing sins in the present era called Kali Yug, and of cruel hunters.

In spite of that, one person prefers the company of the former group, and the other of the other group according to his natural inclinations and bent of mind. This is because one chooses things that are to his liking. (9)

[Note—Everyone knows that it is good to have company of saintly people, and equally unwise to have contact with wicked and sinful persons, but still there are people who prefer to court the wicked and the corrupt because it suits their narrow

vested interests and temperament. They are so stupid that they bargain their long-term spiritual good for some short-term material benefit.

On the other hand we have people who would go to great troubles to meet saintly persons and enjoy their company. It is their natural habit and instinct to avoid the unholy and prefer the holy.

This idea is further expanded in the following Doha no. 5.]

दो०. भलो भलाइहि पै लहइ लहइ निचाइहि नीचु ।
सुधा सराहिअ अमरताँ गरल सराहिअ मीचु ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

bhalō bhalā'ihī pai laha'i laha'i nicā'ihī nīcu.
sudhā sarāhi'a amaratām'garala sarāhi'a mīcu. 5.

Those who are naturally good and internally holy and pious have an inborn tendency and a natural inclination to accept what is good, holy, pure and clean, while those who are internally wicked and inherently pervert will always swerve towards that which is bad, unholy, unrighteous, impure and corrupt. It is just like the natural habit of ambrosia which has a natural propensity to provide immortality and overcome the fear of death, while the natural habit of poison is to kill. (Doha no. 5)

[Note—It is natural for saints to give joy, happiness and a feeling of blessedness to all those who come in contact with them just like the case of ambrosia that provides joy and immortality to the creature who drinks it. On the other hand, non-saints are poisonous for the society and lead one to fall and become sinful by having mere contact with them just like the case of actual poison that kills immediately anyone who drinks it even inadvertently.]

चौ०. खल अघ अगुन साधु गुन गाहा । उभय अपार उदधि अवगाहा ॥ १ ॥
तेहि तें कछु गुन दोष बखाने । संग्रह त्याग न बिनु पहिचाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

khala agha aguna sādhu guna gāhā. ubhaya apāra udadhi avagāhā. 1.
tēhi tēm kachu guna dōṣa bakhānē. saṅgraha tyāga na binu pahicānē. 2.

The narratives of sins and wicked qualities of non-saints on the one hand, and the holy and noble virtues of saints on the other hand, are legendary and countless; they are limitless like the vast ocean. (1)

That is why I (Tulsidas) have briefly narrated some of the good virtues of Saints and evil qualities of Non-Saints, because unless one knows about them it is not possible to be aware of who a Saint is and who a Non-Saint is, and therefore one is not able to distinguish between these two types of people and be on the guard¹.

Without this knowledge and awareness, it is also not possible for a person to choose which virtues and characters are worthy of inculcating, emulating and practicing in one's own life, and which ones are to be avoided². (2)

[Note—¹To wit, it is well nigh impossible to list exhaustively all the wicked qualities of those who are evil, and likewise it is also not possible to enumerate completely all the good virtues of those who are saintly—because in both the cases the list of their unique qualities, either bad or good respectively, are too long to be fully enumerated.

So therefore, one must contend with a few of them that I am pointing out here by way of illustration. This illustration would help one to get an idea of what sort of person he is dealing with, and be on the guard.

²A general idea of what constitutes good virtues and what bad would also help a person to get rid of certain bad qualities that he may already have, and instead strive to inculcate good virtues as much as he can.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 37; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 41 where Lord Ram has himself briefly compared the qualities of saints and non-saints.]

भलेउ पोच सब बिधि उपजाए । गनि गुन दोष बेद बिलगाए ॥ ३ ॥
कहहिं बेद इतिहास पुराना । बिधि प्रपंचु गुन अवगुन साना ॥ ४ ॥

bhalē'u pōca saba bidhi upajā'ē. gani guna dōṣa bēda bilagā'ē. 3.
kahahim bēda itihāsa purānā. bidhi prapañcu guna avaguna sānā. 4.

[In the following verses Tulsidas explains why Saints and Non-Saints are both present in this world even though, undoubtedly, Non-Saints are a like scum; they are like a thorn for the world and its scourge. Why not have only Saints amongst us and get rid of Non-Saints? Well, it's not possible, and Tulsidas now gives his wise reason for it as an answer to this vexing question.]

This entire creation, consisting of the good and the bad, the noble and the ignoble, the wise and the wicked, the straightforward and the crooked et al (bhalē'u pōca saba), are created by the Creator Brahma (bidhi upajā'ē). All have the right to live. But the Vedas (ancient scriptures) have segregated them and classified them into two separate categories based on their inherent nature, temperament, qualities, virtues and character. (3)

The Vedas (primary scriptures), the Ithihas (ancient Hindu historical narratives such as the story of the Ramayan and the Mahabharat) and the Purans (ancient Hindu history based on mythological narratives) have unanimously said that the creation of Brahma is a combination of the good and the bad qualities¹. (4)

[Note—¹It is a great paradox of creation that the good and the bad coexist and cohabit in this world. Perhaps the good old Creator wished to strike a balance between the two and wished to see how these two forces would interact with each other and help him to perpetuate his creation. He thought that if everything was kept holy and righteous and good, then all the creatures, the Jiva or the living being, would soon find deliverance from this gross world and get salvation. Should this happen, who will go to hell? Then again, everyone becomes righteous and holy, what would be the need of

creating so many Gods and so many rules of conduct because good people would not commit sins and would not need a set of laws to tell them what to do and what not to.

Besides this, where would there be the need of a Doctrine of Karma which says that a creature is judged by the deeds done by him. Everyone knows that the true identity of a creature is not his gross body but his Atma or soul that is pure consciousness which is inherently pure, holy, un-corrupt and self-illuminated with knowledge and wisdom. So if this was the case, where would 'sins' and 'vices' come into play?

Herein lies the great secret of creation: Though it is true that the Atma is the real identity of the creature, but this Atma lives inside a gross body and has to act via this body. The mind and the intellect (Buddhi) and its ability to pick and choose between any two options by applying wisdom (Vivek) is the factor that determines what the creature, read the 'Atma', does. The Creator gave the creature the power to choose and determine what suits him best. It is here that the need arose for the Creator for creating an array of choices—such as the choice between the good and the bad. If the Atma falls prey to the distorted advice given to it by the mind that comes under the influence of the sense organs of the body and chooses the bad path such as those pursued by Non-Saintly persons, it would lead to the downfall of the concerned creature. On the other hand, if the Atma decides to rely on its own inner voice and overlooks the pestering demands of the gross body that wants gratification and the mind that yearns for pleasures, then the creature would become righteous and pure like the Atma itself.

Obviously, for the creation to perpetuate and the cycle of birth and death to keep on rolling, to allow this world to be populated by all sorts of creatures of all genres and families, from the lowly to the highest, it was necessary for the Creator to keep a maze of options and opportunity open so that the creatures could decide for themselves what destiny they would like to pursue—whether they want their Atma to find eternal peace and freedom from the tangle of this world, or whether they wished to enjoy more of this world by indulging into it. For to happen there must be a choice; if everything is immaculate and clean and holy and pious then the mind and the Atma would have nothing to choose from, for whatever they choose would be of a good nature, and all the creatures would soon find liberation and deliverance for themselves. By-and-by, the wheel of creation would grind to a halt, so thought Brahma. And then he would have to continue creating newer and newer creatures. But if the creature would be sinful and indulgent in this world, they would re-enter this world in a new birth, and hence the cycle of creation would roll-on on its own.

Indeed, Brahma was very clever in this—that he created the bad and the good simultaneously to ensure the wheel of creation that he has created and set in motion carries on its own without him having to exert any more of his energy? Innovative thinking really!

But he thought over the matter that if it was necessary to create bad qualities in order to keep the creature entangled in this world instead for finding liberation from it, then it was equally important to create good qualities at least to keep a balance, for otherwise he would be creating a Monster that would kill him first. So he created goodness and saintly persons to balance the negative effect of evil and non-saintly persons. This gave him leverage—that in case things went out of hand, he would encourage and help the holy and the saintly figures to helm the affairs of this creation and subdue the bad and the evil who were non-saintly.

In fact, this is what actually has been happening down the centuries and eras. At one point of time there is a noble and good ruler, then as time passes there is a vile

ruler who is ruthless and cruel, and once again some good, righteous and gracious ruler comes to rule over the earth—and the cycle continues.

Saints and Non-Saints are like the two poles of a magnet; a magnet is incomplete without its two poles, the north and the south. One attracts and the other repels. Likewise, this creation is kept in balance by the presence of Saints who counter the negative effect of Non-Saints.

The following verses further elaborate on this concept.]

दुख सुख पाप पुन्य दिन राती । साधु असाधु सुजाति कुजाती ॥ ५ ॥
दानव देव ऊँच अरु नीचू । अमिअ सुजीवनु माहरु मीचू ॥ ६ ॥

dukha sukha pāpa pun'ya dina rātī. sādhu asādhu sujāti kujātī. 5.
dānava dēva ūm̐ca aru nīcū. ami'a sujīvanu māhuru mīcū. 6.

Indeed, the world (the creation of Brahma) is a mixture of pain and grief as well as joy and happiness, of sin and evil as well as merit and goodness, of day and night (symbolizing light and darkness respectively), of the saints and the non-saints (i.e. of saintly qualities and non-saintly vices), of high and the low forms of birth, --- (5)

--- Of demons and gods (i.e. of demonic qualities and godly ones), of the high and the low (i.e. those who are noble and glorious, and those who are lowly and vile; also meaning high mountains and low valleys), of nectar and poison that grant life and death respectively. (6)

माया ब्रह्म जीव जगदीसा । लच्छि अलच्छि रंक अवनीसा ॥ ७ ॥
कासी मग सुरसरि क्रमनासा । मरु मारव महिदेव गवासा ॥ ८ ॥

māyā brahma jīva jagadīsā. lacchi alacchi raṅka avanīsā. 7.
kāśī maga surasari kramanāsā. maru mārava mahidēva gavāsā. 8.

It (the world) is a paradoxical creation consisting of a combination of Maya (delusions and attachments with material world) and Brahm (the pure cosmic Consciousness that is free from all Maya), of Jiva (the living being; the creature represented by his Atma) and Jagdish (the Lord God who is the ruler of this entire creation; here referring to the Supreme Being who is also known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma).

Then there are the rich and the poor; the plenty and the dearth of the basics; the pauper and the king! (7)

It is not limited to this, for there is the place called Kashi (or Varanasi which is regarded as a holy land where those who die find deliverance from the cycle of birth and death) and the place called Magadha (which is said to be a cursed place).

Then on the one hand there is the holy river Ganges which is said to have descended from the heaven and hence called the 'river of gods', and on the other hand there is the river known as Karmanasha which is unholy and impure so much so that if one takes a dip in its water then whatever goodness and merit he may have

accumulated till this point of time are all washed away by its polluted water. [To wit, while taking a bath in the Ganges is considered as holy and auspicious, doing so in the river Karmanasha has the opposite effect.]

On one hand there is the uninhabitable land of the vast desert of Marwar (in the present day state of Rajasthan in western India) and on the other hand there is the green and fertile land of Maalvaa with its rich cultivable soil.

Similarly, there are the Brahmins (who are said to represent Brahma and hence their name; they are supposed to be learned and wise men, and therefore get respect in the society), and there are also the barbarians who are cruel hunters who relish eating flesh (and are also lowly by nature). (8)

सरग नरक अनुराग बिरागा । निगमागम गुन दोष बिभागा ॥ ९ ॥

saraga naraka anurāga birāgā. nigamāgama guna dōṣa bibhāgā. 9.

Similarly, there is the heaven and the hell. [The heaven is a pleasurable destiny for the good and the meritorious people where they go after death. Hell is the very opposite of heaven where life is a suffering and full of utter misery and torment where sinners go after death.]

There is love, affection, emotional attachment and union on one side, and separation, grief, detachment, dispassion and renunciation on the other side.

In this aforesaid way, the sacred scriptures such as the Vedas etc. have separated the good and the bad, and have classified them into separate categories accordingly. (9)

दो०. जड़ चेतन गुन दोषमय बिस्व कीन्ह करतार ।
संत हंस गुन गहहिं पय परिहरि बारि बिकार ॥ ६ ॥

dōhā.

jaṛa cētana guna dōṣamaya bisva kīnha karatāra.
santa hansa guna gahahiṃ paya parihari bāri bikāra. 6.

The Creator has made this mortal world consisting of animate as well as inanimate creatures in such a way that it has both the good and the bad qualities in varying proportions. But true Saints are those who, like the legendary Swan, accept only the good virtues and goodness of the world symbolized by pure and un-adulterated milk, while discarding aught and everything that is gross and mundane (i.e. is un-virtuous, unholy and unrighteous) symbolized by water¹. (Doha no. 6)

[Note—¹The ‘Swan’ has a unique quality—it drinks only pure milk and leaves aside its pollutants or adulterations such as additional water that is used to dilute it to increase its volume, as done by milk merchants to get more money from the same quantity of pure milk. Saints accept all that is pure and holy, and simply neglect aught that is naught.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 232 where Lord Ram has said similar thing while praising Bharat.]

चौ०. अस बिबेक जब देइ बिधाता । तब तजि दोष गुनहिं मनु राता ॥ १ ॥
काल सुभाउ करम बरिआई । भलेउ प्रकृति बस चुकइ भलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa bibēka jaba dē'i bidhātā. taba taji dōṣa gunahim manu rātā. 1.
kāla subhā'u karama bari'ā'īm. bhalē'u prakṛti basa cuka'i bhalā'īm. 2.

When the Creator becomes favourable to a person, he grants him the wisdom not only to be able to discriminate between the good and the bad qualities but also to be able to develop a strong liking for the good ones and abhor the bad ones. (1)

However, it often happens that under the influence of times and circumstances, or habits and inclinations that one develops while living under unrighteous and spiritually adverse conditions in this world that also effects the sort of deeds done by him, a person, who is otherwise very holy and pious and noble, unfortunately becomes so deluded and corrupt that he misses the chance of doing good and being virtuous, and instead gets inclined towards the bad and the evil, altogether forgetting about his primary good nature. (2)

सो सुधारि हरिजन जिमि लेहीं । दलि दुख दोष बिमल जसु देहीं ॥ ३ ॥
खलउ करहिं भल पाइ सुसंगू । मिटइ न मलिन सुभाउ अभंगू ॥ ४ ॥

sō sudhāri harijana jimi lēhīm. dali dukha dōṣa bimala jasu dēhīm. 3.
khala'u karahim bhala pā'i susaṅgū. miṭa'i na malina subhā'u abhaṅgū. 4.

Just like persons who are basically good, righteous, pious and holy, such those who are devotees of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu; Lord God), may have fallen from their good path and acquired some demerit due to some mistake they might have made in their lives, are able to overcome their failings, spiritual errors and sinfulness by coming in contact with Saints and Saintly Persons, and in the process they regain their earlier purity and holiness and reclaim their claim to glory and meritorious position in the world. (3)

In a similar way, even those who are inherently wicked, unholy and sinful too acquire some positive virtues and exhibit goodness when they come in contact with Saints and Saintly Persons. But the irony is that this glory and merit is short-lived as they are habituated to revert back to their bad and ugly old ways; they aren't able to shed their evil nature and wicked ways. (4)

[Note—These verses basically say that communion with saints has a positive effect on one and all in an universal manner. But while those who are basically good and holy make a permanent gain from such contact and interaction with Saints, those who are inherently wild, sinful and wicked do not benefit in the long run.

Devotees of Lord God overcome any mistakes they might make or sins they might commit in life by making a diligent effort to repent for them and mend their way by way of surrendering themselves and their offences to the Lord and vowing not

to repeat their mistakes again, and in the process they not only eliminate the negative effect of their sins and misdemeanours but also get good name and fame in this world when they are guided by Saints. But those who are inherently wicked and evil do not gain much even after coming in contact with righteous and holy people such as great Saints. Though they too are influenced by the latter's positive energy and spiritual qualities so much so that a positive change begins to happen to them, but this change is short-lived as compared to those who are spiritually elevated and devotees of Lord God for sooner rather than later the wicked persons would tend to revert back to their bad old ways while the pious persons acquire perpetual goodness.

To wit, it is to the credit of Saints and noble persons who are pious, righteous and holy that when wicked and evil persons come in contact with them the latter are influenced by the former's positive energy and eclectic qualities so much so that they too begin to do good and act nobly themselves. But unholy and unrighteous people have bad qualities so deeply engrained in them, so deeply embedded in their mind and psyche that after some initial good acts and signs of rehabilitation they have a natural tendency and an inherent propensity to revert back to their bad old ways.]

लखि सुबेष जग बंचक जेऊ । बेष प्रताप पूजिअहिं तेऊ ॥ ५ ॥
उघरहिं अंत न होइ निबाहू । कालनेमि जिमि रावन राहू ॥ ६ ॥

lakhi subēṣa jaga bañcaka jē'ū. bēṣa pratāpa pūji'ahim tē'ū. 5.
ugharahim anta na hō'i nibāhū. kālanēmi jimi rāvana rāhū. 6.

Those who are crooked and wicked inwardly often get outwardly honoured in the world due to their pretension of being a holy men because they don a garb of a pious and saintly person (5).

But sooner or later their deceit comes out into the open and they are exposed just like was the fate of Ravana (the demon king of Lanka who had disguised himself as a mendicant to kidnap Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, from the forest, but was ultimately exposed and his truth as a ferocious demon revealed which led to his slaying by the Lord in the ensuing war of Lanka)¹, or that of Kalnemi (another demon who tried to cheat Hanuman by posing as a hermit, but his truth was also revealed and Hanuman killed him)² and Rahu (a demon who disguised himself and sat amongst the line of Gods to drink nectar of eternity, but was exposed by the Sun and the Moon Gods, and as a result had his head cut by Lord Vishnu's discus)³. (6)

[Note—To wit, a wicked person will be exposed sooner or later. He may have mislead the world for some time by his pretentious behaviour of a saintly and good person, but his inherent evil nature will soon have the better of him and his truth as a evil and sinful person would come out in the open. Indeed, evilness, sinfulness, wickedness and crookedness can't be hidden for long. So therefore, non-saints cannot cheat the world for much long no matter how best they try.

¹The story of Ravana abducting Sita disguised as a mendicant is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-16 that precede Doha no. 28.

²The story of Kalnemi trying to deceive Hanuman and getting killed in the process is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that preceeds Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 6 that preceeds Doha no. 58.

³The story of Rahu and how he was exposed and got his head cut by Lord Vishnu is narrated in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurān, 8/9/24-26.]

किएहुँ कुबेषु साधु सनमानू । जिमि जग जामवंत हनुमानू ॥ ७ ॥
हानि कुसंग सुसंगति लाहू । लोकहुँ बेद बिदित सब काहू ॥ ८ ॥

ki'ēhum³ kubēṣu sādhu sanamānū. jimi jaga jāmavanta hanumānū. 7.
hāni kusaṅga susaṅgati lāhū. lōkahum³ bēda bidita saba kāhū. 8.

Even if a Saintly Person has donned some garb or has to assume some form that may look odd and unholy outwardly, he is still praised and honoured in the world for his inherent goodness and excellent virtues and character just like the case of Jamvant and Hunuman¹. (7)

Bad company is exceedingly harmful and injurious, while good company is highly beneficial and helpful. Bad company is worthy of contempt, while good company is worthy of emulation. This is a fact that is well known; everyone knows it and it is endorsed by the scriptures such as the Vedas. (8)

[Note—¹Jamvant was the king of bears, and Hunuman had the body of a monkey. But inspite of this shortcoming they have been lauded and extolled in the scriptures for their good virtues and devotion for Lord Ram. Their physical form of a bear and a monkey respectively did not come in the way of them acquiring good fame and acclaim in this world.

To wit, a wise person should not be misled by the external appearances of Saints and Saintly Persons. It is their natural goodness that one should pay attention to.]

गगन चढ़इ रज पवन प्रसंगा । कीचहिं मिलइ नीच जल संग्गा ॥ ९ ॥
साधु असाधु सदन सुक सारीं । सुमिरहिं राम देहिं गनि गारीं ॥ १० ॥

gagana caṛha'i raja pavana prasaṅgā. kīcahiṁ mila'i nīca jala saṅgā. 9.
sādhu asādhu sadana suka sārīṁ. sumirahiṁ rāma dēhiṁ gani gārīṁ. 10.

When a dust particle comes in contact with the gust of wind, it rises up high in the sky, while the same dust particle comes down to earth and enters a dirty swamp when it comes in contact with water (either as rain falling down on earth or as water running on the surface of earth after heavy rainfall and collecting in pools and swamps)¹. (9)

The parrot and the blackbird living in the house of a saint learn to speak sweetly and utter the holy name of Lord Ram, while those who live in the house of an un-saintly man learn to abuse, to speak rudely and use cuss words². (10)

[Note—¹To wit, contact with saints raises the creature to a high pedestal of respect and glory, while contact with wicked and sinful people pulls him down and heaps ignominy and miseries on him.

²This shows the effect that company has on a person. The parrot and the blackbird pick up the words spoken in the normal course of the day in the house where they live. In the saint's house they learn sweet and holy words such as the divine name of Lord Ram, and become soft spoken. In the household of a wicked and evil person, they learn cuss words and become abusive. This instance is used to show what happens to a man if he keeps good company, and what if he keeps bad company.]

धूम कुसंगति कारिख होई । लिखिअ पुरान मंजु मसि सोई ॥ ११ ॥
सोइ जल अनल अनिल संघाता । होइ जलद जग जीवन दाता ॥ १२ ॥

dhūma kusaṅgati kārikha hō'ī. likhi'a purāna mañju masi sō'ī. 11.
sō'i jala anala anila saṅghātā. hō'i jalada jaga jīvana dātā. 12.

Smoke assumes different forms and acquires different values depending upon from where it originates and what things it comes in contact with. For instance, smoke having a lowly origin such as that coming from a smouldering fire lit to burn some sort of garbage is suffocating in nature and only produces dark soot that is of no use to anyone (and it needs to be scrubbed clean on any surface upon which it settles).

On the other hand, if the same smoke arises from the wick of a lighted candle or an earthen lamp that uses pure oil as fuel to produce light, then this smoke converts into soot that settles on a surface from which it is scooped up and mixed with some oil or any other lubricant to become a beautiful and useful thing such as the writing ink with which holy books such as the Purans and other books of knowledge are written. [To wit, when a smoke is formed from smouldering heaps of lowly things such as half-burnt wood, leaves, dry grass, coal, flakes made from cow-dung etc., it is dark and suffocating and causes nuisance for others, but the same smoke is sought after as a writing medium when it has a high origin such as that which is formed by the flame of a lighted candle or an oil lamp because it settles down as a soot that is then collected and used as a writing medium by mixing it with some oil etc. In ancient times, writing ink was made from soot that was mixed with some oil.] (11)

The same smoke by its conjunction with water, fire and wind is converted into a cloud that brings rain and life to this world. [The cloud is also a sort of smoke because it is alike it in most every respect. The cloud is formed or made when the 'heat' (fire) of the sun is able to evaporate the 'water' from the ocean that condenses in the higher reaches of the atmosphere to form the 'cloud'. This cloud is carried to all the places on the surface of the earth with the help of the 'wind', thereby bringing rain and life to the earth.] (12)

[Note—To wit, the same 'smoke' assumes three distinct identities and values depending on circumstances of its birth and environment. In the first case when it has a lowly origin as when produced by burning garbage it becomes useless and harmful.

In the second case when it arises from a lighted lamp which is regarded as noble because it gives light and removes darkness, the smoke gets its due respect and value for then it is used as a writing material. In the third instance, this smoke is adored as life-giving cloud which grants life unto the world in the form of rain when it is associated with other pure elements of Nature such as (i) water element (i.e. the ocean from which the cloud draws its water content, and which forms the very body of the smoke-like cloud), (ii) the fire element (i.e. the heat of the sun that evaporates the water from the ocean), and (iii) the wind element (that first transports the evaporated water to higher reaches of the atmosphere to form cloud, and then transports this cloud over to all parts of the earth).

In all sooth, likewise, a person becomes good or bad depending on the company he keeps; any knowledge too becomes good or bad depending upon the source from where it is acquired, on who uses it, on the mind that is used to use it, and on the purpose for which it is used.

The following Doha no. 7 further expands on this concept.]

दो०. ग्रह भेषज जल पवन पट पाइ कुजोग सुजोग ।

होहिं कुबस्तु सुबस्तु जग लखहिं सुलच्छन लोग ॥ ७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

graha bhēṣaja jala pavana paṭa pā'i kujōga sujōga.

hōhim kubastu subastu jaga lakhahim sulacchana lōga. 7 (a).

The planets (or 'stars' that are said to have influence upon a person's life and destiny in accordance with the principles of astrology), medicines or herbs, water, air and cloth becomes good or bad in the world depending upon what they are associated with. Only the wise and illustrious ones are able to distinguish between them and understand this phenomenon. (Doha no. 7-a)

[Note—There are nine Grahas or stars that influence a person's life depending upon which place they occupy and which Graha sits next to which in a person's birth chart that is known as the horoscope. The same Graha can be beneficial or harmful depending upon these conditions.

In the same way, merely selecting a single correct medicine or herb is not important to cure a disease, for much depends upon other factors such as other complimentary medicines or herbs that are used with the principle remedy, the dosage of the medicine, the accompanying proper diet and the lifestyle that is to be regulated, the severity of the disease, the age of the patient, the environment in which the patient lives, and many other such tangible and intangible factors combine to give result of any given medicine.

Similarly, plain and simple thing such as the ordinary water assumes multitudes of forms and shapes and names depending upon as many factors. For instance, the same water is called a river, a stream, an ocean, a pond, vapour, steam, cloud, etc. Then we have salt water, sweet water, lemon water; dirty water and clean water; potable and un-potable water; hard water and soft water; then we have ice and snow and glacier and frost and hail and rain and sleet; boiling water and frozen water; then the water assumes many shapes such as that in a cup, a tumbler, a glass, a bucket, and so on and so forth the list may go on and on.

The air also has countless forms and names. For instance there is the air called breath, the air called atmosphere, the air that is called a some-kind of gas, the hot and the cold air, the storm and the gust of wind and the breeze and the tornado as also the whirlwind, the sweet fragrance of the flower or the repulsive foul air from a decomposed corpse, the enticing aroma of some delectable food and the vomit-inducing pungent smell of the same food that rots.

And cloth is no exception either for we have countless forms and multitude of shapes and names by which the humble ‘cloth’ is known.]

सम प्रकास तम पाख दुहुँ नाम भेद बिधि कीन्ह ।

ससि सोषक पोषक समुझि जग जस अपजस दीन्ह ॥ ७ (ख) ॥

sama prakāsa tama pākha duhum̐ nāma bhēda bidhi kīnha.
sasi sōṣaka pōṣaka samujhi jaga jasa apajasa dīnha. 7 (b).

The proportion of light and darkness of the moon is the same in the two fortnights of the month such as the light fortnight and the dark fortnight respectively. But the Creator has named them differently.

While the one fortnight during which the brightness and the light of the moon waxes gradually to grant increasing happiness and joy to the world, and as it symbolized a gradual enhancement of positive values—it was thus named the ‘bright fortnight’ by the Creator to honour this glory.

On the other hand, the other fortnight when the moon wanes and symbolizes rise of gloom and dark forebodings, it was named as the ‘dark fortnight’ by the same Creator. (Doha no. 7-b)

जड़ चेतन जग जीव जत सकल राममय जानि ।

बंदउँ सब के पद कमल सदा जोरि जुग पानि ॥ ७ (ग) ॥

jaṛa cētana jaga jīva jata sakala rāmamaya jāni.
banda'um̐ saba kē pada kamala sadā jōri juga pāni. 7 (c).

So therefore, realizing that this creation that consists of inanimate as well as animate things and creatures is nothing but a manifestation of Lord Ram in all its forms, I (Tulsidas) therefore always bow my head and pay my respects at the feet of all with my palms joined together in supplication. (Doha no. 7-c)

[This is an important observation. Tulsidas gives the reason why he has chosen to show respect even to the unworthy ‘non-saints’. It is because all living beings—nay, even the inanimate things such as the planets and the plants, and for that matter all that exists here, there and anywhere else in whatever form and state—are all one or the other form of the same Supreme Being known by the name of Lord Ram.

Forsooth and without gainsay, so says the Upanishads, there is nothing but Brahm in this universe! This is Brahm, that is Brahm, and there is nothing but Brahm!!]

देव दनुज नर नाग खग प्रेत पितर गंधर्ब ।
बंदउँ किंनर रजनिचर कृपा करहु अब सर्ब ॥ ७ (घ) ॥

dēva danuja nara nāga khaga prēta pitara gandharba.
banda'um̐ kinnara rajanicara kṛpā karahu aba sarba. 7 (d).

[Extending his all-encompassing and all-inclusive view of this creation, Tulsidas says—]

I give my reverence to one and all—to the gods, the great demons, the human beings, the serpents and other subterranean creatures, the birds, the spirits (holy and unholy), the souls of departed ancestors, the celestial beings such as the Gandharvas and Kinnars (who live in heaven and are said to be dancers and musicians for the gods), the nocturnal creatures (such as the wild animals and ghosts that venture in the night alone)—in fact one and all who exist in this universe, I pray to you all to have your grace upon me and be kind and gracious to me. (Doha no. 7-d)

चौ०. आकर चारि लाख चौरासी । जाति जीव जल थल नभ बासी ॥ १ ॥
सीय राममय सब जग जानी । करउँ प्रनाम जोरि जुग पानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

ākara cāri lākha caurāsī. jāti jīva jala thala nabha bāsī. 1.
sīya rāmamaya saba jaga jānī. kara'um̐ pranāma jōri juga pānī. 2.

There are in all eighty-four lakh species of creatures that take birth in this world¹, and they are broadly divided into four classes². All of them find their habitat either under water (as aquatic creatures of all denominations), or on the earth (as terrestrial creatures of all denominations), or in the sky (as birds of all denominations)³. (1)

Verily indeed, I pay my respects to all of them by joining the palms of my hand and bowing my head because I have a firm faith that this entire living world is a manifestation of Lord Ram and Sita (representing respectively the Supreme Being and his cosmic energy known as Shakti)⁴. (2)

[Note—¹According to Hindu scriptures, there are a total of eighty-four lakh species of living beings. 1 lakh = 1 hundred thousand; hence 84 lakhs means 84 hundred thousand species of living beings.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 44.

²The four classes or types of living beings are the following: (i) 'Andaj' (those born from an egg, e.g. birds, snakes, crocodiles, fish, tortoise etc.); (ii) 'Swadej' (those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi, mosquitoes and lice etc.); (iii) 'Udbhij' (those born from seeds, e.g. plants); and (iv) 'Jarayuj' (those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. 4-limbed man, and animals with four legs, such as horse, deer, lion, goat etc.).

Refer: (a) Padma Puran, Shivagitayam; and (b) Manu Smriti, Canto 1, verse nos. 43-48.

³All living beings have their habitat either under water, on earth (either underground or on its surface), or in the sky. Fish and all such creatures come under the first category who live under water; plants and animals come under the second category of creatures who live either on the surface of the earth or underground (such as edible roots, bulbs and tubers amongst plants, and worms and snakes who live underground by burrowing holes in the earth), while birds and all other creatures who can fly (such as insects) come under the third category of creatures who have their habitat in the sky.

⁴The entire creation is a manifestation of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness. There is nothing in this world which is not one or the other manifestation of that single universal entity known as Brahm. Each unit of creation, from the invisible to the visible, from the subtlest to the grossest is a form of Brahm. This is the metaphysical view of creation as expounded in the Upanishads.

Since Lord Ram is a manifested form of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness that is also known as the Supreme Being, obviously because without Consciousness nothing would live, and this cosmic entity is almighty and all-powerful, being at the core of life and existence in this world. Further, according to the Upanishads, the cosmic powers and energy of the Consciousness that enables the latter to do anything is called its Shakti, literally meaning the dynamism and energy of cosmic Consciousness. In the case of Lord Ram, a manifestation of Brahm, this Shakti is represented by Sita, his constant companion.

Since everything in this creation is a revelation of Brahm, and since Brahm does anything by employing his cosmic Shakti, it follows that this creation is regulated by Brahm from within by the medium of his Shakti, for without Shakti of Brahm which keeps the world active from within, this creation would be lifeless and dead.

Hence, here the learned poet Tulsidas shows the high level of his enlightenment and wisdom, as well as the broadness of his vision and expertise in metaphysical knowledge when he says that he is actually offering his respects to Lord Ram and Sita, who represent the supreme Brahm and the cosmic Shakti respectively, while bowing his head before all living beings in this world and praying to them—because all of them are a manifestation of Lord Ram and Sita.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 (where Mandodari has affirmed this view of cosmic manifestation of Lord Ram); and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81-a (where the saintly crow Kaagbhusund has also reiterated this view.)

जानि कृपाकर किंकर मोहू । सब मिलि करहु छाड़ि छल छोहू ॥ ३ ॥
निज बुधि बल भरोस मोहि नाहीं । तातें बिनय करउँ सब पाहीं ॥ ४ ॥

jāni kṛpākara kiṅkara mōhū. saba mili karahu chāḍi chala chōhū. 3.
nija budhi bala bharōsa mōhi nāhīm. tātēm binaya kara'um̃ saba pāhīm. 4.

Recognising me as a humble servant of the Lord who is an embodiment of grace and kindness himself (i.e. Lord Ram) (jāni kṛpākara kiṅkara mōhū), I beg all of you to sincerely bless me¹. (3)

I don't have the confidence, competence, skills or intelligence needed to undertake the enormous task of narrating the divine story of Lord Ram in the proper way, in the way it should be actually done to bring out the spiritual beauty of the story called Ram Charit Manas, as it requires specialized talent and acumen which I lack. Hence, I am virtually out of my wits, and this is why I need the blessings, good will and grace of one and all, for it would go a long way to help me succeed in doing justice to the narrative and give my writing the spiritual shine it so rightly deserves². (4)

[Note—¹In verse no. 2 herein above, the learned poet Tulsidas has already said that he sees the entire world as a manifestation of his beloved Lord Ram. This means that when he prays to anyone, seeking the latter's grace and blessings, he is actually praying to Lord Ram. And since Lord Ram is an ocean of mercy, kindness and grace, all forms of his manifestations too must have these virtues in them.

Hence, Tulsidas feels sure that everyone, even his opponents, would bless him with success when he tells them that he wishes to write the story of Lord Ram in the form of Ram Charit Manas in a fine and beautiful way. This would preempt even evil ones from creating unnecessary hurdles and problems for him, for they would feel obliged to cooperate with him, instead of obstructing his way, as he was about to narrate the story of Lord Ram, the Lord who is compassionate, king and graceful towards all. It is a holy venture, and so no one would ever think of throwing a spanner in this wheel, for if they do so they would invite the wrath of the Lord himself, specially when Tulsidas asserts that he is a 'humble servant of Lord Ram'. The Lord would definitely not tolerate that his servant is subjected to trouble by anyone.

²This verse shows the great virtues of humility and simplicity, of modesty, humbleness and un-pretentiousness that Tulsidas possessed. He was a blessed soul and a chosen one, for otherwise the very thought of narrating the story of Lord Ram would not have occurred to him. Besides this, he was a scholar who had thoroughly studied Sanskrit language as well as the scriptures. Yet he says that he is incompetent and unskilled to write the story of Ram Charit Manas. He does not brag of his abilities; he does not pretend to be a scholar or an author; he has no airs of superiority about himself. Instead, he prefers to be humble and simple. Lord Ram loves these qualities in his devotees, proving that Tulsidas was surely a devotee and servant of the Lord as he asserts himself to be.

Normally an author of such a wonderful and unique classic as Ram Charit Manas is, a book that is of singular beauty of composition, for it not only tells a devotional story in an inimitable style that nourishes the soul but also effortlessly incorporates in its narration great universal Truths of metaphysics and spiritualism woven intricately into the text, making it a book of stellar qualities unmatched in the realm of devotional literature in Hindu philosophy, would feel proud of his product and its authorship that brings immense fame and applause to him. But here we find Tulsidas expressing his fears that he finds himself incompetent to undertake such an enormous task as writing Ram Charit Manas and risks failure if he is not blessed by everyone and gains their good wishes to enable him to succeed. It is sufficient to show that this great saintly poet had no ego and pride in him, but was full of humility, modesty, humbleness and simplicity. These are the virtues liked by Lord Ram in his

devotees, for the true devotee is one who attributes all his successes to the Lord and takes no personal credit himself. The devotee's enterprise then becomes an enterprise of the Lord himself, with the devotee merely playing the role of an obedient servant; so the Lord then feels obliged to make it succeed, no matter what, as its success or failure would reflect on the Lord's own reputation.]

करन चहउँ रघुपति गुन गाहा । लघु मति मोरि चरित अवगाहा ॥ ५ ॥
सूझ न एकउ अंग उपाऊ । मन मति रंक मनोरथ राऊ ॥ ६ ॥

karana caha'umṛ raghupati guna gāhā. laghu mati mōri carita avagāhā. 5.
sūjha na ēka'u aṅga upā'ū. mana mati raṅka manōratha rā'ū. 6.

I wish to narrate the story of Lord Raghupati's (i.e. Lord Ram's) glories, holiness and divinity, but I don't have the required competence, confidence, intelligence and other mental abilities necessary to do it successfully, for the Lord's story is vast and fathomless (like the sky which is beyond measurement). (5)

I am at a lost and literally find myself at sea, for I don't have the resources or literary acumen to undertake this gigantic task, though my ambition is so high. (6)

[Note—Tulsidas has made himself clear here as to why he is seeking blessings and goodwill of everyone for his endeavour—for he says that he lacks the wherewithal needed to undertake such a great enterprise as writing the holy and divine story of Lord Ram in such a way that it is perfect and flawless, not only from the perspective of poetical literature and grammar of exemplary beauty and scholarly taste, but also from the angle of spiritualism, theology and metaphysics which he aims to incorporate in it, with great stress on devotion and love for Lord God, for he intends to make this story a fountainhead that would give abiding peace, beatitude and joy to the soul of its reader and listener, making its narrator and singer feel immensely blessed and blissful.

The task is extremely daunting and immensely huge, and it seems like he is trying to measure the sky or the ocean which have no end. He wonders how he would succeed in completing his mission successfully. Therefore, he needs blessings of one and all in order to succeed in this holy enterprise.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 33; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 34.]

मति अति नीच ऊँचि रुचि आछी । चहिअ अमिअ जग जुरइ न छाछी ॥ ७ ॥
छमिहहिं सज्जन मोरि ढिठाई । सुनिहहिं बालबचन मन लाई ॥ ८ ॥

mati ati nīca ūm̄ci ruci āchī. cahi'a ami'a jaga jura'i na chāchī. 7.
chamihahim̄ sajjana mōri ḍhiṭhā'ī. sunihahim̄ bālabacana mana lā'ī. 8.

[Elaborating further, Tulsidas says—] Verily I say that I have a low intellect though my ambitions are very high. It is like the case of a person who cannot arrange even

humble butter-milk to feed himself but dreams of acquiring sweet nectar of the best quality to drink. (7)

Therefore, I earnestly beg all noble-hearted persons to excuse me for my stubbornness for attempting to do something beyond my ability and competence, and I beg them to listen to my narrative in the same way as one would affectionately listen to a little child speaking and expressing his feelings excitedly in his own incoherent way¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 183 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it. Here, Bharat says that though he is sinful yet he is sure that his loving brother Lord Ram would excuse him for all his demeanours and shortcomings when he comes face to face before him and begs for forgiveness, for the Lord would listen to his pleas most affectionately and accept his wishes.]

जौं बालक कह तोतरि बाता । सुनहिं मुदित मन पितु अरु माता ॥ ९ ॥
हँसिहहिं कूर कुटिल कुबिचारी । जे पर दूषन भूषनधारी ॥ १० ॥

jauṁ bālaka kaha tōtari bātā. sunahim mudita mana pitu aru mātā. 9.
hamśihahim kūra kuṭila kubicārī. jē para dūṣana bhūṣanadhārī. 10.

When a little child speaks with his childish lisp, the child's incoherent babblings are listened to by the child's loving parents affectionately, for they would always forgive or neglect the ramblings of the child even as they feel amused by the little one's prattle, and enjoy hearing it¹. (9)

On the other hand, those who are wicked in their hearts and harbour malice for one and all, for they are jealous of the achievements of others; such evil persons thoroughly enjoy pricking holes and finding faults in any work done by others by putting a spotlight on their little failures and shortcomings. Such people would laugh at me, ridicule me, mock at me, and have a field day deriding me and my effort². (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 136—where it is said that Lord Ram listened to the innocent talk of forest dwelling tribes who spoke in their uncultured way, not in the way a person of good upbringing would speak, when they came to meet the Lord and express their sincere affection for him; the Lord loved to hear them just like a loving father would affectionately listen to his child talking with a lisping tongue.

A loving parent would enjoy a child's tittle-tattle and smile at it, instead of feeling annoyed, no matter how inappropriate and irrelevant the child's little talk may be, so likewise my narration of Lord Ram's story, no matter how incompetently it is composed and naïvely narrated, would surely find acceptance with saintly souls for they would see the positive side of my noble efforts inasmuch as it is auspicious, for I am singing the glories of the Supreme Lord in a way I can, to the best of my abilities, even if it is not up to the mark, for howsoever faulty it may be and whatsoever shortcomings it may have, yet it still incorporates the holy name of Lord Ram, a single element which would suffice to neutralize all the drawbacks that my narrative may have.

²Here, Tulsidas compares two types of persons: one type of person is he who encourages those who try to do something novel and praiseworthy for the good of others, lauding him for his noble effort, and always encouraging him to move forward, while the other type of person is full of malice for all, being eternally jealous of everyone, always finding faults with others, ridiculing one and all for any good thing they do, even though they know that what others have done is something worthy of honour instead of inviting criticism and scorn.]

निज कबित्त केहि लाग न नीका । सरस होउ अथवा अति फीका ॥ ११ ॥
जे पर भनिति सुनत हरषाहीं । ते बर पुरुष बहुत जग नाहीं ॥ १२ ॥

nija kabinā kēhi lāga na nīkā. sarasa hō'u athavā ati phīkā. 11.
jē para bhaniti sunata haraṣāhīṁ. tē bara puruṣa bahuta jaga nāhīṁ. 12.

Who does not like his own poetry and think that his composition is excellent, whether it is actually delightful and charming, or is insipid, tasteless and boring.

[To wit, everyone thinks that whatever he or she has written is an excellent piece of literature, irrespective of its real worth.] (11)

It is rare to find a noble person who will appreciate the writing of others, and feel glad to hear or read it.

[To wit, authors and poets ordinarily think that they are the best in their fields, and rarely would one find an author or a poet who would express sincere joy and approbation for a composition of another author or poet.] (12)

[Note—Tulsidas says that people are normally jealous of their peers; they think that they are the best in their fields of work. So therefore, it is much easier to find authors and poets who are critical of works of other authors and poets, finding more faults in them than any merit, laughing at such compositions and ridiculing the composer, but it is very difficult and even rare to find a good and noble soul who would cheer other authors and poets sincerely, feeling happy when he comes across a piece of writing by them that is worthy of praise and appreciation, even if such writing is from one's competitor or adversary.

In this context, refer to Tulsidas' book 'Dohawali', verse no. 355.]

जग बहु नर सर सरि सम भाई । जे निज बाढ़ि बढहिं जल पाई ॥ १३ ॥
सज्जन सकृत् सिंधु सम कोई । देखि पूर बिधु बाढ़इ जोई ॥ १४ ॥

jaga bahu nara sara sari sama bhā'ī. jē nija bāḍhi baḥhahīṁ jala pā'ī. 13.
sajjana sakṛta sindhu sama kō'ī. dēkhi pūra bidhu bāḥha'i jō'ī. 14.

Oh brothers!¹ This world has countless numbers of people who feel proud at their own achievements and get puffed up much like the numerous rivers and ponds that overflow their banks whenever water flows into them and makes them swell up. (13)

On the contrary, there are only a few noble and illustrious persons who feel elated when they see someone else rise and shine much like the ocean, which is a vast and fathomless reservoir of water that rises and overflows its shores once in a while when it sees the full moon². (14)

[Note—¹The use of the word ‘Brother’ (bhāī) while making a statement is a polite way of address by which the speaker or the author wishes to draw the attention of his audience or reader to what he is about to say in an affectionate and courteous manner. This mode of address precludes any chance of causing an un-intended offence of any kind to anyone; it soothes emotions, creating goodwill, and an instant bonding between the speaker and his audience.

²The idea here is that ordinarily people are so shallow and narrow-minded in their thoughts that if they have some good quality in them, they would go around the town boasting of it, but when they see someone else exhibiting the same quality, or even a better one, they would do their best to pull him down by deriding him and ridiculing his achievements.

On the contrary, there are only a few noble persons who have a great and magnanimous heart, for they are not jealous of others’ achievements and virtues, as they not only feel glad when they discover some fine talent or good virtue in someone else but they would also encourage that person to further develop it.]

दो०. भाग छोट अभिलाषु बड़ करउँ एक बिस्वास ।

पैहहिं सुख सुनि सुजन सब खल करिहहिं उपहास ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

bhāga chōṭa abhilāṣu baṛa kara'um' ēka bisvāsa.

paihahim sukha suni sujana saba khala karihahim upahāsa. 8.

Tulsidas says—‘I have great and noble intentions of narrating the holy and divine story of Lord Ram, though I am very unlucky because I am incompetent to do so, and lack the knowledge for it. But whatever it is, I am sure that those who are saintly will find happiness and joy in it (i.e. in my narration of Lord Ram’s divine story), whereas those who are un-saintly (wicked, pervert and jealous) will ridicule it and laugh at it scornfully (i.e. they will come to grief and misery; they will become jealous of me as I will do something that is holy and auspicious which is not acceptable by them; they will be tormented because when people hear about the Lord’s divine story they will break their contact with such unholy people).’ (Doha no. 8)

[Note—Tulsidas clarifies in this Doha what he means when he has compared jealous people who are always envious of others, trying to ridicule the latter, without rhyme or reason, at the slightest pretext, with those who are noble souls with a good heart, for they feel glad when they see others showing some talent and producing some good work.

By doing this, Tulsidas has deftly deflected unwarranted criticism of his writing and narration of Ram Charit Manas by saying that only those who are exceptionally selfish and jealous of him would find fault in it, while those who have a noble heart would see the goodness in this book and its positive side as it contains the

divine and holy story of Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being, a book which is intended to pay respect to the Lord and sing his glories, a book aimed to provide spiritual bliss and beatitude to all its readers and devotees of the Lord, a book that brings the Lord closer to the ordinary man by narrating the Lord's story in a simple and local language well known to the masses, and not a book to exhibit Tulsidas' poetic skills and literary acumen, or for self-grandiosity and fame. Tulsidas says that his intention is pious, and not for acquiring name and fortune.]

चौ०. खल परिहास होइ हित मोरा । काक कहहिं कलकंठ कठोरा ॥ १ ॥

हंसहि बक दादुर चातकही । हँसहिं मलिन खल बिमल बतकही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

khala parihāsa hō'i hita mōrā. kāka kahahim kalakaṅṭha kaṭhōrā. 1.

hansahi baka dādura cātakahī. haṁsahim malina khala bimala batakahī. 2.

When evil-minded people laugh at me, when they ridicule and deride me, undermining my auspicious effort and noble intentions (to narrate the glories of Lord Ram in the form of his divine story called Ram Charit Manas)—well, it would be good for me¹, for it is well known that crows always call the cuckoo hoarse out of jealousy and malice towards the latter. (1)

Similarly, herons have a habit of ridiculing the swan, and bats make fun of the sparrow hawk².

It is because rogues and evil-minded creatures have a natural habit of deriding those of finer virtues and ridiculing their refined speech³. (2)

[Note—¹How will false and unwarranted criticism and ridicule by evil-minded people, who have a propensity of finding faults with others and are eternally malicious towards one and all, would benefit the narrator of Ram Charit Manas?

Well, the world knows well about the crooked nature and malicious habit of such people, that whenever someone does something good and auspicious they would instantly stand up to pull him down and deride his noble efforts. So, when such wicked people would laugh at Tulsidas' narration of Lord Ram's holy story in the form of Ram Charit Manas, pouring scorn at him and pricking holes in his composition, the world will instantly know that they are doing it merely because it is their nature to do so, for they are full of malice and jealousy.

If the composition was not up to the mark then these people would keep quiet for they know that it would not stand the test of scrutiny by the world and get rejected automatically. But when they discover that the world is all praise for the way Tulsidas has narrated Ram Charit Manas, it would stoke their envy and ignite their hidden fire of jealousy and malice, which would burst out in the open in the form of ridiculing him and finding a thousand and one faults with his composition.

Hence, in a way they would be indirectly benefiting and helping Tulsidas's noble efforts and promoting his good work because their laughter and ridiculing would draw the world's attention to his composition, the Ram Charit Manas, as more and more people would like to read and hear it directly to judge for themselves the worth of it and the truth in such criticisms, which would serve Tulsidas in good stead as it is this what he expects the world to do—to read and hear the divine story of Lord

Ram which purifies the mind, grants peace to the heart, and bliss and beatitude to the soul.

To wit, loud criticism and derisive laughter by wicked people with respect to Ram Charit Manas would indirectly serve to help spread the holy story of Lord Ram in this world, as more and more people would be inclined to read and hear it to find out why such a clamour is being made about it. This would help to spread the good word of the Lord in the world. And as anything that is good and divine is bound to leave its auspicious mark upon those who come in contact with it, so would the Ram Charit Manas bless those who read and hear it, even if it is done out of curiosity aroused by criticism of it by crooked people.

²The idea is that the world knows fully well that the cuckoo has a sweet voice as compared to the crow, the swan is a finer bird as compared to the heron (for the former drinks only pure water while the latter devours fish), and similarly the sparrow hawk is nobler bird than the bat (as the former drinks fresh rain water while the latter would eat its own excreta), and therefore the criticism of the former by the latter is only due to jealousy and malice and nothing else—so likewise criticism of Tulsidas' composition known as 'Ram Charit Manas' by wicked people is solely because they are jealous and envious of him, for they don't like the world to have access to spiritual wisdom as it would undermine their efforts to keep the world engaged in wicked activities like their own, because once the world comes to know about a source of eternal spiritual bliss and happiness as devised by Tulsidas, it would turn its back to such wicked people and shun them, realizing their evil nature and nefarious designs. This situation would make evil people feel isolated and neglected, which obviously they don't want.

³The spoken word is a reflection of the mind and its thoughts. What Tulsidas is about to speak pertains to the divine and the holy; it is a sublime talk regarding Lord Ram, for he wishes to narrate the auspicious story of the Lord in the form of Ram Charit Manas. Hence, all those who are critical of him must understand that they are themselves in the wrong, for Tulsidas is not narrating any story of a great king as the latter's paid poet or minstrel, but he is narrating the divine story of Lord Ram as his devotee and servant. He is not boasting of any qualification as a savant or learned scholar of poetry, but he will tell the story of the Lord in as simple a language as possible. So what is the problem?]

कबित रसिक न राम पद नेहू । तिन्ह कहँ सुखद हास रस एहू ॥ ३ ॥
भाषा भनिति भोरि मति मोरी । हँसिबे जोग हँसें नहिं खोरी ॥ ४ ॥

kabita rasika na rāma pada nēhū. tinha kaham' sukhada hāsa rasa ēhū. 3.
bhāṣā bhaniti bhōri mati mōrī. hamṣibē jōga hamṣēm nahim khōrī. 4.

Those who do not enjoy poetry and also lack devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram, for them my composition (i.e. Ram Charit Manas) would seem queer and become a source of fun and mirth, for they would derive jolly good satisfaction by ridiculing it and poking jokes at it¹. (3)

I am writing in the local vernacular, the language of the laity and the common man (instead of in the language of the scholar), and my intellect is also not as high as is expected from a person undertaking such a singularly great enterprise, so therefore if anyone laughs at my effort then he or she may be excused and forgiven, for it is not their fault as I may indeed have fallen short of expectations². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, those who are devoted to Lord Ram will see at least one single merit in Tulsidas' work, which is that it sings the glories of Lord Ram and contains the holy name of the Lord. It is a sufficient qualification that would make a devotee feel charmed by the narration of Lord Ram's story known as 'Ram Charit Manas', irrespective of its other merits or demerits.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 10.

²These and other such instances clearly reveal Tulsidas' sense of immense modesty and humbleness like a true devotee of the Lord—for the final product of his that we are reading now as 'Ram Charit Manas' has no parallel in the world in the realm of devotional literature ever written in the vernacular, for it is a classical example of the story of the Ramayana told in such a way and in such simple manner that even an ordinary person, who is not versed at all in metaphysical and theological knowledge, can easily understand both the story of Lord Ram as well as the spiritual message it contains. This is a unique feat in its own right. Besides this, Tulsidas' composition is so refined and well written by observing all the laws of grammar and poetry that it has become a bench-mark for fine poetry and devotional literature that is unmatched for its beauty, magnificence and charm of narration. It captivates the heart and mesmerizes the mind; it hold the listener spell bound by its melody when sung properly, and it acts as a soothing balm for the tormented soul that is looking for a source of solace and succour in this world that surrounds it with unending miseries and worries.

Tulsidas clearly says that he is not writing for the scholar for his medium of composition is the vernacular language, the dialect of the laity and the common man. By writing in the local language Tulsidas has plainly set out his mission and what his intention is: he does not want, nor hopes, for any accolades from learned men for his composition, for the language he has chosen for the work is intended for the common man who does not have the scholarship or the acumen to judge literature, good or bad. So therefore, his main intent is the make the divine story of Lord Ram accessible to the common man so that even the ordinary folk can enjoy the nectar of spiritual bliss that would naturally come to him by hearing and reading the story of Lord Ram in the Ram Charit Manas.

Besides this, Tulsidas has said elsewhere that he is writing this story for his own satisfaction and joy, for he wishes to devote his time and mind in the thoughts of his beloved Lord Ram, and if in the course of this others too derive some benefit and enjoy the nectar of bliss and beatitude as it drips like honey from a full honey-comb, it will be an additional source of satisfaction for him.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12; Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

प्रभु पद प्रीति न सामुझि नीकी । तिन्हि कथा सुनि लागिहि फीकी ॥ ५ ॥

हरि हर पद रति मति न कुतरकी । तिन्ह कहँ मधुर कथा रघुबर की ॥ ६ ॥
राम भगति भूषित जियँ जानी । सुनिहहिँ सुजन सराहि सुबानी ॥ ७ ॥

prabhu pada prīti na sāmujhi nīkī. tinahi kathā suni lāgihi phīkī. 5.
hari hara pada rati mati na kutarakī. tinha kahum̃ madhura kathā raghubara
kī. 6.
rāma bhagati bhūṣita jiyam̃ jānī. sunihahim̃ sujana sarāhi subānī. 7.

Verily indeed and forsooth, those who have no devotion and affection for the holy feet of the Lord (Sri Ram), and those who do not have a wise mind (that would see the positive aspect of anything as it is inclined to invariably see the negative side of everything)—for such unfortunate people (whom I pity), this story of the Lord would appear stale, boring and tasteless. (5)

On the other hand, those who have devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Hari and Lord Har (i.e. Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva respectively), and whose mind is not inclined to engage in fruitless debates and doubting—for such fortunate souls (I pay homage to them) this holy story would look sweet and charming. (6)

Realizing that it is adorned by one stellar virtue called ‘devotion for Lord Ram’ (which is superior to all other adornments put together), those who have a noble heart and wise intellect, those who are charitable and broad minded in their disposition and thoughts, would thoroughly enjoy hearing it, and will hold no qualms in cheering it and appreciating its beauty in laudatory terms. (7)

[Note—These three verses sum up what Tulsidas has said till now: put simply, the story of Ram Charit Manas would be a source of irritation for evil persons who have no devotion for the Lord God, but it would be a source of eternal joy and bliss for all those who are devoted to the Lord and have affection for him.]

कबि न होउँ नहिँ बचन प्रबीनू । सकल कला सब बिद्या हीनू ॥ ८ ॥
आखर अरथ अलंकृति नाना । छंद प्रबंध अनेक बिधाना ॥ ९ ॥
भाव भेद रस भेद अपारा । कबित दोष गुन बिबिध प्रकारा ॥ १० ॥
कबित बिबेक एक नहिँ मोरें । सत्य कहउँ लिखि कागद कोरें ॥ ११ ॥

kabi na hō'um̃ nahim̃ bacana prabīnū. sakala kalā saba bidyā hīnū. 8.
ākhara aratha alaṅkr̥ti nānā. chanda prabandha anēka bidhānā. 9.
bhāva bhēda rasa bhēda apārā. kabita dōṣa guna bibidha prakārā. 10.
kabita bibēka ēka nahim̃ mōrēm̃. satya kaha'um̃ likhi kāgada kōrēm̃. 11.

I say truly that I am neither a poet nor a scholar who is good at oratory or an expert at writing compositions. Verily and in all sooth, I declare that I lack all kinds of expertise and skills in any field of art or craft; I do not pretend to be learned or wise either, for I have no worthwhile qualities that would entitle me to be called a poet or narrator¹. (8)

Poetry, for that matter any kind of composition, is governed by countless numbers of laws and rules concerning that particular type of poetry or prose. Such as for example, the number of letters or syllables in a line or stanza, their various meanings and fine nuances, different types of poetical adornments and embellishments, various sorts of verses and their arrangements using different types of speech, (9)---

--- Many kinds of interpretations that can be made of their meanings, hidden and obvious, various types of emotions and sentiments that are expressed in these verses, and so on and so forth—for all kinds of compositions have their own fault lines and points of excellence which are multifarious. (10)

I firmly declare and write it down in black and white on paper (to affirm the truth of my assertion) that I am not skilled in any of these fine arts of poetic composition². (11)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 8.

²In all these verses, the central idea is that Tulsidas says that he is not at all boasting of his poetical skills nor of his intellect and knowledge, and so there is no cause why anyone should be jealous of him. He is narrating the divine story of Lord Ram in a manner he is able to do it, not to showcase his talent or get any kind of praise, but to give peace to his soul and purify his speech. So why anyone should be annoyed with him; or why should anyone try pricking faults in his composition: for there is no reason for it?

In case he has made some inadvertent errors, or some unintended flaw has crept in his narration, well, it is surely excusable, for he has already declared that he is not a scholar or an expert of any kind.]

दो०. भनिति मोरि सब गुन रहित बिस्व बिदित गुन एक ।
सो बिचारि सुनिहहिं सुमति जिन्ह कें बिमल बिबेक ॥ ९ ॥
dōhā.

bhaniti mōri saba guna rahita bisva bidita guna ēka.
sō bicāri sunihahim̄ sumati jinha kēm̄ bimala bibēka. 9.

Though my poetical composition is lacking in all kinds of qualities that good poetry ought to have, yet it has one exceptional glory about it that has made it famous the world over, a quality that would be discerned by those who have a wise mind and judicious intellect, for such people would then hear my composition with due respect (and revel in its spiritual charm). (Doha no. 9)

[Note—And what is that ‘unique quality in Tulsidas’ composition’? He answers this question in the next verse that follows herein below.]

चौ०. एहि महँ रघुपति नाम उदारा । अति पावन पुरान श्रुति सारा ॥ १ ॥

मंगल भवन अमंगल हारी । उमा सहित जेहि जपत पुरारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi maham¹ raghupati nāma udārā. ati pāvana purāna śruti sārā. 1.
maṅgala bhavana amaṅgala hārī. umā sahita jēhi japata purārī. 2.

Verily indeed, in this composition of mine (known as Ram Charit Manas) there is present the holy name of Lord Ram, a name that is a benefactor for all, extremely pure, holy and divine, and the spiritual essence of all the Vedas and other scriptures¹.
(1)

The Lord's holy name is a treasury of auspiciousness that grants all kinds of grace and blessings, and it is a destroyer of all misfortunes and their attendant miseries.

It is a name that is constantly repeated by Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Uma as a spiritual formula used during Japa (which means repetition of a mystical formula that grants eternal bliss and beatitude to them who use it during meditation, as well as contemplation on the Divine). (2)

[Note—¹The scriptures speak of metaphysical truths and show the way to spiritual bliss and beatitude; they pave the path for the deliverance, salvation and emancipation of the creature. Towards this end they speak of different paths that would enable the creature to reach his spiritual goal, and he has to select the path best suited to his individual needs, temperaments and mental abilities.

For success in any endeavour, some guide and help is needed, some kind of success-formula is necessary, some well-established process ought to be followed. The scriptures prescribe different Mantras or spiritual formulas that one can use to achieve success in reaching his spiritual goal of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Amongst the many such Mantras, Lord Ram's holy name "Ram/Rāma" is regarded as the King; it is called the 'Tarak Mantra'—i.e. a single spiritual formula that entitles the creature to attain deliverance from the cycle of transmigration and its attendant miseries and torments. By employing this single Mantra, i.e. by relying solely on Lord Ram's holy name, one can attain eternal peace, bliss, beatitude and felicity for his soul. This irrefutable fact has been incontrovertibly reiterated in (a) Ram Rahasya Upanishad, and (b) Ram Tapini Upanishad, which are the twelfth and the thirteenth Upanishads respectively of the Atharva Veda.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 108; Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 197; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 194 along with Chaupai line nos. 5 and 8 that precede it, as well as Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (c) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 42; (d) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 129; Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 130.

²The proof of the above assertion lies in the fact that Lord Shiva uses Lord Ram's holy name 'Ram' as a Mantra that he constantly repeats and employs it during meditation. Not only this, Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Ram in the ears of a dying man which grants the latter deliverance; Lord Shiva had invoked the holy name of Lord Ram when he had gulped down a horrible poison produced at the time of the churning of the ocean in some ancient time, and miraculously the poison had no

effect on him by the divine intercession of Lord Ram's holy name which protects those who say it.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 19; Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

भनिति बिचित्र सुकबि कृत जोऊ । राम नाम बिनु सोह न सोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
बिधुबदनी सब भाँति सँवारी । सोह न बसन बिना बर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

bhaniti bicitra sukabi kṛta jō'ū. rāma nāma binu sōha na sō'ū. 3.
bidhubadanī saba bhānti samvārī. sōha na basana binā bara nārī. 4.

No matter how beautiful, charming and well-composed a poetry may be, one that has been penned by an expert poet who is well-versed in all the fine points of writing poetry and is skilled in his art, yet if that composition does not incorporate the holy name of Lord Ram in it then it lacks worth and becomes insipid and dull¹. (3)

It is like the case of a woman who does not look good, dignified and cultured if she is not properly dressed modestly although she may have a face as beautiful as the full moon². (4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas says that the one single factor that lends glory to any composition, no matter who has written it, is the inclusion of the holy name of Lord Ram in its text. To wit, Lord Ram's holy name is the soul of any composition; just like a body is worthless without its soul so is any poetry useless without including Lord Ram's name in it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 23 where the same idea is reiterated.

It is like the case of a dish that would taste dull and boring if no salt is added to it, in spite of the fact that it has been prepared by an expert cook, contains the best of ingredients, has an appetizing aroma and an enticing look that tickle the senses, and is garnished and presented in the best way possible.

²The true charm and beauty of a woman is in her sense of decency and modesty. If she is scantily clad or has applied a thick make-up on her face, she looks vulgar and becomes a laughing stock for the world.]

सब गुन रहित कुकबि कृत बानी । राम नाम जस अंकित जानी ॥ ५ ॥
सादर कहहिं सुनहिं बुध ताही । मधुकर सरिस संत गुनग्राही ॥ ६ ॥

saba guna rahita kukabi kṛta bānī. rāma nāma jasa aṅkita jānī. 5.
sādara kahahim sunahim budha tāhī. madhukara sarisa santa gunagrāhī. 6.

Even if the composition (i.e. Ram Charit Manas) lacks quality and fineness, and even if it has been composed by a poet who lacks competence and skill required for such a

great and scholarly enterprise¹, yet by taking into account that it has Lord Ram's holy and divine Name in it --- (5),

--- Those who are wise and saintly would hear and narrate it with due respect because saints are habituated to see and extract goodness from anything just like the honey bee which would first extract sweet nectar from the flower and then produce equally sweet honey from it². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede it; and Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 9.

²In this analogy, saints are compared to the honey bee. Just like the honey bee that hovers over the flower, examines it, and finally alights on it to enjoy drinking its sweet nectar, and later on convert this into equally sweet honey, saints would politely read and listen to the narration of Ram Charit Manas, draw immense bliss from it as it contains the holy name of Lord Ram, digest it, and then preach it to others for their spiritual welfare.

Such wise and honourable saints would neglect and ignore all other faults in the composition, in the manner the divine story of Lord Ram has been written from the perspective of literature and scholarship, for it matters not at all to them; what matters to them is the nectar of spiritual bliss and beatitude that fills this composition known as Ram Charit Manas like honey filling the honey-comb. Even as the honey-collector collects the honey and discards the comb, these saintly souls extract the nectar of spiritualism that is soaked in this composition of Tulsidas, and overlook every other thing.

When enlightened and sagacious saints read or hear it, they will discover that it contains the holy name of Lord Ram and preaches the virtues of Bhakti (complete devotion, submission, affection and faith) for the Lord, and this single point in Ram Charit Manas would be cited by them as being a priceless gem that gives glory to the whole composition. Devoid of Lord Ram's holy name, any poetry would be like a crown or a diadem, albeit it may be made of gold, but without its central diamond.

They will be least bothered as to who has written it or how it has been written; they would be concerned only with the fact that Ram Charit Manas has the holy name of Lord Ram in it, and this single aspect is enough for them to thoroughly enjoy it and narrate it to others to share the spiritual joy and spread the divine glory of Lord Ram.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 15; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 129; Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 130.]

जदपि कबित रस एकउ नाहीं । राम प्रताप प्रगट एहि माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

सोइ भरोस मोरें मन आवा । केहिं न सुसंग बड़प्पनु पावा ॥ ८ ॥

jadapi kabita rasa ēka'u nāhīm. rāma pratāpa pragaṭa ēhi māhīm. 7.
sō'i bharōsa mōrēm mana āvā. kēhīm na susaṅga baṛappanu pāvā. 8.

Though this composition of mine (i.e. the Ram Charit Manas) lacks in poetic qualities, and there may be other faults and shortcomings, tangible and intangible, yet

one thing is certainly obvious, and it is that it reveals the majesty and glory of Lord Ram and his divinity. (7)

This has given my heart and mind ('Mana') a lot of comfort and encouragement, motivating me to go ahead with its composition—for I thought 'who has not acquired honour, respect and goodwill by being associated with someone or something that is noble, honourable and auspicious?'¹ (8)

[Note—¹Verily, I thought to myself: "Since my composition is dedicated to the merciful and gracious Lord Ram, the Supreme Lord, whose grace makes the sun shine and the moon look beautiful, so therefore my poetry, that sings nothing but the glory of the Lord and honours him, will be blessed with the Lord's grace, and granted beauty and perfection that it may otherwise have lacked. So what is the worry and the fear?" This thought immediately lifted my sagging spirits and filled me with enthusiasm.

Some of the random verses that glorify Lord Ram's majesty are the following: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 292; (b) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 3.]

धूमउ तजइ सहज करुआई । अगरु प्रसंग सुगंध बसाई ॥ ९ ॥
भनिति भदेस बस्तु भलि बरनी । राम कथा जग मंगल करनी ॥ १० ॥

dhūma'u taja'i sahaja karu'ā'ī. agaru prasaṅga sugandha basā'ī. 9.
bhaniti bhadēsa bastu bhali baranī. rāma kathā jaga maṅgala karanī. 10.

For instance, even smoke abandons its natural tendency to smell bad and make people feel uneasy by its choking presence if it is produced by aloe-wood whose sweet fragrance would overcome the smoke's natural pungency¹. (9)

Although my words and composition are clumsy and not up to the mark, yet it narrates the holy story of Lord Ram that would provide auspiciousness and spiritual welfare for the world, and hence my effort is commendable and worthy of praise². (10)

[Note—¹Smoke arising by burning any kind of thing would always seem unpleasant, but when it is produced by burning aloe-wood it becomes pleasant. The credit for this metamorphosis in the smoke is attributable to the sweet fragrance of the oil present in the aloe-wood which vaporizes and mixes with the smoke, making the latter lose its bad and unpleasant character.

²Similarly, Tulsidas says that notwithstanding the many demerits and shortcomings from which his composition known as Ram Charit Manas may suffer, but there is one stellar merit in it—and it is that it is dedicated to Lord Ram and is employed in singing the glory and divinity of the Lord. This single quality in his composition would be sufficient to make it entitled to praise and honour much better than poem written by expert poets, and then recited by qualified bards or sung by competent minstrels.]

छं०. मंगल करनि कलि मल हरनि तुलसी कथा रघुनाथ की । १ ।
 गति कूर कबिता सरित की ज्यों सरित पावन पाथ की ॥ २ ॥
 प्रभु सुजस संगति भनिति भलि होइहि सुजन मन भावनी । ३ ।
 भव अंग भूति मसान की सुमिरत सुहावनि पावनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

maṅgala karani kali mala harani tulasī kathā raghunātha kī. 1.
 gati kūra kabitā sarita kī jyōm sarita pāvana pātha kī. 2.
 prabhu sujasa saṅgati bhaniti bhali hō'ihī sujana mana bhāvanī. 3.
 bhava aṅga bhūti masāna kī sumirata suhāvani pāvani. 4.

Tulsidas says that the holy and divine story of Lord Ram ('Raghupati') bestows all sorts of auspiciousness and blessings, and at the same time it eliminates all the impurities, faults and delusions associated with Kaliyuga. (Chanda line no. 1)

The course of my narrative is a little long and winding like the course of the holy river (Ganges) that twists and turns as it meanders through the plains¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

But it is sure that by being associated with the holiness of Lord Ram's divine story that it narrates, my composition would acquire the virtue of auspiciousness and good value; it would invariably appeal to the mind of the wise ones even as it captivates and entralls their noble hearts. (Chanda line no. 3)

It is like the case of the ash of the funeral pyre that Lord Shiva rubs on his body. This ash would normally be loathed by everyone (as it originates from the funeral pyre), but when it is associated with Lord Shiva (as the Lord rubs it on his body) the same detested ash acquires auspiciousness². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas feels that the world would criticize him for writing such a long-drawn poem as Ram Charit Manas would eventually become. Additionally, it has many problems, one of which is repetition: many ideas have been repeated again and again. Then some of the incidents or events have been elaborately dealt with, while others narrated in a short and crisp manner. Some events do not seem to have any relation with divinity and holiness, for they are like many ordinary events taking place in a person's life in this world. To wit, all such small and big things stretch the narrative unnecessarily, but then, all are related to the story of Lord Ram, and hence cannot be left out.

Since his narrative is long and winding, Tulsidas has compared it with the holy river Ganges that flows with many turns and collects so many odd things as it winds its way along the land, but inspite of its many drawbacks the river is still considered eternally holy and purifying. Similarly, Ram Charit Manas would eternally possess its spiritual healing powers irrespective of its many faults and shortcomings.

²In this Chanda, Tulsidas uses the analogy of the ash rubbed on Lord Shiva's body. Lord Shiva is the most enlightened and self-realised of the Gods, for being the God who presides over 'death', Shiva has realized the futility of pursuing the pleasures of this mortal world. So the Lord practices renunciation and detachment, and remains

engrossed in contemplation and meditation. Shiva rubs the ash from the burnt wood of funeral pyres to remind him of 'death'.

Normally this ash would be hated by everyone, but when it is applied on the body Lord Shiva, such as his 'Lingam', it turns into a holy ash.

So therefore, though Tulsidas' composition may lack quality as a poem, but since it narrates the holy and divine story of Lord Ram it becomes worthy of honour and praise.]

दो०. प्रिय लागिहि अति सबहि मम भनिति राम जस संग ।

दारु बिचारु कि करइ कोउ बंदिअ मलय प्रसंग ॥ १० (क) ॥

dōhā.

priya lāgihi ati sabahi mama bhaniti rāma jasa saṅga.

dāru bicāru ki kara'i kō'u bandi'a malaya prasaṅga. 10 (a).

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, my poetical composition would be liked and appreciated by one and all by the virtue of its association with the divinity and the glory of Lord Ram (for it is totally devoted and dedicated to narrating the holy story of Lord Ram in a modest way, without pretensions of scholarship), just like the case of wood of ordinary trees acquiring the same fragrance and value if they grow alongside a special type of sandalwood tree with exceptionally pleasant scent that is known to grow on the Malayagiri Mountain. (Doha no. 10-a)

[Note—The sandalwood tree that grows on the Malayagiri Mountain is very famous and in high demand because it has a special quality of emanating a very sweet fragrance that surpasses that of other types of sandalwood growing elsewhere. The aromatic oil present in this sandalwood tree has a quality to easily vapourise when wind blows over it, and then it is carried by this wind to other trees in the vicinity where the oil molecules stick. This makes these non-sandalwood trees smell like the original sandalwood tree, giving the impression that the whole mountain is covered by the same kind of sandalwood trees, whereas it is not so in fact.

The effect of this association with sandalwood trees is that wood from ordinary trees acquire the same value as the sandalwood, and are therefore sold at the same rate, though independently they are of much inferior quality.

The saintly poet Tulsidas says that likewise his poetry known as Ram Charit Manas would be well received by everyone because of one single fact—that it narrates nothing else but the glory and divinity of Lord Ram who was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, though his composition may not have any kind of merit of its own.

To wit, he humbly requests all those who read it themselves, or hear it being narrated by others, that they must focus their attention on the subject matter of his composition, which is to praise Lord Ram and sing the Lord's holy name and glory, a single factor that should override all other considerations regarding its poetical worth, quality of composition and grammatical correctness, for nothing else would make the best of compositions worthy of any praise if they do not incorporate the holy name of Lord Ram in their text or are not dedicated to singing the glory and the divinity of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 10.}

There are countless renowned and famous poets and authors in this world who have no match, but the most fortunate ones are those who use their pens and skills to praise the Lord God and sing his divine glories. All shortcomings of their compositions are overcome and nullified by this one fine quality that they incorporate in their writing: and it is that they have dedicated their writing efforts to Lord God; it is the sweet and sublime fragrance that renders their otherwise dull, boring and mediocre composition into something that possesses a stellar quality, and an air of mysticism, divinity and holiness.]

स्याम सुरभि पय बिसद अति गुनद करहिं सब पान ।
गिरा ग्राञ्ज सिय राम जस गावहिं सुनहिं सुजान ॥ १० (ख) ॥

syāma surabhi paya bisada ati gunada karahim saba pāna.
girā grāmya siya rāma jasa gāvahim sunahim sujāna. 10 (b).

It is said that milk from a black-skinned cow has exceptional nutritional value and is good for one's health, and therefore everyone wishes to drink it.

In the same manner, even if crude, rough and un-refined language is used to sing the glories and divinity of Lord Ram, it still becomes exceptionally beautiful and attractive for gentlemen who are wise and intelligent, for they perceive its hidden beauty, instead of being distracted by its external coarseness, because it praises the Supreme Being and sings the Lord's divinity and glories. Therefore, such wise men would cheerfully and willingly hear and sing such compositions, praise the latter and hold them in high esteem inspite of the fact that such compositions may lack all other fine qualities of good poetry. (Doha no. 10-b)

[Note—Tulsidas once again says that he understands that his composition known as 'Ram Charit Manas' uses simple, day-to-day vernacular language of the ordinary people, and not a classical tongue, and that it may be coarse and lacking many of the qualities of good composition, yet it sings the glory and divinity of Lord Ram, and this latter virtue that it possesses is sufficient to overcome all other shortcomings.

So therefore, all wise men would embrace it affectionately; they would welcome it warmly, and they would read and recite it with cheer in their hearts.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 129—to Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 130.]

चौ०. मनि मानिक मुकुता छबि जैसी । अहि गिरि गज सिर सोह न तैसी ॥ १ ॥

नृप किरिट तरुनी तनु पाई । लहहिं सकल सोभा अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mani mānika mukutā chabi jaisī. ahi giri gaja sira sōha na taisī. 1.

nṛpa kirīṭa tarunī tanu pāī. lahahim sakala sōbhā adhikāī. 2.

A gem, a ruby and a pearl lose their inherent importance, beauty and charm if they are present on the hood of a serpent, the top of a mountain or the crown of an elephant, but when removed from these places (which undermine their natural worth and

beauty) and viewed independently, then they manifest their true magnificence and worth¹. (1)

Verily indeed and in all sooth, when these same gems, rubies and pearls are used to adorn a king's crown or the body of a noble lady, they get the attention they deserve, acquire fame, magnificence and worth, and their beauty and price multiplies manifold times².* (2)

[Note—¹The beauty and charm of a gem, a ruby and a pearl do not catch the eye of the beholder and seem useless for him as long as they are borne by a serpent on its hood, a mountain on its top as one of the many unpolished gems present on it, or as an adornment for the crown of an elephant. To wit, everything is valued when it is in the right hand and in the right place. The same piece of gem or ruby or pearl that drew no attention while they adorned the hood of a serpent, the top of a mountain or the crown of an elephant would be admired and longed for when placed in the showcase of a jeweller's shop, duly displayed on a box lined with velvet, or when it adorns a fine lady of noble birth.

²The same piece of gem, ruby or pearl would draw wide admiration and get their due attention and respect when they find a habitat that is compatible with their true worth, such as the crown of a king or as part of a noble lady's ornament.

*In the context of what has been said by Tulsidas in the previous verses herein above, with respect to his composition of Lord Ram's holy story being treated by respect and praise when it is in the hands of wise men, and with contempt and ridicule when it lands in the hands of evil people who are inclined to be jealous of others and ever ready to find faults with anything they do, the meaning of these two verses become very obvious: it simply means that just like the case of these priceless pieces of gems, rubies and pearls losing their worth when placed at the wrong place, so likewise his poetry would too lose its glory and worth if it is handled by evil people. On the other hand, its inherent beauty, charm, magnificence and worth would shine through when it is in correct hands, such as that of saintly souls and holy men who are wise and sagacious, who love Lord God and rejoice in his holy name, who know how to examine the real worth of anything without harbouring any kind of prejudice for and against it.

This idea is further elaborated in the set of verses that follow herein below.]

तैसेहिं सुकबि कबित बुध कहहीं । उपजहिं अनत अनत छबि लहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
भगति हेतु बिधि भवन बिहाई । सुमिरत सारद आवति धाई ॥ ४ ॥

taisēhim sukabi kabita budha kahahīm. upajahim anata anata chabi lahahīm.

3.

bhagati hētu bidhi bhavana bihā'ī. sumirata sārada āvati dhā'ī. 4.

In the same manner, wise people say that a good poet's composition may have been written by him in humble conditions, but when it finds a proper platform (such as illustrious readers and judicious connoisseurs of poetry) then its natural beauty, charm and magnificence shines through and gets its due appreciation¹. (3)

When a devout poet starts penning a poem in honour of Lord God, with a lot of devotion in his pious heart, and with the honest intention of lauding the Lord's glories and majesty (and not for acquiring fame for himself or expecting any approbation)—then the patron goddess of knowledge and learning, i.e. goddess Saraswati, feels obliged as well as glad to help him so much that she immediately rushes down from her exalted abode in the heaven to lend her full grace and blessings to this poetry, helping the poet to overcome all blocks he may face in his writing process². (4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas was of a very humble, modest and pious man, and of an equally humble and modest origin; he has never once boasted about his learning or poetical acumen. What he of course says is that inspite of all drawbacks and handicaps, yet he has one noble vision in his mind, one earnest desire—which was to put to use whatever little knowledge and skills he had to a noble cause, of honouring and praising his beloved Lord Ram through the medium of his poetry, though he was aware he was incompetent to undertake such a great mission and carry it on to its fruition. He has explicitly asserted this fact in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 8; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 9.

²So in this verse he explains how he is sure he will do it successfully: when goddess Saraswati sees that Tulsidas wishes to write a poem in praise of the divinity, holiness and glories of Lord Ram, but finds himself unable to do it because he is not competent or learned enough for this job, and he is feeling completely at sea and utterly lost, she will then personally come to his aid and empower him with a divine vision and ability which shall enable him to accomplish this gigantic task, safely and without hindrance.

And since his poem known as 'Ram Charit Manas' has by now two glorious secret elements revealed in it—one, it has the holy name of Lord Ram in it and is meant to sing the glories of the Lord, and two, it is actually worded, composed and polished by none other but goddess Saraswati herself—surely then there is no question about its stellar quality with regard to the criterion of its matchless beauty, magnificence, charm and poetical fineness. And as a corollary therefore, those who criticize it unjustly for the sake of criticism, then they are doing so at their own peril.]

राम चरित सर बिनु अन्हवाँ । सो श्रम जाइ न कोटि उपाँ ॥ ५ ॥
 कबि कोबिद अस हृदयँ बिचारी । गावहिं हरि जस कलि मल हारी ॥ ६ ॥
 कीन्हें प्राकृत जन गुन गाना । सिर धुनि गिरा लगत पछिताना ॥ ७ ॥

rāma carita sara binu anhvā'ēm̃. sō śrama jā'i na kōṭi upā'ēm̃. 5.
 kabi kōbida asa hr̥dayam̃ bicārī. gāvahim̃ hari jasa kali mala hārī. 6.
 kīnhēm̃ prākṛta jana guna gānā. sira dhuni girā lagata pachitānā. 7.

In fact, goddess Saraswati feels glad to have this opportunity to help a poet complete his composition praising Lord Ram's holiness and glories because she is so tired and weary of undertaking long journeys whenever she is invoked by erudite poets and writers all over the world to help them that she finds it is impossible to feel refreshed and relaxed no matter how hard she tries, for she discovers it is not possible to do so

unless she takes a dip in the cool and fragrant waters of a pond symbolised by the glories of Lord Ram.

[So what happens then? Well, when a poet invites her to help him in an endeavour to write a poem in the honour of Lord Ram, such as the case of Tulsidas writing ‘Ram Charit Manas’, which is a symbolic holy lake filled with the nectar-like water embodying the divine story of Lord Ram, goddess Saraswati grabs this opportunity with both hands and goes out of her way to help the pious poet to complete his composition praising the glories of Lord Ram, as it also serves her own needs of building a symbolic pond of fresh and refreshing water that would give her comfort and peace for all times to come.]¹ (5)

Keeping this in mind, wise and learned poets sing the glories of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord God; here meaning Lord Ram) as it is able to destroy the negative effects of remaining engrossed in mundane activities of life in this gross mortal world during the present age known as Kaliyuga². (6)

On the other hand, if a poet employs his skills to sing praises of mortal creatures or other secular subjects (such as for instance court poets who write poems in honour of their patron kings, or by poets who use their skills to compose poetry of all genres except spiritual topics and in honour of the Lord God)—then surely the patron deity of the faculty of speech and intellect (i.e. goddess Saraswati) would regret immensely and beat her head (for she would greatly lament for coming down to help this poet, instead of keeping away from him)³. (7)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1- 6 that precede Doha no. 129.

²The only way to derive abiding peace, joy, happiness, bliss and comfort in this world consisting of an endless cycle of miseries and problems is to devote one’s time in thinking, speaking and reading about the Lord God.

The present age of Kaliyuga is a dark age, for the word ‘Kali’ itself means ‘dark’: it is the age of spiritual blankness, an age representing a deep void and an abyss that creates horror and intense fear in the heart of the creature. The only way out of this fathomless pit of miseries and torments is to catch hold of the rope of hope of salvation that is symbolized by the story of Lord Ram. This rope would gradually pull the creature up from the deep recesses of the abyss of never ending miseries and problems associated with mundane existence in this mortal world of grossness by showing him the light of day represented by spiritual peace, happiness and joy. The story of Lord Ram is like a lifeline of deliverance, salvation and emancipation for the trapped soul, and therefore the latter must grab it immediately.

³Tulsidas avers that in this short worldly life, a wise man is he who utilizes the little time and whatever skills he has to devote himself in the service of the Lord God, i.e. Lord Ram. To wit, using poetical skills to praise the world and its countless things, both material things as well as mortal creatures, is an exercise in futility, a waste of talent and time, and effort washed down the drain. So therefore, the patron deity of speech and learning, i.e. goddess Saraswati, regrets for helping this poet in his

composition, for notwithstanding how learned or skilled a poet may be, yet it is not possible for him to write a single line without the blessing of this goddess.

Compared to this, goddess Saraswati feels happy and privileged if she gets a chance to help a poet pen a composition in honour of Lord Ram as stated in the previous verse.]

हृदय सिंधु मति सीप समाना । स्वाति सारदा कहहिं सुजाना ॥ ८ ॥
जौं बरसइ बर बारि बिचारू । होहिं कबित मुकुतामनि चारू ॥ ९ ॥

hr̥daya sindhu mati sīpa samānā. svāti sārādā kahahim̐ sujānā. 8.
jauṁ barasa'i bara bāri bicārū. hōhim̐ kabita mukutāmani cārū. 9.

Wise men (sujān) aver that the poet's heart is like a sea, his mind and its ability to think is like the shell in which a pearl grows, and the patron goddess of speech, knowledge and erudition, goddess Saraswati, is like the asterism known as 'Swati' (i.e. the group of stars known as Arcturus; the 15th lunar asterism that is said to favour the formation of pearls). (8)

If it rains during the time this asterism lasts, it is believed that it favours the formation of pearls inside the shells in the sea. Likewise, if goddess Saraswati is benevolent upon the poet, she would grace him with her blessings, granting him the ability to write fine poetry in a natural way, without any artificiality or superfluity in it, which would make it as pristine, priceless and beautiful as the piece of natural pearl formed during the asterism of Swati. (9)

[Note—The Swati asterism is a rare event, and it is said that the rain drops that fall during it are like nectar falling from the heaven. The pearls that form during this period are blessed with extraordinary shine and beauty.

Similarly, if goddess Saraswati is kind on the poet and showers her blessings on him, then his composition would have no match in this world as far as its pristine beauty and charm are concerned.

Now, on which poet would Saraswati become gracious? This question has already been answered in the forgoing verses: surely she would grant her blessings upon a poet who writes poem in the honour of Lord Ram, with an honest intention to sing the Lord's glories, grace, holiness and divinity. As a natural corollary, such poetry would be a classical production of excellent value and stellar qualities; it would be a poem of pristine beauty, having unadulterated spiritual purity, and one that would enthrall the heart and mind of everyone without distinction or exception.]

दो०. जुगुति बेधि पुनि पोहिअहिं रामचरित बर ताग ।
पहिरहिं सज्जन बिमल उर सोभा अति अनुराग ॥ ११ ॥

dōhā.

juguti bēdhi puni pōhi'ahim̐ rāmacarita bara tāga.
pahirahim̐ sajjana bimala ura sōbhā ati anurāga. 11.

If these priceless pearls are carefully threaded together into a beautiful garland and worn by anyone on his chest, surely it would make an excellent piece of ornament for the wearer.

Likewise, when the verses composed by a poet in honour of Lord Ram are arranged together in a systematic manner in order to form a composition that narrates the holy story of Lord Ram, and it is sung or narrated by him piously, with his heart and emotions involved in the process, surely then he would be praised and honoured by all who listen to him. (Doha no. 11)

[Note—A garland is worn around the neck and it hangs on the chest above the heart of the wearer; it is the right place for the garland so that it is admired by the beholder.

Similarly, a poem that is recited by a poet himself would have his natural emotional warmth injected into it. Since a poem is recited by the use of the vocal cords in the throat, and also since the poet usually remembers it by heart and pours out his inner feelings and sentiments when he recites it himself, being emotionally involved in its singing or recitation, it is symbolically like the case of the garland that is worn around the neck and allowed to hang on the chest of the wearer, making the wearer look charming and honourable by the virtue of wearing this particular garland.

When a learned poet sings his composition and becomes emotional while doing so, it is like his whole heart pouring out its inner feelings through the words of the poetry. Such charged would the entire atmosphere become that more often than not everyone is deeply affected, the narrator as well as his audience, for they become overwhelmed by the warmth of emotions and sentiments that effuse out of the poetry, much like the warmth of the sun gracing everyone under its shine.

In this analogy, every single episode or event in the story of Lord Ram is like the pearl of a garland of pearls; the proper arrangement of the sequence of events and the way the story is put forward is like threading the pearls into a garland; and the finished garland of pearls is the beautiful story of Lord Ram itself.

There are many kinds of pearls found in the ocean and the sea, but the ones that are formed during the Swati Nakshatra are of rare value; and hence a garland of these pearls too has rare value. Similarly, there is neither dearth of poets nor of poetry, but the one poem that narrates the holy story of Lord Ram stands out amongst the whole crowd of poetries, tall and handsome, for it is universally lauded and applauded for its pristine spiritual beauty and charm, as a fountainhead of eternal peace, bliss, happiness and joy.]

चौ०. जे जनमे कलिकाल कराला । करतब बायस बेष मराला ॥ १ ॥
चलत कुपंथ बेद मग छाँड़े । कपट कलेवर कलि मल भाँड़े ॥ २ ॥
बंचक भगत कहाइ राम के । किंकर कंचन कोह काम के ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jē janamē kalikāla karālā. karataba bāyasa bēṣa marālā. 1.
calata kupantha bēda maga chāmṛē. kapaṭa kalēvara kali mala bhāmṛē. 2.
bañcaka bhagata kahā'i rāma kē. kiñkara kañcana kōha kāma kē. 3.

Those who are born during the dark age of Kaliyug (a terrible age of moral degradation and spiritual depravation) act and think like a crooked crow though they assume the garb of a swan¹. (1)

These people lead a life that goes astray and against the principles of goodness, righteousness, auspiciousness and propriety as advised in the Vedas (scriptures). They are embodiments of pretension, corruption, falsehood, deceit and conceit. Verily indeed, they are a repository of all the shortcomings, faults and negativities associated with the age of Kaliyug². (2)

These crooked and pretentious people call themselves devotees of Lord Ram, whereas in reality they are crooks and vile fellows who are servants or followers of vices such as greed, anger and worldly passions. In all sooth, such people are hypocrites, unscrupulous and pretentious to the core³. (3)

[Note—¹The people of this evil age are full of falsehood, pretensions, deceit and conceit; externally they pretend to be good and noble by what they wear and say, but internally they are crooked like a wicked crow. Their action and words are diametrically opposite.

A swan is a noble bird which is used as an example of purity as it is believed that it would drink milk and leave aside its adulterant water, while the crow is a detested bird that is abhorred by everyone as it is flesh eating bird that steals even rotten meat and rummages through garbage bins for stale and discarded bits of food.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 302 where a wicked person is compared to a crow.

²The unique character of Kaliyug is outlined in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to line no. 1 of Doha no. 102-a.

³A true devotee of Lord Ram is one who is a holy and pious person, someone who is free from such negative qualities as greed, lust and anger. But there are crooked people who assume a false façade of piousness and holiness, pretending to be devotees of the Lord, with an intention to cheat the world and satisfy their own interests. Such false devotees of Lord Ram hide themselves behind a garb of holiness and piety, yet a close examination of their behaviour reveals their true face.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 40.]

तिन्ह महँ प्रथम रेख जग मोरी । धींग धरमध्वज धंधक धोरी ॥ ४ ॥
 जौं अपने अवगुन सब कहऊँ । बाढ़इ कथा पार नहिं लहऊँ ॥ ५ ॥
 ताते मैं अति अल्प बखाने । थोरे महँ जानिहहिं सयाने ॥ ६ ॥

tinha maham^ṅ prathama rēkha jaga mōrī. dhīnga dharamadhvaja dhandhaka dhōrī. 4.

jauṁ apanē avaguna saba kaha'ūṁ. bāṛha'i kathā pāra nahim laha'ūṁ. 5.
 tātē mairi ati alapa bakhānē. thōrē mahum^ṅ jānihahim sayānē. 6.

[In these verses, Tulsidas once again expresses his sense of utmost modesty and humbleness by saying that in no way he pretends to be a wise poet or a scholar who is skilled enough to write and narrate the story of Lord Ram; nor does he pretend to be a pious and saintly person because he wishes to write the story of Lord Ram. He has no

intention to cheat anybody, nor mislead them to praise or honour him. In this context, refer to earlier Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—to Doha no. 10.

That said, Tulsidas reiterates as follows:-]

Let me be counted as the first amongst such people as enumerated in the foregoing verses, people who are flag-bearers of pretension, falsehood and deceit. (4)

If I start listing my shortcomings, it will be a long list that would needlessly stretch the narrative. (5)

That is why I am being brief in outlining my faults. Those who are clever would get an idea from it. [To wit, those who are wise would see the hidden meaning behind what Tulsidas says, and what his real intention is¹.] (6)

[Note—¹Tulsidas makes a point here. He wants to keep his detractors at bay by self-criticism, thereby giving such wicked people no occasion to deprecate and ridicule him as a pretentious hypocrite and a false saint, one who wishes to hide his evilness behind the garb of being a holy person because he is narrating the divine story of Lord Ram and dedicating his poem to the Lord. Fie to such evil-minded persons driven by jealousy and malice. Once wicked persons hear that Tulsidas has publicly accepted that he is not a holy person but one like them, one who is full of faults and evil characters of Kaliyug, then surely his enemies would leave him at peace.

To wit, Tulsidas wishes to put to rest all sorts of gossip and tittle-tattle about himself. He therefore says: “I don’t want any praise or honour for being a pious or saintly person, nor do I want approbation for my composition that narrates the glories of Lord Ram. Let no one be jealous of me; let no one harbour prejudice against me; let no malice be heaped upon me. Let me be at peace with myself, and be allowed to sing the holy story of Lord Ram in a humble way that I can. It’s enough for me. If anyone thinks I am a pretentious person who falsely claims to be an expert poet and a holy man, than what is the great deal about it, for I myself welcome such insinuations as a means of insulating me from further scorn and scrutiny: because once the world knows I am a false poet and a crooked fellow, it will shun me and leave me alone to do what pleases me, thereby letting me continue to narrate the holy story of Lord Ram, at ease and with peace.”

This self-deprecating statement from him would pre-empt any attempt by his detractors to criticize him and find fault with his composition. It would deter back-biters to deride him behind his back and call him pretentious and false—because he himself says he is one such, so there is nothing new left to say against him by his enemies.

The following verses clarify this strategy of Tulsidas in express terms.]

समुझि बिबिधि बिधि बिनती मोरी । कोउ न कथा सुनि देइहि खोरी ॥ ७ ॥
एतेहु पर करिहहिं जे असंका । मोहि ते अधिक ते जड़ मति रंका ॥ ८ ॥

samujhi bibidhi bidhi binatī mōrī. kō'u na kathā suni dē'ihī khōrī. 7.
ētēhu para karihahim jē asaṅkā. mōhi tē adhika tē jaṛa mati raṅkā. 8.

After understanding the import of my humble assertions and prayers (that I have made in the foregoing verses) and realising what I mean to say, no person would blame me for leaving shortcomings in my composition when they hear the story of Lord Ram that I have composed¹. (7)

In spite of all these humble submissions by me, if still someone raises objections with regard to my composition and find faults in it, woe betide him, as then he is more stupid and of a poor intellect than I am²! (8)

[Note—¹This is because I have already said that I am not competent to write any poem, that I am an ordinary person like the rest of the world, that I have a lot of faults in me, and that I am writing Lord Ram's story just to satisfy myself and not to get any fame or approbation. So therefore, it is understood that my poem has many poetical shortcomings. Yet on the other hand, since it is a holy narrative of the divine glory of Lord Ram, what can I do if goddess Saraswati herself decides to bless it by her grace, out of her own free will, and not at my request, thereby making it beautiful and matchless. Why should I be blamed for it?

²I have abundantly apologized for my limitations and shortcomings, as well as that I am an ordinary man with no poetical skills worth the name. Yet if someone still finds faults with my poem, what can I do about it? Such men are bigger hypocrites and pretentious judges of the worth or un-worth of a poem than I thought them to be; surely they are driven by malice and jealousy, and nothing else. Such men are bankrupt of mind and scruples—for, when a man has already apologized for his shortcomings and has clearly affirmed he does not seek laurels for his work, what is the cause and the logic of hauling him over the coal and roasting him, for no rhyme or reason?

Besides this factor, one must realize that I am writing about the glories and divinity of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, and this single factor should override all other considerations while deciding on the merit of my poem. Still if I am criticized and my poem derided by my enemies and detractors, then surely they are most unfortunate and cursed.]

कबि न होउँ नहिं चतुर कहावउँ । मति अनुरूप राम गुन गावउँ ॥ ९ ॥
कहँ रघुपति के चरित अपारा । कहँ मति मोरि निरत संसारा ॥ १० ॥

kabi na hō'um̃ nahim̃ catura kahāva'um̃. mati anurūpa rāma guna gāva'um̃. 9.
kaham̃ raghupati kē carita apārā. kaham̃ mati mōri nirata sansārā. 10.

[I have repeatedly asserted that—] I am neither a poet nor a clever and wise man¹. I am singing the divine glories of Lord Ram in accordance with my intellect and understanding. (9)

Verily and without gainsay, on the one hand the divine and glorious story of Lord Ram has no end, as it is profound and endless, transcending time and age², and on the other hand there is my mind and intellect which have a limited scope and reach as they are tied to this mortal world of countless material objects that create attachment to them³.

Say then, how is it ever possible for my limited intellect to be able to measure the depth and expanse of the holy story of Lord Ram in order to narrate it exhaustively and completely⁴? [To wit, it is not possible for me do it, and neither am I claiming to do so.] (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 9; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 29; (ii) Doha no. 29-c.

²This is because the Lord is a manifestation of Brahm, the cosmic Lord of creation and a personified form of supreme Consciousness which is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and immanent in this creation, an entity that has an eternal existence, for it was present before this world came into being, and will exist after it ends.

³The true form of Lord Ram is Brahm, the Supreme Being representing the cosmic Consciousness. As such, the glories of the Lord are as expansive, vast, endless and measureless as the open sky itself. On the other hand, Tulsidas is a human being, someone who is bound to this mortal world, with natural limitations that are inherent to such existence. Say then, how can something with a limited reach measure something that has no limits? It is like the case of a bird flying in the sky; it flies high in accordance to its abilities, but it cannot claim to have measured the length and width of the endless sky. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 91.

Refer also to Doha no. 13 herein below.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 8.]

जेहिं मारुत गिरि मेरु उड़ाहीं । कहहु तूल केहि लेखे माहीं ॥ ११ ॥
समुझत अमित राम प्रभुताई । करत कथा मन अति कदराई ॥ १२ ॥

jēhim māruta giri mēru uṛāhīm. kahahu tūla kēhi lēkhē māhīm. 11.
samujhata amita rāma prabhutāī. karata kathā mana ati kadarāī. 12.

Say, the powerful force of the wind that can even blow away mighty mountains, how can the humble cotton ever think of resisting the might of such a wind and stand on its way?

[To wit, it is impossible for the light-weight cotton to resist being blown away by a powerful gust of wind which in its fiercest form has the ability to uproot giant trees and cause massive landslides on mountains, giving the impression that the mountain is moving itself.] (11)

In a similar way, taking into consideration the vastness and profundity of Lord Ram's glories, I feel very hesitant and my mind is sore affright at the thought of attempting to narrate the Lord's divine story¹. (12)

[Note—¹Tulsidas says the task he is about to undertake is extremely daunting and it is frightening the wits out of him. Lord Ram and his glories are endless and profound,

while Tulsidas' intellect and abilities are very limited. It is like cotton trying to match its strength against the power of the wind. With one whiff the wind would blow the cotton to god only knows where; so this analogy shows the apprehension of Tulsidas as he fears getting lost and losing the bearing of his mind when faced by the mammoth structure representing Lord Ram's expansive story which he is trying to bound in the words of his poem—a task that makes him sore affright, and puts him out of his wits.

But then why is he doing so; why is he attempting the impossible by his own admission? Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 361 where Tulsidas says: "I am singing the divine glories of Lord Ram to purify my speech and to honour my birth in the community of poets for having chosen to sing the glories of Lord Ram, though I am well aware that the Lord's glories are like an endless ocean that cannot be measured."]

दो०. सारद सेस महेस बिधि आगम निगम पुरान ।
नेति नेति कहि जासु गुन करहिं निरंतर गान ॥ १२ ॥

dōhā.

sārada sēsa mahēsa bidhi āgama nigama purāna.
nēti nēti kahi jāsu guna karahiṁ nirantara gāna. 12.

Verily indeed, how can I sing the glories and the holy story of Lord Ram in entirety when they are so extremely profound that even the goddess of knowledge and speech known as Sarada (Saraswati), the thousand hooded celestial serpent known as Seshnath with his thousand tongues, the Great God known as Lord Mahesh (i.e. Lord Shiva—who is the wisest and the most enlightened of all the gods), the creator of the world and the laws that govern its functioning, known as Bidhi (i.e. Lord Brahma), the Aagams and Nigams (i.e. the ancient scriptures such as the Vedas) as well as the Purans (mythological histories)—all of them continue to sing the Lord's glories endlessly yet find no end to it.

As a last resort they yield, saying 'Neti-neti', meaning 'what we have said is not all, and much is still left to be said, for what we have said in an attempt to describe the Lord is only like scratching the surface of anything that seems to have no end'¹. (Doha no. 12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92 where this principle is reiterated more elaborately.]

चौ०. सब जानत प्रभु प्रभुता सोई । तदपि कहें बिनु रहा न कोई ॥ १ ॥
तहाँ बेद अस कारन राखा । भजन प्रभाउ भाँति बहु भाषा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saba jānata prabhu prabhutā sō'ī. tadapi kahēm binu rahā na kō'ī. 1.
tahām' bēda asa kārana rākhā. bhajana prabhā'u bhām'ti bahu bhāṣā. 2.

Everyone in this world (including the great ones listed in Doha no. 12 herein above) are well acquainted with the profundity of Lord Ram's glories and the fact that they cannot be enumerated in their entirety, yet there is rarely anyone who has not attempted (and found joy) to try and sing these glories as much and as best as one can.

(1)

The Vedas have put forward a reason for this eagerness shown by one and all to sing the Lord's glories inspite of everyone being aware of their own limitations, and the reason is this: there are many ways by which one can offer worship to Lord Ram and pray to him, and all of them bless the worshipper and devotee of the Lord in a variety of ways.

[So therefore, singing the Lord's glories and narrating his divine story is a sort of offering worship and paying obeisance to the Lord, and honouring him by his devotees. This is why everyone willingly does so, inspite of being aware of their own limitations as well as the profundity of the Lord's glories and divinity which cannot be measured and enumerated completely.] (2)

[Note—Tulsidas has laid the foundation for his endeavour to sing the divine story of Lord Ram in the form of a poetical composition known as Ram Charit Manas. He says that it is a form of worship and prayer that he is offering to the Lord, and it is not meant to acquire fame or name as a poet.

Even well known gods and goddesses as well as the scriptures listed in Doha no. 12 do the same, because they wish to worship Lord Ram and pray to him in this simple and easy way.

Verily indeed, a tongue that is not employed to sing the glories of Lord Ram is like the tongue of a frog that knows only to croak endlessly without making any sense—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 113.]

एक अनीह अरूप अनामा । अज सच्चिदानंद पर धामा ॥ ३ ॥

ब्यापक बिस्वरूप भगवाना । तेहिं धरि देह चरित कृत नाना ॥ ४ ॥

सो केवल भगतन हित लागी । परम कृपाल प्रनत अनुरागी ॥ ५ ॥

ēka anīha arūpa anāmā. aja saccidānanda para dhāmā. 3.

byāpaka bisvarūpa bhagavānā. tēhiṃ dhari dēha carita kṛta nānā. 4.

sō kēvala bhagatana hita lāgī. parama kṛpāla pranata anurāgī. 5.

The Lord God who is one and non-dual, who is free from all desires and wants (i.e. he is self-contented and fulfilled), who is formless and without attributes, who has no specific name, who takes no birth as he is eternal, who is an embodiment of eternal bliss and happiness, who is the ultimate destination of every creature in this creation, -- (3)

--- Who is all pervading and omnipresent, who has revealed himself in the form of the entire creation, visible as well as invisible (i.e. the whole universe, from the subtlest to the grossest, is a manifestation of the same Lord God), and who is the Supreme Being and the Lord of the whole creation.¹

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, it is the same Lord of the universe who had revealed himself by assuming a visible form and doing many deeds in this manifestation².* (4)

[When and why does the Supreme Being, who has no forms and is invisible, assumes a visible form? This question is answered in this verse.] It is only for the sake of his devotees that the Supreme Being manifests himself. The Lord is most gracious, kind, merciful, munificent, benevolent and magnanimous, and when his devotees bow before him and pray to him, the Lord obliges them by fulfilling their wishes³. (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 109; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 152; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 39; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15; (d) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81-a.

²In these verses it is clarified that Lord Ram, to whom this composition known as Ram Charit Manas is being dedicated, is not an ordinary human being as his physical form may mislead one to believe, but the Supreme Being himself in a human body. This is an irrefutable fact endorsed even by Mandodari, the wife of the demon king Ravana, when she felt her husband is under great delusions regarding the reality of Lord Ram as he was stubborn in his refusal to make peace with the Lord and give Sita, the Lord's consort and an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, back to him to avoid a ruinous war that would decimate the demon clan. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15.}

In a similar way, Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, too was confused about the reality of Lord Ram, doubting the Lord's divinity and supremacy, for which he was directed to sage Kaagbhusund's hermitage by Lord Shiva, where Garud heard the story of Lord Ram from the sage and questioned him at length about the Lord's truth. Finally Garud was convinced that Lord Ram was indeed the Supreme Being himself in a human form, a realization that not only settled his doubts but gave him immense mental peace as well as bliss that came to him naturally as a reward of listening to the holy story of Lord Ram being recited by Kaagbhusund. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 125-a.}

Even goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, had once got confused about the truth of Lord Ram; she had even defied Lord Shiva's advise not to doubt Lord Ram and had tested the Lord's mystical powers and divinity, for which she was punished by her husband who withdrew himself from her. Later on, when she took another birth and did severe penance to atone for her mistake, she was accepted by Lord Shiva as his consort once again. Then once again she approached Shiva with the same query, and then the Lord narrated the story of Lord Ram to her in great detail, a narration that came down to us in the form of this holy book known as 'Ram Charit Manas'. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 115; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53.}

*An important point to note here is this: these two verses summarise the unique virtues possessed by the Supreme Being. To wit, anybody who does not possess even one of these mystical abilities is not entitled to be called the Supreme Being.

³In Ram Charit Manas, some of the instances are cited where the Supreme Being had to assume a form and come down in this mortal world—apropos: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124.

In Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 187, we read that once Lord Vishnu had assured the gods and mother earth that he would assume a body and come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the cruel demons who had been tormenting them for quite some time.

In Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122 it is said that Lord Ram had manifested himself to enable his devotees to narrate the Lord's story as a means to find joy and happiness in this world while they live here, and enable their souls to attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death at the time of leaving their mortal coils. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 217.

Another reason why the Lord takes birth is to restore Dharma (law and order) in this world whenever it is declining—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

In Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 39 we learn that the Lord manifests himself to protect humble creatures and uphold the sanctity of the Vedas whenever evil forces try to trounce them and trample them underfoot.]

जेहि जन पर ममता अति छोहू । जेहिं करुना करि कीन्ह न कोहू ॥ ६ ॥

गई बहोर गरीब नेवाजू । सरल सबल साहिब रघुराजू ॥ ७ ॥

बुध बरनहिं हरि जस अस जानी । करहिं पुनीत सुफल निज बानी ॥ ८ ॥

jēhi jana para mamatā ati chōhū. jēhim karunā kari kīnha na kōhū. 6.

ga'ī bahōra garība nēvājū. sarala sabala sāhiba raghurājū. 7.

budha baranahim hari jasa asa jānī. karahim punīta suphala nija bānī. 8.

He (Lord Ram) is the Lord who has extreme affection for, and is very merciful and kind towards his servants and followers (i.e. devotees), so much so that he has never become angry at his devotees upon whom he has shown his grace and compassion.

[To wit, Lord Ram is very kind and merciful towards his devotees, and he would never become angry at them under any situation.]¹ (6)

Lord Ram is the one who helps to restore what has been lost²; he is munificent and benevolent towards the lowly, the miserable and the underprivileged as he is a friend of the deprived and the poor; he has a simple, straightforward and unpretentious nature³; he is the able Lord and the almighty⁴; and he is the Lord of the race of illustrious kings in the line of Raghu of Ayodhya⁵. (7)

With full understanding of these facts, wise and illustrious poets, those who are intelligent, erudite and sagacious, find extreme satisfaction and joy in singing and narrating the divine story of Lord Ram as they use it as a means to purify their speech and intellect. [It is because they realize that when they sing the glories of Lord Ram they are actually honouring the Supreme Being, praying to him and worshipping him by this means. This makes them feel fortunate and honoured at being given the chance to do so.]⁶ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 183; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 234; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 260; (b) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 23; (c) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 43; (iii) Doha no. 87 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

In all the verses cited herein above, one common thing is said: that Lord Ram is extremely gracious towards his devotees.

Refer also to Tulsidas' (i) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 249; and (ii) Dohawali, verse no. 158.

²From the spiritual point of view this virtue of the Lord means that when a person has lost his way while traveling to the actual spiritual goal of his life, which is to attain freedom from the cycle of transmigration and get eternal beatitude, when he finds himself at sea by becoming entangled in this world and its multifarious material attractions, Lord Ram's grace would show his devotee the right path and lead him on towards his spiritual destination, by virtually hand-holding him.

³The kind and graceful nature of the Lord is such that he treats even the most ordinary people with the greatest affection and respect, never letting them feel that he is superior to them: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 204 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that follow it; (ii) Doha no. 224 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 28; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 114 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (ii) Doha no. 136 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 where Angad stresses the fact that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being whom even the mightiest of gods long to serve; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 63 where Kumbhakaran, the younger brother of Ravana, the king of Lanka, has too asserted this fact; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 106 where the saintly crow Kaagbhusund states this fact to Garud who was listening to the narration of the Lord's story from the former.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20.

⁶Tulsidas says that those who are wise and intelligent, those who enlightened and have a correct understanding of the different scriptures would know that when they are singing the glories of Lord Ram by way of narrating the Lord's holy story, they are actually using this means to pay their respects to and offer their worship to the

Supreme Lord of the creation, and not to some king of a worldly kingdom. This latter view is held by those who are deluded and ignorant.

This is why wise poets would welcome Tulsidas' narration of Lord Ram's holy story in the form of 'Ram Charit Manas', while foolish and ignorant poets would laugh at him and deride him.]

तेहिं बल मैं रघुपति गुन गाथा । कहिहउँ नाइ राम पद माथा ॥ ९ ॥
मुनिन्ह प्रथम हरि कीरति गाई । तेहिं मग चलत सुगम मोहि भाई ॥ १० ॥

tēhim bala mair̃ raghupati guna gāthā. kahiha'um̃ nā'i rāma pada māthā. 9.
muninha prathama hari kīrati gāī. tēhim maga calata sugama mōhi bhāī. 10.

Tulsidas says that these considerations have given him the strength and the courage to continue with his effort to sing the glories of Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus (kings of Ayodhya)¹. So now he would begin his narration after first bowing his head most reverentially at the holy feet of the Lord to pay his obeisance to him. (9)

Listen my Brothers (bhāī)! Great and wise sages have already sung the divine glories of Lord Ram since time immemorial; so I find it easy and convenient to tread on the same path². (10)

[Note—¹In verse no. 7 herein above, Tulsidas has clarified that the king of the Raghu line of illustrious rulers of Ayodhya, who is known as 'Lord Ram', to whom his poem is dedicated, is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and not an ordinary human king of some mighty kingdom. So therefore, no one should be misled by this word 'Raghupati', meaning 'the Lord of king Raghu's family', or 'the Lord who belongs to the line of kings descending from the ancient king Raghu of the kingdom of Ayodhya' when Tulsidas refers to the Supreme Being with this term.

²Tulsidas says that he is not doing something new, nor is he revealing some secret not hitherto known or professing a spiritual path having any novelty in it. He is simply doing what great sages and saints have been doing down the ages, for he wants to sing the glories of Lord Ram to purify his own mind, heart and speech, as well as to worship his beloved Lord by this simple means.

In Chaupai no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14 herein below, as well as Chaupai no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3 earlier, Tulsidas names some of the great learned poets and illustrious sages of the past who had most reverentially narrated the glories of the Lord God. He specifically names sage Veda Vyas, who wrote the story of Lord Ram in his 'Adhyatma Ramayan', and the sage Valmiki, who is better known as the 'Aadi Kavi', for he is deemed to be the first learned sage who was also a poet as he was the first one to have composed the story of Lord Ram in the form of a poem and compiled as a book, called the 'Valmiki's Ramayana', which is believed to be the first such narration of its kind. Then he also names sage Narad and sage Agastya.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 14; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 31; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 34; (v) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 35; (vi) Doha no. 43; (b) Uttar

Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 4 that precede Doha no. 91; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 92.]

दो०. अति अपार जे सरित बर जौं नृप सेतु कराहिं ।
चढ़ि पिपीलिकउ परम लघु बिनु श्रम पारहि जाहिं ॥ १३ ॥

dōhā.

ati apāra jē sarita bara jaur̥m nr̥pa sētu karāhir̥m.
caḍhi pipīlika'u parama laghu binu śrama pārahi jāhir̥m. 13.

If there is a mighty river of enormous depth and turbulent currents, one which is otherwise difficult to cross, but some great and magnanimous king builds a bridge across it to help his subjects, then this same river can be easily crossed by even a humble ant¹.* (Doha no. 13)

[Note—¹In the previous verse no. 10, Tulsidas says that he is following the path and the tradition set by ancient sages and poets before him, who have already sung the glories of Lord Ram. This has made his path easy and convenient. It is like being able to easily get across a great river by using a bridge instead of trying to swim across its furious currents, or even using a boat that heaves, tosses and twists in the wild currents, creating immense fear of getting drowned.

*The reader must have noted by now that Tulsidas, by his own explicit admission, seems to be very apologetic as well as apprehensive of inviting scorn, ridicule and rejection by his peers while preparing to start writing Ram Charit Manas, inspite of the fact that he was doing nothing wrong in penning a poem in honour of Lord Ram. So, what is the reason for this?

Well, the Sanskrit scholars and Brahmin pundits of his time in Kashi (i.e. Varanasi, the ancient city known as the center of Sanskrit scholarship) were very jealous of him and his rising fame amongst the masses; when they learned that he was planning to write the story of Lord Ram in the vernacular language which would be loved by the common man, who would lap up his narrative immediately and embrace it very affectionately for one simple reason that it was in the native tongue and meant for the common man, as opposed to the Sanskrit versions of the story of Ramayana, chiefly the Valmiki's version that was the common form of Lord Ram's story narrated at the time, but unfortunately the common man could not so easily read and enjoy it directly himself as Sanskrit was not the common man's language, but the language of the court, of the scholar, the high and the learned.

So these pundits and scholars of Kashi feared that if they allow Tulsidas to go ahead with his project, their position as the only teachers and preachers of the story of Lord Ram would suffer, and consequently their superior position in the society and demand amongst the masses would be severely undermined, which would obviously adversely affect their source of revenue. Driven by such selfish objectives and filled with jealousy and malice for Tulsidas, it is said that they tried their best to dissuade this great saint from writing the divine story of Lord Ram in the vernacular, first by persuasion, then by different kinds of covert and overt threats, oral and physical, when he defied them and refused to be cowed down by showing his determination to go ahead with his mission irrespective all objections and hurdles thrown in his way.

This is why he refers to evil persons and pays his respect to them as well, obviously to keep at least the majority of them in good humour, and let him live in peace and do his work—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede it.]

चौ०. एहि प्रकार बल मनहि देखाई । करिहउँ रघुपति कथा सुहाई ॥ १ ॥
 व्यास आदि कबि पुंगव नाना । जिन्ह सादर हरि सुजस बखाना ॥ २ ॥
 चरन कमल बंदउँ तिन्ह केरे । पुरवहुँ सकल मनोरथ मेरे ॥ ३ ॥
 कलि के कबिन्ह करउँ परनामा । जिन्ह बरने रघुपति गुन ग्रामा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi prakāra bala manahi dēkhāī. kariha'um̃ raghupati kathā suhāī. 1.
 byāsa ādi kabi puṅgava nānā. jinha sādara hari sujasa bakhānā. 2.
 carana kamala banda'um̃ tinha kērē. puravahum̃ sakala manōratha mērē. 3.
 kali kē kabinha kara'um̃ paranāmā. jinha baranē raghupati guna grāmā. 4.

In the aforesaid manner, I gather courage and strength of mind and heart to start narrating the beautiful, holy and divine story of Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus¹. (1)

Great, wise, enlightened and illustrious sages, such as Veda Vyas and the ancient poet Valmiki, as well as many others, have sung the glories of Lord Ram with great reverence². (2)

I most reverentially bow my head at their holy feet and pray to them to bless me so that my wishes (of successfully narrating the holy story of Lord Ram and singing the Lord's divine glories) are fulfilled. (3)

Verily and most sincerely I pay my respects and bow before all the poets and bards and minstrels of the present age of Kaliyug who have sung the legion of glories of Lord Ram in one or the other way. (4)

[Note—¹Tulsidas was apprehensive of whether or not he would be successful in narrating the divine story of Lord Ram in a proper way, for one, he feared being hooted by his peers, and secondly, he thought he did not have the needed competence for writing something on such a profound topic as narrating the story of Lord Ram that would do justice to the Lord's glories, holiness and divinity that are as measureless as the ocean and the sky, and beyond comprehension.

In this regard, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 9; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3 where sages Valmiki, Narad and Agastya are named.

As regards sage Agastya, even Lord Shiva had once listened to the story of Ram Charit Manas being narrated by him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48.

Lord Shiva had narrated it to his consort, goddess Uma, as well as to Kaagbhhusund—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30; and Doha no. 111.]

जे प्राकृत कबि परम सयाने । भाषाँ जिन्ह हरि चरित बखाने ॥ ५ ॥
 भए जे अहहिं जे होइहहिं आगें । प्रनवउं सबहि कपट सब त्यागें ॥ ६ ॥
 होहु प्रसन्न देहु बरदानू । साधु समाज भनिति सनमानू ॥ ७ ॥

jē prākṛta kabi parama sayānē. bhāṣāṁ jinha hari carita bakhānē. 5.
 bha'e jē ahahim jē hō'ihahim āgēm. pranava'um sabahi kapaṭa saba tyāgēm.
 6.
 hōhu prasanna dēhu baradānū. sādhu samāja bhaniti sanamānū. 7.

I also pay my homage to those wise and learned poets who have written such profound glories of the Lord in the ancient language known as 'Prakrit'¹. (5)

My respects are given to all such poets of the past ages, of the present age, as well as those who will come in the future ages.

I bow before all of them sincerely, without any deceit or pretension in me, for I am absolutely honest in my submissions when I express my deep respects to all of them. (6)

Please be gracious upon me and bless me with the grant of a boon that my poem (which is dedicated to Lord Ram) would find its due respect in the hallowed community of saints and pious people². (7)

[Note—¹In earlier times, there were two main languages in which poem and prose were scripted by poets and scholars respectively: one was Sanskrit and the other was Prakrit. The Prakrit language was for the less educated and was usually looked down upon as a non-scholarly language, while Sanskrit was used in scriptures and was the medium employed by scholars and court poets. The word 'Prakrit' is derived from 'Prakriti' meaning 'Nature'. Hence, Prakrit is believed to be a language that was spoken by the ancient man in the earlier days of evolution of civilization, and hence it is said to pre-date the more evolved form of it that came to be known as Sanskrit. Sanskrit was the language of the Pundits, while Prakrit was derided as a language of spirits and ghosts—because when civilization developed and more refined form of language evolved, known as Sanskrit and later on the main vernacular tongues, this ancient language known as 'Prakrit' began to fade away and lose its importance for lesser and lesser persons could speak or understand it; it started becoming outdated and gradually went into oblivion. Hence, if there was some person who could still read and speak it, but was not understood by his listeners, he was laughed at for speaking in a 'ghostly language'. Similar was the fate of ancient writing written in this language—for no one could understand it, and hence it was called the 'language of the spirits'.

It is believed that Prakrit language was the prevalent language-franca in the Indian sub-continent till around 300 B.C., and at that time it was known as 'Pali' in royal courts. The books of the two main religions having their origin in ancient India,

Jainism and Buddhism, are written in the Pali language. As Vedic religion gained momentum, Sanskrit became the court language and patronized by kings.

²Tulsidas has made an important observation here: he says he expects respect for his poem amongst ‘saints and pious people’, clearly meaning he does not expect any such reception from the wicked and the ugly people of this world who would be jealous of him and harbour malice towards him. Saints and pious people would see the positive side of his composition—that it narrates the holy story of Lord Ram and extols the Lord’s glories, that it professes love and devotion for Lord Ram as a means to attain peace and happiness in this world that is otherwise full of miseries, that it would help the ordinary man to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation for himself by remembering Lord Ram and singing the Lord’s divine glories, that it would give an easy way by which a tormented soul can find bliss and beatitude for itself—which are some of the virtues of Ram Charit Manas that would be enough for saints and pious people to honour it. This idea is made clear earlier too—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 11.]

जो प्रबंध बुध नहिं आदरहीं । सो श्रम बादि बाल कबि करहीं ॥ ८ ॥
कीरति भनिति भूति भलि सोई । सुरसरि सम सब कहँ हित होई ॥ ९ ॥

jō prabandha budha nahim ādarahīm. sō śrama bādi bāla kabi karahīm. 8.
kīrati bhaniti bhūti bhali sōī. surasari sama saba kaham̐hita hōī. 9.

I need blessings of wise and saintly poets and illustrious souls because any composition that is not accepted as being of any good by such people who know how to appreciate it and value its worth (and if it lands in wrong hands), then all efforts (time and energy) spent in composing it goes in vain. (8)

Indeed, any sort of fame, any kind of power and authority, as well as any poem or composition is considered to be good and worthy of respect in this world if it does good to others selflessly, without any self-serving motive, just like the holy river Ganges that blesses the world with its life-sustaining water, irrespective of the land over which it flows and the creatures who live by its banks and come to seek water in it for their daily needs¹. (9)

[Note—Here, Tulsidas means that he is writing this story of Lord Ram in the local language, the vernacular known as Avadhi, rather than the scholarly Sanskrit, because his aim is to make the holy lake symbolized by the divine story of Lord Ram accessible to the common man so that everyone can take a dip into it by way of reading, singing and narrating this story and derive spiritual joy and bliss as a consequence, just like the case of the holy river Ganges which makes its life-sustaining water available to one and all without any kind of distinction.

The river Ganges, which is deemed to be holy and pure as it is believed to have descended from the heavens where it is called the ‘river of the gods’, flows through dirty plains and traverses through all sorts of soil as it weaves its serpentine way across the land, never worried that the dirt and the garbage all along will ever corrupt it. It purifies the holy man as well as the sinner who come to bathe in it; it cleanses a washerman’s clothes as well as it cleans the soul of the seeker of liberation

and deliverance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 15.

Likewise, the divine story of Lord Ram ought to be entitled to provide spiritual bliss and beatitude to both the high and the lowly, yet it is difficult to make this happen if it not made accessible to the common man in his local language. This is why Tulsidas has chosen to write in the vernacular, and he has no self-serving motives behind it, such as to gain fame and applause as a great poet. Since his objective is noble and pious, and since he is writing this poem known as Ram Charit Manas as a means to sing the divine glories of Lord Ram, to honour the Lord Ram and pay respects to him, hence saintly persons must welcome him and support his efforts.

Therefore, he begs saintly souls and right-minded poets to understand the importance of his work and appreciate his efforts by blessing him. To wit, Tulsidas implies that he is pleading with good people to support him against the onslaught of his detractors and enemies who would go out of their way to deride and ridicule Ram Charit Manas.]

राम सुकीरति भनिति भदेसा । असमंजस अस मोहि अँदेसा ॥ १० ॥
तुम्हरी कृपाँ सुलभ सोड मोरे । सिअनि सुहावनि टाट पटोरे ॥ ११ ॥

rāma sukīrati bhaniti bhadēsā. asamanjasa asa mōhi amḍēsā. 10.
tumharī kṛpām̐ sulabha sō'u mōrē. si'ani suhāvani ṭāṭa paṭōrē. 11.

[In these two verses, Tulsidas gives a reason for his earnest request to saints and pious people to bless and support him. This is in addition to the ideas expressed in the note to the previous set of verses.]

Lord Ram's glories are exceptionally majestic, sublime in their beauty, and eternally divine¹, while my abilities to write about them and to speak of them are sorely limited and inapt. This apparent mismatch between them, this obvious dichotomy betwixt the objective and the means to achieve it, creates immense consternation and fear in my mind as to whether or not I shall be able to do justice to the holiness of the Lord's story in my narrative because of my incompetence and lack of skills.

This has filled me with doubt and I am totally at my wits for I lack confidence regarding my ability to successfully achieve my aim² (of narrating the holy story of Lord Ram in such a way that its pristine beauty, its magnificence, and its divinity and holiness are properly and correctly depicted, without omitting any important point, and ensure that justice is done to it). (10)

But however, no matter what my shortcomings are, everything can be taken care of and sorted out by your (i.e. saints and holy people mentioned in verse nos. 4-6) grace and blessings just like the case of rough cloth that acquires value if it has been stitched using a silk thread³. (11)

[Note—¹The majesty of Lord Ram and his story has been referred to in Ram Charit Manas in (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 120-c; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 13.

³In this analogy, Tulsidas compares him to a rough piece of cloth which has no good value of its own, and the wise and pious souls to the silk thread that is used to stitch that cloth. Left to its own devices, the cloth will have no value and draw no attention, but when fine embroidery is done on it with a silk thread and its ends are stitched with such thread, the same piece of useless cloth would acquire value.

Similarly, when Tulsidas' poem narrating the divine story of Lord Ram is accepted by saintly souls who will judge it not for its mastery of the language or beauty of its style of composition but for the fact that it has Lord Ram's name in it and sings the Lord's glories, then others too would welcome it. Those who would be watching from the side to see what kind of reaction it gets from the fraternity of honourable poets and saintly persons, when they find that they have blessed Tulsidas and welcomed his composition, they would quietly move away and leave him at peace. Otherwise, if unscrupulous people discover that honorable poets and saints have rejected Tulsidas' composition, it will add fuel to their already burning fire of jealousy, hatred and malice, and they would pounce upon him like hungry wolves tearing down at their helpless victim.]

दो०. सरल कबित कीरति बिमल सोइ आदरहिं सुजान ।
सहज बयर बिसराइ रिपु जो सुनि करहिं बखान ॥ १४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

sarala kabita kīrati bimala sō'i ādarahim sujāna.
sahaja bayara bisarā'i ripu jō suni karahim bakhāna. 14 (a).

Verily indeed, a poem that is in simple language, and which narrates a story that is sublime and holy in its message, is welcomed by wise, sagacious and intelligent people.

Nay, even those who are wicked and inclined to be naturally inimical towards the poet who had composed it would find no cause to discover fault with such a composition, and so they too would discard their natural animosity towards the poet by sincerely appreciating his poem. (Doha no. 14-a)

सो न होइ बिनु बिमल मति मोहि मति बल अति थोर ।
करहु कृपा हरि जस कहउँ पुनि पुनि करउँ निहोर ॥ १४ (ख) ॥

sō na hō'i binu bimala mati mōhi mati bala ati thōra.
karahu krpā hari jasa kaha'um' puni puni kara'um' nihōra. 14 (b).

But the problem is that such an excellent kind of poem needs an equally refined mind and a highly evolved intellect for its composition, and unfortunately I don't have it.

This is why I am earnestly beseeching you (saints and pious poets) to please be kind upon me, and bless me with your favour and benevolence (so that whatever

sort of poem I may eventually be able to write, whether or not it is up to the mark, yet you will bless it and appreciate it in public, even if it is just for the sake to honour Lord Ram and respect the Lord's majesty, because my poem has the Lord's holy name 'Ram' imbedded in it, and it is also dedicated exclusively to narrate the divine story of the Lord and nothing else)¹. (Doha no. 14-b)

[Note—¹Tulsidas says that all other factors that are normally employed by expert poets to judge the quality of a poem may weigh against him in his composition, but one factor is in his favour—and it is that his poem has Lord Ram's holy name in it, and it sings the divine story of Lord Ram and pays homage to his glories. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 10.

Tulsidas says that the presence of Lord Ram's holy name and glory in his poem would naturally attract applause from saints, while non-saints too would praise it because they won't be able to do otherwise for the same reason.]

कबि कोबिद रघुबर चरित मानस मंजु मराल ।

बाल बिनय सुनि सुरुचि लखि मो पर होहु कृपाल ॥ १४ (ग) ॥

kabi kōbida raghubara carita mānasa mañju marāla.
bāla binaya suni suruci lakhi mō para hōhu krpāla. 14 (c).

Wise poets and learned men, who are like swans living in the holy waters of a lake symbolized by the divine story of Lord Ram which gives them immense peace and bliss¹, would treat me affectionately and kindly like one would treat a child when they hear my polite request and come to know of my noble wishes². (Doha no. 14-c)

[Note—¹Just like the swan that loves to dwell in a lake that has clean water and shuns ordinary lakes with dirty water, saintly poets and holy men find immense peace when they remain submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram, meditating and contemplating upon the Lord by means of reading, listening to and reciting the holy story of Lord Ram. This immensely pure and holy story is like a symbolic lake in which such pious souls live.

The glories of Ram Charit Manas have been enumerated in Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38 where it has been compared to a fine fresh-water lake.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-9 that precede Doha no. 8.]

सो०. बंदउँ मुनि पद कंजु रामायन जेहिं निरमयउ ।

सखर सुकोमल मंजु दोष रहित दूषन सहित ॥ १४ (घ) ॥

sōraṭhā.

banda'um^o muni pada kan̄ju rāmāyana jēhiṁ niramaya'u.
sakhara sukōmala man̄ju dōṣa rahita dūṣana sahita. 14 (d).

Once again, I pay my respects and worship the holy lotus-like feet of the sage (or sages) who have composed the holy story of Lord Ram that is known universally as the 'Ramayana'¹.

The story of the Ramayana is inherently beautiful and charming, pleasing for the mind and comforting for the heart, inspite of it having some 'Khar' qualities in it which seem unpleasant and unsavoury at face value (which is a reference to the inclusion of the episode of demon 'Khar', a cousin of the demon king Ravana, from whom this fault derives its name).

Likewise, the Ramayana is immaculate and without any faults present in it that may corrupt or pollute its inherent purity and fineness inspite of it having some instances that give a superficial impression of impurity (such as the presence of the demon 'Dushan' who gives his name to this fault, and other similar instances that make it appear that this story lacks holiness and divinity in it)². (Sortha no. 14-d)

[Note—¹Tulsidas has not specifically mentioned any sage here by name, but in all probability he refers both to sage Valmiki and sage Veda Vyas. This is because both these sages were exceptionally enlightened and both have composed the Ramayana; the Ramayana written by them has formed the foundation upon which Tulsidas has build his own story. It is believed that Tulsidas has drawn the story from Valmiki's Ramayana, and the metaphysical philosophy from Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan.

²Here Tulsidas is playing on the words 'Khar' and 'Dushan'. The word 'Khar' refers to something that lacks smoothness, is rough, coarse, dry and lacking in fine quality; the word 'Dushan' refers to something that has many faults and shortcomings in it; something that is corrupted and polluted, making it unpleasant, uncomfortable and thorny. These two words are also the names of two demon brothers who were as brave and invincible as Ravana, the king of Lanka, and equally cruel and ruthless. They were killed in a fierce battle with Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—Doha no. 20-a; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 23.

The idea is that though the story of the Ramayana often times appear to be a tale of a great prince and not of the Supreme Being as it includes many instances of events in the life of Lord Ram that seem most humdrum and worldly, having no or little bearing with Lord Ram's divinity and holiness, or convey any spiritual and metaphysical message that could apparently benefit the reader, yet all such things are but inconsequential diversions and they do not rob the Ramayana of its sublime beauty.

Instances of some such events that give the otherwise holy story of Lord Ram the contours of worldliness and stand as obstructions in the smoothness and spiritual beauty of the story of the Ramayana are many, giving the impression that it is a story of a prince of Ayodhya who was sent to forest due to some family feud, such as the bloody battles fought by Lord Ram and extensively described in it, and the narration of the cruelty perpetrated by the demons, and many other events that give the general impression that it is merely a tale of some ancient prince who got entangled in family dispute and wrangling over the throne due to which he was ousted by his father and exiled to the forest where his wife was stolen by demons whom he fought to retrieve his lost wife, being a fable of fantasy and mythology and fertile imagination. But

these prickly thorns do not rob or affect the natural spiritual beauty and the inherent charm of the story of Ramayana, nor does it in any way tamper with its spiritual message and the metaphysical principles that it preaches for the general good of mankind.

This is why it is found attractive by wise, enlightened, erudite and sagacious sages and saints as they are able to see below the surface by diving deep into it and finding pearls of wisdom embedded throughout its text, enabling them to discard the useless and accept the worthy things in it. This is also why they are compared to a 'swan' because it is said that a swan would drink pure milk and leave alone its adulterants, and also because it can pick up pearls and discard other gems even if they are all mixed up in a bowl.

Another interpretation of the use of the words 'Khar' and 'Dushan' is that even as Lord Ram had physically eliminated the two demons Khar and Dushan in the story of the Ramayana, all the apparent faults and shortcomings in this story, as well as those that pertain to its composition, are taken care of by the simple fact that it has the holy name of the Lord incorporated in it, because the Ramayana is dedicated to Lord Ram and honouring him, that it praises the Lord's glories and extols his virtues, that it narrates the divinity and holiness of the Supreme Being in the human form of Lord Ram, that it provides an easy gateway to spiritual bliss, joy, happiness and peace for the devotees of the Lord, that it shows such devotees the easy and simple path of Bhakti (meaning, inter alia, devotion, submission, service, love, affection, worship, and all such spiritual practices that brings the devotee closer to his Lord God) which can hand-hold them towards their spiritual goal of attaining liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

To wit, all drawbacks and shortcomings that may be cited by critics vis-à-vis the technical aspects of composition of this poem or its contents that seem to pertain to the gross, mortal and mundane world are taken care of when wise and learned poets take into consideration its one stellar beauty and one singularly unique quality—which is that the Ramayana is dedicated to Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Lord God, and it is devoted to the singing of the Lord's glories, divinity and holiness, and nothing else at all.

So therefore, even if it seems to lack any succulence, flavour and beauty with respect to its poetical quality from the perspective of poems related to this gross world, it is more than compensated, and rather better positioned and raised to a high pedestal, making it the most praise worthy poem ever composed, by the sublimity, succulence and beauty of its spiritual message as well as the holiness of its subject matter.]

बंदुँ चारिउ बेद भव बारिधि बोहित सरिस ।

जिन्हि न सपनेहुँ खेद बरनत रघुबर बिसद जसु ॥ १४ (ड) ॥

banda'um' cāri'u bēda bhava bāridhi bōhita sarisa.

jinhahi na sapanēhum' khēda baranata raghubara bisada jasu. 14 (e).

[Tulsidas says—] I also pay my respects to the four Vedas (primary scriptures) which act like a sturdy ship to help a person go across the vast ocean represented by existence in this gross mortal world¹. The Vedas never tire of singing the extensive

glories of Lord Ram, the exalted Lord of the Raghus (because they find immense pleasure in it). (Sortha no. 14-e)

[Note—¹The Vedas are repository of wisdom and knowledge. For a creature who is trapped in the whirlpool of transmigration, there is no better source of guidance than the Vedas as they prescribe many methods by which a creature can find deliverance from this endless churning of his soul in this whirlpool. The creature can select the method best suited to his needs based on his temperament and abilities to follow the chosen path.

One such easy method prescribed in the Vedas is to have devotion, love and affection for Lord God, to serve him, to sing the Lord's glories and worship him, to submit oneself before him, and many other similar paths that are easy to follow.]

बंदउँ बिधि पद रेनु भव सागर जेहिं कीन्ह जहँ ।
संत सुधा ससि धेनु प्रगटे खल बिष बारुनी ॥ १४ (च) ॥

banda'um̐ bidhi pada rēnu bhava sāgara jēhim̐ kīnha jaham̐.
santa sudhā sasi dhēnu pragatē khala biṣa bārunī. 14 (f).

I also worship the dust of the holy feet of the creator Brahma, the Lord who created this vast world which is like an endless ocean (of transmigration), for it is from this symbolic ocean that he produced saints, who are like a moon (that provides comfort and solace to tormented souls by its soothing, cool and calm rays) and a source of Amrit (the nectar of bliss and joy), as well as the wicked people who are like the intoxicating wine and the scorching poison that too were produced from the same ocean. (Sortha no. 14-f)

[Note—According to the Purans, the celestial ocean was once churned by the gods and the demons. Among other things, it produced the moon, the nectar, wine and poison. In this verse, saintly persons are likened to the moon and the nectar as they give comfort to the world and create a positive effect by their presence. On the other hand, the wicked and evil persons are compared to the wine and the poison which only create suffering and cause misery all around wherever they are present.]

दो०. बिबुध बिप्र बुध ग्रह चरन बंदि कहउँ कर जोरि ।
होइ प्रसन्न पुरवहु सकल मंजु मनोरथ मोरि ॥ १४ (छ) ॥
dōhā.

bibudha bipra budha graha carana bandi kaha'um̐ kara jōri.
hō'i prasanna puravahu sakala mañju manōratha mōri. 14 (g).

I join the palms of my hands and pray most reverentially to all the Gods, the Brahmins, the Wise Ones, the Plants and Stars, et al—with a humble request to them all to be pleased with me and bless me that my noble wishes (to narrate the holy story of Lord Ram) are fulfilled successfully. (Doha no. 14-g)

चौ०. पुनि बंदउँ सारद सुरसरिता । जुगल पुनीत मनोहर चरिता ॥ १ ॥
मज्जन पान पाप हर एका । कहत सुनत एक हर अबिबेका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni banda'um̐ sārada surasaritā. jugala punīta manōhara caritā. 1.
majjana pāna pāpa hara ēkā. kahata sunata ēka hara abibēkā. 2.

Once again, I bow before goddess Saraswati (Sarada), the patron goddess of knowledge, understanding, wisdom and speech¹, and the holy river Ganges, known as the ‘river of the gods²’—for both of them are immaculate in their virtues and their glories are profound. (1)

[Now, Tulsidas gives the reason why he pays his obeisance to Saraswati and Ganges.]

It is because while one (i.e. the holy river Ganges) washes away sins by taking a bath (or dipping) in its holy waters and sipping it with due reverence, the other (goddess Saraswati) eliminates the darkness of ignorance and delusions when she reveals herself in the form of refined words of wisdom that are spoken and heard in this world (as she purifies the mind and the intellect of the speaker as well as the listener, so that both of them are blessed with wisdom and enlightenment)³. (2)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sholka line no. 1 that precedes Sortha no. 1 at the very beginning of the book. Here we read that Tulsidas has paid his respects to goddess Saraswati before anyone else.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 14 herein above.

The story of ‘the river of the gods, i.e. river Ganges, and how it descended from heaven to earth, was narrated by sage Vishwamitra to Lord Ram while going to Janakpur from his hermitage. We shall also narrate it when we come to that episode in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 212.

³Tulsidas pays his homage to both Saraswati and Ganges before starting to narrate the story of Lord Ram in his epic poem known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’ to invoke their blessings and seek their patronage, because (a) Saraswati would bless him with a purified mind and intellect that are fine tuned to meet his needs, as these instruments of the mind and the intellect are absolutely essential for the work he is about to undertake, which is of writing the holy story of Lord Ram with its profound spiritual and metaphysical message, a task that is not an easy job by any count, and (b) Ganges would clean his body and keep him refreshed and energized for this enormously huge task.

Blessings of Saraswati and Ganges are needed because when the mind and body are fresh and free from worldly problems, such as worries and diseases, a man works with high spirit and immense enthusiasm; for otherwise he would be bogged down by countless forms of distractions that would sap his energy and undermine his zeal in any kind of work in which he engages himself.

The subtle idea in this invocation is that though goddess Saraswati and holy river Ganges would help everyone who come to them, for Saraswati enables the mind

to work and the tongue to speak, and river Ganges would clean anything put in its waters for washing, but such functions are merely their mundane worldly obligations that they fulfill as a matter of routine, without taking any personal interest in them. To wit, Saraswati enables a person to speak, write and think on all sorts of worldly matters, and water of the Ganges washes dirty clothes of the washer-man as well as household utensils of people living along its banks. But such humdrum and mundane activities serve no worthwhile purpose for the long term spiritual good of the world.

The real worth of Saraswati is proved when a seeker approaches the goddess and asks her to bless him with a purified mind and the intellect so that he can acquire refined wisdom and enlightenment that would enable him to see the Truth and Reality by overcoming the profound darkness of ignorance and delusions that had hitherto cloaked him. With the newly acquired wisdom and enlightenment, this wise seeker would then speak good words and give wise advice to other less fortunate creatures by showing them the light of truth and wisdom, that would in turn remove the darkness of ignorance and delusions from their path so that they themselves can see the reality and understand the truth, which would in turn enable them to walk steadily forward to attain the spiritual goal of their lives.

Similarly, the real spiritual benefit of river Ganges is when one takes a bath in it and sips its water with the faith that it has a mystical ability to clean his inner being from all sorts of faults, which are invisible forms of sins that may have tainted his Atma, or soul. This conviction has a profound impact on his psyche, for now he feels free of the hidden burden on his conscience so much so that he acquires a sprint in his steps as he steps out of the water a changed and cleaned man. But this will work only if he vows not to do any wrong deed again, and promise to lead a pious life. Otherwise it's back to square one again the next day.

To wit, Tulsidas invokes the blessings of Saraswati and Ganges to enable him with a refined mind and a wise intellect on the one hand, and a healthy body and soul on the other hand respectively.]

गुरु पितु मातु महेश भवानी । प्रनवउँ दीनबंधु दिन दानी ॥ ३ ॥

सेवक स्वामि सखा सिय पी के । हित निरुपधि सब बिधि तुलसी के ॥ ४ ॥

gura pitu mātu mahēsa bhavānī. pranava'um^o dīnabandhu dina dānī. 3.
sēvaka svāmi sakhā siya pī kē. hita nirupadhi saba bidhi tulasī kē. 4.

I bow before Lord Mahesh and his consort goddess Bhavani (i.e. Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati) who are like a Guru (teacher, guide and preceptor) as well as like a father and a mother for me¹.

Verily indeed I prostrate myself before the holy couple (i.e. Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati) for they are a friend of the distressed and the lowly, and most gracious granter of wishes of the devotee. (3)

Forsooth and without gainsay, Lord Shiva is a loyal devotee and a friend of Lord Ram, the dear husband of Sita (siya pī kē). Nay, not only that, Lord Shiva is revered and worshipped by Lord Ram as his preferred Lord and Deity².

Verily indeed, the Lord (Shiva) is always most favourably inclined to his servant Tulsidas of whose good the Lord always thinks and takes care of, for the Lord is his benefactor in every way³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sholka line no. 3 that precedes Sortha no. 1. Here we have already read that Tulsidas has paid his respects to Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani at the very beginning of the book.

Lord Shiva and Bhavani are also honoured as the Father and Mother of this world in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103.

Lord Shiva is revered as the Guru of this creation in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 111.

Meanwhile, Tulsidas owes his special gratitude to them because the story of Lord Ram which he is about to narrate, the divine story known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, was originally conceived by Lord Shiva and narrated first to his consort Uma or Parvati, the other names of Bhavani—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.

A Guru is a wise and enlightened person who shows the right path to a seeker of Truth. So, Tulsidas treats the holy couple, Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati, as his Guru as they have shown light to the story of Lord Ram in a way that would benefit the world from a spiritual angle, and this light also helped Tulsidas to see for himself what kind of story of Lord Ram he is expected to tell the world. There were many variations of the Ramayana extant at that time, but Tulsidas chose to narrate the version of the Ramayana that Lord Shiva told Parvati. Since it was a conversation between Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati, Tulsidas uses the term ‘Guru’ to mean both.

In a way, Ram Charit Manas is a revelation of a divine story of Lord Ram by way of a question asked by Parvati and answered by Lord Shiva much on the pattern of the Upanishads wherein a disciple asks his learned Guru some profound metaphysical question to which the teacher replies in detail, and this reply becomes the Upanishad. From this perspective, the narrative of Tulsidas would be no less than a Upanishad on the spiritual philosophy behind the story of Lord Ram, especially because it was conceived and revealed by no other than Lord Shiva who is honoured by the epithet of ‘Maha-Deva’, meaning the Great God renowned for his wisdom, enlightenment, self-realisation and spiritual achievements.

²Lord Ram worships Lord Shiva, and Lord Shiva also worships Lord Ram. That is why when Lord Ram established the Lingam of Shiva, the Lord’s icon, on the shores of the ocean before stepping on the bridge to go to Lanka, he had addressed Lord Shiva as ‘Rameshwar’, having a dual meaning: for it means ‘The Lord whom Ram worships’ as well as ‘The Lord who worships Ram’. At that time, Lord Ram had made it clear that if anyone wishes to attain him and have devotion for him, then he must first worship Lord Shiva and seek his blessings. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Later on, while addressing the citizens of Ayodhya, Lord Ram has once again reiterated this principle in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45—that without having devotion for Lord Shiva and worshipping him, one cannot fully honour Lord Ram and attain him.

Refer also to the following verses that show Lord Shiva treats Lord Ram as his Lord God: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 50; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line nos.

1-5 that precede Doha no. 77; (iv) Doha no. 116; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119.

The following verses show the mutual respect that Lord Ram and Lord Shiva have for each other: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precedes Doha no. 104.

Lord Ram had worshipped Lord Shiva on the banks of river Ganges while on his way to the forest in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103.

³Tulsidas has already honoured Lord Shiva by addressing him as his Father and Guru; a father and guru are surely expected to be very favourably inclined towards their ward, a son and a disciple respectively. Further, Tulsidas is himself a great devotee of Lord Ram, and he is about to narrate the divine story of his beloved Lord, so therefore it is natural that Lord Shiva would shower his blessings on him, more so because Tulsidas gives due credit to Shiva as the creator of this story and says that he is narrating the same story which Lord Shiva had told Uma. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 31.

So now Tulsidas fulfills the mandate of Lord Ram by saying that he holds Lord Shiva in great reverence, honours him as his father and guru, and to Lord Shiva he always would remain obliged for his grace and kindness for authorizing him to tell the divine story of Lord Ram that the Lord had told his consort Bhavani in some ancient time.]

कलि बिलोकि जग हित हर गिरिजा । साबर मंत्र जाल जिन्ह सिरिजा ॥ ५ ॥

अनमिल आखर अरथ न जापू । प्रगट प्रभाउ महेस प्रतापू ॥ ६ ॥

kali bilōki jaga hita hara girijā. sābara mantra jāla jinha sirijā. 5.

anamila ākhara aratha na jāpū. pragaṭa prabhā'u mahēsa pratāpū. 6.

Seeing the miserable spiritual condition of the creatures of the world during the age of Kaliyug (when they find no hope of salvation and emancipation as true spiritual knowledge eludes them, and the path to deliverance has been darkened by delusions and ignorance as well as the prevalence of countless false doctrines and religious philosophies hawked by as many preachers), Lord Har (Shiva) and his divine consort Girija (Parvati or Uma or Bhavani) devised a simple Mantra (a spiritual formula or device) for their well-being and welfare by stringing a series of words and phrases into a motley series of network of verses which may not have any apparently coherent meaning and beauty a poem ought to possess, nor can they be used to do Japa (repetition of a holy Mantra for meditation purposes)—yet taken in their entirety, these words reveal the mystical power of Lord Shiva as they would enable the humble creature to derive spiritual bliss, peace, joy and happiness by reading and listening to it. (5-6)

[Note—Tulsidas clearly refers to Ram Charit Manas here. He is pre-empting any viral criticism of his composition by experts of poetry by saying that though it may not stand scrutiny in terms of passing muster of any poetical scale of judgment with regard to beauty, meaning and perfection of grammar in a composition, yet it must not

be forgotten that this composition is revealed by Lord Shiva himself for the benefit of mankind, and it is meant for the common man who may not have much knowledge of poetry or its fine qualities, nor is he bothered about them either, for he is so miserable and fatigued by his daily toil in this mundane world that he has no time for such things, as his only immediate concern is to find an easy way out of his torments so that he can find peace and rest for himself and his soul.

This purpose is taken care of and well served by Ram Charit Manas, notwithstanding its other shortcomings and faults, for it has Lord Ram's holy name in it and it narrates the divine story of Lord Ram in a simple language understood by the common man as it is in the vernacular.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 27; and (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 130. In all these verses, the idea expressed in the present verses is reiterated.

What is a “sābara mantra”? It refers to a group of letters, syllables or words that have no meaning, are esoteric in nature, and are usually employed in occult practices and secret forms of worship. Tulsidas here means that for some his composition may seem ridiculous and professing some occult form of worship. But it is not at all so, for it advocates devotion for Lord Ram and praises the latter's holy name and glory as done by Lord Shiva himself. Hence, it is a holy composition of immense spiritual value, and not something to be looked down upon as being a dark form of some secret religious text.

Tulsidas says that the words used in his narrative “can't be used in Japa”; why? It is because a Mantra that one would use for doing Japa ought to be short, crisp and straightforward, and not a long winding narrative as this story of Lord Ram is.

Yet it has the secret key to this Mantra: and what is it? It professes that the holy name of Lord Ram, which it incorporates intricately in its text, is that supreme Mantra used for doing Japa, for Lord Ram's holy name is the famed ‘Tarak Mantra’ which grants deliverance to the soul of a creature. Refer: (a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 10 herein above; and (b) Ram Rahasya and Ram Tapini Upanishads which elaborately expound on this principle.]

सो उमेस मोहि पर अनुकूला । करिहिं कथा मुद मंगल मूला ॥ ७ ॥
सुमिरि सिवा सिव पाइ पसाऊ । बरनउँ रामचरित चित चाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

sō umēsa mōhi para anukūlā. karihim kathā muda maṅgala mūlā. 7.
sumiri sivā siva pā'i pasā'ū. barana'um' rāmacarita cita cā'ū. 8.

That Lord Shiva (“umēsa”; the Lord of Uma), who is kind upon me and is my benefactor, would therefore grace my composition so that it becomes a fountainhead of spiritual bliss and joy, as well as acquire basic natural beauty and charm. (7)

So therefore now, by seeking Lord Shiva and his divine consort's grace and benevolence, and invoking their blessings, I would endeavour to start narrating the holy story of Lord Ram with a cheerful mind and an enthusiastic spirit. (8)

[Note—Tulsidas has called Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani has his Parents and Guru in Chaupai line no. 3 herein above. So now he once again offers his respects to them as he would do to his worldly parent and guru before starting any enterprise, for it is by their blessings that one succeeds in one's efforts.]

भनिति मोरि सिव कृपाँ बिभाती । ससि समाज मिलि मनहुँ सुराती ॥ ९ ॥
जे एहि कथहि सनेह समेता । कहिहहिं सुनिहहिं समुझि सचेता ॥ १० ॥
होइहहिं राम चरन अनुरागी । कलि मल रहित सुमंगल भागी ॥ ११ ॥

bhaniti mōri siva kṛpām̐ bibhātī. sasi samāja mili manahum̐ surātī. 9.
jē ēhi kathahi sanēha samētā. kahihahim̐ sunihahim̐ samujhi sacētā. 10.
hō'ihahim̐ rāma carana anurāgī. kali mala rahita sumāngala bhāgī. 11.

By the grace of Lord Shiva, my words would shine with such beauty and charm as the moon shines in the night in the company of stars, making the otherwise dark and foreboding night look exceptionally charming and peaceful¹. (9)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, those who would narrate and listen to this divine, holy and auspicious story of Lord Ram carefully, with due affection and paying attention to its details, who would be alert enough to understand its sublime meaning and comprehend its subtle message (both metaphysical as well as spiritual)² (10),---

---Such persons would surely develop affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram; they would be freed from the many sins and faults inherent in Kaliyug, and would become eligible to get the reward of auspiciousness and spiritual merit (that would come to them automatically)³.* (11)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Lord Shiva's grace is like the rays of the full moon, the grace of other gods is like the many stars that cover the sky in the night, and the peace and bliss that one derives in such a tranquil atmosphere of the night while enjoying the soothing rays of the moon is like the peace and bliss one would get by reading and listening to the story of Ram Charit Manas in the words of Lord Shiva repeated by Tulsidas.

The 'moon' is selected for this comparison instead of the 'sun' because thought the sun is definitely brighter as compared to the moon, yet its rays are not as soothing and comforting as those of the moon, for at noon the sun scorches, but the moon never does it even when it is right overhead in the sky.

²This verse tells us how to read and listen to the story of Ram Charit Manas.

³And this verse tells us what spiritual rewards would come to such people.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 15; (ii) Doha nos. 126; (iii) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (iii) Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 130—all of which literally reiterate the same spiritual idea.

*Verse no. 10-11 can be read in another way also as follows: “Those who hear this (glorious, divine, sacred and holy) story of Lord Ram attentively, and who narrate or recite it wisely and intelligently, with great affection, devotion, belief and faith (in their heart and mind) (10)—such persons would surely be able to free themselves from all the terrible sins and their attendant horrifying consequences that are a common feature in the evil era of Kaliyug, would be able to purge all impurities from their inner-self, and would be naturally spiritually blessed with the development of steady devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram (11).”]

दो०. सपनेहुँ साचेहुँ मोहि पर जौँ हर गौरि पसाउ ।
तौ फुर होउ जो कहेउँ सब भाषा भनिति प्रभाउ ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

sapanēhum' sācēhum' mōhi para jaum' hara gauri pasā'u.
tau phura hō'u jō kahē'um' saba bhāṣā bhaniti prabhā'u. 15.

[Tulsidas has now emphasized that he is sure that Lord Shiva and his divine consort known as Gauri are pleased with him when he says—]

I say with great conviction that if I am right that Lord Shiva and his divine consort goddess Gauri is pleased with me, then let them bless me and make my poem acquire the qualities and virtues I have mentioned herein above come true! (Doha no. 15)

[Note—And what are the qualities and virtues that Tulsidas refer to? In this context, refer to Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede this Doha wherein he says that his poem would give spiritual bliss to the reader and the listener much like the soothing rays of the moon does to a tormented soul suffering from some grave emotional stress, free them from the miseries of life in Kaliyug, and pave the way for them to develop devotion and affection at the holy feet of Lord Ram, which in turn would give them spiritual merit and auspiciousness, and finally grant them beatitude and deliverance—for this composition of his has the holy name of Lord Ram in it, and the Lord's holy name is the panacea for all spiritual miseries that torment a creature in this mundane world. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 10.]

चौ०. बंदउँ अवध पुरी अति पावनि । सरजू सरि कलि कलुष नसावनि ॥ १ ॥
प्रनवउँ पुर नर नारि बहोरी । ममता जिन्ह पर प्रभुहि न थोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

banda'um' avadha purī ati pāvani. sarajū sari kali kaluṣa nasāvani. 1.
pranava'um' pura nara nāri bahōrī. mamatā jinha para prabhuhi na thōrī. 2.

Now, I offer my respects to the holy city of Ayodhya (where Lord Ram was born)¹ as well as to the holy river Saryu (which flows on the northern fringes of the city)² as both are very purifying and wash away the sins of Kaliyug (because of their holy aura and spiritual atmosphere)³. (1)

Next, I bow before the residents of Ayodhya, the males as well as the females, who are very fortunate as Lord Ram's affection for them is not of a small degree (i.e. the Lord's affection and grace for them is immense and beyond imagination)⁴. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Tulsidas' book 'Geetawali Ramayan', verse no. 23; and Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 74; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 120; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 4; Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 97; Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 109.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 120; Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 4.

In sage Valmiki's Ramayana, the glories of Ayodhya and river Saryu are mentioned in Baal Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 24.

Their virtues and glories are also extolled in Skanda Puran, Vaishnav Khand, Ayodhya Mahatamya, Canto 12, verse nos. 27-32—which say: “The spiritual reward obtained by living in the pilgrim city of Kashi (Varanasi, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva) for one thousand Manwantars (an exceptionally long period of time) is obtained by merely having a Darshan (reverential viewing) of river Saryu even once with due reverence and faith. Similarly, the reward of living in Mathura (the birth place of Lord Krishna) for one Kalpa is obtained by having a Darshan of river Saryu. The spiritual reward got by bathing in river Ganges for sixty thousand years is obtained by living in Ayodhya for half a Pal (roughly half an hour; meaning a very short period of time).

In this Puran's Ayodhya Mahatamya, Canto 1, verse no. 62 it is said with regard to Ayodhya: “Ayodhya has a very sublime existence; it has no grossness associated with this mortal world because it is not built on earth but is borne atop the discus of Lord Vishnu.”

According to the ancient classic known as 'Rudryaamal', it is said in its Ayodhya Mahatamya, Canto 30, verse no. 54 that there are seven holy cities, viz. Ayodhya, Mathura, Mayapura, Kashi (Varanasi), Kanchi and Avantika. All of them can grant Moksha (deliverance) to the creature, but amongst them Ayodhya stands at number one.

³The countless faults of Kaliyug as well as its one good character have been enumerated briefly in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 27; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 104.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 274; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 4.

It ought to be noted here that the residents of Ayodhya who are being referred to here were those who lived during the time of Lord Ram, for they were pious and holy souls, free from corruption, pretensions, deceit, conceit, trickery and falsehood, and were followers of the laws of Dharma, i.e. who followed the principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, ethics, and nobility in thoughts and conduct. The sort of people whom Lord Ram loved and their characters have been

enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 22.

But that was the age of Tretayug when Lord Ram was born, and not Kaliyug, the age of corruption and moral degradation. So surely therefore, it can be said with certainty, without any prejudice of the least kind or malice towards anyone whatsoever, that surely Lord Ram would have had no love for the sort of people who live now in Kaliyug.]

सिय निंदक अघ ओघ नसाए । लोक बिसोक बनाइ बसाए ॥ ३ ॥
 बंदउँ कौसल्या दिसि प्राची । कीरति जासु सकल जग माची ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रगटेउ जहँ रघुपति ससि चारू । बिस्व सुखद खल कमल तुसारू ॥ ५ ॥

siya nindaka agha ogha nasā'ē. lōka bisōka banā'i basā'ē. 3.
 banda'um' kausalyā disi prācī. kīrati jāsu sakala jaga mācī. 4.
 pragaṭē'u jaham' raghupati sasi cārū. bisva sukhada khala kamala tusārū. 5.

Lord Ram's affection for the subjects of his kingdom was so immense that he had not only forgiven one of them (the washer-man) who had committed a grave error or sin by casting unwarranted aspersions on the immaculate character of Sita¹, the Lord's consort, but had also given him peace by granting him a place to live in heaven along with other noble citizens at the time when the Lord departed from this world and ascended to his holy abode. (3)

I bow before mother Kaushalya who symbolizes the eastern horizon². Her fame and good name has spread over the whole world (as the mother of Lord Ram). (4)

For she gave birth to Lord Ram who is like the beautiful full moon that gives peace, comfort, joy and happiness to the world at large, and also causes the lotus representing the evil and the wicked to shrivel up and close its petals as if bitten by frost³. (5)

[Note—¹This incidence is narrated in detail in sage Veda Vyas' epic narration of the story of Lord Ram in his book 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 29-53.

It is also likewise narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 42-67 that say that every single individual of Ayodhya had left his body and went to heaven with Lord Ram at the time of his departure from this mortal world. It obviously includes that washer-man who had accused Sita of infidelity by casting doubts on her character. Lord Ram had not punished him for this absurd and incredulous insinuation by ordering him to be dragged over burning coal and roasted alive, as would have been the normal course of things for a king to do in today's world, but the gracious and forgiving Lord had allowed peace to prevail upon the accuser's soul.

²Though in verse no. 5 she is honoured for being the mother of Lord Ram who is likened to the moon, as the Lord grants peace, tranquility, bliss and solace to everyone in this world much in the same way as the full moon that provides comfort and peace to those who are emotionally upset, yet it can also be said that Kaushalya is compared

to the eastern direction because it is where the sun rises, for she gave birth to Lord Ram who is like a sun rising in the east to show light to the whole world and remove the fear of darkness of night symbolized by all the miseries associated with mundane life characterized by dominance of delusions and ignorance that horrify the living being.

³Here, mother Kaushalya is likened to the eastern direction or horizon where the moon rises as she gave birth to Lord Ram, who is compared to the full moon as the advent of the Lord in this world gave immense comfort to tormented creatures suffering from the many miseries and problems associated with life in this gross mortal world.

Further, the moon is said to make the lotus close its petals as the latter feels shy in the presence of the former. This natural phenomenon is used to mean that wicked, unscrupulous and evil people withdrew and went into hiding when they learnt that Lord Ram had taken birth on this earth to tackle people like them just as the lotus flower closes its petals, and begins to brood and look dismayed when the moon rises in the eastern horizon and gradually ascends in the sky.

‘Bitten by frost’ implies that evil people were sore affright and stumped when they learnt that Lord Ram had taken birth to tackle people like them. They were stunned and dumbfounded out of their wits as they did not know how to react or what to do to save themselves from the Lord’s wrath.]

दसरथ राउ सहित सब रानी । सुकृत सुमंगल मूरति मानी ॥ ६ ॥
 करउँ प्रनाम करम मन बानी । करहु कृपा सुत सेवक जानी ॥ ७ ॥
 जिन्हहि बिरचि बड़ भयउ बिधाता । महिमा अवधि राम पितु माता ॥ ८ ॥

dasaratha rā'u sahita saba rānī. sukṛta sumāṅgala mūrati mānī. 6.
 kara'um̐ pranāma karama mana bānī. karahu kṛpā suta sēvaka jānī. 7.
 jinhahi biraci baṛa bhaya'u bidhātā. mahimā avadhi rāma pitu mātā. 8.

Regarding (mānī) king Dasrath (of Ayodhya, who was the worldly father of Lord Ram) and his queens¹ as blessed ones and embodiments of all meritorious virtues (for the simple reason that Lord Vishnu, the Lord God, had chosen to manifest himself in their household as Lord Ram), (6) ---

--- I bow my head before them and pay my respects in all possible ways, by my deeds, thoughts and words (karama mana bānī)—i.e. I am sincere in offering my obeisance to them all. Please be gracious upon me and bless me as if I were your child². (7)

Verily indeed, even the creator Biranchi (Brahma) felt honoured by creating them (or occasioning their birth) for they would eventually become parents of Lord Ram³. (8)

[Note—¹Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya, had three chief queens, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Kaushalya became the mother of Lord Ram, Sumitra of Laxman, and Kaikeyi of Bharat and Shatrughan. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 188 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that

precede Doha no. 190; (iii) Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

In one of his previous lives, Dasrath was known as Kashyap, and his chief queen Kaushalya was Aditi, the parents of the Gods, and Lord Vishnu had become their sons in order to fulfill their wishes—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 187.

In another life, so goes the story, Dasrath was known as Swayambhu Manu, and Kaushalya was his wife Satrupa, the first human parents from whom the rest of the creatures took birth. They had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to please Lord Vishnu, and when the Lord appeared before them and requested them to seek what they wished, the couple expressed their desire to have the Lord as their son, at which Lord Vishnu blessed them that it would be so in due course of time. Their story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 152.

The good luck and great fortune of Dasrath and his queens have been lauded by sage Vasistha too in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 294. Sage Vasistha was the royal priest of Ayodhya and believed to be the son of the creator Brahma—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.

²This is why Tulsidas holds Dasrath and his queens in great reverence so much so that he treats them as his own parents too like they were parents of Lord Ram, the beloved Lord of Tulsidas whose holy story he is about to narrate. Thus, Tulsidas requests king Dasrath and his queens to bless him and treat him as their son, which means they should shower their blessing upon him like a parent would naturally do upon his or her child, especially when Tulsidas is about to write about their other son Lord Ram whom they loved so dearly much.

It is a remarkable and a wonderful thing for Tulsidas to do, to call himself as a son of Dasrath and his queens, for now he has virtually established a close kinship with Lord Ram himself, because they were the parents of Lord Ram too!

Further, this also ensures that Lord Ram will take a personal interest in Tulsidas' narrative as now he belongs to his own family, which is verily very true for Lord Ram loves all his devotees as belonging to an extended family of which the Lord himself is the head.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 188—to Doha no. 191.]

सो०. बंदउँ अवध भुआल सत्य प्रेम जेहि राम पद ।

बिछुरत दीनदयाल प्रिय तनु तृन इव परिहरेउ ॥ १६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

banda'um' avadha bhu'āla satya prēma jēhi rāma pada.

bichurata dīnadayāla priya tanu tṛna iva pariharē'u. 16.

I bow my head reverentially before the king of Ayodhya (i.e. king Dasrath) who had immense and abiding affection for Lord Ram and worshipped the Lord's feet so much that when he was forced to be separated from the Lord, who is eternally merciful towards the lowly and the humble, he (Dasrath) could not bear the grief of this separation from his beloved Lord, and as a consequence he discarded his mortal body like it was a worthless piece of grass. (Sortha no. 16)

[Note—Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156 where the last moments of Dasrath are described in a very poignant manner.

Later on, sage Vasistha had lavishly praised Dasrath in a meeting held after his cremation: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174.

In his previous life when Dasrath was known as Manu, he had done severe Tapa (rigorous penance and austerity) along with his wife Satrupa, and when Lord Vishnu blessed them that he would come to their household as their son in order to fulfill their wishes, Manu had asked the Lord that let it be so that his love for the Lord should never diminish even when he would become his son, because Manu feared that delusions would cast their long shadow on his wisdom and intellect so much so that there were fair chances he would forget that his son Ram was not a human child but the Supreme Being who has revealed himself in that form just in order to honour his wishes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 149—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 151.

It is this reason why Dasrath died in grief on being separated from Lord Ram—as this was what he had wanted at the time he expressed his wishes before Lord Vishnu.

At the time of his death, Dasrath kept on repeating the holy name of Lord Ram, i.e. 'Raam-Raam', and this ensured his exalted place in heaven, for it is said that great sages and hermits spend their entire life doing penances and austerities but rarely Lord Ram is remembered by them at the time of death. In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 31 where we shall read in due course that the vulture Jatau has made this famous assertion.

We also read in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 10 that “sages and hermits spend their lifetime in making all sorts of efforts to attain spiritual bliss and feel blessed by having a last glimpse of Lord Ram before dying, but the Lord rarely comes to them”. This affirmation of faith was made by Baali, the king of Kishkindha at the time of his death. And truly he was blessed by Lord Ram himself who sent him to his own abode in the heaven—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 10 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Even the demons who died uttering the holy name of Lord Ram became eligible for praise—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45; and (ii) Doha no. 76.]

चौ०. प्रनवउँ परिजन सहित बिदेहू । जाहि राम पद गूढ़ सनेहू ॥ १ ॥

जोग भोग महँ राखेउ गोई । राम बिलोकत प्रगटेउ सोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pranava'um̐ parijana sahita bidēhū. jāhi rāma pada gūrha sanēhū. 1.
jōga bhōga maham̐ rākhē'u gōī. rāma bilōkata pragaṭē'u sōī. 2.

[After honouring the parents of Lord Ram, Tulsidas now pays his respects to Janak, the father-in-law of the Lord, and the father of Sita, the Lord's consort. It ought to be understood that both the kings, Dasrath and Janak, were equally fortunate and blessed, as the former was the worldly father of Lord Ram while the latter was the Lord's father-in-law. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 310; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 320.]

I bow my head to king Janak¹ along with all his family members, his close kith and kin as well as his associates², as he had deep affection and reverence for the holy feet of Lord Ram. (1)

He was acclaimed for his great attainments in the field of Yoga (meditation) while enjoying the pleasures and comforts of this world, known as Bhoga (jōga bhōga). While doing so, he had successfully kept his affection and devotion for the Supreme Being a closely guarded secret, but this came out in the open when he saw Lord Ram, for then he became so extremely overwhelmed with emotions that he couldn't contain his secret love for the Lord any longer³. (2)

[Note—¹King Janak was renowned for his renunciation, dispassion and enlightenment; he was a self-realised soul and an ardent practitioner of Yoga. Yet he lived life like a king lives, taking care of his kingdom and living amidst material comforts that naturally came to him by the virtue of his being a king of a great kingdom known as Janakpur. But inspite of being surrounded by worldly pleasures and material comforts, Janak maintained a safe distance from them at the subtle level of his Atma, his inner-self. This stellar quality in him, and the high sense of spiritual wisdom and erudition that he naturally had gave him the honour of being called 'Videha', i.e. a person who is so highly self-realised and enlightened that he remains immersed in the thoughts of the 'Self', which is pure Consciousness and separate from the gross body and the equally gross world, thereby making him oblivious of the external gross material world, which, for all practical purposes, he is deemed to have no awareness of, and this includes his own physical body. So therefore, such persons live in a state of perpetual 'Samadhi', a state of transcendental state of existence of consciousness which is trance-like. Such persons go about the affairs of life like ordinary people, but internally, at the subtle level of their consciousness know as the Atma, they are aloof from everything happening around them in the gross physical world, for they keep their mind and heart completely un-involved in and detached from what their body does; how this body acts and establishes its numerous contacts and relations with things of the world are none of their concern.

He was steeped in the knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic pure Consciousness, and deep knowledge in the field of spiritualism, metaphysics and theology. He used to organize huge congregation of the greatest sages and wise men of his time where debates on profound principles of metaphysics were held and winners rewarded. One such occasion forms the major part of Brihadaranyka Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, where the debate is elaborately described in its Canto 3 with its 9 Brahmans. At the conclusion of this grand debate sage Yagyawalkya was declared the winner, and then we read in the next Canto 4 that Janak accepted the sage's

discipleship after engaging him in a personal session of questions and answers on metaphysical questions.

To wit, Janak was no ordinary king, but an enlightened and self-realised soul who was a 'king' for the outside world, but an 'ascetic par excellence' when one became aware of his reality and true identity.

²The queen of Janak was Sunayana*. He had two daughters, Sita and Urmila. He had a younger brother named Kushdwaj or Kushketu, who also had two daughters, Mandavi and Srutkirti#. His Guru was Satanand\$.

{*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 324.

#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 325.

\$Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 263.}

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217.

It so happened, as we shall read by and by, that Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman were taken by sage Vishwamitra to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony which Janak was organizing to select a groom for his daughter Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210.}

When king Janak came to know that the exalted sage has come a-visiting his kingdom, he went to meet and welcome the sage, and at that time he saw Lord Ram. The first sight of the Lord swept Janak off his feet, and for some moments the king virtually lost his bearings, for he forgot who he was, and that he ought to maintain neutrality when meeting a prince completely unknown to him. To wit, such was the dynamic magnetic charm of Lord Ram that he pulled the Atma, the true inner-self of king Janak towards himself just as a strong magnet would naturally do to iron. During this brief interaction, Janak has himself declared that though he had always practiced renunciation, dispassion and detachment, yet for once he finds himself at a loss for he does not understand why he is so attracted by Lord Ram, for surely there must be something deeper and more sublime in this affection that had so suddenly sprouted for the Lord in his heart than what meets the eye.]

प्रनवउँ प्रथम भरत के चरना । जासु नेम ब्रत जाइ न बरना ॥ ३ ॥

राम चरन पंकज मन जासू । लुबुध मधुप इव तजइ न पासू ॥ ४ ॥

pranava'um^o prathama bharata kē caranā. jāsu nēma brata jā'i na baranā. 3.
rāma carana pañkaja mana jāsū. lubudha madhupa iva taja'i na pāsū. 4.

[Next in line of receiving Tulsidas' respect are the three brothers of Lord Ram, i.e. Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan.]

I bow at the feet of Bharat first¹ (before other brothers of Lord Ram), whose adherence to the vows of good conduct and righteousness are matchless and beyond description. (3)

His Mana (mind and heart) has so intense affection for the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram that it never desires to move away from them and wishes to always remain immersed in the thought of worshipping them² just like the case of the bee that hovers over the lotus flower and thinks of nothing else but the nectar that it contains. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to another of Tulsidas' classical books called 'Vinai Patrika' where a prayer is dedicated to honour Bharat; refer its verse no. 39.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 197 where it is said that Bharat was so named because he was responsible for taking care of the daily needs of the world with respect to provision of supplies that are necessary for its sustenance and existential requirements.

²Bharat was an epitome of the virtue of Bhakti (devotion and dedication) for Lord Ram; he showed by his actions and deeds how a true devotee should put his love and dedication for Lord Ram above all other things in his life, even if this causes him great suffering, he would cheerfully bear it with a smile. The second half of Canto 2 of this book, known as 'Ayodhya Kand', is dedicated to this theme.

However, some of the verses of Ram Charit Manas that we can cite here are the following:

(a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 178—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185: where Bharat has expressly refused to accept the crown of Ayodhya, saying that it rightly belongs to Lord Ram, and he is merely an obedient servant of the Lord whose only good lies in serving his Lord and not in unjustly usurping what belongs to Lord Ram. This assertion of Bharat immediately endeared him to the masses who lavishly praised him for his love and devotion for Lord Ram as well as for his sense of propriety, probity, morality and good conduct.

(b) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it: where Bharat has been praised by the presiding deity of Prayag, the holy site of the confluence of three holy rivers Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati.

(c) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 210: where sage Bharadwaj has lavished liberal praises for Bharat.

(d) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233: where Bharat's immaculate character and his undiluted devotion for Lord Ram has been extolled by the gods as well as by Lord Ram himself.

(e) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289: where king Janak has lauded Bharat and his exemplarily good virtues.

(f) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 295: where goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of wisdom and knowledge, has herself praised Bharat and refused to delude his mind when the gods wanted her to intervene and somehow make Bharat relent from his determination to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya from the forest.

(g) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it: where Lord Ram has expressed his deep respect for Bharat's purity of character.

(h) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304: where there was general approbation

for Bharat and immense appreciation for his noble conduct by one and all who were present in the meeting held in the forest to discuss Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya.

(i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324—to Sortha no. 326: where the immensity of Bharat's devotion for Lord Ram and the matchlessness of his glories have been sung in flourishing language.

(j) And finally, in Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 we read that Lord Ram has acknowledged the suffering Bharat was undergoing as a result of his separation from his beloved Lord, for the Lord says that when he remembers Bharat even a moment seems like an age for him, and therefore he should now hasten back to Ayodhya so as to reach it within the stipulated time by which he was supposed to return, for if a day passed more than that, then Bharat would surely die in grief.]

बंदुँ लछिमन पद जलजाता । सीतल सुभग भगत सुख दाता ॥ ५ ॥
 रघुपति कीरति बिमल पताका । दंड समान भयउ जस जाका ॥ ६ ॥
 सेष सहस्रसीस जग कारन । जो अवतरेउ भूमि भय टारन ॥ ७ ॥
 सदा सो सानुकूल रह मो पर । कृपासिंधु सौमित्रि गुनाकर ॥ ८ ॥

banda'um^१ lachimana pada jalajātā. sītala subhaga bhagata sukha dātā. 5.
 raghupati kīrati bimala patākā. daṇḍa samāna bhaya'u jasa jākā. 6.
 sēṣa sahasrasīsa jaga kārana. jō avatarē'u bhūmi bhaya ṭārana. 7.
 sadā sō sānukūla raha mō para. kṛpāsindhu saumitri gunākara. 8.

I offer my obeisance at the lotus-like feet (pada jalajātā) of Laxman who has a calm temperament, is charming to behold, and gives joy to devotees¹. (5)

Verily indeed and in all sooth, his (Laxman's) fame (and support) acted as a sturdy staff (or a shaft) that holds aloft high the flag of Lord Ram's glories². (6)

He (Laxman) is none else but Lord Sheshnath, the thousand-hooded celestial Serpent who holds the world aloft on his hoods (and prevents it from sinking into the bottomless abyss of the cosmos)³. The Lord had manifested in this world in order to remove the fears that Mother Earth was subjected to due to the tyranny unleashed by the demon⁴. (7)

I (Tulsidas) earnestly pray that Laxman—who is the son of Sumitra, an embodiment of all excellent virtues and goodness, and an ocean of mercy and kindness—be always favourable and munificent towards me; let Laxman be always pleased with me and be benevolent upon me. (8)

[Note—¹Laxman was the son of queen Sumitra. At the time of his naming ceremony, sage Vasistha had named him 'Laxman' as he would be a treasury of all good virtues, greatly loved by Lord Ram, and one who is a support of the world in his primary form as Lord Sheshnath, the thousand-hooded celestial serpent who is said to hold this world on his hoods as stated in verse no. 7 herein below.

Laxman's love, affection and devotion for Lord Ram were no less than that of Bharat. For instance, when Lord Ram was about to go to the forest, Laxman sacrificed everything to accompany him: this episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas,

Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76.

He became extremely agitated whenever he observed that Lord Ram is worried, as is proved on one occasion when news arrived in the forest that Bharat was coming with a large army to meet the Lord. Laxman apprehended that Bharat had some ill intentions when he saw Lord Ram become pensive on hearing the news of Bharat's arrival. Laxman became ready to confront Bharat and defeat the whole army, though it turned out that Lord Ram was worried due to another reason, which was how would he muster courage to refuse Bharat's request to return home, given the fact that Bharat loved him so much that his request just can't be turned down out of hand. When, however, Lord Ram explained things to Laxman and praised Bharat, Laxman relented. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 226—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram's love for Laxman was deep and unbound. During the war at Lanka when Laxman was gravely wounded by Meghanad's arrow and fell unconscious, Lord Ram had wailed and lamented for him most sorrowfully: refer—am Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Sortha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-18 that precede it.

On the one hand Lord Ram loved Laxman and Sita and protected them both just like the eyes are protected by their lids, while on the other hand Laxman served Lord Ram and Sita as diligently and whole-heartedly as a passionate person serves his body and gratifies its desires—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 142.

Laxman was very lovely to behold by his physical appearance just as Lord Ram was—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 221; (ii) Doha no. 228 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it and Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it.

When it is said “he gives joy to devotees” it means to his devotees as well as those who are devoted to Lord Ram.

²Here, Laxman's glories are likened to the staff or the pole that holds a flag high, while Lord Ram's glories to the flag itself. This is because Laxman has always stood by Lord Ram and supported him in all his endeavours. Just like a flag needs a sturdy shaft to remain high, Lord Ram invariably needed Laxman's support. Laxman indeed stood the Lord in good stead, during the testing time the Lord lived in the wilderness of the forest, during his many battles with the demons, and later on during the full fledged great war in Lanka.

When Sita was abducted by Ravana and Lord Ram was full of distress and on a verge of emotional breakdown, it was Laxman who gave him moral support and encouragement, motivating the Lord not to give up but to make efforts to find her—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 30. Had it not been for Laxman's support in such distressing times, Lord Ram would probably have sunk in a deep pit of grief for his lost wife from where he would have found it hard to climb back.

We also read that during the Lord's forest journey, Laxman had kept guard when Lord Ram and Sita slept during the night—and remember, it was not for one or two days or weeks, but for fourteen long years that Laxman never slept to protect Lord Ram. In this connection, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 89 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

When Lord Ram went to lie down to rest, Laxman would softly massage the feet of the Lord to give his tired legs comfort: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 226; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 89.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 197; (b) Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 54 and 82; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 77.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 187 where Lord Vishnu assures the gods and mother earth that he would manifest himself on earth as Lord Ram to remove the cause of their miseries and torments by eliminating the demons who had been tyrannizing them. For this purpose, the Lord said he will be accompanied by all his associates to help him. To wit, Seshnath is Lord Vishnu's companion in the sense that both take care of the world, Seshnath by supporting it from below and Vishnu by protecting it from all other sides.]

रिपुसूदन पद कमल नमामी । सूर सुसील भरत अनुगामी ॥ ९ ॥

महाबीर बिनवउँ हनुमाना । राम जासु जस आप बखाना ॥ १० ॥

ripusūdana pada kamala namāmī. sūra susīla bharata anugāmī. 9.
mahābīra binava'um' hanumānā. rāma jāsu jasa āpa bakhānā. 10.

I bow my head (namāmī) at the lotus-like feet (pada kamala) of 'Ripusuduan'¹, i.e. Shatrughan (the youngest brother of Lord Ram) who is very brave and valorous, extremely courteous and amiable by his nature, and a follower and constant companion of Bharat (his elder brother)². (9)

Next, I pray to Hanuman who is most valiant, strong, powerful and brave, and whose glories and virtues even Lord Ram has extolled in lavish terms³. (10)

[Note—¹The word 'Ripusudan' means one who vanquishes his enemies. To wit, Shatrughan, his other name, also implies the same thing: one who crushes his enemies and proves most formidable for them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 197.

²Shatrughan was the younger brother of Bharat. He always remained by Bharat's side, and during the long fourteen years of Lord Ram's forest sojourn when Bharat had led a life of a recluse and did not participate actively in the affairs of the kingdom, it was Shatrughan who stepped in and took control of the administrative affairs of Ayodhya—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precedes Doha no. 323.

No enemy dared to attack the kingdom by taking advantage of the absence of Lord Ram and Bharat's refusal to take the crown, which left the throne vacant and created a power vacuum, because it was Shatrughan's formidable reputation as the vanquisher and crusher of all enemies that kept all evil eyes, that might have been preying and prying upon the wealthy kingdom of Ayodhya, at bay.

Shatrughan always followed Bharat as a true friend and companion; wherever Bharat went Shatrughan followed him like a shadow: apropos—Ram Charit Manas,

Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 187, 268; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 318.

It ought to be noted that all the brothers of Lord Ram has been praised by Tulsidas equally. The reason is that all the four brothers were born at the same time, their childhood days, education, growth into manhood, and their marriage—all were together, and they always stood side-by-side on all occasions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 10.

³Lord Ram had affectionately embraced Hanuman and had told him on two occasions that he would ever remain indebted to him for the selfless service that he had rendered to the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 32—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33 when Hanuman returned from Lanka after his successful mission to locate Sita; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 62 when he had brought the medicinal herb that saved the life of Laxman in the battle-field of Lanka.

Indeed, there is no one more fortunate than Hanuman whose devotion for Lord Ram and submission at the Lord's holy feet were profound, complete and exemplary so much so that even the Lord himself had praised him repeatedly for these virtues: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 50.

Angad had also praised Hanuman for his great fortune that he was able to selflessly serve Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 19.

Sita, the consort of Lord Ram, had affectionately addressed Hanuman as her dear son while he has called her his mother: for instance, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 14, amongst many other such verses.

Similarly, Lord Ram has too addressed Hanuman very affectionately by calling the latter his son: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 32.

In Tulsidas' classic known as 'Kavitawali Ramayan', Lord Ram had told Laxman to behold the spectacle unfolding on the battle-field of Lanka where a ferocious war was underway, where one could see Hanuman single-handedly leading the assault and trouncing the powerful demon army: apropos—Kavitawali, Lanka Kand, verse no. 40.

Hanuman's glories are praised in Tulsidas' book of prayers called 'Vinai Patrika', verse nos. 25-36.

Hanuman was Lord Ram's favourite messenger. The Lord had deputed him on many occasions to carry his message, such as when Hanuman was given the ring to be carried to Sita with Lord Ram's message#1, when he was sent to bring the herb to revive Laxman in the battle-field#2, when he was sent by the Lord to inform Sita that he has won the war and Ravaan was killed#3, when he was deputed to Ayodhya to inform Bharat about the Lord's safe return from the forest#4.

{#1Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 23.

#2Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 55 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

#3Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 107.

#4Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 121.}

In Ram Charit Manas, Hanuman's courage, dare-devilry, valiance, strength and bravery have been repeatedly emphasized while narrating the many episodes of the war, for whenever someone was needed in times of crisis it was invariably Hanuman who was remembered, from the first wave of assault on Lanka till the end of the war. For instance, refer to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 43 during the first wave of attack on the fort of Lanka; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 84 where even the mighty Ravana, the demon king, had praised the strength of arms and valour of Hanuman.

Hanuman had a colossus frame, like a huge mountain: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 30.

When he roared, the females of the demon race were so terrified that they aborted: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

सो०. प्रनवउँ पवनकुमार खल बन पावक ग्यानघन ।

जासु हृदय आगार बसहिं राम सर चाप धर ॥ १७ ॥

sōraṭhā.

pranava'um̃ pavanakumāra khala bana pāvaka gyānaghana.
jāsu hr̥daya āgāra basahir̃ rāma sara cāpa dhara. 17.

I bow my head reverentially before the son of the wind god, i.e. Hanuman, who was like a fierce fire for the forest symbolized by evil forces and wicked creatures¹, who was extremely wise, prudent and intelligent², and in whose heart-like home dwells Lord Ram holding a bow and arrow in his hands³. (Doha no. 17)

[Note—¹Just as a fire can easily destroy a forest, Hanuman can also as easily overcome and eliminate all creatures who are wild, sinful, evil and wicked.

²Hanuman is exceptionally wise, prudent and intelligent, and he ranks first amongst enlightened souls. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Sholka line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 1 in the very beginning of this Canto.

He was blessed by Sita to possess excellent virtues—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 17.

Hanuman's glories are lauded in Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 25-36.

³Hanuman had enshrined the image of Lord Ram in his heart; the Lord is depicted as holding a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other. These arms have a symbolic meaning, for they imply that the Lord is ready to protect his devotee at all times.]

चौ०. कपिपति रीछ निसाचर राजा । अंगदादि जे कीस समाजा ॥ १ ॥

बंदउँ सब के चरन सुहाए । अधम सरीर राम जिन्ह पाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kapipati rīcha nisācara rājā. aṅgadādi jē kīsa samājā. 1.
banda'um̃ saba kē carana suhā'ē. adhama sarīra rāma jinha pā'ē. 2.

[Now, Tulsidas pays his homage to those who had served Lord Ram though they were most humble creatures. Why he does so is also explained by him in verse nos. 2-4.]

The Lord of the Kapis and the Bears (i.e. of the monkey and bear races, referring to Sugriv and Jamvant respectively), as well as the King of the demon race (here referring to both Ravana*, the king of the demon race, and his younger brother Vibhishan, who succeeded Ravana upon the throne of Lanka), along with Angad (the prince of the Kapis) and all the rest of members of the monkey and bear races¹, (1) ---

--- I bow at the feet of them all as they were indeed worthy of immense respect by the virtue of the fact that inspite of having a lowly body they still had attained nearness with Lord Ram (by being able to serve the Lord personally from close quarters, and for this service the Lord had called them his friends, which is an exceptionally rare honour bestowed on them, for even great sages and ascetics who spend their lifetimes doing various religious practices fail to attain this exalted stature)². (2)

[Note—¹All of them, including the ones specifically named here, such as Sugriv, Jamvant, Angad, Vibhishan etc., had served Lord Ram during the Lord's difficult days after his wife Sita was abducted by Ravana. The Lord had publicly acknowledged their service by calling all of them his dear friends—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5-8 that precede Doha no. 8.

Refer also to Tulsidas' Book of Prayers, called Vinai Patrika, verse no. 166 (9).

²It must be remembered that Lord Ram was least concerned with the sort of physical body the creature had, for the Lord looked deeper into their heart and perceived what they thought and felt at the subtle level of their inner-self. The Lord, being the Supreme Being, knew that the gross outer body is not the true 'self' or 'identity' of the living being, but that it was his Atma, the soul, which was pure consciousness and the creature's truthful self and identity.

The Lord has unequivocally declared that the only relation he accepts is that of devotion for him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35; (ii) Doha no. 36 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede it; and (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 86; and (v) Doha no. 87.

So therefore, let alone the monkeys, bears or demons, the Lord had shown his affection, grace and benediction upon everyone who came in touch with him. This fact is affirmed in the next verse nos. 4-5.

*Ravana, the king of the demon race and the elder brother of Vibhishan, is also included in the list of worthy souls who deserve respect in the sense outlined in the above discussion, for it cannot be denied that he too was accepted by Lord Ram when he died, because at the time of Ravana's death his soul had exited his demon-body in the form of a dazzling shaft of light and went directly to enter the body of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103. Had Ravana's 'true self', i.e. his Atma, his soul, been impure there was no question for Lord Ram accepting it and giving it final rest within his own holy body, for it must be remembered that Lord Ram was a personified form of

Supreme Being known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma representing pure cosmic Consciousness. Hence, this merger of Ravana's Atma with the supreme cosmic Atma represented by Lord Ram obviously meant Ravana's 'Moksha', which is the final deliverance of the creature's soul when it attains emancipation and salvation by dissolving its independent identity by merging with the cosmic Soul known as pure Consciousness to become one with it.

Although Ravana has been reviled and despised as a villain throughout history for being a wicked demon who was extremely pervert and sinful, yet it cannot be denied that he was an enlightened soul who had become a demon by his body not due to his own fault but because in his previous life when he was a great king named Pratapbhaanu, he had fell in a trap laid by a king who was his enemy, who maneuvered things in such a cunning way that the unsuspecting Pratapbhaanu was cursed to become a demon by Brahmins. This entire story we shall be reading by-and-by in our book Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 152—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 176.

The point to note here is this that inspite of his misfortune, Ravana was nevertheless an enlightened soul and a great devotee of Lord Shiva, and that he had willingly created animosity with Lord Ram with the express intention of making sure that his soul, that was trapped in the evil body of a demon, could find its final freedom and deliverance: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23.

Lord Ram had established an abiding friendship with Sugriv, the prince and later on the king of the monkey race, although he was not some great sage or enlightened soul but an ordinary creature born in the monkey race—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 4 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

Sugriv remained a close confidante of Lord Ram and one of his chief advisors from the very beginning of the search for Sita as well as during the war of Lanka: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 21; (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50; and (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 39.

Angad was Sugriv's nephew and one who had faithfully served Lord Ram, because his father, Baali, had entrusted Angad's future in the safe hands of Lord Ram at the time of his death: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Angad had become very close to Lord Ram who took care of his safety and well-being, which even Angad had acknowledged: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 26.

Lord Ram had shown his immense trust in Angad when the latter was sent as an emissary to the court of Lanka to negotiate with Ravana and see if the ruinous war of Lanka could be avoided: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Sortha no. 17 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

Angad had so much faith in Lord Ram that he had staked Sita and the future of everything else by planting his legs in the court of Ravana and pledging that if anyone could move his legs then Lord Ram would deem to have lost Sita and return back: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 34.

Finally, when the Lord bid farewell to all his friends who had come with him from Lanka to attend his coronation ceremony in Ayodhya, he was particularly moved

by Angad's devotion for him: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 19.

Jamvant, meanwhile, was a the king of the bear race, and being the most senior member in the court of Kishkindha, he served as Lord Ram's senior advisor during the war of Lanka; he had also participated actively in the battles during the war: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 39 (a senior member of Lord Ram's war council); (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55 (advise given to Lord Ram at the time of Laxman's injury during the war of Lanka); (iii) Doha no. 65 (confrontation with Kumbhakaran); (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-9 that precede Doha no. 74 (confrontation with Meghanad); and (vi) Chaupai line nos. 11-15 that precede Doha no. 98 (confrontation with Ravana).

Vibhishan too was a great devotee of Lord Ram from the very beginning, and later on he became a close friend and advisor of the Lord: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 177 (Vibhishan seeks devotion for Lord God when the creator Brahma came to grant him his wishes); (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8 (Hanuman's meeting with Vibhishan in Lanka); (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50 (Vibhishan comes to submit himself before Lord Ram and is accepted by the Lord as his friend); (c) Lanka Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106 (Vibhishan made the new king of Lanka by Lord Ram); (v) Line no. 1 of Doha no. 116-a (Lord Ram addresses Vibhishan as his 'son'), and (iv) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 117 (where, among other places, Lord Ram calls Vibhishan as his 'friend').

Lord Ram has expressly stated that whether a person is a male or a female or even a eunuch is of no matter for him, but if anyone worships him then that person is very dear to him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87. And—serving the Lord in any way is indeed a form of worship offered to him. So therefore, these Kapis and Bears as well as Vibhishan, the king of the demon race who succeeded his brother Ravana to the throne of Lanka, were worshipping Lord Ram when they served him at a time when the Lord was alone and needed help in finding Sita and rescuing her from the clutches of her abductor, the demon king Ravana.]

रघुपति चरन उपासक जेते । खग मृग सुर नर असुर समेते ॥ ३ ॥

बंदउँ पद सरोज सब केरे । जे बिनु काम राम के चरे ॥ ४ ॥

raghupati carana upāsaka jētē. khaga mṛga sura nara asura samētē. 3.
banda'um^ॐ pada sarōja saba kērē. jē binu kāma rāma kē cērē. 4.

In addition to the exalted souls mentioned herein above, all others who worship the holy feet of Lord Ram (Raghupati), including the birds, animals, gods, human beings, demons et al.¹, (3) ---

--- I (Tulsidas) pay my deep respects and give obeisance to all of them by bowing my head at the feet of all those who are devoted to Lord Ram and selflessly serve the Lord². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the only criterion for a creature to deserve any respect, according to Tulsidas, is the virtue of devotion and service to Lord Ram that the creature practices in his or her life. Even Lord Ram endorses this principle—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87.

The whole world, both the animate world consisting of the animal kingdom and the plant kingdom, from the most exalted of sages to the most humble of creatures, from citizens of Ayodhya to the strangers traveling on the road, the birds of the sky to the water-dwelling creatures[#], as well as the inanimate world consisting of the gross elements such as the earth, the rivers and streams, the mountains and hills, the trees and shrubs and plants of all denominations, the meadows and valleys[§]—to wit, all felt most fortunate, blessed and fulfilled by their contact with Lord Ram and the opportunity to have a divine sight of the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) [§]Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 139; (b) [#]Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 4 (where we read that countless marine creatures came to the surface to have a sight of Lord Ram and his army as they crossed the mighty bridge across the ocean to Lanka).

Refer also to Tulsidas' Book of Prayers, called Vinai Patrika, verse no. 166 (10).

²To wit, Lord Ram has expressly stated that whether a person is a male or a female or even a eunuch is of no matter for him, but if anyone worships him then that person is very dear to him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 87.

Lord Ram considers only one criterion to judge a creature, to see if that individual is eligible to receive the Lord's grace, benevolence and favour—and this criterion is 'devotion'. There are ample instances of verses that reiterate this principle; some of the examples are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 78; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 85; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 86; (iv) Doha no. 87 along with Chaupai line no. 7-8 that precede it.

The fact that even those with a lowly birth had been fortunate to be accepted by Lord Ram has many instances in the story of the Ramayana. Some specific references are the following:

The Lord had embraced and established friendship with Nishad and Kewat, both belonging to low castes of the boatmen tribe and those who had fishing as their main occupation—Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 88; (ii) Doha no. 102 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 20.

Lord Ram had shown his affection to the forest-dwelling tribes known as Kol and Kiraat: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 135—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 137.

Lord Ram's grace and benevolence were showered even on a flesh-eating vulture whose name was called Jatau so much so that the Lord not only granted his soul emancipation and salvation but also performed last rites as he would have done for his own worldly father Dasrath—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32.

Another example made famous by the Ram Charit Manas is that of the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund who was also blessed by Lord Ram: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85.

We also have the example of the out-caste woman named Sabari whose fruit offerings were accepted by Lord Ram who enjoyed eating this refreshment to oblige her, and then the Lord also performed her last rites as if she was his mother: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 34; (ii) Doha no. 36 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.

The saintly crow Kaagbhusund has affirmed that the best way a creature can put his gross body to some positive use in this life, that would be helpful for the good of his soul, is to motivate it to have devotion for Lord Ram, who was the Supreme Being himself personified, for otherwise if a creature allows his body to remain engrossed in the affairs of this mundane, perishable world of material objects, seeking sense gratifications and yearning for worldly objects, then that life and body will be deemed to have been wasted, and no worthwhile gain made whatsoever: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 95—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 96; and (ii) Doha no. 114-a.]

सुक सनकादि भगत मुनि नारद । जे मुनिबर बिग्यान बिसारद ॥ ५ ॥
 प्रनवउँ सबहि धरनि धरि सीसा । करहु कृपा जन जानि मुनीसा ॥ ६ ॥

suka sanakādi bhagata muni nārada. jē munibara bigyāna bisārada. 5.
 pranava'um̐ sabahi dharani dhari sīsā. karahu kṛpā jana jāni munīsā. 6.

Sages Suka¹, Sankaadi², Narad³ and other such great devotees of the Lord, who were highly wise and enlightened and experts in the principles of metaphysics and spiritualism⁴, (5) –

--- Verily, I bow before them all by putting my head on the ground at their feet, with a prayer that they should treat me as their humble servant and grant me their blessing and patronage (so that I can succeed in my noble and holy efforts to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram without facing any hurdles). (6)

[Note—¹Sage Suka had a body of a parrot; he was the son of the legendary seer and sage Veda Vyas who had classified the Vedas and the Upanishads, as well as written the Purans.

Sage Suka, also known as 'Shukdeo', was highly respected and was born of the celestial maiden named Ghrataachi when she had taken the form of a parrot, called Shuka in Sanskrit, to produce Shukdeo. He had his education under the expert guidance of his father Veda Vyas (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-20, and the entire Rudra Hridaya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition). He was fortunate enough to have as his wise Guru (moral preceptor and teacher) the legendary king Janak, the father of Sita of the Ramayan fame and the most self-realised and enlightened king of his time (refer Maho-panishad of Sam Veda, Canto 2, verse nos. 28-77) and Lord Shiva himself (refer Shuk Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda which was preached by Lord Shiva to Shukdeo).

His self-restraint was so profound that the celestial Apsara, the dancing damsel of the court of Indra, the king of Gods, failed to trap him in her honey-trap of lust and passions. Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yuga (the third era of the four-

era celestial cycle of mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug. In an incident narrated in Maho-panishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 21-27 it is described how sage Shukdeo had to wait for twenty-one days before king Janak granted him an audience to test his self control over anger, ego and self-pride of being a son of an enlightened father of the stature of sage Veda Vyas as well as his sincerity and steadfastness of purpose which are important virtues that must be present in a student of spiritualism and important criterion by which his eligibility as a disciple can be judged.

The Tejobindu Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda describes him as a truly Brahm-realised sage along with sage Sankaadi in its Canto 1, verse no. 47.

Shukdeo learnt the epic Bhagvata Mahapurana from his father and then narrated it to Parikshit at the culmination of the Dwapar Yug (the third era of the four-era celestial cycle of Hindu mythology) and the beginning of the present era called Kali Yug (which is the last of the four-Yug cycle).

The Sharva Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sage as Shukdeo had praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if Shukdeo had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

²Sages Sankaadi: Sanatkumar and other celestial sages are collectively called Sankaadi Rishis. Sage Sanatkumar is considered as one of the four Manas Putras or the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. The other three are Sanak, Sanat-sujaat and Sanandan. They are regarded in a perpetual state of boyhood.

Sanatkumar had taught the greatness of Vishnu to demon Vrittaasur, the enemy of Indra, the king of Gods. He also taught spiritual wisdom to sage Narad, the celestial sage.

Sanat-sujaat taught spiritual wisdom to Dhritrashtra who was the blind father of the Kauravas of the epic Mahabharat fame. Sanak is said to an eternal companion of Lord Vishnu. Sanandan is regarded as the ancient preacher of the Sankhya Shastra, even more ancient than Kapil.

Sanatkumar, along with sages Pippalaad and Angira, had approached sage Atharva to ask him about the highest form of meditation, the different aspects of OM and the culmination of spiritual journey by realising Brahm in the form of Shambhu, one of the names of Lord Shiva, in Atharva Veda's Atharva-shikha Upanishad.

It is narrated in the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 7, verse no. 8, that he had gone to Lord Kalagnirudra, one of the forms of Lord Shiva and who had first revealed this Upanishad to one sage Bhusund (Brahmans 1-6) to learn about the metaphysical importance and spiritual value of the Rudraksha beads. [Rudraksha beads are the seeds of the tree *Eleocarpus ganitrus*.]

According to Kalagni Rudra Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, Sanatkumar was taught how to wear the Tripundra, the three lines marked on the forehead of all Hindus, by Lord Kalagnirudra himself.

The Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, in its verse no. 22 stresses the greatness of Lord Shiva known as Maheshwar by saying that even such great sages as Sankadi and Sanatsujat (i.e. sages Sanatkumar and others collectively called the Sankaadi Rishis) had praised and prayed to the Lord, implying that if these great sages had worshipped Shiva then the latter must surely be a great Lord.

³Sage Narad: The celestial sage Narad is said to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being's Mana (mind and its thoughts, intentions, hopes, desires and wishes, as well as

the heart and its emotions and sentiments). The Supreme Being implements his wishes and expresses his intentions and wishes by making Narad his spokesperson. Purans list uncountable instances when Narad has approached people—both the good and righteous as well as the demonic and unrighteous ones—to tell them the path best suited to them, and the wise ones treated this advise as the Lord's wish while the unwise ones still benefited from it because Narad's intention was always to turn a living being away from his sinful ways and lead him towards the good.

Since he is a personified Mana, he is as fickle, unstable and transient as the Mana—never staying at one place for more than a fleeting moment, always roaming here and there in the entire creation, having nothing to stop his path as he could go anywhere he wished. And the remarkable thing is that he was never unwelcome anywhere—even the demons welcomed him with the same respect as did the Gods.

It is believed that he is born in each Kalpa to carry out the wishes of the Supreme Being. [1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion human years.] He was a Gandharva (a semi-God who is a celestial musician) named Upbarhan in the previous Kalpa. He was physically very charming and an expert musician. Once he showed his amorous intentions towards Urvashi, a celestial dancer, in the presence of Brahma the creator where he was supposed to show exemplary restraint, and this overt show of lust resulted in his being cursed by Brahma that he would become fallen and take birth in the mortal world as a Shudra (a low caste). So, he was born from a maid servant of low caste working as a devoted servant of a learned Brahmin. Under the constant companion of this great Brahmin, Narad developed noble and auspicious virtues in him even though he was a mere child of five years. He was very modest, devoted, pious, noble hearted and diligent.

Since he had the Lord's genes in him, his inclinations were more inclined towards the Spirit than the worldly charms of material sense objects which he detested from childhood. As luck would have it, once some wondering mendicants came to spend the four-month period of the rainy season in the hermitage of this Brahmin. Narad served them with great devotion. Impressed by his service and having some inner vision of his high spiritual stature and the spark of divinity that was lying hidden in him waiting for an opportune moment to leap up and shine through, they blessed him, taught him meditation and contemplation, besides initiating the child into the path of the Lord.

Thus, the dormant fire of renunciation and spiritual awareness was immediately ignited in Narad's little heart and he wished to take to Sanyas (a renunciate's life marks by constant wandering as a mendicant in search of the supreme bliss and Truth), but he did not wish to hurt his mother's emotions. But the Lord had other plans for him, and soon his wish was fulfilled when his loving mother died of snake bite while milking a cow. Instead of grieving at such a loss in human terms, the child Narad felt happy as if the last fetter was broken and he was liberated from worldly obligations.

He immediately headed north towards the mighty Himalaya Mountains to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to attain access to the Supreme Being. The little one walked on and on, and finally he was so tired and exhausted that when he saw a cool lake he drank water, ate fruits that he found there, and sat under the shadow of a tree and became lost in meditation. Lord Vishnu revealed himself in his four-arm form in his heart, but Narad was so thrilled and excited with this divine vision that he wished to see the Lord in practical terms with his physical eyes rather than the subtle eyes while he was in deep meditation. But as soon as he opened the eyes, the Lord vanished. Most sorry and overwhelmed with this loss, the child began to cry bitterly.

Then a cosmic formless reverberating voice said—‘Oh son! Your penance is accepted, and I do love you. Though I bless you with an eternal life and that your memory of me would never be erased, but you would not be able to see me with physical eyes in this world. So go back to the world and carry out my divine mandate for me. Become my messenger and go preach the path of my devotion and holy name to this world so that other unfortunate creatures also can get liberation and deliverance from the fetters in which they have bound themselves with no one to show them an easy and practical way out of their predicaments. Go and preach my message to such people in every corner of the earth; go and preach my devotion and let them have faith in my holy name. Your salvation would come naturally and automatically to you as an unasked reward.’

Narad turned back with this divine mandate of the Lord to be carried out just like the great Apostles of Lord Jesus Christ had went, on the Lord’s instructions, to spread his message to the people on this earth. Henceforth, he wandered in the entire creation like a mendicant, with an Indian lute upon which he sang the Lord’s glories and his divine name, spreading the divine message of the Lord’s mercy, compassion, benevolence and love everywhere, attempting to turn everyone towards the Lord and away from this sinful and mortal world so that each individual creature could get his spiritual liberation and deliverance. Such are the ways of great and holy saints that instead of being selfish to seek his own liberation and deliverance from the Lord as the grant of a boon and letting the rest of the world go to hell, Narad chose to sacrifice his own life, liberation and deliverance at the altar of larger good of creation and to fulfill the wish of the Lord. Of course there is another twist to this tale—the Lord does not select everyone to carry on his own divine agenda, and a soul who the Lord designates for this purpose is indeed the most favoured and lucky one—because the Emperor chooses only those upon whom he has utmost confidence to carry out his personal task. It is just like Jesus choosing his disciples and ordaining them the task of spreading his glorious Gospel of love and salvation.

Therefore, Narad, the apostle of the Supreme Being, is the most loved disciple of the Lord, and it is evidenced by the fact that he is the only saint who has unrestricted access to the abode of the Trinity Gods (Lord Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation, Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder of this creation) besides every nook and corner of creation without hindrance and even without seeking any previous permission and appointment from anyone, be it a God or a Demon or anybody else. Narad’s visit was always for the host’s long term good, so he was always welcome and revered.

When the time came and the age of the physical body ended, he left the mortal coil like a serpent leaves its cuticle and went to heaven to sing the Lord’s holy and divine name in the presence of Brahma, the old patriarch of creation. At the end of the Kalpa, at the time of Doomsday, he merged and became one with Brahma, the creator.

When the new cycle of creation came into being, he was born again from the Mana (mind) of Brahma the creator after the Sankadi sages were born. That is why, in the present Kalpa, Narad is called the ‘Manas Putra’ of Brahma, i.e. the son born out of Brahma’s mental powers or his wishes. With this heritage and gene running in his blood, it is natural that he is highly respected and regarded as one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Being personified. It is from the navel of Lord Vishnu that Brahma, the creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine Lotus that emerged from it while he was reclining on the bed made of the coiled body of the legendary serpent named Seshnath who floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar.

Narad preached renunciation of this material world and an extreme sense of faith in and complete devotion for Lord Hari (Narayan, Vishnu, the Supreme Being). But this was against the process of creation, because if everyone followed the path preached by Narad and renounced the material world then the process of propagation of the world and its inhabitant creatures along with its development would come to a naught. So, when Narad preached renunciation and detachment from this material world of sense objects that was mortal, transient and never a giver of peace and happiness to the ten thousand mental sons who were created by Daksha Prajapati (the first male from whom the rest of the human race was born and who was assigned the task by Brahma to propagate creation) in order to propagate this human race, Narad obviously annoyed him. These sons were preached by Narad and they all became mendicants, renouncing their attachment with this life and all charms of the material world along with the desire to enjoy it, gratify their sense organs and remain entangled in affairs of this world. Daksha Prajapati was exasperated and he created another set of ten thousand sons. But when Narad again played spoil-sport, Daksha cursed him that Narad would have to remain on the move always and he would not be able to stay at one place for more than two 'Gharis'. [1 Ghari = 24 minutes. In practice the term means a very short period of time; a fleeting moment as small as batting an eyelid.] As a result of this curse, Narad became an ever-wandering mendicant. But this suited the divine mandate of the Lord—for now Narad was forced to keep on the move and reach newer corners of the worldly and celestial realm to preach the Lord's message amongst the mortal creatures on earth and the Gods and Spirits in the heaven.

It is believed that Narad is immortal and is symbolic of the stupendous powers of a man's mind. The mind is ever-wandering like Narad, and the subtle message in the entire lore is that one should tame this restless mind and train it to turn away from this mortal engrossing material world and instead turn towards the Lord for finding permanent liberation and deliverance from this world. A wise mind would teach (preach) the aspirant about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, and instead seek ways of finding the Truth that gives eternity and brings to an end the endless litany of miseries and horrors, perplexities and confusions, restlessness and agitations that are invariably associated with un-truth, delusions and ignorance.

Narad was the most erudite and scholarly devotee of the Lord. No other sage or saint could match him in his scholarly acumen and profundity of wisdom (ref. Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 1, verse no. 2). Narad is also credited with the composition of the great Sutra (formula or key) called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra' which defines the eclectic principles and characteristics of the spiritual practice called Bhakti which is to have a profound and exemplary degree of devotion for and surrender to the Supreme Being. Narad himself epitomizes Bhakti at its most refined and developed form.

In Atharva Veda's Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, sage Narad has taught an assembly of sages the grand philosophy as well as the eclectic tenets of Sanyas, the life of total renunciation, detachment and dispassion, leading to one's spiritual liberation and deliverance.

The Atharva Veda's Hayagriva Upanishad has been revealed to sage Narad by Brahma the creator when the sage approached the latter with his quest for Brahm-Vidya, the knowledge of Brahm.

In Garud Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, the creator Brahma has taught Narad the esoteric knowledge known as the 'Garud Vidya' which describes the secret Mantras pertaining to Garud, the divine mount of Lord Vishnu, as well as the

Mantras which can help to counter the evil effects of all types of poisons arising from snake bites.

It was sage Narad who had told Valmiki the story of the Lord Ram which the latter penned down in the form of the epic Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

In Tulsidas' epic Ram Charit Manas, Lord Ram had explained to Narad why the Lord had not allowed him to marry in great detail. In essence the Lord told him that once he had taken the vows of renunciation and detachment to lead a life of a wandering hermit or friar, it would have been very wrong to marry. At the same time, the Lord has outlined the characteristic virtues of saints in the same discourse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

Sage Narad was the greatest exponent of the spiritual practice of “Bhakti”, the path of devotion and love that leads to God-realisation. He is famous as the sage who had expounded on the eclectic spiritual philosophy of Bhakti in his book of aphorisms on this theme, called “Narad Bhakti Sutra”. It is believed that the principles of devotion and love for the Lord God that he has enunciated in this book were originally conceived by Lord Shiva, and Narad had been ordained by the Lord to spread this good message far and wide as the sage used to roam around in every corner of this creation.

Narad was a selfless saint, and therefore he was respected by all wherever he went. Even the demons praised him and welcomed him because they knew that he would always give them such advice as would be good for them. Everyone knew that Narad always taught of ways that would provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of all the creatures, and that his company will always do some good for even the greatest of sinners.

⁴The “other enlightened sages” not specifically mentioned here but who had the privilege of meeting Lord Ram himself are the following:

(i) Sage Bharadwaj: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.

(ii) Sage Valmiki: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 132.

(iii) Sage Atri: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 7.

(iv) Sage Sarbhanga: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9.

(v) Sage Sutikshan: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12.

(vi) Sage Agastya or Kumbhaj: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 13.]

जनकसुता जग जननि जानकी । अतिसय प्रिय करुना निधान की ॥ ७ ॥

ताके जुग पद कमल मनावउँ । जासु कृपाँ निरमल मति पावउँ ॥ ८ ॥

janakasutā jaga janani jānakī. atisaya priya karunā nidhāna kī. 7.

tākē juga pada kamala manāva'um̃. jāsu kṛpām̃ niramala mati pāva'um̃. 8.

Sita, also known as Janki as she was the daughter of king Janak, is extremely dear to her husband Lord Ram¹ who is a treasury of mercy, kindness, compassion and grace. (7)

I bow my head with reverence at her two holy lotus-like feet, for it is by her grace that I will be blessed with a refined intellect and purified mind (that would remain calm and undistracted by her blessings, helping me to remain focused on my divine mission of narrating the holy story of Lord Ram, and becoming a practical tool that would enable me to complete my mission successfully)². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 148; (ii) Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 323; (iii) Doha no. 326; (iv) Chanda line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 327.

When Sita was abducted by Ravana, both she and Lord Ram were overcome with excessive grief of separation from each other: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 29 (Sita's lamentations); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-16 that precede Doha no. 30 (Lord Ram's lamentations).

Lord Ram's immensity of affection for Sita is evident in the message he sent to her through Hanuman, which the latter conveyed to her at the time of their meeting in the garden of Lanka where Sita was held captive: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 15.

Meanwhile, Sita's unbound love for Lord Ram is abundantly evident in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 97.

²Sita had blessed Hanuman in a similar way: refer to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 17.]

पुनि मन बचन कर्म रघुनायक । चरन कमल बंदउँ सब लायक ॥ ९ ॥

राजिवनयन धरें धनु सायक । भगत बिपति भंजन सुख दायक ॥ १० ॥

puni mana bacana karma raghunāyaka. carana kamala banda'um̃ saba lāyaka. 9.

rājivanayana dharēṁ dhanu sāyaka. bhagata bipati bhanjana sukha dāyaka. 10.

Once again, I bow my head most reverentially and command all my faculties, such as my mind and its thoughts, my speech and the words I speak or write, as well as the deeds I do, to pay my respects at the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram (who is the Lord of Raghu's line of kings of Ayodhya) who is able in all respects, (9) ---

--- Who has lotus-like eyes, holds a bow and an arrow in his hands, who is the vanquisher of all troubles and miseries of his devotees, and who bestows happiness and joy of all kinds. (10)

[Note—Worshipping of the auspicious and holy feet of Lord Ram grants all wishes and well-being to his devotees. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 146; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 149; (iii) Chanda line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 324; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 139; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line nos. 12-19 that precede Doha no. 122.]

दो०. गिरा अरथ जल बीचि सम कहिअत भिन्न न भिन्न ।
बंदउँ सीता राम पद जिन्हहि परम प्रिय खिन्न ॥ १८ ॥

dōhā.

girā aratha jala bīci sama kahi'ata bhinna na bhinna.
banda'um' sītā rāma pada jinhahi parama priya khinna. 18.

Just like a spoken word and its meaning cannot be delineated from one another though they appear to be independent of each other (because a word may have many meanings, but it should always be understood in the context in which it is used by when one speaks), and the water cannot be separated from the wave formed by it though they are independent entities (because water has many forms, but a wave is invariably water and nothing but water), ---

---Similarly, Lord Ram and Sita appear to be two independent persons, but actually they are the same, being manifestations of the same Divinity that has revealed itself in two separate forms. Hence, I (Tulsidas) offer my worship and obeisance to the holy feet of both Lord Ram and Sita with the considered thought that they are one and the same Divinity. (Doha no. 18)

[Note—While Lord Ram represents Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, Sita represents its Shakti, the cosmic energy and dynamism of Brahm. Brahm uses this Shakti to do what it wishes to do; and Shakti can't do anything without the express orders and support from Brahm. Hence, the two are indispensable to each other; they are inseparable from one another; they form two aspects of the same Divinity.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 97 where Sita has stated that her relationship with Lord Ram is like the moon and its rays; they can't be separated from one another.]

चौ०. बंदउँ नाम राम रघुबर को । हेतु कृसानु भानु हिमकर को ॥ १ ॥
बिधि हरि हरमय बेद प्रान सो । अगुन अनूपम गुन निधान सो ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

banda'um' nāma rāma raghubara kō. hētu kṛsānu bhānu himakara kō. 1.
bidhi hari haramaya bēda prāna sō. aguna anūpama guna nidhāna sō. 2.

I pay my respects to Lord Ram's Holy Name 'RAM' of Lord Raghubar¹. This name has three letters 'Ra+Aa+Ma' (ra+ā+ma). These letters respectively represent the three great Gods, viz. (i) the 1st letter 'Ra' stands for the Fire-God, (ii) the 2nd letter 'A' stands for the Sun God, and (iii) the 3rd letter 'Ma' stands for the Moon God².

[The holy Name of the Lord is pronounced as ‘Rāma’ or ‘Raam’. It consists of three basic sounds: ‘Ra’ as in the English word ‘run’, ‘Aa’ as in the English word ‘father’, and ‘Ma’ as in the English word ‘mum’, ‘rum’.] (1)

The holy Name of Lord Ram represents the three Gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer and protector) and Shiva (the concluder of creation) respectively.

It is the essence of the Vedas (i.e. it is literally the breath or the vital life of the Vedas—“*bēda prāna*”)³. It is without qualifications; it is peerless and an eternal source or fount of all auspiciousness and good virtues⁴. (2)

[Note—¹The word ‘Raghubara’ literally means the ‘Great Lord who is the best in the line of kings descending from the ancient king named Raghu who ruled over the kingdom of Ayodhya in some ancient time’.

From the spiritual perspective this name means ‘the Lord of the creatures’, where the 1st part of the name, i.e. ‘Raghu’ stands for a living being, and the 2nd part, i.e. ‘Bara’ stands for the Lord or a husband.

So this verse essentially means ‘I pray to and offer my respects to the holy Name of Lord Ram who is the Lord of all living beings’.

²The three letters of Lord Ram’s holy Name, viz. ‘Ra+Aa+Ma’ (*rā+ā+ma*), represent the basic cosmic energy incorporated in the ‘fire element’ that is at the base of all life in this creation as represented by the ‘sun’ and the ‘moon’, i.e. the one that shines directly (i.e. the sun), and the one that is made to shine by the first (i.e. the moon). In this metaphor, the ‘fire’ stands for the cosmic Consciousness, the ‘sun’ for the Supreme Being, and the ‘moon’ for the individual Creature as the latter basks in the glory of the former. Refer: Maharamayan, 52/62-64.

To wit, just like the fire is able to burn all impurities and make gold pure, invocation of Lord Ram’s holy Name purifies the creature completely and makes his heart holy and pure. Again, just as the sun provides energy and life to all the creatures on earth and removes all darkness and the fear of ghosts by its mere presence in the sky, the holy Name of Lord Ram removes all darkness of delusions and ignorance that cloud the soul of a creature, thereby freeing him and granting him fearlessness from the horrors of birth and death in this mundane world of transmigration. And finally, just as the moon provides a soothing balm of its rays to the world scorched by the heat of the blazing sun, the Lord’s holy Name gives solace and succour and hope to the tormented soul of all creatures.

The different sounds of the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet stand for one or more Gods of the Hindu pantheon. A letter that relates to a particular God is called that God’s Beej Mantra, or a letter which acts like a secret formula that directly refers to the chosen God and encrypts his cosmic energy and mystical powers. When a worshipper wishes to seek help from a particular God, he would use a Beej Mantra specific to that God. By invoking a Beej Mantra the worshipper virtually invokes a God’s cosmic powers and energy for fulfillment of his desire. Repetition of a Beej Mantra builds up the energy that corresponds to the respective God, and it gathers more and more dynamism as time passes.

If more than one Beej Mantras are used then the worshipper is able to harness the combined energy of all the Gods to whom these Beej Mantras belong. It is like the case of employing more than one source of energy or power when a single source falls short of requirements. It’s like putting more than one electric motor into place to

run a machine when any single motor falls short of the required horse-power that is needed. The combined cosmic energy of all these Beej Mantras and their respective Gods is thus focused on a single mission, and obviously the result would be more profound and the effect more stronger than using a single Beej Mantra—because this method puts the combined cosmic energy of more than one God into fulfillment of one mission.

In the case of Lord Ram, the three letters ‘Ra, Aa and Ma’ of the Lord’s holy Name combine the energy of the Fire God, the Sun God and the Moon God.

Further, it also combines the powers of the three great Gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer and protector, and Shiva the concluder of creation. To wit, the holy Name of Lord Ram symbolizes the entire gamut of creation—its beginning, its development and expansion, and its conclusion. It infuses life (Brahma), it protects and sustains (Vishnu), and it provides liberation from the miseries and torments of life (Shiva).

³Refer: Tulsidas’ book Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 74 which also says the same thing in its line nos. 1-2.

⁴This verse clarifies that the Name which is being glorified is not simply a name of a great king, but it is a holy Name that has been endorsed by the Vedas, the most sacred of religious texts. The three letters of Lord Ram’s holy Name combine and roll into one the cosmic powers and the authority of the three supreme forces of creation, viz. the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu and the concluder Shiva. The holy Name ‘Ram’ represents the entire spectrum of creation—its beginning, its expansion and its conclusion. And therefore it stands for ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness.

The holy Name of Lord Ram is equivalent to the divine Mantra ‘OM’ that is universally regarded as the most sacred of all Mantras and is directly related to the cosmic Consciousness as it is the sound manifestation of the latter and stands for Brahm, the Supreme Being. This fundamental metaphysical fact has been elaborately detailed in Ram Uttar and Purva Tapini Upanishads that belongs to the Atharva Veda tradition. OM and RAM are synonymous with each other. A full English version of this Upanishad has already been published by this author.

Calling Lord Ram’s holy Name as being the ‘essence of the Vedas’ it is meant that just like a body is useless without life in it, the scriptures would lose their greatness and holiness, their importance and value, if Lord Ram’s holy Name is removed from them.

An important question arises here. The Supreme Being or the Lord of the Word has countless names. He is known by different names in different religions and faiths; all these names refer to the same Divinity. Then why is that Lord Ram’s name ‘Ram’ or ‘Rāma’ or ‘Raam’ is regarded as the best and the most holy among them all? It is like a case of it being ‘the first among equals’. It is said in Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, 254/22 that ‘Lord Ram is the one who resides in the heart of all living beings, and his name is the one that directly appeals to the heart which finds joy in remembering it. So therefore, though there are thousands of names of the Supreme Lord, the name ‘Ram’ is the best amongst them all.’

There is another aspect to it. All the Mantras or divine formulas that have been prescribed in the Vedas and other scriptures are specific to particular Gods to whom they belong, and when these Mantras are used for spiritual purposes, only the spiritual

energy of their respective God or deity is invoked. But in the case of Lord Ram when his holy Name is remembered or invoked then the benefits that accrue encompass the entire spectrum of cosmic forces, i.e. the forces of creation, of sustenance and of conclusion. Nothing is left out, and so obviously the powers and authority that this holy Name grants to the person who invokes it are all-encompassing and wholesome in their nature. The benefits of Lord Ram's holy Name are all-round and comprehensive.

Like the pure 'cosmic Consciousness' that is self-illuminated and does not require any other source to provide light to it, the holy Name of Lord Ram is also self-illuminated and self-empowered.]

महामंत्र जोड़ जपत महेसू । कासीं मुक्ति हेतु उपदेसू ॥ ३ ॥

महिमा जासु जान गनराऊ । प्रथम पूजित नाम प्रभाऊ ॥ ४ ॥

mahāmantra jō'i japata mahēsū. kāśim mukuti hētu upadēsū. 3.

mahimā jāsu jāna ganarā'ū. prathama pūji'ata nāma prabhā'ū. 4.

Lord Shiva repeats (chants) this 'Great Mantra'¹ of Lord Ram, and utters them in the right ears of a dying man at Kashi (Varanasi) to give him emancipation and salvation². (3)

Lord Ganesh knows about the stupendous glory, the mystical powers and the supremacy of Lord Ram's holy Name over all other Mantras of all other Gods, and it is for this reason that he (Ganesh) is worshipped first in all religious ceremonies and is deemed to be the senior-most God³. (4)

[Note—¹A Mantra is a syllable, a letter, a word or a phrase that is used as a spiritual formula. In this case it is the holy Name of Lord Ram, viz. 'RAM' or 'Rāma' or 'Raam'.

²This fact has been endorsed in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition. This Upanishad clearly states that Lord Ram's holy Name 'RAM' is called the "Tarak Mantra", which is a spiritual formula that can grant freedom, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of the creature by liberating him from the cycle of transmigration and helping him to go across over this vast ocean represented by this mundane world of birth and death.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 46; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119; Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 10; (b) Barvai Ramayan, verse no. 53; (c) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 74; (d) Vinai Patrika, (i) stanza no. 11, verse no. 152; (ii) stanza no. 3, verse no. 218; (e) Shiva Samhita, 2/14; (f) Anand Ramayan, Yatra Kand, Canto 2.

³There are two stories narrated in the Purans (ancient mythological histories of the Hindus) that describe how Ganesh invoked Lord Ram's name to attain supremacy amongst all the Gods. The first version is in Shiva Puran (Shaiva Tantra), and the other is in Padma Puran.

The first story is as follows: Once there was a quarrel between Ganesh and his elder brother Kartikeya as to who should be regarded as senior. Lord Shiva sent them to Brahma, the creator, to decide the contentious matter. Another version says that once Brahma asked all the Gods who was to be deemed as being senior amongst them all and therefore eligible to be worshipped first during religious ceremonies. Each God said that it is him. So, in order to settle this dispute Brahma asked them (Ganesh and Kartikeya in the first version, and the Gods in the second version) to go around the universe and come back to him. The one who comes back first will win the trophy as well as the honour to be called the senior-most God and the right to be worshipped first. Kartikeya jumped on his peacock and so did all the other Gods who mounted their respective vehicles as they started out on their journey around the universe. Ganesh was confounded as he had a pot-belly and a mouse as his vehicle—so it was impossible for him to win the race. Though he embarked on the journey, he felt hopeless and dejected. Somewhere sage Narad met him, and he told Ganesh that the entire creation is a manifestation of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, and therefore there is nothing that exists beyond the Lord's holy Name. Hence, the best recourse for him, Narad advised, would be to write the name of Lord Ram on the ground and go around it in a symbolic gesture of going around the entire spectrum of creation consisting of countless universes. After doing it, Ganesh should go to Brahma and narrate the entire episode to him. Meanwhile, wherever the other Gods, including Kartikeya, went, they found the foot-prints of a mouse ahead of them, indicating that Ganesh was ahead of them in the race around the many universes! When they finally came back to Brahma they found Ganesh already there. Brahma declared him the winner and explained the reason for his decision to all the Gods—that Ganesh was the wisest amongst them all as he had circumambulated the entire creation by going around the holy Name of Lord Ram, and so he is the winner.

A variation of this is found in Padma Puran, Srishti Kand where sage Vyas narrated an event in this connection to Sanjaya. Though this story is not related to the glory of Lord Ram's name, yet let us read it for the sake of interest. It says that when the two brothers Kartikeya and Ganesh were born to Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, all the Gods offered some wonderful rounded balls of sweets known as 'Modak' to her as a gift. These balls of sweet were made from Amrit, the juice of eternity and immortality. The two brothers quarreled to eat these sweet balls. Parvati explained that this was no ordinary sweet as it was made from Amrit, and therefore only he who was qualified to have it would get it. She said, "Look, only someone who is extremely wise, and has purified himself by doing exemplary meritorious deeds—only he is eligible to partake of this sweet." Hearing it, Kartikeya mounted his vehicle, the peacock, and went on a pilgrimage to all the holy places. But Ganesh had a fat belly and a mouse as his mount, which made it impossible for him to go anywhere. So he went around his parents, father Lord Shiva and mother Parvati, and sat down. When Kartikeya returned, panting and huffing because he was in a hurry to reach ahead of Ganesh, he found his younger brother seated comfortably. Then Lord Shiva and Parvati declared Ganesh as the winner and one who was eligible for the sweet made from Amrit. They explained that one's parents are the most honourable beings for any living being. Paying respect to one's parents is equivalent to thousands of meritorious deeds combined into one. So Ganesh would henceforth be the first to be worshipped in all religious ceremonies.]

जान आदिकबि नाम प्रतापू । भयउ सुद्ध करि उलटा जापू ॥ ५ ॥

सहस नाम सम सुनि सिव बानी । जपि जेई पिय संग भवानी ॥ ६ ॥

jāna ādikabi nāma pratāpū. bhaya'u sud'dha kari ulaṭā jāpū. 5.
sahasa nāma sama suni siva bānī. japi jē'īm piya saṅga bhavānī. 6.

The ancient poet (Valmiki) knows the great effect and the magical powers of the Holy Name of Lord Ram because he attained purity and greatness by chanting this Name in the reverse order¹. (5)

On hearing from Lord Shiva that Ram's Name is equivalent to thousands of Names of other Gods and Goddesses, Bhavani (Lord Shiva's consort) decided to chant this Holy Name alongside Lord Shiva². [To wit, when Shiva's consort became aware of the glories of Lord Ram's holy Name, she used it as a spiritual formula herself just like her husband Lord Shiva had always been doing.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Sortha/Doha no. 14 (d); (b) Vinai Patrika, (i) verse no. 151, stanza no. 7; (ii) verse no. 156, stanza no. 2; (ii) verse no. 156, stanza no. 2.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 64 and 80, Valmiki himself says: “Oh Lord Ram, I have attained the exalted state of being a sage equivalent in stature to celestial sages because of your holy Name. Say then, who can ever sufficiently praise the greatness of your holy Name?”; “The celestial sages known as Sapta-rishis had advised me to repeat your holy Name in the reverse order as MARA instead of in the right order as RAMA because I told them I wouldn't be able to do it in the correct way due to my overriding sins. And inspite of this reverse way of chanting your glorious name, I still found exaltedness and enlightenment.”

Sage Valmiki was a sage who lived during the time of Lord Ram. The Lord had visited his hermitage during his journey into the forest.

The story of Valmiki is as follows: Sage Valmiki is well known for his classical work known as the famous epic ‘Ramayana’, which is his magnum opus. He is also credited with penning Advhut Ramayan in which Sita had assumed the form of Maha Kali to kill the Ravana with a thousand heads.

Valmiki is said to be the son of sage Pracheta who is said to be the son of Varun, the Water God. He is also said to be one of the Prajaapatis—the ancient patriarchs of this world.

Before he became famous as ‘Valmiki’, he was known by the name of Ratnakar. In his early life he had been in the company of Bhils, ancient tribals, from his childhood days, and married into this race. So he adopted their life and means of livelihood, which was hunting. He used to waylaid travellers and rob them to sustain his family. Once the celestial sages known as Sapta-rishis met him and told him that no one would share his sins. The meeting of these sages was a turning point in Valmiki's life. He pleaded with them to tell him how to get over his path of sins and somehow find deliverance. The sages then advised him to meditate upon the holy Name of Lord Ram as it is the easiest way for him for it requires no knowledge of scriptures and needs no formalities, and at the same time it is easy and convenient for him to repeat it as a Mantra. Valmiki accepted this advice, and immediately sat down in a motionless state of Samadhi, focusing his mind on the holy Mantra ‘RAM’. This alone led him to his enlightenment and self-realisation.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 57-58 he was a Brahmin by birth but became a cruel robber who would even kill his victims if they failed to give all their possessions to him. He had adopted this means of livelihood because he was brought up by a band of robbers and highway vagabonds who would way lay travellers and rob them. Once the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-Rishis went through the forest where he lived, and Valmiki accosted them. When asked by the sages why he robbed others, Valmiki replied that he did it to feed his family and other dependants. The sages advised him that they would not share the consequences of sins that he is committing for them. To test the correctness of this advice, Valmiki tied them to a tree and went to his house to ask his kith and kin if they would share any misfortune that might befall upon him. When they replied that they are only concerned with what loot he brings home, Valmiki's eyes of wisdom opened instantaneously. He rushed back to the sages, untied them and fell at their feet seeking forgiveness. He asked them to show him the path by which he can seek redemption and salvation for himself. The sages then advised him to do Japa (repetition) with Lord Ram's holy Name 'RAAM'. Valmiki said that he was so sinful that it is not possible for him to utter the Lord's holy Name. At this, the sages thought over the matter and told him to repeat the name in the reverse order—as 'MARAA'. When this word MARAA is repeated it becomes RAAM. This trick worked fine for Valmiki, and he immediately sat down to do Tapa (severe form of penance) and meditated on the name of the Lord in the reverse order. He became so immobile and lost in contemplation that a mound of anthill formed around his body. It so happened that when the sages returned to the same place during their return journey, they saw him in this condition. They poured consecrated water on him and revived him. It was then that they gave him a new name 'Valmiki', which means 'one who has emerged from an anthill'. This story is narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, 6/57-58.

He established a hermitage on the banks of river Tamsa and lived there. Lord Ram went to meet him during his outward journey to the forest, and it was in the sage's hermitage that Sita lived and her two sons Lav and Kush were born when she was sent to exile by Ram during the final days of the Lord's days on earth as a prelude to his winding up his worldly 'Leela' or deeds and ascending to the heaven as Lord Vishnu.

One day Valmiki saw a hunter shoot down a male bird and heard the wailings of his companion, the female bird. He cursed the hunter in a verse that came out of his mouth in a poetic style called the Anushtup Chand (metre). Never before had Valmiki ever composed any verse, so he was astonished at this development. Then Brahma the creator appeared before him and ordered him to compose the epic Ramayan for which the basic story was provided to him by sage Narad.

The genesis of the story of Ramayan is this—Once the celestial sage Narad came to his hermitage (called an Ashram) on the behest of Brahma. Valmiki asked him if there was anyone living in this creation who embodied all the 16 Kalaas (qualities) that the Supreme Being is known to possess. Then Narad told him about Lord Ram. This is how the grand and magnificent story of the Ramayan was revealed.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10 which clearly endorses this fact. Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 247, stanza no. 2.

This story is narrated in Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 254, verse nos. 11-24. Briefly it is as follows: Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, had been

initiated and given Lord Vishnu's Mantra by her Guru (preceptor) sage Vamdeo (pronounced "Vaamdeo"). Once Lord Shiva sat down for his meals and invited Parvati to join him. Parvati replied that she was worshipping Lord Vishnu by using his thousand names, known as Vishnu Sahastra Naam, which takes a long time to complete. It was then that Lord Shiva advised her that she must understand that Lord Ram's single name 'Ram' (pronounced as 'Rāma' or 'Raam') was equivalent to the thousands of names of Vishnu, or for that matter any God. Parvati accepted Shiva's advice as she knew that he was the wisest and the most enlightened amongst the Gods. Since that time Parvati always accompanied Lord Shiva in repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram and used it as her spiritual formula.]

हरषे हेतु हेरि हर ही को । किय भूषन तिय भूषन ती को ॥ ७ ॥
नाम प्रभाउ जान सिव नीको । कालकूट फलु दीन्ह अमी को ॥ ८ ॥

haraṣē hētu hēri hara hī kō. kiya bhūṣana tiya bhūṣana tī kō. 7.
nāma prabhā'u jāna siva nīkō. kālakūṭa phalu dīnha amī kō. 8.

Lord Shiva was so happy at her decision (of chanting Lord Ram's holy Name and accepting it as her spiritual Mantra) that he made her the jewel among womenfolk as well as an inseparable part of his own self. (7)

Lord Shiva knows the great effect and the spiritual potency of the holy Name (of Lord Ram)¹ by the virtue (or the strength) of which the poison he drank became nectar for him². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva knows the mystical powers and spiritual value of Lord Ram's holy Name. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 25 which says that after studying all the scriptures and analyzing the countless ways they have been interpreted, Lord Shiva deduced that Lord Ram's holy Name is the best Mantra and the best spiritual formula for a living being. So he adopted it as his preferred Mantra which he invoked during meditation. This invocation granted him eternal peace and bliss, and elevated him to the pedestal of being a Great God, the 'Maha-Deva'.

²This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurān, Skandha 8, Canto 5-7. In brief it is this: The Gods and the Demons decided to churn the ocean to produce Amrit, the liquid that would grant them eternity. But this was not a joke, for the ocean was extremely sour and bitter. During the fierce churning of the ocean, for which the celestial serpent was made a rope, Mt. Mandrachal the churning rod, and the Tortoise as the base on which this mighty mountain was rested, one of the first things that was produced was 'Halahal Poison', i.e. a poison that was so acidic, scalding, corroding and dangerous that if even one drop of it fell on the earth, all life on its surface would vanish. All were terrified, not knowing how to tackle it. All the Gods rushed to Lord Shiva as they knew he was the wisest amongst them all and would certainly know what to do with this poison. Besides this, Shiva is also the God of death, so he would find a way around this problem. So Shiva uttered the holy Name of Lord Ram and sipped the poison. The name of Lord Ram is so powerful that it neutralized the negative effects of the poison so much so that it didn't affect Shiva; only Shiva's neck

turned blue due to this poison. Since that time Shiva came to be known as Neel-Kantha, the Lord with a blue-tinged throat.

This drinking of the poison by Shiva and his surviving due to the powerful antidote effects of Lord Ram's holy Name has also been mentioned in Tulsidas' books (i) Kavitali, Uttar Kand, stanza no. 1 of verse no. 158; and (ii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 156, stanza no. 2.]

दो०. बरषा रितु रघुपति भगति तुलसी सालि सुदास ।

राम नाम बर बरन जुग सावन भादव मास ॥ ११ ॥

dōhā.

baraṣā ritu raghupati bhagati tulasī sāli sudāsa.

rāma nāma bara barana juga sāvana bhādava māsa. 19.

Tulsidas says that devotion to Lord Ram's and his holy Name is like the rainy season, and devotees are like the paddy crop. The two syllables of the holy Name, i.e. 'Ra' and 'Ma', stand for the two months of Shravan and Bhadav which are very auspicious for the growth of paddy. (Doha no. 19)

[Note—Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 221, stanza no. 4 also where a similar idea is expressed. Refer also to Kavitali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 78, line nos. 3-4 where Tulsidas says that he has only Lord Ram's name as his sole source of succour and solace, and he relies on it exclusively.]

Paddy grows wonderfully during the two months of the rainy season known as Shravan and Bhadav in India. It is because during these two months rainfall is abundant, and it usually falls regularly, for prolonged periods of time and in a controlled manner such as in a drizzle or a light shower so as to properly water the fields. A heavy downpour is useless as the water runs off quickly, leaving the land dry and useless for the paddy crop to grow because it needs a wet soil and an abundance of water on the ground.

In this verse, Tulsidas compares a devotee to the paddy crop, and the two letters of Lord Ram's holy Name, viz. Ra and Ma, as the two months of the rainy season. Just like the paddy crop that finds an infusion of life during these two months of the rainy season, a devotee also finds extreme joy and happiness in the name of Lord Ram; a devotee feels energised and spiritually blessed when he invokes the holy Name of Lord Ram that injects freshness and cheer into his life.]

चौ०. आखर मधुर मनोहर दोऊ । बरन बिलोचन जन जिय जोऊ ॥ १ ॥

सुमिरत सुलभ सुखद सब काहू । लोक लाहु परलोक निबाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ākhara madhura manōhara dō'ū. barana bilōcana jana jiya jō'ū. 1.

sumirata sulabha sukhada saba kāhū. lōka lāhu paralōka nibāhū. 2.

Both the letters (Raa and Ma) of Lord Ram's name are sweet and charming, and they are virtually like being the 'eyes' and the 'pran' (i.e. the soul and the essence) of all

the letters of the alphabet, and at the same time they are the very life of all devotees¹.
(1)

These two letters of the holy Name of the Lord are easy to remember, and they delight one and all. [To wit, whereas other Mantras are complicated and oftentimes difficult to remember and pronounce, the holy Name of Lord Ram consisting of the two letters 'Raa' and 'Ma' are very easy to recall and as easy to remember by even the most humble of persons. No special skills or knowledge of the language is required to say the holy Name of the Lord. Hence this divine Mantra is easily accessible to one and all. They are so sweet and pleasant to say and hear that they delight both the speaker as well as the hearer.]

These two letters that form the holy Name of Lord Ram (i.e. Raa and Ma) possess mystical powers and they are so glorious and spiritually empowered that they not only take care of the creature while he lives in this gross mundane world but also ensures his well-being after this world (i.e. after his death, by providing him with deliverance from the cycle of birth and death, and taking care of his salvation and emancipation of his soul). (2)

[Note—¹In Doha no. 19 herein above we have read that the two letters of Lord Ram's holy Name are like the two months of the rainy season that are virtually the vital life-giving months for the paddy crop, because if the rains fail the paddy would die. These present verses are an elaboration of this idea.

The letters of the alphabet are nothing but sounds made by the tongue, or a mark of ink made on paper when written. They acquire meaning and life only when one makes some sense out of them. These seemingly ordinary letters of the alphabet, which ordinarily are practical devices for general communication in day-to-day life, assume great mystical powers, and acquire dynamism and spiritual energy when they are used as Mantras (spiritual formulas), prayers or hymns dedicated to God.

So here poet Tulsidas means that if one were to closely examine and analyse the underlying philosophy of this phenomenon, then one would come to the conclusion that the sound produced by the two letters of the holy Name of Lord Ram is the cosmic energy that subtly infuses dynamism and life into all the letters of the alphabet just like the case of the invisible life-giving breath that silently breathes life and dynamism into the body of all living beings. Sans this cosmic energy injected by the sound of the holy Name of Lord Ram, the letters of the alphabet would simply be lifeless entities marked on a piece of paper, or incomprehensible and un-intelligible words uttered by the tongue.

²The Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition says that Lord Ram's holy Name is the 'Tarak Mantra', i.e. it is a spiritual formula that grants liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to a creature. At the same time, it is a formula which grants joy, happiness, peace and bliss to the creature in this world while he lives in it. This is what is meant here. The holy Name of Lord Ram is the single-dose remedy for all spiritual ills and worldly torments from which a living being suffers.

Tulsidas has extolled the glories of Lord Ram's name and his divine story in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32.

Refer also to: (a) Dohawali, verse nos. 14, 570; (b) Vinai Patrika, verse nos. 70, 76, 254-255.]

कहत सुनत सुमिरत सुठि नीके । राम लखन सम प्रिय तुलसी के ॥ ३ ॥
बरनत बरन प्रीति बिलगाती । ब्रह्म जीव सम सहज संघाती ॥ ४ ॥

kahata sunata sumirata suṭhi nīkē. rāma lakhana sama priya tulasī kē. 3.
baranata barana prīti bilagāṭī. brahma jīva sama sahaja saṅghāṭī. 4.

The two letters of the holy Name of Lord Ram are sweet, pleasant and delightful to speak, to hear and to remember; and they are as dear to Tulsidas as are Lord Ram and Laxman themselves are to him¹. (3)

The two letters (Raa and Ma) lose their harmony and profound spiritual significance and value when pronounced separately just as Brahm (the Supreme Reality; the cosmic Soul) and Jiva (the individual creature; the individual soul) appear to be different entities but are essentially the same. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, these two letters ‘Raa’ and ‘Ma’ of the holy Name of Lord Ram represent Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman for Tulsidas, and so he reverses them as personified forms of the two brothers.

A similar idea that both Lord Ram and Laxman are equally dear to Tulsidas has been expressed in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 36, stanza no. 5.

There are other references in Ram Charit Manas where we see that both Lord Ram and Laxman are equally praised and revered. Some of these are: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 315; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 248.

When the two brothers had gone out to visit the city of Janakpur, all the citizens were equally captivated by their charm. This is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 225.

The same was the condition of the king of Janakpur when he had first seen the two brothers with sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216.

The glory of the two letters of the Lord’s name are extolled in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 67 too.

²Brahm is the Supreme Being who represents the cosmic Consciousness at the universal or the macro level of creation, while the Jiva is the living being who represents the same Consciousness at the individual or the micro level of creation.

According to metaphysical principles expounded in the Upanishads, there is no fundamental difference between the two, i.e. Jiva and Brahm are the same. When a living being becomes aware and convinced of this universal and irrefutable spiritual Truth, he is said to be ‘self-realised and enlightened’. Otherwise, when he thinks that the Jiva and Brahm are two separate entities, he is said to be deluded and ignorant.

To wit, the two letters ‘Raa’ and ‘Ma’ of the holy Name of Lord Ram (pronounced as ‘Rāma’ or ‘Raam’) are inseparable from one another, and they must always be remembered and invoked together to produce the desired spiritual effect. If they are separated from one another then they become ordinary letters of the alphabet.

We can take a simple example to understand this principle. A magnet has two poles—north and south. A magnet has no existence and loses its strength to either pull or repel iron if it loses this uniqueness of having two poles. During electrolysis we have a negative ion and a positive ion; there cannot be electrolysis without the presence of the two. Every human being breathes, and it consists of inhalation and exhalation. There is no life in the body if any one of these two processes stop. A flame produces light; no one can separate the flame from its light; both must co-exist. Where there is a sun there is warmth and light; they are inseparable from one another.

In the same way, the two letters Raa and Ma of the holy Name of Lord Ram cannot be separated from one another. They produce good spiritual effects only when invoked together.

This fact has been explicitly expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 217; and (b) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

नर नारायन सरिस सुभ्राता । जग पालक बिसेषि जन त्राता ॥ ५ ॥

भगति सुतिय कल करन बिभूषन । जग हित हेतु बिमल बिधु पूषन ॥ ६ ॥

nara nārāyana sarisa subhrātā. jaga pālaka bisēṣi jana trātā. 5.

bhagati sutiya kala karana bibhūṣana. jaga hita hētu bimala bidhu pūṣana. 6.

Like the two divine brothers Lords Nara and Narayan¹, these two auspicious letters of the holy Name of Lord Ram (i.e. Raa and Ma) take care of the entire creation.

In a general way, these two letters (that symbolize Lord Ram and Laxman) are the protectors and sustainers of the whole world, without any discrimination, but more specifically they are particular about the welfare of the devotees of the Lord and grant redemption to them, assuring them of freedom from torments and sufferings of all manner in this world. (5)

They are like beautiful ear-rings that act as adornments of a sweet maiden named ‘Bhakti’. [Here, the grand spiritual virtue of faith, devotion, love, affection and dedication for Lord God, and submission to him without any conceit and pretensions, has been personified. These virtues are called ‘Bhakti’.]²

As for the world, they are like the spotless and untainted celestial bodies known as the Sun and the Moon³. (6)

[Note—¹The story goes that Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, took birth as two great sages known as ‘Nara’ and ‘Narayan’ from the womb of Murti, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati and the wife of Dharma. Nara and Narayan were personified form of the Lord himself, and so were images of calmness and peace like their Father. They were highly enlightened and self-realised from birth, and thus did not wish to get involved in the routine affairs of creation and the mundane world. So they renounced all attachments and went to the Himalayas to do deep meditation. It is believed that

they are still meditating at a place called Badrikashram or Badrinath which is located in the upper reaches of the Himalayan range of mountains in the north of India, and is one of the four most sacred pilgrim places of the country.

According to a legend narrated in Jaimini Bharat, there was a demon known as Sahastra-kavachi. He got this name because he had once done severe penance and pleased the Sun-God. When asked to seek a boon or blessing of his desire, the demon got a boon that his body should be protected by thousands of shields or impregnable vests known as 'Kavach' so that no one can kill him. When told that all those who have taken birth must die and so he must ask for a boon that does not go against this inviolable rule of creation, the demon found a clever way to circumvent it. So he asked for a boon that only when someone fights with him for a thousand years would he be able to break only one of his shields or vests, but as soon as this happens the enemy would immediately die himself. Lords Nara and Narayan were born to kill this demon. One of the two brothers spent time in doing penances and meditation while the other fought with the demon for a thousand years and break one of his thousand body-vests, but as soon as it happened that brother died in accordance with the boon. Then the other brother who had been doing penance and meditation till now brought the first brother to life again by use of Mantras and transmitting the good result of his spiritual practices, and took up the battle himself while the revived brother engaged in doing severe penance and austerity to regain mystical powers. This cycle continued for ages till the time only one last shield was left. The cunning demon escaped the battle-field and took shelter in the blazing sun. Then the two brothers Nara and Narayan went to do penance and meditation together to acquire combined strength to overcome him and face the heat of the sun.

It is believed that during Dwapar age (when Lord Krishna was born), this demon took birth as Karna who is said to have been born with a Kavach (a thick layer of hard and impregnable tissue like the shell of a tortoise) around his body. He was killed by Arjun and Lord Krishna who are, according to this legend, incarnations of Nara and Narayan respectively. It ought to be noted here that the word 'Nara' means a Jiva, a living being, here representing Arjun, and the word 'Narayan' means Lord Vishnu, here representing Lord Krishna.

The formless and attributeless form of the Supreme Being is too abstract and difficult to understand, relate to, access and invoke for ordinary living beings. So here the Lord's manifested form as Nara and Narayan has been cited. The idea is that a devotee can overcome even the most stubborn of his sins and misdeeds if he takes recourse to the powerful name of Lord Ram, because its two letters would be able to eliminate his sins one by one just like Lord Nara and Narayan had destroyed one-shield-at-a-time of the demon Shastra-kavach.

Another reason for citing the story of the two brothers Nara and Narayan is that just like they were born from the same mother (Murti, the wife of Dharma), Lord Ram's holy Name has its origin in the tongue which acts like its mother—because a person uses the tongue to pronounce this holy Name. To wit, just like Murti produced Nara and Narayan, her two sons, the tongue produces the two letters Raa and Ma of the holy Name of Lord Ram.

And just like 'Dharma' being the worldly father of Nara and Narayan who actually were personified form of Lord Vishnu, the two letters of Lord Ram too represent all that is auspicious and righteous, or a personified form of 'Dharma' in

this world, and at the same time they represent Lord Vishnu who had revealed himself in the physical form of Lord Ram.

²To wit, Bhakti would lose its charms if the devotee does not use Lord Ram's holy Name in his spiritual endeavours.

³To wit, just like the sun and the moon adorn the sky and are like the two shining jewels that illuminate the world that would have been dark in the absence of these two celestial bodies, the two holy letters of the name of Lord Ram, i.e. Raa and Ma, shine and illuminate the entire spectrum of spiritualism for a wise man. Just like the sun and the moon that remove the darkness of the world below, the two letters of the Lord's holy name remove the darkness in a devotee's life. All other Mantras etc. are like the stars that dot the night sky, but even as the combined light of all the stars is unable to illuminate either the sky or the earth below, all the Mantras taken together wouldn't be able to grant spiritual peace, bliss and redemption to a person; they won't be able to grant liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to his soul.]

स्वाद तोष सम सुगति सुधा के । कमठ सेष सम धर बसुधा के ॥ ७ ॥
जन मन मंजु कंज मधुकर से । जीह जसोमति हरि हलधर से ॥ ८ ॥

svāda tōṣa sama sugati sudhā kē. kamaṭha sēṣa sama dhara basudhā kē. 7.
jana mana maṅju kaṅja madhukara sē. jīha jasōmati hari haladhara sē. 8.

These two divine letters taste like nectar and have the latter's qualities that grant contentedness, joy and bliss to all. [To wit, these two letters of the Lord's holy Name are as refreshing and rejuvenating as nectar, and they give immense bliss and joy to the soul of a creature as if he has actually drunk nectar.]

They symbolically support and protect life on this earth (i.e. they look after the welfare and well-being of all living beings in this world) just like the divine Tortoise did (when it supported life on earth by holding it on its back and preventing it from sinking into the nether world at the time of the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons), and like the Serpent God (known as Sheshnath) who does so even today (by holding the earth on its hood)¹. (7)

For the devotees' mind which is comparable to a lotus, the two letters of Lord Ram's holy Name are like the bees (that continuously hover above the lotus flower to drink its nectar)².

For the tongue which is symbolically like mother Yashodha, these two letters are like Lord Krishna and his brother Balaram respectively (hari haladhara sē)³. (8)

[Note—¹In some ancient time when the Gods and Demons had churned the ocean in search of Amrit, the liquid of immortality, they had used Mt. Mandrachal as the churning rod and the celestial serpent Seshnath as the rope. At that time Lord Vishnu had assumed the form of a Tortoise and supported the great mountain from below so that it did not drill through the earth and split it into two or push it under its weight to sink into the nether world.

In Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 234, verse nos. 17-18 we read that at the end of this churning the Gods had offered their prayers to honour Lord Tortoise and requested him to help Seshnath (the legendary Serpent) and other Diggajs (mythological mighty Elephants) to support the earth from below. It is believed that Seshnath holds the earth on his thousand hoods, and he is aided by the Elephants who support the earth at its corners, while the Great Tortoise supports the earth on its shell and helps the Seshnath and the Diggajs in their effort to carry the earth aloft. The Tortoise ensures that they do not get tired, and the earth does not slip and fall.

²The bees hum and buzz continuously over the lotus flower; some of them alight on the flower to drink its nectar. This metaphor implies that the tongue of a devotee continuously repeats the holy Name of Lord Ram so much so that the sound produced by this chanting creates a continuous humming sound around the devotee. It seems that the devotee's mind is like a bee that derives intense pleasure in remaining engrossed in drinking nectar from a flower because his mind finds similar pleasure in repeating the holy Name of Lord Ram and remain submerged in the bliss that is got by this repetition. The constant humming produced by repetition of the word "Raam" creates vibrations that sooth the devotee's mind and nerves so much so that he does not wish to think of anything else.

³The word 'Haldhar' also means 'a person who holds a plough' which he uses to plough his fields, the other word 'Hari' also means 'green', a reference to the lush green fields, and the word 'Jasomati' may mean 'a mind that is wise and one that gives fame to a person'. So in the context of this metaphor we can interpret this verse to mean that a wise person uses Lord Ram's holy Name to plough and ready his field symbolized by his life and his inner-self so that a good harvest of spiritual values are accumulated in it, which in turn would give him immense joy and happiness just like a farmer who rejoices when he sees his green field full of rich crop.

Just like the field that is made usable by the plough, repeating the Lord's holy Name prepares a man to make good use of his life and render it worthwhile and auspicious. Just like farmer who works with his plough first so that he can enjoy a good harvest later on, a wise person is one who uses the holy Name of Lord Ram to prepare his life and inner-self to welcome spiritualism and good virtues such as piety, holiness, saintliness etc. in order to enjoy spiritual bliss, peace, happiness and redemption later on in life.]

दो०. एकु छत्रु एकु मुकुटमनि सब बरननि पर जोड ।
तुलसी रघुबर नाम के बरन बिराजत दोड ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

ēku chatru ēku mukuṭamani saba baranani para jō'u.
tulasī raghubara nāma kē barana birājata dō'u. 20.

Tulsidas says: 'Lo and Behold! The two letters of Lord Ram's holy Name (i.e. 'Raa' and 'Ma') crown all the other alphabets of the Sanskrit or the Hindi language—the former acts as 'umbrella' and the latter acts as a 'crown-jewel'. (Doha no. 20)

[Note—The 1st letter ‘Raa’ of the Lord’s name Raam or ‘Rāma’ consists of two parts—viz. the Sanskrit consonant ‘Ra’ and vowel sound of ‘Aa/ā’, which is the second vowel of the alphabet. The first letter ‘Ra’ and the vowel sound of ‘Aa’ are integral to the first half of the holy Name (Ra + ā).

When the letter ‘Ra’ or the vowel sound of ‘Aa’ are used in conjunction with any other consonant of the alphabet, then they are represented in the form of a ‘curved line’ placed on the top of the concerned letter. This curved line is called a ‘ref’ in Sanskrit grammar. It is shaped like an ‘umbrella’ that is placed above the letter concerned.

Similarly, the 2nd letter ‘Ma’ of the name of Lord Ram (‘Rā + ma’) is converted into a ‘dot’, known as an ‘anuswar’, that is placed on the top of another letter (a consonant) when ‘Ma’ is used in conjunction with it. The resultant sound is equivalent to the English letter M as in *mum*, *hum*). The effect is that it looks like it was a ‘crown jewel’ put on the top of the letter.

So in this verse, Tulsidas means that both the letters of Lord Ram’s holy Name are so glorious that one acts like an umbrella or a parasol held on the head of a king, and the other acts like the crown jewel worn on the head of the king. Just like the case of a king acquiring his dignity and stature by the virtue of the umbrella held over his head and the jewel that adorns his crown, the two letters of Lord Ram’s holy Name give glory to all other letters that form Beej Mantras for different Gods and Goddesses. Devoid of these two holy letters of Lord Ram’s name, all other letters that stand for various Beej Mantras lose their effectiveness and glory, and so does the beauty of the language itself as a whole.]

चौ०. समुद्भूत सरिस नाम अरु नामी । प्रीति परसपर प्रभु अनुगामी ॥ १ ॥

नाम रूप दुइ ईस उपाधी । अकथ अनादि सुसामुद्भि साधी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

samujhata sarisa nāma aru nāmī. prīti parasapara prabhu anugāmī. 1.
nāma rūpa du'i īsa upādhi. akatha anādi susāmujhi sādhi. 2.

The ‘Name’ and the person ‘Named’ (i.e. the person to whom the name refers to, in this case Lord Ram), though apparently appearing to be synonymous with each other because they refer to the same entity, are actually different from one another but very closely allied to each other just like the relationship that exists between a ‘master’ and a ‘loyal follower or servant’ of his. [To wit, first the Lord’s Name is pronounced, and then the Lord reveals himself before the worshipper or the devotee. Hence, the ‘Name’ has precedence over the ‘Named’.]¹ (1)

The ‘Name’ (nāma) and the ‘Form’ (rūpa) are the two attributes of the Lord God (du'i īsa upādhi)—both are so great that they are beyond the reach of words (i.e. words cannot describe their glory and majesty), and both of them are without a beginning or an end. This principle can only be understood by those who have the proper wisdom, and are enlightened enough to grasp it². (2)

[Note—¹The ‘Name’ refers to the holy Name of Lord Ram, and the ‘Named’ refers to the Lord himself. In this simile, the Name of the Lord is like the ‘Master’ (prabhu),

while the Lord himself is like the ‘person’, literally an ‘obedient follower’ (anugāmī) who follows his Master.

It is easy to understand this philosophy. When anyone wishes to call a person or draw his attention, he calls out to the latter using his name, and then that person knows that he is being called and so he responds immediately. Hence, when a devotee or a worshipper remembers Lord Ram and wishes to invite the Lord or invoke his mercy and grace, he first remembers and invokes the Lord by his name, and then the Lord himself makes his presence felt and blesses the devotee or the worshipper. So therefore, the ‘Name’ (RAM) acquires precedence over the ‘Named’ (Lord Ram himself in a personified form).

There is another way of interpreting this verse. The ‘Name’ of the Lord, when pronounced, consists of a ‘sound’ that represents the invisible, cosmic and universal form of the Lord just like OM that represents the cosmic Consciousness which is invisible and all-pervading. This cosmic, all-pervading, subtle and invisible form of the Lord represented by the sound of the letters ‘RAM’ revealed itself in the physical grosser form of Lord Ram, a form which is like any other human being.

Even from the perspective of creation, first the invisible, all-encompassing, all-pervading and macrocosmic form of ‘Prakriti’ or Nature appeared, and then came into being its microcosmic visible form as individual entities that formed the infinite maze that constituted the vast grid of creation. Similarly, first comes the basic letters that form the name of an individual, the letters that combine to form a word (the ‘name’— nāma) that would identify that individual, and then comes the individual himself (the ‘named’— nāmī).

In this scenario, the ‘name’ of Lord Ram (nāma) is deemed to be senior or superior to the Lord’s ‘physical form’ (nāmī) because of a variety of reasons. For instance, the name of the Lord can be remembered and invoked at anytime by anyone, and it immediately grants relief to the worshipper or the devotee as it is a powerful spiritual Mantra which is a divine spiritual formula that possesses unique cosmic powers and dynamism that produce instantaneous results of astounding proportions when a person invokes it. On the other hand, the physical form of Lord Ram would have its own practical limitations by the virtue of it being a physical gross body (as compared to the ‘name’ which is extremely subtle by its very nature, because it is merely a ‘sound’ that exists in ether and covers the entire space that is available to it).

²This verse draws from the eclectic metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads which says that the divine word OM is a sound representation of the vibrations produced by the cosmic Consciousness, and its manifested form is known as Brahm, the Supreme Being. To wit, Brahm is a personified form of OM representing supreme Consciousness at the macrocosmic and the subtlest level of creation. The entire creation is a revelation of this Brahm. To wit, when we deal with this Brahm at the microcosmic level of creation, we talk of the individual living being known as the Jiva and his individual Atma or soul which is the Jiva’s individual identity that is specific to him. This unique identity of the Jiva is represented in the form of the Jiva’s personal name. So therefore we say that the Name and the Form are the two aspects of the same entity. In the case of Lord Ram, his divine Name ‘RAM (Rāma or Raam)’ and his physical form by which we know and recognize him are the same thing because they refer to the same Lord.

And who is this ‘Lord’? He is not any ordinary prince or king or human being even though he was born in a human form. The fact is that he is the Supreme Lord of the World, a personified form of the invisible supreme Brahm and of the equally

invisible and supreme cosmic Consciousness. This latter entity, i.e. the cosmic Consciousness, is indescribable and beyond comprehension; it is beyond the purview of the mind and the reach of the intellect. So it is said that the Name and the Form that refers to Lord Ram are beyond understanding; they are infinite and eternal like Brahm and supreme Consciousness. Only those who are wise are able to understand the significance of this principle. For the ignorant and the less initiated, Lord Ram is merely a great king who ruled over an ancient kingdom known by the name of Ayodhya. They don't know who the Lord actually was.]

को बड़ छोट कहत अपराधू । सुनि गुन भेदु समुझिहहिं साधू ॥ ३ ॥
देखिअहिं रूप नाम आधीना । रूप ग्यान नहिं नाम बिहीना ॥ ४ ॥

kō barā chōṭa kahata aparādhū. suni guna bhēdu samujjihahim sādihū. 3.
dēkhi'ahim rūpa nāma ādhinā. rūpa gyāna nahim nāma bihīnā. 4.

Both the 'name' and the 'form' of the Lord are of equal importance. So it would be improper and impudent to call any one of them as being greater or lesser in importance than the other. However, saints understand the subtle difference between the two (as has been explained in the preceding verses herein above) after hearing or taking into consideration their merits, virtues and glories¹. (3)

Forms are visible manifestations of the entity that is known by a particular name, and hence the 'form' is dependent on the 'name'. Therefore, the 'name' acquires precedence over the 'form', because without the name of any person or thing one cannot know or visualise or think about that person's or thing's physical existence in a given form. To wit, without knowing the name it is not possible to identify and relate with a particular person². (4)

[Note—¹To wit, it is wrong to call one or the other as being superior or inferior. Only pious souls or Sadhus will understand this secret after hearing and understanding the essence of the metaphysical philosophy behind them as has been explained in the preceding verses.

²When we say a particular name, say that of our son, his picture immediately comes to our mind. Therefore, the 'image' or the 'physical form' of the son is directly dependent upon his 'name'. When we talk about a person by the name of 'Ram', his physical form, characters, virtues, nature and other attributes immediately come to our mind. When we mention 'Ram' we think of 'Ram', and not of anybody else who is *not* Ram.

Suppose we see a stranger and wish to establish an abiding relationship with him. We ask him his or her name. Otherwise it becomes absolutely impossible to relate to, or remember and establish contact with that person in the future. We can remember a stranger's face, but how can we identify him and tell others about him if they too wish to have contact with him if we don't know his name? And once the stranger's name is known, he becomes a familiar person to us in the future. So therefore it is deduced that 'name' takes precedence over 'form'.]

रूप बिसेष नाम बिनु जानें । करतल गत न परहिं पहिचानें ॥ ५ ॥
सुमिरिअ नाम रूप बिनु देखें । आवत हृदयँ सनेह बिसेषें ॥ ६ ॥

rūpa bisēṣa nāma binu jānēm. karatala gata na parahim pahicānēm. 5.
sumiri'a nāma rūpa binu dēkhēm. āvata hṛdayam' sanēha bisēṣēm. 6.

A person cannot be identified and known without first knowing his name though he may be in front of our eyes. (5)

But if the name of a person is known and when we remember that name, then even without seeing that person physically as soon as that name is mentioned we can immediately identify the person and remember his characteristic and attributes. His picture flashes in the mind even though he is not physically present at the place. And if that person is someone who is near and dear to our heart, then the mere mention or remembrance of his name would immediately evokes affection and love for him. (6)

[Note—The idea expressed in these verses is simple and straightforward. It means that when a devotee invokes the holy 'name' of Lord Ram, then the Lord's divine glories and his majestic powers immediately come to the mind as do his story and the 'physical form' that has been described in the scriptures, even though the devotee has not personally seen the Lord in a physical form.

As soon as the name of Lord Ram is said, the listener draws a mental picture of the Lord that he has come to know of by the reading and hearing of the scriptures.

Hence, the mere remembrance or invocation of the holy Name of Lord Ram helps the devotee to feel the presence of the Lord near him. To wit, the 'name' of the Lord helps the devotee to establish a direct contact with the Lord himself. It is like a bridge between the Lord and the devotee; it is like a communication channel between the two of them!

Since in this case the 'name' belongs to Lord Ram who is very dear to the devotee, so as soon as the Lord's name is remembered or invoked, the devotee feels a surge of affectionate emotions for Lord Ram surging in his heart. The devotee is filled with joy and ecstasy by simply remembering the holy Name of Lord Ram even though the Lord is not actually present near him in a physical form.]

नाम रूप गति अकथ कहानी । समुझत सुखद न परति बखानी ॥ ७ ॥
अगुन सगुन बिच नाम सुसाखी । उभय प्रबोधक चतुर दुभाषी ॥ ८ ॥

nāma rūpa gati akatha kahānī. samujhata sukhada na parati bakhānī. 7.
aguna saguna bica nāma susākhī. ubhaya prabōdhaka catura dubhāṣī. 8.

The mystery of the greatness of story of the 'Name' and the 'Form' cannot be so easily told (as it is mystical and profound in nature). Though it is delightful and fascinating to understand their relationship, it is difficult to explain it. [To wit, the relationship between the 'name' and the 'form' of Lord Ram is a complex one, and it cannot be outlined by words so easily; it has to be understood by application of the mind, and it can be understood by intelligence and wisdom alone.] (7)

The 'Name' is an intermediary between the Supreme Being who is 'formless', all-pervading, invisible, cosmic, unqualified and attributeless, and the Lord's divine revelation in which has a 'Form' which is visible, has its own unique qualities and attributes.

The 'Name' of the Lord is like a clever interpreter who reveals the Truth of the visible 'Form' that the Lord had assumed in order to make his primarily sublime, subtle, invisible and attributeless cosmic form made accessible to his devotees so that they can easily relate themselves to him and feel closer to their beloved Lord. [To wit, The holy Name of the Lord, i.e. the word 'RAM' ('Rāma' or 'Raam'), is an intermediary between the Supreme Being and his divine revelation in the physical form as Lord Ram.] (8)

[Note—The complexities of the relationship between the Lord's holy Name and his divine form and their inter-dependence have been explained earlier in notes appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow Doha no. 20 herein above.

To put in simple words, the holy 'Name' of Lord Ram is a bridge that helps to establish a link between the Lord's cosmic form as the Supreme Being and his visible 'form' that is easily known, accessible and understandable, the 'form' of the Lord as a human being known by the name of 'Ram'.

The holy Name of the Lord, i.e. the word 'RAM' ('Rāma' or 'Raam'), is an intermediary between the Supreme Being and his divine revelation in the physical form as Lord Ram.

Now, when it is said that "it has to be understood by application of the mind, and it can be understood by intelligence and wisdom alone" it is meant that only a wise man would know the Truth of who Lord Ram actually is. For the lesser wise souls, those who lack wisdom, enlightenment and knowledge of the essence and philosophy of the scriptures, Lord Ram is some great King of an ancient kingdom of Ayodhya. But for those who are wiser and knowledgeable, Lord Ram is a personified form of the Lord of the World, the manifested form of the Supreme Being.

So therefore, the 'name' of the Lord, i.e. the word 'RAM' ('Rāma' or 'Raam'), would immediately remind the wise of the Supreme Being himself. When they use the name 'Ram', they think of the 'Lord of the World', instead of some ancient great King or Emperor who ruled over some mighty kingdom or empire.

Thus, for a wise and enlightened person, the repetition of the 'name' of the Lord, i.e. the word RAM, becomes a spiritual exercise involving a sacred Mantra. To wit, wise and intelligent persons do Japa (repetition of some mystically empowered formula) when they repeat the seemingly ordinary word 'Ram', and this then becomes a means for attaining spiritual blessedness, bliss, peace, happiness, emancipation and salvation for them. For others who aren't wise and are foolish so, the same word 'Ram' remains merely the 'name' of some great person of this particular name who was a great King in some ancient time! The difference is so stark and obvious that even a blind won't miss it.]

दो० राम नाम मनिदीप धरु जीह देहरीं द्वार ।

तुलसी भीतर बाहेरहुँ जौं चाहसि उजिआर ॥ २१ ॥

dōhā.

rāma nāma manidīpa dharu jīha dēharīm dvāra.
tulasī bhītara bāhērahum̃ jaur̃m cāhasi uji'āra. 21.

Tulsidas says that if you want 'light' both inside and outside of yourself (i.e. the virtues of spiritual awareness, self-realisation, enlightenment and knowledge of your own 'truthful self' known as the Atma or the soul which is pure consciousness on the one hand, and of the universal Truth about the essential nature of the Atma or the 'self' as being an image of the Parmatma or the cosmic Self which is nothing but the cosmic Consciousness that has revealed itself as the individual's Atma)— then you should keep the self-illuminated gem or a lamp symbolized by Lord Ram's holy Name on the doorway or the threshold of your mouth (i.e. your lips)¹. (Doha no. 21)

[Note—¹To wit, you should constantly chant the holy Name of the Lord with your tongue because it will purify your inner-self by cleansing it of all its spiritual impurities, thereby enabling you to experience the truth of the Atma within yourself, and to acquire sufficient light of wisdom that would enable you to realise the Supreme Truth of existence in the form of the Parmatma. This is like 'being shown light within and without'.

The holy Name of Lord Ram would clean the inner-self and shine light into the darkness of the heart and mind so that the spiritual gloom of ignorance and delusions are removed, and instead there is illumination of self-realisation that entitles the devotee to experience the bliss and joy that comes from deep within his own self, and which in turn makes his external life full of joy and happiness in this world. The devotee feels carefree and delightful that Lord Ram is always with him to take care of his spiritual and worldly needs, day in and day out, in thick and thin, in storm and sunshine, come what may. The devotee is rid of all his worries, distresses, and other kinds of torments.

Even as ghosts and phantoms run away when there is light, all sorts of delusions and horrors of life that would otherwise dominate the Spirit and keep it subdued take to their heels when a person invokes the holy Name of Lord Ram and chants it constantly with his tongue. Nay, not only that, even remembering the holy Name suffices to light up the inner-self and chase away darkness from the hidden chambers of the heart and the mind.

The 'mouth' is the only opening of the body by which a person communicates or interacts with the external world. It is also the opening by which he eats and drinks to sustain life inside his own self. So if this opening is well illuminated with the help of a lighted lantern symbolizing Lord Ram's holy Name that is kept aloft on the tongue, thieves, scoundrels and mischief-mongers symbolizing all sorts of worldly evils and sins and negative thoughts would dare not enter a person's inner-self and cause peril for him. Just like we need light to see what we eat and drink, and avoid things that would make us sick if eaten or drunk, the holy Name of Lord Ram stands as a guard to protect us against things that are demeaning, bad and foul for our soul.

The idea expressed in this Doha has been reiterated elsewhere also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 120.

The following verses further elaborate on this theme.]

चौ०. नाम जीहँ जपि जागहिं जोगी । बिरति बिरंचि प्रपंच बियोगी ॥ १ ॥
ब्रह्मसुखहि अनुभवहिं अनूपा । अकथ अनामय नाम न रूपा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nāma jīham̐ japi jāgahim̐ jōgī. birati birañci prapañca biyōgī. 1.
brahma sukhahi anubhavahim̐ anūpā. akatha anāmaya nāma na rūpā. 2.

Yogis (ascetics; mystics) who are full of dispassion and they possess the eclectic virtue of exemplary detachment and renunciation from this gross material world. They thereby enjoy happiness and profound bliss because they chant Lord Ram's holy Name with their tongue. In this way, they remain awake and delightful in a dark and foreboding night (symbolized by delusions that pervade this gross mundane world in which all other creatures are either restless in their dreams while they sleep, or remain restless and terrified because of the shadows of ghosts and phantoms that they see even if they are awake)¹. (1)

They are always involved in contemplation and meditation upon the supreme Brahm, and experience the bliss of Brahm-realisation. This Brahm cannot be described in words, is incomparable, nameless and formless. Therefore, the bliss of Brahm-realisation also cannot be described in words, as it is not comparable to anything else that it can be understood. [To wit, it can be 'experienced and realised' at a subtle plane, but cannot be understood by logic at the grosser plane of the mundane world.]² (2)

[Note—¹Ascetics and mystics remain aloof from the affairs of this gross world as they understand that all its charms are illusive and false. They focus on the 'Truth' instead, and they strive to find an eternal and truthful source of bliss, happiness and joy. This they find by chanting the holy Name of Lord Ram, and using it for meditation and contemplation. In this way, they attain a state of blissfulness and contentedness.

By saying that they are 'awake in this world' it is meant that they are aware of the perils of getting entangled in the web of delusions and their attendant miseries that are so characteristic of this gross transient world. They know that true happiness and peace would always elude them if they allow themselves to get involved in this world. So they keep a safe distance to avoid their boat being capsized.

Like an alert pilot who remains awake during the night while steering a ship across a rough sea, wise Yogis who chant Lord Ram's holy Name are able to steer the boat of their lives clear of all the crooked and perilous outcrops and sandbars and reefs and dense undergrowths that form the shoreline of this world in order to reach their spiritual destination safe and sound. To wit, they use the holy Name of Lord Ram as an illuminated boat that takes them across the high sea of this tumultuous world to their destination of freedom that grants emancipation and salvation to their soul. Such wise Yogis find eternal bliss and peace and happiness for themselves. The phantoms and ghosts of the night symbolized by this world do not terrify them.

These alert Yogis manage to steer their boat safely across the symbolic rough sea representing mundane life in this gross material world during a tempestuous night full of horrifying delusions, and of worldly temptations and torments? Well, they meditate upon Lord Ram by invoking his holy Name. This keeps them awake and well-oriented. It helps them keep their inner cool and overcome all anxiety about their fate. So their mind and heart are calm and rested and controlled, and by-and-by they easily reach their destination without any mishap.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 93 which say: "Everyone is fast asleep in the night made thick by

the darkness of Maya symbolising worldly delusions, attachments and horrors. Only wise ascetics who are contemplative, have renounced all attachments with this world and think about the good of others are said to be awake in this night. Indeed, without gainsay and in all sooth, one must regard a creature as being awake in this world if he has completely distanced himself from all attachment with the material world. It is then that the light of self-realisation and wisdom dawns on the horizon of the creature's inner-self, and it is also only then that he begins to have abiding love, affection and devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram."

We read a similar thing in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56 which says: "Abandon the notion of mine and yours, of me and you, if you wish to wake up from sleep in the dark and foreboding night symbolized by the great delusions created by Moha (attachment, infatuation and longing)."

We read in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 140, stanza no. 2 that: "Worldly people remain entangled in a web of worldly ties and affairs, and they are so unfortunate that they never realize their folly as their mind never wakes up to the reality."

A similar idea is expressed in Kavita-wali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 31 which says: "In the night of youthfulness you have become enamoured of the pleasures of the senses (in the form of another person's woman). You do not get renunciation (or are not inspired) even after looking at the gate keepers of Yam (the God of Death and Hell) in the form of sorrows, diseases, separations and various losses that you witness happening all around you in this horrifying world. You have forgotten all the horrors of your previous life and those suffered by you in the past in this life itself due to attachments and delusions that surround you. Now it is dawn, so wake up and run away from all this great fear created by ignorance. The death and its attendant agonies in the shape of a sun have risen in the east represented by your old age. Oh you dud! You still don't wake up, how utterly stupid you are!"

²These wise Yogis invoke the holy Name of Lord Ram to attain the bliss of Brahm-realisation, which means 'self-realisation' because the true 'self' is known as the Atma or soul, and this Atma is a personified form of pure consciousness. This 'consciousness' that resides inside an individual is the same the cosmic Consciousness that pervades uniformly in this creation, and which is also manifested in the form of Brahm known as the Supreme Being. So therefore, realizing Brahm is equivalent to realizing one's own true 'self', and vice versa.

The Atma is a source of bliss and beatitude, and realizing this Atma makes the Yogi full of bliss and beatitude. And the medium by which it is made possible is the holy Name of Lord Ram. To wit, the name of the Lord acts as an intermediary between the Yogi and Brahm, and the Yogi attains blissfulness, beatitude and felicity right here in this life, and at the same time he is assured of deliverance, emancipation and salvation of his soul after death of the body.]

जाना चहहिं गूढ़ गति जेऊ । नाम जीहँ जपि जानहिं तेऊ ॥ ३ ॥

साधक नाम जपहिं लय लाएँ । होहिं सिद्ध अनिमादिक पाएँ ॥ ४ ॥

jānā cahahim gūrḥa gati jē'ū. nāma jāham' japi jānahim tē'ū. 3.

sādhaka nāma japahim laya lā'em'. hōhim sid'dha animādika pā'em'. 4.

Those who want to know (or discover) the Supreme Truth or the ultimate destination of the soul (gūr̥ḥa gati) are able to do so by chanting Lord Ram's divine and holy Name by their tongue. (3)

Spiritual seekers (sādhaka) who are sincere in their practice and are regularly absorbed in contemplation and meditation, achieve super-human mystical powers (hōhiṁ sid'dha animādika pā'ēm̃) simply by repeating the Lord's mystical name consistently, and with due concentration, devotion and faith (nāma japahiṁ laya lā'ēm̃). (4)

[Note—To wit, the holy Name of Lord Ram entitles the devotee to realize the Supreme Truth, as well as to attain mystical powers. The 'Supreme Truth' is about the true nature of the Atma, the pure conscious Soul. Lord Ram is a personified form of the cosmic Soul. So the Lord's holy Name enables the devotee to become enlightened enough to realize that his own Atma is a personified form of Lord Ram. It means that the Lord is not far away from him, but he resides in his own inner-being as the Atma.

Thus, all distance between the devotee and the Lord ends, and thus also ends the search for the Lord! And the name of the Lord repeated through the tongue while meditating becomes an instrument in this achievement.]

जपहिं नामु जन आरत भारी । मिटहिं कुसंकट होहिं सुखारी ॥ ५ ॥

राम भगत जग चारि प्रकारा । सुकृती चारिउ अनघ उदारा ॥ ६ ॥

japahiṁ nāmu jana ārata bhārī. miṭahiṁ kusaṅkaṭa hōhiṁ sukhārī. 5.
rāma bhagata jaga cāri prakārā. sukṛtī cāri'u anagha udārā. 6.

When even the most tormented, distressed and gravely suffering devotees do Japa with the holy Name of Lord Ram (i.e. when they mutter or invoke the Lord's name and constantly repeat it as a symbol of taking shelter behind its protective shield), then all their worst of calamities, miseries and troubles are eliminated, and they become happy and delighted. [To wit, greatly distressed devotees who chant Lord Ram's holy Name are relieved of all their distresses and torments. As a natural blessing of the Lord, they become happy and contented.] (5)

There are four kinds of devotees of Lord Ram¹, and all of them are deemed to be fortunate, blessed, virtuous, sinless and noble at heart. (6)

[Note—¹The four types of devotees are the following—(1) 'Aarta': There are two interpretation of this word. One refers to those who are extremely distressed and need immediate intervention of the Lord to help them overcome their sufferings. The other meaning refers to those devotees who are extremely eager to have an access to their Lord that they would go to any length to attain him. (2) 'Jigyasu': Those who are seekers of Truth, those who want to know and learn more about the Lord. (3) 'Artharthi': Those who worship the Lord so that their worldly desires are fulfilled as a blessing of the Lord. The word 'Artha' means wealth and prosperity. Hence, such devotees do not worship the Lord for any spiritual objective or because they love the Lord dearly, but because they hope that the Lord would fulfill their worldly desires to

gain material welfare. And (4) ‘Gyani’: Those who are wise and have become realised and enlightened.

We observe here that there are four types of devotees who worship Lord Ram, and they have different reasons and motivations to do so. But all of them are said to be fortunate and blessed; all of them get merit for worshipping the Lord irrespective of why they worship him and why they invoke his holy Name. Why is it so?

The reason is this: On the one hand it is because of the graceful, kind, obliging and merciful nature of Lord Ram as he goes out of his way to extend his blessing even on those who may otherwise not deserve it simply because they have remembered the Lord and invoked his holy Name, and so it becomes obligatory on the part of the Lord that he must bless all those who worship him and remember his holy Name for whatever reason.

And on the other hand it is because the Lord’s holy Name is intrinsically purifying and so holy that no matter who invokes this name and remembers the Lord for whatever reason, the Lord ensures that his glorious name lives up to its reputation and does not fail to have its good, meritorious and positive effect on the person who utters it.

Lord Ram has said himself that: “Those who are sinful in their hearts and engrossed in sinful activities can never find interest in worshipping me and having devotion for me. Only those who have a pure and uncorrupt heart are able to come near me, for I do not like conceit, deceit, pretensions, falsehood and fraud”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 5 that precede Doha no. 44.

So therefore, notwithstanding for what reason a devotee worships Lord Ram, if he remembers the Lord and utters his holy Name then it is deemed that he is a noble soul as compared to others, and that his heart has a place for the Lord, and when the Lord dwells in the person’s heart then that person is deemed to be blessed and fortunate.

It is like the case of the sunshine—it benefits one and all; both the good and the evil men enjoy the same warmth and light of the sun irrespective of their personal character and nature. The sun does not differentiate between anyone.

Similarly, nectar would have its good effect and poison its bad upon all those who drink them. Neither nectar nor poison would differentiate between two persons based on whether one is good and the other is evil.]

चहू चतुर कहूँ नाम अधारा । ग्यानी प्रभुहि बिसेषि पिआरा ॥ ७ ॥

चहूँ जुग चहूँ श्रुति नाम प्रभाऊ । कलि बिसेषि नहिँ आन उपाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

cahū catura kahum̐ nāma adhārā. gyānī prabhuhi bisēṣi pi’ārā. 7.

cahum̐ juga cahum̐ śruti nāma prabhā’ū. kali bisēṣi nahim̐ āna upā’ū. 8.

All the four types of devotees are clever for they rely on Lord Ram’s holy and all wish-fulfilling name. But out of these four, a ‘Gyani’ (the realised and enlightened one) is very dear to the Lord¹. (7)

The glory and greatness of Lord Ram’s holy and divine Name is well known and well established in all the four Yugs (eras of time)², as well as in the four Vedas (Rig, Sam, Atharva and Yajur Veda).

In Kaliyug especially, there is no other means of salvation except taking recourse to the holy Name of Lord Ram³. (8)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 86, Lord Ram has said: “The entire creation and all its inhabitants were created by me, and I love all of them. Out of all the living beings, the humans are more dear to me. Amongst the humans, Brahmins (i.e. those who are learned and wise) are preferred by me. From amongst such Brahmins, I like those who are well versed in the Vedas and other scriptures. Out of them, I prefer those who actually follow the path shown by these scriptures and practice their teachings in their own lives, i.e. who lead a noble, pious and auspicious life, and not merely preach others. Out of such exalted souls, I prefer those who have renounced all attachment with this delusionary world and are wise and enlightened (“Gyani”). Out of ordinary Gyanis, I like those who “Vigyanis”, i.e. those who are exemplary in their conduct and highly spiritually elevated, enlightened and self-realised so much so that they can set an example for others to follow. And out of all such exalted, enlightened and self-realised souls, I love them who are my devotees, who love me unconditionally, and who realize that attaining me is the ultimate goal of all spiritual pursuits”.

²The cycle of creation and destruction have been divided into four segments, each called a ‘Yuga’. According to Hindu scriptures, there are four such Yugs in one cycle of creation and destruction. These four ‘Yugs’ or eras are the following: Satyug, Tretayug (when Lord Ram manifested on earth), Dwaparyug (the era of Lord Krishna), and Kaliyug (the present era in which we live).

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 102—to Doha no. 103. Now let us briefly read what it says:

“[Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, told Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu—] Listen, oh the Enemy of Serpents (“byālāri”; Garud)! The age of Kali is virtually an abode of darkness symbolising sins, turpitude, evil and vices.

But inspite of all its shortcomings and drawbacks, all its degeneration, perversities and depravities, Kaliyug has one exceptional worthwhile quality (or kind of a ‘ray of hope at the end of the dark tunnel’)—and it is that during this age a creature is able to get freedom easily from the web of birth and death that is so characteristic of life in this mundane and mortal world. [How this is made possible is explained below in the verses that follow herein below.] (Doha no. 102-a)

The spiritual objectives of a creature, and the attainment of liberation and deliverance of his soul from the cycle of birth and death with its accompanying chain of endless horrors and miseries, that could be achieved by making a lot of strenuous efforts such as doing worship (of gods and elements of Nature visualised as deities that symbolised divine forces), various sacrifices and meditation etc. (*pūjā makha aru jōga*) during the (three) ages that preceded Kaliyug, viz. the Sata Yug, the Treta Yug, and the Dwapar Yug respectively—the same spiritual rewards and the same pristine pure and holy destination for the soul is attainable by the creature simply by relying on the holy Name of the Lord God (here referring to the holy and divine Name of Lord Ram, the revealed form of the Supreme Being). (102-b)

In the age known as ‘Sata Yug’ (which is the first of the four-yug cycle that constitutes one round of creation and destruction), more or less everyone was like an ascetic; they were wise, self-realised, enlightened and had spiritual wisdom.

During this period, a Jiva (a creature; a living being) could cross the vast and fathomless ocean-like world of transmigration (the endless cycle of birth and death) by meditating upon Lord Hari (the Supreme Being's cosmic all-pervading form). (Chaupai no. 1)

In the next era known as 'Treta Yug', men used to do various kinds of fire sacrifices and meritorious deeds. They attained liberation and deliverance (from the cycle of transmigration) by doing all such sacrifices and meritorious deeds selflessly and then offering whatever rewards that accrued due to such activities to the Lord God. [Since people did not wish to accept and enjoy any reward for their sacrifices they did, and offered all rewards of spiritual practices to the Lord God, their 'Parent', so when they died their soul did not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death to enjoy the rewards that had been accumulated and become due to them by the virtue of their doing fire and other sacrifices during their previous life. Thus, at the time of death of the physical body, their soul got emancipation and salvation.] (Chaupai no. 2)

During the age of Dwapar (the third era), men could cross over the vast ocean-like world of birth and death by offering worship, reverence and homage to the holy feet of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram). There was no other alternative way or option. (Chaupai no. 3)

Finally, during Kaliyug, it is simply by singing and narrating the divine glories of Lord Hari (Lord Ram) that men can find the end of (i.e. cross) the huge and seemingly endless ocean symbolising the cycle of birth and death. (Chaupai no. 4)

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, in Kaliyug there is no (need for doing) Yoga (meditation), Yagya (fire and other sacrifices), and Gyan (having spiritual knowledge, being self-realised, acquiring wisdom and enlightenment).

The only source of spiritual succour and solace, the only basis by which one can derive joy and happiness is to sing hymns in praise of Lord Ram and his divinity, holiness and glories. (Chaupai no. 5)

Anyone who abandons all other hopes and stops relying on any other means to attain his spiritual objectives, and instead relies solely on worshipping Lord Ram and affectionately singing the Lord's hymns and glories --- (Chaupai no. 6)

--- Such a person is sure to cross this ocean-like world of birth and death; there is no doubt about it. [To wit, if a person relies only on worshipping Lord Ram and affectionately singing the hymns dedicated to the Lord that extol the Lord's glories, divinity and holiness, then it is sure that he will find liberation and deliverance for himself. He will not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death.]

Forsooth and without gainsay, the astounding mystical powers that are inherent in Lord Ram's Name, and the spiritual significance of this holy, divine and sacred Name, is very evident and clearly manifested in the age of Kaliyug (more than any of the other three Yugs). (Chaupai no. 7)

There is one more wonderful and unique quality or glory of Kaliyug (that none of the other Yugs possessed)—and it is that during this age even if a person's mind and heart (i.e. his Mana) wishes to do some meritorious deed (though he may not be actually able to do it), he still gets the credit of it as if he has physically done that good deed. On the other hand, if a person merely thinks or wishes of doing some evil deed but actually does not do it, then the sin and taint (and therefore the punishment) associated with such bad or evil deed would not accrue to him. (Chaupai no. 8)

There is no other age as compared to Kaliyug if a person has faith in its rare virtues and capabilities (i.e. its ability to provide a person with the chance to attain his spiritual objectives most easily as has been enumerated in the foregoing verses herein above).

And one such rare ability or boon that Kaliyug possesses is this: A person can easily cross this vast and endless ocean-like world of transmigration known as 'Bhava' by simply singing (remembering, reciting and hearing) the divine glories and holy praises of Lord Ram. [To wit, by simply remembering the sacred story of Lord Ram that describes the Lord's glories and the deeds done by him during his sojourn in the mortal world, and understanding the hidden spiritual message that this story contains, a seeker can attain spiritual joy, happiness, blessedness and beatitude that would have required him to undertake many elaborate rituals and strenuous efforts in all other eras that preceded Kaliyug.] (Doha no. 103-a)

There are said to be four pillars or pedestals of Dharma—i.e. there are four ways in which one can gain spiritual merit. [These four ways are (i) Satya—truthfulness; (ii) Daya—mercy and compassion; (iii) Tapa—austerity and penance; and (iv) Daan—making charity and giving alms.]

In Kaliyug, the one pillar that is deemed to be the chief one is the act of doing 'Daan'—i.e. giving alms and making charity selflessly as a means of getting spiritual rewards or accumulating spiritual merit. No matter in which way one does 'Daan', it would always serve him in good stead, it would always be conducive for his spiritual good and welfare. (Doha no. 103-b)"

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 2 that follows Doha no. 22 herein below.]

दो०. सकल कामना हीन जे राम भगति रस लीन ।
नाम सुप्रेम पियूष हृद तिन्हहुँ किए मन मीन ॥ २२ ॥

dōhā.

sakala kāmanā hīna jē rāma bhagati rasa līna.
nāma suprēma piyūṣa hrada tinhahum' ki'ē mana mīna. 22.

Those who have tasted the juice of Lord Ram's devotion without hankering for any sort of desires are deemed to have made their mind into a fish which floats in the pond of nectar made of the lovable divine name of the Lord. (Doha no. 22)

[Note—To wit, the mind of such devotees thinks of nothing else except enjoying the nectar that drips by repeating the Lord's holy Name. The ecstasy and thrill that comes with such repetition completely overwhelms them so much so that their condition becomes one like that of a fish which would die as soon as it is removed from water.

Just like the fish which would exchange everything for water, a true devotee of Lord Ram would exchange every joy and happiness attainable in this world for the sake of devotion for Lord Ram—for he knows the latter's value and importance. He knows that nothing in this world would ever compare with the joy and happiness and bliss that come by having devotion for Lord Ram and repeating his holy Name with love and faith. He knows that the while the best and the most charming attractions of the world are transient in nature and do not give any worthwhile joy, the holy Name of the Lord and his remembrance is a source of abiding bliss and blessedness.]

चौ०. अगुन सगुन दुइ ब्रह्म सरूपा । अकथ अगाध अनादि अनूपा ॥ १ ॥
मौरें मत बड़ नामु दुहू तें । किए जेहिं जुग निज बस निज बूतें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aguna saguna du'i brahma sarūpā. akatha agādha anādi anūpā. 1.
mōnrēm mata bara nāmu duhū tēm. ki'ē jēhim juga nija basa nija bütēm. 2.

The Supreme Being has two aspects—one is attributeless and unqualified aspect, and the other is a qualified aspect that has known attributes. The former is called 'Nirguna', and the latter is known as 'Saguna'. Both these forms of the Lord are beyond words as they cannot be described; they are unreachable by the mind as they are sublime and divine by nature; and they are peerless and unique in the sense that they have no beginning nor an end¹. (1)

In my (Tulsidas') view, Lord Ram's holy Name is greater and more powerful than both the above forms of the Supreme Being². [To wit, the holy Name of Lord Ram is far superior to and more important for a devotee than both the Saguna and the Nirguna forms of the Lord as it is easily accessible and helps to establish a bridge between the devotee and the Supreme Being who is extremely difficult to find and attain. The holy Name of the Lord helps the devotee to avoid getting confused and entangled in the maze of scriptural philosophies about which form of the Lord, the Saguna or the Nirguna, are best for one's spiritual objectives.]

In the current era of Kaliyug it has established its authority and glory by the virtue of its spiritual and mystical powers as well as its fame as being the most effective instrument that can provide a creature with liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92. Here, the greatness and majesty of Lord Ram and his form have been described. It is said that the glory of the Lord's name, form and stories are so astounding, vast and great that there is no comparison with anything else; no one can ever fathom them, even the scriptures have failed in this attempt. The Lord's glory is as fathomless and immeasurable as the ocean. So therefore, Lord Ram is compared to his own self, so say the Vedas!

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it, Lord Shiva too reiterates this view that Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and he is eternal, and without a beginning or an end.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 113 where Indra, the king of Gods, has also expressed a similar idea while offering his prayers to Lord Ram. He says: "There are some who worship the Lord's invisible, all-pervading cosmic form known as Brahm, a form that has been praised and endorsed in the Vedas and other scriptures as the Lord's primary and truthful form. But howbeit, I find the Lord's visible manifestation as Lord Ram." ; —to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6.

³This principle has already been explained as a note of Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 22 herein above.]

प्रौढ़ि सुजन जनि जानहिं जन की । कहउँ प्रतीति प्रीति रुचि मन की ॥ ३ ॥

एकु दारुगत देखिअ एकू । पावक सम जुग ब्रह्म बिबेकू ॥ ४ ॥
उभय अगम जुग सुगम नाम तें । कहेउँ नामु बड़ ब्रह्म राम तें ॥ ५ ॥

prauḍhi sujana jani jānahim̐ jana kī. kaha'um̐ pratīti prīti ruci mana kī. 3.
ēku dārugata dēkhi'a ēkū. pāvaka sama juga brahma bibēkū. 4.
ubhaya agama juga sugama nāma tēm̐. kahē'um̐ nāmu baṛa brahma rāma
tēm̐. 5.

Elders should not take this assertion of mine as being a boastful sermon. What I (Tulsidas) am saying is out of my own conviction that comes out of my own personal experience and observation. I have firm faith in what I say, and my mind is convinced of its truth and authenticity. (3)

The two aspects of God (Nirguna and Saguna) are like to the two aspects of fire—one aspect of fire which is invisible and latent in wood (which is the Nirguna aspect standing for the invisible and cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm), and the other aspect that is visible to all of us (the Saguna aspect that stands for the Lord's manifestation on earth as Lord Ram). This is the real wisdom of which the wise men talk about. (4)

It is true that both the forms of the Lord (as Brahm, the Supreme Being, and Lord Ram, the former's manifested form) are difficult to access, but the holy Name of the Lord is easily accessible to one and all. And the best part is that the name helps one to have access to both the forms of the Lord.

That is why I (Tulsidas) say that the Lord's holy Name is greater and more important than either Brahm or Lord Ram himself¹. (5)

[Note—¹The dilemma is that both Brahm and his manifested form are usually inaccessible to an ordinary seeker, whereas with this wisdom that the holy Name of the Lord is synonymous with the Lord, that the holy Name and the Lord are one, it is possible for everyone to have an easy access to the Lord. Hence Tulsidas asserts that the divine Name of the Lord is greater than the two aspects of God himself.

The formless aspect of the Lord is too abstract to be understood by an ordinary person and so the Lord goes out of his reach. The formed aspect of the Lord is limited to a specific era of time or place, and it is not possible for all to be physically present where the physical form of the Lord lives. But if one develops the wisdom that the holy Name of the Lord can be taken anywhere at any time and under any circumstance, and that the Name represents both the Nirguna Lord as well as the Saguna Lord, then the Lord becomes most easily accessible to him day and night.

When it is said that “the name helps to establish access to both the forms of the Lord, the Nirguna and the Saguna forms”, it is meant that the holy Name of the Lord can be used as a Mantra while meditating on Brahm and derive bliss and ecstasy of self-realisation as is done by ascetics (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 22 herein above), and it is used by devotees of all dispensations when they invoke Lord Ram by repeating his name to derive full benefit as if the Lord himself has come to bless them (refer: Chaupai line no. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 22 herein above).

Even a child can utter the word “RAM”. So it is extremely easy to use the holy Name of the Lord as a means to derive full spiritual benefits that are equivalent to having direct access to the Lord himself.

It has been said earlier that the name of the Lord acts as a bridge between the devotee and the Lord himself. Brahm had revealed himself in the form of Lord Ram ages ago in the era known as Tretayug, but even today a common man can feel the divine presence of the Lord just by remembering his holy Name with love, devotion and faith. Refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 21 herein above.

It may not be possible for someone who is very dear to our heart to be always be with us at all times of the day in our lives, but when we hear that person’s name his sweet memory immediately brings him close and makes his presence felt in a symbolic way. So is the case with Lord Ram—even though the Lord is not physically present today with us, but if we call out his holy Name with due devotion and faith then his divine presence can be felt and experienced.]

व्यापकु एकु ब्रह्म अबिनासी । सत चेतन घन आनंद रासी ॥ ६ ॥
 अस प्रभु हृदयँ अछत अबिकारी । सकल जीव जग दीन दुखारी ॥ ७ ॥
 नाम निरूपन नाम जतन तें । सोउ प्रगटत जिमि मोल रतन तें ॥ ८ ॥

byāpaku ēku brahma abināsī. sata cētana ghana ānam̐da rāsī. 6.
 asa prabhu hṛdayam̐ achata abikārī. sakala jīva jaga dīna dukhārī. 7.
 nāma nirūpana nāma jatana tēm̐. sō'u pragaṭata jimī mōla ratana tēm̐. 8.

Brahm, the Supreme Being, is eternal, attributeless and unqualified; he is all-pervading, universal and without a parallel. He is the supreme and absolute Truth, the pure Consciousness, and the center from where ‘bliss’ originates. (6)

Even though such a divine and holy Lord lives in everyone's heart as his Atma or soul (which is pure consciousness and an image of the cosmic Consciousness that Brahm represents)—it is such an irony and a pity that the people of this world are still miserable, tormented and unhappy. [It is because they do not realise that the Lord who is a fount of bliss and beatitude resides in their own heart, and not outside somewhere.] (7)

If Lord Ram's divine Name is evaluated properly like a jeweller evaluates a gem, it would dawn upon the seeker that it is like a priceless piece of jewel which can act as a panacea for all his worldly miseries and torments. [Just like a priceless piece of gem can make a man instantly wealthy and help him overcome all his financial difficulties, the name of the Lord can help him overcome all his worldly and spiritual problems, and give him everlasting peace and happiness. But it can only happen when he realises its importance and value.] (8)

दो०. निरगुन तें एहि भाँति बड़ नाम प्रभाउ अपार ।
 कहउँ नामु बड़ राम तें निज बिचार अनुसार ॥ २३ ॥

dōhā.

niraguna tēm ēhi bhām̐ti baṛa nāma prabhā'u apāra.
kaha'um̐ nāmu baṛa rāma tēm nija bicāra anusāra. 23.

I (Tulsidas) solemnly affirm that, in all sooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram's holy Name is far superior to the Nirguna (invisible, attributeless, unqualified, all-pervading and cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm).

Now, I shall tell you how the 'name' is greater than the divine incarnation of Brahm as Lord Ram. (Doha no. 23)

[Note—In the verses that follow herein below, a comparison would be now made between the Nirguna aspect of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and his Saguna counterpart known as Lord Ram. And then finally it would be explained how and why the 'name' of the Lord is superior to both of them.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 21, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23; (b) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 228.]

चौ०. राम भगत हित नर तनु धारी । सहि संकट किए साधु सुखारी ॥ १ ॥

नामु सप्रेम जपत अनयासा । भगत होहिं मुद मंगल बासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma bhagata hita nara tanu dhārī. sahi saṅkaṭa ki'ē sādhu sukhārī. 1.

nāmu saprēma japata anayāsā. bhagata hōhir̐ muda maṅgala bāsā. 2.

[In the verses that follow now, Tulsidas has emphasised the glory, the greatness and the spiritual importance of Lord Ram's name that is holy and divine by comparing it with that of Lord Ram's personal form and personal presence, and this comparison makes it obvious that while the physical form of Lord Ram has its own limitations and it benefited a limited numbers of devotees who lived during the period of the Lord's manifestation on earth, but the Lord's holy Name has an eternal presence as it transcends the limits of time and era, and has been providing protection, blessedness and spiritual rewards to countless devotees from time immemorial, and would continue to do so for eternity.

So whereas only a fortunate few could benefit from Lord Ram's personal presence during his incarnation, the Lord's holy Name is easily available to the living beings in all eras of time, the past, the presence and the future. As compared to the physical limitations of all sorts that the Supreme Being was subjected to in his form as Lord Ram by the virtue of his having to assume a body of a human being which inherently has many limitations, the holy Name of the Lord is free from all such inhibitions and limitations as it is in the form of a 'sound' that has no physical body that would impose any physical barriers or limitations upon it.

The holy Name of Lord Ram is like the cosmic sound of OM that is produced by the cosmic Consciousness that pervades and fills the entire space of creation; it can be pronounced at any time of the day and night by anyone and under any circumstance—and its spiritual rewards are there for all to have, without any discrimination. The holy Name of Lord Ram has been granting liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to all since time immemorial, is doing so now, and would continue to do so in the future as well.

To wit, in all sooth and without gainsay, while Lord Ram could bless only some fortunate ones who came in direct contact with him, the Lord's holy Name touches the lives and souls of all living being in all phases of time and creation.

So therefore one deduces that the spiritual value of Lord Ram's holy Name has far greater reach and far more importance than Lord Ram's physical form itself.]

The Supreme Being (who is without a form) had assumed a human form as Lord Ram for the sake and the good of his devotees, and he had to suffer a lot in order to make those who were pious and saintly happy¹. (1)

On the other hand, when the devotees of the Lord repeat his holy Name with due love, faith, devotion and dedication, they unwittingly, even without being aware of it themselves, become an abode of abiding happiness and eternal joy because the Lord's glorious name is inherently and by its very nature a provider of blessedness, bliss, auspiciousness, beatitude and felicity of the best kind to one and all without any discrimination². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the supreme Brahm. He had to assume the form of a human being and come down to earth when Mother Earth and the Gods prayed to him to do so to free the earth and protect its good inhabitants from the terror and horror unleashed by the demons who symbolised all hues of evil, sins, cruelty, tyranny, perversities et al one can ever imagine of.

This entire episode—why Lord Vishnu came down to earth in the form of Lord Ram—has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 176—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 189.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 13 where the saint-poet Tulsidas tells us that Lord Ram was actually a manifested and visible form of the Supreme Being who has a cosmic form that is invisible, all-pervading and all-encompassing; (ii) Doha no. 51 where Lord Shiva has endorsed this view himself while trying to convince his consort Sati about the glory and the divinity of Lord Ram; (b) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 72 where the saintly crow Kaagbhusund has reiterated the same point before Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu who had approached the former to remove some doubts about Lord Ram's divinity and glories that had befuddled his mind.

²To wit, though the Supreme Being had to suffer great hardships himself when he took a visible form as Lord Ram, the Lord's divine Name is so grand, mystically powerful and divine that all those who say it or even remember it are freed from all sorts of sufferings and miseries in this world. They become a virtual treasury of bliss and happiness of a pristine kind.

The fact that Lord Ram had to undergo sufferings like an ordinary human being is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 211.

It was necessary for the Lord to undergo suffering like an ordinary man in order to conform to the Laws of Creation which the Supreme Lord had himself laid down—that all living beings who have a gross body are subjected to sufferings of some kind, and it is how a person deals with these sufferings and takes them in his stride, how he maintains his balance of mind and heart, how he adheres to and upholds the laws of righteousness, probity and propriety in the face of the greatest of challenges, how he remains calm and unruffled during the greatest of adversities and

lows of life, how dispassionate and detached he is from the grossness of the material world and its emotional upheavals, and how inspite of his personal miseries and torments he gives warmth and love to all around him are some of the factors that would distinguish him from the rest. We find in the life of Lord Ram that all these and countless other such noble and glorious virtues were exemplified by him.]

राम एक तापस तिय तारी । नाम कोटि खल कुमति सुधारी ॥ ३ ॥

रिषि हित राम सुकेतुसुता की । सहित सेन सुत कीन्हि बिबाकी ॥ ४ ॥

सहित दोष दुख दास दुरासा । दलइ नामु जिमि रबि निसि नासा ॥ ५ ॥

rāma ēka tāpasa tiya tāri. nāma kōṭi khala kumati sudhāri. 3.

riṣi hita rāma sukētusutā kī. sahita sēna suta kīnhi bibākī. 4.

sahita dōṣa dukha dāsa durāsā. dala'i nāmu jimī rabi nisi nāsā. 5.

Lord Ram had redeemed a single woman (a reference to Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who had turned into a stone due to a curse)¹, but his holy and divine Name (Ram, Rāma or Raam) corrected the fate and the spiritual destiny of millions of wicked souls². (3)

For the good of sage Viswamitra, Lord Ram had slayed a demonic woman named Tadka, who was a daughter of Suketu Yaksha, along with her son's army³. (4)

But Lord Ram's holy Name destroys a devotee's vain hopes arising out of worldly delusions that cause him immense grief, that torment him endlessly, and create sorrows for him, just like the rays or the light of the Sun destroys the darkness of night⁴. (5)

[Note—¹This story is about Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam. Briefly it is as follows:

She was a devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see

nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken-pox.

The story of Ahilya's liberation from her horrifying curse is this: When Lord Ram, accompanied by his brother Laxman, was on his way to Janakpur with sage Vishwamitra to attend the bow-breaking ceremony where later on he would marry Janka's daughter Sita, the Lord saw a rock or a boulder, perhaps shaped like a lady, lying alone and forlorn in an abandoned hermitage. This aroused the Lord's curiosity. When he enquired about it, the sage told him the story of Ahilya and how she became a stone. The sage asked Lords Ram to be gracious upon her and free her from her torments by removing the curse by touching her with the dust of his holy feet. As soon as the Lord touched that rock with his foot, Ahilya was revived. She had tears rolling down her eyes, and with a bowed head and heart overflowing with gratitude and joy she offered her prayers and obeisance to Lord Ram. Then she went back to heaven to be reunited with her husband, sage Gautam.

This story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60; (c) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 39-40; (d) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-61; and (e) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, from Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33—to Sarga/Canto 49, verse nos. 1-21.

²To wit, the holy Name of Lord Ram is so pure and mystically powerful that it provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to countless creatures. The mere utterance of the holy Name of the Lord frees all the living beings from their wickedness, and if they regularly invoke it then their entire being becomes pure and holy as those of saints and pious people.

³When sage Vishwamitra was returning to his hermitage with Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, he was attacked by a demoness named Tadka. Lord Ram slayed her with a single arrow. This event is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209.

Then when the sage got engaged in his fire sacrifice, Lord Ram and Laxman stood guard. At that time, a huge army of demons led by Marich and Subahu, who were kin of Tadka, attacked. They were led by Marich and Subahu. In the battle that followed, Lord Ram and Laxman eliminated all the demons, but Marich was shot by a head-less arrow of Lord Ram that did not kill him but flung him to a remote island in the middle of the ocean. In this way, Lord Ram provided joy to sage Vishwamitra and other sages by helping them complete their fire sacrifice. This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

⁴The darkness of the night is compared to the many fears that torment a creature in this world, and Lord Ram's holy Name is likened to the sunlight that instantly removes this darkness. To wit, Lord Ram's holy Name removes all the fears that cause immense and endless distress to a devotee, and it assures him of constant protection throughout his life.]

भंजेउ राम आपु भव चापू । भव भय भंजन नाम प्रतापू ॥ ६ ॥
 दंडक बनु प्रभु कीन्ह सुहावन । जन मन अमित नाम किए पावन ॥ ७ ॥
 निसिचर निकर दले रघुनंदन । नामु सकल कलि कलुष निकंदन ॥ ८ ॥

bhanjē'u rāma āpu bhava cāpū. bhava bhaya bhanjana nāma pratāpū. 6.
 daṇḍaka banu prabhu kīnha suhāvana. jana mana amita nāma ki'ē pāvana. 7.
 nisicara nikara dalē raghunandana. nāmu sakala kali kaluṣa nikandana. 8.

Lord Ram broke the Bow of Lord Shiva¹, but his divine Name breaks the dread of rebirth of his devotees. (6)

Lord Ram transformed only one inhospitable forest called Dandaka into one that was full of charm and beauty², whereas his divine Name has purified the minds of numerous devotees and made them glorious and praiseworthy. (7)

The son (i.e. Lord Ram) who born in the line of glorious Kings of the Raghu Dynasty of the kingdom of Ayodhya (raghunandana) had crushed only a handful of demons³, but his powerful Name crushes all the sorrows, pains, miseries and torments during the era of Kali (which is rich in negativity and its accompanying pains and miseries). (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6.—to Doha no. 264.

Briefly, the story is this: The King of Janakpur was known as Janak, and he had a daughter named Sita. He had in his custody an ancient bow that was kept by Lord Shiva with his ancestors generations ago. That bow had become fragile and useless even for Lord Shiva, and was of no use for Janak either. But it was formidable and strong and heavy nonetheless as it belonged the Shiva. So in order to judge who is the strongest, the most powerful and courageous man in this world whom he could pick to be his daughter's groom, Janak decided that whosoever broke this bow would marry Sita. So he declared a 'Bow Breaking Ceremony' in which all the great princes, kings and warriors of that era were invited. Some came by invitation, and some came on their own to try their luck, as everyone had heard of Sita's matchless beauty and charm. In the competition that followed, no one could as much as move the great bow an inch, what to talk of lifting and breaking it. By-and-by, Lord Ram broke the bow and married Sita.

²During his stay in the forest, Lord Ram had spent some time in the most inhospitable part of it that was called Dandak. It was cursed by sage Sukracharya, and so it became barren. Lord Ram lived here on the banks of river Godavari at a place that was green and had large trees of five kinds, giving it the name of Panchavati—the 'garden of five trees'. Here, Lord Ram had met the old king of birds known as Jatayu, and he had blessed the many sages and hermits who lived here in seclusion to carry on with their spiritual objectives undisturbed by the hustle and bustle of the populated parts of the world. The Lord's presence in this otherwise barren part of the forest had transmuted it into a verdant and vibrant forest full of greenery and fruit bearing trees. The Lord's holy presence had also blessed the sages and hermits who dwelled there. Refer: Ram

Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14.

It was here in the Dandak forest that the demoness named Supernakha had tried to play fools with Lord Ram by assuming the form of a beautiful lady and lure him to marry her. At this pervert, sinful and unrighteous move of her, the Lord had got her nose and ears chopped off by Laxman. This event ultimately led to the abduction of Sita by the demon king Ravana, and the ruinous war of Lanka.

³When Supernakha was deformed, her cousin brothers Khar and Dushan had attacked Lord Ram with a huge army of demons to take revenge. The Lord had slayed them all then. Besides these demons there were many more who were slayed by the Lord personally. So this verse means that while it is true that Lord Ram had personally eliminated many demons representing evil, vile and sinful forces in the world, it is the Lord's holy Name that takes the trophy and the glory because it has been continuously eliminating countless such symbolic demons down the ages and providing delight and happiness to devotees by eliminating their fears and miseries in this world.]

दो०. सबरी गीध सुसेवकनि सुगति दीन्हि रघुनाथ ।
नाम उधारे अमित खल बेद बिदित गुन गाथ ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

sabarī gīdha susēvakani sugati dīnhi raghunātha.
nāma udhārē amita khala bēda bidita guna gātha. 24.

Raghu-Nath (the Lord of king Raghu's dynasty; Lord Ram) gave immortality to only a few faithful devotees of his, such as Sabari (the old woman)¹ and Giddha (a vulture called Jatau)², whereas the Lord's holy Name has delivered, liberated and provided salvation and emancipation to numerous lowly creatures who had no hope of ever getting delivered from their miserable lives—a fact that is well known and lauded even by the Vedas which sing (extol and repeatedly stress) the greatness and the glory of the holy Name of Lord Ram. (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had provided liberation and deliverance to an old, low-caste lady named Sabari (or Shabari) who lived alone in the forest and was eagerly waiting for the Lord's arrival. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.

Her story in brief is this: According to the story of Ramayana, Shabari was a woman belonging to a forest tribe called 'Shabari'. This tribe was classified as Shudras or lower caste, and sustained themselves by collecting and selling honey and fruits from the forest trees. Being of a low caste, she is said have been ostracized by others. She served a sage named Matanga very devotedly. The sage was a realised soul, and so pleased was he with her devotion and service that he blessed her at the time of leaving his body that she would find her emancipation and salvation when Lord Ram visits her while searching for Sita. Like her Guru, Shabari too left her mortal body after having the privilege of meeting and worshipping the Lord in person by lighting the pyre herself with her mystical powers. According to Adhyatma Ramayana of sage Veda Vyas, it was Lord Ram who had performed her last rites himself, a rare privilege that was even denied to his own worldly father Dasrath.

Shabari used to live in the hermitage where earlier sage Matanga lived. This hermitage was near Mount Rishyamook where Sugriv, the exiled younger brother of the king of monkeys Baali, lived with his close confidantes Hanuman, Jamvant, Naal and Neel etc. This place was about ten Yojans or eighty miles from Kishkindha, the capital of the forest kingdom of which Baali was the king.

There is a story about Lake Pampa on the banks of which she lived. The great sage Matang had his hermitage here. Shabari used to get up very early and clean the path around this lake before her Guru went there for his daily bath and other chores. It so happened that one day, the sages and seers who lived in that area saw her cleaning the path leading to the lake very early in the morning. Since she was of a low caste, they cursed and scolded her because they regarded her appearance as defiling the place. This misplaced notion of superiority and high stature immensely displeased the Lord. So as soon as those haughty and proud sages went and took a dip in that lake, its water turned turbid, polluted and infested by warms and filth. When Sri Ram had gone there during his forest exile, the sages and seers requested him to purify that lake. Sri Ram, being all-knowing, knew the secret behind that pollution, and in order to teach those sages a lesson of their lives, he asked them to request Sabari to take a dip in it. As soon as she did it, the water regained its former pristine purity, and the lake its former exceptional scenic beauty. This made the haughty sages and seers feel ashamed at their ignorance and behaviour.

Lord Sri Ram had visited her hermitage and enjoyed the fruits offered by her just like he would have enjoyed them if they were given to him by his mother. In the 'Ram-Sarawali of Surdas', verse no. 11, it is said that 'Sabari was a long time ardent devotee and a humble follower of Raghupati (Sri Ram). He accepted and ate fruits offered by her, preached her on the concept of complete devotion, and then liberated her by giving her residence in his own abode.'

It was Shabari who had advised Sri Ram to go towards the Rishyamook mountain and make friends with Sugriv, the monkey king, who in turn would help the Lord in finding out Sita and freeing her from the clutches of her captors.

²Jatau was the king of vultures. He was befriended by Lord Ram when the Lord was passing through the Dandak forest. Jatau was a friend of Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, and he had assured the Lord that he will stay in close proximity to them (Ram, Sita and Laxman) in the forest to keep a vigilant eye and give them protection to the best of his might—this is narrated in the Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-7. This fact is also endorsed by Tulsidas in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 12, stanza no. 2.

True to his word, Jatau had fought valiantly with the demon king Ravana when the latter was taking Sita on his chariot to Lanka after abducting her. He was mortally wounded as Ravana cut off his wings. So Jatau fell to the ground and waited for Lord Ram's arrival. By-and-by the Lord came there and was told by Jatau about Ravana taking Sita away. Jatau died in the arms of Lord Ram, a death no one's been fortunate ever to have. The Lord performed his last rites just as a son does for his own father. Thus, Jatau was granted liberation and deliverance by the Lord. These episodes are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Doha no. 13; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.

The glorious way that Jatau died has been lauded and applauded by Tulsidas in Dohawali verse nos. 222-227. Refer also to Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse nos. 12-16.

“Lord Ram lifted Jatayu onto his lap and washed his wounds with the tears streaming from his (Ram’s) eyes”—this is said in Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 13, stanza no. 1, while Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 30 says that “the Lord moved his loving hand caressingly on his head”.

Jatayu’s special death which made him a subject of jealousy and envy for all other exalted persons as narrated in the Doha above has one unique aspect—in spite of him being a vulture by birth and body, he was given an honour befitting a father by none else than the Supreme Being (Lord Ram) himself when the Lord performed his last rites himself—refer: (i) Geetawali, Aranya Kand, verse no. 16, stanza no. 4; verse no. 14, stanza no. 1; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 32; (iii) Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 16, line no. 3; (iv) Doha no. 227 of Dohawali; (v) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 164, stanza no. 2; verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1.

Vinai Patrika, verse no. 138, stanza no. 3, line no. 1 says that Lord Ram offered a ‘Pinda’, a ball of cereals that is offered to the soul of one’s departed parent, to Jatayu after the bird left its physical body.]

चौ० राम सुकंठ बिभीषन दोऊ । राखे सरन जान सबु कोऊ ॥ १ ॥

नाम गरीब अनेक नेवाजे । लोक बेद बर बिरिद बिराजे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma sukaṅṭha bibhīṣana dō'ū. rākhē sarana jāna sabu kō'ū. 1.

nāma garība anēka nēvājē. lōka bēda bara birida birājē. 2.

As is well known to all, Lord Ram gave refuge to and restored the self-respect and dignity of only two persons by helping them to get back the kingdoms from which they were ousted by their respective elder brothers—one was Sugriva (the heir to the monkey kingdom, and brother of Baali)¹, and the other was Vibhishan (the brother of Ravana, the king of the demons)². (1)

On the other hand, the Lord’s divine and holy Name has given protection, succour and solace to numerous humble and poor souls from time immemorial. This glory is well known and well established in the world as well as in the Vedas³. (2)

[Note—¹Sugriva, the monkey prince, had a well-formed and attractive neck, and hence got the name “sukaṅṭha”. We read in the story of the Ramayana that Sugriva, the monkey prince, was beaten, disinherited and thrown into exile by his elder brother Baali, the monkey king, due to some misunderstanding between the two. Sugriva was so terrified of Baali who was baying for his blood that he escaped to the summit of a mountain called Rishyamook along with his trusted aides, and lived a sorrowful life in hiding. When Lord Ram was wandering in the forest in search of Sita, his wife who was abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, he passed that way. By-and-by, the Lord and Sugriva struck a bond of friendship, and the Lord promised him to restore his lost dignity and right to the kingdom of Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom, from which he was disinherited. In return, Sugriva promised the Lord that he would do all he can to help the Lord find Sita and recover her, even if that meant a war with Sita’s abductor. To keep his part of the bargain, Lord Ram had slain Baali and restored Sugriva to the throne of Kishkindha.

The full story of Baali and Sugriv is narrated in detail in (i) sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttarkand, Canto 3; (ii) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand (Chapter), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse no. 140-152; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 11.

The full story is this: Sugriv and Baali were two brothers, Baali being the elder of the two siblings. They were the rulers of the monkey race and had their capital at Kishkindha. Once, a demon named Dundhubhi came to challenge Baali for a duel. Baali killed him and flung his dead body on the mountain called Rishyamook. Blood of the demon sprayed in all the directions, and this blood defiled a hermitage of a sage who lived on this mountain. So he cursed that if Baali ever came in that place he would die. It was out of this fear that Baali never came near Mt. Rishyamook.

Earlier, the two brothers had very cordial relations. Once a demon named Maayaawi, the son of Maye, came to Kishkindha and challenged Baali. When Baali rushed towards him, the demon fled and hid inside a cave. Baali pursued him inside, but while entering the cave he told his younger brother Surgriv to guard the mouth of the cave and wait for him for at least a fortnight. Sugriv waited for one full month, but Baali did not come back. At the end of this period blood started seeping out of the mouth of the cave. Thinking that the demon has killed his brother and would come out to kill him also, Sugriv covered the mouth of the cave with a huge boulder and fled from there. When he returned to Kishkindha, the courtiers had no choice but to anoint him as the king in place of his brother whom they all thought was killed by the demon.

Meanwhile it so happened that the blood that had seeped out of the cave's mouth was that of the demon who was killed by Baali. When Baali came out, he did not find Sugriv, and to make matters worse he found the mouth of the cave closed by a heavy boulder. When he came back to Kishkindha he found Sugriv on the throne. Naturally of course he went mad with anger, and beat his brother mercilessly. Sugriv, though not at all at fault, tried his best to explain the situation to Baali, but the seed of misunderstanding and animosity was already sown, and seeing no way out, Sugriv fled with his life. Baali usurped the kingdom and the wife of Sugriv forcibly. Sugriv was so terrified of Baali who was baying for his blood that he escaped to the summit of a mountain called Rishyamook along with his trusted aides, and lived a forlorn and sorrowful life in hiding, because he knew that Baali would never come to harm him here because of the sage's earlier curse.

The story goes that on some previous occasion Baali had collected seven fruits of the coconut tree and kept them on the ground to take bath in the lake known as Pampaa. When he returned he found that a huge python was sitting on these seven fruits. This was tantamount to defiling the fruits and so Baali cursed the serpent that the seven fruits would pierce his body and grow into tall trees. When the mother of the serpent came to know of this curse, she also cursed Baali that anyone who would cut these seven coconut trees with a single arrow would be the one who would also kill him.

When Lord Ram was wandering in the forest in search of Sita, his wife who was abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, he passed that way. By-and-by, the Lord and Sugriv struck a bond of friendship, and the Lord promised him to restore his lost dignity and right to the kingdom of Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom, from which he was disinherited. In return, Sugriv promised the Lord that he would do all he can to help the Lord find Sita and recover her, even if that meant a war with Sita's abductor.

Sugriv knew about the secret of the seven coconut trees. As he wished to be sure that Lord Ram was indeed capable to restore him to the throne of Kishkindha by eliminating Baali, and that the things wouldn't go out of hands and make life further tormenting for him, Sugriv asked the Lord to fell these seven tall coconut trees with a single arrow. So when Lord Sri Ram felled the seven trees with an arrow, Sugriv knew that the Lord would indeed be able to kill his arch enemy Baali.

With Lord Sri Ram's patronage and support, Sugriv went and challenged his elder brother Baali for a duel. Baali was absolutely stunned, as he had never expected Sugriv to ever have enough courage and strength to challenge him like this. His wife Taaraa also tried to dissuade him by pointing out that Sugriv has the support of Lord Sri Ram who is the Supreme Being incarnate, but Baali was wiser because he decided that either way he was the winner. If he managed to eliminate Sugriv then he would get rid of this constant nuisance of a brother, and if he gets killed at the hands of Lord Sri Ram then also he will be lucky as his emancipation and salvation was absolutely sure. Where, he thought to himself, will he get such an opportunity again in life. In the first bout, Sugriv got bruised and beaten badly. He limped back to Sri Ram and complained bitterly. The Lord replied that he did not shoot Baali because the two brothers looked exactly alike and he could not distinguish between them. There was a hidden message in this statement—the Lord wished to convey to Sugriv that for him all the creatures are alike. But at the same time he had to keep the words he had given to Sugriv that he would eliminate his enemy Baali. So the Lord put a garland around his neck, purportedly to identify him but actually to finally warn Baali that the victory of Sugriv is decided, and if he wants to save himself then he must make a truce. This time around too, Baali beat Sugriv black and blue. The Lord was watching the proceedings from behind a tree. When the situation became worst and Sugriv was about to be knocked down, the Lord shot an arrow that hit Baali and he fell down.

It is said that Lord Sri Ram had to shoot Baali from hiding because the latter had a boon which said that half of the enemy's strength would pass on to Baali if the enemy is within his sight. Nevertheless, Baali felt privileged that the Lord of the world has himself killed him and given his soul the chance of finding liberation and deliverance from the fetters of the gross body of a monkey. At the time of death, Baali put his son Angad in the Lord's custody. This showed that Baali was extremely prudent and wise. By entrusting the conqueror Ram with the safety and security of his son Angad he ensured that Angad would be safe from any kind of evil design of his uncle Sugriv who would now never try to kill him overtly or covertly.

Besides this thing of the Lord giving Sugriv his word to kill his enemy and undo the grave injustice done to him and restore his dignity and right to the kingdom, there was another very important reason why Baali had to be eliminated. On some previous occasion a reciprocal military pact was made between Baali and Ravana that essentially said that they would not allow their respective territories to be used to launch an attack on the other, and also that they would come to each others aid should either of them is called to do so. The story is that once Baali had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. This story is narrated in *Anand Ramayan*, Saar Kanda (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 96-101.

Since Lord Sri Ram needed to cross the territory of Kishkindha and also take the help of the army of this place to launch an assault on Lanka it was militarily wise and prudent to eliminate the foe in the backyard.

But the Lord knew the constraints under which he had to eliminate Baali though the latter had not offended the Lord in any manner whatsoever. The Lord was well aware of his responsibilities towards Angad and he wished to rectify this apparent biased action of his of killing Baali at the behest of Sugriv—so he ensured that the final right to the kingdom of Kishkindha went to the heir of Baali, instead of the heir of Sugriv, by appointing Angad as the heir-apparent or the prince regent, and declaring that though Sugriv was made the king of Kishkindha upon Baali's death it was Angad who would succeed to the throne after Sugriv instead of any direct descendent of Sugriv such as his own son.

²Vibhishan was the younger brother of Ravana, the king of the demon race and the one who had abducted Sita. When Lord Ram launched a campaign to retrieve Sita from his clutches and a ruinous war loomed on the horizon, many of Ravana's ministers and councillors tried to persuade him to give Sita back to the Lord and avoid total destruction. But by the fiat of fate had shrouded Ravana's wisdom in a thick veil of dooms-day darkness so much that he had become excessively stubborn and unamenable and so much deluded about his own invincibility, strength and powers that it warn't no good trying to make him see reason and act with prudence as he wasn't ready to lend his ears to nobody who dared to give him any sane advice that was against what he wished to hear; he would listen to no nothing. He warn't to blame for it for the hungry god-of-death had already bared his teeth for him. One such well-wishing advisor of his was Visbhishan, his own brother. But instead of facing harsh reality, Ravana was got so angry at his brother that he kicked him in full court and told him to get out immediately. Fearing for his life and smarting from grave insult, Vibhishan left Lanka and came to Lord Ram to seek refuge with him. The Lord of course graciously granted him refuge, promising him not only fearlessness from his arch enemy Ravana but also the throne of Lanka after the war.

This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.

³A similar idea—that the glory and divinity of Lord Ram's holy Name is well known throughout the world and well established in the Vedas, the ancient scripture—has also been expressed in Doha no. 24 herein above. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Doha no. 51 where Lord Shiva has affirmed this point in an unequivocal term.

The point being stressed here is that while Lord Ram was personally able to restore the dignity and self-respect of only some selected individuals, such as Sugriv and Vibhishan in this particular case, and had granted them fearlessness from their tormentors, the holy Name of the Lord has been doing it for ages and from time immemorial for countless creatures all over the world.]

राम भालु कपि कटकु बटोरा । सेतु हेतु श्रमु कीन्ह न थोरा ॥ ३ ॥
नामु लेत भवसिंधु सुखाहीं । करहु बिचारु सुजन मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

rāma bhālu kapi kaṭaku baṭōrā. sētu hētu śramu kīnha na thōrā. 3.
nāmu lēta bhavasindhu sukhāhīm. karahu bicāru sujana mana māhīm. 4.

Lord Ram had collected an army of bears and monkeys, and took a lot of trouble to construct a bridge across the ocean (to cross over to Sri Lanka to fight and bring back Sita from the clutches of demon Ravana)¹. (3)

But mere pronouncing Lord's holy Name is enough to dry-up the ocean represented by all the entanglements of this mundane, gross, delusory and dreary world. So oh wise men, think this over in your mind and ponder over it's significance². (4)

[Note—¹The story of Lord Ram constructing the mighty bridge across the ocean to reach the shores of Lanka is narrated in all the versions of the story of the Ramayana. Presently we will refer only to Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas where we read about it in Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5.

²This verse stresses that Lord Ram's holy Name helps a creature to easily cross this formidable world of transmigration, a world that is compared to the mighty and monstrous ocean because it is almost impossible to cross it, and more often than not this monster drowned people who dared to challenge it. But the glory of the holy Name of Lord Ram is such that with the help of it a creature can easily and as comfortably get across as if one was walking over a bridge. To wit, Lord Ram's holy Name makes a creature fearless in the face of the horrors of this world of birth and death, and it assures the creature that the future of his soul is secured. If a creature takes the help of the Lord's holy Name then he can easily find liberation and deliverance for himself; his soul would certainly and without gainsay attain emancipation and salvation. It would be as easy for a creature as walking across a bridge to reach the other side of an ocean, without being subjected to a bumpy ride on a boat, no matter how sturdy it may be, a-tossing, a-joggling, a-wobbling and a-stumbling, spinning, heaving and plunging so fiercely on the waves in order to cross a choppy ocean represented by this mundane, gross world of transmigration.

Lord Ram's holy Name would make this journey-of-life very peaceful and joyful for a devotee who would be at ease during his life in this world as he is assured of an all-round protection offered by the shield of the Lord's holy Name, and he is also assured of eternal peace and beatitude in the world hereafter as Lord Ram's divine Name would ensure of his soul's emancipation and salvation and eternal rest.

This verse essentially says that though there are many other means to attain liberation and deliverance as advised in the scriptures, such as doing Tapa (penance, austerity), Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Japa (repetition of holy Mantras), Daan (making charity), Yagya (fire and other religious sacrifices), Vrat (keeping fast and observing many vows and sacraments) and so on and so forth, but the most comfortable and easy path is that of Lord Ram's holy Name, for all other paths are strenuous and cumbersome, and they are rife with countless hurdles and problems that create a lot of uncertainty and trouble for the creature.]

राम सकुल रन रावनु मारा । सीय सहित निज पुर पगु धारा ॥ ५ ॥

राजा रामु अवध रजधानी । गावत गुन सुर मुनि बर बानी ॥ ६ ॥

rāma sakula rana rāvanu mārā. siya sahita nija pura pagu dhārā. 5.
rājā rāmu avadha rajadhānī. gāvata guna sura muni bara bānī. 6.

Lord Ram had killed Ravana and his entire clan (except Vivhishan), and then returned to his capital Ayodhya along with Sita. (5)

He then was anointed as the King of Ayodhya with Sita as the Queen, while gods and sages sung his praises, virtues and glories in best of terms. (6)

[Note—These events are narrated in full in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Doha no. 102—to Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 15.]

सेवक सुमिरत नामु सप्रीती । बिनु श्रम प्रबल मोह दलु जीती ॥ ७ ॥
फिरत सनेहँ मगन सुख अपनेँ । नाम प्रसाद सोच नहिँ सपनेँ ॥ ८ ॥

sēvaka sumirata nāmu saprītī. binu śrama prabala mōha dalu jītī. 7.
phirata sanēhamṁ magana sukha apanēm. nāma prasāda sōca nahimṁ
sapanēm. 8.

As compared to this, the Lord's devotees and followers are able to conquer an army of faults and delusions (known as Maya) without exertion simply by remembering the holy Name of the Lord with love and devotion. [To wit, while Lord Ram had to gather a huge army and wage a ferocious and strenuous war to eliminate the sinful and evil demons who were terrifying the world, the Lord's holy Name enables his devotees to overcome all their fears, sins and faults most easily and effortlessly.] (7)

These devotees of the Lord roam around cheerfully and fearlessly, absorbed in the thoughts of the Lord, and deeply immersed in the ocean of bliss that comes with having devotion for the Lord. By doing this, they derive immense joy, happiness and beatitude. They are not worried about anything even in their dreams, thanks to the glory and the grace of Lord Ram's holy Name. (8)

दो०. ब्रह्म राम तेँ नामु बड़ बर दायक बर दानि ।
रामचरित सत कोटि महँ लिय महेस जियँ जानि ॥ २५ ॥
dōhā.

brahma rāma tēm nāmu baṛa bara dāyaka bara dāni.
rāmacarita sata kōṭi mahamṁ liya mahēsa jiyamṁ jāni. 25.

So therefore we conclude that the divine and the holy Name of Lord Ram is greater and superior than Brahm (the Absolute and Supreme Being) himself (because Brahm had manifested in the form of Lord Ram).

The Lord's holy Name bestows blessings and grants boons even to those exalted souls who themselves are capable of granting boons and blessing others. [This refers to the great gods as well as the sages, hermits and saints who can bless others

and grant boons to them. To wit, these gods, sages, hermits and saints and et al derive their mystical powers relying on the strength of Lord Ram's holy Name. The Name of the Lord empowers them to do so; they derive their authority and power by the virtue of their invoking and using the Lord's holy Name while granting boons and blessings.]

Wise as he was, Lord Shiva selected these two syllables (Ra and Ma that form the divine name of the Lord as 'RAM') out of the one hundred million verses comprising the story of Lord Ram¹. [To wit, out of so many choices and options available to Shiva, he selected these two letters as the easiest means to attain one's spiritual goal as well as to obtain whatever one desires in this world. When these two letters were joined by him, they formed the word 'Ram'. So this became the Mantra which Shiva repeats constantly and consistently, and consequentially he has found eternal bliss and tranquility. Not only this, he became renowned as the wisest amongst the pantheon of Gods.] (Doha no. 25)

[Note—¹Refer: Barvai Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 56.

The idea is that Lord Ram's name RAM ('Rāma' or 'Raam') is very divine and holy. It is not an ordinary name, but more powerful than any other Mantra (spiritual formula) advised in the scriptures. Its glory and majesty has been extolled and endorsed by the Vedas themselves as clearly mentioned herein above in Doha no. 24 and Chaupai line no. 2 that follows it.]

मासपारायण, पहला विश्राम (māsapārāyaṇa, pahalā viśrāma)

[This is the point where a pause, the first such, is made if this Holy Book 'Ram Charit Manas' is recited for a whole month.]

चौ०. नाम प्रसाद संभु अबिनासी । साजु अमंगल मंगल रासी ॥ १ ॥
सुक सनकादि सिद्ध मुनि जोगी । नाम प्रसाद ब्रह्मसुख भोगी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

nāma prasāda sambhu abināsī. sāju amaṅgala maṅgala rāsī. 1.
suka sanakādi sid'dha muni jōgī. nāma prasāda brahmasukha bhōgī. 2.

[In the following verses, a lot many instances are cited where well-known devotees of the Lord had attained blessedness and beatitude as well fame and an exalted stature by invoking the holy Name of Lord Ram. These instances are employed to lend support to the advice given in earlier verses about the greatness and the glory, the importance and the value, the effectiveness and the surety of employing Lord Ram's holy Name as a wonderful and mystically empowered sure-shot formula that can help a person to attain his spiritual objectives. The Lord's holy Name is richly endowed with all auspiciousness, blissfulness, blessedness, beatitude and felicity.]

By the grace of Lord Ram's holy and auspicious Name, Lord Shiva has become immortal. And inspite of having inauspicious and ominous forms of paraphernalia on

his body (such as having serpents wrapped all around his body, wearing a wreath of skulls around his neck, and having ash smeared all over his almost naked body), he has become a treasury of the best of spiritual glories, values, blessings and auspiciousness¹. (1)

The glory of the holy Name of Lord Ram is such that all those who have attained true bliss and beatitude, such as the sages Suka, Sankadi etc., and other such sages and yogis (mystics) who enjoy the supreme joy which comes with the blissful state of self and Brahm realisation—all of them have attained it due to the grace of Lord Ram's auspicious Name which is holy and divine². (2)

[Note—¹In the Hindu pantheon of Gods, Lord Shiva occupies the most exalted place of honour. He is one of the Gods of the Trinity, and is revered and honoured by all the other Gods for his mysticism, wisdom and enlightenment. Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the second God of the Trinity and deemed to be a personified form of the Supreme Being, has himself said that if a person wishes to have devotion for him and attain beatitude and felicity of self-realisation and Brahm-realisation, then it is obligatory for the aspirant to worship Lord Shiva first as he is very dear to Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

It is also Lord Ram's declaration that his devotion is granted by those who worship and pay obeisance to Lord Shiva—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Lord Shiva's external appearances that look very horrifying on their face value are very misleading, for the Lord actually is a great mystic, an Yogi par-excellence, one who is a treasury of holiness, auspiciousness, divinity and spirituality. He has assumed this unconventional attire of being wrapped in serpents, having ash all over his body and wearing a garland of skulls just to keep at bay and dissuade those who are not true devotees and not sincere in their spiritual pursuit, and worship Lord Shiva only to fulfill their worldly desires. The Lord abhors them for he hates deceit and conceit in his devotees, and nor does he like selfish ones who pretend to worship the Lord but it is only to fulfill some worldly aspirations.

Lord Shiva's most odd external appearance has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 92.

²All the great sages and mystics have unanimously declared that they have attained the state of eternal blissfulness and beatitude by relying upon the holy Name of Lord Ram. To wit, the Lord's holy Name is the formula that all self-realised and enlightened souls who have attained bliss, beatitude and felicity have employed to attain this exalted and eclectic state of being.]

नारद जानेउ नाम प्रतापू । जग प्रिय हरि हरि हर प्रिय आपू ॥ ३ ॥

नामु जपत प्रभु कीन्ह प्रसादू । भगत सिरोमनि भे प्रहलादू ॥ ४ ॥

nārada jānē'u nāma pratāpū. jaga priya hari hari hara priya āpū. 3.

nāmu japata prabhu kīnha prasādū. bhagata sirōmani bhē prahalādū. 4.

Sage Narad knows the glory, the power and the importance of the holy Name of Lord Ram. That is why while the world loves Sri Hari (Vishnu), and Lord Shiva (Har) is dear to Hari (Vishnu), sage Narad is loved by both Har and Hari¹. (3)

By the grace of Lord Ram's holy Name, Prahalad² became a jewel (i.e. most honoured and respected one) amongst the devotees of the Lord (and he was freed from the fear of his demonic father who was ready to kill him). (4)

[Note—¹Sage Narad constantly repeats the holy Name of the Lord, and wherever he goes he announces his arrival by saying aloud 'Hari Hari'. The word immediately gives him recognition and invites great respect. He is welcomed everywhere, even by the demons who are otherwise inimical towards Lord Vishnu, one of whose names is 'Hari'. This is because the demons realise that Narad is shielded by a very powerful shield of the Lord's holy Name, and he is invoking the Supreme Being who is the supreme Lord of creation, and therefore of the demons also. Narad has been blessed with the boon of having access to all parts of creation precisely on the strength of the Lord's Name because he goes everywhere chanting the Name. It opens the door for him in all the directions of creation as if it were a magical charm that opens all doors and removes all obstacles.

Lord Shiva's other name is 'Har'. It literally means 'one who steals or removes all evil and sins as well as all worldly attachments and delusions from his devotees'. This paves the way for the devotees' liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Lord Shiva is famed as the God who chants Lord Ram's holy Name constantly without fail, and he always remains in a state of quiet meditation even when appearing not to be so. Lord Shiva uses Lord Ram's holy Name as an exclusive spiritual formula for doing Japa (repetition of a holy Mantra) and Dhyana (contemplation) during Yoga (meditation). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 58; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.

²Prahalad was a young boy who had meditated by repeating Lord Ram's holy Name, and as a result he succeeded in having a divine vision of Lord Vishnu. His story in brief is this:

He was an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. He was the eldest son of the king of demons, named Hiranyakashipu. His mother was Kayaadhu, the daughter of the demon king named Jambhaasur. Both the mother and the son were initiated by sage Narad who had inspired them to become devotees of Lord Vishnu.

The story of Prahalad is narrated in detail in (i) Vishnu Puran, 1/17-20, and (ii) Bhagvata Puran, Skandha 7, Cantos 3-10. This is the story of Prahalad, the son of the demon Hiranyakashipu.

When Prahalad was still in his mother's womb, sage Narad had taught her about the principles of spiritualism and devotion for Lord Vishnu. {Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 7, Canto 7, verse nos. 15-55.} Prahalad had heard this preaching, and when he was born he still remembered Narad's advice given to his mother. As result, Prahalad was born with devotion for Lord Vishnu firmly engrained in his heart and mind.

The father, being a demon, was an inveterate opponent of Lord Vishnu, and so naturally he couldn't tolerate his own son worshipping his enemy Lord Vishnu. He

tried his best to dissuade Prahalad from being devoted to the Lord, but the son had immense faith in the Lord and would not be deterred by his father's threats, torments and scoldings. Hiranyakashipu tried even cruel means to change Prahalad, including an attempt to burn in a raging fire, but the child devotee escaped unscathed. So, finally the demon father decided to kill him personally. Prahalad was tied to a pillar and asked 'Where is your Lord Vishnu? Is he in this pillar also?' The child replied in the affirmative. Then his father swung the sword to kill him, and it was at this instant that Lord Vishnu revealed himself as the famous incarnation known as 'Nrisingh'—the upper half of his body was like a lion and the lower half was like a man. An Upanishad titled 'Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad' of the Atharva Veda is dedicated to this Lord.

Lord Nrisingh snatched the sword of the demon, which he had raised in his hand to kill Prahalad, and laid the demon across his laps. He then tore through his abdomen, and yanked out his intestines, thereby killing the demon instantly. He then picked up the child Prahalad on to his laps and lovingly licked and caressed him like a lion does to its cub. But Prahalad prayed to the Lord to provide deliverance to the soul of his father, at which the Lord liberated the demon from all his sins.

Prahalad is credited with enumerating the nine-fold path of Bhakti, the path of devotion for the Lord, in the epic Bhaagvata, 7/5/23.

Lord Dattatreya, one of the manifestations of Lord Vishnu, had preached Prahalad about the eclectic state of Avadhut Sanyasi in the form of a huge python, known as Ajgara. Prahalad had spiritual discussions also with other sages such as Hansa (the divine Swan, an incarnation of Vishnu), and with Indra (the king of Gods).

Prahalad had four brothers, three sons and a daughter. The king of demons known as Bali, who was famous for his charities and donations, was a grandson of Prahalad. The incarnations of Vishnu as Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, is related to this legendary king.]

ध्रुवं सगलानि जपेड हरि नाऊँ । पायड अचल अनूपम ठाऊँ ॥ ५ ॥
सुमिरि पवनसुत पावन नामू । अपने बस करि राखे रामू ॥ ६ ॥

dhruvamṅ sagalāni japē'u hari nā'ūṁṅ. pāya'u acala anūpama ṭhā'ūṁṅ. 5.
sumiri pavanasuta pāvana nāmū. apanē basa kari rākhē rāmū. 6.

Dhurva chanted Sri Hari's (Lord Vishnu's) holy Name because he was insulted and ill-treated by his stepmother, but the effect was such that he was given a permanent and immovable place among the 'stars in the sky'. [It is believed in mythology that the Northern-Star in the northern hemisphere of the night sky, a star that remains fixed in its position while all other stars appear to move in the sky, is actually Dhruva.]¹ (5)

By remembering the holy and divine Name of Lord Ram, the Son of the Wind God (known as Hanuman) has kept Lord Ram under his loving sway². (6)

[Note—¹The story of Dhruva is as follows: He was the elder son of king Uttaanpaad from his first wife Suniti. The king was so charmed by his second wife named Suruchi that he completely neglected Suniti and Dhruva. Once it so happened that the child Dhruva was snubbed by his step-mother for attempting to draw affection of his father.

The child was very upset and despondent. He approached his mother for solace. She advised him to accept Lord Vishnu as his eternal and loving Father and protector. For this, Dhruva had to do severe Tapa (austerity and penance). The overwhelmed child was so determined that he immediately proceeded to the forest to do Tapa. He met the celestial sage Narad on the way who instructed him on ways to meditate upon the Lord. The Lord was extremely pleased by Dhruva's sincerity and devotion and appeared before him. He blessed the child and gave him two boons—one was the restoration of his honour and kingdom of the kingdom, and the other was a permanent place in the heavens, a position so exalted, steady and unwavering that even the God could not match it. So, in due course of time, Dhruva assumed a personified form of a divine God and took up his heavenly abode in the Dhruva Loka. The story related to him is narrated in detail in the Vishnu Puran, section 1, cantos 11-12.

The Tripadvibhuti Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 5, paragraph no. 15 mentions this Dhruv Loka and Dhruva, the God, when it describes the path taken by a devotee of Lord Vishnu to the latter's abode in heaven when the former leaves his mortal body. The devotee has taken a ride on the back of the Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu who is represented by the divine ethereal Mantra known as OM in this Upanishad, and has already passed through the Satya Loka where Brahma the creator lives, the Ishan Loka where Lord Shiva lives, the Graha Loka where the different Grahas live, the Saptarishi Mandal where the seven celestial sages live (and which is represented by the Great Bear constellation of stars in the sky), the Surya Mandal which is the realm of the Sun God, and the Chandra Mandal which is the realm of the Moon God. Then he reaches this Dhruva Mandal.

The Dhruva Loka or Dhruv Mandal is represented by the North Star and its immediate environs in the celestial map. The North Star is a personified form of Dhruva. The North Star has a great symbolic importance and value here. This star remains static and unchanging in its position in the sky—it is a metaphor for stability, uniformity, unchanging nature, steadfastness and durability. It is a vital guide for navigation purposes in the night. Hence, if a person is steady in his thoughts and single-mindedly pursues his chosen path, always keeping the aim in sight, he is sure to achieve success and obtain his objective in life. The objective of the spiritual aspirant is to attain his Lord Vishnu and find Mukti. So when he has crossed all hurdles and overcome formidable obstacles in the symbolic form of praises and honours lavished on him en-route to heaven as described above in this narration, it is only then that he can rupture through this world and reach the exalted abode where Vishnu lives. Now, if the celestial sky is imagined as a huge sphere, then this is the point from where the cosmic traveller has ruptured the solar system and entered the upper reaches of the cosmos where the upper heaven is situated. Since Lord Vishnu's abode is supposed to be unchanging and steady in its glory unlike other worlds, the metaphor of the North Star as a gateway to Vaikunth, the abode of Vishnu, appears to be very appropriate here.

²The Lord is exceptionally obliged to Hanuman and on several occasions he had expressed this too. Hanuman was more close to Lord Ram than any other single character in the Ramayana. Whenever the Lord needed help, he looked at Hanuman. Hanuman had always repeated the holy Name of Lord Ram silently, and this gave him immense strength and peace. By the way of the Name, Hanuman was able to have the Lord stay with him always. The best proof of the Lord recognizing this divine quality and spiritual nature of Hanuman was when the Lord directed him to stay in this world

at the time of the Lord's own departure for his heavenly abode at the end of his tenure on this earth, and keep the light of the Lord's glory alight by way of repeating his divine Name and ensuring protection for those who said the Lord's Name. In other words, the Lord had appointed Hanuman as the heir to his legacy, and passed on the baton of Dharma (virtues of righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and auspiciousness) and Satya (truth) to him to act as their custodian on the strength of Lord's holy Name.

A life sketch of Hanuman is narrated in the following scriptures—(i) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 155-190; (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Kishkhindha Kand, Sarga (Canto) 66, verse nos. 1-17 (as narrated by Jamvant, the Bear king); Uttar Kand, Sarga 35-36 (as described to Sri Ram by sage Agastya).

Wonderful hymns dedicated to Lord Hanuman are found in Tulsidas' "Vinai Patrika", verse nos. 25-36.

These describe Hanuman as the Son of the Wind God.

But it is also universally believed that Hanuman is a manifestation of Lord Shiva, and represents the 'Tej' (glory and dynamism) of Lord Ram. This is clearly mentioned in Brihad Brahm Sanhita, Chapter (Pratham) 3, Canto (Adhyaya) 1, verse (Shloka) no. 102. This verse also says that it is Lord Shiva who manifested also as Sankarshan, one of the forms of Lord Vishnu. In the case of Hanuman, it is said here that "Hanuman is a manifestation of Lord Maha Shiva, and represents the Tej (glory and dynamic aspect) of Lord Ram".

Lord Hanuman was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Ram. His devotion for Lord Ram had no match. He is regarded as the wisest, the most enlightened and a highly self-realised soul. He is an incarnation of the eleventh form of Lord Shiva that is known as Rudra. When Lord Vishnu decided to manifest himself as Lord Ram in this world, all the different Gods has assumed various forms to serve the Lord. Shiva had taken the form of Hanuman to serve Lord Ram.]

अपतु अजामिलु गजु गनिकाऊ । भए मुकुत हरि नाम प्रभाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
कहाँ कहाँ लगी नाम बड़ाई । रामु न सकहिं नाम गुन गाई ॥ ८ ॥

apatu ajāmilu gaju ganikā'ū. bha'ē mukuta hari nāma prabhā'ū. 7.
kahaurṁ kahām' lagi nāma barā'ī. rāmu na sakahim nāma guna gā'ī. 8.

The sinful and fallen Ajaamil¹, the elephant king known as the Gaja², and Ganika the prostitute (harlot)³—they were all liberated by the power and the majesty of Lord Ram's holy Name. (7)

Say, how far can I (Tulsidas) describe the glory, the majesty, the divinity, and the spiritual importance and value of Lord Ram's holy Name (because I have no words for it). Even Lord Ram himself is unable to sing the glories of his own Name. (8)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 130.

The story of Ajaamil, Gaja and Ganika are as follows:-

¹Ajaamil—He was a Brahmin by birth, but he became enamoured with a prostitute and married her. Bad company made him turn into a hunter. One day a group of sages passed by the village. When they asked the villagers if there was a Brahmin's house where they could spend the night, the villagers told them of Ajaamil. So these sages decided to spend the night there. When Ajaamil returned from his hunting trip with a catch of a bird and saw the sages, he felt very ashamed. He confided with them that he is a fallen man and that they should not eat in his house. The saints had a merciful heart and they thought amongst themselves that it is their moral obligation to show this man some way by which he can find liberation and deliverance.

They cooked their own meals with whatever they had. The next day, they summoned Ajaamil and told him, 'Look, your wife is pregnant. She will soon deliver a son. Give that son the name 'Narayan' (one of the many names of Lord Vishnu). This would lead to your emancipation.' And then the group of sages went on their journey.

When the son was born, Ajaamil named him as advised by them—he called the son 'Narayan'. He was very fond of the son, and called out his name 'Narayan, Narayan' umpteen numbers of times during the course of the day. He was unwittingly taking the name of Lord Vishnu. This continued till the time came for his death. When he was tormented by the messengers of Yam, the God of hell and death, he became terrified and called out in fear—'Narayan, Narayan. Save me'. Though he was calling his son, but the Lord heard his name being called out by someone in distress. So he sent his own messengers to protect the caller. The messengers of Lord Vishnu chased away the messengers of Yam and took Ajaamil to heaven. When Yam complained to Vishnu, the Lord told him that if anyone calls out his name at the time of death he is duty-bound to liberate and protect him. This story tells us the power of the name of the Lord.

²Gaja, the king of elephants— In the ancient country of Dravid (the present day South India), there was a kingdom called Pandyaraaj whose king was named Indradumna. He was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and used to offer regular worship to the Lord with great diligence. Once, sage Agastya passed that way with his retinue of disciples. The king was so engrossed in the worship of the Lord that he did not notice the sage and neither did he get up to welcome him or pay his obeisance to him. This annoyed the sage and he cursed—'You are like a haughty and wild elephant who pays no heed to those standing in the front. Therefore, you deserve to become an elephant—so you would take a birth as an elephant.' When the king died he became an elephant in a pleasant island in the middle of the Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean of milk.

He had a majestic body and was very strong in his herd. Once he was playing with his she-elephants and companions in a large and beautiful pond. In this pond lived an crocodile who was actually a Gandharva (a semi-god) named Huhu in his previous life and had become an crocodile due to a curse of sage Deval. The crocodile caught hold of the leg of the elephant and started pulling him inside the deep lake. The Gaja himself and all his companions tried their best but failed to free him from the mouth of the crocodile. A long tussle followed and the elephant became completely exhausted. When the situation became so bad that the Gaja, the elephant, was about to sink fully inside the water, he broke a lotus flower and offered it to Lord Vishnu as his last worship and offering before dying. The merciful Lord rushed instantly astride his mount, called the Garud, to save him. Reaching the spot within a moment, the Lord pulled the Gaja out of the water with one hand, and with the other he opened the mouth of the crocodile to yank the leg of the elephant free from its

clutches. Then the Lord cut off the crocodile's head with his circular weapon known as the Chakra.

Both the crocodile and the elephant found liberation—the crocodile reverted to his earlier form of a Gandharva, and Gaja the elephant assumed a divine form similar to that of the Lord and went to his abode in the heaven.

³Ganika, the herlot—There was a prostitute by the name of Pingla. One day she had decorated herself with flowers and ornaments and waited eagerly for her lover. When he did not turn up even till midnight, she was very contrite and it dawned upon her that if she had spent so much of her time in devotion and remembrance of the Lord, she would have found deliverance. Right onwards, she turned away from her profession and became an ardent devotee of the Lord. This led to her emancipation and salvation.]

दो०. नामु राम को कलपतरु कलि कल्याण निवासु ।
जो सुमिरत भयो भाँग तें तुलसी तुलसीदासु ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

nāmu rāma kō kalapatāru kali kalyāna nivāsu.
jō sumirata bhayō bhāmṅa tēm tulasī tulasīdāsu. 26.

In Kaliyug, Lord Ram's holy Name is like a Kalpataru (the all wish-fulfilling Tree of the Gods)¹, and a gracious benefactor of all in every imaginable way, by remembering and chanting of which Tulsidas has changed from being a 'Bhaang' (a hallucination producing herb having the technical name of Tetrahydro-Cannabinolis) into Tulsi (the Basil or Ocimum plant which is a herb used to sanctify food offered to deities in temples, and also as a medicine for its antibiotic properties).

[To wit, even a useless and despised man becomes a much sought-after and useful one by the good influences and good effects of Ram's holy and divine Name. In effect this means that the correctional properties of the Name removes all the negative virtues present in a creature, and transforms him into a worthy one.] (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹Refer also to Tulsidas' book of prayers known as 'Vinai Patrika', verse no. 173.]

चौ०. चहुँ जुग तीनि काल तिहुँ लोका । भए नाम जपि जीव बिसोका ॥ १ ॥
बेद पुरान संत मत एहू । सकल सुकृत फल राम सनेहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

cahum' juga tīni kāla tihum' lōkā. bha'ē nāma japi jīva bisōkā. 1.
bēda purāna santa mata ēhū. sakala sukṛta phala rāma sanēhū. 2.

In all the four Yugas or eras (ages or phases) of creation (known as the Sata, Treta, Dwapar and Kali Yugas respectively)¹, as well as in all the three phases of time (past, present, future), and the three lokas (heaven, earth, nether world)—countless souls

have got liberation and deliverance from their sorrows and miseries by chanting the holy Name of Lord Ram. (1)

The Vedas, Purans and saints have given this unanimous advice—that to have love in Lord's Form and Lord's Name is the result of all virtuous acts.² (2)

[Note—¹According to the Purans, the ancient mythological histories of the Hindus, one cycle of creation, development and destruction is divided into four parts, each known as a Yuga. Thus, there are four such Yugas.

The first is called 'Sata Yuga' and it is equivalent to 17,28,000 human years. The second is 'Treta Yuga' and it equals to 12,96,000 human years. The third era is known as 'Dwapar' and it is equal to 8,64,000 human years. The fourth and the last age, i.e. the current era, lasts for 4,32,000 human years.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 12-14 that precede Doha no. 122 that say: "Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma (ajā), sage Suka (the parrot saint), the celestial sages Sankadi and Narad, and other such exalted sages who are experts in the knowledge of Brahm (the Supreme Being) --- [12] --- It is their unanimous view, oh the king of birds (khaganāyaka), that one should have devotion and affection for the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Ram. [13] --- The Vedas, the Purans and all other scriptures unequivocally assert that there is no happiness and peace without having devotion (Bhakti) for Lord Ram. [14]"

ध्यानु प्रथम जुग मखबिधि दूजे । द्वापर परितोषत प्रभु पूजे ॥ ३ ॥

कलि केवल मल मूल मलीना । पाप पयोनिधि जन मन मीना ॥ ४ ॥

dhyānu prathama juga makhabidhi dūjēm. dvāpara paritōṣata prabhu pūjēm.
3.

kali kēvala mala mūla malīnā. pāpa payōnidhi jana mana mīnā. 4.

As a means of finding liberation and deliverance or emancipation and salvation, there was a provision of doing contemplation and meditation during the first era called the Sata Yuga. During the second era known as Treta Yuga, sacrifices were prescribed. In the third era known as the Dwapar Yuga, the Gods were propitiated through worship¹.
(3)

But in the fourth (current) era called Kali Yuga, there is only evil and corruption, moral degradation and spiritual impurities all around so much so that the mind of men are rolling in this filthy water like a fish in an ocean of sin.² (4)

[Note—¹An exactly similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 102 (b) along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

²The horrors of Kali-Yuga has been detailed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 102 (a).

A similar reference to the 'fish' is cited in Vinai Patrika, verse no. 102.]

नाम कामतरु काल कराला । सुमिरत समन सकल जग जाला ॥ ५ ॥
राम नाम कलि अभिमत दाता । हित परलोक लोक पितु माता ॥ ६ ॥

nāma kāmataru kāla karālā. sumirata samana sakala jaga jālā. 5.
rāma nāma kali abhimata dātā. hita paralōka lōka pitu mātā. 6.

In such a terrible age (of Kali Yuga), the holy Name of the Lord is like a Kalpa-Taru (an all wish-fulfilling tree), the very remembrance of which can abolish all sorts of illusions in this world—i.e. the divine and holy Name of the Lord can liberate a creature from the net of worldly delusions¹. (5)

In Kali Yuga, Lord Ram's holy Name can give all desired results and fulfill all objectives of a devotee. It is beneficial for the creature in the afterworld after his death, while when he is alive in this world it acts as his caring parent². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 102 (a) and Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 103.

²There are many verses in Tulsidas' excellent Book of Prayers known as 'Vinai Patrika' where Lord Ram's holy Name is compared to a child's caring parent. Some of these are the following: verse no. 69, stanza no. 4; verse no. 182, stanza no. 6; verse no. 226, stanza no. 5; verse no. 254, stanza no. 1.]

नहिं कलि करम न भगति बिबेकू । राम नाम अवलंबन एकू ॥ ७ ॥
कालनेमि कलि कपट निधानू । नाम सुमति समरथ हनुमानू ॥ ८ ॥

nahim kali karama na bhagati bibēkū. rāma nāma avalambana ēkū. 7.
kālanēmi kali kapaṭa nidhānū. nāma sumati samaratha hanumānū. 8.

In Kali Yuga, neither there is a chance to do good deeds, nor is there devotion and wisdom. In this depressing scenario, the only resort or avenue (for the creature if he wishes to attain emancipation and salvation) is Ram's holy Name¹. (7)

'Kali' is like the demon Kalnemi¹ who was like a treasury of falsehood, lies, conceit, deceit, pretensions and other vices, whereas the Lord's 'Name' is like Hanuman who was very wise and able in every manner. [Here, the holy Name of Lord Ram is compared to Hanuman who had slayed this demon, thereby giving the latter liberation from bodily bondage in which his soul was trapped. Likewise, the Lord's holy Name can free the creature from all delusions, and provide his soul with the spiritual reward of deliverance, emancipation and salvation.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it where an exactly similar idea has been expressed.

Refer also to Vinai Patrika, verse no. 155 which describes the horrors of Kali-Yuga.

²Kalnemi was sent by Ravana to prevent Hanuman from going ahead to bring the herb that would revive Laxman in the battle-field after he fell unconscious upon being hit by Meghnad's arrow. Kalnemi assumed the form of a hermit to trap Hanuman, but the latter discovered the demon's trick and killed him, thereby liberating his soul from the body of a demon. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.

Similarly, the Lord's powerful Name helps the creature to attain liberation and deliverance from the evil world surrounding him on all sides.]

दो०. राम नाम नरकेसरी कनककसिपु कलिकाल ।
जापक जन प्रह्लाद जिमि पालिहि दलि सुरसाल ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

rāma nāma narakēsarī kanakakasipu kalikāla.
jāpaka jana prahalāda jimī pālihi dali surasāla. 27.

Lord Ram's holy and divine Name is like a Man-Lion (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu that is known as Lord Nara-Singha) and Kali is like the demon Hiranya-Kasipu (the father of Prahalad)¹. Even as the Man-Lion crushed (killed) the demon who was tormenting the devotee Prahalad (to abandon his devotion for the Lord), the Name of the Lord can destroy all evil forces tormenting the devotees during the era known as Kali. (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹The story of Lord Vishnu taking the form of a 'Man-Lion' relates to the story of Prahalad, the child devotee of the Lord. Lord Nara-Singha is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. It is narrated as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 26 herein above in this Chapter (Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas).]

चौ०. भायँ कुभायँ अनख आलसहूँ । नाम जपत मंगल दिसि दसहूँ ॥ १ ॥
सुमिरि सो नाम राम गुन गाथा । करउँ नाइ रघुनाथहि माथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhāyam' kubhāyam' anakha ālasahūm'. nāma japata maṅgala disi dasahūm'. 1.
sumiri sō nāma rāma guna gāthā. kara'um' nā'i raghunāthahi māthā. 2.

The holy Name of Lord Ram chanted with either good or bad intentions, in an angry mood or even while yawning lazily¹, will always be beneficial for the living being and

do good to him no matter in which of the ten directions of the world he lives². [To wit, Lord Ram's holy, divine and glorious Name is a supreme benefactor of all the creatures of this creation, no matter where they live and in which form their soul exists in this world. Anyone who invokes the Lord's holy Name, in any way and under any circumstance, willingly or unwillingly, with devotion and love or with enmity and anger, with a cheerful mind or with a bored demeanour—the holy Name of Lord Ram would have its positive effect and bless one and all nevertheless in a universal manner, irrespective of everything else.] (1)

After remembering such a powerful and glorious 'Name' of the Lord, a Name that is both divine and holy, Tulsidas proceeded to narrate the story of the worldly deeds of Lord Ram³. (2)

[Note—¹There are ample instances in the story of the Ramayana that endorse this observation. Lord Shiva continuously repeats Lord Ram's holy Name with devotion and affection and faith—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.

Then in sharp contrast we have the demon Marich who was so terrified of Lord Ram that he remembered the Lord day and night out of fear, but this unwitting remembrance of the Lord made him eligible for the final liberation and deliverance of his soul in the hands of the Lord himself—this story is narrated in detail Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 27.

Then there was Ravana, the demon king, who remembered Lord Ram with hostility (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103), and yet his soul attained a destiny that was envy of all—at the end of the war at Lanka, Ravana's soul exited in the form of a lightning streak from his evil body of a demon and entered the body of Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the Supreme Being, so as to merge with the cosmic Soul and find eternal peace, rest and beatitude. This fact is clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 103, and Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 104.

We have another example where Lord Ram's holy Name had its miraculous effect even when it was remembered upside down in an odd sort of way. It is the example of sage Valmiki who had done meditation by using Lord Ram's holy Name in the reverse order—i.e. 'MARA' instead of 'RAMA'. In spite of this unconventional way of using any name, Valmiki attained enlightenment and an exalted place amongst the greatest sages of all times. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 19.

Other such instances abound where a living being had called out Lord Ram's holy Name in distress and was granted instant protection even if he was a sinful one all along his life and hadn't called out the Lord's holy Name in no way out of any devotion or love for the Lord. A reference to such souls is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26 where we read about Ajaamil, Gaja and Ganika.

²The ten directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.

A similar idea is expressed earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27.

³Tulsidas has narrated the wonderful, the most fascinating and charming, and the most holy of stories ever told, the divine story of Lord Ram, in his epic rendering of it to which he gave the title ‘Ram Charit Manas’—literally, ‘the story that describes the life and time and deeds of Lord Ram who dwells in the heart of devotees and who is revered by the mind which remains focused on this story; it is a story that is like a lake full of and brimming over with spiritual nectar.

It is to be noted that Tulsidas has used all his persuasive skills, all possible arguments, words and logic to convince us all of the importance of remembering, loving and chanting, in having unwavering faith, devotion and loyalty for the holy Name of Lord Ram. He has offered all living beings a simple formula that can take care of all their spiritual needs.

The word ‘Ram’, the holy Name of the Lord, has been used as being synonymous with both the Nirguna aspect as well as the Saguna aspect of Lord Ram’s divine form. The ‘Nirguna’ aspect refers to that aspect which has no attributes, that is invisible, unmanifest, unqualified, cosmic and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth in creation, while the ‘Saguna’ aspect refers to that aspect of the same Supreme Being that is visible, that has attributes and a form which we recognise as Lord Ram. To wit, the holy Name of Lord Ram bridges the gap between these two aspects of the Supreme Being.

For those of a higher intellect and wisdom, the former aspect of Nirguna is more appealing, whereas for the ordinary devotees, the Saguna form is more useful. And for those who are neither, Tulsidas has this simple and practical advice—to just repeat the Lord’s holy and divine Name even without having any faith and conviction in the Lord and his divine nature—because he says that Lord Ram’s holy Name is just like a well chosen medicine for all the spiritual ailments that afflict a creature in this world, for once a correct medicine is taken by a sick person then it is no matter how that medicine was taken for its good effect will surely show upon the patient, and he would be on the path of recovery.]

मोरि सुधारिहि सो सब भाँती । जासु कृपा नहिं कृपाँ अघाती ॥ ३ ॥

राम सुस्वामि कुसेवकु मोसो । निज दिसि देखि दयानिधि पोसो ॥ ४ ॥

mōri sudhārihi sō saba bhāmṭī. jāsu kṛpā nahim kṛpām̐ aghātī. 3.
rāma susvāmi kusēvaku mōsō. nija disi dēkhi dayānidhi pōsō. 4.

That (merciful and compassionate) Lord Ram (the glories of whose name I have narrated in the forgoing verses) will take care of correcting and rectifying any errors of commission or omission that I might make in my composition (inadvertently or advertently because of my limited skills, knowledge and aptitude)¹, by setting them right and putting things in order—for the Lord is so exceptionally gracious and kind by nature that he is never tired of nor shies away from showing his unlimited grace and goodwill upon his devotees. (3)

On the one hand is Lord Ram who is an epitome of majesty, nobility and greatness, and on the other hand is me (Tulsidas) who is most humble and full of shortcomings! In spite of this great disparity between the Lord and his servant (i.e. in spite of the fact that I am not the least worthy of being shown any favour by Lord Ram), yet the Lord

has graciously accepted me, he has sustained and protected me by showering his enormous bounty of benevolence and munificence upon me². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 9 where Tulsidas has already expressed his limitations as far as competence and skills that are needed for one to successfully pen poetry or author any kind of composition.

He says that the only encouragement he has is that his composition has Lord Ram's divine and holy name in it; it is meant to honour Lord Ram and pay tribute to the Lord by singing about his glories and divinity, and it is enough of a qualification as far as he is concerned—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Tulsidas also accepts that he is very humble, and does not have anything to rely on by way of a favourable Providence and good Fortune that could have stood him in good stead, because they play a pivotal role in an individual's success in any of his endeavours. So therefore, he asks everyone to excuse him for his boldness in attempting to write the holy story of Lord Ram inspite of his incompetence and limited support from Providence—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 8.

In the present verse Tulsidas expresses his confidence of success because even if he makes mistakes and his composition suffers from shortcomings, yet Lord Ram would take care of such faults by rectifying them himself and polishing the text so much so that it would shine with the radiance of divinity inherent in the Lord holy name that would attract attention and entitle the composition to get respect from one and all.

²Normally, a Lord would show favour upon those servants who are competent and skilled in their jobs, and who generally are qualified enough to be worthy of being called an attendant of the Lord keeping in mind the social standing and the stature of their Master. In the case of Tulsidas, he feels that he is not at all worthy of being called a servant or devotee of Lord Ram because he is very humble and has no good qualities worth the name in him that would entitle him to get any attention or favour from his Master, Lord Ram. But the fact that Lord Ram takes special care of such lowly and demoralized person as Tulsidas, never letting the latter feel neglected or underprivileged in any manner, shows how enormously gracious, how great and noble hearted Lord Ram is.

In this context one can note that there are countless verses in Tulsidas' book of prayer called 'Vinai Patrika' where it is stressed that Lord Ram is especially very careful in taking care of the humble and the lowly. Some randomly selected instances are verse nos. 71-72, 162-163, 192.]

लोकहुँ बेद सुसाहिब रीती । बिनय सुनत पहिचानत प्रीती ॥ ५ ॥
गनी गरीब ग्रामनर नागर । पंडित मूढ़ मलीन उजागर ॥ ६ ॥
सुकबि कुकबि निज मति अनुहारी । नृपहि सराहत सब नर नारी ॥ ७ ॥

lōkahum̃ bēda susāhiba rītī. binaya sunata pahicānata prītī. 5.
ganī garība grāmanara nāgara. paṇḍita mūṛha malīna ujāgara. 6.

sukabi kukabi nija mati anuhārī. nṛpahi sarāhata saba nara nārī. 7.

Verily indeed, it has been observed in the world and is also reiterated in the Vedas (ancient scriptures) that a wise Lord or Master is one who is able to determine the sincerity of affection and devotion in the heart of a person as soon as he hears that person's submission or prayers¹. (5)

The above principle applies to all—because everyone, males as well as the females (i.e. all the citizens or subjects of a kingdom) would praise their King (i.e. the Lord or the Master whom they serve or under whose domain they live), whether such people are rich or poor, whether they are rustic villagers or urban residents who are deemed to be more cultured, whether they are scholars and experts in their fields or just ordinary folks who are illiterate or unlettered, whether they have a bad reputation or a good one, (6) ---

--- Whether they are known as acclaimed poets, bards or minstrels (who are experts in their fields), or simple laity (who try to please their King by use of ordinary words)—all of them try extol the virtues and goodness of their King (to please him). (7)

[Note—¹A good Lord or Master or King is a person who has an exceptionally high mental level of understanding and a sense of accommodation; he has a broad outlook, a noble heart, a compassionate nature, and true grace in him. When a petitioner stands before him with some prayer or submission to be made, a good king would hear him patiently and decide the matter on its merit. He can immediately determine, by the virtue of his sixth sense and good understanding of the working of the world, whether or not the person who is standing before him with a petition is honest in his heart, or is he trying to pull a fast trick on the king by his pretensions.

A wise and judicious king's judgment is not based on the person's looks, wealth, stature in society, knowledge, or the ability to praise the king by flowery words of flattery; the king's decision is based on the honesty in the heart of the petitioner and his sincerity, as well as the truth and the merit of the case.

In the context of what Tulsidas has been saying till now in connection with his poetry known as Ram Charit Manas, what he intends to say in these three verses is clear: Lord Ram will not judge Tulsidas on any other parameters of judgment, but on the sincerity and honesty of his heart as to whether it is true or false that Tulsidas wishes to narrate the Lord's divine story to honour the Lord, pay obeisance to him and extol his glories, whether Tulsidas is honest when he says that in spite of his countless faults and shortcomings the only assurance he has with respect to his poem being faultless and perfect, and it being accepted by one and all in this world with respect due to it, is the one single fact that his narration has the holy name of Lord Ram in it, and that he has no intention of being glorified or praised personally for this composition but it is to sing the divine story of his beloved Lord Ram in a selfless manner so that everyone can benefit from it, and it is for this reason that he has chosen to write it in the local vernacular language so that the common man can enjoy the spiritual bliss and happiness that it would provide the society in general.

In the next two verses, i.e. chaupai line nos. 8-11, Tulsidas elaborates further on this idea; he expresses his confidence in Lord Ram that the Lord would graciously accept him and his humble petition in the form of this holy poetry written in the honour of the Lord, because realizing the honesty of Tulsidas' heart and the sincerity of his effort, the Lord would bless him with his grace, benevolence and munificence.]

साधु सुजान सुसील नृपाला । ईस अंस भव परम कृपाला ॥ ८ ॥
सुनि सनमानहिं सबहि सुबानी । भनिति भगति नति गति पहिचानी ॥ ९ ॥

sādhu sujāna susīla nṛpālā. īsa ansa bhava parama kṛpālā. 8.
suni sanamānahim sabahi subānī. bhaniti bhagati nati gati pahicānī. 9.

A great King who is saintly and pious by his nature, who is most courteous and amiable and a thorough gentleman, and who possesses the auspicious virtues of mercy and compassion—such a King is deemed to be a representative of the Lord God in this mortal world (īsa ansa bhava). (8)

He listens to the prayers of everyone, without any discrimination or preferences, and recognizing them for their devotion and loyalty to him, as well as their true intentions, such a wise King would gracefully welcome such people with sweet and pleasant words. (9)

[Note—To wit, Lord Ram immediately judges what is in the depth of the heart of his petitioner. He immediately perceives that the person making a humble prayer is his devotee, inspite of the fact that he may not be a skilled poet who would sing laurels for the Lord in a flowery language, yet he pours out his love for the Lord that is deep in his heart by the rustic language he uses to express himself. Lord Ram immediately understands his language, and then he would warmly accept his devotee with open arms, making him feel at home with a smile and sweet words of welcome.

To wit, Tulsidas says that this being the case, he is sure Lord Ram would welcome him and his composition with grace and compassion by recognizing the high level of love and devotion for the Lord that Tulsidas has deep inside his heart.

This idea is expressly stated in the next two verses herein below.]

यह प्राकृत महिपाल सुभाऊ । जान सिरोमनि कोसलराऊ ॥ १० ॥
रीझत राम सनेह निसोते । को जग मंद मलिनमति मोते ॥ ११ ॥

yaha prākṛta mahipāla subhā'ū. jāna sirōmani kōsalarā'ū. 10.
rijhata rāma sanēha nisōtēm. kō jaga manda malinamati mōtēm. 11.

This (i.e. what has been said herein above in the preceding verses) is the general rule that is universally applicable to the nature and behaviour of all worldly Kings. So then definitely it also applies the 'King of such Kings'—i.e. to Lord Ram, the Lord of Kaushal (Ayodhya) who is the Sovereign Lord of this mortal existence (jāna sirōmani kōsalarā'ū). (10)

Therefore, it goes without saying that Lord Ram is easily endeared to the devotee by the virtue of purity of love and affection for the Lord that the devotee has in his heart.

So who is a bigger fool and of a lower intellect than me (Tulsidas) in this world (that inspite of having such a gracious and merciful Lord Ram as my patron

Lord and protector, who has his graceful hands on my head, I still worry for petty things in this world)! (11)

[Note—The meaning is clear now. Tulsidas affirms that he is being so stupid as to worry about the fate of his poetry, or whether he would be able to complete it successfully, and all such humdrum matters, inspite of declaring that he is a devotee of Lord Ram with a mission of singing his Lord's glories selflessly.

Even ordinary human kings are able to understand the real intention of their petitioners who come to them with certain prayers, and when they see that the person is fully loyal to his king and devoted to his cause, the king would shower his bounty upon that person. So therefore, will it not be so with Lord Ram? Besides this, Lord Ram is the Emperor amongst Kings, so a benediction and reward granted by Lord Ram would surely be in accordance to his exalted stature, which would far exceed and surpass all such grants from other kings. Tulsidas laments at the foolishness of his mind that though it understands these things, yet it worries and worries no end.]

दो०. सठ सेवक की प्रीति रुचि रखिहहिं राम कृपालु ।

उपल किए जलजान जेहिं सचिव सुमति कपि भालु ॥ २८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

saṭha sēvaka kī prīti ruci rakhihahim rāma krpālu.

upala ki'ē jalajāna jēhim saciva sumati kapi bhālu. 28 (a).

Tulsidas says: 'I am very sure that such a gracious and merciful Lord Ram would honour the love and devotion of this humble and lowly servant of his, and uphold (fulfill) his wishes (that he wants to compose a story in honour of the Lord inspite of the fact that he has neither the skills nor the competence or any other wherewithal to undertake such a great task)—for almighty Lord Ram is the one whose mere grace made heavy stones float on the water of the ocean to form a majestic bridge at the time of going to Lanka, and who had enabled ordinary monkeys and bears to have such a high degree of wisdom and intelligence that they could become successful councilors and military advisors of the Lord during the war of Lanka. (Doha no. 28-a)

[Note—Ordinarily stones don't float on water, and monkeys and bears are low down in the evolutionary hierarchy so normally they are not accepted to have a highly evolved mind and intellect that would make them expert military planners and advisors. But it was by the grace of Lord Ram that both these virtually impossible feats were made possible.

The bridge was constructed by just throwing the stones on the water of the ocean; instead of sinking or being washed away by swift currents they remained afloat and stuck together: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 2; and (ii) Doha no. 3.

Senior monkeys such as Sugriv, Angad and Hanuman, and the chief of the bears, Jamvant, became Lord Ram's close advisors during the entire course of the war in Lanka: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 17; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 39.

Not only this, these humble monkeys and bears were elevated to an exalted stature of being called as his close friends by Lord Ram: apropos—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 8.

Tulsidas feels assured by these instances that the merciful Lord Ram, who had showed so much grace upon stones and monkeys and bears, would show such grace upon his humble devotee named Tulsidas too, making him succeed in his mission of writing an excellent story narrating the divine glories of Lord Ram.]

हौंहु कहावत सबु कहत राम सहत उपहास ।
साहिब सीतानाथ सो सेवक तुलसीदास ॥ २८ (ख) ॥

haunhu kahāvata sabu kahata rāma sahata upahāsa.
sāhiba sītānātha sō sēvaka tulasīdāsa. 28 (b).

I call myself a true devotee and a humble servant of Lord Ram, because so I am indeed, and the world also taunts me by repeating what I say about myself (because the world thinks I am either joking or have lost my wits). But Lord Ram is so exceptionally kind and gracious that he tolerates both my bold assertions (inspite of my limitations and incompetencies that don't make me eligible to become a favourite of Lord Ram), and also the way the world taunts me and scoffs at the fact that 'on the one hand there is Tulsidas who is good for nothing, and the other hand is the most exalted Lord Ram, the Lord of Sita'¹!(Doha no. 28-b)

[Note—¹To wit, when Tulsidas says that he is a devotee and a servant of Lord Ram, he is true in his heart and sincere about his assertions, but the world is skeptical about his claims and doubts its truth because he seems to have no meritorious qualities worth the name that would endear him to Lord Ram, or make him eligible to be honoured with such an exalted stature as being favoured by the Lord for being his devotee and follower.

Besides this, it also puts Lord Ram in a tight spot for accepting such a good-for-nothing person as Tulsidas as his close devotee and follower, one who is fortunate to become a recipient of the Lord's grace and favour. A great Lord is expected to show favour to well qualified, meritorious and competent persons of renown whom he keeps near himself, for such persons with specialized skills and exceptional virtues or stature in society would add some glory to the Lord's own majesty by their being associated with him, but surely the Lord would not like to be associated with useless persons whose presence near him would only tarnish and undermine his personal reputation and majesty.

Yet, Lord Ram is so gracious and kind by his nature that inspite of understanding the situation that accepting Tulsidas would undermine his own reputation as a great and mighty Lord of the World, he still shows his tenderness towards the meek, humble and lowly Tulsidas out of his inherent nature to be gracious and merciful and kind towards those who love the Lord selflessly, who have immense affection for the Lord, who worship the Lord and have true devotion for him, who have faith in the Lord's love for his devotees and followers irrespective of who they are and what their qualities are, for whom Lord Ram is the only destination in their lives, who look upon the Lord for succour and protection in this world, who are persecuted by the world and have no one else to call out for help except Lord Ram,

and who are pious, truthful, honest, humble, lowly, meek and simple in their hearts—all qualities that Tulsidas possesses, and which endear him to Lord Ram.

Hence, the great and benevolent Lord Ram does not pay attention to all the taunts and scoffing that the world does vis-à-vis Tulsidas, for the Lord knows that Tulsidas is indeed his true and loyal devotee and servant, whose heart is pure and pious irrespective of what the world says about him. Ironically, the world does not understand these facts, and so it wonders why Lord Ram is so favourable towards Tulsidas.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 24; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 243 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it. Here we read that sage Vasistha had met the boatman (Kewat) most affectionately because this poor man was so fortunate that he had been blessed by Lord Ram for his devotion and affection for the Lord. The same thing applies to Tulsidas as well, for though he is otherwise most humble and lowly yet he has one great quality in him, which is to have true and undiluted devotion and affection for Lord Ram. These simple virtues raise him to an exalted stature that makes him honourable and a favourite of the Lord.

As to the wonder that inspite of all his shortcomings which Tulsidas has himself admitted, how was it possible for him to pen such a remarkable narrative of Lord Ram's divine story in the form of his classic 'Ram Charit Manas', the answer is found in the first half of this Doha, where Tulsidas says that the most merciful Lord Ram would fulfill Tulsidas' wishes as it is the Lord's nature to honour the wishes of his devotees and servants, no matter how foolish they may be.

Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has acknowledged this obliging nature of the Lord when he makes a public acknowledgement of the fact that during their childhood days the Lord would willingly lose a game so that Bharat could win it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 260.

The way Tulsidas has expressed his emotions that though he is so humble, and though he possesses no qualities, yet there is no doubt that Lord Ram would accept him affectionately, is also reflected in Bharat's acknowledgement of his own shortcomings, along with the confidence that the compassionate Lord would forgive him for everything and accept him affectionately. The presiding deity of the holy place known as Prayag had endorsed Bharat's views and blessed him too that his wishes would be fulfilled—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 205.]

चौ०. अति बड़ि मोरि ढिठाई खोरी । सुनि अघ नरकहुँ नाक सकोरी ॥ १ ॥

समुझि सहम मोहि अपडर अपनें । सो सुधि राम कीन्हि नहिं सपनें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ati baḍi mōri ḍhiṭhā'ī khōrī. suni agha narakahum' nāka sakōrī. 1.

samujhi sahama mōhi apaḍara apanēm. sō sudhi rāma kīnhi nahim sapanēm.

2.

[Continuing what has been said in Doha no. 28 herein above, Tulsidas says—]

My assertions (that I am a devotee and servant of Lord Ram, and that the Lord has affection for me) seems very presumptive and inaccurate, so much so that even hell

appears skeptical about it, and expresses its doubts and annoyance at me by constricting its nose to scoff and sniff at it, with a great degree of resentment at me in its response to my claims. (1)

I myself quake in fear at the consequences of making such bold claims about myself (regarding my faith, trust, devotion and affection for Lord Ram, because I am unsure what fate has in store for me in case I am wrong), but Lord Ram is so kind, gracious, merciful and benevolent that he takes no notice of my outrageousness and seemingly rash over-confidence even in his dreams¹. (2)

[Note—¹Tulsidas feels that he may have exceeded bounds of proper conduct by making so tall claims about his own devotion, affection, faith and trust in Lord Ram on the one hand, and on the other hand unilaterally declaring that Lord Ram has great affection for him that has made the Lord not only sweep aside all of Tulsidas' shortcomings and incompetencies but also welcome him in the honourable community of the Lord's faithful devotees and followers.

But then this great and pious soul Tulsidas immediately finds comfort in the fact that Lord Ram is supremely gracious, kind, compassionate and magnanimous by his inherent nature, and therefore he feels certain that, on the one hand, the Lord would never feel offended by Tulsidas' temerity of making a claim repeatedly about his close and affectionate relationship with Lord Ram without the Lord's nod of approval, and on the other hand, that the Lord would be obliged to honour Tulsidas' words by actually accepting him as his devotee inspite of his many faults.

And when this happens, 'hell', which had scoffed at Tulsidas and was getting ready to punish him, would be perplexed and left wondering as to what to do with him, because once Lord Ram extends his protective shield over Tulsidas, hell won't be able to harm him in any way.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Doha no. 299 where Bharat has expressed the same emotion.

Refer also to Tulsidas' Book of Prayers called 'Vinai Patrika', verse nos. 158, 171, 176 and 182 amongst many other verses which reiterate the ideas expressed here.]

सुनि अवलोकि सुचित चख चाही । भगति मोरि मति स्वामि सराही ॥ ३ ॥

कहत नसाइ होइ हियँ नीकी । रीझत राम जानि जन जी की ॥ ४ ॥

suni avalōki sucita cakha cāhī. bhagati mōri mati svāmi sarāhī. 3.

kahata nasā'i hō'i hiyam' nīkī. rījhata rāma jāni jana jī kī. 4.

Lord Ram praised my devotion and affection for him when he heard others speak of them, as well as when he himself observed these qualities in me with his own eyes that can perceive the reality that lies behind the exterior, which consequently convinced him of the truth of my assertions (that I have made heretofore)¹. (3)

For it is indeed true that Lord Ram looks deep into what is present in the heart of a person rather than what he says on the outside. To wit, if the heart of a person is pure and pious (i.e. if the heart has true love and devotion for the Lord), then even if the

person's words are rough and unpleasant to hear, still the all-knowing Lord Ram becomes pleased with him². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 279.

²To wit, it is not possible to deceive Lord Ram by an external show of piety and holiness, for the all-knowing and omniscient Lord knows what is in the heart of a person, and judges him accordingly; the Lord pays scant attention to external appearances and pretentious behaviour. Hence, Lord Ram has shown favour to Tulsidas not because the latter claims to have devotion and affection for the Lord so as to mislead the world and get respect, but because the Lord could see deep inside Tulsidas' heart and see that he is honest in his claim, and what he says is indeed the truth.]

रहति न प्रभु चित चूक किए की । करत सुरति सय बार हिए की ॥ ५ ॥
 जेहिं अघ बधेउ ब्याध जिमि बाली । फिरि सुकंठ सोइ कीन्हि कुचाली ॥ ६ ॥
 सोइ करतूति बिभीषन केरी । सपनेहुँ सो न राम हियँ हेरी ॥ ७ ॥
 ते भरतहि भेंटत सनमाने । राजसभाँ रघुबीर बखाने ॥ ८ ॥

rahati na prabhu cita cūka ki'ē kī. karata surati saya bāra hi'ē kī. 5.
 jēhim agha badhē'u byādha jimi bālī. phiri sukaṅṭha sō'i kīnhi kucālī. 6.
 sō'i karatūti bibhīṣana kērī. sapanēhum' sō na rāma hiyam' hērī. 7.
 tē bharatahi bhēṅṭata sanamānē. rājasabhām' raghubīra bakhānē. 8.

Lord Ram is so exceptionally gracious and magnanimous that, on the one hand, he does not allow his mind to pay attention to and remember the many failings and shortcomings of his devotees and servants (followers), yet on the other hand the Lord takes special care to notice even the smallest traces of goodness and the minutest of good virtues that they have in their hearts. (5)

[Now, Tulsidas cites some examples to prove his point.]

The misdeeds for which Lord Ram had slayed Baali (the elder brother of Sugriv and the king of the monkeys in Kishkindha) like a hunter would kill his prey without any regret, the same kind of misdemeanour was done by Sugriv, but the Lord overlooked it¹. (6)

A similar offence was committed by Vibhishan (the brother of Ravana who was the king of Lanka and of the demon race), but Lord Ram never allowed that wrong doing to find a place in his own heart that would have affected his cordial relations with Vibhishan². (7)

Lord Ram showed both of them due respect while they were introduced to his brother Bharat (at the time of the Lord's arrival in Ayodhya from Lanka when everyone went to welcome the Lord on the outskirts of the city); the Lord had praised them even in his royal court (in the presence of all courtiers and ministers and the royal priest)³. (8)

[Note—¹What was the fault of Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv, that Lord Ram cited to justify his slaying? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 6; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 9. The reason that Lord Ram cited for slaying Baali was: “it is a grave sin for an elder brother to keep the wife of his younger brother as a mistress after beating and chasing the latter away”.

But it eventually turned out that Sugriv too had committed a similar mischief after he ascended the throne upon Baali’s death, for after all he too was a lustful creature like his elder sibling, and he was not only selfish but passionate too for enjoyment of worldly pleasures and gratification of the sense organs. These facts are clearly laid out in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 18; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 21. In these verses two things are to be noted: (i) Lord Ram has threatened to kill Sugriv with the ‘same arrow that he had used to slay his elder brother Baali’. This statement of the Lord is a clear indication that he would ‘punish Sugriv for a crime that is similar to his brother’s misdeeds’; and (ii) Sugriv has himself accepted that he was overcome with passions and desires for self-gratification, and that the lustful sight of a woman and greed for wealth and its accompanying physical pleasures of the senses makes even the wisest lose their self control, leading them astray.

Like Baali who had forcibly kept Sugriv’s wife as his mistress, when Sugriv became a king he too committed the same misdeeds by making Tara, the wife of Baali, his mistress. A hint to this is given in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 20 where Sugriv has sent Tara to calm down the anger of Laxman who was sent by Lord Ram to summon Sugriv.

Refer also to (a) Tulsidas’ book ‘Kavitawali Ramayan’, Uttar Kand, verse no. 5; and (b) Valmiki’s Ramayana, Uddha / Lanka Kand, Canto 18, verse no. 2.

But however, Lord Ram forgave him, and that too with a smile, saying “you are dear to me like my own brother Bharat”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 21. Why is it so?

This is a very contentious issue and controversial one. Well, the simple and straightforward answer is this: Once someone surrenders himself before Lord Ram and seeks the Lord’s grace and protection, especially at a time when that person is in distress and needs the Lord’s help to tide over his misfortunes, and when the Lord consequently accepts that creature and assures him of his help and protection, then this assurance of the Lord lasts for a lifetime. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49.}

In the case of Sugriv, Lord Ram had assured him of abiding friendship and help when they first met, and at that time Sugriv was a hunted person, persecuted by Baali and living under constant danger of being killed anytime. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, (i) Doha no. 4 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 7; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 9.}

But do all these developments mean that Lord Ram retained his resentment for Baali forever? Not at all, surely—for once Baali had sought forgiveness from the Lord and begged for his grace, the Lord willingly blessed him by putting his hand on Baali’s head, and sending him to his own abode in the heaven at the time of his death.

{Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.}

²The same thing applies to Vibhishan. He had come to surrender himself to Lord Ram because his life was in danger in Lanka, for his elder brother Ravana, the ruthless king of the demon race, had become excessively angry at him for showing a soft corner for Lord Ram in his heart, for Vibhishan had advised Ravana to return Sita to the Lord and end hostility with him. So Ravana had kicked him out of the kingdom. At that time too Lord Ram had not only welcomed him but also promised all help for his security, making Vibhishan a friend of his. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 49.}

What was Vibhishan's fault that Lord Ram overlooked and which Tulsidas cites here? Well, after Vibhishan ascended the throne of Lanka upon Ravana's death in the Great War, he kept Mandodari, Ravana's wife, as one of his mistresses.

The idea expressed in these two Chaupais is also reiterated in Tulsidas' another book called 'Dohawali', in its verse nos. 157 and 159.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 8-a along with Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 11; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17. In these verses we read that Lord Ram had shown great honour to both Sugriv and Vibhishan, treating them equally and with great respect. Lord Ram had not once given any hint in public that he his annoyed with either Sugriv or Vibhishan for their offences.]

दो०. प्रभु तरु तर कपि डार पर ते किए आपु समान ।
तुलसी कहूँ न राम से साहिब सीलनिधान ॥ २९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

prabhu taru tara kapi ḍāra para tē ki'ē āpu samāna.
tulasī kahūṁ na rāma sē sāhiba silanidhāna. 29 (a).

Lord Ram stayed under the branches of trees (because he was in the form of a human being) while his dear companions known as the Kapis (literally the 'monkeys') dwelt above him on the same trees. There was so much disparity between them (even in terms of evolution), yet the gracious Lord had cheerfully gone out of his way to make these lowly creatures equal to himself by befriending them, and acknowledging, without any reservations, their companionship and help they gave to him¹.

Tulsidas unequivocally praises this excellent nature of Lord Ram: that he does not shy away from treating even the most humble and lowly with the respect and dignity that are due to them. Verily indeed, forsooth and without any gainsay, there is no other Lord in this world who is as gracious, compassionate, benevolent and magnanimous as Lord Ram is. (Doha no. 29-a)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 118; (ii) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 106; (b) Uttar

Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 8; (iv) Doha no. 16 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

All these verses explicitly show how Lord Ram has acknowledged the services these humble Kapis had rendered to him, and how much he feels obliged to them.]

राम निकाई रावरी है सबही को नीक ।
जौं यह साँची है सदा तौ नीको तुलसीक ॥ २९ (ख) ॥

rāma nikā'īm rāvarī hai sabahī kō nīka.
jauṁ yaha sāṁcī hai sadā tau nīkō tulasīka. 29 (b).

Tulsidas declares: 'Oh Lord Ram! This glory and excellent nature of yours (as stated herein before) is beneficial to one and all in this world, and if this stellar character of yours is indeed true, which definitely it is, then I feel rest assured that everything will be fine and happy for Tulsidas for all times to come.' (Doha no. 29-b)

[Note—Tulsidas expresses his confidence that since Lord Ram has the nature to overlook all faults and shortcomings of his devotees, and that if someone comes to surrender himself before the Lord, seeking nothing but the Lord's grace, then it is sure and certain that Lord Ram obliges him by not only accepting him but even overlooking all his faults and shortcomings, and then granting this person assurance of his abiding protection and grace. With Lord Ram as his patron, what worry can a person have anymore in this world? This assurance is sure to make a distressed person happy, not temporarily, but for his entire lifetime.

Refer: Vinai Patrika, verse no. 252; Dohawali, verse nos. 106—109.

Bharat has expressed a similar view in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 234; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 260; (iii) Doha no. 183 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.]

एहि बिधि निज गुन दोष कहि सबहि बहुरि सिरु नाइ ।
बरनउँ रघुबर बिसद जसु सुनि कलि कलुष नसाइ ॥ २९ (ग) ॥

ēhi bidhi nija guna dōṣa kahi sabahi bahuri siru nā'i.
barana'um̐ raghubara bisada jasuni kali kaluṣa nasā'i. 29 (c).

In this way, after stressing about my incompetence, limitations and faults, as well as after repeatedly bowing my head reverentially to one and all, I shall now endeavour to narrate the holy, divine and immaculate glories of Lord Ram which have the mystical power to remove all sorrows and evil consequences caused by sins and impurities associated with Kaliyug (the present age)¹.* (Doha no. 29-c)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 126 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 129; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 130.

Also, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 12-13 that precede it.

*This Doha concludes the introductory part of Ram Charit Manas where Tulsidas has first offered his obeisance to everyone, from the high and the mighty to the most humble and of a low degree, seeking forgiveness from them for any error he might make as well as to seek their blessings, and then he goes on to acknowledge his limited knowledge and competence, saying that he is endeavouring to write the holy story of Lord Ram merely to purify his mind and speech, as well as to pay homage to his beloved Lord Ram by singing the Lord's glories in the simple and rustic way in which he can, without any claim of fineness in his composition or expectation of getting any sort of honours.]

चौ०. जागबलिक जो कथा सुहाई । भरद्वाज मुनिबरहि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥
कहिहउं सोइ संबाद बखानी । सुनहुं सकल सज्जन सुखु मानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāgabalika jō kathā suhāī. bharadvāja munibarahi sunāī. 1.
kahiha'um̃ sō'i sambāda bakhānī. sunahum̃ sakala sajjana sukhu mānī. 2.

The sweet and pleasant story (i.e. the sacred story of Lord Ram which is divine, holy and sweet to hear) which sage Yagyavalkya¹ had narrated to sage Bharadwaj² – (1),

I (Goswami Tulsidas) shall now narrate in detail the same conversation at length³. All those who are good souls, those who are virtuous and pious, should listen to it attentively, with great delight, as it would give them joy and happiness. (2)

[Note—¹The name of sage Yagyavalkya can also be spelt as 'Yagyawalkya'.

Sage Yagyavalkya belonged to that Vedic period when people had an integral and holistic view of life and the reality behind existence, and all-activities, secular or religious, were regarded as one big, wholesome and composite religious sacrifice called a Yagya. Life itself was consecrated and devoted to the realization of the transcendental and supreme truthful Reality. There was no distinction between renunciation and involvement in life's chores. There was no dichotomy between the two, and the various debates arising in Indian spiritual practices due to different interpretations and re-interpretations of the Vedic and Upanishadic tenets was a product of the later period. One such exemplary sage and seer belonging to that golden period was Yagyavalkya—he was an enlightened wise man who was not only a self-realised householder but an ardent ascetic, an acclaimed scholar and an exemplary renunciate man par-excellence, all at the same time.

It is believed that Yagyavalkya was an incarnation of Lord Brahma, the creator, when he was cursed by Lord Shiva. [Skand Puran, Nagar Khand, 1-9.] His father was named Brahmabahu (literally, the limbs of Brahma, because the latter's limbs had manifested as this person). [Vayu Puran, 61.] But according to a book of religious law written by Yagyavalkya himself known as 'Yagyavalkya Sanhita', his father also had the same name. So, our Yagyavalkya was, in effect, 'Yagyavalkya, the second'. [Yagyavalkya Sanhita, 1.]

There is another story in connection with the birth of sage Yagyavalkya; it is narrated in Skanda Puran, Haatkeshwar Kshetra Mahatamya, Naagar Khand. It says that once the creator Brahma was doing a fire sacrifice. His consort named Savitri was

late in arriving at the ritual site, and the auspicious moment was passing away. Since such sacrifices are to be done by both the husband and wife sitting together, and Savitri hadn't arrived, so in order to tide over this difficulty, Indra, the king of gods, brought a maiden of the milkmen community and asked Brahma to symbolically marry her so that the sacrifice ritual can be duly completed within the stipulated auspicious time frame. Brahma was reluctant, but there was no other choice before him. So he made that maiden enter the mouth of a cow and emerge from her womb, which symbolically gave her a new birth. This lady came to be known as 'Gayatri'—meaning 'born from a cow; the offspring of a cow'. Brahma then accepted her as his partner and performed the sacrifice.

Meanwhile, Brahma's consort Savitri arrived on the scene, and finding another woman sitting alongside him as his wife, she became infuriated and cursed her husband to become a human being, because he was so impatient and lustful like human beings usually are, for he couldn't wait for her and decided to make do with another woman. After thus cursing her husband Brahma, Savitri went to the mountains and started doing Tapa (severe penances and austerities) for purification. Meanwhile, Brahma had to honour her curse, and so he took birth in the household of a great sage by the name of Charan pronounced as Chaaran). Thus, Brahma became 'Yagyavalkya' in this birth. But owing to Savitri's curse, he had become exceedingly lustful and fidgety; so his father, sage Charan, expelled him from his hermitage. Yagyavalkya roamed around for some time and finally came to the hermitage of another great sage named Shakalya (pronounced as Shaakalya) near the ancient city of Chamatkarpur (pronounced as Chamatkaar Pur); it was here that Yagyavalkya studied the Vedas.

Once it so happened that a king of the kingdom of Aanartadesh performed a great fire sacrifice, and he invited sage Shakalya to preside over its rituals as the chief priest. Shakalya used to send one of his disciples daily by turn to look after the rituals; one day it was the turn of Yagyavalkya. After completing the rituals when Yagyavalkya went to give sanctified Prasad (offering of rice) to the king and bless him before leaving the venue, he found the king in a compromising intimate posture with a woman. The king was so engrossed in sensual pleasures that he asked Yagyavalkya to leave the sanctified rice grains on a log of firewood lying nearby. Infuriated at this stance of the lustful king who did not observe self-restraint over his passions even while the fire sacrifice was underway, and had insulted the sanctified rice as well as Yagyavalkya, the sage sprinkled those rice grains over the said log of wood and returned to his teacher's hermitage, but he was very angry. In the meantime, that dead-wood became green and new shoots sprouted from its side, and soon it bore green leaves and flowers. The king was stunned at this mystical transformation, and realized the immensity of spiritual powers of Yagyavalkya. He sent a messenger to Shakalya with a request that he should send this particular disciple of his daily to complete the rest of the rituals. When Shakalya ordered Yagyavalkya to go to the do the rituals the next day, he refused, and explained to his guru what had happened the previous day. But Shakalya wished to please the king in return of some reward, so he insisted. When Yagyavalkya firmly refused to go to attend a lustful king who had even insulted him, Shakalya became angry at his disciple, accusing him of not obeying his guru, though the fault was not of Yagyavalkya at all.

Peeved at Yagyavalkya's refusal to obey his commands, Shakalya asked him to return the knowledge of the Vedas that the latter had got from him. Stunned by this irrational demand of his guru, Yagyavalkya decided that it is not the worth for him to

keep such a person as his teacher, so he vomited out all the knowledge of the Vedas by sipping a mouthful of sanctified water. This vomited knowledge of the Vedas was immediately picked up by other disciples of Shakalya who assumed the form of partridges to gobble it up. This knowledge came to be known as the ‘Krishna Yajur Vedas’.

Meanwhile, once Yagyavalkya lost all his previous knowledge of the Vedas, which practically means he decided to forget what he had learnt out of disgust for his guru who lacked true wisdom and nobleness of heart to stoop so low as to ask a disciple to return what he had learnt after hard toil of long years, he wondered again like a foolish man. Then he went to a place called Hatkeshwar (pronounced as Haatkeshwar) where he consecrated twelve idols of the Sun God and worshipped him. Pleased by his devotion and sincerity, the Sun God appeared before him and asked him to seek a boon. Yagyavalkya requested the Sun to teach him the Vedas once again. So the Sun God blessed him and asked him to assume a diminutive form and sit in the ears of one of his seven horses where he will be protected against the fierce heat of the Sun’s rays, and while the Sun God’s chariot traverses across the firmament he will teach Yagyavalkya the entire text of the Vedas. So in this way, Yagyavalkya learnt the Vedas once again. This knowledge was called ‘Shukla Yajur Veda’, which refers to the knowledge of Brahm, so-called as it is the knowledge of the pure cosmic Consciousness that is as bright, enlightening and splendid as the rays of the sun. {Naagar Kand, Canto 278.}

According to this ancient text, Yagyavalkya had two wives—Maitreyi and Kaatyaani. One renowned sage named Kaatyaayan was the son of Kaatyaani. {Naagar Kand, Canto 130.}

Yagyavalkya’s teacher in the science of Yoga (meditation) and the knowledge of the self (metaphysics and philosophy) was sage Vasistha, son of Hiranyanabha Kaushalya, a king of the Raghu dynasty which ruled Ayodhya in ancient times. [Vayu Puran, 88; Bhagwat Mahapuran, 93/106.] The sage performed severe penances and austerities, know as Tapa, at Mithila, the birth place of Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram. [Skandpuran, Reva Khand, 42.]

He used to attend the court of great ancient wise kings, such as king Janak (the father of Sita—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 3-4) and Yudhisthir (of the Mahabharat fame—Mahabharat, Sabha Parva, 4/32). It was in the court of king Janak that Yagyavalkya had defeated all the assembled scholars of the time on various metaphysical and theological concepts. He is also believed to be a chief priest in Yudhisthir’s Rajsu Yagya.

Sage Yagyavalkya was one of the greatest, most erudite, wise and renowned seers of his time. He was a senior and enlightened man, so wise and learned a scholar that even king Janak, who himself was a most self-realised and enlightened king of his era, was so much bowled over by his erudition, depth of knowledge and scholarship that he accepted the sage’s discipleship (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 1, 4). He was proclaimed the undisputed champion and winner in a metaphysical and theological debate held in the court of Janak during the course of a great fire sacrifice held where great scholars, seers and sages from far and wide had assembled (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 1-9).

He was a much sought after teacher and an honoured exponent of the eclectic Advaitya Vedanta philosophy of non-duality. This basically propounds, inter alia, that everything in existence, visible or invisible, minute or colossal, important or unimportant, are all fundamentally the same singular unit called Brahm manifested in

myriad and diverse ways, that therefore nothing that exists which is not Brahm is not true, that this Brahm is the only supreme Authority and Divinity in the entire creation, that this Brahm and the individual Atma or pure consciousness of the creature are one and the same, and not two independent units, that this Atma is the pure self, etc. Anything contrary to this is false and fallacious.

It is believed that all major Upanishads belonging to the Yajur Veda tradition are either directly or indirectly expounded and enunciated by and elucidated upon by Yagyavalkya or any one of his long line of disciples who had acquired this eclectic knowledge from him. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/6/1-3, 4/6/1-3 and 6/5/1-3.)

One such example is the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition in which sage Yagyavalkya has taught even the teacher of the Gods, i.e. Brihaspati, about the esoteric secrets and the profound spiritual importance as well as the significance of the Tarak Mantra, and about the divine nature of Lord Ram and his great Mantras that can provide a creature with Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance) once and for all.

The high spiritual prowess and reach of Yagyavalkya can be judged from the fact that he could communicate directly with the Supreme Being called Mandal Purush in his visible manifestation as the brilliant and splendorous Sun as described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The fact that Yagyavalkya had a repeated communion with the Sun God, at least on four occasion is clearly marked out in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/1-2; 2/1/1-2; 3/1/1-2; 4/1/1-2.

Yagyavalkya was a rich householder sage and seer. This is borne out by the fact that (a) on each occasion when he attended great debates he was showered with huge largesse by king Janak in the form of immense quantity of gold and thousands cows (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/1/1-2, 4/1/1-7, 4/3/33, 4/4/23), and (b) when he asks his wife Maitreyi to partition his vast estate before he went on to take Sanyas (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/4/1-2, 4/5/1-2).

The creation of Yajur Veda's two branches:- The word 'Yajus' means a liturgy of hymns chanted during the fire sacrifice. The Yajur Veda has been classified into Krishna and Shukla branches. It would be pertinent and interesting to add a brief note here on why the Yajur Veda has come to be known as Krishna and Shukla, meaning 'black' and 'white' respectively. The Yajur Veda Sanhita (a collection of Mantras or hymns) is classified into these two types for a variety of reasons. One of the probable reasons for this Yajur Veda having two names is that the collection in the Sanhita that came to be known as 'Krishna' had a mixture of prose and poetry, and hence considered 'impure and corrupted'. This is because primarily the Vedas were composed in poetry form with the verses structured according to one or the other methods of poetical composition called 'Chandas'. Prose as style of composition came later on and was regarded as an interpolation, interposition or juxtaposition which is all tantamount to corrupting the original method. Hence, that text which had both the poetry and prose was deemed to be 'corrupted and impure form of the Vedic text', and therefore called 'Krishna'—the dark one. On the other hand, the Sanhita which had only poetry was considered un-adulterated and pure form of the Vedic text, and hence called 'Shukla' or the white one, the colour 'white' being the colour of purity, immaculacy, divinity and holiness.

Since the primary use of the hymns of the Vedas in earlier times was for incantatory chanting during religious fire sacrifices, the poetical mode of composition was more suitable than the prose model. That is why these hymns were composed in 'Chandas' which are the different styles in which Sanskrit verses are composed. Later

on, when these verses were also being used for purposes other than the fire sacrifices, the prose model evolved and developed. The Upanishads are mainly in the prose model because they are philosophical treatises and not ritualistic incantatory chanting.

Another plausible reason is that the verses of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more difficult to understand than those of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Hence, the former were called 'dark' or Krishna because of the difficulty in their comprehension and explanation as compared to the more easier ones classified as 'white' or Shukla. The Krishna Yajur Veda Sanhita was more prevalent in the south of India while the Shukla was more common in the north of the country.

The third reason is that the original classifier of Vedas was 'Krishna Dvaipaayana Veda Vyas' who taught the text of the Yajur Veda to his disciple called Vaishampaayana. Hence, the original version of the text was named 'Krishna' in order to commemorate this fact.

There is a fourth probable reason as outlined here. The chief exponent of the Yajur Veda is regarded as the ancient sage Yagyavalkya. He was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of elaborate penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so confident of himself, his knowledge and competency that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by 'vomiting' them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda's Taitirriya branch. It is called 'Krishna' after the teacher and 'Taitirriya' after the partridges. Also, since they were 'vomited products' they were regarded as polluted and impure. Such body of knowledge came to be known as 'Krishna'—the impure one.

Now, not to be demoralized so easily and determined to get back his lost knowledge and wisdom, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from a 'bright source' represented by the sun, this set of Mantras was called the 'Shukla Yajur Veda'. [The word 'Shukla' means 'bright or light or illuminated'.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vaaj-sanei, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vaajis' means a horse. The teaching was done in the form of the cosmic neighing. This form of the Sun God came to be worshipped as 'Hayagriva', the Lord with the neck of a horse. An entire Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is named after this God, and it is called 'Hayagriva Upanishad'. It is the 29th Upanishad of this Veda.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kaanva, Maadhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.] The list of sages and seers who excelled in the Shukla Yajur Veda branch has been given in Brihad-Aaranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 6, and Canto 4, Brahmin 6.

The Yajur Veda is divided into two major types—viz. the Shukla (white) and Krishna (black or dark). The Krishna Yajur Veda has only four branches existing at present out of the earlier eighty-five—Taitirriya, Maitraayani, Katha, and Kapisthal. Its Brahman is known as Taitirriya Brahman. The Shukla Yajur Veda, also known as the Vaajsaneyi Sanhita, originally had seventeen branches, but now only following

two branches exist—Kaanva and Maadhyandeen. Its Brahman is known as Shatpath Brahman.

The sub-Veda of the Yajur Veda is known as Dhanur-Veda which deals with the science of archery and warfare.

The Aaranyakas of the Yajur Veda are—Taittiriya (of the Krishna Yajur Veda) and Brihad-aaranyak (of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

There are 19 principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda, and 32 principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda—such as Taitiriya, Swetaasvatar, Katha, Brihdaaranakya, Maitri, Ishavasya Upanishads etc.

The priests who used the hymns of the Yajur Veda during fire sacrifices were called 'Yajus' or 'Adhwaryu'.

The story of "Ram Charit Manas" written by Goswami Tulsidas, that describes the life, time and deeds done by Lord Ram, a human incarnation of the Supreme Being, was unveiled as a discourse between sage Bharadwaj and sage Yagyavalkya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Yagyavalkya had previously heard this divine and holy story of the Lord from the saint-crow Kaagbhusund who himself had heard it from Lord Shiva, the original conceiver of the story—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 30.

Family—He had two wives. The elder was named Katayani, and the second was called Maitreyi. From the elder wife, he had a son named Katyanana. [Skandpuran, Nagar Khand, 130; Brihad Aranya Upanishad, 4/5/1.] According to 'Yogi Yagyavalkya', a hand book on Yoga, his third wife was Gargi, though she is depicted as a rival interviewer who tested the sage's erudition and scholarship in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad. [Yogi Yagyavalkya, edited by Upendranath, Vasumati—Calcutta, 1-5.]

Sanyas—Though Yagyavalkya was externally a householder sage and seer, he was internally (i.e. mentally; intellectually and emotionally) a highly self-realised and an exceptionally enlightened man, a sincere ascetic and a renunciate monk who knew the futility of worldly pursuits. He was not preaching what he did not believe in. So he finally took to the eclectic path of Sanyas as clearly mentioned in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/5/15.

Works—Yagyavalkya wrote great texts on Yoga, metaphysics and law pertaining to daily life, much like Manu's Smiriti Law. (i) Yagyavalkya Sanhita contains religious laws; (ii) Yog Sanhita was composed in the hermitage of sage Upmanyu [Kurma Puran, 25.]; and (iii) Yogi Yagyavalkya on Yoga philosophy.

Yagyavalkya was a great and acclaimed Yogi (an ascetic) as well as a philosopher and preacher par-excellence of metaphysical principles, one who was well-versed in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma.

²Sage Bharadwaj—Sage Bharadwaj is regarded as one of the seven celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis. Ironically, we find many ancient sages with this name, and therefore it is clear that this word was used more as a surname or title rather than the name of an individual sage or seer. Bharadwaj is regarded as a Vedic sage after whom a lineage of sages and seers of the highest order was established. His disciples assumed their teacher's name as their title, and came to be known as Bharadwajs.

Sage Bharadwaj Baarhasptya is the seer of several hymns of the Rig Veda, Mandal no. 6. He is the son of Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of the Gods. He was

the father of Dronacharya of the Mahabharata who has taught Arjun the science of archery.

The epic story of the life and times of Lord Ram that was written by the legendary poet Goswami Tulsidas, the book titled “Ram Charit Manas”, mentions sage Bharadwaj. He lived in Prayag, the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44.

The story that narrates the time, life and acts of of Lord, a human manifestation of the Supreme Being, as told in the epic Ram Charit Manas was unveiled as a discourse between sage Bharadwaj and sage Yagyavalkya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Later on in the narration of Ram Charit Manas we read that Lord Ram had visited the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj during his forest sojourn—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Sage Bharadwaj is credited with two great works—viz. Bharadwaj Shrauta-Sutras consisting of ten sections, and Bharadwaj Griha-Sutras.

The profound philosophy pertaining to the divine nature of Lord Ram and him being the Tarak Brahm himself personified is preached to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto nos. 2-3.

In addition to this, the story of Lord Shiva’s marriage with Parvati was narrated to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Charit Manas—refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 47. Here we read that sage Yagyavalkya had narrated to sage Bharadwaj the story of Lord Ram which Lord Shiva had narrated to his consort goddess Uma some time in the past.]

संभु कीन्ह यह चरित सुहावा । बहुरि कृपा करि उमहि सुनावा ॥ ३ ॥
सोइ सिव कागभुसुंदिहि दीन्हा । राम भगत अधिकारी चीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

sambhu kīnha yaha carita suhāvā. bahuri kṛpā kari umahi sunāvā. 3.
sō'i siva kāgabhusuṇḍihi dīnhā. rāma bhagata adhikārī cīnhā. 4.

Lord Shambhu (Shiva) was the first one who had conceived this glorious story that is so beautiful and pleasant (to hear and remember)¹. He then graciously told or revealed it to Uma, his consort². (3)

It is the same story that the Lord (Shiva) gave (i.e. told or revealed) to Kaagbhusund when he found that the latter was eligible to hear this story and was worthy to receive it as he had immense Bhakti (devotion, faith, reverence and affection) for Lord Ram³. (4)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva had conceived this sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram in his Mana—i.e. he had conceived it in his mind and enshrined it reverentially in his

heart. When the time came he revealed it to his consort. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.

²Why did Shiva reveal this story to Uma has been explained in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 111; and (ii) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Doha no. 55.

³The story of Lord Ram that the saintly crow Kaagbhusund had heard from Lord Shiva was narrated by him to Garud, Lord Vishnu's celestial mount, when the latter was confused about the reality of Lord Ram. This narrative forms the second half of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125.

Lord Shiva had himself found Kaagbhusund eligible to have devotion for Lord Ram, and so Shiva blessed him with this glorious spiritual reward. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 109.

Even Lord Ram had personally blessed Kaagbhusund—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 85.]

तेहि सन जागबलिक पुनि पावा । तिन्ह पुनि भरद्वाज प्रति गावा ॥ ५ ॥
ते श्रोता बकता समसीला । सर्वँदरसी जानहिं हरिलीला ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi sana jāgabalika puni pāvā. tinha puni bharadvāja prati gāvā. 5.
tē śrōtā bakatā samasīlā. savamṁdarasī jānahim harilīlā. 6.

Then from him (i.e. from Kaagbhusund), sage Yagyavalkya had received this story¹, and subsequently he (Yagyavalkya) had recited it to sage Bharadwaj (or 'sung' it for him)². (5)

These two sages, the hearer as well as the narrator (i.e. sage Bharadwaj who had listened to the story, and Yagyavalkya who had recited or narrated it to him), were both exalted, wise, learned and enlightened sages in their own right. They were both equally courteous and possessed equally excellent virtues; they had evenness of mind, uniformity of view and treated everyone alike³; and they were acquainted with the mysteries of Lord Hari's (Supreme Being's) maverick deeds and mystical plays. (6)

[Note—¹The genesis and the sequence of how the divine story of Lord Ram, known as 'Ram Charit Manas', was first conceived and revealed, and then how it reached great sages of ancient time, has been outlined in the foregoing verses.

The lineage is clearly marked: It was first conceived in the Mana (heart and mind) of Lord Shiva, who then told it to his consort Uma; Kaagbhusund also was told the same story by Shiva. From Kaagbhusund it was heard by sage Yagyavalkya, and the latter revealed it to sage Bharadwaj.

The wondrous fact to note here is that Kaagbhusund was a crow, not a human being, and sage Yagyavalkya's hearing and understanding of this holy story from a saint who had the body of a crow, and hence spoke in a crow's language (i.e. he 'crowed'), proves that Yagyavalkya could comprehend languages of birds. It's not

surprising though, because this sage was exceptionally able and possessed rare skills, for he was no one else but Brahma, the creator of all knowledge, himself. How Brahma became Yagyavalkya has already been narrated in an elaborate note on Yagyavalkya appended to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 29 herein above.

²How Bharadwaj received this story from Yagyavalkya has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 47.

³To wit, both Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj were realised souls who did not distinguish between creatures based on their physical bodies, as they knew that the Atma, which indeed is the true self of all living beings, is the same ‘pure consciousness’ that uniformly dwells in all the creatures, though the body of one creature is different from the other. They also knew that this Atma of the individual creature is the same as the Supreme Atma of this creation that is known as the Parmatma, or the Supreme Being. The only difference between these two, i.e. between the individual’s Atma and the Parmatma, is the level at which it is understood, for the individual’s Atma exists at the microcosmic level of existence while the Parmatma exists at the macrocosmic level of the same existence. So they treated everyone with equal affection and respect.

Hence, these two exalted sages could easily understand that though Lord Ram had the physical body of a human being, and he acted also like a human being, yet in reality he was the cosmic Consciousness known as Parmatma, or the Supreme Atma, in that form.]

जानहिं तीनि काल निज ग्याना । करतल गत आमलक समाना ॥ ७ ॥

औरउ जे हरिभगत सुजाना । कहहिं सुनहिं समुझहिं बिधि नाना ॥ ८ ॥

jānahim̐ tīni kāla nija gyānā. karatala gata āmalaka samānā. 7.

aura'u jē haribhagata sujānā. kahahim̐ sunahim̐ samujhahim̐ bidhi nānā. 8.

They had transcendental knowledge, knowing definitely of the past, the present as well as the future in the same way as a person has a definite and an unambiguous knowledge of anything, for example the cherry plum (āmalaka), that he holds in his palms (right before his eyes)¹. (7)

Besides these sages, there are countless other devotees of the Lord as well as erudite and wise persons who narrate it in various ways, who hear it and understand it, and all of them hold the same view about its authenticity, holiness and spiritual powers.

[To wit, apart from these sages, other virtuous, enlightened and noble souls who are devotees of the Lord (Sri Ram), who adore the Lord and worship him, recite or narrate, hear, interpret and understand this story in a variety of ways]². (8)

[Note—¹Both Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj were great sages; they had such mystical powers that they could see what had happened at any point of time in the past, what is happening anywhere in the present time, and what will happen in the future too. To wit, they could perceive the reality of any given thing irrespective of its outer appearances. In the context of the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, it simply means that they could easily see that it contains a faithful account of

the life and the deeds done by the Lord; they could also see that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human prince but the almighty Supreme Being himself in his form.

Hence, since they could not be deceived by falsehoods, pretensions, superfluity and external embellishments that may be used to polish a story and refine it make it look extraordinarily glorious and enchanting, so when they assert that the story of Ram Charit Manas is truly a divine and holy story that can grant spiritual bliss and joy to its reader, hearer and narrator, then surely it is a matter of fact beyond doubt.

It is as certain a fact as one actually holding a cherry plum in his hand; he can actually see it, feel it, taste it and smell it. The physical plum present in his hand is not a figment of that person's fertile imagination, but it's a reality. So likewise, what has been said about Ram Charit Manas is not something imaginary, but a matter of fact.

²The same story of Lord Ram acquires countless forms and versions depending upon the narrator and the listener. This is because each individual has his own level of wisdom, knowledge and intellect, and so each would interpret and understand the same universal story in his own unique way. Therefore, the way the story is told and passed on from generation to generation changes; it acquires countless variations, contours and connotations, but essentially it remains the same.]

दो०. मैं पुनि निज गुर सन सुनी कथा सो सूकरखेत ।

समुझी नहिं तसि बालपन तब अति रहेउँ अचेत ॥ ३० (क) ॥

dōhā.

mair̥m puni nija gura sana sunī kathā sō sūkarakhēta.

samujhī nahim̥ tasi bālapana taba ati rahē'um̥ acēta. 30 (a).

[Goswami Tulsidas says—] Further, I have myself heard this story from my Guru (teacher and preceptor) at a place called 'Sukarkheta¹'. But I could not fully grasp its meaning and import at that time as I was in my childhood days when the mind and the intellect are not mature². (Doha no. 30-a)

[Note—¹Sukarkheta or Sukar-shetra is the place where, according to legends, Lord Vishnu had appeared in the form of the Boar ("sukar") to slay the demon named Hiranyaaksha, the elder brother of the demon Hiranyakshipu. In this form, Lord Vishnu had salvaged the earth from remaining submerged in the depths of the ocean where the said demon had hidden it.

In the present day, Sukarshetra is believed to be located in a district known as Gonda across the river Saryu, approximately thirty miles from Ayodhya in the North-West direction. An old cottage where Tulsidas and his guru, saint Narhari-Das used to live still exists here atop a small hillock or mound of earth that is roughly twenty feet above the surrounding land. They chose it because the river Ghagra (by which river Saryu is known locally) inundated the surrounding plains during its spate in the rainy season. A huge Banyan tree and an Indian fig tree are located here next to this hut; it is locally believed that they were planted by Tulsidas' guru.

According to another account, it situated in a place called Soron in the west of the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.

These two places are called “Sukar Shetra” also because they are predominantly grazing land for domesticated animals. Earlier its inhabitants used to breed swine here; hence the name ‘Sukar’.

²Tulsidas’ guru (teacher) was saint Narhari-Das. It is believed that Tulsidas became his disciple at the tender age of seven years. Narhari Das first brought the child Tulsidas to Ayodhya where the young boy studied the Sutras of Panini (Sanskrit grammar) for roughly ten months.

Then his guru took him to Sukarshetra roughly at the age of eight years and four months. There, Tulsidas continued with his Sanskrit studies for another five years. Simultaneously, his guru taught him the story of Lord Ram in the vernacular language, repeating it many times so that the young boy could know it like the back of his hand—see verse line no. 1 that follows this Doha herein below.

Hence, at the time Tulsidas learnt the story of Ramayana he was approximately of sixteen or seventeen years of age. That is why he says that he could not properly estimate the profound importance of Ram Charit Manas due to his childhood days when his mind and intellect were still immature.]

श्रोता बक्ता ग्याननिधि कथा राम कै गूढ़ ।

किमि समुझौं मैं जीव जड़ कलि मल ग्रसित बिमूढ़ ॥ ३० (ख) ॥

śrōtā bakatā gyānanidhi kathā rāma kai gūṛha.

kimi samujhaurṁ mairṁ jīva jaṛa kali mala grasita bimūṛha. 30 (b).

Both the listener and the narrator of the divine story of Lord Ram should be extremely wise, enlightened and intelligent; he must have the requisite competence and intellectual prowess to properly understand, interpret and benefit from it, because this story is highly mystical, with profundity of spiritualism and abundance of metaphysical principles as its contents. [To wit, it is beyond comprehension of those who are dull and stupid, or those who lack the wisdom and intellect to comprehend spiritual principles of profound depth and great magnitude. Those who do not exert themselves to pay proper attention to the gravity and depth of Ram Charit Manas vis-à-vis its spiritual messages will be like those blind fools who miss seeing the tree while living in the forest.]

Say then, how could I fully grasp the spiritual depth and the magnitude of its metaphysical message when I heard, given that I am a dull person of a low intellect who is overshadowed by the taints and shortcomings associated with life in the present age of Kaliyug (the present era where spiritual wisdom is at a premium, and people are more inclined to be interested in worldly affairs instead of spiritual matters)¹. (Doha no. 30-b)

[Note—¹Tulsidas is being humble and unpretentious when he makes this observation. He implies that a true devotee of Lord Ram must never be boastful and haughty about his spiritual achievements as it would undo whatever he may have gained.

Remember: Tulsidas was not a fool or an illiterate person, and neither was he an ordinary person—because otherwise it would not have been possible for him to pen the marvellous epic book known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, which till today has had no match. The lucidity, flow and succulence of the verses of this book holds the

reader, the recitor and the listener equally enthralled and captivated as if by a wand of magical charm. The fact is that Tulsidas was a blessed soul no less than any of the sages he mentions here—viz. Kaagbhusund, Yagyavalkya or Bharadwaj. It goes to his credit that he prefers to keep a low profile and act most modestly and humbly like a true devotee of Lord Ram should.]

चौ०. तदपि कही गुर बारहिं बारा । समुझि परी कछु मति अनुसार ॥ १ ॥
भाषाबद्ध करबि मैं सोई । मोरें मन प्रबोध जेहिं होई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tadapi kahī gura bārahim bārā. samujhi parī kachu mati anusārā. 1.
bhāṣābad'dha karabi mair̄m sōī. mōrēm mana prabōdha jēhim hōī. 2.

Though I could not follow or understand the story of Lord Ram easily, my Guru had patience with me, and he kept on telling it to me repeatedly. But by-and-by I could follow and understand it little by little in accordance to my intellectual abilities¹. (1)

I shall now put that understanding of mine with respect to the story of Lord Ram in simple words using the local dialect², as this endeavour would give immense satisfaction to me.

To wit, I am narrating the holy and divine story of Lord Ram for my own joy and contentment (and not for any other purpose, such as expectation of getting any kind of honour or praises for writing it)³. (2)

[Note—¹Tulsidas was of a tender young age of approximately eight or eight and a half years when his guru named Narhari Das started teaching him the story of the Ramayana in the local dialect known as Avadhi. He taught Tulsidas the story of Lord Ram repeatedly, according to some traditions for twenty-four times, till this young boy attained his teens, i.e. till Tulsidas attained the age of thirteen or fourteen years. By this time his intellectual abilities also developed, and so he began to grasp the meaning and depth of the story of Ram Charit Manas better; he began to realize its profound spiritual import and the benefit it can grant to ordinary folks.

There is an important message here. And it is this: If one is unable to fully comprehend the secrets and mysteries of the story of Lord Ram, he must not lose hope but continue with the effort. He should hear the story again and again. In due course of time the darkness of ignorance would clear in a gradual manner, and the sunlight of spiritual knowledge with its sunshine of joy and happiness would dawn in the seeker's inner-self, filling him with a sense of fulfillment, elation and bliss.

²Tulsidas says that he will re-tell the same story which he had heard from his Guru, but in a simple local language which is his mother-tongue and with which he is conversant. He won't use Sanskrit which is the language used by scholars and learned people. This is because he would be better able to put into words whatever little he has understood of the story if he uses a language he knows best—viz. his local mother-tongue.

It ought to be noted here that this is the primary reason why the story of the Ramayana written by Tulsidas with the title “Ram Charit Manas” became so popular and famous—it is because he had written it in the local dialect, using the common

language and lexicon that an ordinary person could very easily understand and identify with. So, Tulsidas' version touched the heart of the masses immediately as it was free from complicated jargon and complexities of language and metaphysical or spiritual knowledge that are inherent in other versions of the Ramayana.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 13.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Shloka line no. 14 precedes Doha no. 1 at the very beginning of this book; as well as to Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 13. The next two verses, nos. 3-4 that follow herein below, are very specific on this point.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 10 he says that the only courage he has in going ahead with his narration is that the book has the holy name of Lord Ram in it, and this is enough for him as an encouragement, though he has no competence or expertise as a poet—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 8.]

जस कछु बुधि बिबेक बल मेरें । तस कहिहउँ हियँ हरि के प्रेरें ॥ ३ ॥
निज संदेह मोह भ्रम हरनी । करउँ कथा भव सरिता तरनी ॥ ४ ॥

jasa kachu budhi bibēka bala mērēm̄. tasa kahiha'um̄ hiyam̄ hari kē prērēm̄.

3.

nija sandēha mōha bhrama haranī. kara'um̄ kathā bhava saritā taranī. 4.

Whatever little strength of wisdom, erudition, knowledge, intellectual abilities and competence that I have, I shall employ them to do my best to narrate this divine and holy story (of Lord Ram) as my heart is inspired to do by the grace of Lord Hari (Lord Sri Ram)¹. (3)

I shall do it also because this sacred and mystical story of the Lord would help me to get rid of my own doubts, delusions and bewilderments pertaining to existence in this gross mortal world (for this will give me abiding peace and unbound joy)².

This holy story of Lord Ram is like a sturdy boat that can take a creature across the vast river symbolized by this gross mortal existence³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 105.

²Tulsidas makes it amply clear that he is going to tell this divine story of Lord Ram in order to eliminate any remnants of darkness caused by worldly delusions that may still be present in his heart and mind. Apart from the fact that the narration of this holy story spiritually benefits the narrator himself, the feeling of satisfaction that he gets when he finds that the listener too is filled with spiritual joy and bliss are additional rewards for him. Both the listener and the narrator therefore benefit by this sacred story of Lord Ram. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30-b herein above.

In Uttar Kand we read that Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, too was overcome with confusions and delusions; it was only after hearing the story of Ram

Charit Manas from the saintly crow Kaagbhusund that Garud finally found his peace. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 68; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 125.

Even goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, was not beyond the tentacles of delusions and doubts. It was to remove her perplexities and give her peace of mind that Lord Shiva had revealed the divine story of Lord Ram to her in the beginning. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Doha no. 113; (ii) Doha no. 119 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

The great sage Bharadwaj too had some secret doubts and confusions; he had explicitly accepted his mental perplexities which had robbed him of his peace of mind when he had requested sage Yagyavalkya to remove them by narrating to him the divine story of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 47.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 124; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 125; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 130.

In order to cross a wide and turbulent river with swift currents, a good and strong boat is needed. Likewise, for the purpose of obtaining deliverance from the miseries and torments of this mundane gross world, the divine story of Lord Ram acts like a buoy and a barge as it helps the devotee to find steadiness in his life and live peacefully in this world, with the assurance that he will finally attain spiritual blessedness and bliss.]

बुध विश्राम सकल जन रंजनि । रामकथा कलि कलुष बिभंजनि ॥ ५ ॥

रामकथा कलि पंग भरनी । पुनि बिबेक पावक कहँ अरनी ॥ ६ ॥

budha biśrāma sakala jana ranjani. rāmakathā kali kaluṣa bibhanjani. 5.
rāmakathā kali pannaga bharanī. puni bibēka pāvaka kahum̐ aranī. 6.

The spiritual story of Lord Ram, known as the ‘Ram Katha’ (rāmakathā), gives peace and rest to those who are wise, sagacious and enlightened. It delights all those who hear it, making them happy and blissful. It neutralises the negative effects of all the spiritual taints associated with Kaliyug. (5)

For the serpent symbolising Kaliyug, this Ram Katha is like a peacock (which is an enemy of serpents as it eats them)¹.

For the purpose of kindling the fire of spiritualism and wisdom, it is like a piece of firewood known as ‘Arani’². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, the divine story of Lord Ram is as beautiful as the peacock because on the one hand it is charming, sweet and pleasant to hear and delights the heart, and on the other hand it destroys all the fears and torments arising for a creature due to Kaliyug just like the beautiful peacock that can devour a poisonous snake.

²During fire sacrifices, two pieces of firewood are rubbed vigorously to create a spark that lights up the sacred fire in the sacrificial pit. So, when one hears, reflects and contemplates upon this divine story of Ram Charit Manas for sometime, spirituality and wisdom sprouts automatically in his heart and mind.]

रामकथा कलि कामद गाई । सुजन सजीवनि मूरि सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥
सोइ बसुधातल सुधा तरंगिनि । भय भंजनि भ्रम भेक भुअंगिनि ॥ ८ ॥

rāmakathā kali kāmada gāī. sujana saḥivani mūri suhāī. 7.
sō'i basudhātala sudhā taraṅgini. bhaya bharṅjani bhrama bhēka bhu'aṅgini. 8.

Ram Katha (the story of Lord Ram) is like the symbolic all wish-fulfilling cow known as Kaamdhenū during the era of Kaliyug (i.e. in the present world, it fulfils all the wishes of devotees).

For those who are wise and good, it is like a magical root that provides whatever they want. [Just like a medicinal herb that can cure the gravest of diseases if selected and administered properly, the story of Lord Ram has mystical abilities that enable a seeker to attain success in all his endeavours, which means all his wishes are fulfilled and his dreams are realised.]¹ (7)

On this earth (i.e. in this mortal world), the divine story of Lord Ram is like a sacred river of nectar that can provide liberation and deliverance from the fear of birth and death (i.e. it can provide salvation and emancipation to the soul of all those who hear it and narrate it with due devotion and faith).

Not only this, it removes all spiritual fears and consternations arising out of delusions and doubts that torment a creature, and for this purpose it acts just like a serpent that can easily devour a frog². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, a wise and enlightened person would not want worldly things; he would want spiritual blessedness, an eternal source of happiness, joy and peace, something that frees him from the miseries of life in this world and gives him liberation from the cycle of birth and death by providing deliverance to his soul. All these can be accomplished by hearing and narrating Ram Katha.]

²To wit, just like a serpent that devours a frog, the Lord's story can eliminate all the spiritual problems such as confusions and doubts (**bhrama**) that torment a living being. In this verse, the different spiritual consternations, confusions and doubts that create so much misery for a creature are likened to a 'frog', while the Lord's divine story that can eliminate all such problems is likened to a 'serpent' that can devour the frog.

The story of Ram Charit Manas, if listened to carefully and understood properly, would instill confidence in the heart of a devotee that inspite of all the problems he has to face in this world and uncertainties about his spiritual fate, Lord Ram would take care of him and his destiny, provided he submits himself unconditionally before the Lord and seeks his protection. When that happens, the Lord would certainly and surely look after his welfare, in the physical world as well as in the spiritual sphere. The very hearing and singing of Ram Charit Manas would provide unbound bliss and eternal joy to a devotee, and very soon he would discover

to his delight that his mind and heart has finally found the peace for which he had yearned for so long but which had evaded him till now.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 69; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1 that precede Doha no. 129—to Doha no. 130.]

असुर सेन सम नरक निकंदिनि । साधु बिबुध कुल हित गिरिनंदिनि ॥ ९ ॥
संत समाज पयोधि रमा सी । बिस्व भार भर अचल छमा सी ॥ १० ॥

asura sēna sama naraka nikandini. sādhu bibudha kula hita girinandini. 9.
santa samāja payōdhi ramā sī. bisva bhāra bhara acala chamā sī. 10.

Just like ‘Girinandini¹’, it (the Ram Charit Manas; the story of Lord Ram) helps a pious soul by destroying for him the fear of the gravest of hells symbolising a huge army of demons which torments ordinary creatures.

Once again, just like this ‘Giridamini’ being favourable for the gods and their well-wisher, this story of Lord Ram is also beneficent to all the saints and pious souls by providing them solace and succour from their torments and miseries. (9)

For the ocean of clean and holy water symbolised by the community of saints and holy persons, it represents goddess Rama (Laxmi, the goddess of well-being and prosperity, who emerged from the celestial ocean of milk known as the Kshirsagar)².

Like the earth that supports all forms of life and provides all its needs, this glorious story of Lord Ram too helps support the soul and takes care of all the spiritual needs of a person³. (10)

[Note—¹The word “girinandini” has two important connotations: (i) it means ‘the Daughter of the King of the Mountains’, and hence refers to goddess Parvati who was the daughter of Giri, the ‘King of Mountains’ and the consort of Lord Shiva; and (ii) river Ganges which is also called the ‘Daughter of the Mountains’ as it has its origin in the higher reaches of the Himalayan mountain range.

Goddess Parvati is regarded as the ‘Mother Goddess’ and the ‘Shakti’ which refers to the dynamic force and the almighty powers of the Supreme Being. She had manifested herself in many forms on different occasions to destroy the demons who represented evil, dark and negative forces in creation that needed to be overcome and neutralised. One of her most famous forms is goddess Durga, and the other is Kali. Both these two forms are regarded as the patron deities of the battle-field, and are invoked for obtaining victory over one’s enemy, no matter how formidable the enemy might be.

River Ganges, on the other hand, is also regarded with great reverence as a holy river that can provide liberation and deliverance to the creature. It is regarded as the ‘river of gods’ as it is believed that it flows in heaven, and a stream of it had descended on earth to provide purity to mortal creatures.

This verse simply means that the story of Lord Ram, known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’, is as holy, sacred and divine as river Ganges; it is capable to provide liberation and deliverance to a creature like this holy river.

Similarly, like goddess Durga or Kali, this story of Lord Ram can eliminate all fears of hell like this goddess had destroyed the huge army of demons to provide safety and security to the gods in heaven and mortals on earth.

Now, let us read briefly about the interesting story associated with these two goddesses, Durga and Kali.

Goddess Durga is a combined form of the dynamic energy of the three Gods of the Trinity—i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder. An entire Puran, called the ‘Devibhagwat’, is dedicated to her. Another work known as ‘Devimahatamya’ is a brief rendering of Devibhagwat, and it appears in another Puran called Markandeya Puran. Each verse of this ‘Devimahatamya’ book is revered as a Mantra, a holy formula dedicated to the goddess and used to invoke her blessings.

Goddess Durga is also known as ‘Mahisaasur-mardini’, one who slayed the demon called Mahisaasur, the demon who was shaped like a fierce he-buffalo. In his symbolic form of a ‘he-buffalo’ this demon stood for ‘law-of-the-jungle’—a law that has no regulations, no codes of conduct, morality and ethics, but is based on entirely on ruthless and mindless use of crude force depending on the whims and fancies of the most strong amongst the creatures. This demon’s misdeeds were so horrendous that Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva became very annoyed at him, and they pooled their energies and powers to create Durga. The dynamic powers of other gods also established themselves in her form and their weapons became her weapons, thereby empowering the goddess with stupendous powers and acquire invincible potentials. Thus empowered and authorized, she rode a fierce lion symbolizing valour, ferocity, invincibility, strength, agility and astounding powers, to challenge the demon and slay him in the battle that ensued.

Goddess Kali is also another form of Durga which was revealed from the body of Parvati, the primary form of the goddess known as ‘Shakti’ or the ‘Mother Goddess’. There are two versions regarding the story of the emergence of Kali.

One version says that when the cruelty of two demons Shumbha and Nishumbha reached a climax so much so that even the gods were not spared, they went to Parvati and requested her to save them. She manifested herself as goddess Kali, the black goddess of the battle-field, who eliminated these two demons along with their other equally ferocious companions known as Dhumralochana, Chanda, Munda and Raktabeej. Her black form is attributed to her anger and wrath, as well as to the ferocity and heat of the battle.

The legendary story briefly says that Shumbha and Nishumbha were infatuated by the beauty of Kali, so they wanted to marry her. She laid out a condition that first they must defeat her in a battle. Infuriated, they tried to drag her away when she cut off their heads. Their other companions intervened, but excepting Raktabeej the other three were easily eliminated. Raktabeej had a boon that if his blood fell on the ground, as many new Raktabeejs would be formed as the number of drops of the blood. So the goddess Kali elongated her tongue to lick all the drops of blood of Raktabeej before they fell on the ground. This is how he was killed.

Another version is mentioned in Adbhut Ramayan said to have been written by sage Valmiki, according to which it was Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, who manifested herself as Kali to eliminate the demon known as Sahastrabahu, the one with a thousand arms. The story says that after successfully slaying the demon kind Ravana, the ten-headed king of Lanka, Lord Ram returned to his capital city of Ayodhya. Then he launched a campaign against this demon who is said to be a cousin and elder brother of Ravana of Lanka. In the battle that followed, Lord Ram fell

unconscious after being wounded. Then Sita jumped off the war chariot to assume the ferocious form of Kali to slay the demon.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27.

²To wit, just like the case of goddess Laxmi, who is the patron goddess of wealth, material well-being and prosperity with their accompanying comforts and pleasures, the divine story of Lord Ram grants all sorts of spiritual comfort, delight and contentedness to those who hear it or listen to it. It fulfils all their wishes just as Laxmi helps a man to fulfil all his desires by granting him abundant money, power and authority. Laxmi represented the best of the things that emerged from the churning of the celestial ocean of milk when it was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. Similarly, the story of Lord Ram is the best reward that one gets by keeping the company of saints and holy people which is compared to ‘the ocean of milk’ here because it is free from corruptions and is spiritually as rejuvenating as the nourishment given by pure and unadulterated milk.

³The earth sustains all its inhabitants, selflessly and without any bias. It sustains the animate as well as the inanimate, the high and mighty as well as the humble and the lowly. It provides nourishment and habitat to one and all, without any discrimination, and irrespective of who they are and what their religious beliefs are. Similarly, the divine story of Lord Ram selflessly provides spiritual solace and blessedness to one and all, it provides an opportunity for liberation and deliverance to all irrespective of who the person is and what his religious beliefs are.

Again, like Mother Earth, it is a treasury of everything that a person’s soul needs for its welfare and happiness.

Once again, like the earth’s diversity in its physical form and features as well the wide variety in the culture and tradition of its people, the story of Lord Ram too has many variations in its details and finer nuances, with different people interpreting and understanding it in different ways.]

जम गन मुहँ मसि जग जमुना सी । जीवन मुकुति हेतु जनु कासी ॥ ११ ॥

रामहि प्रिय पावनि तुलसी सी । तुलसिदास हित हियँ हुलसी सी ॥ १२ ॥

jama gana muham̐ masi jaga jamunā sī. jīvana mukuti hētu janu kāsī. 11.
rāmahi priya pāvani tulasī sī. tulasidāsa hita hiyam̐ hulasī sī. 12.

Like the sacred river Yamuna (whose water appears to be dark in colour as compared to river Ganges), the story of Lord Ram is able to darken the face of the messengers of the god of death known as Yam.

[To wit, it helps to put to shame the messengers of Yam who come to take the creature to hell when he dies. The reason is that one who hears the sacred story of Lord Ram cannot go to hell.]

Similarly, it is like the holy place known as Kashi for the purpose of granting liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death.

[It is believed that a person who dies in Kashi finds immediate freedom from the cycle of transmigration. There are two reasons for it: (i) The presence of river

Ganges on whose banks the last rites are conducted; and (ii) Lord Shiva who utters the holy name of Lord Ram in the ears of a dying person so that the latter gets immediate deliverance¹.] (11)

This story is as dear to Lord Ram as is the sacred plant known as Tulsi (Basil plant) is to him.

[Lord Ram is an incarnation or manifestation of Lord Vishnu. According to legends, the leaves of the Tulsi plant are very dear to Lord Vishnu so much so that no worship or offering to the Lord is complete without first offering these leaves to him.]

And as far as Tulsidas (the composer of the book 'Ram Charit Manas') is concerned, this story is as dear to him as is his own mother whose name was Hulsī, as it sincerely and lovingly cares for his welfare as his own mother would have done. (12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19 regarding Lord Shiva giving the boon of deliverance to those who die at Kashi; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 212 where it is said that Ganges is the purifier of the world.]

सिवप्रिय मेकल सैल सुता सी । सकल सिद्धि सुख संपत्ति रासी ॥ १३ ॥
सदगुन सुरगन अंब अदिति सी । रघुबर भगति प्रेम परमिति सी ॥ १४ ॥

sivapriya mēkala saila sutā sī. sakala sid'dhi sukha sampati rāsī. 13.
sadaguna suragana amba aditi sī. raghubara bhagati prēma paramiti sī. 14.

Lord Shiva is fond of this story as much as he is fond of river Narmada (which is called "mēkala saila sutā" as it originates from the summit of a hill called Maikula which is part of the chain of hills called Amarkantaka). [The word "sutā" means a 'daughter'; and "saila" means a hill or a mountain.]

It is a spring-board of all Siddhis (achievements; mystical powers) and a treasure-trove of all imaginable forms of happiness, joy and delight. (13)

For the purpose of inculcating and developing good and noble qualities, it is like Mother Aditi, the mother of gods, who not only produced the gods symbolising the best of qualities in this creation but also nourished them and favoured them.

[To wit, Lord Ram's story helps a person to inculcate and develop excellent virtues in him; it helps him to become a noble soul with immaculate characters.]

It acts as a milestone in the path of devotion for Lord Ram; it represents the culmination of the spiritual efforts of a seeker to attain love and devotion for the Lord. (14)

दो०. रामकथा मंदाकिनी चित्रकूट चित चारु ।
तुलसी सुभग सनेह बन सिय रघुबीर बिहारु ॥ ३१ ॥

dōhā.

rāmakathā mandākinī citrakūṭa cita cāru.
tulasī subhaga sanēha bana siya raghubīra bihāru. 31.

Tulsidas says that in a metaphoric way this beautiful and holy story of Lord Ram is like the river Mandakini (a tributary of Ganges), a cheerful mind that is purified of all impurities and is tranquil and wise is like the holy place called Chitrakoot, devotion and affection for Lord Ram is like its verdant forest, and in it dwells Lord Ram with his consort Sita¹. (Doha no. 31)

[Note—¹Chitrakoot was a place endowed with extraordinary natural beauty where Lord Ram, accompanied by his consort Sita and brother Laxman, had spent the greater part of his fourteen years of forest sojourn. The Lord lived here in peace and comfort in the lap of nature and its pristine beauty. The charm of Chitrakoot and the Lord's stay there on the advice of sage Valmiki has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 142.

Refer also to verse nos. 23-24 of 'Vinai Patrika', the wonderful Book of Prayers written by Tulsidas. Its English version with elaborate commentary has been published by me, the author of this present book titled Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan.

The calm environs of Chitrakoot is compared to a tranquil mind to imply that only when the mind is free from disturbances can it focus on the thoughts of Lord Ram. These thoughts of the Lord are so absorbing and charming that they resemble the bewitching natural beauty of Chitrakoot which enchanted and captivated the mind of the beholder so much so that one never had enough of it.

Those who live in Chitrakoot take a bath in the river Mandakini whose waters are clean and unpolluted. Similarly, the story of Lord Ram also helps one to refresh his spirit, rejuvenate himself and clean all his impurities if he takes a dip in its symbolic nectar-like water by way of hearing it, reading it or reciting it.

In this Doha, Tulsidas says that the Mana (mind and the heart) of devotees is like the forest of Chitrakoot where Lord Ram had spent quite of bit of time living peacefully with Sita and Laxman near the banks of the tranquil river Mandakini whose water was clear as liquid crystal. This river flowed through the forest of Chitrakoot and made the environment around it pleasant and the land fertile just like the story of Lord Ram, known as Ram Charit Manas, that is continuously recited and heard by devotees of the Lord gives delight to them and purifies their inner-self, making their Mana a fertile ground where the tree of spiritualism can remain evergreen.]

चौ०. रामचरित चिंतामनि चारू । संत सुमति तिय सुभग सिंगारू ॥ १ ॥
जग मंगल गुनग्राम राम के । दानि मुकुति धन धरम धाम के ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmacarita cintāmani cārū. santa sumati tiya subhaga singārū. 1.
jaga maṅgala gunagrāma rāma kē. dāni mukuti dhana dharama dhāma kē. 2.

The glorious story that describes the life and time of Lord Ram is symbolically like the wonderful gem called ‘Chintamani’ (which has the magical power to eliminate all worries—“Chintaa”)¹.

If the refined mind and intellect of wise and enlightened sages and seers are likened to a beautiful and intelligent woman (for instance, a chaste and loyal housewife), then this story of Lord Ram is like her ornaments and decent attire that make her look adorable and worthy of respect². (1)

The hosts of glorious virtues possessed by Lord Ram and described in the story of the Lord are auspicious blessings for the entire world (for they do good to the world and all its inhabitants by acting as examples to be followed by one and all so that even a layman is offered a guidance to help him reach his spiritual goal very easily, comfortably, and in a sure way).

Not only this, the story of Lord Ram incorporating the Lord’s majestic qualities also bestows ‘Mukti’ (liberation and deliverance), ‘Dhan’ (wealth and prosperity; especially spiritual wealth in the form of wisdom, bliss, contentedness and blessedness), ‘Dharma’ (inspiration to follow the path of righteousness, probity and propriety), and ‘Dhaam’ (the final destination of the soul which is to attain emancipation and salvation; the attainment of oneness of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul)³. (2)

[Note—¹The eclectic and magical qualities of the wonderful gem known as ‘Chintamani’ have been described by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to Garuda in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-9 that precede Doha no. 120.

To wit, if one hears and recites this mystically empowered story then all his worries are removed. He becomes carefree because Lord Ram is obliged to take care of his devotees.

²To wit, just like a housewife looks glorious and attractive in her beautiful ornaments and colourful attire, the mind and intellect that is devoted to this wonderfully glorious story of Lord Ram, finds joy in hearing it and reciting it to others, too is praiseworthy; such a mind and intellect indeed deserve respect and honour.

³Again, when one reads this story one becomes aware of what noble qualities in the world are, and then he can use them as benchmarks in his own life. A person desirous of reaching a high goal in life will find the story of Lord Ram as a practical manual to which he can refer for the purpose of guidance and advice. This fact is endorsed in clear terms in the next verse no. 3 herein below.]

सद्गुरु ग्यान बिराग जोग के । बिबुध बैद भव भीम रोग के ॥ ३ ॥

जननि जनक सिय राम प्रेम के । बीज सकल ब्रत धरम नेम के ॥ ४ ॥

sadagura gyāna birāga jōga kē. bibudha baida bhava bhīma rōga kē. 3.

janani janaka siya rāma prēma kē. bīja sakala brata dharama nēma kē. 4.

For the purpose attaining ‘Gyan’ (acquiring true spiritual awareness and knowledge; enlightenment and wisdom; gnosis), ‘Vairagya’ (the virtue of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from this world and the attraction of its sense objects of pleasure and

comfort), and ‘Yoga’ (meditation, with its many branches and connotations)—this wonderful story of Lord Ram acts as a true and wise Guru (teacher and guide)¹.

For the purpose of curing the serious disease, symbolised by the horrors and torments caused by this gross world of transmigration, that afflict all living beings, this holy story of the Lord acts as the heavenly physician (known as Ashwini Kumar, the medicine-man of the gods)². (3)

For the purpose of inspiring love and affection for Lord Sita-Ram in the heart of a devotee, this story of the Lord acts as a parent³.

It is indeed like a metaphoric seed from which sprouts all kinds of religious vows, practices and observances⁴. (4)

[Note—¹If read carefully and analytically, the story of Lord Ram guides a spiritual aspirant as to what the practical meaning of the virtues of Gyan, Vairagya and Yoga is. The Book is a rich source material to enlighten a true seeker who wants to know what actually constitutes true wisdom, renunciation and meditation, and how to actually implement them in practical life.

²The celestial physician known as Ashwini Kumar is a patron deity of all doctors who use traditional medicines such as herbs to cure the greatest of illnesses. Hence, this story of Lord Ram is metaphorically an expert doctor who can treat his patient, the suffering creature, of all his ailments, no matter how grave they are. These ailments are not of the gross body which any other doctor can treat, but they are deep-seated spiritual problems that need some special treatment that only a specially qualified ‘doctor’ can treat. And this ‘doctor’ is symbolised by the glorious story of Lord Ram as it is able to remove all the horrors and torments associated with the cycle of birth and death by providing spiritual peace, happiness, bliss and blessedness to a creature.

It ought to be noted here that more often than not emotional problems—i.e. spiritual problems—are usually at the root of many intractable diseases which are hard for ordinary physicians to cure by the use of routine medicines.

³A parent is a child’s best friend and teacher; a parent would always teach what is best for the child. Likewise, the story of Lord Ram helps a person to develop devotion, love and faith for the Lord.

⁴To wit, even as a plant sprouts from its seed, the story of Lord Ram motivates a person to keep auspicious vows, follow good practices, and observe noble codes of conduct and thought. The story of Lord Ram is a ‘seed’ because all these glorious virtues—and countless others—spring forth from its content. A careful, wise and intelligent reader would find the story of Lord Ram a treasure trove of wonderful gems of wisdom and practical advice from which he can learn everything worth learning in life. From this ‘seed’ germinates wisdom and good advice that would help him in dealing with problems and dilemmas that arise during the course of his routine life. The glorious examples that sprout from this ‘seed’ hand-holds him in each step of his life so that he can find peace and happiness in life, lead a fruitful life, and reach his desired spiritual destination with ease.]

समन पाप संताप सोक के । प्रिय पालक परलोक लोक के ॥ ५ ॥

सचिव सुभट भूपति बिचार के । कुंभज लोभ उदधि अपार के ॥ ६ ॥

samana pāpa santāpa sōka kē. priya pālaka paralōka lōka kē. 5.
saciva subhaṭa bhūpati bicāra kē. kumbhaja lōbha udadhi apāra kē. 6.

The sacred and holy story of Lord Ram is able to vanquish and destroy all sins, torments and sorrows in this world.

It is a benevolent provider of spiritual sustenance to a creature in this world, and takes care of his providence as well.

[To wit, the story of Lord Ram provides joy to a creature while he lives in this world, and quietly ensures that he gets liberation and deliverance at the time of his death so that he does not have to re-enter the cycle of birth and death, thereby freeing him from the horrors incumbent in this cycle.] (5)

For the King symbolised by a person's thoughts and motivations, this story acts like a wise and intelligent chief Minister.

[Just like a wise and intelligent chief minister of king can guide him to attain great glory and fame, the story of Lord Ram too can help a person attain the pinnacle of fame and glory in his life.]

For the purpose of drying up the vast ocean symbolising greed and longing for material gains, this story of Lord Ram acts like sage Agastya (who had drunk the entire ocean in three gulps)¹.

[To wit, just like sage could very easily gulp down the whole of the vast ocean, the eclectic story of Lord Ram can motivate a person to overcome all his greed for worldly things—which means 'all his desires are dried up'.] (6)

[Note—¹The story of sage Agastya drinking the mighty ocean is narrated in (i) Srīsthi Khand of Padma Puran; (ii) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (iii) Mahabharat, Van-Parva, Cantos 103-105; and (iv) Anand Ramayan, Vilaas Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 18-24.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

There are three versions of this story. In brief, they are as follows:

(a) Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

(b) Sage Agastya once took pity on a bird whose eggs were washed away by the ocean. The grieving bird was trying to dry the water of the ocean by picking drops of it in its beak. Then the sage decided to punish the ocean by drinking it up.

(c) The third version says that the ocean had washed away the items of worship that sage Agastya had arranged for his routine religious rituals. Agastya

became peeved and drank up the ocean. When the gods prayed to him to forgive the ocean, the kind sage obliged and refilled it in the form of his urine. That is the reason why the ocean is bitter and salty like urine.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

In all these versions, one thing is found common, and it is that the sage had invoked the divine powers of Lord Ram to accomplish this unique feat. He had pronounced the Mantra (spiritual formula to invoke the cosmic powers of a chosen deity) of Lord Ram, which is "Raamaaye Raamchandraaye Raambhadraaye".]

काम कोह कलिमल करिगन के । केहरि सावक जन मन बन के ॥ ७ ॥

अतिथि पूज्य प्रियतम पुरारि के । कामद घन दारिद दवारि के ॥ ८ ॥

kāma kōha kalimala karigana kē. kēhari sāvaka jana mana bana kē. 7.
atithi pūjya priyatama purāri kē. kāmada ghana dārida davāri kē. 8.

In order to eliminate the wild elephants symbolised by such negative traits as 'Kaam' (desire, lust and passion), 'Krodha' (anger) and the countless 'Mals of Kaliyug' (the taints of sins, negative qualities, perversions and vices which are so dominant in the era of Kaliyug) that roam wildly and without any restraint or inhibition in the forest-like Mana (mind and heart) of devotees, the Lord's story acts like a group of young lions who can easily vanquish these rogue elephants¹. (7)

The sacred and holy story of Lord Ram is most dear to Lord Shiva (known as "purāri"), and is like an honoured and welcome guest of the Lord².

For the purpose of dousing the symbolic fire of wants and dearth that is as ferocious as a wild forest-fire that destroys vast tracts of land, this story is like the rain-giving cloud that pours its nectar-like water to quench all thirst (i.e. it satisfies all desires of the devotee and gives him contentedness)³. (8)

[Note—¹The lion is the lord and king of the jungle. It can easily overcome the might of the elephant that is far bigger in form and apparently stronger in body than the lion. Even rogue elephants are vanquished by the dexterity of the lion. Likewise, the story of Lord Ram has such mystical powers that it can easily vanquish such negative traits as Kaam, Krodha and other such taints that are formidable and almost invincible for a devotee to overcome on his own.

²Just as a person would happily welcome a guest of honour who happens to be his dearest friend as well, Lord Shiva eagerly looks forward to listening to and reciting this glorious story of Lord Ram at the first opportunity. He enjoys it; he is fond of it; he loves it.

³Just like the case of the wild forest-fire that burns down huge forests, wants and desires that a person harbours in his heart robs him of all peace and happiness. His mind is occupied with the thought of these wants, and he never rests in peace. But the story of Lord Ram teaches him the joy of renunciation, detachment and dispassion, it tells him that this world and its material things never give abiding happiness and peace, and that the true goal of a human body is to find final rest for the soul by way of liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation which is got when the individual soul merges and becomes one with the Supreme Soul.]

मंत्र महामनि बिषय ब्याल के । मेटत कठिन कुअंक भाल के ॥ ९ ॥

हरन मोह तम दिनकर कर से । सेवक सालि पाल जलधर से ॥ १० ॥

mantra mahāmani biṣaya byāla kē. mēṭata kaṭhina ku'aṅka bhāla kē. 9.
harana mōha tama dinakara kara sē. sēvaka sāli pāla jaladhara sē. 10.

For the purpose of overcoming the horrifying killer-effect of the poison of the snake symbolised by the sensual charms of this world, this story of the Lord acts as a great Mantra (formula) that is invoked to neutralise the harmful effects of snake-bite¹.

This story has the potential to erase the writing of providence that has determined a doomed fate for a devotee². (9)

For the purpose of removing the darkness symbolised by 'Moha' (delusions and ignorance that create infatuation and attachment), this story acts like the brilliant rays (light) of the sun³.

Similarly, for the purpose of sustaining the crop symbolised by the devotee himself, this story is like the rain-bearing cloud⁴. (10)

[Note—¹In the ancient traditional form of curing a person who has been bitten by a snake, the snake charmer uses certain incantations which are said to neutralise the poison. Hence this metaphor is used here to stress that the verses of this divine story are like the Mantras which help a devotee overcome his spiritual problems, no matter how grave and deep-rooted they may be.

²To wit, even if a devotee is destined to be doomed by providence, the divine story of Lord Ram can salvage his future miraculously, and give lift him up from the dark well of gloom and misery. This holy story of Lord Ram can re-write the fiat of Fate and the mandate of Destiny that had condemned the devotee to a life of misery and gloom by providing him redemption, filling his life with joy and happiness, and ensuring that his soul gets liberation and deliverance upon his death.

³Sunlight and darkness cannot co-exist. Similarly, the darkness in the heart of a devotee that is created by Moha cannot survive in the spiritual light provided by the story of Lord Ram.

⁴Just as the rain helps the crop to thrive and make the farmer joyous, the story of Lord Ram bestows joy and blessedness upon the devotee.]

अभिमत दानि देवतरु बर से । सेवत सुलभ सुखद हरि हर से ॥ ११ ॥
सुकबि सरद नभ मन उडगन से । रामभगत जन जीवन धन से ॥ १२ ॥

abhimata dāni dēvataru bara sē. sēvata sulabha sukhada hari hara sē. 11.
sukabi sarada nabha mana uḍagana sē. rāmabhagata jana jīvana dhana sē.
12.

For the purpose of fulfilling the wishes of a devotee, this story is like the all wish-fulfilling celestial Tree of Gods, known as the Kalpa Tree.

This story of Lord Ram is ever-obliging and ready to serve all the needs of the devotee just like the two benevolent, munificent and magnanimous Lords Hari and Har (Vishnu and Shiva respectively)¹. (11)

For the symbolic sky during the clean winter night that is adorned by twinkling stars that dot it like so many pieces of jewel, the heart and mind of those who are learned, enlightened and wise are also adorned by the story of Lord Ram that sparkles in their inner-self like the stars in the sky².

Indeed, without gainsay and in all sooth, this story of Lord Ram is like the cherished wealth of the devotees of the Lord, because they would never part with it, no matter what the sacrifice is that they have to make for it. (12)

[Note—¹These two Gods of the Trinity are very gracious, easy to please, benevolent and munificent by nature. They help their devotees like a parent would help his or her child. Likewise, the sacred story of Lord Ram acts as a best friend and companion who stands in good stead for the devotee. It grants all his wishes.

²Here, the Mana, the heart and mind combination of devotees is likened to the clean sky of the winter season, and the different episodes of the story of Lord Ram are likened to the twinkling stars that dot the sky. The night sky looks so beautiful with the decoration of stars. Likewise, the heart and mind of devotees derive joy by remembering the different episodes of the story of Lord Ram.]

सकल सुकृत फल भूरि भोग से । जग हित निरुपधि साधु लोग से ॥ १३ ॥
सेवक मन मानस मराल से । पावन गंग तरंग माल से ॥ १४ ॥

sakala sukṛta phala bhūri bhōga sē. jaga hita nirupadhi sādhu lōga sē. 13.
sēvaka mana mānasa marāla sē. pāvana gaṅga taraṅga māla sē. 14.

This story of Lord Ram is the culmination of all meritorious deeds and thoughts. It is the best fruit of all religious and spiritual endeavours.

For doing true and selfless good of the world and its inhabitants, this story of the Lord is equivalent to true and pious saints¹. (13)

For the Mana (the heart and the mind combined) of the devotee and follower of the Lord which is like the Mansarovar Lake, this story is like a majestic Swan that floats on its surface².

And for the purpose of cleaning and purification, this story is like the swift currents of the water of river Ganges (which is said to be a holy river that can clean the taints of sins and other negativities that cling to a creature who takes a bath in its water)³. (14)

[Note—¹Saints are always good to others; they always think good of others. Their actions and words are always meant for the welfare of others. They are selfless in their attitude and service. This is also true with the story of Lord Ram as it does the same.

²The ‘Mansarovar Lake’ is situated on Mt. Kailash, which is the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. This lake is characterised by having crystal clean water on which float Swans. The ‘swan’ itself is regarded as a wise bird, and its white colour stands for purity and cleanliness. Here in this verse, the ‘Mana’ of the devotee is like a ‘lake’, and the story of Lord Ram that he always remembers and cherishes in this Mana is the symbolic Swan that floats in this lake.

³Just like the river Ganges that can easily purify the devotee who dips in its holy water, the sacred lake represented by the story of Lord Ram can also purify the soul of the devotee who reads and recites it.]

दो०. कुपथ कुतरक कुचालि कलि कपट दंभ पाषंड ।
दहन राम गुन ग्राम जिमि इंधन अनल प्रचंड ॥ ३२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

kupatha kutaraka kucāli kali kapaṭa dambha pāṣaṇḍa.
dahana rāma guna grāma jimi indhana anala pracaṇḍa. 32 (a).

The hosts of the glorious virtues of Lord Ram (that are described explicitly or implied implicitly in the story of the Lord known as Ram Charit Manas) can destroy the greatest hoard of negative qualities that are so prevalent in the era of Kaliyug, evil qualities that corrupt the soul of all living beings, such as evil and corrupt ways that demean the dignity of the soul and destroy the character of the individual creature (kupatha), fallacious and distorted way of reasoning that is aided by being adamant about one’s point of view inspite of it being erroneous and untrue (kutaraka), mischievous, evil and pervert practices (kucāli), conceit, deceit and falsehood (kapaṭa), pretensions, hypocrisy, arrogance and heresy (dambha pāṣaṇḍa) even as a fierce fire would reduce to ashes the greatest stock of firewood¹. (Doha no. 32-a)

[Note—¹In this Doha, the metaphor of the ‘fire burning or consuming the firewood’ has been used to stress how the various virtues of Lord Ram are extremely powerful and as potent as the blazing fire for the purpose of destroying the many evil forces that play havoc with the life and destiny of a creature during the era of Kaliyug. The

person who hears and recites the story of Lord Ram would learn of these eclectic virtues in the course of his study of the story, and then realising the immense importance of these virtues, how they make a person so great and how they can help one in his own life, if he is wise and intelligent he would endeavour to inculcate and practice at least some of these excellent virtues in his own life.

The reward would be that the numerous spiritual taints, blemishes and corruptions that darken his inner-self are scrubbed off one by one in due course of time, to render the 'self' immaculate and make it shine with the pristine glory of the supreme Consciousness.

To wit, the story of the Lord helps a man by acting as an example and showing him the practical way of being good and righteous in his life. It helps a man to become a good human being. It helps him to get rid of the layers after layers of evil tendencies and corrupt ways that had earlier suffocated his being, enabling him to breathe a fresh draught of air of spirituality and holiness which is the true character of his Atma or soul.]

रामचरित राकेस कर सरिस सुखद सब काहु ।

सज्जन कुमुद चकोर चित हित बिसेषि बड़ लाहु ॥ ३२ (ख) ॥

rāmacarita rākēsa kara sarisa sukhada saba kāhu.

sajjana kumuda cakōra cita hita bisēṣi baṛa lāhu. 32 (b).

The glorious and magnificent story of Lord Ram is like the rays of the full moon that shines with a soothing brilliance to shower the nectar of joy and bliss upon all living beings.

Even as the rays of the full moon are specially liked by the white flower known as the water-lily as well as the bird known as the Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge)¹, the story of Lord Ram is especially loved by those who are pious, devout and holy by their inherent nature. This story is very beneficent to them even as it is very agreeable for the lily and the bird. (Doha no. 32-b)

[Note—¹The water-lily is so fond of the moonlight that it welcomes the sight of the moon by opening its petals. Similarly, the bird Chakor is so enamoured of the moon that it keeps its gaze fixed on the moon and follows its course through the sky from the time it rises in the east till the time it sets in the west.

This analogy is applied to saintly and pious people who are very fond of the story of Lord Ram as it gives them immense spiritual delight, bliss and peace.

By implication it means that those who are not saintly and pious would not like the story just like thieves who do not like the brilliant light of the moon because they prefer a dark night without the moon's light.]

चौ०. कीन्हि प्रसन्न जेहि भाँति भवानी । जेहि बिधि संकर कहा बखानी ॥ १ ॥

सो सब हेतु कहब मैं गाई । कथाप्रबंध बिचित्र बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kīnhi prasna jēhi bhāmṭi bhavānī. jēhi bidhi saṅkara kahā bakhānī. 1.
sō saba hētu kahaba mairṁ gā'ī. kathāprabandha bicitra banā'ī. 2.

I shall now describe how Bhavaani (i.e. Uma, the consort of Shiva) had questioned Lord Shiva and prevailed upon him to tell her this story, and how the Lord answered her queries in detail as a result of which this story (of Ram Charit Manas) was narrated by him¹. (1)

I (Tulsidas) shall endeavour to narrate everything pertaining to the question as to how and why this wonderful story came to be revealed. For this purpose I shall tell this strange story in a most enchanting way by weaving its text using pleasant words and embellishing it with mysterious events and circumstances that would enthrall the mind and captivate the heart (of the reader, the narrator and the listener alike)². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 111; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 55.

²Tulsidas says that he will narrate the same story that Lord Shiva had narrated to his consort goddess Uma or Parvati. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 47; (ii) Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 11-13 that precede it; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 55 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede it; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 64—to Doha no. 68; (v) Chaupai line nos. 11-13 that precede Doha no. 113; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128.

Tulsidas essentially means that he is not telling some tale of fantasy based on heresy or wild imagination, but an authentic story that was narrated by Lord Shiva himself in some ancient time, and which indeed has immense spiritual powers that will benefit the reader, the narrator and the listener alike.]

जेहिं यह कथा सुनी नहिं होई । जनि आचरजु करै सुनि सोई ॥ ३ ॥
कथा अलौकिक सुनहिं जे ग्यानी । नहिं आचरजु करहिं अस जानी ॥ ४ ॥

jēhim yaha kathā sunī nahim hō'ī. jani ācaraju karai suni sō'ī. 3.
kathā alaukika sunahim jē gyānī. nahim ācaraju karahim asa jānī. 4.

Let anyone who has not heard this story before not be surprised and get perplexed by its mysteries and strange anecdotes. (3)

Those who are wise, enlightened, learned and realised (gyānī), i.e. those who are aware of who Lord Ram actually was, and know the mystical and maverick ways of the Lord, they won't be surprised by it. It is because they would realise that – (4).

रामकथा कै मिति जग नाहीं । असि प्रतीति तिन्ह के मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
नाना भाँति राम अवतारा । रामायन सत कोटि अपारा ॥ ६ ॥

rāmakathā kai miti jaga nāhīm. asi pratīti tinha kē mana māhīm. 5.
nānā bhāmṭi rāma avatārā. rāmāyana sata kōṭi apārā. 6.

--- They believe that the divine and legendary story of Lord Ram has no end in this world—i.e. there are infinite ways it is told and re-told; there are myriad versions of it in this world. [Since they are aware that Lord Ram’s story has countless versions that have been adopted by different cultures and civilisations, and therefore it had to be adapted to suit them, those who are wise and learned won’t feel astonished when they hear my version of the story of Lord Ram.]¹ (5)

Lord Ram has manifested himself in this world during different times and for different reasons. And therefore, the story of Ramayan that describes the life, time and deeds of Lord Ram would logically be as many and varied as the times the Lord manifested himself in this world for various reasons². (6)

[Note—¹Therefore, such wise men would also not be surprised to read and hear about the ‘Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan’ that appears in the Uttar Kand of this book Ram Charit Manas. They won’t frown at and fret about this holy and divine story being narrated by even a humble creature such as a ‘crow’, which was the physical form of sage Kaagbhusund.

²Lord Shiva himself has reiterated this fact to Uma in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124.

So Tulsidas is merely repeating what Shiva has said.]

कलपभेद हरिचरित सुहाए । भाँति अनेक मुनीसन्ह गाए ॥ ७ ॥
करिअ न संसय अस उर आनी । सुनिअ कथा सादर रति मानी ॥ ८ ॥

kalapabhēda haricarita suhā'ē. bhāmṭi anēka munīsanha gā'ē. 7.
kari'a na sansaya asa ura ānī. suni'a kathā sādara rati mānī. 8.

The beautiful and pleasing story of Lord Ram differs according to the era and circumstances in which he had manifested himself. All these different stories have been recited (sung; narrated) by countless sages and seers over time. (7)

Therefore, one should not cloud his heart and mind with doubts (as it would rob him of the pleasure and joy derived by hearing the wonderful story). Instead, one should respect it and listen to it with devotion, faith and reverence¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, one should not be skeptical about this holy story, but read, narrate and listen to it with devotion, faith and conviction. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 38; (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 15; (c) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.]

दो०. राम अनंत अनंत गुन अमित कथा बिस्तार ।
सुनि आचरजु न मानिहहिं जिन्ह कें बिमल बिचार ॥ ३३ ॥

dōhā.

rāma ananta ananta guna amita kathā bistāra.
suni ācaraju na mānihahim̐ jinha kēm̐ bimala bicāra. 33.

Indeed and without gainsay, I reiterate once again that Lord Ram is eternal and infinite, and so are his virtues¹. Likewise, the Lord's stories too are countless and varied, and they spread over eras and generations.

Those who are wise, those whose intellect is free from corruption, and those who have purity in their thought, they should not express surprise at this story and its variety. (Doha no. 33)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (b) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15; (c) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 81.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि सब संसय करि दूरी । सिर धरि गुर पद पंकज धूरी ॥ १ ॥
पुनि सबही बिनवउँ कर जोरी । करत कथा जेहिं लाग न खोरी ॥ २ ॥
सादर सिवहि नाइ अब माथा । बरनउँ बिसद राम गुन गाथा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi saba sansaya kari dūrī. sira dhari gura pada paṅkaja dhūrī. 1.
puni sabahī binava'um̐ kara jōrī. karata kathā jēhim̐ lāga na khōrī. 2.
sādara sivahi nā'i aba māthā. barana'um̐ bisada rāma guna gāthā. 3.

[Tuslidas says—] In this way, after removing all causes of doubts and confusions (pertaining to the story of Lord Ram), I put the dust of my Guru (teacher and preceptor) on my head (as a mark of respect to him¹) (before I commence narrating the story of Lord Ram). (1)

I once again bow my head and pray to all by joining my palms in supplication so that by their grace and blessings no blame would come either to me (for any errors I may inadvertently make) or be imposed on the narration of this divine story (for any of the shortcomings or deficiencies that may creep into it unintentionally due to some cause)². (2)

Now finally, I bow my head reverentially to Lord Shiva³ and commence the narration of the elaborate story of Lord Ram that describes the Lord's exemplary virtues, stellar qualities and divine glories. (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2.

²Tulsidas has previously also paid his respects to one and all, but now he does so again finally before actually commencing the narration of the story. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 4; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 5; (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 14; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16—to Doha no. 18.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 15.]

संबत सोरह सै एकतीसा । करउँ कथा हरि पद धरि सीसा ॥ ४ ॥
 नौमी भौम बार मधु मासा । अवधपुरी यह चरित प्रकासा ॥ ५ ॥
 जेहि दिन राम जनम श्रुति गावहिं । तीरथ सकल तहाँ चलि आवहिं ॥ ६ ॥

sambata sōraha sai ēkatisā. kara'um³ kathā hari pada dhari sīsā. 4.
 naumī bhauma bāra madhu māsā. avadhapurīm yaha carita prakāsā. 5.
 jēhi dina rāma janama śruti gāvahim. tīratha sakala tahām³ cali āvahim. 6.

[Now, Tulsidas mentions the auspicious year and date when he had started writing this glorious book dedicated to Lord Ram, and named as 'Ram Charit Manas'.]

Putting my head at the holy feet of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, who had manifested as Lord Ram) (to pay my deepest reverence to the Lord and seeking his mercy and grace), I hereby start narrating (writing) the holy story (of Lord Ram) in the Hindu year of Samvat 1631 (corresponding to A.D. 1574). (4)

It is a Tuesday, the ninth day of the Hindu Lunar month called Chaitra (corresponding to the period of end of March till mid of April) which is regarded as a pleasant month¹. It was on this day in the holy city of Ayodhya that this divine story revealed its first rays of light for the world². (5)

It is affirmed by the Vedas (primary scriptures) that on the auspicious day when Lord Ram took birth in Ayodhya, all the pilgrim sites represented by their presiding deities come here to pay their obeisance and offer their respects to Lord Ram³. (6)

[Note—¹The Hindu month of Chaitra, corresponding to the period from end of March till beginning or mid of April, is pleasant because the weather is warm, and yet it is not too hot like in the month of May. It was also during this pleasant month of Chaitra that Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya.

Hence, this verse means that Tulsidas selected this auspicious month of Chaitra as well as the holy city of Ayodhya to start writing the story of Lord Ram as the Lord had taken birth during this month in Ayodhya. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 190—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 191.}

²To wit, it was on this day that the first verses of Ram Charit Manas were composed. They symbolically represented the first rays of the splendorous sun representing the glory and divinity of Lord Ram that this book endeavours to unfold, which eventually would show its light of spiritualism and the virtues of devotion and affection for Lord Ram to the whole world, in order to remove the darkness of night symbolized by ignorance and delusions that envelops it from all sides, thereby creating so much fear in the heart of a creature.

It was also the day when Lord Ram had revealed himself, or was ‘born’, in Ayodhya. Hence, Tulsidas chose this auspicious day of Lord Ram’s birth, i.e. “the Lord’s birthday”, to start narrating the story of his revered Lord.

³Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 190—to Doha no. 191.]

असुर नाग खग नर मुनि देवा । आइ करहिं रघुनायक सेवा ॥ ७ ॥
जन्म महोत्सव रचहिं सुजाना । करहिं राम कल कीरति गाना ॥ ८ ॥

asura nāga khaga nara muni dēvā. ā'i karahim raghunāyaka sēvā. 7.
janma mahōtsava racahim sujānā. karahim rāma kala kīrati gānā. 8.

Verily indeed, on this auspicious day, all creatures, such as non-gods, serpents, birds, humans, sages and seers, as well as the gods, come (to Ayodhya) to offer their services to Lord Ram¹, the Lord of the Raghu’s line of illustrious kings (raghunāyaka)². (7)

Pious and noble people commemorate that auspicious occasion of Lord Ram’s birth by holding mass celebrations and festivities on the day of the Lord’s birth; they organize community recitals of the litany of the Lord’s glories, and remember the Lord by singing verses lauding his divine virtues³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 191; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196.

²Since the story that is being narrated in this book called ‘Ram Charit Manas’ pertains to Lord Ram, who though was the almighty Supreme Being in his primary cosmic form, yet he had manifested himself in the form of a prince in the kingdom of Ayodhya ruled by a line of illustrious kings descending from King Raghu. The Supreme Being has a subtle, sublime and all-pervading comic existence with no attributes or physical forms that are visible, because the Lord is a personified form of pure Consciousness, but when the same Lord revealed himself as ‘Lord Ram’ he had assumed all the normal attributes that characterize a human being. So therefore, it is proper to recognize the glory of that exalted line of kings that the Supreme Being chose to become a member of.

Hence, Tulsidas refers to Lord Ram on countless occasions throughout this book by using many variants of his name that indicate the Lord’s birth in the fortunate royal household of the kingdom of Ayodhya which the Supreme Being chose to bless by his birth, inspite of being fully aware of the true identity of Lord Ram, that he was not a human being but the Supreme Being himself personified in that form.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 197.]

दो०. मज्जहिं सज्जन बृंद बहु पावन सरजू नीर ।
जपहिं राम धरि ध्यान उर सुंदर स्याम सरीर ॥ ३४ ॥

dōhā.

majjahim sajjana bṛnda bahu pāvana sarajū nīra.
japahim rāma dhari dhyāna ura sundara syāma sarīra. 34.

On this occasion (of Lord Ram's birthday), countless groups of pious men and women take a purifying dip in the holy waters of the river Saryu (that flows on the north of Ayodhya)¹; they meditate upon Lord Ram, who has a dark complexion, and invoke Lord's divine grace and blessings by doing Japa (repetition) of his holy name. (Doha no. 34)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 4 where Lord Ram has himself praised the glories of river Saryu.]

चौ०. दरस परस मज्जन अरु पाना । हरइ पाप कह बेद पुराना ॥ १ ॥
नदी पुनीत अमित महिमा अति । कहि न सकइ सारदा बिमलमति ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

darasa parasa majjana aru pānā. hara'i pāpa kaha bēda purānā. 1.
nadī punīta amita mahimā ati. kahi na saka'i sārādā bimalamati. 2.

[These verses continue to praise the greatness and holiness of river Saryu that have been mooted in the previous verses herein before.]

The Vedas and the Purans (i.e. the ancient scriptures) affirm that the evil and negative effects of the misdeeds and sins of a person are washed away or nullified by the mere sight of, the mere touch of, by taking a bath in, or by the sipping of the holy waters of the river Saryu¹. (1)

Verily indeed and in all sooth, the river Saryu is very holy and purifying, and its glories are legendary and infinite so much so that even the wise goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of refined knowledge and speech, is unable to narrate them in entirety². (2)

[Note—¹The water of river Saryu is regarded as very holy and purifying so much so that each of the four options given in this verse is independently able to neutralize the taint of sins and the negative consequences of misdeeds done by a creature. But this privilege of pardoning of sins and misdeeds granted by the holy waters of river Saryu does not mean that the person continues to commit sins and misdeeds in the hope that every time he will be forgiven. It is a way of redemption for those who have realized their mistake and are sincere about mending their way; it is meant for those who are

honestly regretful and penitent about their wrong doings and evil way of life, and wish to repent and change themselves for good. It is like one washing one's dirty hands in clean water, but this washing makes sense if the person doesn't dirty his hands again; otherwise it is a futile exercise.

The sequence that is outlined here to clean one's self is significant: first one sees the holy river from a distance, next he goes near and touches its water, then he takes a bath in it, and finally he sips water to rinse his mouth.

In a metaphoric way, this is how one would benefit from the holy story of Ram Charit Manas: First a seeker hears about its wonderful glories and its divine nature in a distant place where he lives, which is like seeing the holy river Saryu from a distance. Then the seeker goes to a place where this story is narrated by some holy man who explains in detail its spiritual importance and the benefit it grants to the soul of the creature, which would be like coming near the river and touching its water. Next, the seeker sits down and hears the full story with attention and faith, which is like bathing in the holy water of river Saryu. Finally, he starts reading and reciting it himself, which is symbolic of the sipping of the water of Saryu to clean the mouth.

²River Saryu is so holy and revered because Lord Ram had blessed its waters by touching it and bathing in it. The Lord took birth in the holy city of Ayodhya which is situated on the banks of this river, and so it is natural that he would have gone to this river quite regularly, as a child as well as when he grew up. We read in Ram Charit Manas that those rivers which were visited by Lord Ram or on whose banks the Lord had spent some of his time were praised by the gods as well as the deities of other rivers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 113; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 138; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 139.]

राम धामदा पुरी सुहावनि । लोक समस्त बिदित अति पावनि ॥ ३ ॥
चारि खानि जग जीव अपारा । अवध तजें तनु नहिं संसारा ॥ ४ ॥

rāma dhāmadā purī suhāvani. lōka samasta bidita ati pāvani. 3.
cāri khāni jaga jīva apārā. avadha tajēm tanu nahim sansārā. 4.

[This verse is in honour of Ayodhya, the holy city where Lord Ram took birth.]

The holy city, which is the abode of Lord Ram (i.e. Ayodhya), is very charming, and it grants access to the holy abode of Lord Ram in the heaven (which is known as Vaikuntha) as well. It is famed in the world as a city that is most purifying for the soul of the creature, and as the holiest of the holy places¹. (3)

There are four types of births for all living beings². However, all of them find ultimate deliverance and freedom from the cycle of transmigration if they die in Ayodhya. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 4; Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 97; Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 109.

²The four types of births that all living beings have are the following: (i) ‘Andaj’: those born from an egg, e.g. birds; (ii) ‘Swadej’: those born from sweat and dampness, e.g. bacteria, fungi and lice; (iii) ‘Udbhij’: those born from seeds, e.g. plants; and (iv) ‘Jarayuj’: those born from an embryo inside the womb, e.g. a man.

To wit, anyone who dies in the holy city of Ayodhya will find deliverance from the endless cycle of birth and death. But it ought to be noted here that such a glorified death is available to those who have lived a righteous life and had devotion for Lord Ram while they lived; surely and certainly not to those who are sinful and evil, as well as those who care not for Lord Ram.]

सब बिधि पुरी मनोहर जानी । सकल सिद्धिप्रद मंगल खानी ॥ ५ ॥

बिमल कथा कर कीन्ह अरंभा । सुनत नसाहिं काम मद दंभा ॥ ६ ॥

saba bidhi purī manōhara jānī. sakala sid'dhiprada maṅgala khānī. 5.
bimala kathā kara kīnha arambhā. sunata nasāhirī kāma mada dambhā. 6.

Having paid my obeisance to the holy city of Ayodhya in the previous verses, and recognizing the fact that it is blessed with stellar qualities, such as that of exceptional charm in all respects (physical as well as spiritual), the mystical ability to grant all sorts of successes and boons, and itself being a mine of auspicious virtues—I have chosen this holy city as the place to commence writing the Divine Story of Lord Ram known as Ram Charit Manas, a story that can annihilate the negative traits of Kaam (worldly desires and passions), Mada (haughtiness, arrogance and ego) and Dhambha (falsehood, deceit, pretensions, conceit and hypocrisy), along with their damaging consequences. (5-6)

[Note—The city of Ayodhya is most blessed because it is here that the Supreme Being came down to earth in the physical form of Lord Ram; the Lord was born here and he ruled the mighty kingdom of the same name, i.e. the kingdom of Ayodhya, as its king and emperor. The Lord’s reign was a stellar instance of excellence of governance and full adherence to the laws of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, ethical conduct, and truthfulness). The sort of good government under Lord Ram and the all round prosperity and happiness enjoyed by his subjects have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 26.

These two verses clearly indicate that Tulsidas had commenced writing this epic book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ in Ayodhya itself. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 35 herein below, as well as to Chuapai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 34 earlier.

The three spiritually dark traits, viz. Kaam, Mada and Dambha, are neutralized if a devotee hears the holy story of Lord Ram, because the story is so powerful in its positive and purifying effects that under its illuminating light none of ghosts of the dark shadows of negativities associated with this material world can ever survive.

The next chaupai line no. 7 tells us that Tulsidas has named his book as ‘Ram Charit Manas’.]

{In the following verses, Tulsidas once again reiterates that (a) this holy, sacred and divine story of Lord Ram, known as Ram Charit Manas, is dear to sages, seers and hermits and they love to hear it, (b) it was first conceived by Lord Shiva who told it to his consort Parvati, and (c) it is the same story that he is now reciting for the benefit of others, and so everyone is welcome to hear it attentively and with due devotion and faith in one's heart.

He says further that this wish to narrate this wonderful story of Lord Ram was inspired in his heart by Lord Shiva, and therefore he concludes that the Lord himself wants him to teach it to others.}

रामचरितमानस एहि नामा । सुनत श्रवन पाइअ बिश्रामा ॥ ७ ॥

मन करि बिषय अनल बन जरई । होइ सुखी जौं एहिं सर परई ॥ ८ ॥

rāmacaritamānasa ēhi nāmā. sunata śravana pā'i'a biśrāmā. 7.

mana kari biṣaya anala bana jaraī. hō'i sukhī jaur̥m ēhir̥m sara paraī. 8.

The name of this sacred, holy and divine story (of Lord Ram) is “Ram Charit Manas”¹. One's ears find extreme solace and peace immediately upon hearing it. [Or, to put it in another way, “one finds immense solace and peace in his inner-self as soon as one's ears hear this story being narrated”.] (7)

The elephant symbolised by one's Mana (mind and heart; inner-self) is highly agitated as it is being scorched and greatly tormented by the heat of the fierce fire symbolising passions of the sense organs and temptations of their respective objects in this material gross world. This elephant can get rid of its sufferings and find peace and solace if it plunges in the cool and soothing lake filled with nectar represented by this divine story². (8)

[Note—¹The title of this story is “Ram Charit Manas”. It simply means ‘The story that narrates the life and time of Lord Ram and the deeds done by him, a story that sprouts spontaneously in the Mana or the heart and mind of the narrator, and is enshrined in the Mana of those who narrate it as well as those who listen to it’.

²To wit, if a creature wishes to find emotional peace and stability in a world full of turmoil, if he is tormented by sufferings and grief, then he is advised to listen to this holy story of Lord Ram as it would bestow upon his soul immense amount of bliss and peace.

If we apply this metaphor of the tormented elephant and the lake of cool water in which it plunges to calm its agitated nerves to the story of Ram Charit Manas, it would mean that if a person is feeling highly upset and emotionally agitated, one who feels that he is emotionally empty, spiritually in a void and unfulfilled inspite of having all the material comforts and pleasures of this material world, one who is tormented by the countless problems associated with life and has reached a stage where he is very eager to find an avenue which would lead him to a place that would grant him eternal peace and abiding happiness, then he should head straight to this path of listening to this holy story of Lord Ram being recited by a wise narrator as this would surely restore his peace of mind, give rest to his agitated heart, help him

discover spiritual bliss and fulfillment, and fill his inner-self with extreme joy and happiness.

In all sooth and without gainsay, the story of Ram Charit Manas benefits the narrator and the listener alike. It is like a symbolic lake represented by a creature's heart and mind, and it is filled with cool and soothing nectar that provides spiritual bliss and happiness to all those who make the effort to come and take a dip in it by listening to this story.]

रामचरितमानस मुनि भावन । बिरचेउ संभु सुहावन पावन ॥ ९ ॥

त्रिबिध दोष दुख दारिद दावन । कलि कुचालि कुलि कलुष नसावन ॥ १० ॥

rāmacaritamānasa muni bhāvana. biracē'u sambhu suhāvana pāvana. 9.
tribidha dōṣa dukha dārida dāvana. kali kucāli kuli kaluṣa nasāvana. 10.

Ram Charit Manas delights sages, seers and saintly souls; they are very fond of it. It is beautiful, holy and divine, and it was created or conceived (first) by Lord Shambhu (Shiva) himself¹. (9)

This story destroys or eliminates all the three types of faults, sorrows and poverty that torment a creature in this world². It helps one to defeat all the dirty tricks played by Kaliyug³, as well as neutralise the evil effects and tainting influences of sins, vices and misdemeanours. (10)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is an embodiment of all the spiritual virtues that are deemed to be excellent, auspicious, holy, divine, immaculate and redeeming for the soul of a creature. To wit, Shiva is beautiful, holy and divine himself. So the story of Lord Ram that sprouted in the soil of Shiva's inner-self that has these eclectic qualities as outlined above also acquired these qualities much in the same way as a flower derives its nourishment from the soil in which it grows.

Thus, the story of Ram Charit Manas is absolutely holy, divine, auspicious and spiritually redeeming like Lord Shiva who had conceived it. It is like a beautiful lotus flower that blooms in a lake of crystal clear nectar.

²These refer to errors one makes in relation to one's deeds, thoughts and words. The sorrows that torment a creature relate to his birth, old age and death. And the other things from which a creature suffers in this world are lack of resources, poverty, and dearth of opportunities to rise and attain success in one's endeavours.

³The dirty tricks of Kaliyug cause immense delusions, temptations, passions, lust, desires, attachments, infatuations, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, anger, jealousy, ill-will, malice, hatred, enmity, and so on and so forth. These negative things set in motion a train of problems for a creature. All these seemingly insurmountable problems can be easily overcome by listening to the holy story of Lord Ram as it ignites the hidden spark of spiritualism in the creature that gives him the taste of bliss and beatitude that would motivate him to forgo other superficial forms of tastes represented by the artificial comforts and pleasures of this material world of sense objects.]

रचि महेस निज मानस राखा । पाइ सुसमउ सिवा सन भाषा ॥ ११ ॥
तातेँ रामचरितमानस बर । धरेउ नाम हियँ हेरि हरषि हर ॥ १२ ॥

raci mahēsa nija mānasa rākhā. pā'i susama'u sivā sana bhāṣā. 11.
tātēṁ rāmacaritamānasa bara. dharē'u nāma hiyaṁ hēri haraṣi hara. 12.

Lord Mahesh (the Great Ish or the Great Lord God) had created (conceived) it (the story of Lord Ram known as the Ramayan) and kept it enshrined in his Mana (mind and heart).

When the proper time came, he had narrated it to his consort 'Siva' (who is also known as goddess Uma or Parvati)¹. (11)

This is the reason why this story is called 'Ram Charit Manas'—for it was conceived (or viewed; visualised) by Lord Har (Shiva) in his Mana². He loved and adored its beauty and spiritual value exceedingly, and so he reverentially, with due affection and devotion, enshrined it in his heart.

[That is why this Ram Charit Manas is the most revered and best form of the story of Lord Ram. It is because this story was conceived by Lord Shiva himself, then enshrined in the Lord's sacred heart, and he was the first one to reveal it to goddess Parvati.

It is Lord Shiva who had given it the name of 'Ram Charit Manas' when he observed that the mystical deeds done by Lord Ram when he had manifested himself on earth as a human being for the good of his devotees ("Ram Charit") was reflected in his (Shiva's) own heart ("Manas") while he was meditating upon the Lord and repeating his holy name during his spiritual practices.

This clearly establishes that it was Lord Shiva who had himself named this sacred, holy and divine story pertaining to Lord Ram as "Ram Charit Manas"] (12)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 105—to Doha no. 120.

²This story of the Ramayan is called "Ram Charit Manas" as it describes the life and times as well as the deeds done by Lord Ram, the Supreme Being who had manifested himself as a human being on earth for the welfare of the gods as well as other creatures, as it was conceived in the 'Mana', or the heart and mind, of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva always remains submerged in meditation and contemplation; he repeats the holy name of Lord Ram, viz. "RAM", as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula), and he treats Lord Ram as his revered deity to whom he offers all his worship and obeisance.

So during these meditative sessions this story revealed in his heart and mind, he was ecstatic with bliss and entered into a state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of the consciousness that appears to be like a state of trance to the outside world, and in which he lost awareness of everything else. He loved it so much that he carefully etched this story right inside his own heart and mind like one would consecrate a deity in a shrine.

Like one dips in a lake of cool and clean water to calm and sooth one's self and would prefer to remain in the lake as long as possible, Lord Shiva was so excited

with this revelation and its attendant bliss and beatitude that he too found exceptional solace in remaining perpetually submerged in remembering this divine and holy story and repeating it within himself.]

कहउँ कथा सोइ सुखद सुहाई । सादर सुनहु सुजन मन लाई ॥ १३ ॥

kaha'um̐ kathā sō'i sukhada suhā'ī. sādara sunahu sujana mana lā'ī. 13.

I (Tulsidas) shall tell the same story that is charming and pleasant, and gives joy and happiness (to both the narrator and the listener). All those who are good, virtuous and pious souls should hear it attentively (because it for their own good and welfare) (13)

दो०. जस मानस जेहि बिधि भयउ जग प्रचार जेहि हेतु ।
अब सोइ कहउँ प्रसंग सब सुमिरि उमा बृषकेतु ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

jasa mānasa jēhi bidhi bhaya'u jaga pracāra jēhi hētu.
aba sō'i kaha'um̐ prasaṅga saba sumiri umā bṛṣakētu. 35.

I shall now proceed to give a full account and describe what Ram Charit Manas is all about, what are its qualities, importance and values, how it came into existence, and how and for what reasons it spread in this world.

I shall now commence doing it after first invoking Lord Shiva who has a bull on his flag (“bṛṣakētu”; the flag that has an emblem of a bull; Lord Shiva’s insignia), and his divine consort goddess Uma¹. (Doha no. 35)

[Note—¹It is absolutely essential and obligatory to pay respects to Lord Shiva and seek his blessings because he is the one who had first conceived this holy and divine story. Had it not been for him, we would have not heard of it, and so the world would have not been able to access this eternal lake of spiritual bliss and peace.

Another reason why Tulsidas pays his respects to Lord Shiva is given in Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.

Then again, it is equally important to pay my homage to goddess Uma because it was due to her enquiry and insistence that Lord Shiva revealed this story of Lord Ram for the first time, as hitherto he had kept it secret and enshrined in his own Mana.]

चौ०. संभु प्रसाद सुमति हियँ हुलसी । रामचरितमानस कबि तुलसी ॥ १ ॥
करइ मनोहर मति अनुहारी । सुजन सुचित सुनि लेहु सुधारी ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sambhu prasāda sumati hiyaṃ¹ hulasī. rāmacaritamānasa kabi tulasī. 1.
kara'i manōhara mati anuhārī. sujana sucita suni lēhu sudhārī. 2.

It is due to the grace and blessings of Lord Shiva that this divine, holy and sacred story of Ram Charit Manas sprouted and developed in its full bloom in the heart of Tulsidas. This enabled him (Tulsidas) to become a narrator or recitor of this wonderful story. (1)

To the best of his (Tulsidas') ability he would try to make it (i.e. narrate or recite or describe it) in the most beautiful way he can, but at the same time he requests one and all who listen to it to improve upon it and make it more attractive and valuable as much as they can¹. (2)

[Note—¹And so true was his request and prediction. Today we find so many preachers and teachers and readers of this single book 'Ram Charit Manas' that one can't keep count. Each of these teachers and preachers has presented it in his own unique way; each of them has interpreted the verses and their meanings in their own way; each reader understands and derives pleasure from this book in his or her own way.

Though there are many other versions of the Ramayan, this variety and flexibility is missing from all of them.]

सुमति भूमि थल हृदय अगाधू । बेद पुरान उदधि घन साधू ॥ ३ ॥
बरषहिं राम सुजस बर बारी । मधुर मनोहर मंगलकारी ॥ ४ ॥

sumati bhūmi thala hṛdaya agādhū. bēda purāna udadhi ghana sādihū. 3.
baraṣahiṃ rāma sujasa bara bārī. madhura manōhara maṅgalakārī. 4.

The purified and uncorrupt mind and intellect is equivalent to the 'earth', the heart of a pious person is its 'catchment area', the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans are like the 'ocean', and saintly people are the 'rain-bearing clouds'¹. (3)

Even as the rain-bearing clouds shower their life-giving nectar in the form of rain, these saints preach the holy story of Lord Ram that describes the glorious of the Lord for the benefit of all living beings. This divine story acts as nectar for the soul of the hearer as it is very sweet to hear, is a rejuvenator of the spirit, and is a bestower of all sorts of welfare and auspiciousness for all the creatures. (4)

[Note—¹The clouds gather moisture from the ocean and then they move inland to pour it out in the form of rain which quenches the thirst of all living beings and irrigates the land mass of the earth. Similarly, saints and wise people study the scriptures and extract the essence in the form of the holy story of the Lord God which they then preach to others who derive joy and peace by it.

In this way, even those who cannot directly access the spiritual nectar contained in the scriptures are benefited by the saints who have access to these holy books.

Further, just as the inherently sour and un-potable water of the ocean becomes clean and pure when it reaches the cloud, because it is done by the physical process of evaporation which is the Nature's way of distilling it, and when this cloud pours this water in the form of rain it becomes sweet and drinkable, the sagacious and erudite saints filter the vast contents of the scriptures by studying them thoroughly and then extracting their essence in the form of the divine story of the Lord God, i.e. Lord Ram, which they store in the reservoir of their heart and mind which acts as the 'catchment area', then they refine it further by applying their intellect and wisdom to transform the raw story into an exceptionally charming, sweet and pleasant narrative that would appeal to the heart and the mind of ordinary devotees with whom they share this spiritual nectar by way of reciting the story, preaching it, and explaining its finer meaning for their benefit.

Hence, just as the ordinary creature gets to access the life-giving sweet water from the vast natural reservoir of water known as the ocean by the grace of the cloud, the spiritual nectar buried in the huge volumes of the scriptures is made easily accessible for the devotees of the Lord by the grace of saints.

लीला सगुन जो कहहिं बखानी । सोइ स्वच्छता करइ मल हानी ॥ ५ ॥
 प्रेम भगति जो बरनि न जाई । सोइ मधुरता सुसीतलताई ॥ ६ ॥

līlā saguna jō kahahim bakhānī. sō'i svacchatā kara'i mala hānī. 5.
 prēma bhagati jō barani na jāī. sō'i madhuratā susītalatāī. 6.

The detailed narration and the explanation of the life and deeds of Lord Ram (the Lord God; the Supreme Being) during his human manifestation on earth is the 'cleanliness and purity' of the symbolic water (referred to in previous verse nos. 3-4 herein above; i.e. the divine story of Lord Ram and its spiritual benefits) that is made accessible to the devotee¹. This distilled and refined symbolic 'water' is able to wash all the spiritual impurities and blemishes that cling to the inner-self of the devotee (and by extension to all those who hear it with devotion and faith). (5)

The subtle and silent message of love, faith and devotion that is hidden in the story comes to the fore when it is explained by wise saints, and this is equivalent to the sweetness and rejuvenating qualities of this water². (6)

[Note—¹We have read in the previous verse nos. 3-4 that wise saints first refine the raw story and convert it into a sweet narrative that appeals to the heart, which they then preach to the devotee of the Lord. Thus, just like the rain water that falls on earth by the grace of the clouds to benefit one and all, is the purified and cleaned form of the raw water which was extracted from its primary source of the ocean which is sour and salty, the story that is narrated and explained by erudite and sagacious saints becomes easily understandable and it appeals to all. Even a person of ordinary intellect would be able to grasp its essence. Hence, even ordinary creatures can benefit from this narration.

Here, the process of explaining the meaning and message of the story of Lord Ram is like distilling water to make it sweet, refined, and free from all impurities.

²This verse explains the importance of ‘explaining the story of Lord Ram’. This method makes it very charming, and simultaneously removes all doubts—which is like distilling water to make it clean and purified.]

सो जल सुकृत सालि हित होई । राम भगत जन जीवन सोई ॥ ७ ॥
 मेधा महि गत सो जल पावन । सकलि श्रवन मग चलेउ सुहावन ॥ ८ ॥
 भरेउ सुमानस सुथल थिराना । सुखद सीत रुचि चारु चिराना ॥ ९ ॥

sō jala sukṛta sāli hita hō'ī. rāma bhagata jana jīvana sō'ī. 7.
 mēdhā mahi gata sō jala pāvana. sakili śravana maga calē'u suhāvana. 8.
 bharē'u sumānasa suthala thirānā. sukhada sīta ruci cāru cirānā. 9.

That cleaned and purified ‘water’ representing the detailed narration of the Lord’s holy story and removal of all doubts is the symbolic rain water that is beneficial for the crop represented by the good deeds of a creature.

[Just as rain water is beneficial for the crop as it makes the latter grow properly and yield good result for the farmer, the story of Lord Ram, when it is properly explained by the teacher and understood by the disciple, too is beneficial for the spiritual welfare of the latter.]

Therefore, for a devotee of Lord Ram this story is like his own life and soul, and hence it is most dear to him. (7)

This purified symbolic water represented by the narration of the holy story of Lord Ram fell on the earth represented by the wise, attentive and receptive ‘mind and intellect’ of the hearer (i.e. the devotee who listens to it with faith and devotion); this water then moves through the pleasant channel of the ‘ear’ to reach the best reservoir meant for it; and this reservoir is symbolised by the ‘heart’ of the hearer where this holy water finally collects and dwells (to be accessed by the devotee as and when he needs it)¹. [And that is why the story of Lord Ram is called the “Ram Charit Manas” because the word ‘Manas’ refers to the ‘Mana’—the combination of the heart and the mind.]

As time passed, this ‘water’ became cleaner, cooler and more refreshing as it is allowed to settle in its resting place in the heart (because whatever residual impurities that still remained in this water could settle down to the bottom when the water was allowed to remain undisturbed for some time in the receptacle, making that part of the water that is to be used much cleaner than what it was in the beginning)². (8-9)

[Note—¹Merely hearing the story won’t benefit the listener if he is not attentive and his mind is not ready to receive the message just like a student who does not pay attention in the classroom is unable to grasp the subject being taught by the teacher. Such students waste their time in school, and they gain nothing by attending the class physically when their mind is focused elsewhere and they are not paying attention to the subject being taught.

Once again, a clever student is one who goes home and revises the subject taught in school; he keeps on revising it from time to time till he has a complete grasp of the subject. Later on in life when he grows up, this wise student would shine in his

field of expertise as his knowledge has a robust foundation and he is well-versed in the fine technical details of the subject of his choice.

Therefore, it is very important to hear this story of Lord Ram with a receptive mind willing to learn its finer details and understand its message properly. Just as running by rote won't benefit the student at all because he won't be able to understand the intricacies of any technical subject, and therefore would fail to solve practical problems pertaining to this subject, the hearing of the story of Lord Ram in a careless manner won't serve any purpose for the hearer. If a spiritual aspirant wishes to really benefit from the story of Lord Ram then he must pay attention to its finer details, remove all doubts by questioning his teacher, and then keep on thinking of the story and its subtle message on a continuing basis.

²When water flows over some surface then it is natural for it to collect some dirt sticking to this surface irrespective of the fact that the water was cleaned earlier. When this water is allowed to remain undisturbed for some time, the dust particles settles at the bottom of the container and clean water comes on the surface.

Likewise, when the story of Lord Ram is first heard and stored in the heart and memory of the devotee, it may not be perfectly clear in its meaning and message to him. Later on as time passes and he gets the company of saints where this story is explained in detail in a variety of ways by different teachers using different ways to explain it, the subtle meaning and the hidden message of the story of the Lord becomes more and more clearer to the devotee. This is what is meant here in this verse.

The 'cleaner, cooler and more refreshing water' obviously refers to the greater clarity of the meaning and the better grasp of the spiritual message of the divine story of Lord Ram that the devotee has already enshrined in his heart.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 32.]

दो०. सुठि सुंदर संबाद बर बिरचे बुद्धि बिचारि ।
तेइ एहि पावन सुभग सर घाट मनोहर चारि ॥ ३६ ॥

dōhā.

suṭhi sundara sambāda bara biracē bud'dhi bicāri.
tē'i ēhi pāvana subhaga sara ghāṭa manōhara cāri. 36.

This most beautiful and attractive symbolic 'lake' ("manas") representing the divine story of Lord Ram has four banks represented by the four most excellent and wise conversations that have been recorded in it (and all these four conversations have been so expertly woven into the text of the story that they form an integral part of it, and cannot be separated from it).

[To wit, in this holy and divine Story of Lord Ram, (known as Ram Charit Manas), the four primary discourses, rich in spiritual and metaphysical wisdom, that have been narrated to form its framework, are like the four banks of a beautiful lake filled with ambrosia of bliss and beatitude. These four discourses are the following: Lord Shiva and Parvati; sages Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj; the saintly crow

Kaagbhusund and Garud; saint poet Tulsidas and other saints and sages that narrated this story subsequently.]¹ (Doha no. 36)

[Note—¹These four conversations are the following:-

(i) Between Lord Shiva and his consort goddess Parvati (also referred to as Uma, Girija and Bhavani at different places)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 108; and Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

(ii) Between sages Yagyavalkya and Bharadwaj—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Doha no. 47.

(iii) Between the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64.

(iv) The devotee poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas and his Guru—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 31.

All those who had narrated the story of Lord Ram—i.e. Lord Shiva, sage Yagyavalkya, sage Kaagbhusund, and the Guru of Tulsidas—were wise, enlightened, erudite and sagacious. Hence, these conversations were intelligent, wise and full of spiritual wisdom.

A 'lake' usually has four banks—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 39 where it is said that Lord Ram went to a lake known as Pampa which had four banks on its four sides.

The story of Lord Ram is likened to a 'lake' because it is filled with the nectar of devotion (Bhakti) for the Lord as this story of 'Ram Charit Manas' stimulates the development of the glorious spiritual virtues of devotion, faith and affection for the Lord in the heart of the devotee. It cleanses his inner-self of all spiritual impurities, and just like a fresh-water rejuvenates the body and the spirit of anyone who takes a dip in its pristine clean and cool water, the story of the Lord soothes the creature by eliminating the torments of his soul and providing his mind with solace and succour.]

चौ०. सप्त प्रबंध सुभग सोपाना । ग्यान नयन निरखत मन माना ॥ १ ॥

रघुपति महिमा अगुन अबाधा । बरनब सोइ बर बारि अगाधा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sapta prabandha subhaga sōpānā. gyāna nayana nirakhata mana mānā. 1.
raghupati mahimā aguna abādhā. baranaba sō'i bara bāri agādhā. 2.

The seven 'Kandas' (Cantos or Chapters) are the seven symbolic 'steps' of this lake¹, and one feels delighted in heart when one sees these steps with the eyes of wisdom². (1)*

The fathomless depth of this reservoir of spiritual nectar is represented by the infinite glories and the eclectic virtues of Lord Raghunath (Lord Sri Ram) that are divine by nature, as well as beyond comprehension of the mind and grasp of the intellect³. (2)**

[Note—¹Just as one needs steps to reach the water in a vast lake, the nectar that provides spiritual bliss to the devotee in the story of Ram Charit Manas can be accessed in the right way only if one reads the whole story consisting of seven Kandas from the beginning to its natural conclusion. Random reading would be like skipping the steps and trying to jump directly into the lake to bathe in its water, and this would obviously cause serious injury to the bather.

²When one sees a deep fresh-water lake and wishes to take a dip in its cool and refreshing water, the first thing that he searches for are the steps that lead to that water. Some of the steps may be dirty and made slippery by the use of others who may not have bothered to clean them after use, so he looks around to find some place where the steps are not only clean but also lead to that part of the lake where the water is free from surface impurities such as algae, hyacinth and other aquatic plants, or even stagnant water on which some kind of scum may have collected over time.

In this metaphor, the devotee would get true benefit by reading or hearing this story of Lord Ram if he approaches it with the ‘sight of wisdom’. To wit, he must be careful, alert and wise to be able to understand the hidden spiritual message of the story to gain anything from it, and not get entangled in the mesh of other superficial things relating to the humdrum affairs of the mortal world as described in it. One must realise that the story describes the life and time of the Supreme Being during his manifestation as a ‘human being on earth which is a gross and mortal world’. Life on earth is not the same ideal life as one expects in the heaven.

It is quite natural and incumbent in this scenario that all the not-so-divine factors that are associated with and are a part-and-parcel of life on earth and existence in the mortal gross world are bound to cast some of their shadows on the story. It would therefore be foolhardy and stupid on the part of a seeker to get bogged down in this quagmire and be distracted from his real spiritual goal. This is what is meant by ‘looking at the seven steps with eyes of wisdom’.

³One must not be misled by what one sees on the surface of the story, for its content of spiritual knowledge and wisdom is exceedingly deep and beyond measure. To wit, on the surface it appears to be one other story from ancient mythology, but on deep analysis one would see more to it than what meets the eye. The deeper one goes into the story, the greater is the treasure of wisdom that one discovers in it.

It is not a shallow lake; it is as deep as the ocean. Nay, it is deeper than the ocean; it is as fathomless as the sky and the space of the cosmos that is filled with ether.

Some of the instances where the stupendous glories and the divine nature of Lord Ram have been mentioned in Ram Charit Manas are as follows: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 341 (where king Janak has praised Lord Ram); (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (where Laxman has praised Lord Ram’s greatness to Nishad); (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 127 (where sage Valmiki has praised the glory of Lord Ram); (iii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 13; (iv) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 1 (where Hanuman has praised the Lord); (v) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 21 (where Hanuman has praised Lord Ram’s stupendous glory in the court of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka); (vi) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22 (where Angad, the messenger of Lord Ram, has praised the Lord while admonishing Ravana and advising him to surrender before the

almighty Lord); and (vii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 80— to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 82 (where the saintly crow Kaagbhusund describes the cosmic form of Lord Ram).]

<< We can read these two Chaupais and interpret them a little differently as follows:-

*This divine story of Lord Ram has been arranged into seven chapters (called the Kandas), and they represent the seven steps that lead to the nectar of spiritual bliss present in the center of the symbolic lake represented by this holy story. When one sees these steps and the lake that they lead to with eyes of wisdom, one's Mana (heart and mind) is filled with delight unbound#, --- (1)

**--- For he realizes that the water of this holy lake is accessed by reading the full story having seven chapters that narrate the infinite glories and greatness of Lord Ram, because they expound upon the divinity and holiness of the Lord in a finite and comprehensible way so as to make the Supreme Lord, whose primary form is invisible, cosmic, infinite and without any attributes, become easily accessible to a devotee in a way he can relate to in the gross, mortal world in which he lives. (2)

#Why are eyes of wisdom so important? The answer is given in the second Chaupai— because without wisdom and proper understanding one would look at this holy story as a mere tale of a great prince of Ayodhya, a tale that describes his life and time like so many other fascinating stories and captivating tales written by numerous court historians, minstrels and bards meant more to eulogise and lift to lofty heights the concerned princes and kings in order to please them rather than to present a truthful account of events.

However, the case of Ram Charit Manas is completely different, for it is the story of the Supreme Being who was gracious enough to assume the form of a human being in the person of Lord Ram to fulfill the wishes of his devotees as well as to give countless pious souls a chance to have simple way to know the Lord and identify themselves with him, to give them a visible form which they can easily worship and offer obeisance to, because having devotion for an entity that has no form and attributes, which is the case with the primary form of Lord Ram as the Supreme Being who has a cosmic presence that is invisible and without known attributes, is extremely difficult in practice.

By manifesting himself as Lord Ram, the Supreme Being has given countless ordinary devotees a chance to attain spiritual joy, bliss and beatitude, as well as find deliverance, emancipation and salvation which they would have missed if the only way to attain this eclectic state of exalted being was by acquiring metaphysical and theological knowledge based on spiritual philosophy, for the latter is too abstract and makes it difficult for the common man to benefit from. >>

राम सीय जस सलिल सुधासम । उपमा बीचि बिलास मनोरम ॥ ३ ॥
पुरइनि सघन चारु चौपाई । जुगुति मंजु मनि सीप सुहाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāma sīya jasa salila sudhāsama. upamā bīci bilāsa manōrama. 3.
pura'ini saghana cāru caupā'ī. juguti mañju mani sīpa suhā'ī. 4.

In this metaphoric lake, the eclectic glories and the excellent virtues of Lord Ram and Sita (his consort) are its 'water'¹.

The innumerable instances of enchanting comparisons, similes and metaphors that have been used in this wonderful story are like the softly undulating wavelets of this charming lake that captivate and enthrall the mind². (3)

The Chaupais (verses that precede as well as follow each two-line couplet known as the Doha) are the thick maze of lotus plants with its stems³.

The various styles of poetry employed in composing this story are like the many oyster shells that yield so many beautiful pearls. (4)

[Note—¹If Lord Ram was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm', Sita is the human form of Laxmi, the goddess who is the consort of Lord Vishnu and a manifestation of the cosmic Shakti, the dynamic powers and energy of Brahm.

To wit, Ram and Sita are not an ordinary human couple; they are personified form of the cosmic almighty Lord and his dynamic powers called Shakti. This fact is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246.

²Some excellent examples of wonderful comparisons, similes and metaphors are found in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 40 when Lord Ram visited Lake Pampa; and in (b) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17 where we read about the time spent by Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman on the summit of Mt. Prabarshan.

³The word "Chaupai" means a 'four-legged verse'. The traditional form of a Chaupai is like the standard 'stanza' of a poem that has four lines that recur as the basic metre of the poem. There are many variations to this basic structure, and as for our Book 'Ram Charit Manas', the term 'Chaupai' is applied to each line of the poem. It is to be noted that each of these lines has two parts, one to the left and one to the right, with a pause in the center. This pause is like a coma (,) in a standard sentence, whereas the end of a particular line is like a semi-colon (;) or a full stop (.), depending upon the flow of the idea that is being expressed. If one line is sufficient to complete the idea, the end is like a full stop, and if the idea is continued into the next line then the end of the line is like a semi-colon.]

छंद सोरठा सुंदर दोहा । सोइ बहुरंग कमल कुल सोहा ॥ ५ ॥

अरथ अनूप सुभाव सुभासा । सोइ पराग मकरंद सुबासा ॥ ६ ॥

chanda sōraṭhā sundara dōhā. sō'i bahuraṅga kamala kula sōhā. 5.
aratha anūpa subhāva subhāsā. sō'i parāga makaranda subāsā. 6.

The beautiful Chandas, the Sorthas and the Dohas¹ that adorn this poetic composition are like the countless lotus flowers of different hues of colour that embellish the lake (referred to in Doha no. 36 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it). (5)

The high spiritual quality of the meaning of this divine story of Lord Ram (i.e. the Ram Charit Manas), the exaltedness of the noble ideas expressed in it, and the lucid and enchanting language employed to compose it are like the nectar, the essence and the fragrance of these lotus flowers (that spreads all over the lake symbolised by the story itself). (6)

[Note—¹The “Chanda” is a style of poetry that usually consists verses having a standard stanza of four lines each as opposed to the ‘Chaupai’ which has stand-alone verses of single lines. The standard number of letters and syllables also differ in the two styles. The way they are recited also differs. Other than this, the superficial structure is the same in both these systems of composition—i.e. there is a pause in the center of the line.

The “Doha” and the “Sortha” are also alike in the sense that they consist of two-line verses. The basic difference between the two lies in the fact that whereas in the ‘Doha’ the last words of both the lines rhyme with each other, but it is not the case with the ‘Sortha’.

Another technical difference between the two, which is usually understood only by an expert in languages, is that whereas in the ‘Sortha’ the first and the third parts have eleven syllables each, and the second and the fourth parts have thirteen syllables each, the ‘Doha’ has just the opposite, i.e. its first and the third parts have thirteen syllables each, and the second and the fourth parts have eleven syllables each.

An example of this will be evident when we compare Doha no. 15 and Sortha no. 16 of Baal Kand.]

सुकृत पुंज मंजुल अलि माला । ग्यान बिराग बिचार मराला ॥ ७ ॥
धुनि अवरेब कबित गुन जाती । मीन मनोहर ते बहुभाँती ॥ ८ ॥

sukṛta puñja mañjula ali mālā. gyāna birāga bicāra marālā. 7.
dhuni avarēba kabita guna jāti. mīna manōhara tē bahubhāmṭī. 8.

The devotees who have done a host of good and meritorious deeds are like the huge assembly of ‘black bees’ that are so naturally attracted to the lotus flower that they crowd around it, humming away merrily and hovering over the flower to find an opportunity to draw nectar from it¹.

{Alternately, this part of the verse can be read as follows: “The many glorious and meritorious deeds narrated in this story of Lord Ram are like the black bees that swarm on the surface of the lake, buzzing around merrily and hovering over the lotus flowers in order to drink their nectar.”²}

The eclectic virtues of Gyan (true knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment; gnosis), Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) and Vichaar (proper analysis, correct thought, and intelligent application of the mind to chose the right option) are like the wonderful ‘Swans’ that float on this lake. (7)

The many styles of poetic compositions, and their excellent qualities and sublime charm are like the many varieties of colourful fish, small and big, that inhabit this symbolic lake. (8)

[Note—¹There are countless insects but only the black bee is attracted to the lotus flower. Similarly, there are countless people who may read this story of Lord Ram just due to curiosity but they will find no interest in it. Only those who have done some good deed from the spiritual perspective will find the true value in this story. So such devotees flock to it like the black bee flocks to the lotus flower, and then they enjoy reading and reciting this story and deriving immense bliss and blessedness by doing so just like the bee that merrily hums over the lotus flower, alights on it and enjoys drinking its nectar.

²There are numerous examples of the righteous and noble way of living and thinking in this world that are cited in the story on different occasions. These are like the black bees that hover over the lake because they are attracted by the fragrance of the lotus flowers present in it. These bees hum and buzz around the surface of the lake full of lotus flowers, alight softly over the flower, drink its nectar, and linger on in the vicinity. This creates a beautiful sight for the beholder.

अरथ धरम कामादिक चारी । कहब ग्यान बिग्यान बिचारी ॥ ९ ॥

नव रस जप तप जोग बिरागा । ते सब जलचर चारु तड़ागा ॥ १० ॥

aratha dharama kāmādika cārī. kahaba gyāna bigyāna bicārī. 9.
nava rasa japa tapa jōga birāgā. tē saba jalacara cāru tarāgā. 10.

The countless other beautiful aquatic creatures that live in this lake are represented by the following: (a) the four rewards that one can obtain for all human activities (and these are ‘Artha’, ‘Dharma’, ‘Kaam’ and ‘Moksha’)¹ as described in the story, (b) understanding of what constitutes true wisdom and enlightenment, and what is the true reward for all human endeavours as indicated in the story, and then speaking about them wisely², (c) the nine charms of any composition, whether poetry or prose that are found in the story³, and (d) the grand spiritual virtues of Japa (repetition of prayers and mantras), Tapa (penance and austerity), Yoga (meditation and contemplation), and Vairagya (renunciation, detachment and dispassion) as they are described by way of examples in the story. (9-10)

[Note—¹The four rewards are ‘Artha’—material well-being and prosperity; ‘Dharma’—righteous way of living; ‘Kaam’—fulfilment of desires; and ‘Moksha’—liberation and deliverance from the torments associated with the cycle of birth and death.

²These above rewards have two connotations—one is their temporal attainment, and the other is their spiritual attainment. A wise and intelligent person is one who reads the story of Ram Charit Manas and understands the fact that it is useless to strive for any kind of worldly gains by doing religious practices and meritorious deeds. The real use of reading and hearing the story of Lord Ram is to gain awareness and knowledge of what constitutes the actual benefit that one should hope to get by doing any

meritorious deed in life. The superficial gains and rewards in the form of material riches, comfort, fame and powers are not of any real worth. The true reward one gets for all his efforts and other meritorious deeds must have a spiritual dimension to it, and it is to attain Mukti or Moksha—which is to attain freedom from the cycle of transmigration; attainment of emancipation and salvation of the soul; attaining oneness of the individual's soul with the Supreme Soul.

Besides this, a careful reading of the story would also enlighten the devotee of what actually constitutes 'meritorious deed'. The story also tells him what is Gyan, Vairagya, Japa, Tapa, Yoga etc. in the true sense, and what is the best reward of all these spiritual practices taken together.

Emphasis is on 'first understanding these virtues wisely, and then speaking about them wisely as well'. This is an important observation. If one wrongly understands or interprets something that is vital and important, he would not only harm his own interests but others to whom he tells about it would also suffer.

So, a wise person is one who first carefully reads and analyses the story, understands its true meaning and deciphers its hidden message, and then only he advises others about it. Otherwise, more harm would be done than doing any trace of good.

³The nine charms of poetical composition are the following shades of sentiments or emotions that are inherent in all compositions: (i) Sringaar—the sentiment of love and passion; (ii) Haasya—humour and satire; (iii) Karuna—pity; the pathetic sentiment; (iv) Vira—valour and heroism; (v) Rudra—anger, wrath, ill-temper and fury; (vi) Bhayaanak—that which inspires the sentiment of fear, terror and horror; (vii) Bibhatsa—the sentiment of disgust, revulsion; (viii) Shanta—tranquility, peace, calmness; (ix) and Adbhuta—that which is strange and marvellous, that which inspires wonder and awe.]

सुकृती साधु नाम गुण गाना । ते बिचित्र जल बिहग समाना ॥ ११ ॥
संतसभा चहुँ दिसि अवँराई । श्रद्धा रितु बसंत सम गाई ॥ १२ ॥

sukṛtī sādhu nāma guṇa gānā. tē bicitra jala bihaga samānā. 11.
santasabhā cahum̃̄ disī avam̃̄rāī. śrad'dhā ritu basanta sama gāī. 12.

The wonderful flocks of aquatic birds of different kinds of feathers that abound in this lake are represented by the countless noble men who have done meritorious service and righteous deeds, as well as the innumerable saintly and pious souls who jointly praise Lord Ram and sing the Lord's excellent virtues and glories together¹. (11)

The congregation or assembly of saints (where such singing or recitation is done) represents the gardens and orchards (of succulent and sweet fruits) that surround this lake on all its four sides. [And it is in these assemblies or groups where these saints ecstatically sing the divine story of Lord Ram just like the proverbial lark. Fruit gardens are usually flocked by birds. Hence this metaphor is used here.]

The faith and devotion that these pious souls have for the sacred, divine and holy story of Lord Ram is like the spring season that prevails in this symbolic garden and orchard². (12)

[Note—¹Where there are large numbers of birds of different kinds, there would a cacophony of their sounds. This noise is not irritating for the senses; rather it sounds sweet and gives a pleasant aura to the environment. This analogy is used to describe how countless devotees sing or recite the story of Lord Ram in their own style, either singly or in unison with others, to create a pleasant atmosphere of holiness and spiritual bliss.

²The saints and holy men are exhilarated when they read and recite the story of Lord Ram. The atmosphere of joy and happiness that prevails in their company reminds one of the spring season when the leaves turn green, new flowers open their petals, the sun shines in all its splendour, there is greenery all around, and life seems to be full of happiness and joy.

This phenomenon of Nature is invoked here to emphasise that the general atmosphere in the company of saints is as pleasant, rejuvenating and spiritually refreshing as the spring season is for life on earth.]

भगति निरूपन बिबिध बिधाना । छमा दया दम लता बिताना ॥ १३ ॥

सम जम नियम फूल फल ग्याना । हरि पद रति रस बेद बखाना ॥ १४ ॥

bhagati nirūpana bibidha bidhānā. chamā dayā dama latā bitānā. 13.

sama jama niyama phūla phala gyānā. hari pada rati rasa bēda bakhānā. 14.

Exposition and discussions on the various shades of the virtue of Bhakti¹ (devotion for Lord Ram) as well as of Kshama (forgiveness), Daya (mercy and compassion) and Dama (self-restraint of one's sense organs)—these represent the canopy of creepers in these gardens and orchards (as visualised in the previous verse nos. 11-12 herein above). (13)

Control of the Mana (mind and heart), the five forms of Yam (self-restraint) and Niyam (observations, sacraments and vows)² are the symbolic flowers of these creepers that abound in the gardens and orchards (described above).

Gyan (true knowledge, wisdom, enlightenment and self-realisation; gnosis) is the fruit of these creepers. And having or developing devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Hari (Sri Ram) is the juice or the essence of these fruits³. (14)

[Note—¹The many forms that Bhakti can take have been described in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 131; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

²The five 'Yams' are the following: non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-acquisition of worldly riches.

The five 'Niyams' or religious observances or vows are the following: purity, both external and internal, contentment, austerity, self-study of the scriptures, and repetition of holy Mantras that culminate in surrender to God).

³Of what use is Gyan if it can't teach the devotee to have devotion and faith in the Lord God. To wit, the true essence of hearing or studying Ram Charit Manas is that the devotee is able to develop devotion for Lord Ram, have faith in the Lord, and love the Lord as he would love his own life.]

औरउ कथा अनेक प्रसंगा । तेइ सुक पिक बहुबरन बिहंगा ॥ १५ ॥

aura'u kathā anēka prasaṅgā. tē'i suka pika bahubarana bihaṅgā. 15.

The myriad other tales and anecdotes narrated in this Ram Charit Manas are like the many parrots, cuckoo and other birds of colourful feathers that live in these gardens and orchards (as described herein above). (15)

दो०. पुलक बाटिका बाग बन सुख सुबिहंग बिहारु ।
माली सुमन सनेह जल सींचत लोचन चारु ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

pulaka bāṭikā bāga bana sukha subihaṅga bihāru.
mālī sumana sanēha jala sīncata lōcana cāru. 37.

Further, the sense of thrill, ecstasy and exhilaration that is obtained by hearing, reading and reciting this story of Lord Ram are the symbolic gardens, forests and orchards.

The joy and happiness and bliss that accompanies such hearing, reading and recitation are the symbolic birds that abound in these gardens, forests and orchards.

The purified and uncorrupt Mana (mind and heart) is like the expert gardener (who takes care of this metaphoric garden)¹. He waters the excellent garden and its beautiful plants with the water symbolised by the tears that flow from the eyes of the devotee when he is overwhelmed with ecstasy and bliss². (Doha no. 37)

[Note—¹To wit, just like the case of a garden or an orchard depending on the will and the sincere effort of an expert gardener to thrive and remain charming, the Mana of a devotee is responsible for how much benefit the devotee draws from the story of the Lord. If the Mana is interested and finds charm in the story of Lord Ram then it would motivate the devotee to find interest in the story and keep him focused on it. A wise and intelligent Mana would help the devotee to properly understand the story and derive benefit from it. Otherwise, the devotee would lose interest and easily get distracted by other things.

²Tears of joy and love would flow automatically when the devotee reaches a certain point of spiritual bliss that is expected by reading, hearing and reciting the holy story of Lord Ram. When this state is reached it is deemed that his spiritual garden has been well taken care of.]

चौ०. जे गावहिं यह चरित सँभारे । तेइ एहि ताल चतुर रखवारे ॥ १ ॥
सदा सुनहिं सादर नर नारी । तेइ सुरबर मानस अधिकारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jē gāvahim̐ yaha carita sambhārē. tē'i ēhi tāla catura rakhavārē. 1.
sadā sunahim̐ sādara nara nārī. tē'i surabara mānasa adhikārī. 2.

Those who sing (or recite) this story with due care and diligence are the ones who are deemed to be clever, skilful and alert angel-guardians of this symbolic lake (representing the divine story of Lord Ram that contains the nectar that provides spiritual solace, succour, bliss and blessedness). (1)

Those men and women who hear this story reverentially, with due faith and devotion, are deemed to be the patron deities of this lake which is known as 'Manas'¹. (2)

[Note—¹The word "Manas" means that which is related to and originates in the 'Mana'—the mind and the heart. The holy story of Lord Ram was conceived in the 'Mana' of Lord Shiva, then whoever heard it later on loved it so much that he remembered it by heart and kept his mind engaged in thinking of it. The story of Lord Ram is so enchanting and spiritually fulfilling that once one hears it one becomes exhilarated and so enamoured of it that one would commit it to one's memory and remember it fondly because it becomes very dear to the heart. The story takes a permanent place in the memory and the heart of the devotee, and whenever he has time to recall it, or whenever he hears it being recited by others, he feels ecstatic and blissful.

To wit, the spiritually rejuvenating story of Lord Ram is enshrined in the subtle space of the heart of the devotee just like a physical lake filled with fresh and cool water is located in a hollow space scooped out of the earth. Again, just as taking a dip in this physical water makes a man feel fresh and rejuvenated, a dip into the lake symbolised by the story of Lord Ram too provides rejuvenation and joy to the spirit and the mind of the devotee.

According to ancient tradition in the Indian society, all sacred places such as pilgrim centers and holy sites that include temples, lakes and ponds in these centers have a presiding deity to whom a person is expected to pay his obeisance before proceeding with his other religious rituals. In the case of the symbolic lake representing the story of Lord Ram, those devotees who sing it with devotion and faith, those who hold the story dear to their heart and mind, those who enjoy reading, reciting and preaching other about it to others, those who have understood its true meaning and spiritual value—they are the ones who are deemed to be living presiding deities of this 'lake'. So they must be shown respect first before someone proceeds with the hearing or reciting of the story. This is done not only to honour them but also to invoke their blessing and patronage as they would help the new-comer to become fully acquainted with the intricacies of the story and its spiritual value, that would, in turn, motivate the newly initiated devotee to start loving and revering this story of the Lord.]

अति खल जे बिषई बग कागा । एहि सर निकट न जाहिं अभागा ॥ ३ ॥

संबुक भेक सेवार समाना । इहाँ न बिषय कथा रस नाना ॥ ४ ॥

ati khala jē biṣaṭī бага kāgā. ēhi sara nikaṭa na jāhiṃ abhāgā. 3.
sambuka bhēka sēvāra samānā. ihām̃ na biṣaya kathā rasa nānā. 4.

Those people who are wicked, crooked and pervert, those who love sensual pleasures and worldly charms more than anything else are the unfortunate ones who are like the herons and the crows who do not dare to venture near this lake¹. (3)

The reason is that in this divine and holy lake there are no snails, frogs and moss that symbolise vain talk and vile stories related to attachment to the senses². (4)

[Note—¹The ‘Mansarovar Lake’ located at the base of Mt. Kailash, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva, is in the higher reaches of the Himalayan mountain range and is inhabited only by Swans; herons and crows don’t go there. This fact has been invoked here while comparing the story of Lord Ram with a sacred lake when it is said that herons and crows don’t go near this lake.

The ‘Swan’ is used as a metaphor for wisdom, purity and cleanliness. It is believed that it is so wise and selective in its choice of what to accept and what to reject that it would be able to separate water from milk, and pick up pearls from an assortment of jewels. On the other hand, crows and herons eat fish and are deemed to be lowly birds.

Therefore, in such a holy lake as the story of Lord Ram, only those who have a pure mind and heart can have access. Crooked people are not able to come near it.

²Those who find pleasure in the world and its sensual things will find the story of Lord Ram boring and dull as it does not cater to their liking. This story teaches one to renounce the pleasures of the gross mundane world as it does not give any lasting peace and happiness to the creature, but on the contrary it is so full of misery, pain and grief that it only causes torments to the creature. True and lasting happiness comes with self-realisation that entails turning away from the external world of sense objects, and towards the eternally blissful Atma that resides in the inner-self of all living beings. This eclectic spiritual philosophy, no matter how true and correct, would surely not appeal to the lustful and the passionate creature. So such people loathe this story of Lord Ram.]

तेहि कारन आवत हियँ हारे । कामी काक बलाक बिचारे ॥ ५ ॥

आवत एहिँ सर अति कठिनाई । राम कृपा बिनु आइ न जाई ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi kārana āvata hiyam̃ hārē. Kāmī kāka balāka bicārē. 5.
āvata ēhiṃ sara ati kaṭhināī. Rāma kṛpā binu āī na jāī. 6.

This is the reason why people who are likened to herons and crows shun this lake and do not want even to venture near it. (5)

Access to this symbolic holy lake is very difficult, and the path leading to it is full of obstacles¹. Only those upon whom Lord Ram becomes graceful and kind are able to overcome all hurdles and access this sacred lake². (6)

[Note—¹These have been briefly enumerated in the verses that follow herein below.

Refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, that describe the many spiritual hurdles that the devotee has to face, and which can only be overcome by the grace of Lord Ram: (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 71; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 89—to Doha no. 90; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 28-37 that precede Doha no. 121.

²Refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas in this context: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 39; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 200; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 129.]

कठिन कुसंग कुपंथ कराला । तिन्ह के बचन बाघ हरि ब्याला ॥ ७ ॥
गृह कारज नाना जंजाला । ते अति दुर्गम सैल बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

kaṭhina kusaṅga kupantha karālā. tinha kē bacana bāgha hari byālā. 7.
gṛha kāraja nānā janjālā. tē ati durgama saila bisālā. 8.

Company of highly pervert, sinful, evil, wicked and lustful persons is equivalent to the difficult terrain (path) that has to be successfully traversed in order to reach this lake¹.

The words of such companions are equivalent to the roar of the tiger and the lion, and the hissing sound of the snake². (7)

Similarly, the myriads of household duties and worldly obligations that have to be fulfilled are like the high and intractable mountains and hills that are very hard to cross before the seeker can reach this lake³. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the first hurdle is bad company. This company creates a lot of practical problems for the spiritual seeker. It is extremely difficult and requires a lot of will power and resilience on the part of the spiritual aspirant to resist the evil influence of this company.

²Just as the very roar of the tiger or the lion, or the hissing of the snake sends a chill down the spine of a person who is sore affright of them, the sarcastic remarks, derisive comments and insolent words of members of evil community for a person who wishes not to toe their evil line and instead lead a life of righteousness is too humiliating for him to bear with comfort. He feels disgusted and dejected and lonely; he feels rejected and condemned. Evil people would proffer so many ill-conceived and irrational logics to deter the righteous man and make him fall from his chosen spiritual path that even the wisest of men begins to doubt his own wisdom.

The result is that one finds it hard to travel cheerfully and spiritedly on the path that leads to the lake of spiritual nectar symbolised by the story of Ram Charit Manas. His steps become heavy and weary, and chances are that he would yield to the constant mental and emotional pressure exerted by his companions to stop thinking of this lake.

³This is the second practical problem a spiritual aspirant faces. Even if he decides to shun bad company, he finds it difficult not to fulfill his obligations towards his family and the world. He has to carry on with his business or vocation that consume the better part of his time and energy in life, leaving little space for him to devote towards his spiritual objectives.]

बन बहु बिषम मोह मद माना । नदीं कुतर्क भयंकर नाना ॥ ९ ॥

bana bahu biṣama mōha mada mānā. nadīm kutarka bhayaṅkara nānā. 9.

The negative traits such as ‘Moha’ (infatuation and attachment), ‘Mada’ (arrogance and haughtiness) and ‘Maan’ (ego and pride) are like the many dense forests that have to be crossed in order to access the lake.

Irrational logic, fallacious arguments, pretensions of self-righteousness and having better knowledge, fraud and deceptions are the many terrifying rivers that too have to be crossed in order to reach this lake. (9)

[Note—These are the third set of problems faced by the seeker. Even if he manages to overcome the physical obstacles listed in the previous verses, the ones listed here become harder to overcome as they relate to his inner-self and form a part of his attitude, character and inherent nature to which he is habituated, and which is too difficult to mend.]

दो०. जे श्रद्धा संबल रहित नहिं संतन्ह कर साथ ।

तिन्ह कहूँ मानस अगम अति जिन्हहि न प्रिय रघुनाथ ॥ ३८ ॥

dōhā.

jē śrad'dhā sambala rahita nahim santanha kara sātha.

tinha kahum' mānasa agama ati jinhahi na priya raghunātha. 38.

Those who do not have money in the form of faith, conviction and devotion to meet their travel expenses, those who do not have a company of saints and pious people on this path, and those who do not have affection for Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram)—such people find this path extremely arduous and difficult to travel. (Doha no. 38)

[Note—These three things—money for travel expenses, company of like-minded fellow travellers, and a strong desire and dedication to reach the targeted place—are necessary for a traveller to reach his cherished destination. Hence, the factors

mentioned in this Doha help a spiritual aspirant to fully benefit from the reading and hearing of the story of Lord Ram.

To wit, he must have faith and belief, he must have company of saintly people who would encourage him onwards if he gets stuck somewhere or if he is unable to understand anything, and love for Lord Ram that would keep him inspired.]

चौ०. जौं करि कष्ट जाइ पुनि कोई । जातहिं नीद जुड़ाई होई ॥ १ ॥
जड़ता जाड़ बिषम उर लागा । गएहुँ न मज्जन पाव अभागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaur̥m kari kab jā'i puni kō'ī. jātahim̄ nīda jur̄ā'ī hō'ī. 1.
jaṛatā jāra biṣama ura lāgā. ga'eḥum̄ na majjana pāva abhāgā. 2.

Hence, the journey to access this lake represented by the story of Lord Ram is very arduous and full of difficulties. In spite of this, if a person successfully overcomes all these problems and manages to reach the lake, he is overcome with sleep and lethargy as if he has some fever¹. (1)

His heart becomes so numbed by foolishness and ignorance that it literally begins to develop signs of shivering that usually accompanies high fever².

As a result of this perceived illness (shivering and drowsiness as if fever is coming on), this unfortunate person is deprived of the opportunity to take a bath in this sacred lake in spite of the fact that he has already reached it after striding so many difficulties found on the way³. (2)

[Note—¹By the time the pilgrim reaches the holy lake he is so tired that he becomes sleepy. This means that even if one manages to actually hear this glorious story from some wise saint or read it under the guidance of such saint, he soon becomes bored, begins to yawn and becomes drowsy. It is a natural observation that when one does not find anything of great interest he begins to get bored, and this is manifested in the form of yawning and drowsiness.

²The traveller had endured so much difficulty to reach his destination. It is so stupid for him to waste his time by going to sleep there instead of doing what he is expected to do upon completion of the journey.

Similarly, the spiritual aspirant would be deemed to be a great fool if he becomes bored of reading and hearing the divine story of Lord Ram which he has managed to access due to some great good luck of his. It is not an ordinary story which one would read casually to pass time while commuting on a train or bus, or one that is read before going to bed at night so that it can induce sleep.

It is a holy and sacred story that has profound implications for the spiritual welfare of a person as it bestows upon him spiritual fulfilment and liberation to his soul, and so must not be treated lightly.

³The meaning is clear: A devotee needs a fresh and alert mind to fully benefit from the story of Ram Charit Manas. If he becomes inclined to doze off, it is futile for him to hear or read it.]

करि न जाइ सर मज्जन पाना । फिरि आवइ समेत अभिमाना ॥ ३ ॥
जौं बहोरि कोउ पूछन आवा । सर निंदा करि ताहि बुझावा ॥ ४ ॥

kari na jā'i sara majjana pānā. phiri āva'i samēta abhimānā. 3.
jauṁ bahōri kō'u pūchana āvā. sara nindā kari tāhi bujhāvā. 4.

Due to the above problems he is unable to bathe in this lake, so he returns and becomes proud of his spiritual achievement¹. (3)

Then if someone comes to him to seek advice and his opinion about this lake (symbolised by the story of Lord Ram), this unfortunate person criticises the lake and discourages the would-be traveller (spiritual aspirant) not to take the trouble of making this journey (or hearing and reading this story)². (4)

[Note—¹He proudly tells everyone that he has fully read this holy book, he has heard discourses on it, and he is fully conversant with it. But this is mere falsehood and obvious boast as he was sleeping all through.

It is just like the case of someone going on a long journey of pilgrimage to a holy place that entails a lot of money, planning, effort and dedication. But instead of devoting his mind on some spiritual theme at least for the time spent on this journey and while he was at the holy place, if a person spends this time on futile worldly talk or on merrily eating and drinking away, and then when he actually reaches the place he wraps himself in a blanket and goes off to sleep while his companions are performing their religious duties—what would be said of such a person if he comes back from this journey that was more of a picnic or a leisure trip for him than a true pilgrimage, and boasts about his spiritual fulfilment due to this religious journey? He would indeed be deceiving himself as well as his friends?

²This unfortunate and ill-fated person who found the story uninteresting would discourage other people and tell them that there is no good in reading or hearing it.

To wit, a true seeker should be wary of such persons.]

सकल बिघ्न ब्यापहिं नहिं तेही । राम सुकृपाँ बिलोकहिं जेही ॥ ५ ॥
सोइ सादर सर मज्जनु करई । महा घोर त्रयताप न जरई ॥ ६ ॥

sakala bighna byāpahim nahim tēhī. rāma sukṛpāṁ bilōkahim jēhī. 5.
sō'i sādara sara majjanu kara'ī. mahā ghōra trayatāpa na jara'ī. 6.

All the different obstacles hinted at in the aforesaid verses do not cause any hindrance for a devotee who is looked upon munificently by Lord Ram¹. (5)

Only a soul who is fortunate enough to be graced by Lord Ram is able to (first successfully access this symbolic lake of spiritual nectar, and then) take a bath reverentially in this lake, and as a reward of this he is also not affected by the three legendary fires (or torments) that create immense misery for all living beings². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 28; (b) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 21; (c) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30; (d) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 46; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 48; (e) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 129.

All the above cited verses emphasise that when Lord Ram looks gracefully upon someone, all his miseries and troubles are dispelled.

²The three horrifying fires representing the different torments that create immense suffering and misery for all living beings are the following: ‘Adhyatmic’—those related to his spiritual well-being; ‘Adhbhaucic’—those related to the world and its inhabitants; and ‘Adhidaivic’—those related to opposed gods and stars.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21 where it is said that these three fires have no effect in the reign of Lord Ram. To wit, wherever there is the shadow of Lord Ram’s grace and mercy, these three types of torments are vanquished automatically.

Even as a man who is scorched by the blazing sun finds intense pleasure and relief by taking a dip in a fresh water lake, a devotee who immerses himself in the story of Lord Ram, reading it, reciting it and preaching it to others, too derives immense bliss, solace and succour for his tormented soul that had been suffering from countless problems associated with life in this gross mundane world of transmigration. He is able to enjoy the freshness of the rejuvenated spirit, he is able to find bliss and happiness that had eluded him all his life prior to his accessing this symbolic lake representing the divine story of Lord Ram.

So therefore, though a devotee had heard and read the story in the beginning out of curiosity, he later on begins to love it and hold it dear to his heart and mind when he experiences spiritual ecstasy and a sense of blessedness got by this effort so much so that he begins to revere the sacred story of Lord Ram and adore it like one would worship a deity which fulfils all his wishes.]

ते नर यह सर तजहिं न काऊ । जिन्ह कें राम चरन भल भाऊ ॥ ७ ॥

जो नहाइ चह एहिं सर भाई । सो सतसंग करउ मन लाई ॥ ८ ॥

tē nara yaha sara tajahim na kā'ū. jinha kēm rāma carana bhala bhā'ū. 7.
jō nahā'i caha ēhim sara bhā'ī. sō satasaṅga kara'u mana lā'ī. 8.

Those men who have abiding faith, devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram, they do not leave this symbolic lake, no matter what the temptation or provocation is. (7)

Oh Brother! Those who wish to take a refreshing bath in this lake should endeavour to have company of pious and saintly souls¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 128; (ii) Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

अस मानस मानस चख चाही । भइ कबि बुद्धि बिमल अवगाही ॥ ९ ॥
भयउ हृदयँ आनंद उछाहू । उमगेउ प्रेम प्रमोद प्रबाहू ॥ १० ॥

asa mānasa mānasa cakha cāhī. bha'i kabi bud'dhi bimala avagāhī. 9.
bhaya'u hṛdayam'ānanda uchāhū. umagē'u prēma pramōda prabāhū. 10.

When a wise, sagacious, self-realised and enlightened poet (kabi) saw this symbolic lake with his subtle eyes of wisdom and intellect, and when he took a dip in this lake (filled with nectar of bliss and beatitude), his mind was purified (of whatever remnants of evils and faults that had managed to cling to it till this point of time). (9)

His heart felt extremely exhilarated and thrilled, and a wave of delight, joy, bliss and beatitude surged in it¹. (10)

[Note—¹A very beautiful example of how one feels refreshed and rejuvenated when he beholds the enchanting beauty of Nature and takes a bath in a fresh water lake with clean and cool water after a long journey on foot is found when Lord Ram, along with his younger brother Laxman, went to Pampa Lake and took a bath in it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 41. These verses marvellously describe the charm of that wonderful scene.]

चली सुभग कबिता सरिता सो । राम बिमल जस जल भरिता सो ॥ ११ ॥
सरजू नाम सुमंगल मूला । लोक बेद मत मंजुल कूला ॥ १२ ॥

calī subhaga kabitā saritā sō. rāma bimala jasa jala bharitā sō. 11.
sarajū nāma sumaṅgala mūlā. lōka bēda mata maṅjula kūlā. 12.

When the thrilled and jubilant poet's heart overflowed with surging waves of emotional ecstasy and joy, he could not restrain himself so much so that his emotions spilled over and poured out from his exhilarated heart in the form of excellent poetry that symbolised a river of pristine pure water symbolising the divine story of Lord Ram¹. (11)

This metaphoric river is called “River Saryu”² (that flows on the north-bank of the holy city of Ayodhya which was the capital city of Lord Ram when he took a human birth in the kingdom with the same name).

This river is holy and purifying, and it is a fountain of bliss and joy.

This symbolic river has two banks representing the secular view-point and the one from the perspective of the scriptures³. (12)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Tulsidas talks about all the spiritually realised poets and bards who have sung the glorious story of Lord Ram known as Ram Charit Manas with the greatest of devotion and affection. Like a perennially flowing river that has its source in the higher reaches of the mighty mountains where glaciers are located, a river that descends from the high mountains and irrigates the dry plains below to provide joy and succour to one and all, and finally it ends in the ocean which awaits to embrace it along with all the creatures such as aquatic animals and plants that are present in its water, the story of Lord Ram makes its appearance in the Mana (mind and heart) of great sages and saints, then it reaches the common man who hears it from these exalted souls, deriving immense happiness and joy by doing so. Some of these fortunate ones dive deep in the water of this symbolic river, and when they find its waters to be nectar-like they prefer to remain in it forever instead of going on land that is dry and parched for water. So they swim along with the currents of this majestic river to find their final destiny in the form of liberation and deliverance of the soul when it merges with the Supreme Soul represented by Lord Ram.

Indeed, what a fascinating thing and wonderful scenario for a poet to imagine!

²The story of River Saryu: There are many versions of how river Saryu, which flows on the north of the holy city of Ayodhya where Lord Ram took birth and ruled as its great King, appeared on earth.

(a) According to Ananda Ramayan, Yatra Kand, Canto 4, the story briefly is as follows:- Once Lord Ram went to meet the great sage named Mudgal in his old hermitage, but on reaching there the Lord found that the sage had left it and now lives in somewhere else in another hermitage. The Lord went there and asked the sage why he had abandoned the previous hermitage.

The sage explained that he wanted to live at a place where the two holy rivers Ganges and Saryu exist together so that he can derive religious merit of bathing in both of them at the same time. Lord Ram wished to know about the importance of river Saryu and how it came down to earth.

The learned sage told the Lord that in some ancient time a demon named Shankhaasur had stolen the Vedas and hid them in the bottom of the ocean. Then Lord Vishnu, who is the primary form of Lord Ram, took the form of a great Fish and salvaged the Vedas after slaying the demon. Then Lord Vishnu reverted to his original form and felt so glad that tears of joy flowed from his eyes. These tears of joy fell down to form a river that flowed and collected in a lake known as Mansarovar somewhere in the bowls of the lofty mountains called Himalayas.

Just during that period of time, the great ancient King known as Vaivaswat Manu (after whom one cycle of creation known as a 'Manwantar' is named) decided to do a fire sacrifice. He sought the advice of his Guru (preceptor) who told him that if he intends to do the fire sacrifice then he must sanctify and purify the land by bringing the holy river Saryu from the Himalayas.

Hearing this, the King shot an arrow that pierced the wall of the mighty mountains that surrounded the Mansarovar Lake so that the waters of river Saryu gushed through the crevice and streamed down to the plains. This stream followed behind the arrow as it returned to the quiver of the King. It may have been that the stream of the river flowed through the groove made on the surface of the earth by the blazing arrow as it made its way through the plains and up the side of the mountain to reach the lake like some colossal caterpillar.

This river is called ‘Saryu’ as this name reminds one of its origin in a ‘lake’ which is called a ‘Sara’ in the local dialect, or because it was discovered by an arrow which is called ‘Shara’.

(b) According to Satyopaakhyaan, Canto 37, verse nos. 15-41, the story of river Saryu is as follows:- Once, King Dasrath of Ayodhya paid his obeisance to the holy river Saryu by composing a eight-verse hymn in her honour. The deity representing this river was pleased, and she revealed herself. Then the great king told her that as far as he knew, his Guru, sage Vasistha, had brought the river during the era of King Swayambhu Manu. But that is all he knew about the origin of the river. So he wanted to know more about it.

The patron deity of Saryu answered the king and told him the story behind the advent of this holy river on earth. It is this: In the beginning of creation when Brahma, the Creator, himself was born on the top of a lotus flower that emerged from the navel of the Supreme Being known as Viraat Purush, he was inspired to do Tapa (penance and austerity) to empower him to initiate the process of creation. Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush, was so pleased by Brahma’s Tapa that tears of joy flowed down his eyes. When Brahma saw these tears of blessing, he immediately collected them in his Kamandalu (the wooden water-pot he carried). Brahma realized that this water (tears of Vishnu) is very rare, and since it was shed personally by the Lord it is to be revered and worshipped as a direct blessing of the Lord. So Brahma created a lake by employing the creative powers of his mind for safekeeping of this holy and sanctified water. Since this lake was the result of Brahma’s mind, and also perhaps because this ‘lake’ symbolized the emotion of love and devotion for Lord Vishnu that he had in his heart, the lake was called ‘Mansarovar’—the lake (“sarovar”) having its origin in the ‘Mana’ (mind and heart).

Brahma then poured the contents of the water-pot into it, and appointed a sage named Manjukesh to guard it.

Later on, the great King Ikshwaku, one of the forefathers of Lord Ram, requested his Guru sage Vasistha to bring this holy water for him. Vasistha prayed to Manjukesh and sought his permission to take the river to the plains where Ayodhya was located. The sage granted his permission and told Vasistha that first he must bathe in the lake, and then a stream of water would follow the direction he takes. Sage Vasistha took a holy dip in its water, and moved in the direction of Ayodhya which lay to the south. So a stream of water from the Mansarovar Lake followed him as he walked back to the kingdom of Ayodhya. This is how the river reached this holy city.

³This statement means that the story of Lord Ram, known as the epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’, is approached by people in two different ways, depending on their spiritual attitude, outlook and objective. One approach is the secular one whereby the reader treats it as a historical or mythological narration of some ancient event. This approach makes them regard Lord Ram as being a great and noble King of a certain ancient kingdom known by the name of Ayodhya, and then with this view-point they read the rest of the story.

The other perspective is in light of what the scriptures say of Lord Ram—that he was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, who is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the almighty cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. Lord Ram came down to earth in a human form to fulfil certain obligations that he had as the ‘Lord of Creation’. Hence, he was a visible and easily accessible form of the Supreme Being

who is primarily invisible as well as beyond the reach of the senses and the mind-intellect complex.

For a spiritual aspirant, the second approach is what bears fruits.]

नदी पुनीत सुमानस नंदिनि । कलिमल तृन तरु मूल निकंदिनि ॥ १३ ॥

nadī punīta sumānasa nandini. kalimala tṛṇa taru mūla nikandini. 13.

This holy and purifying river is the ‘daughter of an auspicious lake¹’ (known as the Mansarovar Lake). It is powerful and strong enough to uproot the sins, small or big, that are so common in the era of Kaliyug like any great river that would snatch and carry with its swift currents the twigs and small plants found obstructing its path². (13)

[Note—¹The river Saryu is called a ‘daughter of the lake’ because it has its origin in it. We have other instances where one is assigned a name that reflects one’s origin. For instance, goddess Parati, the consort of Lord Shiva, is often called ‘Girija’ as she was born in the Himalaya Mountains. Sita, the consort of Lord Ram, is called ‘Jaanki’ as she was the daughter of King Janak.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 35.]

दो०. श्रोता त्रिबिध समाज पुर ग्राम नगर दुहुँ कूल ।
संतसभा अनुपम अवध सकल सुमंगल मूल ॥ ३९ ॥

dōhā.

śrōtā tribidha samāja pura grāma nagara duhum̃ kūla.
santasabhā anupama avadha sakala sumaṅgala mūla. 39.

The three types of listeners¹ of this story are the various villages, hamlets and towns that are found on the two banks of this holy river.

The exalted community of saints and pious people where this story is read and recited with great devotion and due reverence, where its verses constantly reverberate in all the directions, is the symbolic holy city of Ayodhya (on the north of which this holy river Saryu flows). (Doha no. 39)

[Note—¹The three types of listeners are the following: (i) those who have already attained self-realisation; (ii) those who are striving to attain self-realisation; and (iii) those who are not interested in spiritual pursuits as they are tempted by the senses.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 53; (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 15.]

चौ०. रामभगति सुरसरितहि जाई । मिली सुकीरति सरजु सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

सानुज राम समर जसु पावन । मिलेउ महानदु सोन सुहावन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmabhagati surasaritahi jāī. milī sukīrati saraju suhāī. 1.

sānuja rāma samara jasu pāvana. milē'u mahānadu sōna suhāvana. 2.

This holy river (Saryu), with its purifying water, symbolizes all meritorious deeds and goodness that a devotee of the Lord possesses as it goes to and merges with the holy river Ganges¹ symbolized by Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram². (1)

The fame and glory that Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman attained in the great war and the battles they engaged in³ are like the two great rivers known as Mahanadi and Sona⁴ acquiring fame when they fall in river Ganges and merge with it (because then they are no longer ordinary rivers but are deemed to be revered and holy like the sacred river Ganges)*.

[*There is another way of interpreting this verse. It may be read as: “The fame and glory that Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman attained in the great war and the battles they engaged in are like the great river (mahānadu) Sona⁵ acquiring fame as one of the most revered rivers in the land when it falls and merges with the holy river Ganges.”] (2)

[Note—¹River Saryu is believed to be the daughter of sage Vasistha, the royal Guru or preceptor of the kings of Ayodhya, including Lord Ram, while river Ganges is said to be the daughter of king Bhagirath who brought it down from heaven by his Tapa (penances) in order to liberate the souls of the sons of king Sagar.

Now, Vasistha was a Brahmin and a Guru, while Bhagirath was a King and Kshatriya by birth. Even as a King's daughter welcomes a Brahmin's daughter and embraces her, river Ganges receives river Saryu and symbolically embraces her by allowing the latter to merge with it.

Second reason is this: River Saryu has its origin in the eyes of Lord Vishnu, as tears, while river Ganges originates in the feet of the Lord in the form of water used to wash the holy feet of the Lord. It is natural for water from a higher plain to go down to meet another source of water lower down. So therefore, it is but natural for river Saryu, having its origin in the eye of Lord Vishnu to flow down and fall into the stream that owes its origin in the holy feet of the Lord.

The third reason of merger of Saryu with Ganges is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Yatra Kand, verse nos. 95-98 which says that on the orders of Lord Ram, his brother Laxman used his arrow to bring river Saryu and make it fall in river Ganges for the benefit of sage Mudgal who had his hermitage in the Himalayas, in the area where the holy site known as Badri was situated.

Regarding the origin of rivers Saryu and Ganges, there is a story in Skanda Puran, Reva Khand, that says that once Manu, the ancestor of the human race, performed a fire sacrifice on the banks of river Narmada in the pilgrim site known as Tripuri Tirtha. Upon successful completion of the fire sacrifice, the deity of Narmada was pleased by Manu and asked him to request for a boon. Manu sought that all the holy rivers in heaven should descend on earth and come to purify the land. The deity granted his wishes and said that first Ganges would be brought to earth by the efforts of king Bhagirath in the beginning of Treta Yuga, the era when Lord Ram came down

to earth, and the other holy rivers such as Yamuna, Saraswati, Saryu and Gandak would follow.

²There are two ways of interpreting this verse in relation with the analogy of river Saryu's merger with river Ganges and Lord Ram's devotee attaining devotion for the Lord, as follows:

(i) Just like the river Saryu that meanders through difficult terrain and unclean land, overcoming all sorts of obstacles and not paying attention to all sorts of impurities that continuously fall in its water all along the way till it reaches its final destination, which is river Ganges, where it falls into it and merges with its holy waters to become one and indistinguishable with the river Ganges, so likewise is the case with devotees of Lord Ram, for they lead a pious and meritorious life, doing all sorts of good and noble deeds with the sole aim to attain devotion for Lord Ram, and towards this end move on diligently, overcoming all obstacles and resisting all temptations that come in their way, attempting to divert their attention from their objective and leading them astray from their destination. None of the impurities and disturbances of the world around them affect them; they remain as pure and calm as the water of river Saryu in which all sorts of impurities and rubbish are dumped, but it moves on calmly towards river Ganges.

The idea here is this: Even as the holiness and purity of river Saryu is not compromised by the various types of rubbish that fall in its water, the holiness and purity of the soul of the devotee too is not affected by the grossness of the surrounding world around him, and even as the river Saryu maintains its sanctity in spite of all the nuisance it has to encounter on its way to river Ganges, the devotee too pays no heed to the countless distractions he faces in his spiritual journey towards attaining devotion for Lord Ram.

Further, like the case of river Saryu having its final destination in river Ganges considered as the holiest of all rivers, and with this merger river Saryu cleanses itself of all the impurities that have been falling in its water all along its journey through the land, and it too becomes as holy as the river Ganges when it merges with the latter, so is the case with the devotee of Lord Ram, for when he attains devotion for the Lord and receives the Lord's grace and blessings then all his previous impurities represented by his numerous faults and shortcomings and blemishes are washed off, and the devotee becomes exemplarily holy and pure. This is the culmination of his spiritual journey and the reward of all the good deeds and pious efforts he had been making all along in his life.

(ii) Another way of interpreting this verse is that like river Saryu which has acquired merit by the virtue of it being near the city of Ayodhya where Lord Ram took birth and lived, a devotee of Lord Ram acquires fame and merit by the virtue of his or her having devotion for the Lord which grants the reward of the Lord's blessings and grace.

³Obviously, the 'war' referred to here is the epic War of Lanka, and the 'battles' to the many independent duels which the two brothers fought together with the demons. This Great War of Lanka is described in Lanka Kand of this book Ram Charit Manas.

The battle that the two brothers fought together was at the time of protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, where they defeated the formidable army of demons Marich and Subahu. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 210.}

Wars are not something worth lauding and have no relation with spirituality; they are always bloody and painful. So, how and why did the War of Lanka and the battles fought by Lord Ram and Laxman gave them good fame; why are these wars and battles called holy?

Well, the answer is this: these wars were fought not for usual worldly reasons for which kings and emperors fight wars—such as expansion of their kingdoms, destroying their enemies to usurp their land, and such other reasons driven by greed and rapacity for power, authority and dominion. The two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, fought the War of Lanka and other independent battles with the sole purpose of eliminating the scourge of the demons and end their reign of tyranny which they had unleashed on this earth. The War of Lanka and the other individual battles fought by Lord Ram and Laxman were done to fulfill the promise made by Lord Vishnu to the gods and mother earth that he would himself come down to earth to eliminate the cruel demons and the terror they had spread on earth. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.}

The War of Lanka and the Battle with the ferocious army of demons Marich and Subahu were fought by Lord Ram and Laxman against evil forces represented by the cruel and sinful demons. The battle with Marich and Subahu was fought to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, and the war of Lanka was undertaken to eliminate the tyranny of the demons led by their ferocious and cruel king Ravana who had unleashed a reign of terror on earth.

Besides this, this war and battle led to the deliverance of the souls of the demons, leading to their emancipation and salvation, for otherwise they were so sinful that there was no chance of them ever finding peace for their souls. {This is clearly mentioned on different occasions in Ram Charit Manas: for instance, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 209; (ii) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 20 (a); (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precedes Doha no. 45; and Chaupai line nos. 7 and 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

The current of these two rivers, Sona and Mahanad or Gandak, is very swift, and the rivers are very dangerous when in spate. This is the case with wars and battles too: developments are very swift, unpredictable and dangerous. But in the end these wars and battles fought by Lord Ram and Laxman proved a boon for the souls of the demons just like the fate of river Sona and Gandak, because they became holy at the time of their merger with river Ganges.]

⁴Here, the fame of Lord Ram is like the great river Mahanadi, and that of Laxman as river Sona. The river Sona has its origin in the region of Amarkantak in the state of Madhya Pradesh in India and flows east to merge with river Ganges in the state of Bihar at a place near the city of Danapur. The ancient kingdom of Magadha was established on its banks. The other ‘great river’ associated with Ganges as well as Saryu simultaneously is river Gandak, for Saryu merges in Gandak before finally falling into Ganges. This Gandak river originates in the mountains of Himalayas in Nepal, and during its flow down the plains many smaller rivers and streams merge with it till it reaches Ganges and merges itself with the latter near Patna, the capital city of the state of Bihar.

⁵The word ‘mahānadu’ means the “Great River”, and when it is used before the name of a river, in this case river Sona, it becomes an adjective for this river—meaning that the river Sona is a ‘great river’. The reason is this: The bed of river Sona becomes extremely wide when it reaches the plains of the state of Bihar, where it

spreads over 2-3 miles in width. During rainy season, it appears to be like an ocean—stretching till the horizon if one looks at it from either of its two banks. Hence, the epithet ‘great river’ is apt to be applied to it, for no other river has this spread.

From ancient times, i.e. from the time Purans were composed, India is said to have the following seven rivers that are considered sacred as they fostered great civilizations and nestled life along their banks: Kshonbhadra (another name of river Sona), Sindhu, Brahmaputra, Satlaj, Jhelum, Ghaghara, and Vyas. These rivers gave the name of the country as the ‘land of seven rivers’. {Refer: Amarkosh 2/5/4.}

जुग बिच भगति देवधुनि धारा । सोहति सहित सुबिरति बिचारा ॥ ३ ॥
त्रिबिध ताप त्रासक तिमुहानी । राम सरूप सिंधु समुहानी ॥ ४ ॥

juga bica bhagati dēvadhuni dhārā. sōhati sahita subirati bicārā. 3.
tribidha tāpa trāsaka timuhānī. rāma sarūpa sindhu samuhānī. 4.

Between the two virtues of ‘Gyan’ (gnosis; realization and true knowledge of the ‘self’; in-depth understanding of metaphysics as enunciated in the Upanishads) and ‘Vairagya’ (renunciation, dispassion, detachment, non-involvement in gross worldly affairs), which are symbolized by the two rivers Sona and Saryu respectively, flows the holy stream of the river Ganges (the river of gods—“dēvadhuni dhārā”) representing the virtue of ‘Bhakti’ (devotion, that leads to the deliverance, salvation and emancipation of the soul)¹. (3)

These three streams (rivers Sona, Saryu and Ganges, representing Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti respectively) are very soothing, and they provide succour from the three types of sufferings of the devotee² as he steadily moves in the direction of his destination—i.e. attaining nearness with Lord Ram³. (4)

[Note—¹In this analogy, river Sona represents Gyan; river Saryu represents Vairagya; and river Ganges represents Bhakti. To wit, when these three excellent virtues work together in tandem in a person, he becomes a perfect soul, one who is as divine and holy as any god, and is transformed into a personified form of the Supreme Being himself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 44; and Uttar Kand, Doha no. 100 which echo this idea.

The imagery is wonderful indeed: river Saryu travels in the south direction from the north; river Sona from the south towards the north direction; and river Ganges from the west towards the east direction. To wit, spirituality and its reward in the form of deliverance, emancipation and salvation consists of joint effort of these three stellar virtues—Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti. It’s a Tripod for attaining stability and peace in this world; it’s like a Triumvirate that makes the person who practices them the real Emperor in life.

Since Bhakti is placed in between the other two virtues of Gyan and Vairagya, and rivers are used to represent them, it means that just like the case of a river having two banks from where a person accesses the water of that river, the virtue of Bhakti is easily attained when one practices Gyan and Vairagya.

It also means that both Gyan and Vairagya lead to Bhakti, and if Bhakti is not attained then the two other virtues are useless, just like the case of a person deriving real benefit of going to a river when he actually reaches its water and dips in it to take

a bath and clean himself, but if he just stands on its banks and stares at the water of the river he benefits nothing. To wit, merely having Gyan and Vairagya would lead the devotee no where if he has no Bhakti in him.

²These three types of sufferings are called ‘Tritaap’. They are the following: Daihik—sufferings related to the body such as diseases; Daivik—sufferings caused by angry gods and stars; and Bhautik—sufferings caused by things associate with life in this gross world. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21.}

³The aim of all spiritual practices undertaken by a devotee of Lord Ram is to attain the Lord and find nearness with him. This verse says that if a devotee has these three virtues in him, i.e. if he practices Gyan, Vairagya and Bhakti, then he is sure to reach his destination, he is sure to be successful in his spiritual practices.]

मानस मूल मिली सुरसरिही । सुनत सुजन मन पावन करिही ॥ ५ ॥
बिच बिच कथा बिचित्र बिभागा । जनु सरि तीर तीर बन बागा ॥ ६ ॥

mānasa mūla milī surasarihī. sunata sujana mana pāvana karihī. 5.
bica bica kathā bicitra bibhāgā. janu sari tīra tīra bana bāgā. 6.

Having its source (place of origin) in the sacred Manas Lake¹, and its destination in the holy river Ganges in which it merges, the symbolic holy river Saryu representing the glories and fame of Lord Ram purifies the mind and the heart of those pious and noble souls who listen² to the divine story of the Lord. (5)

The many interesting tales and fascinating episodes that are interspersed here and there in the story of Ram Charit Manas and narrated as part of it³, are like the many gardens and groves and forests that are found on the banks of the river Saryu all along its course⁴. (6)

[Note—¹In this analogy, the story of Lord Ram is represented by river Saryu, and the comfort and pleasure one gets by taking a bath in the cool and clean waters of the river are compared to the spiritual peace and solace that one derives by listening to this holy story.

Again, even as river Saryu heads towards river Ganges and merges with the latter to become inseparable from it, a devotee of Lord Ram who listens to this holy story too attains nearness with Lord Ram, and at the time of his death his soul merges with the Lord’s supreme Soul to become one with it.

It is believed that the river Saryu has its origin in the Mansarovar Lake near Mt. Kailash which is the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. The divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, the present book we are reading, had been conceptualized in the ‘Mana’, i.e. the mind and heart, of Lord Shiva during his meditative sessions. The Mana of Lord Shiva is regarded as a ‘lake’ because it is from this place that the divine story of Lord Ram had first emerged. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Thence, this symbolic river of Lord Ram’s holy story spread across the world much like a physical river that has its origin in a lake situated in the higher reaches of

a mountain glacier, from where the water flows out in a stream and cascades down the mountain to reach the plains below and form a mighty river that irrigates the land and nestles great civilizations. Similarly, the divine story of Lord Ram took the symbolic form of river Saryu and spread across the land to provide solace and succour to all those who would come to the banks of this river and take a dip in its soothing, cool and clean water, i.e. all those who would listen to this holy and divine story of Lord Ram would be able to overcome all sufferings that torment them in this world.

These sufferings are the three listed in verse no. 4 herein above.

²To wit, the story of Lord Ram has such great mystical powers that those who listen to it are made pure, pious and noble in a natural way just like the case of one taking a dip in the waters of river Saryu that would automatically make him feel fresh and rejuvenated by its cool, soothing waters.

³As we move along reading Ram Charit Manas, we shall find that a number of episodes that are not directly related to the story of the life and time of Lord Ram are narrated in the book. The holy book of Ram Charit Manas will still retain its holiness, divinity and charm if these random episodes are removed from the main text, but their inclusion adds more wonder and enhances the interest of the reader, they serve the purpose of embellishment just like ornaments worn by a beautiful lady, for the lady's grace and charm would in no way be less if she hadn't worn these ornaments, but these add-ons on her body help to serve the purpose of increasing the charm of her person.

Another example is this: If a picture is inherently beautiful and stunning, its appeal and charm are inherent and natural to it and the value of the picture does not depend on any external factor, but if the same picture is mounted on a beautiful frame or stand then obviously its appeal and value are enhanced many times.

Now, let us cite some instances of episodes that are not directly related to the story telling of the Ramayana but are included in this book Ram Charit Manas by way of embellishment to it:

One such episode is of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati. It is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Doha no. 103.

Another episode is that of king Pratapbhanu and his getting cursed to become a demon—it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 175.

Yet another story pertains to delusions that overcame sage Narad where he cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being—it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 139.

Then there is the story of king Manu and his wife Satrupa doing Tapa (penances) as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 152.

In all these instances we will observe that even if they were not included in the main text of Ram Charit Manas its narrative or beauty wouldn't have been diminished or compromised in the least, but their inclusion only makes the reading more interesting and informative.

⁴Suppose one takes a boat ride and cruises on the river Saryu from one point to another. The journey would look dull and boring if the landscape on either banks of the river had the same dull and monotonous contour, but if the landscape changed

colours and contours, once presenting the scene of a forest or a garden, then a green field, then a small village, then a vibrant city, then a desert, then a hill and a mountain, then an island far away, sometime lonely stretches of the bank are seen and then comes into sight a harbour with ships and boats docking and undocking, and at some places along the bank are seen people bathing and carrying on with their routine life—naturally these changes are fascinating and would make the cruise interesting, and the tourist would flock on the deck of their boat in order not to miss anything unique that hoooves unexpectedly into sight on the horizon.

Likewise, these small isolated episodes and tales inserted here and there in the main narrative of Ram Charit Manas keep the story interesting for the reader.]

उमा महेस बिबाह बराती । ते जलचर अगनित बहुभाँती ॥ ७ ॥
रघुबर जनम अनंद बधाई । भवँर तरंग मनोहरताई ॥ ८ ॥

umā mahēsa bibāha barātī. tē jalacara aganita bahubhāmṭī. 7.
raghubara janama ananda badhāī. bhavamṛa taraṅga manōharatāī. 8.

The instance of the many members of the bridegroom's party that attended the marriage of Lord Shiva with goddess Uma (also known as Parvati)¹ are like the many kinds of aquatic animals that live in the waters of river Saryu. (7)

The narrative of the joy and ceremony that attended the birth of Lord Ram and described in this book² is like the many charming eddy currents and waves that abound in this river (Saryu). (8)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Doha no. 103.

The members of the procession that accompanied Lord Shiva as he went to wed goddess Uma were all sorts of ghosts and phantoms, who were terrifying to behold with unseemly faces and hideous bodies, because Shiva is their deity as the Lord presides over death. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 93 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it.}

Here such odd and terrifying forms are cited to imply that a devotee may encounter all sorts of people who may terrify him and torment him, but he must remember that they will do him no harm as long as he is headed towards Lord Ram and pays his obeisance to Lord Shiva to thank the latter for making this holy story of Lord Ram available to the world.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194—to Doha no. 196.

Other such pleasant episodes can be recalled here as well. For example, the celebrations that attended the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita--refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 285—to Doha no. 289 for instance.

Then there is the narration of celebrations in Ayodhya when Lord Ram came back from the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 9.

Such pleasant episodes represent the charm of the many currents and waves that are present in river Saryu.]

दो०. बालचरित चहु बंधु के बनज बिपुल बहुरंग।
नृप रानी परिजन सुकृत मधुकर बारिबिहंग ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

bālacarita cahu bandhu kē banaja bipula bahuraṅga.
nr̥pa rānī parijana sukr̥ta madhukara bāribihaṅga. 40.

The frolics, pranks and playful activities of the four divine brothers (Lord Ram and his three siblings, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan) during their childhood days¹ are like the many lotus flowers of various hues² that bloom in this symbolic lake called 'Manas' (i.e. the heart and mind of a devotee of Lord Ram, from where the story of Lord Ram emerges), as well as the river named Saryu (which symbolizes the spreading of this divine story far and wide in this world).

The noble deeds and spiritual merits accumulated by king Dasrath and his queens (who were the parents of the four divine brothers) are like the many bees that hover over the lotus flowers, while those of other family members and relations are like the many water-birds that flock around these lotus flowers to derive immense pleasure by being in close proximity to the latter³. (Doha no. 40)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 198—to Doha no. 205 where a broad outline of the playful activities and the carefree days of the four brothers during their childhood have been described, along with the immense joy and pleasure the four brothers gave to their parents as well as all those who were present at that time, such as the members of the royal household, their friends, and the ordinary citizens of Ayodhya.

²There are said to be four types of lotus flowers depending upon the colour of their petals: grey-coloured, red-coloured, pink-coloured, and yellow tinged petals. There are four brothers too, i.e. Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan, so four types of lotus flowers have been cited in this analogy so that the comparison fits in well.

³The honey bee is extremely fascinated with and enamoured of the lotus flower; it hovers over the flower and its attention is fixed on it. To wit, the bee derives immense pleasure while being in the proximity of the lotus flower, and it would not think of going away from the flower. Likewise, the parents and other family members of the four brothers loved them so much that they kept the children's company as much as was possible, feeling overjoyed and thoroughly enjoying their playful activities.

Like the bee, other water birds too flock around the lotus flower blooming in a lake or a pond, and these water birds cheerfully frolic around the flower in merry abundance.

In this context, the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, are very relevant and specific: (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 198; (ii) Doha no. 199; (iii) Doha no. 200 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 7-8 that precede it; (iv) Doha no. 203 along with Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-8 that precede it; (v) Doha no. 204; (vi) Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede it.

The basic idea in this Doha is that the childhood playful activities of Lord Ram and his brothers are so fascinating and captivating for the mind and the heart that

they give immense joy and pleasure to the Lord's devotees who remember them and sing about them as a means of remembrance of their beloved Lord Ram and remaining submerged in his thoughts.]

चौ०. सीय स्वयंबर कथा सुहाई । सरित सुहावनि सो छबि छाई ॥ १ ॥
नदी नाव पटु प्रस्न अनेका । केवट कुसल उतर सबिबेका ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sīya svayambara kathā suhāī. sarita suhāvani sō chabi chāī. 1.
nadī nāva paṭu prasna anēkā. kēvaṭa kusala utara sabibēkā. 2.

The pleasant and captivating story of the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram¹ represents the magnificent aura of charm and beauty that spreads over the waters of the holy river Saryu. (1)

The many questions that are asked with regard to the different episodes and details of the divine story of Lord Ram are like the many boats floating on the river Saryu, while convincing answers that settle all doubts and remove perplexities in the mind of the seeker of truth and help him understand the reality are like the skilled boatmen who row these boats and help the latter reach the other shore safely inspite of the turbulence in the river and the many unexpected obstacles that are encountered on the way². (2)

[Note—¹This fascinating story is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Doha no. 343.

²The story of Lord Ram appears to be the fascinating story of a great King, but the fact is that the Lord was not an ordinary human being as his physical appearances gave the impression about him, for he was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

In Ram Charit Manas there are many examples where Lord Ram's worldly activities had bewildered those who saw him act like an ordinary human being, provoking them to ask questions about his authenticity. One example is that of goddess Uma, the consort of Lord Shiva, who was so confused about the true identity of Lord Ram that she requested her husband to tell her in detail the truth of the Lord and why he behaved in an ordinary way. The answer that Lord Shiva gave to Uma forms the background of the revelation of the holy book Ram Charit Manas which we are reading at present. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113; and Uttar Kand, Doha no. 125-b—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 130.

The other example is that of Garuda, the celestial vehicle of Lord Vishnu himself, who too was vexed by Lord Ram's worldly behaviour. He went to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and asked many questions pertaining to the divinity of Lord Ram as well as about many spiritual principles. Kaagbhusund patiently answered each query and completely satisfied Garuda, who felt highly obliged to the saintly crow for giving him peace and settling all his doubts. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125-a.}

Yet another example is that of Guha, the chief of the boatman community, who asked Laxman why Lord Ram had to suffer so much if he were the manifested form of the Supreme Lord. Laxman's answer to him forms the 'Laxman Geeta' of Ram Charit Manas. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 90—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94.}

King Janak too was perplexed when he first met Lord Ram, and he had asked sage Vishwamitra to enlighten him about the truth, which the sage indeed did. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217.}

On many occasions such questions and answers had immense spiritual import—such as the case when Lord Ram asked sage Valmiki to tell him the place where he can live during his forest exile. The sage's answer is an excellent one—for he outlines all the qualities that a devotee of Lord Ram must possess, for then the Lord would reside in his heart. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 132.}

In a similar fashion, there are many other instances of questions being asked and answers being given with respect to different spiritual and metaphysical principles that help to remove all doubts in the mind of a seeker of truth.

In this analogy, the questions are compared to a boat and the answers to the boatman who rows the boat and takes it safely to the other bank of the river, because just like an expert boatman who knows the tricks of his trade and can safely transport the passenger to the other side as he is well versed about the nature of the river, its currents, its depth, its whirlpools, the obstacles that one may encounter while crossing it, its behaviour during the time when it is in spate as well as when it is calm, and how to row a boat safely across its waters all round the year like the back of his hand, a wise teacher too would satisfy all doubts in the mind of a devotee of Lord Ram by answering his questions in a convincing and logical manner, thereby giving him peace of mind and reinforcing his faith in Lord Ram.

If the answers are not satisfactory, they will rock the boat of the devotee's faith and devotion for Lord Ram, and ruin the prospects of his spiritual enlightenment.

The story of Lord Ram is like the 'boat' because it helps the devotee attain his spiritual destination easily and with the least effort, but the many doubts that arise in his mind regarding Lord Ram and his divinity, about the truth of the story and its ability to grant him spiritual peace and beatitude, are like the violent turbulence in the river, its rapid currents and swirling whirlpools, as well as the many big and small obstacles that lie in the river that together can rock the boat and drown the devotee midstream. Hence, the answers that are given by wise men to settle all doubts in the mind of the devotee are like the skilled boatman as he deftly negotiates all hurdles and safely takes the boat to the other side of the river.

If a river is known to be rough and turbulent by its nature, then everyone would like that they are taken across by boatmen who are experts in their profession; no one would board a boat rowed by a novice as it is highly dangerous and risky. Likewise, wise devotees would always seek answers to their questions from learned teachers of the story of Lord Ram, and not from any random person because the latter would more often mislead the devotee by erroneous answers.]

सुनि अनुकथन परस्पर होई । पथिक समाज सोह सरि सोई ॥ ३ ॥

घोर धार भृगुनाथ रिसानी । घाट सुबद्ध राम बर बानी ॥ ४ ॥

suni anukathana paraspara hō'ī. pathika samāja sōha sari sō'ī. 3.
ghōra dhāra bhrgunātha risānī. ghāṭa subad'dha rāma bara bānī. 4.

After hearing the divine story of Lord Ram, the listeners gather together in groups to discuss it, ask questions and answer them amongst themselves, and in general help to spread the holy story and its spiritual message far and wide—such listeners are like the travelers and passengers of the boats (mentioned in the previous verse no. 2 herein above) who cross the symbolic river (represented by the story of Lord Ram as narrated in 'Ram Charit Manas') and reach the other side to go on towards their destinations¹. (3)

In this story (of Ram Charit Manas), the episode that describes the angry outburst of sage Parashuram is like the furious current in the river, while the calm and peaceful response of Lord Ram² that ultimately diffused all tensions and succeeded in making the wrathful sage surrender before the Lord and seek forgiveness for his impertinent behaviour is like the strongly built and firms steps, known as 'Ghats', on the banks of this symbolic river³. (4)

[Note—¹Those who seek spiritual peace and deliverance, those who seek emancipation and salvation, those who wish to be granted grace by the Lord God, come to this symbolic 'river' represented by the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas. They hear it patiently—and the time spent by them hearing it and having their queries answered by the boatman is the time spent on the 'boat' to cross the river to the other side. When they disembark and step on the ground on the other bank of this symbolic river to resume their journey onwards, they are now so happy and contented that they have overcome the many obstacles they had faced in their spiritual journey, obstacles that are represented by the many complexities of the story that had filled them with doubt and confusions, and which were like the turbulent river that they had to cross in order to move ahead towards their destination. The 'boatman' is the wise teacher who has removed all their doubts and enlightened them about the Truth.

What is the importance of discussions and debates, of asking questions and answering them? Well, this process makes the subject very interesting as it involves all concerned; it also confirms that those who listen to the story have paid attention to its details, because it is only then they would ask specific questions and thoroughly discuss the answers. Otherwise, without a question-answer session, it cannot be ascertained if anyone has actually taken interest in the story, and whether he has correctly understood it without distortions.

Travelers come to a river and get on board a boat to cross to the other side to continue with their journey towards their destinations. While on the boat they are entertained by the boatman who tells them an extremely interesting story which completely absorbs the mind of the passengers and keeps them enthralled. They listen to it with immense interest and pay great attention to the details of the story, asking pertinent questions and getting satisfying answers from the boatman. The story they hear leave a lasting impression on their minds and makes an indelible mark on their sub-consciousness so much so that when they reach the other side of the river they thank the boatman for what he had told them, and the subject matter of the story they

had heard now becomes a point of discussion amongst them as they continue with their journey further on. When these travelers reach their destination, they tell others of what they had heard, because this story had mesmerized them and had given them immense peace, joy and happiness. This is how the story spreads by the word-of-mouth to far flung places on the land.

This imagery has been used here too. Those who listen to the divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas first hear it out of curiosity and its novelty factor, but sooner rather than later they are mesmerized by its charm and beauty as well as by the spiritual peace and joy that the story naturally provides to the listener. Surely they have certain questions to ask, because many episodes need further clarifications. and the hidden spiritual message needs to be explained. So they approach a wise teacher who apprises them of the finer nuances of the story, answering their questions and setting all doubts to rest. The ordinary listener, who was till now skeptical, now transforms into a devotee who is so firmly convinced of the holiness and authenticity of the story as well as the divinity of Lord Ram, its chief protagonist, that he cannot forget it, and retelling this story to others and spreading its divine spiritual message gives this devotee immense pleasure and satisfaction, some even making this task a mission of their lives as it would benefit a lot of other people who do not have the privilege that the devotee himself has had.

It can be a single devotee or a group of devotees; they are like the passengers who have crossed the river of doubts and skepticism to land on solid ground on the other side, so happy and fulfilled that they thank their stars at having had the opportunity to meet the boatman who not only told them a fascinating story, but who also answered all their queries, and gave them a treasure that would grant them eternal happiness and peace which they will cherish for the rest of their lives.

²This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

Sage Parashuram was renowned for his short temper and wrathfulness. When he heard that Lord Ram had broken the old bow belonging to Lord Shiva, sage Parashuram became furious and rushed to the venue to punish the Lord. He shouted and hopped around mad with anger, vowing to cut off the head of Lord Ram and his brother Laxman to revenge the breaking of the old bow. But Lord Ram never lost his cool; he was politeness personified, asking the sage to calm down and take it easy. After fretting and fuming a lot, when all his suppressed anger was vented out like steam escaping from the spout of a kettle, Parashuram was crestfallen, regretting his behaviour and becoming mellowed like a true sage should be.

³This incident shows the importance of having a balance of mind and calmness of head. Anger is of no consequence; it only shows a person in poor light. Sage Parashuram became a source of ridicule; anger made him behave like a joker and a buffoon in front of the huge assembly. His angry and rude behaviour undermined his stature as a great sage. Ultimately he had to regret. On the other hand, Lord Ram's calm response ultimately gave him victory over his adversary; the Lord got fame while Parashuram got infamy.

Lord Ram's calmness and peaceful behaviour is compared to the 'solid and well built steps on the banks of the river' because this attitude gives firmness of mind and steadiness in the steps of an aspirant and a seeker of truth who moves ahead steadily and calmly on his spiritual journey. On the other hand, anger and loss of composure are like slippery ground where a person is not sure of his stand, and an

angry man is more apt to make mistakes than a person who approaches an issue with a cool head.]

सानुज राम बिबाह उछाहू । सो सुभ उमग सुखद सब काहू ॥ ५ ॥
कहत सुनत हरषहिं पुलकाहीं । ते सुकृती मन मुदित नहाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

sānuja rāma bibāha uchāhū. sō subha umaga sukhada saba kāhū. 5.
kahata sunata haraṣahim pulakāhim. tē sukṛtī mana mudita nahāhim. 6.

The grand festivities and abundance of merriment that accompanied the marriage of Lord Ram and his brothers (Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan)¹ are like the cool and soothing waters of this symbolic river (represented by the story of Ram Charit Manas) that overflows its banks during the rainy season to wet large stretches of land all around it and making it fertile, and which gives pleasure to one and all even during normal times². (5)

Those persons who feel joyous and happy by reading this story (of Ram Charit Manas) are the ones who have truly derived the pleasure and reward of taking a bath in this symbolic river (Saryu)³. (6)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 285—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 355.

²The narration of the marriage of Lord Ram and his three brothers is an occasion for celebration and joy. This episode is beautifully narrated in Ram Charit Manas; it captivates the mind and enthralls the heart. It is like the case of a tired person coming to a river to refresh himself with its cool and clean water: he takes a bath in the river, sips its sweet and cool water, lies down on its banks to relax, and feels refreshed and rejuvenated. Similarly, the episode of Lord Ram's marriage is very heart-warming; its narrative is in the form of a beautiful poetry that is nothing less than nectar for the heart.

The flood of a river is useful for the land around it as it wets and softens the soil, making it fertile and useful for the next crop. Likewise, the charming story of Lord Ram's and his brothers' marriage is so exhilarating and full of merry excitement that it fills the reader with ecstasy, which is akin to a river overflowing its banks during the rainy season.

³The story of Ram Charit Manas has been compared to the river Saryu, and the pleasure and joy one gets by reading it and listening to it is likened to the pleasure one gets by taking a refreshing bath in the cool waters of river Saryu. Both are rejuvenating and refreshing—one the spirit and the other for the body respectively.]

राम तिलक हित मंगल साजा । परब जोग जनु जुरे समाजा ॥ ७ ॥
काई कुमति केकई केरी । परी जासु फल बिपति घनेरी ॥ ८ ॥

rāma tilaka hita maṅgala sājā. paraba jōga janu jurē samājā. 7.
kāṭī kumati kēkaṭī kēri. parī jāsu phala bipati ghanērī. 8.

The huge assembly of people representing all walks of life (such as the citizens of Ayodhya, the monkeys, bears and demon friends of Lord Ram who came with him aboard the plane from Lanka, the large number of sages, seers, saints and ascetics who came to bless the Lord, the invited princes and nobles of the realm, etc.), and the mass celebrations that were organized at the time of coronation of Lord Ram as the King-Emperor of Ayodhya¹—they represent the large crowd of travelers who have arrived on the banks of this symbolic river from all corners of the realm when they heard of its rare beauty and singular charm, as well as of its mystical ability to remove weariness, provide solace, and grant refreshment, rejuvenation and immense pleasure to all those who come to take a bath in its waters². (7)

On the other hand, the evil and selfish nature as well as the corrupted mind of Kaikeyi that prevented Lord Ram from being anointed as the prince-regent of Ayodhya and forcing him to go to the forest (for 14 years)³ is like the moss and scum that gather on the bank of the river, not only polluting the surrounding water but also causing stink and filth on the banks, making it revolting for the senses of those who come to the river⁴. (8)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 10—Doha no. 12-a; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 15—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 16.

²When the good news spreads about a certain river or pond or lake or spring having some unique quality, such as the healing powers of their waters as it often is the case with hot-water springs, or about their natural beauty, or any other factor that makes them unique and different from other such water bodies, large numbers of people flock to them, overcoming all obstacles and inconveniences.

Likewise, as soon as the glory of Lord Ram was established by his devotees who first convinced themselves about the divinity of the Lord, and then spread the good news far and wide to the places they visited and traveled to, large numbers of people, spiritual aspirants and seekers of deliverance, as well as the laity and ordinary people, were motivated to come and hear this divine story of Ram Charit Manas, and benefit from it.

³This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29.

⁴It is the most reprehensible episode in the whole story, more so because, surprisingly, Kaikeyi used to love Lord Ram as much as she loved her own son Bharat. But driven by wrong advice given by her trusted maid Manthara, and also driven by selfishness and corrupted intellect, she played the role a devil, inviting condemnation and all round infamy for herself for all times to come.

This is in sharp contrast with the good fame that Lord Ram got by remaining calm and cool in the face of such adversity and an unexpected, unfortunate turn of events—when his own step-mother became his enemy by depriving him of the crown of a great kingdom to which he was rightfully entitled, and making him suffer for fourteen long years in the forest where his wife Sita was abducted by the demon king

Ravana and the Lord had to fight the bloody war of Lanka to free her. Yet, inspite of all these things, Lord Ram never harboured any ill-will against Kaikeyi; he showed her the same respect as if nothing had happened—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 244.

The episode of Kaikeyi is like the dirt and filth that accumulate near the bank of a river, which starts stinking and polluting the water. No traveler would like to go here to take a bath; everyone would avoid it.

The sharp contrast between the two events—one of Lord Ram being crowned as the King-Emperor and mass celebrations that attended it, and the other of Kaikeyi preventing the Lord's coronation and forcing him to the forest—are like the two extreme facets of life: a time which is full of happiness and joy, and another time that is full of sorrows and despair.

These are representative of the two extreme sorts of conditions found on the banks of the river Saryu, or from a broader perspective, of the two kinds of people who live in this world whom the devotee encounters. One sort of people will give the devotee joy by their company, and the other sort of people would cause confoundedness and despair in him.]

दो०. समन अमित उतपात सब भरतचरित जपजाग ।

कलि अघ खल अवगुन कथन ते जलमल बग काग ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

samana amita utapāta saba bharatacarita japajāga.

kali agha khala avaguna kathana tē jalamala бага kāga. 41.

The excellent character of Bharat is like practicing auspicious virtues that lead to success in one's spiritual pursuit, such as the virtues of selflessness, self-restraint, righteousness, probity, propriety, renunciation, dispassion, devotion, austerity and penances et al¹, as these virtues help to calm down all agitations and overcome all sufferings in the life of a devotee².

Meanwhile, the narration of the many vices of Kaliyuga, the present era of corruption and moral degradation, and the sinful deeds done during this era³, are like the scum as well as the many evil and wicked birds of prey, such as crows and herons that live either on the bank of river Saryu or in its water. (Doha no. 41)

[Note—¹Bharat's character stands out as being exemplarily auspicious, most excellent and highly praise-worthy in the entire story of the Ramayana. He refused the crown of Ayodhya because it meant suffering for his beloved brother Lord Ram, and he led a life of a hermit all through the period of fourteen years that Lord Ram spent in the forest. Glorious tribute has been paid to him on more than one occasion.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand:

(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 169 (by mother Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram and the chief queen-mother of Ayodhya);

(ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 185 (by the ministers, courtiers and all the citizens of Ayodhya);

(iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210 (by sage Bharadwaj);

(iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Doha no. 232 (by Lord Ram);

(v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 257 (by sage Vasishtha);

(vi) Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266 (by the Guru of the Gods);

(vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289 (by king Janak); and

(viii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Doha no. 326 that laud Bharat's exemplary sacrifice and penances that he undertook to atone for the mischief caused in his name.

²If a devotee follows the example set by Bharat, then it is sure and certain that he too will get as much credit and good fame as Bharat got by his meritorious life and auspicious deeds.

³The evil character of Kaliyuga have been enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 97—to Chanda line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 102.

⁴The evil character of Kaliyuga have been compared to wicked birds such as crow and heron, as well as to the scum and filth that are found on the banks of the river Saryu. Once again, the contrast between the good and the bad has been made sharp here. On the one hand we have the exemplary character of Bharat, and on the other side we have the loathsome character of Kaliyuga. A wise devotee uses Bharat as his role model, and shuns that of Kaliyuga and the birds used to symbolize it, such as the crow and the heron.]

चौ०. कीरति सरित छहँ रितु रूरी । समय सुहावनि पावनि भूरी ॥ १ ॥

हिम हिमसैलसुता सिव व्याहू । सिसिर सुखद प्रभु जनम उछाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kīrati sarita chahūṁ³ ritu rūrī. samaya suhāvani pāvani bhūrī. 1.

hima himasailasutā siva byāhū. sisira sukhada prabhu janama uchāhū. 2.

This symbolic river (of Lord Ram's glory, holiness and divinity—i.e. the story of Ram Charit Manas) is magnificent, pleasant and most charming throughout the year, in all the six seasons¹. Indeed and forsooth, it is very soothing for the senses and highly purifying for the spirit at all times, under all circumstances, and for everyone².
(1)

{Now, in this and the following verses, various episodes in the story of Ram Charit Manas are compared to the 'six seasons' mentioned herein above.}

The episode that describes the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati³ is like the early winter season, the onset of cold season known as 'Hima'.

The story of the birth of Lord Ram, and the celebrations and festivities that followed⁴, is like the period marking the end of the winter season and the onset of spring, and known as the pleasant 'Sisira' season. (2)

[Note—¹The six seasons are the following—early winter (Nov.-Dec.), late winter or the season of snowfall (Jan.-Feb.), spring (March-April), summer (May-June), rainy (July-August) and autumn or fall (Sept.-Oct.).

The Prashna Upanishad of Atharva Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11 says that the Sun God is like a wheel having six spokes. These refer to the six seasons of the year.

²To wit, the story of Lord Ram is evergreen, abiding and eternal; it grants joy and bliss to everyone at all times and circumstances. People of all ages and genders, of all denominations and diverse interests, having different likings and inclinations, of varying mental abilities and intelligent quotient, of different emotional setups and varying outlooks to life—i.e. one and all, without exception or discrimination, whether they be devotees of the Lord or are skeptical and secular in disposition, would benefit by reading and hearing the glories of Lord Ram as narrated in this story of Ram Charit Manas.

The appeal of Lord Ram's divine story remains uniform in all ages and situations; its ability to grant spiritual peace, bliss, joy and beatitude is steady and abiding. It is therefore like a river that does not dry up during the summer season, nor does it ever cause annoyance to anyone like a river in spate during the rainy season that creates havoc all around it in the form of floods. The story is uniformly heart warming and soothing for the mind and the spirit just like a great river whose water remains cool in summer and warm in winter.

³This episode is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 103.

It is to be noted here that a remarkable simile has been employed by the learned poet Tulsidas while comparing the marriage of Lord Shiva and Parvati with the name of the season—i.e. the 'Hema season'. Parvati was the daughter of 'Hima', the King of the snow-covered mountain range called the Hingiri, the mountain of snow, or the Himalayas. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 65; Doha no. 102 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.}

Lord Shiva is also the Lord of the Mountains because he has his abode at Mt. Kailash, the best amongst the summits of the range known as Himalaya.

Hence, the similarity in the 'name of the mountain' where the entire event took place and the 'name of the season' that is used to compare it are striking—the word 'Hima', meaning snow.

⁴This episode is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 192—to Doha no. 200.

The birth of Lord Ram was marked by celebrations and festivities that is a metaphoric way of saying that the world rejoiced the arrival of spring when new flowers bloomed on trees, new leaves sprouted, the chill of winter ended, paving the way for sunshine and warmth, and the land became green all around once again after the frosty winter season. This brings cheer and happiness to the people.]

बरनब राम बिबाह समाजू । सो मुद मंगलमय रितुराजू ॥ ३ ॥

ग्रीषम दुसह राम बनगवनू । पंथकथा खर आतप पवनू ॥ ४ ॥

baranaba rāma bibāha samājū. sō muda maṅgalamaya riturājū. 3.
grīṣama dusaha rāma banagavanū. panthakathā khara ātapa pavanū. 4.

The narration of the episode describing the marriage of Lord Ram (with Sita)¹ is like the most pleasant and auspicious (maṅgalamaya) season known as spring, which is called the ‘king of seasons’ (riturājū)² (3)

The episode that relates to Lord Ram going to the forest³ is like the summer season which is very harsh and unbearable, and the troubles that the Lord had to endure there⁴ are like the rays of the scorching sun and the hot air that blows during this season⁵. (4)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated elaborately in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Doha no. 265, and continued from Doha no. 285—to Doha no. 353.

²This episode is the most charming one in the whole story of Ram Charit Manas, and the poet Tulsidas has skillfully employed all his writing talent to wonderfully describe the beauty and magnificence of this event in an inimitable way. The lyrics and the melody of the verses that describe the marriage of Lord Ram are exceptionally charming.

It is compared to the ‘spring season’, the ‘king of all seasons’, because this season is the most pleasant one in the year. Prior to it was the frost and chill of winter, and it is followed by the heat of summer. Even Mother Nature celebrates this season by turning the land green and turning the trees into a riot of colour.

In India, the festival of colour, known as ‘Holi’, too is celebrated at the beginning of this season to herald its arrival.

³This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 142.

⁴The sufferings endured by Lord Ram in the forest can be gauged by reading the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 63 (where Lord Ram tries to dissuade Sita from accompanying him to the forest); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 112 (the humble women folk in the roadside villages rue at the sufferings that Lord Ram and Sita would have to endure in the forest); (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 105; and Doha no. 114 (Lord Ram sleeps on bare earth under a tree, or rests under the shade of a tree); (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Doha no. 120 (the villagers and forest dwellers regret at the sufferings that Lord Ram will undergo in the forest); (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 124 (which say how Sita used to feel tired walking, how Lord Ram took some rest under a tree, brought cool water from a stream, and ate edible roots and fruits, rested for the night, and then moved ahead the next day).

One has to close one’s eyes and see the events unroll on the canvas of the mind to fathom the depth of the sufferings that the Lord had to undergo in the forest. Remember: He was born in comfort and luxury, being the prince of a mighty empire. Suddenly he was tossed overboard to lead a harsh life in the forest: enduring the vagaries of nature and seasons, the roughness and harshness of uncharted terrain, the uncertainties of what lay ahead, living a life of a hermit to which he was not

accustomed, and compounding his sufferings was the fact that he had to care for his young wife Sita and brother Laxman who depended upon him and who had never experienced the horrors of life in the forest. Besides the physical sufferings there was the fear of the ferocious demons who wandered in the forests, killing and eating all human beings they could lay their hands on. Eventually, the Lord had to face the wrath of the demons head on when their king Ravana abducted Sita, after which the Lord had to search for her and free her by waging a war with the help of an unconventional army of monkeys and bears—all done without any help from anyone in his family or kingdom.

Lord Ram endured everything with a smile and courage and resilience; he harboured ill-will against none. The sufferings undergone by Lord Ram would wring the heart of any man who has any trace of compassion in him. Frankly speaking, the remembrance of the harsh life of Lord Ram during his days in the forest, the imagination of the Lord's sufferings there, are so agonizing and painful to think of that they make the author of this book sad and moved to tears.

⁵While the spring season is very pleasant, the summer is very harsh and tormenting. Hence, the sufferings of Lord Ram during his days in the forest are compared to the harsh conditions of the summer season.]

बरषा घोर निसाचर रारी । सुरकुल सालि सुमंगलकारी ॥ ५ ॥

राम राज सुख बिनय बड़ाई । बिसद सुखद सोइ सरद सुहाई ॥ ६ ॥

baraṣā ghōra nisācara rārī. surakula sāli sumaṅgalakārī. 5.

rāma rāja sukha binaya baṛāī. bisada sukhada sō'i sarada suhāī. 6.

The ferocious battles that Lord Ram fought with the demons¹ are like the heavy rains of the rainy season, but these battles were very auspicious for the gods and the rest of the creatures of the world just like the rains are good for the crop and the land². (5)

The glorious reign of Lord Ram when he ascended the throne of Ayodhya, the reign that was marked by righteousness and practice of the laws of Dharma (rightful conduct), with abundance of happiness and joy all around³, is like the pleasant autumn season which is very comforting⁴ as it symbolizes the reward one gets by practicing Dharma and a noble way of life as done during the reign of Lord Ram. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram fought a number of independent battles with the demons, and then there was the major conflict that culminated in the epic war of Lanka.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209 (battle with the female demon Tadka); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 210 (battle with demons Marich and Subahu); (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7 (battle with the demon Viradha); (iv) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 21 (battle with the demon Khar and Dushan); (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33 (battle with the demon Kabandha); and then finally (c) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103 (the epic War of Lanka).

²If we examine these individual battles and the final war of Lanka, we will discover two things: One, that all the demons who died fighting Lord Ram found deliverance, emancipation and salvation for themselves. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}

Two, that after each victory of Lord Ram over the demons the gods and sages felt very glad and contented, because it was for this very purpose—i.e. elimination of the demons—that Lord Vishnu had come down to the mortal world as Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it. }

So therefore, the gods, sages and saintly people were glad that Lord Ram not only saved them from the tyranny of the demons, but he also showed his merciful and forgiving nature by granting deliverance, emancipation and salvation to all the demons inspite of their sinful lives.

³Lord Ram's reign has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24.

⁴Before the autumn season was the harsh period of summer; so the arrival of autumn is very pleasant because the heat of the sun abates and the environment becomes cool.]

सती सिरोमनि सिय गुनगाथा । सोइ गुन अमल अनूपम पाथा ॥ ७ ॥
भरत सुभाउ सुसीतलताई । सदा एकरस बरनि न जाई ॥ ८ ॥

satī sirōmani siya gunagāthā. sō'i guna amala anūpama pāthā. 7.
bharata subhā'u susītalatā'ī. sadā ēkarasa barani na jā'ī. 8.

The immaculate character of Sita, her loyalty towards her husband Lord Ram, and her exemplary life marked by righteousness, probity and nobility in thought and conduct¹ are like the holy water of the symbolic river (representing the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas). (7)

Similarly, the excellent character of Bharat and his upright nature, his devotion for Lord Ram and practice of the laws of Dharma (righteousness and probity in conduct and thought), were stellar in nature and steady². They are like the supreme peace and tranquility that reigns over the waters of this symbolic river³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 6. Here, Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, advises Sita about the chief points of an auspicious way of life that a loyal and chaste wife must practice.

There are other occasions also where Sita has been blessed with grace. For instance, (a) by the deity of holy river Ganges—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 103 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (b) by the ordinary women folk who met Sita on the way to the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 117 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Sita's immaculacy, chastity and unblemished character was ultimately proved and established by her undergoing the 'fire test of purity' at the end of the war of Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

²The excellent nature and righteous character of Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, has been extolled in laudatory terms at a number of places in the story of Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 168 and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it (by mother Kaushalya); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 184 (by ministers, courtiers, guru Vasistha, and citizens of Ayodhya); (iii) Doha no. 205 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it (by the presiding deity of Triveni); (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 210 (by sage Bharadwaj); (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233 (by Lord Ram and the gods); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 257, and Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 258 (by sage Vasistha and others who had assembled in Chitrakoot); (vii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 266 (by the Guru of the gods); (viii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283 (during a meeting between Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, and Sunayana, the mother of Sita in Chitrakoot); (ix) Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow this Doha (by Lord Ram who expresses his confidence in the wisdom of Bharat); (x) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324—to Doha no. 326 (which describes Bharat's penances, austerities, sacrifice and self-control).

³Amid the turmoil of life and its various exigencies and transient nature that seem to rock the boat of a person's life, the way Bharat led his life acts as a lighthouse that helps the perplexed person to navigate through the rough water of the river representing the events in his life. Bharat practiced all the principles of Dharma, such as self-restraint, renunciation, dispassion, austerity, penance, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, morality, and nobility of thought and conduct, as well as having devotion for Lord Ram.

The example of Bharat serves as a beacon of hope for a person seeking guidance to lead a peaceful life amidst the turmoil, sufferings, temptations, despair and contradictions of life that perplex him. Bharat's example gives steadiness and calmness to the person who is unable to decide what to and what not to do when torn between bewildering and complex situations in life.

To wit, taking the analogy of the boat cited earlier in this discussion, Bharat acts as a keel of the boat to give it steadiness so that it can continue with its journey without turning over.]

दो०. अवलोकनि बोलनि मिलनि प्रीति परसपर हास ।

भायप भलि चहु बंधु की जल माधुरी सुबास ॥ ४२ ॥

dōhā.

avalōkani bōlani milani prīti parasapara hāsa.
bhāyapa bhali cahu bandhu kī jala mādhurī subāsa. 42.

The sweet and friendly relationship, and the strong and inviolable bond of brotherhood that existed between the four brothers (Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan)—the affectionate way they looked at each other, the endearing way they talked, met and expressed their love for each other—was exemplary. Indeed and without gainsay, the cordial relationship that existed between the four brothers was extremely profound, sublime and divine by its nature¹.

This warm and amiable relationship marked by sweetness and mutual affection for each other is like the sweet and scented water of the symbolic river (Saryu, representing the story of Ram Charit Manas)². (Doha no. 42)

[Note—¹There are ample verses in the story of Ram Charit Manas that prove the strong and inviolable bond of brotherly love and affection that existed between the four brothers, and the mutual respect they had for each other, right from their infancy. They played together, ate together, grew up together, were taught together by sage Vasishtha, and were married together.

Childhood days: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 198; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 203; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 204; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1, 4, 6 that precede Doha no. 205.

Marriage: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 325 along with Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326; (iii) Chanda line nos. 13-16 that precede Doha no. 327 (gods blessing all the four couples during the marriage rituals); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 328 (king Janak washing the feet of all the four brothers simultaneously as part of the marriage ritual); (v) Doha no. 334 along with Chaupai line no.1 that follows it (Lord Ram and his three brothers visited the city of Janakpur and then to king Janak to bid good bye to all before departing for home, i.e. to Ayodhya, with their brides and the marriage party); (vi) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 341, and Doha no. 342 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it (king Janak blesses the four brothers who were now his sons-in-law); (vii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 348; Doha no. 349 along with Chaupai line nos. 3, 7 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow this Doha; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 353 (welcome ceremony of the four brothers and their brides in Ayodhya).

Lord Ram regretting that he would alone be asked to become a king when sage Vasistha went to inform him about it, whereas it would be correct that the crown be equally shared by all the four brothers in turn as they had hitherto shared everything together—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

Laxman decided to accompany Lord Ram to the forest as he could not live without him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 73.

When Bharat and Shatrughan came to know that their mother Kaikeyi had sent Lord Ram to the forest, they vented their wrath on her and her maid Manthara who had instigated Kaikeyi. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 163.

Later on, Bharat had expressed his excess of anguish and lamented regretfully that he had been the cause for Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman having to come to the forest, asking Lord Ram to forgive him and return home, and let him go to the forest in his place, telling the Lord that the final decision would be his and whatever he orders would be acceptable to Bharat. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267—to Doha no. 269; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 297—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 301; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 313.

When Bharat and Shatrughan met Lord Ram and Laxman in Chitrakoot, their mutual love and affection overflowed and made everyone who was present there emotional. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 242.

During the conference held in Chirakoot, Bharat had stressed the fact that Lord Ram had loved him so much ever since their childhood days that he would voluntarily lose a game so that Bharat could win it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 260.

Finally, we read about the meeting of the four brothers when Lord Ram came back to Ayodhya at the end of his fourteen years of forest sojourn. It was a most emotional union, marked by unprecedented warmth and bonhomie, with tears and sobs and warm embraces by all the four brothers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 3.

²In short, all the four brothers were like the same soul having four bodies.

In this Doha, the sweetness of the waters of the symbolic river represented by the story of Ram Charit Manas has been compared here to the fact that there was exceptional sweetness and love in the relationship between the four brothers, and it stood firm and inviolable even during testing times and circumstances.

To wit, the simple and obvious meaning of this comparison is that inspite of the many unpleasant narrations in the story that seem to be harsh and not so divine, such as the delusions of Narad, the birth of the demon race, the many battles and the epic war of Lanka that were bloody and horrendous, and even the palace intrigue that led to Lord Ram going to the forest, and other such things, yet the story does not lose its inherent sweetness, charm and spiritual beauty.

This fact has been reiterated by Lord Shiva to Paravati in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and by Goswami Tulsidas in his own observation in Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-12 that precede it.]

चौ०. आरति बिनय दीनता मोरी । लघुता ललित सुबारि न थोरी ॥ १ ॥

अदभुत सलिल सुनत गुनकारी । आस पिआस मनोमल हारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ārati binaya dīnatā mōrī. laghutā lalita subāri na thōrī. 1.

adabhuta salila sunata gunakārī. āsa pi'āsa manōmala hārī. 2.

[Poet Tulsidas, who has written this book Ram Charit Manas, says—] ‘My longing for receiving Lord Ram’s grace, my humble prayers and my humility, which are

immense by nature, are like the lightness and cleanliness of the water of this symbolic river (representing the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas)¹. (1)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, this marvelous water (i.e. the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas) has very rare qualities in it—for it can heal the spirit of the hearer who hears it; it can purify the mind of all its impurities, it can clean the inner self of all dirt, and it quenches the thirst of all sorts of worldly desires that the devotee may have². (2)

[Note—¹Tulsidas says that his heart is honest and his mind is pure, he has no trace of deceit or conceit, nor pretensions of being a great poet or of any kind of boastfulness when he says that he has written this holy book as a remembrance of his beloved Lord Ram, as a tribute to him, as a means of offering his worship to Lord Ram, as an offering at his holy feet, and not to show off his poetic or writing skills. He writes this holy book with all humility at his command, and with a humble prayer to the Lord to bless him with the boon of having abiding devotion and love for him. Tulsidas wants nothing else; he seeks no worldly boons or blessings for material gains. He does not either seek fame and name, nor honours and titles for his composition. He has made these points abundantly clear in earlier verses. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 8 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-14 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-11 that precede Doha no. 9; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 10; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12; (v) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Chaupai line nos. 1, 6 that precede Doha no. 14; (vi) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 14; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 7-11 that precede Doha no. 15; (viii) Doha no. 29 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede it.}

So therefore, just as this attitude of simplicity, humility, submission, supplication and modesty neutralizes any trace of grossness that Tulsidas may have had before he started writing Ram Charit Manas, the story would lighten the heart and purify the mind of all those who listen to it and read it, removing the burden of worldly worries and consternations that rob the spirit of its peace and tranquility.

The lightening of the devotee's heart and mind of their worldly burden is likened to the water of this symbolic river being light and pure in the sense that even as waters of some springs and rivers are nectar-like and naturally beneficial for the health of a person as they are easy on the stomach and do not make the drinker bloat up, this holy story of Lord Ram will be easily understood by one and all, and it will spiritually benefit even the uninitiated person as much as it would do to a learned person.

Another point is that just like the case of the water of a sacred river that looks dirty from the outside not losing its inherent holiness and sanctity, the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas remains spiritually evergreen and eternally holy in spite of its story line appearing to be worldly in its appearance, and even if it is read or listened to by non-believers and skeptics who have no faith in Lord God.

The water of this symbolic river representing the divine story of Lord Ram is 'light' in the sense that it lifts the spirit from a gross plane to a higher level of existence, and it is 'pure and clean' because it cleanses the inner self of a devotee of all his spiritual faults, making him pious and saintly. When we need to clean our bodies we take a bath in clean water, and not in dirty water.

²The benefits of hearing the divine story of Lord Ram has been enumerated in this verse. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (ii) Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126—to Doha no. 130.]

राम सुप्रेमहि पोषत पानी । हरत सकल कलि कलुष गलानी ॥ ३ ॥
भव श्रम सोषक तोषक तोषा । समन दुरित दुख दारिद दोषा ॥ ४ ॥

rāma suprēmahi pōṣata pānī. harata sakala kali kaluṣa galānī. 3.
bhava śrama sōṣaka tōṣaka tōṣā. samana durita dukha dārida dōṣā. 4.

The water of this symbolic holy river (representing the divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas) enhances and reinforces one's love and devotion for Lord Ram, while at the same time it eliminates and neutralizes all sorts of sins and their harmful effects that are prevalent in the corrupt and dark age known as Kaliyug (the present age), and which cause a lot of distress and perplexities for a person¹. (3)

This ambrosia-like water is able to relieve fatigue of the soul due to its seemingly endless journey through the cycle of transmigration (i.e. it grants liberation and deliverance to the soul, and emancipation and salvation to the devotee).

It gives contentedness to content itself (i.e. it is a provider of the best kind of contentedness to the seeker, leaving him fully satisfied and in want of nothing more to give him peace and happiness).

It eliminates all sorts of distresses and pains and grief and torments caused by sins and their consequences; nay, it vanquishes sins themselves (i.e. it removes the cause of all kinds of distresses, pains, grief and torments by eliminating 'sin' itself)². (4)

[Note—¹The holy story of Lord Ram has a two-fold benefit—one, it develops positive spiritual virtues of devotion and love for Lord God in a person who listens to it and reads it, and two, it helps to clean one's inner self of all spiritual impurities and taints that cover a person's Atma, his 'pure self', which tend to cause a lot of distress and agitation in him. The story of Lord Ram gives a devotee internal peace and bliss; he finds solace and succour in it; his mind finds rest and his heart emotional stability. It is like the case of a thirsty person finding an oasis in a hot desert—this discovery gives him the joy of his life; he would have given anything demanded just for a sip of water to save his life, but now he has an entire water-hole of cool and sweet nectar-like water all for himself to drink as much as he wants. So is the case with Ram Charit Manas—it nourishes the soul, uplifts the spirit, removes agitations by calming the nerves, and it grants peace to the mind and heart.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 31.

²How does the divine story of Lord Ram remove sins? It does so by purifying the inner-self of the devotee and motivating him to follow the path of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, and nobility in conduct and thought, i.e. the Laws of Dharma, and shun the opposite path, i.e. the path of sin.

In this context, see verse no. 5 herein below.

A person suffers and loses his peace of mind and heart because he goes against the Laws of Nature and Dharma, and becomes indulgent in the gross world and its material things. He develops various passions, longs for this and that, and is never at peace with himself because he pursues his dream and expects to realize imaginary goals that always elude him in a world full of contradictions, mirages and delusions. The situation is like a boat caught in the turbulent currents of a river, which makes the boat toss and rock, making its passengers terrified and agitated. In this situation, Lord Ram's story acts as a strong boat with a good boatman, a sturdy keel and navigation system—that instill confidence in the mind of the passengers and calms their nerves.

The devotee is now certain that inspite of his many failings and faults, at last he has a means to find deliverance from his problems. And the best thing is that this 'means' is easy and uncomplicated, something that does not require elaborate rituals and practicing of many difficult methods as prescribed in the scriptures—such as Yoga (meditation), Japa (repetition of Mantras or spiritual formulas), Tapa (austerity and penance), Dhyan (contemplation), Tirtha (visiting pilgrim places), Yagya and Vrat (sacrifices and vows) et al.

The path of devotion and love for Lord Ram as prescribed in the story of Ram Charit Manas is a very simple and hassle free path for attaining spiritual bliss and happiness. It is uncomplicated and free of dogmas. From a practical point of view too, an interesting story, especially one that is told by the way of a song or poetry that can be sung and recited melodiously, appeals to both the mind and the heart of a weary person, for it gives peace to him and removes his weariness, diverting his attention from the problems of life that burden his mind and heart. But when this 'story' is told with the assurance to a weary person that it is certain to grant deliverance from all worldly torments and give him peace and solace, it acquires a special value for him, for he is anxious to find a way out from the quagmire in which he is trapped. Ram Charit Manas is the perfect remedy for him; it is the kind of story that he has been searching for, something that would be easy on his mind and unburden it of its baggage of worries about how to find liberation and deliverance from the net of problems in which the soul seems to be trapped.

The glories of the story of Lord Ram have been extolled and enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 32 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-14 that precede it.]

काम क्रोह मद मोह नसावन । बिमल बिबेक बिराग बढ़ावन ॥ ५ ॥

सादर मज्जन पान किए तें । मिटहिं पाप परिताप हिए तें ॥ ६ ॥

kāma kōha mada mōha nasāvana. bimala bibēka birāga baṛhāvana. 5.
sādara majjana pāna ki'ē tēm. miṭahirṁ pāpa paritāpa hi'ē tēm. 6.

On the one hand it removes or eliminates Kaam (worldly passions), Krodha (anger), Mada (arrogance and haughtiness) as well as Moha (delusions and attachments), and on the other hand it enhances and reinforces the virtues of purity of thought that fosters wisdom, and purity of conduct that fosters the virtues of renunciation, dispassion and detachment (Vairagya)¹. (5)

Indeed and in all sooth, if a seeker has faith in this story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, listening to it and hearing it attentively and with due reverence, then it would be like his taking a bath and sipping the water of the holy river that symbolizes this story, and even as a weary traveler finds immense joy, feeling refreshed and rejuvenated with this bath and drinking of the water of the river, the devotee too would find that his countless torments and grief, that were caused by sins, have been eliminated, and his inner-self is refreshed and rejuvenated². (6)

[Note—¹This verse answers the question: ‘How would the story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas remove sins and neutralize its consequences while giving peace and deliverance to a devotee?’ It does so by removing sinful nature and replacing it with good character.

²When a tired traveler reaches a river and takes a bath in its cool water, all his tiredness goes away. Similarly, when a person reads and listens to this holy story, his inner-being finds joy, happiness, peace and bliss.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 15; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39.]

जिन्ह एहिं बारि न मानस धोए । ते कायर कलिकाल बिगोए ॥ ७ ॥
तृषित निरखि रबि कर भव बारी । फिरिहहिं मृग जिमि जीव दुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

jinha ēhiṁ bāri na mānasa dhō'ē. tē kāyara kalikāla bigō'ē. 7.
tṛṣita nirakhi rabi kara bhava bārī. phirihahiṁ mṛga jimī jīva dukhārī. 8.

Surely indeed, those unfortunate ones who have not washed their Mana (inner-self; the mind and heart complex) with the purifying water of this symbolic holy river have definitely been cheated by Kaliyug¹. (7)

Verily indeed, those unfortunate ones who have fallen in the trap of delusions created by Kaliyug are like a deer that runs behind the mirage of water created by the heat of the sun in the desert, without actually finding the water to quench its thirst. Likewise, these poor deluded fellows would spend their lives running hither and thither seeking solace and comfort for their tormented self, and searching for a means of deliverance, but would find none². (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 112.

Kaliyug is very cunning and crafty; it throws its net of delusions to trap an unsuspecting creature just like a fishmonger catches fish by throwing his net to trap the poor fish. Only fools who are greedy for the charms of this material world—which though illusionary yet looks surreal due to the veil of delusions thrown by Kaliyug over his mind and wisdom—would take the bait just like a greedy fish, not realizing that it is a trap to ensnare him.

But those who are wise and intelligent see through the trick, and take refuge under the shade of Lord Ram's grace.

²A similar idea has been expressed by Tulsidas in his classical book of prayers called *Vinai Patrika*, in its verse nos. 88, 116, 136, 138 and 188.

To wit, if a person truly seeks to find a way out of his spiritual dilemmas and perplexities that confound his mind and make him feel out of his wits in Kaliyug, then he need not search anywhere but take recourse to the story of Lord Ram as narrated in *Ram Charit Manas*, and follow the guidelines outlined in it. He will surely and certainly see the light at the end of the dark tunnel.

Let us take an example to understand the great import of these verses, viz. *Chaupai* line nos. 1-8, which we are currently reading. In essence they say that a person who is fortunate enough to have come to this lake symbolized by the divine story of Lord Ram, known as *Ram Charit Manas* (apropos: *Doha* no. 36—to *Chaupai* line no. 1 that precedes *Doha* no. 38), should waste no time in drinking this nectar-like water that is rejuvenating for the spirit and a destroyer of all torments associated with life in this mortal world, but if by chance one is not so fortunate to use this opportunity, if he misses it, then surely he is under the influence of Kaliyug which has deluded his wisdom and undermined his sense of right thinking.

It will be easy to understand this point with the help of a simple and straightforward example. Suppose a thirsty and tired man comes to a water body. Would he first and foremost think of drinking water to quench his thirst and save his life, or would he waste precious time in fruitless debating and contemplating on things that do not serve any worthwhile purpose to him? For instance, would it be not a height of stupidity on his part to stand by the side of the water body to first find out its origin and history, the geography and geology of the place, who drank that water before him or has some outcaste washed his hand in it prior to his coming to it himself, what is the flora and fauna of the water body, or what kind of fish live in it, and whether or not some of them may have died and still lying in the water, thereby polluting it, is the water crystal clean or dirty and covered by moss, and so on and so forth. Then, at the end of this doubting and contemplating, being unable to arrive at a conclusion about the purity, holiness, sanctity and cleanliness of the water, turns and goes away thirsty and tired. Say, what would you call this person?

The same thing applies to a person who wastes his time into delving in futile arguments as to the authenticity of the story of Lord Ram, its particular history, spying out some minor inconsistencies here and there in order to upend it and prove it's an imaginary myth, forgetting that it has come down to us from generations after generations of learned sages and seers in an oral tradition, for writing came much later, and therefore some minor divergences from the main structure and flow of events is but natural and in order of things—for this person who engages in such academic debates has lost the chance to imbibe the nectar that is right before him and enjoy its bliss in an attempt to show-off his intellectual muscle.

The idea is, one must approach the story of Lord Ram with an element of devotion and faith in his heart if he wishes to benefit from it, for otherwise he would have lost the fruit while examining the tree that bears it.]

दो०. मति अनुहारि सुबारि गुन गन गनि मन अन्हवाइ ।

सुमिरि भवानी संकरहि कह कबि कथा सुहाइ ॥ ४३ (क) ॥

dōhā.

mati anuhāri subāri guna gana gani mana anhavā'i.
sumiri bhavānī saṅkaraḥi kaha kabi kathā suhā'i. 43 (a).

Having thus enumerated the glorious virtues of this symbolic water (of the holy river representing the story of Lord Ram) to the best of his intellectual abilities and wisdom, and having purified his own mind and intellect by washing them in it, this humble poet (i.e. Goswami Tulsidas) pays his obeisance and respects to Lord Shiva and goddess Bhavani (Parvati, Shiva's consort)¹, as he now begins to narrate this beautiful and most charming story (of Ram Charit Manas). (Doha no. 43-a)

[Note—¹The divine story of Lord Ram known as 'Ram Charit Manas' as narrated by Tulsidas was first conceived in Lord Shiva's Mana (mind and heart). So therefore, Lord Shiva is deemed to be the one who is the progenitor of this story, he is its creator, and hence he is given honour first by offering respects by the poet Tulsidas before commencement of the narration. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-13 that precede it where the same idea is expressed.]

अब रघुपति पद पंकरुह हियँ धरि पाइ प्रसाद ।
कहउँ जुगल मुनिबर्ज कर मिलन सुभग संबाद ॥ ४३ (ख) ॥

aba raghupati pada paṅkaruha hiyaṁ dhari pā'i prasāda.
kaha'um' jugala munibarja kara milana subhaga sambāda. 43 (b).

Invoking the grace of Lord Ram and seeking the Lord's blessings by enshrining his holy lotus-like feet in my heart, I (Tulsidas) now commence with the narration of this exceptionally magnificent story by describing the meeting of two great sages of their time (i.e. sages Bharadwaj and Yagyawalkya)¹. (Doha no. 43-b)

[Note—¹Till this point the saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas has enumerated the glories and divinity of Lord Ram, his holy name and his divine story as he would soon narrate it in his book Ram Charit Manas. To remove any doubt about its authenticity and holiness, the poet has already said that it is not his own composition but that of Lord Shiva, and brought down to him through a chain of great sages who had first heard it and then retold it for the good of others—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 30 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.

So Tulsidas says that what he is narrating is not something new, but a retelling of a holy story already popular with great souls. As to the reason why he is 'retelling it again', he says that he is doing so for his own spiritual peace and beatitude, for his own happiness and joy, as well as to make this story accessible for the ordinary folks who are comfortable with their native language. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 31; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 33; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 8; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 9—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

चौ०. भरद्वाज मुनि बसहिं प्रयागा । तिन्हहि राम पद अति अनुरागा ॥ १ ॥
तापस सम दम दया निधाना । परमारथ पथ परम सुजाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bharadvāja muni basahim prayāgā. tinhahi rāma pada ati anurāgā. 1.
tāpasa sama dama dayā nidhānā. paramāratha patha parama sujānā. 2.

Sage Bharadwaj¹ lived in Prayag² and he had immense affection (and devotion) for the holy feet of Lord Ram. (1)

[Now his qualities or virtues are listed.] He was steeped in Tapa (observed austerities and did penance), practiced the eclectic spiritual qualities of composure of mind and evenness or stability of thought, self-restraint over the sense organs of perception and action, and was an embodiment of the virtues of compassion and mercy. He was a wise and enlightened traveler on the path of liberation and deliverance, and had all the excellent qualities that one ought to possess³. (2)

[Note—¹A brief life-sketch of sage Bharadwaj is as follows:

Sage Bharadwaj is regarded as one of the seven celestial sages known as Sapta Rishis. Ironically, we find many ancient sages with this name, and therefore it is clear that this word was used more as a surname or title rather than the name of an individual sage or seer. Bharadwaj is regarded as a Vedic sage after whom a lineage of sages and seers of the highest order was established. His disciples assumed their teacher's name as their title, and came to be known as Bharadwajs.

Sage Bharadwaj Baarhasptya is the seer of several hymns of the Rig Veda, Mandal no. 6. He is the son of Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of the Gods. He was the father of Dronacharya of the Mahabharata who has taught Arjun the science of archery.

The story of the Ramayana as narrated in Adbhut Ramayana, said to be written by sage Valmiki, it is mentioned that sage Bharadwaj was the disciple of sage Valmiki. He lived near the banks of river Ganges in Prayag, the pilgrim city known as Allahabad in modern India. According to epic story of the life and times of Lord Ram that was written by the legendary poet Goswami Tulsidas, the book titled "Ram Charit Manas", it is mentioned that sage Bharadwaj lived in Prayag, the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44.

Later on in the narration of Ram Charit Manas we read that Lord Ram had visited the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj during his forest sojourn—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109. It was at his advice that Lord Ram styed at Chitrakoot during the first phase of his forest exile.

Sage Yagyavalkya had preached the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', to him when sage Bharadwaj had earnestly requested him to do so during one of the great congregation of holy men at Prayag. It was from here that this glorious story of Lord Ram spread across the world in its present form. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 7 that precede Doha no. 30; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 47.}

Sage Bharadwaj is credited with two great works—viz. Bharadwaj Shrauta-Sutras consisting of ten sections, and Bharadwaj Griha-Sutras.

The profound philosophy pertaining to the divine nature of Lord Ram and him being the Tarak Brahm himself personified is preached to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Canto nos. 2-3.

In addition to this, the story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati was narrated to sage Bharadwaj by sage Yagyavalkya in Ram Charit Manas. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104.}

²Prayag is a holy pilgrim place that has the confluence of three holy rivers, viz. Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati. Its present-day name is Allahabad, and it is situated in the state of Uttar Pradesh in India.

The glory of Prayag has been eulogized in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 106.

³Lord Ram had visited sage Bharadwaj during his journey into the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Later on, Bharat, Lord Ram's younger brother, too had visited the sage when he was on his way to search Lord Ram in the forest and try to bring him back to Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.]

माघ मकरगत रबि जब होई । तीरथपतिहिं आव सब कोई ॥ ३ ॥

देव दनुज किंनर नर श्रेणीं । सादर मज्जहिं सकल त्रिबेनीं ॥ ४ ॥

māgha makaragata rabi jaba hōī. tīrathapatihim āva saba kōī. 3.
dēva danuja kinnara nara śrēnīm. sādara majjahim sakala tribēnīm. 4.

In the Hindu month of Magha when the sun enters the sign of Capricorn, everyone (i.e. sages and seers as well as ordinary people) visit the holiest of holy places (i.e. Prayag). (3)

The Gods, the Demons, the Kinnars (celestial dancers and singers), and all classes of human beings come to Prayag and reverentially take a purifying bath in the Triveni (literally meaning the confluence of three holy rivers—Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati)¹. (4)

[Note—¹All these three rivers are holy in their own right. So by taking a dip at a place where the three meet gives a three-fold religious merit to the pilgrim.

An important to note here is that doing any religious deed, such as taking a bath in a sacred river or going on a pilgrimage or visiting shrines etc. are fruitful and rewarding only if one has faith and undertakes these exercises with reverence. Merely dipping in a river, visiting temples or holy places, without having faith in them and belief in their spiritual importance, or devoid of reverence for them, will be a wasted effort. Lord Krishna has said this in clear terms in his famed Geeta, Chapter 17, verse no. 28.

In Ram Charit Manas too, stress has been laid on having faith, belief and respect for a holy entity if one were to expect any spiritual gain from it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 11-13 that precede Doha no. 2 where a specific reference to Prayag has been made in this context; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 43 where the importance of firm faith in the redeeming powers of the holy river have been stressed, albeit in the context of river Saryu that is used as a metaphor for the flow of the divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in this book called Ram Charit Manas.}]

पूजहिं माधव पद जलजाता । परसि अखय बटु हरषहिं गाता ॥ ५ ॥
भरद्वाज आश्रम अति पावन । परम रज्ज मुनिबर मन भावन ॥ ६ ॥

pūjahim mādharma pada jalajātā. parasi akhaya baṭu haraṣahim gātā. 5.
bharadvāja āśrama ati pāvana. parama ramya munibara mana bhāvana. 6.

While going through the rituals, the visitors and pilgrims worship the holy feet of Lord Veni-Madhav (a form of Lord Vishnu who is the patron and presiding deity of this particular religious place called Triveni), and they feel blessed and thrilled in their bodies by touching the sacred tree of immortality known as ‘Akshaya Vat’. (5)

The hermitage of sage Bharadwaj is located here. It is holy and auspicious, and free from any kind of deceit and corruption of the gross material world. [To wit, it has a holy atmosphere around it that is conducive to spiritual pursuits, and corruptions, such as falsehood and cunning, do not enter its precincts.]

It is exceedingly charming and attractive so much so that it appeals to the hearts of great sages and seers who go there¹. (6)

[Note—¹This is a characteristic feature of places where noble, pious and holy persons live. They are auspicious themselves, and the environment around them too acquires these virtues by being associated with them. It is like an incense stick that burns in a corner of a large room, but its sweet fragrance fill the whole place. When a guest visits a place where a holy man lives, he cannot miss the auspicious atmosphere and an aura of holiness that prevails there. This situation can be compared to a visit to a place of vices, and one would immediately feel uncomfortable.]

तहाँ होइ मुनि रिषय समाजा । जाहिं जे मज्जन तीरथराजा ॥ ७ ॥
मज्जहिं प्रात समेत उछाहा । कहहिं परसपर हरि गुन गाहा ॥ ८ ॥

tahām hō'i muni riṣaya samājā. jāhim jē majjana tīratharājā. 7.
majjahim prāta samēta uchāhā. kahahim parasapara hari guna gāhā. 8.

All the great sages, seers, hermits and other pious people who go to bathe in the holy rivers of Prayag, which is like a King amongst holy places, stay in large numbers in the hermitage of sage Bharadwaj (who cheerfully hosts them all). (7)

These groups of holy men enthusiastically take a purifying dip in the holy rivers early in the morning, and thereafter they spend their time discussing the countless glories of the Lord God and talking about him¹. (8)

[Note—¹In this verse, a general guidance is given regarding what one should do if one visits a holy place. One should wake up early in the morning, take a purifying bath in the river or other water body available there, and then spend one's time talking about Lord God and discussing spiritual matters. Special attention ought to be paid here that one should not waste time in discussing matters of the gross material world during the time spent at a holy place, but unfortunately, this is usually what happens nowadays.]

दो०. ब्रह्म निरूपण धरम बिधि बरनहिं तत्त्व बिभाग ।
कहहिं भगति भगवंत कै संजुत ग्यान बिराग ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

brahma nirūpana dharama bidhi baranahim tattva bibhāga.
kahahim bhagati bhagavanta kai sanjuta gyāna birāga. 44.

These holy men discuss about the nature and truth of Brahm (the pure cosmic Consciousness and the Supreme Being), about the various aspects of Dharma (laws that govern righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct and thought in life), and the finer nuances of the different principles of metaphysics.

They discuss and expound upon the various aspects of Bhakti (devotion) for Lord God in conjunction with the virtues of Gyan and Vairagya (spiritual wisdom and renunciation respectively) that are associated with it.

[To wit, they discuss how Bhakti is related to Gyan and Vairagya, and how the latter leads one to the former.]¹ (Doha no. 44)

[Note—¹Refer to Tulsidas' Book of Prayers called 'Vinai Patrika', verse no. 205 where what Bhakti, Gyan and Vairagya are, and what their relationship is, have been briefly narrated. This book has been published separately by this author in English, and is available on the same internet platform from where the reader had accessed the present book Ram Charit Manas.]

चौ०. एहि प्रकार भरि माघ नहाहीं । पुनि सब निज निज आश्रम जाहीं ॥ १ ॥
प्रति संबत अति होइ अनंदा । मकर मज्जि गवनहिं मुनिबृंदा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi prakāra bhari māgha nahāhīm. puni saba nija nija āśrama jāhīm. 1.
prati sambata ati hō'i anandā. makara majji gavanahim munibrṇdā. 2.

In this way it was a usual practice that all great souls took religious baths during the whole month of Magha¹, and then they went back to their respective hermitages. (1)

Every year there was great rejoicing when the time came for this assembly, and every year the assembled sages and seers and other holy men went back to their places after bathing in the holy rivers while the sun stayed in the asterism of Capricorn. (2)

[Note—¹Magha is the eleventh month of the Lunar calendar. It is so called because the etymology of the word means “don’t commit sins”. To wit, this is a holy month when one ought to be very careful not to do any unrighteous deed.]

एक बार भरि मकर नहाए । सब मुनीस आश्रमन्ह सिधाए ॥ ३ ॥
जागबलिक मुनि परम बिबेकी । भरद्वाज राखे पद टेकी ॥ ४ ॥

ēka bāra bhari makara nahā'ē. saba munīsa āśramanha sidhā'ē. 3.
jāgabalika muni parama bibēkī. bharadvāja rākhē pada ṭēkī. 4.

[Once upon a time as was usual, all the sages and seers had assembled at Prayag, a place where three holy rivers, viz. the Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati, have their confluence. They used to come here every year on the auspicious occasion of “Makar Sakranti”¹. They stayed at the place for the whole month, and on the final day took a bath at the confluence of the rivers before heading back to their respective hermitages.

However, on one such occasion, sage Bharadwaj, who lived permanently at Prayag, requested sage Yagyavalkya², one of the greatest sage and seer of his time, to stay back for some more days and enlighten him about the secrets of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. It was during this long and elaborate discourse that unfolded now that sage Yagyavalkya narrates the story of Lord Shiva’s marriage.]

Once upon a time, all the sages and seers who had performed religious rites during the entire holy month of ‘Makar (Sakranti)¹’, including taking purification baths and doing other rituals daily, did their ablutions on the final day of the month and then cheerfully went away to their respective hermitages. (3)

Sage Yagyavalkya² was one amongst them. He was a very wise, learned and enlightened seer. Sage Bharadwaj (who used to live permanently at the place where the sages and seers assembled to spend the holy month of Makar, a place known as Prayag), fell at the feet of Yagyavalkya and earnestly requested him to stay back for some more time. (4)

[Note—¹Makar Sakranti—The tenth sign of the zodiac known as Capricorn is called “Makar”, and the word “Sarkanti” means a union, the solstice, a planet’s transition from one zodiac to another. In the context of Hindu religious practices, “Makar Sakranti” is the transition of the sun into the tenth zodiac sign of Capricorn. It falls roughly on the 14th of January of each year. It is also known as “Uttaraayan” as the sun moves in the northern direction.

Since “Makar” coincides with the eleventh month of the Hindu lunar year known as “Maagha”, both “Makar” and “Maagha” are commonly used as synonyms.

During this whole month, it is regarded auspicious to take a dip in holy rivers. Since three great rivers, i.e. the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati, have their ‘union’ or confluence at Prayaag (also known as Allahabad in modern India), it is the

place deemed most suitable for performing religious rites as the benefits are symbolically multiplied three times due to the confluence of three rivers here.

A great congregation of sages and seers is held every year during this period when they take holy dip in the rivers, perform various rites and hold discourses—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.

²Sage Yagyawalkya/Yagyavalkya—He belonged to that Vedic period when people had an integral and holistic view of life and the reality behind existence, and all-activities, secular or religious, were regarded as one big, wholesome and composite religious sacrifice called a Yagya. Life itself was consecrated and devoted to the realization of the transcendental and supreme truthful Reality. There was no distinction between renunciation and involvement in life's chores. There was no dichotomy between the two, and the various debates arising in Indian spiritual practices due to different interpretations and re-interpretations of the Vedic and Upanishadic tenets was a product of the later period. One such exemplary sage and seer belonging to that golden period was Yagyavalkya—he was an enlightened wise man who was not only a self-realised householder but an ardent ascetic, an acclaimed scholar and an exemplary renunciate man par-excellence, all at the same time.

It is believed that Yagyavalkya was an incarnation of Lord Brahma, the creator, when he was cursed by Lord Shiva. [Skand Puran, Nagar Khand, 1-9.] His father was named Brahmabahu (literally, the limbs of Brahma, because the latter's limbs had manifested as this person). [Vayu Puran, 61.] But according to a book of religious law written by Yagyavalkya himself known as 'Yagyawalkya Sanhita', his father also had the same name. So, our Yagyavalkya was, in effect, 'Yagyavalkya, the second'. [Yagyavalkya Sanhita, 1.]

Yagyavalkya's teacher in the science of Yoga (meditation) and the knowledge of the self (metaphysics and philosophy) was sage Vasistha, son of Hiranyanabha Kaushalya, a king of the Raghu dynasty which ruled Ayodhya in ancient times. [Vayu Puran, 88; Bhagwat Mahapurana, 93/106.] The sage performed severe penances and austerities, known as Tapa, at Mithila, the birth place of Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram. [Skandpuran, Reva Khand, 42.]

He used to attend the court of great ancient wise kings, such as king Janak (the father of Sita—Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, canto 3-4) and Yudhisthir (of the Mahabharat fame—Mahabharat, Sabha Parva, 4/32). It was in the court of king Janak that Yagyavalkya had defeated all the assembled scholars of the time on various metaphysical and theological concepts. He is also believed to be a chief priest in Yudhisthir's Rajsu Yagya.

Sage Yagyavalkya was one of the greatest, most erudite, wise and renowned seers of his time. He was a senior and enlightened man, so wise and learned a scholar that even king Janak, who himself was a most self-realised and enlightened king of his era, was so much bowled over by his erudition, depth of knowledge and scholarship that he accepted the sage's discipleship (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 4, Brahmin 2, verse nos. 1, 4). He was proclaimed the undisputed champion and winner in a metaphysical and theological debate held in the court of Janak during the course of a great fire sacrifice held where great scholars, seers and sages from far and wide had assembled (refer Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, Canto 3, Brahmin 1-9).

He was a much sought after teacher and an honoured exponent of the eclectic Advaitya Vedanta philosophy of non-duality. This basically propounds, inter alia, that

everything in existence, visible or invisible, minute or colossus, important or unimportant, are all fundamentally the same singular unit called Brahm manifested in myriad and diverse ways, that therefore nothing that exists which is not Brahm is not true, that this Brahm is the only supreme Authority and Divinity in the entire creation, that this Brahm and the individual Atma or pure consciousness of the creature are one and the same, and not two independent units, that this Atma is the pure self, etc. Anything contrary to this is false and fallacious.

It is believed that all major Upanishads belonging to the Yajur Veda tradition are either directly or indirectly expounded and enunciated by and elucidated upon by Yagyavalkya or any one of his long line of disciples who had acquired this eclectic knowledge from him. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/6/1-3, 4/6/1-3 and 6/5/1-3.)

One such example is the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition in which sage Yagyavalkya has taught even the teacher of the Gods, i.e. Brihaspati, about the esoteric secrets and the profound spiritual importance as well as the significance of the Tarak Mantra, and about the divine nature of Lord Ram and his great Mantras that can provide a creature with Mukti (spiritual liberation and deliverance) once and for all.

The high spiritual prowess and reach of Yagyavalkya can be judged from the fact that he could communicate directly with the Supreme Being called Mandal Purush in his visible manifestation as the brilliant and splendid Sun as described in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda tradition. The fact that Yagyavalkya had a repeated communion with the Sun God, at least on four occasions is clearly marked out in Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 1/1/1-2; 2/1/1-2; 3/1/1-2; 4/1/1-2.

Yagyavalkya was a rich householder sage and seer. This is borne out by the fact that (a) on each occasion when he attended great debates he was showered with huge largesse by king Janak in the form of immense quantity of gold and thousands of cows (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 3/1/1-2, 4/1/1-7, 4/3/33, 4/4/23), and (b) when he asks his wife Maitreyi to partition his vast estate before he went on to take Sanyas (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/4/1-2, 4/5/1-2).

The creation of Yajur Veda's two branches:- The word 'Yajus' means a liturgy of hymns chanted during the fire sacrifice. The Yajur Veda has been classified into Krishna and Shukla branches. It would be pertinent and interesting to add a brief note here on why the Yajur Veda has come to be known as Krishna and Shukla, meaning 'black' and 'white' respectively. The Yajur Veda Sanhita (a collection of Mantras or hymns) is classified into these two types for a variety of reasons. One of the probable reasons for this Yajur Veda having two names is that the collection in the Sanhita that came to be known as 'Krishna' had a mixture of prose and poetry, and hence considered 'impure and corrupted'. This is because primarily the Vedas were composed in poetry form with the verses structured according to one or the other methods of poetical composition called 'Chandas'. Prose as a style of composition came later on and was regarded as an interpolation, interposition or juxtaposition which is all tantamount to corrupting the original method. Hence, that text which had both the poetry and prose was deemed to be 'corrupted and impure form of the Vedic text', and therefore called 'Krishna'—the dark one. On the other hand, the Sanhita which had only poetry was considered un-adulterated and pure form of the Vedic text, and hence called 'Shukla' or the white one, the colour 'white' being the colour of purity, immaculacy, divinity and holiness.

Since the primary use of the hymns of the Vedas in earlier times was for incantatory chanting during religious fire sacrifices, the poetical mode of composition

was more suitable than the prose model. That is why these hymns were composed in 'Chandas' which are the different styles in which Sanskrit verses are composed. Later on, when these verses were also being used for purposes other than the fire sacrifices, the prose model evolved and developed. The Upanishads are mainly in the prose model because they are philosophical treatises and not ritualistic incantatory chanting.

Another plausible reason is that the verses of the Krishna Yajur Veda are more difficult to understand than those of the Shukla Yajur Veda. Hence, the former were called 'dark' or Krishna because of the difficulty in their comprehension and explanation as compared to the more easier ones classified as 'white' or Shukla. The Krishna Yajur Veda Sanhita was more prevalent in the south of India while the Shukla was more common in the north of the country.

The third reason is that the original classifier of Vedas was 'Krishna Dvaipaayana Veda Vyas' who taught the text of the Yajur Veda to his disciple called Vaishampaayana. Hence, the original version of the text was named 'Krishna' in order to commemorate this fact.

There is a fourth probable reason as outlined here. The chief exponent of the Yajur Veda is regarded as the ancient sage Yagyavalkya. He was one of the several disciples of sage Vaishampayana. Once the teacher asked his disciples to perform the 'Brahmavadhya' sacrifice (a type of elaborate penance) for him. Yagyavalkya was so confident of himself, his knowledge and competency that he offered to do it all by himself for his teacher. The teacher thought that he was haughty and boastful. So, disowning or disinheriting him from his line of disciples, he commanded that Yagyavalkya should return all that he had learnt from his teacher. The sage returned all the Mantras of the Yajur Veda that he had learnt from his teacher by 'vomiting' them out. The rest of the disciples were very cunning; they transformed themselves immediately into partridges, called Tittars, and gobbled up everything. From that developed the Krishna Yajur Veda's Taitirriya branch. It is called 'Krishna' after the teacher and 'Taitirriya' after the partridges. Also, since they were 'vomited products' they were regarded as polluted and impure. Such body of knowledge came to be known as 'Krishna'—the impure one.

Now, not to be demoralized so easily and determined to get back his lost knowledge and wisdom, Yagyavalkya worshipped the Sun God who blessed him with a fresh set of Mantras of the Yajur Veda. Since it came from a 'bright source' represented by the sun, this set of Mantras was called the 'Shukla Yajur Veda'. [The word 'Shukla' means 'bright or light or illuminated'.] The sage revised this into fifteen sub-texts, called the Vaaj-sanei, i.e. those belonging to the horse race. This is because the Sun God had assumed the form of a 'horse' to teach him, and the word 'Vaajis' means a horse. The teaching was done in the form of the cosmic neighing. This form of the Sun God came to be worshipped as 'Hayagriva', the Lord with the neck of a horse. An entire Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is named after this God, and it is called 'Hayagriva Upanishad'. It is the 29th Upanishad of this Veda.

Yagyavalkya had fifteen disciples (e.g. Kaanva, Maadhyandin etc.) who mastered one each of these fifteen sub-text created by Yagyavalkya. [Vishnu Puran, 3-5; Vayu Puran, 60-1.] The list of sages and seers who excelled in the Shukla Yajur Veda branch has been given in Brihad-Aaranyaka Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 6, and Canto 4, Brahmin 6.

The Yajur Veda is divided into two major types—viz. the Shukla (white) and Krishna (black or dark). The Krishna Yajur Veda has only four branches existing at present out of the earlier eighty-five—Taitirriya, Maitraayani, Katha, and Kapisthal. Its Brahman is known as Taitirriya Brahman. The Shukla Yajur Veda, also known as

the Vaajsaneyi Sanhita, originally had seventeen branches, but now only following two branches exist—Kaanva and Maadhyandeen. Its Brahman is known as Shatpath Brahman.

The sub-Veda of the Yajur Veda is known as Dhanur-Veda which deals with the science of archery and warfare.

The Aaranyakas of the Yajur Veda are—Taititriya (of the Krishna Yajur Veda) and Brihad-aaranyak (of the Shukla Yajur Veda).

There are 19 principal Upanishads of the Shukla Yajur Veda, and 32 principal Upanishads of the Krishna Yajur Veda—such as Taitirriya, Swetaasvatar, Katha, Brihdaaranakya, Maitri, Ishavasya Upanishads etc.

The priests who used the hymns of the Yajur Veda during fire sacrifices were called 'Yajus' or 'Adhwaryu'.

Family—He had two wives. The elder was named Katayani, and the second was called Maitreyi. From the elder wife, he had a son named Katyanana. [Skandpuran, Nagar Khand, 130; Brihad Aranya Upanishad, 4/5/1.] According to 'Yogi Yagyavalkya', a hand book on Yoga, his third wife was Gargi, though she is depicted as a rival interviewer who tested the sage's erudition and scholarship in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad. [Yogi Yagyavalkya, edited by Upendranath, Vasumati—Calcutta, 1-5.]

Sanyas—Though Yagyavalkya was externally a householder sage and seer, he was internally (i.e. mentally; intellectually and emotionally) a highly self-realised and an exceptionally enlightened man, a sincere ascetic and a renunciate monk who knew the futility of worldly pursuits. He was not preaching what he did not believe in. So he finally took to the eclectic path of Sanyas as clearly mentioned in Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 4/5/15.

Works—Yagyavalkya wrote great texts on Yoga, metaphysics and law pertaining to daily life, much like Manu's Smiriti Law. (i) Yagyavalkya Sanhita contains religious laws; (ii) Yog Sanhita was composed in the hermitage of sage Upmanyu [Kurma Puran, 25.]; and (iii) Yogi Yagyavalkya on Yoga philosophy.

Yagyavalkya was a great and acclaimed Yogi (an ascetic) as well as a philosopher and a preacher par-excellence in the field of metaphysics, one who was well-versed in the knowledge of Brahm and the Atma.]

सादर चरन सरोज पखारे । अति पुनीत आसन बैठारे ॥ ५ ॥

करि पूजा मुनि सुजसु बखानी । बोले अति पुनीत मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥

sādara carana sarōja pakhārē. ati punīta āsana baiṭhārē. 5.

kari pūjā muni sujasu bakhānī. bōlē ati punīta mṛdu bānī. 6.

Sage Bharadwaj reverentially washed the feet of sage Yagyavalkya and seated him respectfully on a very clean seating-mat. (5)

Then after duly worshipping the great sage, praising his glories and reputation as a wise, learned and enlightened sage, he (Bharadwaj) said most politely and in a reverentially tone¹—(6)

[Note—¹When a person wants to learn anything and is sincere about it, he is very polite and humble while approaching the teacher for knowledge and removal of doubts. The teacher whom he approaches for an answer is a wise man, and so he senses the seekers earnestness. A good teacher cannot refuse, but feels that it is his moral duty to enlighten the other person and impart the knowledge he seeks. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 48.

The same thing has happened when Uma, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, approached the Lord to remove certain doubts she had in her mind regarding the divinity of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 111. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 64 where we learn that it was on the most polite and humble request of Garud, the celestial eagle which is the mount of Lord Vishnu, that the crow-saint Kaagbhusund narrated the story of Lord Ram for his benefit.

Earlier, Garud had bowed his head before Lord Shiva and had very politely asked him to remove his doubts about the divine reality of Lord Ram, but the Lord sent him to Kaagbhusund because a bird would better understand the language of another bird—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 61; (b) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 62.]

नाथ एक संसुड बड़ मोरें । करगत बेदतत्व सबु तोरें ॥ ७ ॥

कहत सो मोहि लागत भय लाजा । जौं न कहउँ बड़ होइ अकाजा ॥ ८ ॥

nātha ēka sansa'u barā mōrēm. karagata bēdatattva sabu tōrēm. 7.

kahata sō mōhi lāgata bhaya lājā. jaur̄n na kaha'um̄ barā hō'i akājā. 8.

‘Oh Lord! I have a grave doubt which perplexes me¹, and I know that you are well-versed in all the essential knowledge of the Vedas (scriptures). [Hence, by inference, you are the most suitable seer who can remove my doubts and explain the reality to me. That is why I have approached you, and request you to please be kind to enlighten me.] (7)

I am afraid (or ashamed and feeling shy) to divulge my ignorance (or lack of knowledge)² and ask you to remove my doubts (as it may annoy you that being a great sage myself how come I harboured such ridiculous doubts in my mind; it would seem incongruous to you). But at the same time if I don't say anything about my doubts and confusions, it would be very harmful for me (as it will rob me of my mental and spiritual peace, and cast a dark shadow on my wisdom and my ability to preach others). (8)

[Note—¹The reason for having any doubt is ignorance; it eclipses the wisdom of even great sages and seers. Ignorance does not even spare the Creator from being deluded. These things are clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 1, 5-7 that precede Doha no. 59; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60; (c) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 62.

Lack of wisdom and prevalence of ignorance creates a lot of heartburn, doubts and irrational thoughts—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 58; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 59.

There is no wonder that sage Bhardwaj had some doubts and confusions regarding Lord Ram, for even goddess Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, too was overcome with similar doubts and confusions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.

And, like sage Bharadwaj here confiding in sage Yagyavalkya his mental vexations, requesting the great sage to be graceful upon him and remove his confusion by enlightening him about the truth and reality of Lord Ram, Parvati too had confided in her husband Lord Shiva, asking the Lord to remove her confusions. It was as a result of this that the great story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas came to be told. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Doha no. 111.

²As for being afraid to ask someone, who is very senior and exalted, a question which seems ridiculous because its answer is very obvious, and such ignorance is unexpected from a person who is otherwise regarded highly knowledgeable and wise, as was the case with sage Bharadwaj presently, we have other instances in Ram Charit Manas where the person wanting some of his doubts removed is afraid to ask questions out of hesitation. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas we shall read that even Bharat, the dear brother of Lord Ram, had felt hesitant and afraid to ask the Lord about the characteristic features of saints—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37. This obviously is because Bharat was supposed to know the qualities of saints, and his wanting to know about them seemed incongruous on the face of it.

Then of course, we have the example of Parvati herself who was quite hesitant in asking Shiva to tell her the story of Lord Ram in detail so that she finds peace of mind and able to dispel her doubts. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

दो०. संत कहहिं असि नीति प्रभु श्रुति पुरान मुनि गाव ।
होइ न बिमल बिबेक उर गुर सन किँँ दुराव ॥ ४५ ॥

dōhā.

santa kahahim asi nīti prabhu śruti purāna muni gāva.
hō'i na bimala bibēka ura gura sana ki'ēm' durāva. 45.

Oh Lord! It is proclaimed by saints and also declared by the scriptures such as the Vedas and Purans that true and pure form of wisdom cannot be expected in the heart of someone who conceals his ignorance from his guru (teacher). [And that is why I have gathered courage to express my lack of knowledge to you so that true and pure form of wisdom can sprout in my inner-self, and I can become enlightened.] (Doha no. 45)

[Note—Sage Bharadwaj wishes to be enlightened about the divinity of Lord Ram, and unless one has pure form of wisdom firmly established in his heart, this knowledge would elude him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 122.

Without proper wisdom no one can expect to cross over this huge ocean-like world and find liberation and deliverance from its horrors—refer also to Vinai Patrika of Tulsidas, (a) verse no. 115, line no. 2 of stanza no. 5; and (b) verse no. 123.]

चौ०. अस बिचारि प्रगटुँ निज मोहू । हरहु नाथ करि जन पर छोहू ॥ १ ॥
राम नाम कर अमित प्रभावा । संत पुरान उपनिषद गावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa bicāri pragaṭa'um' nija mōhū. harahu nātha kari jana para chōhū. 1.
rāma nāma kara amita prabhāvā. santa purāna upaniṣada gāvā. 2.

Considering all the aforesaid facts I have decided to reveal my ignorance. Oh Lord, please be kind to remove it, please dispel my doubts and fears by enlightening me about the truth and reality, and be kind to be gracious upon me as I am your follower (or your disciple) (1)

That the holy name of Lord Ram has astounding and unlimited potentials is reiterated by saints and sages, as well as by the Purans and Upanishads which eulogize the holy name's powers and effects in no uncertain terms¹. (2)

[Note—¹The immensity of the glory, the stupendous spiritual importance and the significance as well as the astounding mystical powers of Lord Ram's holy name have been enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.

As for the Upanishads, the divinity, holiness and glory of the name of Lord Ram have been enumerated in the following Upanishads:

(i) Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 4/1 to 4/47; (ii) Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 43-63; (iii) Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 7; (iv) Ram Rahasya Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 1-106; (v) Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1; and (vi) Kali-Santaran Upanishad, verse no. 2.

The following Puran and Ramayan too extol the glories of Lord Ram's holy name:

(i) Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 281, verse nos. 30-48. They were pronounced by Lord Shiva for the benefit of his divine consort goddess Parvati.

(ii) Anand Ramayan, Purva Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 32-51.

This author has written a book in English titled 'Glory of Lord Ram's Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras, Hymns & Prayers' that has an exhaustive presentation of a wide variety of classical books and scriptures on the subject of holiness of Lord Ram's divine Name. This book is available on the same internet platforms from where the learned reader has accessed the present book 'Ram Charit Manas'.]

संतत जपत संभु अबिनासी । सिव भगवान ग्यान गुन रासी ॥ ३ ॥
आकर चारि जीव जग अहहीं । कासीं मरत परम पद लहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

santata japata sambhu abināsi. siva bhagavāna gyāna guna rāsi. 3.
ākara cāri jīva jaga ahahīṁ. kāsiṁ marata parama pada lahahīṁ. 4.

Lord Shiva—who is the eternal Lord God, a treasury of bliss and joy, and an embodiment of Gyan and Gunas (spiritual wisdom, enlightenment and auspicious virtues respectively)—constantly and without a break repeats this holy name (of Lord Ram)¹. (3)

There are four categories of Jivas (creatures; living beings)² in this world, and all of them attain emancipation and salvation if they leave their mortal coil (i.e. die) at the holy place known as Kashi (Varanasi)³. (4)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.

²From the perspective of this physical world where a living being is recognized by its physical gross body, there are said to be four types or categories of Jivas (living beings). They are the following:-

(i) Udbhij—these are those life forms that are born from seeds, such as members of the plant kingdom. These have only one Kalaa or aspect of the Atma called Anna Maye Kosh or Kalaa. In other words, they depend on food and become food for others higher up in the evolutionary ladder.

(ii) Swedaj—they are those which are born from dampness and sweat, such as fungi, algae, bacteria, germs, mosquito, lice, flies etc. They have two Kalaas, viz. Anna Maye and Pran Maye. That is, they are formed from food, they live for food and they die as food. Besides this, they also exhibit signs of life, e.g. the mosquito and lice have life like any other member of the animal kingdom.

(iii) Andaj—they are placed higher up in the evolutionary ladder, and are born from eggs, whether inside the mother's womb or outside. Such birds as pigeon, sparrow, parrot, peacock etc. come under this category. They have three Kalaas which are Anna Maye, Pran Maye and Mano-maye. The last Kalaa refers to the fact that such creatures have a mind and heart which enables them to think, albeit in a primitive level.

(iv) Jaruyuj—these are the creatures that are born as embryo that develops inside the mother's womb. Under this class come the animals such as horses, cows, dogs, elephants etc. They have four Kalaas, such as Anna Maye, Pran Maye, Mano-maye and Vigyan Maye. The last Kalaa refers to their ability to have a higher level of thinking ability called intelligence. The human being comes under this last category with the added benefit of having five Kalaas. Besides the four Kalaas mentioned above in other creatures of this category, the man has the fifth one and it called the Anand Maye Kosh. It is only possessed by a man and not by other creatures in the sense that the man can realise the true meaning of the terms 'bliss and happiness that is eternal and substantial' by the virtue of his attaining higher level of intelligence and his ability to delve into the secrets of the concept of truth itself and then realising that

kind of happiness and bliss that is not superficial and which is not limited to enjoyment of the sensual pleasures of the body and the material comforts of the world, but which has a holistic and all-inclusive dimension that incorporates the spirit or the soul.

³Those who die at Kashi find liberation and deliverance for their souls because Lord Shiva, the presiding deity of this holy place, utters the holy name of Lord Ram in the dying creature's ears. This holy name is so powerful that once the creature hears it, it is sure to find salvation for itself. This fact is mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119.]

सोपि राम महिमा मुनिराय । सिव उपदेसु करत करि दाया ॥ ५ ॥
रामु कवन प्रभु पूछउँ तोही । कहिअ बुझाइ कृपानिधि मोही ॥ ६ ॥

sōpi rāma mahimā munirāyā. siva upadēsu karata kari dāyā. 5.
rāmu kavana prabhu pūcha'um' tōhī. kahi'a bujhā'i kṛpānidhi mōhī. 6.

[Sage Bharadwaj said—] Oh the most exalted sage (Yagyavalkya)! This supreme form of death that a creature gets if it dies at Kashi (i.e. the reward of spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation) is also due to the divine glory and mystical powers of Lord Ram. It is because Lord Shiva utters the holy and salvation-providing name of Lord Ram in the ears of the dying Jiva, thereby providing it with immediate liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, which in effect gives its soul the benefit of salvation and emancipation. (5)

But I am confused (by the worldly deeds and acts of the Lord on the one hand, and these mystical powers and glories of the Lord as espoused by the Purans, the Upanishads and Lord Shiva himself; they seem to be contradictory and do not seem to add up). Therefore, I most humbly ask you this question: “Who really is Lord Ram?”¹

Please be gracious and kind enough to explain this mystery to me properly. (6)

[Note—¹Similar confusion was experienced by goddess Parvati, and Garuda, who is the mount of Lord Vishnu. Both had doubts about two aspects of Lord Ram—whether he indeed was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and if it is so then why did he behave like an ordinary human being; why didn't he know who has stolen his wife, why did he wail for her, and why couldn't he kill her abductor by his simple wish instead of going all the way barefoot to Lanka and waging a bloody war to gain her freedom? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 50; (ii) Doha no. 108 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it—with respect to Parvati, and (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 58 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it; (iv) Doha no. 68-b—with respect to Garuda.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 66.

Whereas the doubts of Parvati were dispelled by her husband Lord Shiva, that of Garuda by the saintly crow Kaagbhushund. In both the cases, the story of Ram Charit Manas was told and explained to them.

For Parvati and Shiva's conversation, refer to Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 111; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53.

As regards Garud and his conversation with Kaagbhusund, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69; and (ii) Doha no. 124-b—to Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 125.]

एक राम अवधेस कुमारा । तिन्ह कर चरित बिदित संसारा ॥ ७ ॥
नारि बिरहँ दुखु लहेउ अपारा । भयउ रोषु रन रावनु मारा ॥ ८ ॥

ēka rāma avadhēsa kumārā. tinha kara carita bidita sansārā. 7.
nāri biraham' dukhu lahē'u apārā. bhaya'u rōṣu rana rāvanu mārā. 8.

One 'Ram' I am aware of is the son of the King of Ayodhya (i.e. Dasrath). His life and deeds are well known in this world¹. [It is because they have been repeatedly described in the many versions of the story of his life and time that is known as the Ramayan.] (7)

This 'Ram' had suffered a lot and wailed and grieved for his wife Sita² (when the Lord was sent to forest exile by his father on the behest of his step-mother, and where his wife was abducted by the demon king Ravana). He was so angry with her abductor, i.e. Ravana, that he killed him (in the famous war of Lanka)³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187; and (ii) Doha no. 191 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (the manifestation of Lord Vishnu as Lord Ram in the household of king Dasrath of Ayodhya).

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-17 that precede Doha no. 30 (Lord Ram's grief after Sita was abducted by Ravana).

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103 (death of Ravana).]

दो०. प्रभु सोइ राम कि अपर कोउ जाहि जपत त्रिपुरारि ।
सत्यधाम सर्बग्य तुम्ह कहहु बिबेकुबिचारि ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu sō'i rāma ki apara kō'u jāhi japata tripurāri.
satyadhāma sarbagya tumha kahahu bibēku bicāri. 46.

Oh Lord, I am totally confounded. Who really is 'Ram' whose holy name Lord Tripurari (Shiva) repeats constantly as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula)¹—is he

the ‘Ram’ I have cited herein above (in the foregoing verses), or is he a different ‘Ram’?

You are truthful and a repository of true knowledge. [Therefore, there is no one better qualified and competent to answer my questions than you are.]

So please give due thought to my query and tell me about it to quell all my doubts and confusions. (Doha no. 46)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

चौ०. जैसें मिटै मोर भ्रम भारी । कहहु सो कथा नाथ बिस्तारी ॥ १ ॥
जागबलिक बोले मुसुकाई । तुम्हहि बिदित रघुपति प्रभुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaisēm miṭai mōra bhrama bhārī. kahahu sō kathā nātha bistārī. 1.
jāgabalika bōlē musukāī. tumhahi bidita raghupati prabhutāī. 2.

so oh gracious Lord, in whatever way my ignorance and delusions can be removed, please be kind enough to tell that story to me in detail.¹ (1)

Sage Yagyavalkya smiled in amusement² at Bharadwaj’s poser. He replied—‘You are aware of the majesty of Lord Ram. (2)

[Note—¹Parvati had also praised Lord Shiva as being all-knowing and truthful when said had asked Lord Shiva to tell her the divine story of Lord Ram in detail to remove her doubts, and explain all intricacies of the story to her along the way. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 108.}

A similar thing happened in the case of Garud too when he went to the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to ask the latter to remove his doubts about Lord Ram by telling the story of the Lord and explain all its intricacies in detail. First Garud praised Kaagbhusund, then asked the latter to tell him the story of Lord Ram, and at the end of this narration Garud thanked Kaagbhusund for removing all his doubts about Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 64; and (ii) Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69.}

²Why did Yagyavalkya smile? Well, he thought to himself “I know that you, Bharadwaj, are an acclaimed sage of great wisdom and enlightenment. So it is obvious that you pretend to be confused, but I am sure you are not. I’ll explain why herein below in the following verse nos. 3-4! But nevertheless I am glad you asked this question, for it gives me an opportunity to dwell in depth and at length in the holy story of Lord Ram which will give peace to me as well as to you, and to all others who would hear it subsequently. It’s a privilege and an honour bestowed upon me to be a preacher of the divine story of Lord Ram; surely it is the Lord’s grace upon both you and me that he has inspired you to ask me this question, and has chosen me to be

the narrator of the Lord's holy story. Thank you Bharadwaj for it; I bless you profoundly.”]

रामभगत तुम्ह मन क्रम बानी । चतुराई तुम्हारि मैं जानी ॥ ३ ॥

चाहहु सुनै राम गुन गूढ़ा । कीन्हिहु प्रस्न मनहुँ अति मूढ़ा ॥ ४ ॥

rāmabhagata tumha mana krama bānī. caturā'ī tumhāri maim jānī. 3.
cāhahu sunai rāma guna gūṛhā. kīnhihu prasna manahum'ati mūṛhā. 4.

You are a devotee par-excellence of Lord Ram by your Mana (mind and heart), your Karma (deeds) and your Vaani (words; speech). [There is no doubt about it.] I have realized your ploy; you are indeed very clever! (3)

Actually, you want to hear in detail and in depth about the astounding glories, the holiness and divinity of Lord Ram that have profound meaning and implications. That is why you are pretending to be naïve and ignorant about it¹. (4)

[Note—¹It is because you feel that if you do not pretend to be ignorant and eager to learn about something few people know, then I may not preach and unfold this profound secret to you. You think that if you do not show eagerness and earnestness to know about Lord Ram's truth, I may think you are joking with me and teasing me, and so I may ignore you. That's why presumably you have assumed a face of utter ignorance and confusion that is just enough to sufficiently encourage me so that I would expound about this mystical theme for your spiritual benefit. Well, I understand, but I would have told you everything nevertheless as it is great privilege to remember and speak about the glories of Lord Ram, for this exercise in itself is a provider of extreme bliss, joy, happiness and peace to both the narrator as well as the hearer.]

तात सुनहु सादर मनु लाई । कहउँ राम कै कथा सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥

महामोहु महिषेसु बिसाला । रामकथा कालिका कराला ॥ ६ ॥

tāta sunahu sādara manu lā'ī. kaha'um' rāma kai kathā suhā'ī. 5.
mahāmōhu mahiṣesu bisālā. rāmakathā kālikā karālā. 6.

Therefore dear (tāta), listen to it attentively with reverence and faith in your heart¹. I shall narrate the story of Lord Ram², which is exceedingly pleasant and wonderful³. (5)

In this world, the great delusions, and its attendant confusions and doubts that overwhelm a creature (mahāmōhu), are like the huge demon that had the form of the great he-buffalo (mahiṣesu bisālā). Lord Ram's sacred, divine and holy story (rāmakathā) is like the ferocious goddess Kali (kālikā karālā) who had slayed this horrifying demon⁴. (6)

[Note—¹The importance of having faith, belief and reverence that are accompanied by the virtues of dispassion, self-restraint over passions, renunciation and other such spiritual practices has already been emphasized and explained earlier with reference to taking a bath in a holy River symbolizing the story of Lord Ram, as well as in Triveni, the confluence of three holy rivers in Prayag. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43; and (ii) Doha no. 44 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

²Lord Shiva has also told a similar thing to Parvati when he told her the story of Lord Ram—that he is narrating it to her as he has found that she has great devotion and affection for Lord Ram, for it is evident from the fact that she wishes to remove all her doubts about the Lord so that her devotion and faith in him remains firm and steady, because doubts and skepticism create a crack in this foundation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 52-b which explicitly reiterates this fact that Lord Ram’s story is like nectar that is exceptionally refreshing for the mind and heart, and the ears are never satisfied by hearing it for they want to hear more and more of it.

⁴To wit, just like the case of goddess Kali easily killing this ferocious demon, Lord Ram’s story too can easily eliminate all sorts of delusions that cause so much emotional suffering and spiritual misery for the creature.]

रामकथा ससि किरन समाना । संत चकोर करहिं जेहि पाना ॥ ७ ॥
ऐसेइ संसय कीन्ह भवानी । महादेव तब कहा बखानी ॥ ८ ॥

rāmakathā sasi kirana samānā. santa cakōra karahim jēhi pānā. 7.
aisē'i sansaya kīnha bhavānī. mahādēva taba kahā bakhānī. 8.

Verily, Lord Ram’s divine story is like the soothing rays of the moonlight. Just as this moonlight gives immense joy to the bird known as Chakor (the Indian red-legged partridge) which finds immense joy and solace while it is surrounded by its rays, saintly souls too enjoy and feel exhilarated when they hear the story of Lord Ram and imbibe its spiritual nectar. (7)

A similar type of doubt about the reality of Lord Ram, the question ‘who Lord Ram actually is’, was expressed by goddess Bhavani (i.e. Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva who is also known as ‘Bhava’). At that time, Lord Mahadeva (Shiva, the Great God) had explained the reality (of Lord Ram) to her. (8)

दो०. कहउँ सो मति अनुहारि अब उमा संभु संबाद ।
भयउ समय जेहि हेतु जेहि सुनु मुनि मिटिहि बिषाद ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

kaha'um̃ sō mati anuhāri aba umā sambhu sambāda.
bhaya'u samaya jēhi hētu jēhi sunu muni miṭhihi biṣāda. 47.

Now I shall tell you to the best of my ability about that conversation between Uma (another name of Bhavani) and Shambhu (Lord Shiva) in great detail.

I shall narrate for you when that conversation took place, and the immediate reason for this discourse¹. Oh Sage, listen to it carefully, for it has the potential to remove your vexations and the cause of all your perplexities². (Doha no. 47)

[Note—¹When did the conversation between Lord Shiva and Parvati take place, and what was the immediate cause of Parvati's bewilderment? These two questions are answered in the verses that follow herein below—i.e. from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51.

²To wit, Lord Shiva's consort Uma was confused in the same way as sage Bharadwaj was about the reality of Lord Ram: whether the Lord was an ordinary human prince who went to the forest where he lost his wife Sita, and then he wondered here and there searching for her. Uma had asked Shiva a similar question as Bharadwaj has asked Yagyavalkya here.

So, in order to reassure Bharadwaj and comfort him that he need not be ashamed at his confusion about the reality of Lord Ram which shows him in poor light because he is reputed to be an enlightened and wise sage, Yagyavalkya cited the example of Uma, who is a goddess and the consort of Lord Shiva. If she can be confused and deluded, then after all Bharadwaj is a human being, and so therefore there is nothing to feel guilty about and be ashamed of.

The story of how Uma got deluded about the truth and divinity of Lord Ram, the evil consequences of this delusion, and how Lord Shiva later helped her overcome this delusion and its attendant doubts and perplexities has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 121.]

चौ०. एक बार त्रेता जुग माहीं । संभु गए कुंभज रिषि पाहीं ॥ १ ॥
संग सती जगजननि भवानी । पूजे रिषि अखिलेस्वर जानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēka bāra trētā juga māhīm. sambhu ga'ē kumbhaja riṣi pāhīm. 1.
saṅga satī jagajanani bhavānī. pūjē riṣi akhilēsvara jānī. 2.

Once upon a time, during the age of Treta¹, Lord Shiva went to the hermitage of sage Kumbhaj (or sage Agastya)². (1)

The Lord (Shiva) was accompanied by Sati, his divine consort who is also known as Bhavani, and who is the great Mother of the entire creation. The sage reverentially worshipped him, knowing that he (Shiva) was the Lord of the entire creation. (2)

[Note—¹Trētā juga:- This era is equivalent to 3600 divine years of Gods, and 12,96,000 human years. It is second era of the 4-era Hindu cycle of creation and

destruction. It was during this Yug that Lord Ram manifested on earth as an incarnation of Vishnu, and it concluded when the Lord left the earth for his heavenly abode.

²Why did Lord Shiva choose to go to sage Agastya's hermitage to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and discuss the Lord's glory with him? Well, the plausible reason is that this sage was a great devotee of Lord Ram, no less than Lord Shiva himself. Agastya's devotion and faith in Lord Ram was exemplary, and Lord Ram had himself fell at the sage's feet to pay obeisance to him when they met in the forest during Lord Ram's visit to his hermitage. At that time, the sage has acknowledged that he is somewhat acquainted with the divinity and glory of Lord Ram, of course due to the Lord's grace upon him, but he had then asked the Lord to bless him with the ability to be able to narrate his divine glories to others. These facts are clear in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1, and 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-13 that precede Doha no. 13.

So obviously therefore, Lord Shiva thought that amongst all the great sages of the time, sage Agastya was the most competent preacher of the story of Lord Ram—for Lord Ram had himself granted this boon to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 13.

That said, let us now have a brief knowledge about who the great sage Agastya, also known as Kumbhaj, was.

Well, sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a 'Brahm-rishi' or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as 'Kumbha'. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vasistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the

demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, and (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva. This feat of sage Agastya is cited by Goswami Tulsidas in his epic narration of the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term ‘Agastya’ became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as ‘Agastya’, and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a ‘bright star’ and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the ‘Agastya Sanhita’ which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.]

रामकथा मुनिबर्ज बखानी । सुनी महेस परम सुखु मानी ॥ ३ ॥
रिषि पूछी हरिभगति सुहाई । कही संभु अधिकारी पाई ॥ ४ ॥

rāmakathā munibarja bakhānī. sunī mahēsa parama sukhu mānī. 3.
riṣi pūchī haribhagati suhāī. kahī sambhu adhikārī pāī. 4.

The exalted sage narrated the divine story of Lord Ram in great detail, hearing which Lord Mahesh (Shiva) found immense sense of contentedness, happiness and bliss¹. (3)

The sage in turn asked Lord Shiva to preach him about the virtue of Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram (known as “haribhagati”, for Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu who is known as ‘Hari’), for this narration describing the glories of Bhakti is very pleasant to hear and a bestower of beatitude, and which Lord Shiva willingly described as he found the sage eligible for this knowledge².# (4)

[Note—¹The wise sage Agastya knew that Lord Ram was very dear to Lord Shiva, and therefore he concluded that the best way to please Shiva was to narrate Lord Ram’s story in detail. When an honoured guest arrives, the host would try his best to please him and entertain him. Lord Shiva was not an ordinary guest; he was the Lord of creation, “Mahesh”, the ‘Great Ish—Great Lord’. Naturally therefore he should be pleased with something that is the best, and nothing else was the ‘best’ than narration of the divine story of Lord Ram.

From the perspective of the narration of the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the epic book “Ram Charit Manas”, this communion between sage Agastya and Lord Shiva forms the basis, the background against which the story was revealed.

As we would discover in due course of time, Sati was not convinced with whatever Agastya said about the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram, and she harboured her grave doubts just as Bharadwaj had his. Sage Yagyawalkya had chosen this episode of Lord Shiva going to sage Agastya and the latter narrating the divine story of Lord Ram in the presence of Sati to reassure Bharadwaj that he need not feel guilty or ashamed at having some traces of ignorance in him because even Sati, the

Mother of creation and the divine consort of Lord Shiva too had her own doubts and she too was eclipsed by the shadow of ignorance inspite of Lord Shiva, the greatest of all the gods and the wisest among them, being her husband and even trying hard to dissuade her from harbouring ignorance as this negative character undermines a person's nobility and wisdom. How Sati (Shiva's wife) was swept off her feet and fell prey to ignorance, and the consequences she faced will be narrated in due course in this story—from Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Doha no. 64.

²As a return favour, the sage asked the Lord (Shiva) to enlighten him about the pleasant and spiritually elevating virtues of “Hari-Bhakti” (devotion for Lord Hari, or Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being and Lord God of the world whose incarnation on earth was in the form of Lord Ram).

Lord Shiva had been so pleased with the sage and so obliged by him (because the sage had narrated the whole divine story of Lord Ram) that he told the sage the characteristic features of “Hari-Bhakti” as desired, realising that the sage was eligible to hear it.

A similar case was that of Kaagbhusund. Lord Shiva had revealed the divine story of Lord Ram to him when he found that Kaagbhusund is eligible to hear it. And the eligibility criterion in case of Kaagbhusund was that he had ‘devotion for Lord Ram’. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 30.

So we see two aspects of eligibility condition here that would make one dear to Lord Ram and deemed to be fit to be called a devotee of the Lord: one is having ‘devotion for Lord Ram’ which entitles a person to know the esoteric secrets of the story of the Lord as was the case of Kaagbhusund, and the other is ‘deriving joy and bliss by narrating the story of Lord Ram’ that entitles him to have devotion as was the case with sage Agastya.

What is the lesson we learn from it: It is that narrating and hearing the divine story of Lord Ram and having devotion for the Lord complement and supplement each other. They are like the two sides of the same coin. One devoid of the other reduces their true potential and spiritual value.

The concept of “Hari Bhakti”, meaning having undiluted devotion and a sense of absolute surrender and loyalty to Lord Hari, or Lord Ram, has been elaborately described at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas.

The concept of “Bhakti” has a very broad sweep, and it incorporates such glorious virtues as having, inter alia, sincere devotion, dedication and firm faith in the Lord God, total submission and surrender before the Lord God, having unwavering love, conviction and belief in the Lord God, to be completely dedicated to the Lord and surrender oneself to him, having reverence and veneration for the Lord God, having no other solace, succour, hope and respite except the Lord, treating oneself as a humble servant of the Lord God and feeling fortunate at being able to serve the Lord God, remembering the Lord God at all times and offering each and every deed done and action taken to the Lord without expecting anything in return, remaining unruffled and calm under all circumstances with the view that these are the wishes of the Lord God and one has no right to get overly excited over them. In brief, Bhakti entails honouring the divine forces of creation in the form of some chosen deity who personifies the grandest virtues in creation.

The *Holy Bible* explains the essence of Bhakti in very succinct words as follows — ‘In him we live and move, and have our being’ (Acts, 17/28), ‘Trust in him

at all times, you people, pour out your heart before him; for God is a refuge for us' (Psalms, 62/8).

The *Narad Bhakti Sutra*, literally meaning the fundamental formula that defines what comprises devotion for Lord God as enunciated by sage Narad who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, is a treatise on Bhakti that is succinct and is universally respected as being one of the best in its genre. It has only 84 Sanskrit verses.

It says that the easiest (verse no. 58) and the best instrument for God-realisation (verse no. 80, 81) is 'Bhakti' because it gives the spiritual fruit or reward for which a person does any auspicious effort in the first place (verse no. 26, 30). It is superior to Gyan (knowledge), to Yoga (meditation), to Karma (rituals and religious observances), and other spiritual traditions (verse no. 25). Bhakti is a complete and wholesome way to attain self and god realisation; it needs no other support or help (verse no. 59).

Bhakti gives eternal peace and bliss of the highest order (verse no. 60).

Bhakti is divided into two aspects—(i) Paraa Bhakti, and (ii) A-paraa Bhakti. The A-paraa Bhakti is divided further into (a) Gauna Bhakti, and (b) Mukhya Bhakti. The Paraa Bhakti is the aim of spiritual practice, while the A-paraa Bhakti is a means to achieve success in it.

Paraa Bhakti is attainment of extreme and eternal bliss obtained upon God-realisation which is equivalent to self-realisation because the Parmatma, the Supreme Soul and the cosmic Spirit, is the same as the individual's Atma or his own soul. It is like nectar, and gives immortality and supreme form of bliss (verse nos. 2 and 3); it helps eliminate worldly desires and temptations (verse no. 7).

The A-paraa Bhakti involves some methods to make this possible—such as having interest in worshipping the Lord (verse no. 16), having desire and interest in listening to the stories associated with the Lord (verse no. 17), to be engrossed in the thoughts of the 'self' or the Atma (verse no. 18), surrendering all deeds to the Lord and always remembering him (verse no. 19).

But it must be noted that Gyan or truthful knowledge of the reality is also conducive to attaining nearness or oneness with God (verse no. 28). In other words, Gyan and Bhakti go hand in hand; they aid each other instead of constracting one another (verse no. 29). Bhakti is the only way that leads to Mukti—liberation and deliverance from this world of transmigration leading to permanent rest for the soul (verse no. 33). Bhakti helps one to break free from the shackling effects of this deluding and entrapping world (verse no. 33).

The methods by which Bhakti can be established and made to bloom in one's heart are narrated in verse nos. 34-42 as follows—to abandon attachments to material sense objects and sensual pleasures of this world, to desist from self gratification of the sense organs (verse no. 35), to do Bhajan—or the constant remembrance of the Lord, his divine name and divine deeds (verse nos. 36, 79), to hear and sing the divine stories, the virtues and the holy name of the Lord along with others in the community (verse no. 37), to have contact and communion with holy men such as great saints (verse no. 38-39, 42) which is obtained when the Lord is kind (verse no. 40), to treat true devotees of the Lord as being equivalent to the Lord himself (verse no. 41), to offer all the deeds and their fruits or rewards to the Lord (verse no. 61) along with any trace of negativity such as desires, anger, pride etc. that may still linger on (verse no. 65), and in general doing everything that is auspicious and holy which makes it possible for him to enhance his level of Bhakti (verse no. 76).

Other aids to Bhakti are the following—Abandonment of the feeling of worldly happiness and joy on the one hand, and of sorrow, misery and grief on the other hand, eliminating any sort of desires and passions such as for gain or profit of any kind, and to be careful not to waste a single moment and be prepared for death that may come any time (verse no. 77). Practicing the virtues of ‘Ahinsaa’ (non-violence), ‘Satya’ (truthfulness), ‘Shaucha’ (cleanliness and purity), ‘Dayaa’ (mercy and compassion), and ‘Aastikta’ (belief in God and the Holy Spirit as well as the teaching of the scriptures) etc. (verse no. 78).

The main obstacle in Bhakti is bad company (verse no. 43), as well as Kaam (wordly desires and passions), Krodh (anger) and Moha (infatuations, attachments, delusions, entanglements) that lead to Smriti-bhransa (failure to remember the horrible consequences of committing sins and getting entangled in the world), Buddhi-naash (destruction of intelligent thinking and wisdom), and Sarwa-naash (complete ruin) (verse no. 44).

Maya (the web of delusions so characteristic of this world) is a great obstacle and it is overcome only by detachment from all things (verse no. 46). Other methods of overcoming Maya are to live a serene life away from the world (verse no. 67), to break all worldly fetters and bondages, to become neutral by rising above the three Gunas of Sata, Raja and Tama, and to discard attempts to acquire and then worry about the protection of worldly possessions (verse no. 47), to not bother about the fruits of one’s deeds and labour but do one’s duty as ordained by destiny, peacefully and stoically (verse no. 48), and to abandon even the Vedas (excessive study of the scriptures once the basic knowledge and guidance has been obtained) and become free from all doubts, confusions, perplexities and consternations (verse no. 49).

One must avoid the following also—talking about or remembering anything pertaining to women, material wealth, hearsay and talks that create doubts in the mind about the truth of the Holy Spirit, talks about one’s enemies or those who are unfavourable—because all these things unnecessarily create vexation for the spirit (verse no. 63); negative characters such as Abhmaan and Dambha (pride and arrogance accompanied by deceit, conceit and pretensions) etc. (verse no. 64); getting involved in worthless debates and arguments (verse no. 74).

The ‘Gauna’ Bhakti is like a dumb man attempting to describe some delicious food (verse no. 52)—i.e. it is a silent form of devotion for the Lord which has no external signs. Here, the devotee sips the nectar of spiritual bliss that comes with self and god realisation without showing any signs of his spiritual enlightenment. It can be experienced and never be described; nothing more remains to be attained or desired for after that (verse no. 54).

The ‘Gauna Bhakti’ is of three types (verse no. 56)—(i) Saatvika, (ii) Raajsik, and (iii) Taamsik. These are also called ‘Aarta-bhakti’, ‘Arthartha-bhakti’, and ‘Jigyaasu-bhakti’. Gauna Bhakti is easy because it does not require any effort as it is done directly by having natural love for the God that arises in one’s heart. It leads to internal peace and bliss (verse nos. 58-60).

A true and sincere devotee of the Lord acquires a holy aura around him which makes him effuse divinity and holiness similar to the Lord, thereby making their presence beneficial for the whole world around them (verse no. 68-71). Like the universality and oneness of the Supreme Being, Supreme Spirit, the Supreme Truth and the Supreme Reality, such realised devotees of the Lord have no distinction as to their caste, religion, knowledge, physical form, birth, level of worldly prosperity or poverty, or the type of deeds done by them—because they have risen above such mundane considerations (verse no. 72-73).

The 9 types or paths of Bhakti, called the 'Navadhaa Bhakti', according to Ram Charit Manas, are the following:- (1) hearing about the Lord's virtues, glories, deeds, fames, holy name etc.; (2) talking and discussing about the Lord; (3) remembering him; (4) serving his holy feet; (5) adoring and worshipping him; (6) honouring and revering him; (7) submission and humility before him, treating him as a friend and companion; (8) concentrating on one's pure-self or Atma; (9) and treating the Atma (soul) as being the manifestation of the Lord.

Tulsidas has used this 'episode of Shabari' to elucidate on the concept of 9-fold path of Bhakti in the holy book's Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 36.

The importance of 'Bhakti' has been emphasized by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86, to Doha no. 87 Ka.

Refer also to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas where the concept of "Bhakti" have been elaborately described:—

(a) Ayodhya Kand—Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93; Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 137; Doha no. 204; Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 5 that precede Doha no. 218; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 219; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265; Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 291; Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 299; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

(b) Aranya Kand—Chaupai line nos. 2-9 that precede Doha no. 16; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 43.

(c) Kishkindha Kand—Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 12.

(d) Sundar Kand— Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23; Doha no. 46, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 6 that precede Doha no. 47; Doha no. 48 and Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede it.

(e) Uttar Kand— Chanda line no. 5-16 that precedes Doha no. 14; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precedes Doha no. 86; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 87 and line no. 2 of Doha 87 Ka; Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 116; Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precedes Doha no. 119; Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 120; Doha no. 122 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 15-19.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Dohawali", Doha nos. 53-54, 87-88, 126-127, 134-140, 145, 147, 152, .

Other references: (a) Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Aranya Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 37-39; and Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 60-72.

(b) The Tripadvibhuta Maha Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 8, paragraph nos. 12-14 describe the importance and significance of Bhakti.

#A very interesting observation can be made here. Lord Shiva is the one who had originally conceived the story of the Ramayan known as "Ram Charit Manas". From him it came to the knowledge of Kaagbhusund, and from the latter to sage Yagyavalkya. Later on it spread far and wide and became commonly known.

When this good word reached Shiva that the divine story of the Ramayan which he had revealed is benefiting a large number of Jivas and aiding in their spiritual welfare, he surely felt happy and contented. After all, all good things and all good words need to be shown the light of day and helped to be spread for the long-

term good of the society and mankind, while all bad things need to be buried and concealed for they cause harm to the world at large.

So first Lord Shiva was glad, but after some thought he wondered if the real intent and purpose of the story, which was to spread spiritual bliss and provide succour and solace to the Jiva's tormented soul and help them develop devotion for Lord God amidst the world's churn and flux, is being truly fulfilled or not. Is the integrity of original story maintained, or has it been diluted, corrupted and deformed during its transmission and propagation from one sage to another, from one preacher to another, from one listener to another, from one generation to another.

Therefore, Lord Shiva wished to verify facts and ascertain whether the story Kaagbhusund narrates is true to the original version he (Shiva) had revealed to him, and whether or not any distortion has crept in the story amongst those who had heard it from Kaagbhusund and narrated it to others down the line. For Shiva feared that usually this happens, because often times the preacher is not correctly understood by his disciple who grows up to become a preacher himself, and therefore the wrong understanding percolates down the line to corrupt the next generation of preachers who tweak and twist the original version either due to their lack of grasp of the original story when they had first been taught by their own teacher, or due to the desire to please the audience which compels them to add a pinch of spice to the story, thereby ruining its pristine purity and authenticity.

Hence, Lord Shiva first went to hear it from Kaagbhusund. He was satisfied that it is indeed the same story he had conceived earlier in his Mana. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.}

He was absolutely sure that Yagyavalkya cannot distort it for he was the most enlightened and the wisest sage of that time. There were however chances that those who have heard it from him or other sages may have injected some novelty in the story to spice it up. So he decided to check it from a third preacher who was preaching this story to others but who had not directly heard it from Yagyavalkya as was the case with Bharadwaj. So, Lord Shiva went to sage Aastya to hear the divine story of the Ramayan being narrated. He heard it attentively and was satisfied. It filled him with spiritual solace, joy and bliss as he expected the story to do. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51.}

But there was a problem with sage Agastya. What was it? Though it is true that his narration of the story of the Ramayan was correct to the last dot, the sage could not develop the virtue of 'Bhakti' or devotion for Lord Ram inside his inner-self, something which is the main objective of preaching, listening and reading this story. The wise sage acknowledged this shortcoming in himself, and asked Lord Shiva to preach him about 'Bhakti' so that he becomes fulfilled and feels fully rewarded for having heard the Ramayan himself and endeavouring to spread the good word by preaching it to others. Shiva willingly obliged the sage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 48.}]

कहत सुनत रघुपति गुन गाथा । कछु दिन तहाँ रहे गिरिनाथा ॥ ५ ॥

मुनि सन बिदा मागि त्रिपुरारी । चले भवन सँग दच्छकुमारी ॥ ६ ॥

kahata sunata raghupati guna gāthā. kachu dina tahām̃ rahē girināthā. 5.
muni sana bidā māgi tripurārī. calē bhavana sam̃ga dacchakumārī. 6.

The Lord of the mountains (i.e. Lord Shiva)¹ stayed there (at the hermitage of sage Agastya) for some days², hearing and narrating (as well as discussing) the divine glories of Lord Ram. (5)

Then after some time, Lord Tripurari³ asked the sage to give him permission to leave, and then went to his own abode (at Mt. Kailash)⁴ along with the daughter of Daksha⁵ (i.e. Sati, his consort). (6)

[Note—¹Shiva is known as the “Lord of the mountains” as he has his permanent abode in Mt. Kailash, one of the holiest peaks of the mighty mountain range of the Himalayas.

²When Lord Shiva had once gone to the hermitage of saintly crow Kaagbhusund disguised as a swan in order to hear the narration of Lord Ram’s divine story, the Lord had stayed there also for many days—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 57.

Once when the crow saint Kaagbhusund had gone to the hermitage of his own guru he had stayed at the latter’s place, hearing the divine story of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 113.

³Demon Tripurasur/Tarakasur—Tarakasur (pronounced as ‘Taara-kaa-sur’) was the son of Vajraanga and his consort Varaangi. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) as a result of which the creator Brahma had granted him several boons which had made him invincible. He was killed by Lord Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati. He had three sons—Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali. They had also pleased Brahma and by his blessings built three great cities, collectively called ‘Tripura’. These cities were made of gold, silver and iron. These three demon brothers were collectively called Tripurasur—the demons of the three cities. When they became a nuisance for the Gods, Shiva destroyed these three cities and the demons with one arrow. Therefore he got the name of Tripurari—one who destroyed the three enemy cities.

The story of Tripurasur with a slight variation is narrated in Bhagwat Mahapurān, 7/10/53-58. According to it, once when the demons were defeated by the gods, they went to take refuge with the greatest demon of them all, the mighty demon named ‘Maya Daanav’. He was the one who had created the golden city of Lanka for Ravana.

Maya Danav created three huge planes made of gold, silver and iron. These planes were so huge that they resembled entire cities and were well provided for with all the things necessary for comfortable living. Maya Daanav handed them to the three chief demons named Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali who were said to be the son of Tarkasur. The special quality of these planes was that they were hidden from view and flew stealthily. Emboldened by being invisible, the demons went on the rampage, plundering and laying to waste the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the sky. The gods could not fight them as these demons were invisible. Besides this, these three city-like planes had a pond of nectar each, the contents of which made the demons invincible and beyond the reach of death.

Frustrated and flabbergasted, the gods approached Lord Shiva to get rid of the demons. Lord Shiva invoked his specially empowered arrow known as the 'Pashupatastra'. When shot, it produced countless arrows spewing fierce tongues of flame. Though these arrows burnt the three cities or planes ("Tripurs"), the demons however managed to survive by taking a dip in the pond of nectar that was present in each of the three places.

Confused, Lord Shiva invoked Lord Vishnu, the maverick Lord who knows every trick in creation as he is the Supreme Being, to find some solution. Vishnu disguised himself as a cow and made the Creator Brahma a calf. They went to these ponds and drank the nectar. The demons were so dazed by the Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers) that they could not respond and react. After that, Vishnu prepared for the great war—creating the chariot from Dharma (righteousness), the charioteer from Gyan (knowledge), the war standard from Vairagya (renunciation), the horses from Aishwarya (fame and might), bow from Tapa (penance), the body armour from Vidya (skills), arrows from Kriya (deeds and dynamism), and all other paraphernalia of war by employing other mystical powers he had.

Then, on an auspicious moment of the asterism of "Abhijit" (conquer now), Lord Shiva rode this chariot and burnt the three cities by a single arrow.

According to the Ramayana of Valmiki, Baal Kand, Canto 75, two great bows were made from the bones of Dadhichi. One was known as "Sarang" and the other was known as "Pinak". The former was held by Lord Vishnu, and the latter by Lord Shiva. Vishnu killed the demons with his Sarang bow, while Shiva used his Pinak to destroy the three cities.

Another version of who the demon "Tripurasur" was appears in Skanda Puran, Aawantya Reva-Khand. It says that the son of the demon king Bali was known as 'Baanasur' (pronounced "Baanaa-sur"). He had thousand arms. He worshipped Lord Shiva for a thousand years. Pleased with him, Lord Shiva asked him to seek a boon, upon which Baanasur requested the Lord to provide him with a city that is so invincible that none of the gods can ever conquer it, except of course by Lord Shiva whom he had worshipped as his deity. Shiva granted him his wish.

The cunning Baanasur then decided to please the other three gods of the Trinity, i.e. Lords Vishnu and Brahma. So he worshipped them one by one and extracted similar boons from them as he had done from Shiva. Once done, he now had three invincible cities that symbolized his sway and domain covering the three dimensions of creation—viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world. Then he went mad with recklessness, plundering and pillaging at will. Terrified, the gods approached Lord Shiva as he was the one who had initially blessed Baanasur, and also because the demon had himself exempted Shiva from the boon of immunity from destruction. Then, Shiva stringed his bow called Pinak, mounted an arrow called Aghor, and angrily shot it at the three cities ruled by Baanasur. This arrow instantly burnt and reduced the three cities to ashes. Their residue fell in the holy river Narmada. Then Baanasur fervently prayed to Lord Shiva to be pleased with him and give him abode in his own divine Loka known as the 'Shiva-Loka', the divine abode of Shiva in the heaven.

The Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 describes that Lord Shiva is also known as the slayer of the demon Tirpurasur. Hence, Shiva or Rudra is also called Tripurari. The three cities ruled by Tripurasur symbolised the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world.

⁴Lord Shiva's abode is on Mt. Kailash—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 57; Baal Kand, Doha no. 58 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 6.

⁵Shiva's consort Sati was the daughter of Daksha Prajapati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Doha no. 60 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8; Doha no. 61; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63.

The story of Daksha is narrated as a note to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60 herein below, that we shall be reading soon.]

तेहि अवसर भंजन महिभारा । हरि रघुबंस लीन्ह अवतारा ॥ ७ ॥
पिता बचन तजि राजु उदासी । दंडक बन बिचरत अबिनासी ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi avasara bhañjana mahibhārā. hari raghubansa līnha avatārā. 7.
pitā bacana taji rāju udāsī. daṇḍaka bana bicarata abināsī. 8.

It was the occasion when Lord Hari (Vishnu) had revealed himself as a human being (in the body of Lord Ram) in the family lineage of king Raghu in order to eliminate the burden of the earth¹. (7)

The imperishable and eternal Lord (i.e. Lord Vishnu as Lord Ram) was wandering at that time (i.e. at the time when Shiva was on his way to his own abode from the hermitage of sage Agastya) in the dense and un-inhabitable part of the forest known as Dandak². The Lord had renounced his kingdom and had gone to the forest attired like a hermit on the instruction of his father (Dasrath)³. (8)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Sortha/Doha no. 183—to Doha no. 192. Briefly, the demons, led by their king Ravana, had wreaked havoc on earth, killing and plundering innocent living beings and committing horrendous crimes. Peeved and disgusted, Mother Earth and the Gods prayed to Lord Vishnu to save them. The Lord promised them that he will descend to earth as a human being in the form of Lord Ram and take birth in the royal household of Dasrath who had done severe Tapa in his previous life and had requested the Lord to become his son. So, two birds would be killed with a single stone as it were—Dasrath's desires would be fulfilled, and the demons would be eliminated at the same time.

²Lord Ram's stay in the Dandak forest has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 46 which marks the end of this Kand.

³The episode of king Dasrath being forced to agree to give his unwilling consent to send Lord Ram to 14 years of forest exile due to family intrigue having its origin in the selfishness of his third wife Kaikeyi who had thrown a tantrum is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 79.]

दो०. हृदयँ बिचारत जात हर केहि बिधि दरसनु होइ ।
गुप्त रूप अवतरेउ प्रभु गाँ जान सबु कोइ ॥ ४८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

hṛdayam̐ bicārata jāta hara kēhi bidhi darasanu hō'i.
gupta rūpa avatarē'u prabhu ga'ēm̐ jāna sabu kō'i. 48 (a).

As Lord Har (Shiva) was on his way home, he kept wondering how he would have an opportunity to get a divine glimpse of the Lord (Sri Ram) here (in the Dandak forest). The Lord (Vishnu) had taken a birth as a human being secretly (in order to eliminate the demons), and though it was a secret for others, but every enlightened person (such as sages and seers) was aware of this fact. (Doha no. 48 Ka)

[Note—The fact that Lord Vishnu had come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram was kept a secret because otherwise if the demons got a hint it would be impossible to get rid of them. Only those who had great spiritual powers were aware of the Lord's incarnation. Lord Shiva was obviously privy to this because it was he who had directed the Gods and Mother Earth to pray to Lord Vishnu to overcome their problems—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 185; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 48 Kha herein below.]

सो०. संकर उर अति छोभु सती न जानहिं मरमु सोइ ।
तुलसी दरसन लोभु मन डरु लोचन लालची ॥ ४८ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

saṅkara ura ati chōbhū satī na jānahiṁ maramu sō'i.
tulasī darasana lōbhū mana ḍaru lōcana lālacī. 48 (b).

Lord Shiva's mind and heart were highly uneasy and anxious¹, but Sati was not aware of the reason why it was so.

Tulsidas says that Lord Shiva's Mana (mind and heart) was overcome with apprehension and he was on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand his eyes were eager to have a divine Darshan (viewing) of Lord Ram, and on the other hand he did not want to reveal the true identity of Lord Ram by first showing his eagerness, and then when the opportunity actually arrived, by paying his obeisance to the Lord (Ram) and bowing at his feet (because these actions would let the cat out of the bag, as it were). (Sortha no. 48 Kha)

[Note—¹The reasons why Shiva was unhappy and restless are the following—

(i) Lord Ram had gone to the forest in order to fulfil his promise to the gods that he would eliminate the demon king Ravana, and for this the Lord had to suffer a lot personally by having to wonder in the wild forest infested with wild beast and demons. Lord Shiva loved Lord Ram so much that he had enshrined the Lord's image in his heart like one enshrines a deity in a temple. Shiva was pained to see his beloved

and revered Lord Ram wondering barefoot in the wild and undergoing all the hardships that are associated with life in the dense forest. This is one reason why Shiva became uneasy when he saw Lord Ram wandering in the Dandak forest as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48 herein above.

(ii) Shiva was worried that the enemy of the gods, i.e. the demon king Ravana, was his (Shiva's) ardent devotee, and the irony is that Ravana was to be killed by Lord Ram whom Shiva worships. This was a piquant situation. What would happen if Ravana comes to know of this fact, or if Ravana approaches Shiva to help him against Ram in the epic war at Lanka? Should Shiva go to Lord Ram while he is alone in the secluded part of the forest and discuss this problem with him, or should he desist from it?

(iii) The other reason for Shiva's restlessness was that he was anxious whether or not he (Shiva) would get an opportunity to meet his Lord, Sri Ram, and pay his obeisance to him without the world knowing it. Shiva did not wish to let the secret about Lord Ram's true identity to be leaked because that would warn the demons. But at the same time he did not want to miss this golden opportunity to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram while he was all alone in the forest. This was the reason for his anxiety and restlessness for he did not know how this will come about without divulging the secret—because when anyone came to know that Lord Shiva had personally bowed before Ram and paid his obeisance to him then it would be easy to conclude who Ram actually was as everyone knew that Lord Ram is Shiva's revered Lord God whose holy name Shiva keeps repeating at all times,

Shiva could not openly go and visit Lord Ram because, for one, Sati was with him and there was a fair chance that she would chatter about the Lord's incarnation and reveal the secret to others. Shiva could not even stop midway indefinitely on his journey to his abode in Mt. Kailash through the path of the sky, and so it was very uncertain if he would ever have the chance to see Lord Ram in the short span of time while he was passing overhead the forest through the path of the sky. It could only happen if Lord Ram himself decides to create a favourable circumstance where it becomes possible for Shiva to see the Lord somewhere in the open area of the forest.

As we shall read shortly, this indeed happened. Lord Ram obliged Shiva by appearing on an open stretch of the forest path to enable the latter to see him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 50 herein below.]

चौ०. रावन मरन मनुज कर जाचा । प्रभु बिधि बचनु कीन्ह चह साचा ॥ १ ॥

जौं नहिं जाउँ रहइ पछितावा । करत बिचारु न बनत बनावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāvana marana manuja kara jācā. prabhu bidhi bacanu kīnha caha sācā. 1.
jauṁ nahim jā'um' raha'i pachitāvā. karata bicāru na banata banāvā. 2.

[Shiva was lost in thoughts. On the one hand the true identity of Lord Ram had to be kept a secret, and on the other hand this golden opportunity of having a divine view of the Lord cannot be allowed to be missed. So, Shiva was thinking as follows—]

‘It was concluded (i.e. decided after close scrutiny and analysis) that the demon king Ravana could only be killed by a human being, and the Lord wished to make the words of Vidhi (the creator Brahma), given as a boon (to Ravana), truthful¹.

(This was the reason for Lord Hari becoming a human being in the form of Lord Ram.) (1)

On the other hand, if I (Shiva) do not go to have a Darshan of my revered Lord (Sri Ram), then I will regret forever for missing this opportunity.'

Thus, Shiva was on the horns of a great dilemma, not being able to decide what to do and what not to. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 177. Ravana had done severe Tapa, and when Brahma appeared before him to grant his wishes, Ravana asked that he may not be killed by anyone else except a human being and a monkey. Brahma had said 'okay' with a rider: he told Ravana that everyone who has been born must die one day, and even he, Brahma, had his life-span determined before he came into existence. So, if the boon is to be made effective then Ravana must ask for some exceptions of his choice. Ravana had thought that if he could conquer the gods, and especially the 'death god', on the strength of the boon of immunity from death as granted by Brahma, then it would be impossible for such weaklings as humans and monkeys to ever stand against him and harm him. So he told Brahma that he decided to exempt humans and monkeys from the blanket of immunity of his death. Lord Vishnu exploited this loophole in the shield of immunity from death granted by Brahma to Ravana and became a human being in the form of Lord Ram, while the rest of the gods became monkeys to help the Lord successfully kill Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 7-9.]

एहि बिधि भए सोचबस ईसा । तेही समय जाइ दससीसा ॥ ३ ॥
लीन्ह नीच मारीचहि संगी । भयउ तुरत सोइ कपट कुरंगी ॥ ४ ॥
करि छलु मूढ़ हरी बैदेही । प्रभु प्रभाउ तस बिदित न तेही ॥ ५ ॥
मृग बधि बंधु सहित हरि आए । आश्रमु देखि नयन जल छाए ॥ ६ ॥
बिरह बिकल नर इव रघुराई । खोजत बिपिन फिरत दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥

ēhi bidhi bha'ē sōcabasa īsā. tēhī samaya jā'i dasasīsā. 3.
līnha nīca māricahi saṅgā. bhaya'u turata sō'i kapaṭa kuraṅgā. 4.
kari chalu mūrha harī baidēhī. prabhu prabhā'u tasa bidita na tēhī. 5.
mṛga badhi bandhu sahita hari ā'ē. āśramu dēkhi nayana jala chā'ē. 6.
biraha bikala nara iva raghurā'ī. khōjata bipina phirata dō'u bhā'ī. 7.

[Verse nos. 3-7 describe the moment when Lord Shiva got the opportunity to see Lord Ram.]

In this way (as narrated in previous verses), Isha (Lord Shiva) was lost in deep thoughts.

During that period of time it so happened that the ten-headed demon king Ravana [3] had taken Marich with him who transformed himself as a golden deer (when the two reached the hermitage of Lord Ram in the forest, at a place near the banks of river Godavari) [4]. (3-4)

The wicked fellow (Ravana) deceitfully stole (kidnapped) Vaidehi (Sita, the daughter of king Videha of Janakpur, and the wife of Lord Ram) because he (Ravana) was not aware of the immense powers and potentials of the Lord (Sri Ram). (5)

Lord Hari (Ram) returned to the hermitage with his younger brother (Laxman) after having slayed the imposter deer (i.e. Marich disguised as a golden deer). When he saw that the hermitage was empty (because Sita had been abducted by Ravana), the Lord's eyes were filled with tears. (6)

Lord Ram, the king of the Raghu dynasty, was overcome with grief and anxiety. Thereafter, the two brothers went out in the forest to search for Sita. (7)

[Note—This entire incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26—to Doha no. 28; and Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 30.

The story in brief is as follows—While Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita lived in Panchavati, a demoness named Supernakha was infatuated by the beauty of Lord Ram. She disguised herself as a beautiful lady and approached Lord Ram with a proposal of marriage. When the Lord refused, she became furious. Then the Lord ordered Laxman to cut-off her nose and ears as punishment. She went to her brothers, Khar and Dushan, to complain, and the duo collected their demon army to attack the hermitage of Lord Ram to avenge their sister's humiliation. In the battle that ensued, all the demons were killed.

Then Supernakha went to Ravana to instigate him to take revenge. Ravana went to Marich and forced him to accompany him to Panchavati so that he could kidnap Sita, the wife of Lord Ram to settle scores with the Lord. Marich became a golden deer to lure Sita who wished to have this wonderful deer when she saw it. Lord Ram went very far away in an attempt to catch it, and finally shot the deer with his arrow. While dying, Marich called out for Laxman. When Sita heard the name of Laxman being called out, she thought that Lord Ram was in danger. She forced Laxman to go out and help his brother. Once Laxman had gone, Ravana approached Sita disguised as a mendicant. When Sita came out to give alms to him, Ravana grabbed her and forcibly put her on his chariot to take her away to be kept in captivity at Lanka, his capital city.

Lord Ram and Laxman returned to find the hermitage empty. Then the Lord behaved like an ordinary man, grieving and lamenting at the loss of his wife. The two brothers set out in the wild to search for her.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Doha no. 28; and Chaupai line nos. 1-17 that precede Doha no. 30.

It was at this time that Lord Shiva saw his revered Lord Ram wandering in the forest.]

कबहूँ जोग बियोग न जाकें । देखा प्रगट बिरह दुखु ताकें ॥ ८ ॥

kabahūṁ' jōga biyōga na jākēm. dēkhā pragaṭa biraha dukhu tākēm. 8.

It is indeed a wonder that he who is never affected by either union or separation should be overcome with grief of separation (from his beloved wife Sita). (8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 7-17 that precede Doha no. 30; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39.

The answer to the question “why did Lord Ram behave in such a way that made him look like a man who is passionate and tied to the world with fetters of worldly relationships” is found in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 17 that precedes Doha no. 30; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 39.

These verses say in essence that this peculiar behaviour of Lord Ram, who was supposed to be above all worldly relationships and immune to emotional outbursts, is because he wanted to act his role as a human being to perfection, thereby signaling the natural traits in everyone born as a man, and secondly to show at once how a passionate man behaves vis-à-vis a man who practices courage and resilience.]

दो०. अति बिचित्र रघुपति चरित जानहिं परम सुजान ।
जे मतिमंद बिमोह बस हृदयँ धरहिं कछु आन ॥ ४९ ॥

dōhā.

ati bicitra raghupati carita jānahim parama sujāna.
jē matimanda bimōha basa hṛdayam̐ dharahim̐ kachu āna. 49.

Lord Raghupati’s (Sri Ram’s) deeds and his behaviour is very mysterious and beyond comprehension. Only the very wise and enlightened are able to decipher and understand them correctly. For the ignorant, those who are overcome with delusions, and those who are utterly stupid, these events are interpreted in the wrong light, and they harbour misgivings about the Lord in their hearts. (Doha no. 49)

[Note—The less enlightened think that Lord Ram was a human being who was grieving for his kidnapped wife, but those who are wise know that it was a clever trick by the Lord to keep the demons in the dark about his true identity of Lord Vishnu who had to find an excuse by which to confront the demons and eliminate them. Sita, who was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, was hidden in the fire element and what Ravana took away was merely her shadow. Besides this, Lord Ram had voluntarily made Sita to be stolen by Ravana so that the Lord could find an excuse to fight with her abductor and punish him by killing him in the battle that would ensue to rescue her from captivity.

This is very clear in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 119 where Lord Shiva himself removes the doubts about the authenticity of Lord Ram’s divinity when he had preached Parvati, his divine consort who had asked Shiva to enlighten her about the reality of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. संभु समय तेहि रामहि देखा । उपजा हियँ अति हरषु बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥
 भरि लोचन छबिसिंधु निहारी । कुसमय जानि न कीन्हि चिन्हारी ॥ २ ॥
 जय सच्चिदानंद जग पावन । अस कहि चलेउ मनोज नसावन ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sambhu samaya tēhi rāmahi dēkhā. upajā hiyam̐ ati haraṣu bisēṣā. 1.
 bhari lōcana chabisindhu nihārī. kusamaya jāni na kīnhi cinhārī. 2.
 jaya saccidānanda jaga pāvana. asa kahi calē'u manōja nasāvana. 3.

Lord Sambhu (Shiva) saw Lord Ram at that time¹, and this vision made him extremely exhilarated in his heart. (1)

The magnificent sight of Lord Ram made Shiva so ecstatic with joy and bliss that his eyes were filled with tears of happiness and delight. Shiva filled his eyes with this beautiful sight of Lord Ram who was like an ocean of magnificence and beauty². [That is, Shiva watched the enchanting form of Lord Ram to his heart's content, and till his eyes were fully satisfied with the view.]

But he (Shiva) refrained from introducing himself to Lord Ram to meet him personally to pay his obeisance to the Lord of his heart and exchange greetings, as this was not the proper time to do so³. (2)

So, Shiva merely saluted Lord Ram mentally, exclaiming—“Glory to the Lord who is Sacchidaanand (eternal and supreme Consciousness that is truthful, and a repository of exemplary spiritual blissfulness), and is the one who makes the world purified and clean of all sins and negativities.”

Saying thus, Lord Shiva, who had vanquished Manoj (Kamdeo-cupid)⁴, went ahead on his way (to his abode in Mt. Kailash). (3)

[Note—¹At which time did Shiva see Lord Ram? The answer is given in previous verses, in Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 48, and Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 49 herein above.

A very interesting point to note here is this—Lord Ram had gone southwards, towards Panchvati in the Dandakarnya forest and onwards to Lanka, from sage Agastya's hermitage (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 15-18 that precede Doha no. 13), while Lord Shiva was heading towards his abode in Mt. Kailash which lies in the northern Himalayan mountain range—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 103).

How did, therefore, Shiva saw Lord Ram? Well, the answer is that Lord Ram had been searching for Sita in the whole of the forest known as Dandak (refer: Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 30), and naturally he must have been at a spot north of the sage's hermitage when Shiva was passing overhead in the sky.

It is also possible that Lord Shiva had himself taken a detour and was wandering in the sky roughly around the area where Lord Ram was wandering on ground—in an apparent effort to see the latter.

²Lord Vishnu's divine sight is so fulfilling for the eyes that anyone who sees the Lord is mesmerised by his enchanting and bewitching form. Vishnu is so enchanting and

captivating to look at that it appears that he is like an endless ocean of beauty. This fact has been reiterated elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, when Manu and his wife Satrupa had prayed to the Lord, and the Lord had revealed himself before them, the couple were enthralled by the Lord's fabulous sight which was like an ocean of beauty and charm—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 148.

And the question 'how beautiful was Lord Ram that Manu and Satrupa were dazed?' is answered at the same place, viz. Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 148.

It was the same form that has now mesmerised Lord Shiva.

³Why was it not the proper time to meet Lord Ram? The answer is that it was essential to keep Lord Vishnu's incarnation as Lord Ram a top secret so that the Lord's mission of elimination of demons could be accomplished successfully. The demon king Ravana had to be killed by Lord Vishnu in the disguise of a human being (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49 above), and if it was revealed that Lord Ram, whose wife Sita was stolen by Ravana, was Lord Vishnu in his form, the whole planning would crumble. The demons must be kept in the dark about the true identity of Lord Ram, and if Shiva went to bow before Lord Ram and pay his respects to him, the demons would immediately come to know of this because surely they must have kept watch over the movement of Lord Ram after their king Ravana stole Sita. The cat would be out of the bag, and this was something which had to be avoided at all costs.

Obviously, if Shiva went to meet Lord Ram, there would have been a lot of showing of respect and affection between the two, such as mutually bowing their heads and paying respects to each other. It would have been impossible to keep the identity of Lord Ram concealed as Shiva would not bow to anyone except the Supreme Lord of creation.

Earlier in Doha no. 48 herein above we have already read that Shiva was very eager to have a divine vision of Lord Ram but was not sure how it would come to happen. Then we read that even as he walked towards his abode, his mind was occupied with this thought—whether he would be able to see Lord Ram, and whether it would be alright to meet the Lord and see him up close—refer: line no. 1 of Doha no. 48 Ka above.

It is always wise to have patience when the time is not proper ("Kusamaya")—this principle is observed by Parvati's mother later on in the story when she had refrained her emotions at the time of departure of her beloved daughter with Shiva after their marriage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 102.

⁴We shall soon be reading this story of how and why Lord Shiva vanquished Kamdeo. It appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.]

चले जात सिव सती समेता । पुनि पुनि पुलकत कृपानिकेता ॥ ४ ॥

calē jāta siva satī samētā. puni puni pulakata kṛpānikētā. 4.

Lord Shiva, accompanied by Sati, went on moving ahead on his path (for reasons explained above), but the body of the Lord, who is an abode of kindness, graciousness and mercy, was getting repeatedly thrilled all along the way (as he remembered the divine sight of Lord Ram he had just seen a while ago). (4)

[Note—Shiva was moving ahead towards his abode in Mt. Kailash, but his thoughts were fixed on Lord Ram. It ought to be noted here that Shiva was the greatest devotee of Lord Ram, and in fact this story of Ram Charit Manas was conceived by him in his Mana (heart and mind) and then was first revealed by him to his consort Uma—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33; (iii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 104; (b) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3; (c) Uttar Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 128; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 129; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 130.]

सतीं सो दसा संभु कै देखी । उर उपजा संदेहु बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
 संकरु जगतबंध जगदीसा । सुर नर मुनि सब नावत सीसा ॥ ६ ॥
 तिन्ह नृपसुतहि कीन्ह परनामा । कहि सच्चिदानंद परधामा ॥ ७ ॥
 भए मगन छबि तासु बिलोकी । अजहुँ प्रीति उर रहति न रोकी ॥ ८ ॥

satīm sō dasā sambhu kai dēkhī. ura upajā sandēhu bisēṣī. 5.
 saṅkaru jagatabandya jagadīsā. sura nara muni saba nāvata sīsā. 6.
 tinha nṛpasutahi kīnha paranāmā. kahi saccidānanda paradhāmā. 7.
 bha'e magana chabi tāsu bilōkī. ajahum' prīti ura rahati na rōkī. 8.

When Sati observed this emotional condition of Shiva, she was confused and great doubts sprouted in her heart.¹ (5)

She thought to herself—‘Lord Shankar (Shiva) is the Lord of the world (“Jagdish”) to whom the whole world pays its obeisance and whom the world worships. All the gods, the humans, the sages and seers bow their head before him (Shiva). (6)

The same Lord (i.e. Shiva) has bowed his head to the son of a king (“Nrip-sut” = the “king’s” “son”) and exclaimed that the latter was “Sacchidaanand” and “Pardhaam” (i.e. he is eternal, truthful and the supreme abode of spiritual bliss, as well as the supreme destination of the soul). [How is it possible?] (7)

Not only this, Shiva had also become so enchanted by the sight of this prince (Lord Ram) that he has been dazed since then. Shiva is so lost in the thoughts of Ram and is so much thrilled that he seems to be overcome with affection for the prince, and this affection does not seem to abate at all. It rather seems to overwhelm him. [I am utterly

confused, as Shiva is a renunciate god and he is not easily charmed by anything at all, let alone by the beautiful form of a human being. Besides this, Shiva is an enlightened god and the wisest amongst them. So, his odd behaviour has become a mystery for me.]² (8)

[Note—This confusion in the mind of Sati shows that she wasn't paying attention to the discussion between her husband Lord Shiva and sage Agastya as narrated earlier in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 48. The two had been discussing at length about the divinity of Lord Ram and had narrated the story of the Lord during the course of this discussion.

This state of immaturity of Sati's mind will come to the fore once again a little later when she would assume the form of Sita, the stolen wife of Lord Ram, and walk in front of the Lord to find out if he is able to recognise her as Sati, or thinks that she is Sita. In the latter case it will be proved that Ram was an ordinary prince, but should he recognise her as Sati then it will be certain that he is indeed the Lord whom Shiva worships. In her zeal to determine the reality of Lord Ram, Sati forgot that to assume the form of Sita would be in violation of ethical norms, and that Lord Shiva would not like her doubting his wisdom and assuming the form of the divine consort of the Lord whom her husband worships. Assuming the form of Sita would mean trying to cheat Lord Ram on the one hand, and assuming the form of another person's wife would be betrayal of loyalty vows with her own husband, Lord Shiva. It would be a compounded crime, a deceit that would be multiplied two times over.

¹Refer similar idea expressed in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 55 herein below.

It is pertinent to note here that Sati's questions to Lord Shiva about who Lord Ram actually was is the basis of the telling of the entire story of the Adhyatma Ramayan written by sage Veda Vyas—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto no. 1.

Besides this, this entire episode of Sati getting deluded regarding the authenticity of Lord Ram's divine form is narrated in detail in 'Shiva Puran, Rudra Samhita', in its Canto no. 24. Incidentally, this Puran (ancient mythological history), as its name suggests, is entirely dedicated to the theme of Lord Shiva.

²Refer also to: Baal Kand, Doha no. 50 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-4 herein below.]

दो०. ब्रह्म जो व्यापक बिरज अज अकल अनीह अभेद ।
सो कि देह धरि होइ नर जाहि न जानत बेद ॥ ५० ॥

dōhā.

brahma jō byāpaka biraja aja akala anīha abhēda.
sō ki dēha dhari hō'i nara jāhi na jānata bēda. 50.

Does it make sense to assume that Brahm, the supreme Lord of creation—who is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent (“Vyaapak”), is immaculate and holy (“Viraj”), is eternal and without a birth (“Aja”), who is free from all physical and perceivable attributes and qualities associated with this creation (“Akal”), who is free

from having desires and ambitions (“Aniha”), is uniform and without distinct parts (“Avedha”), and is so mysterious and mystical that he is beyond the reach of the knowledge of the Vedas (i.e. whom even the great scriptures have not been able to know and define)—will ever take the gross form of the body of a human being? (Doha no. 50)

[Note—Sati was confused because the virtues of Brahm are in sharp contrast with and opposite to those of a human being. There is no comparison between the two. None of the attributes of Brahm are applicable to a human. So, thought Sati, why would Brahm volunteer to demote himself to the lowly stature of a human being?

Even if it is assumed that Brahm had to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons, he could do it by his mere wish as he is the almighty and all-powerful “Supreme Being”, without the need to come down on the earth and undergo all the hardships and sufferings like an ordinary man. How can Brahm wail and grieve for a woman like Ram is doing for his abducted wife Sita? Why would Brahm have to take a birth and grow up like a man when he can simply reveal his divine form anywhere and in any shape he wants? Does not Brahm, who is all-knowing and all-pervading, even know where Sita is that he has to go and search for her in the wilderness like a man as Ram is doing?

None of the external deeds and behaviours of Lord Ram show that he is Brahm, then why did her husband Shiva bow before him, and why was he so enchanted by the sight of Lord Ram that he had lost awareness of everything else? Sati was confounded as she could not understand it!]

चौ०. बिष्णु जो सुर हित नरतनु धारी । सोउ सर्बग्य जथा त्रिपुरारी ॥ १ ॥
खोजइ सो कि अग्य इव नारी । ग्यानधाम श्रीपति असुरारी ॥ २ ॥
संभुगिरा पुनि मृषा न होई । सिव सर्बग्य जान सबु कोई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

biṣṇu jō sura hita naratanu dhārī. sō'u sarbagya jathā tripurārī. 1.
khōja'i sō ki agya iva nārī. gyānadhāma śrīpati asurārī. 2.
sambhugirā puni mṛṣā na hō'ī. siva sarbagya jāna sabu kō'ī. 3.

[Sati thought to herself—] ‘Supposing it is true that Lord Vishnu has taken the form of a human being (as Lord Ram) to protect the interest of the gods and help them (by eliminating the demons), but then it is well known that Vishnu is also omniscient and wise like Tripurari (Lord Shiva). (1)

This being the fact, why would he (Vishnu in the form of Ram) then wander aimlessly in search of his wife like an ignorant man? After all, Vishnu is an abode of all knowledge, he is the Lord of Laxmi (the goddess who is Vishnu’s divine consort) who is inseparable from him, and is the invincible enemy of the demons.

[Given these facts, it is unbelievable that Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram would not know where Laxmi in the form of Sita is, that he would have to suffer separation from Laxmi who is supposed to be eternally inseparable from him, and that Laxmi would be so weak and lacking in mystical powers that she could not protect herself from a demon who would easily kidnap her like an ordinary woman.] (2)

Nevertheless, the words of Shambhu (Lord Shiva)¹ cannot be wrong, because everybody knows that he is all-knowing and wisest.' (3)

[Note—¹What were the words of Shiva? The answer is found in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50 herein above. Shiva has saluted Lord Ram and pronounced that the Lord is 'Sacchidaanand', and 'Jag-Paawan'—i.e. Lord Ram is eternally truthful, pure, divine and an abode of spiritual bliss, as well as the one who purifies the world of its impurities. These are the characteristics of Lord Vishnu. This being so, Lord Ram cannot be equated with ordinary human beings. But his behaviour contradicts these facts, and on the face of it Ram does not appear to bear any resemblance to Vishnu.

These negative thoughts bore heavily in the mind of Sati, and left her bewildered.]

अस संसय मन भयउ अपारा । होइ न हृदयँ प्रबोध प्रचारा ॥ ४ ॥
जद्यपि प्रगट न कहेउ भवानी । हर अंतरजामी सब जानी ॥ ५ ॥

asa sansaya mana bhaya'u apārā. hō'i na hṛdayam̃ prabōdha pracārā. 4.
jadyapi pragaṭa na kahē'u bhavānī. hara antarajāmī saba jānī. 5.

There was a great deal of bewilderment in the Mana (heart and mind) of Sati, leaving her confused and perplexed. In spite of great effort to reassure her own self, wisdom did not emerge in her heart and she could not calm herself down because of these doubts and confusions¹. (4)

Although Bhavani (Sati) did not openly expressed the confusions and doubts that were deluging her mind and heart and taking a heavy toll of her peace, Lord Har (Shiva) became aware of it as he is 'Antaryaami', i.e. he knows the internal thoughts of all; nothing is so secret as to be hidden from the Lord². (5)

[Note—¹Refer similar idea expressed in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50 herein above.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 93 that says having unwarranted doubts has a stunning affect on a man's wisdom, and it causes so much perplexities and confusions in him as if he has been bitten by a serpent.]

²Sati had acknowledged that Shiva is omniscient in Chaupai line no. 1 herein above. Nothing could be hidden from him.]

सुनहि सती तव नारि सुभाऊ । संसय अस न धरिअ उर काऊ ॥ ६ ॥
जासु कथा कुंभज रिषि गाई । भगति जासु मैं मुनिहि सुनाई ॥ ७ ॥
सोइ मम इष्टदेव रघुबीरा । सेवत जाहि सदा मुनि धीरा ॥ ८ ॥

sunahi satī tava nāri subhā'ū. sansaya asa na dhari'a ura kā'ū. 6.

jāsu kathā kumbhaja riṣi gāī. bhagati jāsu mairṁ munihi sunāī. 7.
sō'i mama iṣṭadēva raghubīrā. sēvata jāhi sadā muni dhīrā. 8.

Thus, Shiva told Sati (even though she did not ask the Lord for any clarification as she was afraid to do so lest her husband would be annoyed at her impertinence and stupidity)—‘Look Sati. Your temperament is like an ordinary woman (though you are a goddess in your own right and my consort who is supposed to be above such delusory thoughts). It is not good and wise to harbour such baseless doubts in one’s heart (as they do more harm and serve no purpose whatsoever).¹ (6)

He whose divine story had been narrated by sage Kumbhaj (i.e. sage Agastya), and the virtues of whose Bhakti (devotion and submission) I had explained to the sage a short while ago² [7],---

---It is the same Lord Raghubir (Sri Ram, the brave warrior of the dynasty of king Raghu) whom I adore as my revered deity (“Iṣṭha-Dev”—इष्टदेव) and who is constantly being served (worshipped) by wise, learned and realised sages to whom I have bowed my head and paid my obeisance a little while ago [8].

[In other words, the warrior prince before whom I bowed and upon whom you have cast your doubts is the same Lord Ram whom I worship as my revered deity. He is not an ordinary warrior prince of the Raghu dynasty as you think him to be. Have wisdom, and refrain from falling prey to falsehoods and temptations of Maya—the Lord’s maverick power to create delusions. It won’t help you in anyway.] (7-8)

[Note—¹In other words, you behave like an ordinary woman who is full of doubts, and is habituated to question the wisdom and actions of her husband. You are a goddess, and have been living with me for so long. You have always accompanied me whenever I had gone to some sage’s hermitage to discuss spiritual and metaphysical topics. You have always observed that I meditate upon Lord Ram and his holy name and form. You also know that I am immune to delusions and don’t play fools around with nonsensical things. You are well aware of the level of my wisdom and intellectual prowess, and the fact that gods and their patriarch, the creator Brahma, have often approached me when they themselves could not find an answer to confounding issues faced by them.

Therefore, it is incongruous for you to doubt my wisdom when I declare my faith, devotion and allegiance to Lord Ram.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chuapai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 48 herein above.]

छं०. मुनि धीर जोगी सिद्ध संतत बिमल मन जेहि ध्यावहीं । १ ।
कहि नेति निगम पुरान आगम जासु कीरति गावहीं ॥ २ ॥
सोइ रामु व्यापक ब्रह्म भुवन निकाय पति माया धनी । ३ ।
अवतरेउ अपने भगत हित निजतंत्र नित रघुकुलमनी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

muni dhīra jōgī sid'dha santata bimala mana jēhi dhyāvahīm. 1.
 kahi nēti nigama purāna āgama jāsu kīrati gāvahīm. 2.
 sō'i rāmu byāpaka brahma bhuvana nikāya pati māyā dhanī. 3.
 avatarē'u apanē bhagata hita nijatantra nita raghukulamani. 4.

#He (Lord Ram) who is meditated upon with a pure and holy Mana (mind and heart) by wise and learned sages, seers, ascetics, hermits, mystics and saints [1]---

---He whose endless, immeasurable and eternal glories are being sung and lauded continuously by the Vedas and Purans, but still the scriptures fail to understand and define him in entirety, thereby declaring that he is “Neti-Neti”¹ (not this; not this—or that ‘whatever has been said of the Lord is not a sufficient description of his true glory nor of his true identity, for it evades description and understanding’) [2]---

---It is the same Lord Ram who is Brahm (the Supreme Being), the all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent Lord of the whole universe, the Lord of Maya (i.e. the delusory powers of creation), in a personified form² [3]---

---Who has manifested himself, out of his own free will, in a divine form as the gem-of-a-prince in the family of king Raghu (“Raghu-kul-mani”) for the welfare and good of his devotees³ [4]. (Chanda line nos. 1-4)

[Note—#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 and its following Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 127.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 12.

²There are ample number of verses in Ram Charit Manas that reiterate this fact. Refer to: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141; (iii) Chanda line nos. 5-6, 9 that precede Doha no. 186; (iv) Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 192; (b) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (vi) Doha no. 85-a; (vi) Chanda line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 13; (viii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 150; (b) Kishkindha Kand, (ii) Doha no. 26; (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48.

Sati had raised two questions—one was that Lord Ram was not Brahm, and the second was that Brahm does not incarnate as a human being: refer—from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 2 that follows this Doha. Lord Shiva has addressed her doubts in the above verses, saying that “Lord Ram is indeed Brahm”, and then giving the reason “why Brahm became a human being”.]

सो०. लाग न उर उपदेसु जदपि कहेउ सिवँ बार बहु ।
 बोले बिहसि महेसु हरिमाया बलु जानि जियँ ॥ ५१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

lāga na ura upadēsu jadapi kahē'u sivam̐ bāra bahu.
bōlē bihasi mahēsu harimāyā balu jāni jiyam̐. 51.

Though Lord Shiva repeatedly told her the reality of Lord Ram, his wise words had no effect upon Sati whose heart did not accept the reasoning. She remained stubborn in her disbelief. [Sati wasn't convinced about what her husband had said.]¹

Understanding in his heart about the stupendous power and the immense influence that Lord Hari's (Lord Vishnu's) Maya (delusion-creating powers) can have upon a person's wisdom² (thereby totally eclipsing it, and hence making him or her susceptible to falling an easy prey to delusions and ignorance), Lord Mahesh ("the Great God", Lord Shiva) smiled wryly and said³—(Sortha no. 51)

[Note—¹A similar situation has arisen elsewhere in the narration of Ram Charit Manas when we read that the great sage Narad, who is supposed to be a great devotee of Lord Vishnu and above passions and worldly emotions, too had not paid attention to Lord Shiva's advice to him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 127.

The context in Narad's case was that once he had been so deeply submerged in mediating upon Lord Vishnu that Kamdeo (cupid), the god of passions, could not detract the sage in spite of his best efforts to do so. This achievement filled Narad with a sense of pride, and he went to Lord Shiva to boast of his achievement. It was then that the Lord told him that whatever he had said before him was alright, but he should not go and repeat his boast before Lord Vishnu as the latter is sure to punish him. Narad did not take this advice in the correct light, and thought that Shiva wishes to keep him quiet so that his stunning feat remains obscure so that the world would believe that Kamdeo was defeated by Shiva alone as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

As in our present case of Sati suffering due to her disobeying Shiva, Narad too had to suffer horrible ignominy when Lord Vishnu turned him into an ugly faced monkey—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 133; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 134.

²The power of Maya is extremely strong. It has held under its spell even the wisest and the most learned, and deluded them so much as to portray that they were utterly stupid and ignorant.

It is averred in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72 that Maya is so powerful that it makes the world dance to its tune—this is the proclamation of the saint-crow Kaagbhusund.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand—(i) Doha no. 41; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precedes Doha no. 59; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 116.

The Atharva Veda's Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Uttar Kanda/Canto 2, verse no. 9-10 describe the effects of Maya, verse nos. 15-18 the relationship between Maya and the Atma, and verse nos. 33, 44-45 the fact that Maya is a voluntary creation of the Atma as well as of Brahm.

Sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, in its Lanka Kanda, canto 14, verse nos. 28-29 describe the relationship between Maya and Brahm.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 132 where we read that Lord Vishnu had smiled at the ignorance and delusions that engulfed the wise sage Narad as a result of the influence of Maya of the Lord.

Lord Ram's Maya is so great and powerful that it had provoked even Sati, the otherwise truthful consort of Shiva, to "tell a lie"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56.]

चौ०. जौं तुम्हरे मन अति संदेहू । तौ किन जाइ परीछा लेहू ॥ १ ॥
तब लगि बैठ अहउँ बटछाहीं । जब लगि तुम्ह ऐहहु मोहि पाहीं ॥ २ ॥
जैसे जाइ मोह भ्रम भारी । करेहु सो जतनु बिबेक बिचारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jaur̄m tumharēm̄ mana ati sandēhū. tau kina jā'i parīchā lēhū. 1.
taba lagi baiṭha aha'um̄ baṭachāhīm̄. jaba lagi tumha aihahu mōhi pāhīm̄. 2.
jaisēm̄ jā'i mōha bhrama bhārī. karēhu sō jatanu bibēka bicārī. 3.

Shiva told Sati—'If you have so strong doubt (that inspite of my trying to tell you the truth you still do not seem to be convinced), then why don't you go and examine the truth for yourself?'¹ (1)

In the meantime, I will sit calmly here under the shadow of a banyan tree (the Indian Fig tree)², and wait till you come back to me. (2)

Use your wisdom and apply intelligence and careful thought³ to do whatever you think is necessary that would help you to overcome your doubts. [Because harbouring doubts is not good for anyone. Doubts make a person restless and it robs the peace of the mind and heart.] (3)

[Note—¹Shiva thought that since Sati has been overcome with doubts and has even begin to question her husband's wisdom, then in this situation no matter how hard he tried she cannot be convinced. So it's better to let her examine the truth herself. In a sort of way, there is a lesson in this episode: it is wise for an intelligent person not to get agitated when his best of advice has no effect on the mind of a person whose intelligence and wisdom have become eclipsed. In this situation it is better to let go and retain one's calm.

Another lesson is that when a person becomes stubborn and refuses to hear even his best well-wisher, as we see presently in the case of Sati disbelieving her own husband, it is better to stop arguing and let the other person have his or her way so that he or she learns the lesson the hard way. As we shall see soon, Sati discovers to her horror that what her husband, the wise and all-knowing Lord Shiva, has said about Lord Ram was actually the truth, but by the time she had committed certain errors which were unpardonable.

The consequences were severe for Sati, and it finally led to her being abandoned by Shiva—not so much as for disbelieving him as for her telling lies to him (Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56) on the one hand, and on the other hand having the temerity and irreverence to attempt to cheat Lord Ram by assuming the visible form of Sita (Baal Kand, Doha no. 52). Sati forgot that Sita is worshipped by Lord Shiva as the Mother Goddess because he worships Lord Ram as

the Supreme Lord of creation. How could Sati expect Shiva to accept her again once she has played the role of Sita (Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 56)?

When one begins to doubt even the best of teachers and advisors, when one thinks that everyone else is a fool except himself or herself, then such a person is doomed to suffer as Sati had learnt the hard way—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 59—and Chaupai line no. that follows this Doha.

²The banyan tree, the Indian Fig tree, is liked by Shiva, and whenever the Lord sits down to relax or meditate, it is under the shadow of this tree—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 106.

Even in Shiva's abode in Mt. Kailash, there is a banyan tree under which he sits to rest and meditate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 58.

The banyan tree is the preferred one under the shade of which saints and sages gathered to talk on religious and spiritual matters. It has a broad girth and a wide area is covered by its shadow, allowing a large gathering to assemble under its shade. It is also regarded as an auspicious tree.

Even the saintly crow Kaagbhusund used to tell the divine story of Lord Ram under the shadow of a huge banayan tree—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 57. Once, Shiva had himself gone to hear Lord Ram's story at Kaagbhusund's place (Uttar Kand, Doha no. 57 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-10).

³Shiva has already warned Sati to be careful as to how she tests the reality of Lord Ram. Sati should use 'wisdom, intelligence and prudence', and not do anything that violates the basic tenets of Dharma. But the irony is that she was so deluded that she did—one, she assumed the form of Sita to cheat Lord Ram (Baal Kand, Doha no. 52), and second she came back and told lies to her husband (Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56).]

चलीं सती सिव आयसु पाई । करहिं बिचारु करौं का भाई ॥ ४ ॥

calīm satī siva āyasu pā'ī. karahim bicāru karaum kā bhā'ī. 4.

Thus, after getting the orders from Lord Shiva, Sati went to test the truth and reality about Lord Ram. But she was so confused that she did not know how to do it. So on the way she kept pondering, 'What should I do now?' (4)

[Note—Sati has shown lack of wisdom from the very beginning. First and foremost, she could not pick up the truth inspite of hearing the discourse between the learned sage Agastya and Lord Shiva—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 51.

Then she did not believe her own husband inspite of knowing that Shiva was the most exalted God of creation, and that he never says a lie—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 50; and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 51.

Thirdly, when Shiva told her to go and find out the truth herself in a wise manner, she should have at least asked him to guide her how best to test the truth about Lord Ram—but she didn't do it. This is because she had already doubted the wisdom and had questioned the intelligence of Shiva.]

इहाँ संभु अस मन अनुमाना । दच्छसुता कहँ नहिं कल्याना ॥ ५ ॥
 मोरेहु कहें न संसय जाहीं । बिधि बिपरीत भलाई नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 होइहि सोइ जो राम रचि राखा । को करि तर्क बढ़ावै साखा ॥ ७ ॥

ihām̃ sambhu asa mana anumānā. dacchasutā kahum̃ nahim̃ kalyānā. 5.
 mōrēhu kahēm̃ na sansaya jāhīm̃. bidhi bipolarīta bhalāī nāhīm̃. 6.
 hō'ihī sō'i jō rāma raci rākhā. kō kari tarka baṛhāvai sākḥā. 7.

Back here (from where Sati had left Lord Shiva sitting under the banayan tree), Lord Shambhu (Shiva) concluded that Sati is bound to commit some mischief and suffer its consequences. He thought, 'The daughter of Daksha¹ cannot have any welfare anywhere. (5)

Her doubts were not dispelled inspite of my attempts to tell her the truth. It appears that the creator is ill-disposed towards her and the stars are opposed to her well-being. These are bad omens and they portend harm for her². (6)

What is the use of unnecessarily debating and contemplating upon things which are beyond one's reach and grasp; what is the benefit of uselessly creating imaginary trees with their extended branches for things? It's best, therefore, to leave the fate and whatever is to happen in the unknown realm of the future in the hands of Lord Ram, for ultimately it is the Lord's wish that shall prevail. [So, there is no point in worrying unnecessarily]' (7)

[Note—¹It is clever to use the phrase “daughter of Daksha” for Sati. Daksha, Sati's father, was also egoist, stubborn and arrogant by nature. He also lacked wisdom and could not understand that Lord Shiva was not merely his son-in-law by the virtue of marriage of his daughter Sati with him, but is the “Mahadeva”, the greatest of all the gods, the most enlightened and powerful among the entire lot. So Daksha harboured ill-will against Lord Shiva and did not think twice before insulting the Lord. Daksha was so stupid that he did not realise that if Lord Shiva did not pay heed to his insulting behaviour it was not that the Lord was afraid to take revenge or was afraid of Daksha, but it was because Shiva was immune to such gross emotions as feeling elated at being honoured or angry at being insulted as he was beyond such things being a renunciate ascetic and an extremely self-realised god amongst the pantheon of gods. Daksha held Shiva in very low esteem and had boycotted him during the fire sacrifice when offerings are supposed to be made to all the gods without exception—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 62.

Being his daughter, Sati inherited many of her father's traits—one being stubborn, and the other to treat Shiva to be of a low intellect. We shall soon read that inspite of learning the hard way that what her husband Lord Shiva had told her with respect to Lord Ram being the absolute truth, she continued to disobey Shiva and doubt his advice. When the Lord advised her against going to participate in the fire

sacrifice organised by her father Daksha because she won't be welcome, Sati did not pay heed to him and was adamant to go. Of course, she faced scorn and taunts there, and finally, being unable to bear with the insult, she had burnt herself in the fire sacrifice—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

Sati has also been addressed as 'the daughter of Daksha' later on in this narration in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55 where it is said that she 'was so dazed by the magical sighting of numerous images of Lord Ram in his Viraat form that for a moment she felt giddy and her senses were numbed, leading to her being blinded for sometime'.

²And this was the 'harm' that Sati suffered—she not only was overwhelmed with guilt that made her lose her mental peace and face (refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 55; Doha no. 57 ka; Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 58; and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 59), but she also acquired ignominy for herself in the annals of history as a stubborn and stupid woman who did not obey her wise husband (refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 59). She also had to suffer being abandoned by her husband (refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 56; and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58), and ultimately burn herself in the fire sacrifice at her father's place, resulting in the ruin of the whole family when Lord Shiva sent his follower named Birbhadra to punish Daksha and destroy his fire sacrifice (refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 65).]

अस कहि लगे जपन हरिनामा । गई सती जहँ प्रभु सुखधामा ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi lagē japana harināmā. ga'īm satī jaham̃ prabhu sukhadhāmā. 8.

Saying so (or, deciding in the manner as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 herein above) to himself, Lord Shiva began repeating the holy name "Ram" of Lord Hari (i.e. Vishnu—because Lord Ram was Vishnu's incarnation)¹.

Meanwhile, Sati went to the spot on the ground where the Lord (Ram), who is an abode of happiness and bliss², was present. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva repeated the holy name of Lord Ram to find peace and solace because this holy name of the Lord is a well-recognised universal formula for attaining abiding bliss and tranquillity of the soul.

When Lord Shiva reached Mt. Kailash, his abode in the Himalayas, he sat down under the shade of a banayan tree to meditate, and we learn that the holy name he used for this purpose was "Ram"—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 58; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 60; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19.

In fact, Lord Shiva adores this name of Lord Ram so much because he knows its astounding spiritual powers:

(i) It is on the strength of this holy name that he had gulped the horrible poison known as 'Halaahal' that was produced at the time of the churning of the ocean (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19).

(ii) It is on the strength of this holy name—known as the 'Tarak Mantra' because it can take the creature across the mundane world consisting of a continuous

cycle of birth and death together with their accompanying horrors, a world which is compared to a vast and limitless ocean—that Lord Shiva provides a dying creature with the reward of liberation and deliverance when he utters this holy name of “Ram” in his ears (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19).

²It is important to use the epithet “Sukha-Dhaamaa” (i.e. an abode of happiness and bliss) here to remove misgivings about the true nature of Lord Ram who is acting his part of being a human to perfection by wailing and lamenting the loss of Sita, and wondering gloomily in the forest in search of her as if he is an ordinary man overcome with grief and distress. The reader ought to understand that Lord Ram has to do this because he is an expert actor and leaves nothing to chance. How will we judge an actor? Well, the only criterion for judging any actor is the perfection with which he plays the role assigned to him. Here, the Supreme Lord is playing the role of a prince whose wife has been abducted by an unknown enemy in the forest. What is he expected to do in this situation—sing and dance merrily?!

दो०. पुनि पुनि हृदयँ बिचारु करि धरि सीता कर रूप ।
आगें होइ चलि पंथ तेहिं जेहिं आवत नरभूप ॥ ५२ ॥

dōhā.

puni puni hṛdayam' bicāru kari dhari sītā kara rūpa.
āgēm hō'i cali pantha tēhim jēhim āvata narabhūpa. 52.

Sati repeatedly thought to herself what is to be done (to ascertain whether or not Lord Ram is the divine Lord Vishnu in a human form as advised by Shiva). Finally she decided to test the truth of Lord Ram by assuming the illusory form of Sita, and having assumed this form she started to walk ahead on the path on which Lord Ram was going in search of Sita. (Doha no. 52)

[Note—Sati decided to assume Sita’s form because she thought that if Lord Ram is indeed the all-knowing Lord Vishnu as Shiva had told her, then surely he would see through the illusionary form of Sita that she has assumed, and would recognise her to be Sati instead.

If Lord Ram, on the other hand, cannot see through her illusionary form and falls for the trap, thinking her actually to be Sita, then in this case it would be established beyond doubt that Ram has no insight or divine powers to see behind a veil of deceit, that he is not all-knowing and omniscient as Shiva had proclaimed him to be. In other words, Lord Ram was an ordinary human prince, and therefore her doubts about him are true. This implies that Shiva was wrong and she was correct.]

चौ०. लछिमन दीख उमाकृत बेषा । चकित भए भ्रम हृदयँ बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥
कहि न सकत कछु अति गंभीरा । प्रभु प्रभाउ जानत मतिधीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

lachimana dīkha umākṛta bēṣā. cakita bha'e bhrama hṛdayam̐ bisēṣā. 1.
kahi na sakata kachu ati gambhīrā. prabhu prabhā'u jānata matidhīrā. 2.

#When Laxman saw Uma in her disguised form (as Sita)¹, he was astonished and flabbergasted. His heart was puzzled² because it was most unexpected. (1)

But he did not say a word because he thought that there was some very serious matter that defies his mind. Knowing about the Lord's (Sri Ram's) stupendous abilities and powers as well as his mystical ways, he decided to keep quiet and watch.³ (2)

[Note—¹The first point to note here is that Laxman has become aware of Sati's true identity. What to say of Lord Ram who is all-knowing, even his fractional form Laxman could not be deceived by Sati.

Another important point to note here is that the word used for Shiva's consort is "Uma" and not "Sati". This is very crucial here. 'Uma' was the daughter of Daksha Prajapati, and like her father she too was arrogant and overcome with delusions. Even Shiva has addressed her as "the daughter of Daksha" in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52 to indicate this fact.

On the other hand, the word "Sati" means one who is immaculate and pure, one who is devoted and loyal towards her husband. How can one expect such a woman to disbelief her loving husband who is giving a good advice for her own good, and how can one expect a true Sati to assume the form of another person's wife as Uma has done here by becoming Sita?

²Laxman was very surprised and perplexed as he had never imagined in his wildest of imaginations that Lord Shiva's consort would stoop so low and do this mischief. She has fallen low because she wasn't a 'Sati' now, but was 'Uma', the daughter of Daksha, and had inherited the low intellect and wisdom of her over-jealous and ill-advised father.

³Surely there must be some very serious matter with which he is not aware. And so Laxman thought that it was wise and prudent for him to keep quiet lest he would make a clown of himself like Uma.

#There is another way of interpreting these verses, and they have a spiritual message. Laxman was puzzled when he saw Uma, but Lord Ram would not be at all as we shall read below shortly in the verses that follow. The metaphysical implication of this development is that a Jiva (a living being), represented by Laxman, is confused when he sees so many stunning sights of the world. The Jiva is unable to decide what is true and what is false. So it is best for him to maintain his calm and leave everything in the hands of the Lord God whom he worships, because the Lord knows the truth and what is best for the Jiva. This spares the Jiva from getting tormented by a lot of problems that are avoidable. He is not subjected to unnecessary restlessness and tensions.]

सती कपटु जानेउ सुरस्वामी । सबदरसी सब अंतरजामी ॥ ३ ॥

सुमिरत जाहि मिटइ अग्याना । सोइ सरबग्य रामु भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

satī kapaṭu jānē'u surasvāmī. sabadarasī saba antarajāmī. 3.
sumirata jāhi miṭa'i agyānā. sō'i sarabagya rāmu bhagavānā. 4.

The Lord of the Gods (“Sur-Swaamy”, i.e. Lord Ram) immediately came to know about the deceit of Sati because he is all-knowing, and therefore knows the inner thoughts of all (as he lives in the inner-self of everyone as the Atma, the Soul). (3)

Lord Ram is the “Bhagwan” (the Supreme God) by remembering whom all ignorance and delusions are removed; he is the “Bhagwan” who is all-pervading and omniscient. (4)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 257 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 where sage Vasistha has reiterated exactly the same thing.

Even Lord Shiva has reiterated this sentiment in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 39.

We also find that when Sita has asked Lord Ram to go fetch the golden deer for her, the Lord got up to run behind the illusive deer, knowing fully well that he was a demon named Marich in disguise, that all this was destined to happen as a prelude for Sita’s abduction by Ravana, and that nothing was surprising in it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 27.

Other similar reference is found in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 6 where sage Atri has honoured Lord Ram by affirming that Lord Ram knows the inner thoughts of all as he is “Antaryaami”—one who lives in the heart of all living beings.]

सती कीन्ह चह तहँहुँ दुराऊ । देखहु नारि सुभाव प्रभाऊ ॥ ५ ॥
निज माया बलु हृदयँ बखानी । बोले बिहसि रामु मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥

satī kīnha caha tahamṅhum' durā'ū. dēkhahu nāri subhāva prabhā'ū. 5.
nija māyā balu hrdayam' bakhānī. bōlē bihasi rāmu mṛdu bānī. 6.

Look at the nature of a woman and the way it affects her thinking and behaviour that even Sati (who is supposed to be of an immaculate character and wise as she is the consort of Lord Shiva, the wisest of all the gods and the greatest devotee of Lord Ram) had chosen to play a cunning trick with Lord Ram (who is the all-knowing Lord of Gods)¹. (5)

Meanwhile, Lord Ram praised in his heart the wonderful strength that his Maya (delusion-creating powers) has, and the magic it can play². So he smiled³ and said politely (to Sati)--- (6)

[Note—¹Chaupai line no. 5 is the comment of the author, Goswami Tulsidas. He means that a woman is easily led astray by delusions so much so that she would not believe even her own husband once an idea gets its hold on her mind.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 47 in the context of Kaikeyi who was so overcome

with selfishness that her sense of rationality and probity took a severe beating, and she decided to send Lord Ram to forest so that her son Bharat could ascend the throne, not realising the turbulence this stubbornness would bring upon the whole family and the kingdom.

Once again, it is said in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 162 that “even the creator Brahma (“Vidhi”) is not able to understand the nature of a woman and how she would react”.

²Even Lord Shiva had realised that it was the Lord’s powerful Maya that has got its hold on Sati’s mind so that she has become so stubborn and irrational—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 51.

Later on, when Sati told Shiva a lie that she hasn’t tested Ram, Shiva again wondered at the powerful force of Lord Ram’s Maya that prevailed upon and instigated Sati to commit the unpardonable sin of telling a lie to her husband—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56.

When Hanuman met Lord Ram later on in the story in Kishkindha Kand, he too could not recognise the Lord due to the deluding powers of Lord Ram’s Maya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 2.

³Why has Lord Ram smiled? Because he is in awe of his own Maya and the powerful delusions it can create. It is a wry smile, a sort of a teasing smirk with taugth lips. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 51; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 132.

We shall read later on in Ram Charit Manas that when sage Sutikshan asked the Lord that he be allowed to accompany him to the hermitage of sage Agastya, the Lord had smiled and given his assent. It is because here also Sutikshan has used cunning so that he can be in the company of Lord Ram by saying that he hasn’t met his guru Agastya for quite some time and it is an opportunity to go and meet him with Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 12.

To wit, whenever someone uses cunning tricks with the Lord to serve his or her own agenda, Lord Ram smiles because he knows the real intention.]

जोरि पानि प्रभु कीन्ह प्रनामू । पिता समेत लीन्ह निज नामू ॥ ७ ॥
कहेउ बहोरि कहाँ बृषकेतू । बिपिन अकेलि फिरहु केहि हेतू ॥ ८ ॥

jōri pāni prabhu kīnha pranāmū. pitā samēta līnha nija nāmū. 7.
kahē'u bahōri kahām̃ bṛṣakētū. bipina akēli phirahu kēhi hētū. 8.

The Lord (Sri Ram) joined his palms and reverentially bowed before Sati, introducing himself by his own name and that of his father (king Dasrath). (7)

Then he politely asked her, ‘Say, where is ‘Brishketu’ (one of the names of Lord Shiva)? Why are you (i.e. for what reason are you) wondering alone in the dense forest?’ (8)

[Note—The very fact that Lord Ram bowed his head and then introduced himself by not only saying his own name but being more specific by adding the name of his father shows that he was kind of teasing Sati. He subtly reprimanded her by saying in effect that since she was so stupid that she didn't know who he (Ram) was in spite of Shiva telling her all essential elements associated with the Lord as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and its following Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51, it will be better if she is properly introduced with the prince she has come to examine, complete with all the identity credentials such as his own name as well as the name of his father so that no confusion is left in her mind as to which "Ram" she is meeting.

This introduction also signalled to Sati that Lord Ram has recognised who she actually is, that he knows that she isn't Sita. So, her trick hasn't worked!

Lord Ram was in a human form, and as such by bowing before Sati and holding his hands together in his front as a sign of showing great respect to her is a message to the rest of the world as to how one should treat a lady.]

दो०. राम बचन मृदु गूढ सुनि उपजा अति संकोचु ।
सती सभित महेश पहिं चलीं हृदयँ बड़ सोचु ॥ ५३ ॥

dōhā.

rāma bacana mr̥du gūṛḥa suni upajā ati saṅkōcu.
satī sabhīta mahēsa pahim̐ calīm̐ hr̥dayam̐ baṛa sōcu. 53.

When Sati heard these polite but significant words of Lord Ram (which clearly indicated that he has recognised her, and has even smiled at her nuisance and idiotic behaviour), she felt very uneasy and confounded.

Afraid out of her wits (as she realised her folly and the grave consequences that she would have to face now), Sati started on her return journey to where Mahesh (Lord Shiva) was (waiting for her to return). On the way, her heart was overcome with immense regret and consternation. (Doha no. 53)

[Note—We observe here that Sati did not have the courage to answer Lord Ram's question asked in verse no. 8 that precedes this Doha—"Where was Lord Shiva, and why was she loitering alone in the forest?"

First, she was already very nervous as she knew deep within her heart that by defying her enlightened husband, Lord Shiva, she was committing a grave sin. This was compounded when all her pretensions were bared naked and she was sort of unmasked. She had failed miserably in the test she so confidently set out to take, and what answer would she now give to Shiva upon return when he asked her how she fared. She was utterly stunned and confounded.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 58.

The lesson to learn here is about the horrendous consequences of falling in the trap of Maya. One must be wary of Maya.]

चौ०. मैं संकर कर कहा न माना । निज अग्यानु राम पर आना ॥ १ ॥

जाइ उतरु अब देहउँ काहा । उर उपजा अति दारुन दाहा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mair̥m saṅkara kara kahā na mānā. nija agyānu rāma para ānā. 1.
jā'i utaru aba dēha'um' kāhā. ura upajā ati dārūna dāhā. 2.

Sati was overwhelmed by contrition and regret. She lamented internally, and muttered to her self, 'I had not obeyed the words of Lord Shankar (Shiva), and in my stupidity and folly I had cast the shadow of my ignorance on Lord Ram¹. (1)

Now, what answer shall I go and give him (Shiva)²?

These thoughts filled her heart with immense dismay and worry, tormenting it intensely and setting it literally afire by the worries of the consequences she would now have to face for her stupidity and impertinent behaviour. (2)

[Note—¹Sati was extremely perturbed. She had disobeyed her husband, Lord Shiva, despite his repeated attempts to make Sati see reason (refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 51), which in its self is a grave sin. This is obviously because she had thought that he is less wise than she is in spite of witnessing how reverentially sage Agastya had welcomed and respected her husband, Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 48.

To compound the matter further and make it worse, she had cast her ignorance upon someone, i.e. Lord Ram, who was praised unanimously by both sage Agastya as well as her husband Lord Shiva as the Supreme Lord of creation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.

²Her fears were not unfounded as we shall read below that as soon as she reached Lord Shiva, he immediately asked her how she had examined the reality of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 55. The confounded Sati was at her wits end, not knowing what to say: should she tell her husband the truth that she had committed a grave error by questioning his wisdom and asking for forgiveness, or should she cook up a story to hide her stupidity and consternation, trying to pretend that she had never actually doubted her husband, but that she had just wanted to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram from close quarters, so she had devised this device as a ploy to go and meet the Lord to pay her personal obeisance to him. However, it turned out that the all-knowing Lord Shiva saw through her lies, and being too merciful to outright punish her for this sin of disobeying him and questioning his assertion about Lord Ram, he decided to neglect her instead and stop treating her as his divine consort. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 57 herein below.]

जाना राम सतीं दुखु पावा । निज प्रभाउ कछु प्रगटि जनावा ॥ ३ ॥

सतीं दीख कौतुकु मग जाता । आगें रामु सहित श्री भ्राता ॥ ४ ॥

फिरि चितवा पाछें प्रभु देखा । सहित बंधु सिय सुंदर बेषा ॥ ५ ॥

jānā rāma satīm dukhu pāvā. nija prabhā'u kachu pragatī janāvā. 3.
 satīm dīkha kautuku maga jātā. āgēm rāmu sahita śrī bhrātā. 4.
 phiri citavā pāchēm prabhu dēkhā. sahita bandhu siya sundara bēṣā. 5.

Lord Ram realised that Sati was utterly confounded and worried¹. So he decided to remove all traces of doubts about him that she may still harbour in her mind and heart by revealing some of his mystical powers that cannot be possessed and displayed by an ordinary human being (which Sati had thought him to be). (3)

[So, what did Lord Ram do? He assumed many duplicate forms, all like him, and all accompanied by Sita! This was to show Sati that Sita is never separate from Lord Ram, and Sati should not think that she is the only one who could play tricks on the Lord.]

Sati saw a miraculous spectacle unfold before her eyes#. As she was going back, she saw on the path ahead of her the sight of Lord Ram with Sri (Sita) and his brother (Laxman). (4)

Stunned and bewildered, being utterly confounded and out of her wits, she looked back, only to see the beautiful forms of Lord with Sita and his brother.² (5)

[Note—¹It is to be noted that no words were exchanged between Lord Ram and Sati. The Lord had asked her where Shiva, her husband, was, but she hadn't replied, and instead had started retracing her steps in the direction from where she had come. But consternation and perplexities were writ large on her face. Even if she had done her best to hide it, Lord Ram knew the turbulent state of her mind as he is "all-knowing, and is privy to the inner thoughts of everyone"—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha nos. 3-4 herein above.

²Sati had assumed the form of Sita, Lord Ram's wife who had been abducted by Ravana, by the virtue of mystical powers that she possessed which allow one to change one's form at will. These powers are normally possessed by gods and goddesses, but not by an ordinary human prince. Sati had thought that Lord Ram was an ordinary prince as is clear by the reading of Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 50, as well as Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow this Doha.

So, Lord Ram wished to teach Sati in the language she would best understand—i.e. deceit, falsehood and illusions created by use of magical powers. After all, Sati had also employed deceit to test the Lord, and it is time that she is repaid in the same coin.

#If we were to dramatise this episode then it would be like Lord Ram and Laxman seeing an apparition of Sita. This is the reason why Laxman was dumbfounded in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 53. And this perhaps is the reason why Sati did not reply to Lord Ram—as shadows, phantoms, ghosts and apparitions don't speak.

What Sati saw now was also an apparition—and we shall observe that the shadowy forms of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman that appeared all around Sati do not speak a word too! We shall also read that this sight churned the head of Sati like in a whirlpool so much so that she was terrified, her heart shivered and her body became numbed out of fear and shock, even becoming temporarily blind like a person suffering from vertigo and some serious mental illness which results in bouts of

hallucination and loss of sight—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 55.]

जहँ चितवहिं तहँ प्रभु आसीना । सेवहिं सिद्ध मुनीस प्रबीना ॥ ६ ॥
 देखे सिव बिधि बिष्नु अनेका । अमित प्रभाउ एक तें एका ॥ ७ ॥
 बंदत चरन करत प्रभु सेवा । बिबिध बेष देखे सब देवा ॥ ८ ॥

jaham' citavahim taham' prabhu āsīnā. sēvahim sid'dha munīsa prabīnā. 6.
 dēkhē siva bidhi biṣṇu anēkā. amita prabhā'u ēka tēm ēkā. 7.
 bandata carana karata prabhu sēvā. bibidha bēṣa dēkhē saba dēvā. 8.

[What Sati saw was the 'Viraat' form of Lord Ram, the Lord's original form as Lord Vishnu who is also known as the "Viraat Purush". The word 'Viraat' means the vast, the cosmic and the all-encompassing form of the Lord.¹]

Wherever and in whichever direction Sati saw she could see the Lord seated majestically, and being served by Siddhas (mystics) and wise sages. (6)

Not only this (i.e. not only the mystics and sages), but she also saw many Lord Shivas, Vidhis (the creator Brahma) and Vishnus, all more influential and powerful than the other, [7] ---

---each serving Lord Ram and worshipping the Lord's holy feet. She also saw the gods, in varied forms and attires, serving the Lord too [8]. (7-8)

[Note—¹This is the cosmic and all-inclusive form of the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, from whom not only the three primary gods, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, have emerged, but also the rest of the creation headed by the gods in heaven, as well as the mystics and sages on earth.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 55 which too describe Lord Ram's beautiful Viraat form.

The three, Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita stayed together in the forest, and they represented the three symbolic forms of Brahm (Supreme Being), the Jiva (the living being), and Maya (the mystical powers of Brahm) respectively—refer: Ram Charit Manas--(i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 123; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 7; Chaupai line no. 20 that precedes Doha no. 10.

Indeed, Lord Ram's visible form was so astounding that the beholder was left thrilled and dumbfounded with awe and astonishment—refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 148 where this condition was experienced by Manu and Satrupa when the Lord revealed himself before them; and (ii) in Kiskindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2 when Hauman was thrilled upon recognising his revered Lord, Sri Ram.]

दो०. सती बिधात्री इंदिरा देखीं अमित अनूप ।
 जेहिं जेहिं बेष अजादि सुर तेहि तेहि तन अनुरूप ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

satī bidhātrī indirā dēkhīm amita anūpa.

jēhim jēhim bēṣa ajādi sura tēhi tēhi tana anurūpa. 54.

Sati also saw the respective consorts of the gods (she had already seen as narrated in the previous verses). That is, she saw as many Satis (consort of Shiva), Bidhaatris (consort of Bidhi or the creator Brahma), and Indiraas (consort of Indra, the king of gods) in as many forms and in different attires as she saw their respective counterpart gods.

All the female counterparts of the different gods had as many compatible forms and varied attires as they were gods in myriad forms and attires. (Doha no. 54)

[Note—As we shall read below in verse nos. 3-4, Lord Ram and Sita were seen by Sati in one universal form and attire as compared to the varied forms and different attires of the rest of the gods and goddesses. This sight was in conformity with the philosophy of the scriptures that the Supreme Being is steady, constant, uniform, unchanging and universal.]

देखे जहँ तहँ रघुपति जेते । सक्तिन्ह सहित सकल सुर तेते ॥ १ ॥

जीव चराचर जो संसारा । देखे सकल अनेक प्रकारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhē jaham̃ taham̃ raghupati jētē. saktinha sahita sakala sura tētē. 1.

jīva carācara jō sansārā. dēkhē sakala anēka prakārā. 2.

She saw the many Gods with their Shaktis (female counterparts; their consorts) everywhere she saw Lord Ram (“Raghupati”). (1)

Besides them, she also saw all the Jivas (living beings) that inhabit this world—both those who could move (such as the members of the animal kingdom) as well as those who could not (the members of the plant kingdom)—in numerous forms and different stages of evolution. (2)

[Note—To wit, the profoundly bewildered Sati saw the entire creation serving Lord Ram—right from the gods and goddesses in heaven to the exalted sages and mystics as well as the members of the animal and plant kingdoms on earth. This magical sight left her dumbfounded; she had never expected to witness such a scene in her wildest of imaginations. In fact it proved to her that Lord Ram, whose divinity and supremacy as the Lord of creation she had doubted, was indeed none else but the Supreme Lord of the world who had willingly assumed a form of a human being, and he is indeed the Lord whose true form is of cosmic dimension, who is served by every unit of creation, from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic level of existence.

A similar development occurred when the saintly crow Kaagbhusund saw the cosmic form of Lord Ram when the Lord was yet a child. This event is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82. We shall be reading this episode

in due course when we arrive there as we progress in our reading of this magnificent book.]

पूजहिं प्रभुहि देव बहु बेषा । राम रूप दूसर नहिं देखा ॥ ३ ॥
 अवलोके रघुपति बहुतेरे । सीता सहित न बेष घनेरे ॥ ४ ॥
 सोइ रघुबर सोइ लछिमनु सीता । देखि सती अति भई सभिता ॥ ५ ॥

pūjahim̄ prabhuhi dēva bahu bēṣā. rāma rūpa dūsara nahim̄ dēkhā. 3.
 avalōkē raghupati bahutērē. sītā sahita na bēṣa ghanērē. 4.
 sō'i raghubara sō'i lachimanu sītā. dēkhi satī ati bha'īm̄ sabhitā. 5.

All of the gods in their different forms were worshipping the same Lord (Sri Ram). Sati did not see different forms of Lord Ram as she had seen the gods in myriad of forms. [That is, though she saw many forms of different gods and goddesses, she saw only one universal form of Lord Ram whom all the gods and goddesses were worshipping.] (3)

Though she saw many images of Raghupati (Lord Ram) with Sita [as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 54 herein above], yet all these images had the same attire and forms. [In other words, though Sati could see countless images of Lord Ram and Sita in every direction she looked, yet all these physical forms of the Lord and Sita were exactly alike, though the gods who worshipped them had variations in their physical forms and attires.]¹ (4)

Hence, when Sati saw with amazement this magical sight wherein she could see countless images of Lord Ram and Sita but all of them were exactly similar to each other, she became absolutely perplexed and scared². (5)

[Note—¹This miracle of seeing one uniform image of Lord Ram everywhere was experienced by the crow saint Kaagbhusund also as narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha nos. 80—81. More specifically, Kaagbhusund had also seen one form of Lord Ram wherever he had gone—refer: Uttar Kand, Doha no. 81 Ka.

Kaagbhusund had wondered in many universes, and in each of these worlds he saw the same awe-inspiring wonderful sight as Sati has seen here in our present narration.]

हृदय कंप तन सुधि कछु नाहीं । नयन मूदि बैठीं मग माहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 बहुरि बिलोकेउ नयन उघारी । कछु न दीख तहँ दच्छकुमारी ॥ ७ ॥

hr̄daya kampa tana sudhi kachu nāhīm̄. nayana mūdi baiṭhīm̄ maga māhīm̄. 6.
 bahuri bilōkē'u nayana ughārī. kachu na dīkha taham̄ dacchakumārī. 7.

Sati's heart trembled (with fear) and she lost awareness of her senses (body). She (was so scared and dazed by what she saw that she) shut her eyes close and sat down in the middle of the path¹. (6)

After some time she gathered herself and collected her senses, and then opened her eyes only to find that she could not see anything any more². (7)

[Note—¹Sati felt giddy and reeled under the influence of the stunning things she saw. She felt numbed in her senses, and thought that she was hallucinating. She feared that she has lost her mind or was seeing some terrifying ghosts. Feeling that she will faint and fall down unconscious if she continued to walk further, she closed her eyes and sat down in the middle of the road.

²Well now, this verse has two obvious meanings:—

(i) Sati was so stunned that when she opened her eyes after some time, she could not see properly as happens when a person suffers from some sort of severe mental shock and his or her nerves become temporarily paralysed.

(ii) The miracle of countless stunning images of Lord Ram and Sita being served by as many countless forms of gods, goddesses, mystics, sages and creatures suddenly vanished from sight when Sati reopened her eyes. It was like a nightmare, a bad dream which vanishes as soon as a person wakes up from sleep. Indeed it was so—for Sati would now wake up from the ignorance-inspired delusions and would see the truth and reality. We shall read below in verse no. 8 that the same Sati who was so skeptical when Shiva had bowed before Lord Ram would now bow her own head before the latter.]

पुनि पुनि नाइ राम पद सीसा । चलीं तहाँ जहँ रहे गिरीसा ॥ ८ ॥

puni puni nā'i rāma pada sīsā. calīm tahām' jaham' rahē girīsā. 8.

She repeatedly bowed her head before Lord Ram¹ (to ask for forgiveness as well as to pay her respects to him), and then went her way to the spot where Girish (literally, the Lord of the mountains; here meaning Lord Shiva) had been waiting for her. (8)

[Note—¹When Sati was convinced about the reality of Lord Ram, about the Lord's divinity and true form as being the all-pervading, immanent and omnipresent Supreme Being himself in that form, she was at once thrilled for having had the privilege of witnessing the Lord's truthful form as well as was full of regret that she was foolish enough to have cast doubts on him. So she bowed repeatedly before Lord Ram to not only offer her deep reverence to him, but also to ask for forgiveness from the Lord for her impertinence and foolish behaviour.

A similar incident occurs later on in the story of Ram Charit Manas. The monkey prince Sugriv had doubts about Lord Ram's abilities, and whether the Lord was an ordinary human prince or someone divine, so to test the Lord he showed him a series of tall trees and asked him to shoot down all of them with a single arrow. Lord Ram fell all the trees as asked. This miracle convinced Sugriv that Lord Ram was no ordinary man. At that time too we read that 'Sugriv bowed his head repeatedly before the Lord'. {Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 7.}

Compare this 'repeatedly bowing of the head' with how Lord Shiva reacted when he saw Lord Ram as narrated earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 50. We will note that Lord Shiva did not bow his

head before Lord Ram, but silently paid his obeisance to the Lord by praising his glories and feeling extremely exhilarated so much so that his body had goose-bumps. The question is: why did Shiva not bow his head before Lord Ram even though he was fully aware about the reality of the Lord and did not need any convincing? The answer is this: Lord Shiva avoided to openly bow before Lord Ram as it was not the opportune time for it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50.}

Why was it not so? It is because Lord Shiva wished to keep Lord Ram's identity secret so that the mission for which the Supreme Being had come down to earth in the physical form of Lord Ram, which was to eliminate the scourge of the demons, could be successfully completed. Lord Shiva did not wish to divulge the secret of Lord Ram's identity as that would have alerted the demons who would then run away into hiding.]

दो०. गई समीप महेस तब हँसि पूछी कुसलात ।
लीन्हि परीछा कवन बिधि कहहु सत्य सब बात ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

ga'īm samīpa mahēsa taba hamṣi pūchī kusalāta.
līnhi parīchā kavana bidhi kahahu satya saba bāta. 55.

When Sati reached Lord Mahesh (Shiva), he smiled¹ and asked about her welfare, if everything was alright with her².

Shiva asked her, 'How did you examine Lord Ram? Tell me everything truthfully³.' (Doha no. 55)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva was intelligent, wise and prudent. He could observe the pale face of Sati, and her crestfallen manners. He smiled because he thought that today Sati has had her share of wonder that is so characteristic of the deluding world, that she has learnt the truth the hard way, and that she has had a hands-on bitter experience of doubting Lord Ram's divinity on the one hand, and the words of her husband, Lord Shiva, on the other hand.

²He wondered if everything was alright with her, for he had his doubts. We have already read earlier that when Shiva failed to persuade Sati to abandon her adamancy and listen to him to his wise council not to try acting smart to test the authenticity of Lord Ram or the truthfulness of the words of Shiva, he had decided that the fate of Sati was not good—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 52.

³It is very significant here that Shiva has asked her to tell 'everything truthfully'. It shows that he had his doubts whether Sati would tell him 'everything' without hiding anything, and say it 'truthfully'. He guessed it correctly that Sati would try to hide her mischief so as not to annoy her husband any further. She had already disobeyed Shiva, and had to bite a bitter pill for her audacious and impertinent behaviour, and now if she told him the truth of what she did, i.e. assumed the form of Lord Ram's wife Sita, it would surely stoke the fire of anger in him further. Sati was scared stiff like a person who is caught between the devil and the deep sea. She was bound to try

more tricks to save her skin; she would surely now try to deceive Shiva so as to escape being punished by him.

Sati's nervousness was too obvious to have escaped Shiva's close scrutiny: she was ashen-faced, fidgety, shuffling nervously with lowered eyes and head, and her voice quivered out of uncertainty when she answered her husband. The signs were too tell-tale to have skipped Lord Shiva. Hence he concluded that there were fair chances of Sati hiding things from him, and telling him a lie to save herself from his wrath.]

मासपारायण, दूसरा विश्राम (māsapārāyaṇa, dūsarā viśrāma)

Pause no. 2 for a 30-day recitation of Ram Charit Manas

चौ०. सतीं समुज्झि रघुबीर प्रभाऊ । भय बस सिव सन कीन्ह दुराऊ ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

satīm samujhi raghubīra prabhā'ū. bhaya basa siva sana kīnha durā'ū. 1.

Realising the truth about the greatness of Lord Ram¹, the brave warrior in the race of king Raghu, Sati was so awed and scared that she hid from Shiva the reality of what had happened (or, what mischief she was upto in order to test the truth of Shiva's assertions pertaining to Lord Ram and the latter's greatness)². (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 54 where we read that Lord Ram has decided to reveal his astounding mystical powers to Sati when he found that she was feeling miserable.

What was the reason for Sati feeling so miserable? Well, she had realised her mistakes though it was too late to make amends now. She admits her error when she says—"I have not listened to what Shiva told me, and have cast the shadow of my stupidity and ignorance upon Lord Ram. Now, what and how shall I answer Shiva when I go back to him?" Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 54.

²So we see that Sati was completely confounded and dazed. On the one hand she had committed a grave sin by disbelieving and disobeying her husband, a sin that itself demanded stern punishment, and on the other hand her head was still reeling from the effects of the frightening experience she had had a little while ago when she saw out-of-world visions of countless images of Lord Ram and Sita being served by countless gods, goddesses, sages and others that surrounded her from all sides.

To make matters worse for her, she had, in her stupidity, taken the form of Sita, another person's wife, and this was sure to annoy her own husband Shiva because this was against all norms of good conduct and ethics. She had tried to cheat Lord Ram though her husband Lord Shiva had clearly told her that Ram is the Lord

whom he worships—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51.

With this big baggage of stupid, stubborn, unethical, impertinent and un-reverential behaviour, what more can be expected from Sati other than she being scared out of her wits so much that she was afraid to tell the truth. She tried to hide her follies and mischief by taking recourse to falsehood, thereby compounding her miseries further, instead of abating them.

What was the effect of all this consternation and emotional tumult on Sati? Well, the answer is found below in verse nos. 2-3 where we read that she hides her actions and tells Shiva a lie.]

कछु न परीछा लीन्हि गोसाईं । कीन्ह प्रनामु तुम्हारिहि नाई ॥ २ ॥
जो तुम्ह कहा सो मृषा न होई । मोरें मन प्रतीति अति सोई ॥ ३ ॥

kachu na parīchā līnhi gōsā'īm. kīnha pranāmu tumhārihi nā'īm. 2.
jō tumha kahā sō mṛṣā na hō'ī. mōrēm mana pratīti ati sō'ī. 3.

Sati told a lie to Shiva. She told him—‘Oh Lord! I have not tested him (Lord Ram) in any way. I just bowed my head before him like you had done. (2)

Indeed oh Lord, whatever you had said is the truth, and I am fully convinced of it. [Or, whatever you say cannot be wrong, and I have firm faith in my Mana (mind and heart) regarding the truthfulness of your words.]’ (3)

[Note—Sati has said two blatant lies here: One is that she did not test Lord Ram, which she had actually done, and another is that she has full faith in the truthfulness of Lord Shiva’s words, which she hadn’t.

She could have said instead that she did not test Lord Ram because though she had her doubts about the divine aspect of the Lord in the beginning but by the time she reached him she thought over the matter and decided that Shiva cannot tell something that is wrong, and therefore she had aborted her test and came back to him. That would have somewhat eased the intensity of her lies.

Further still, the best option for her would have been to honestly admit to Lord Shiva that she had made a serious mistake by not trusting him, and that she has now regrets it bitterly, begging for forgiveness from the Lord; she should have added that if Lord Shiva wishes to make her undertake some sort of penance for repentance, she was willing to do it.

Making a mistake is not such a big crime as to hide one’s mischief by telling lies to conceal it—especially from one’s own husband or someone who is one’s well-wisher, such as the case was with Shiva and Sati.]

तब संकर देखेउ धरि ध्याना । सतीं जो कीन्ह चरित सबु जाना ॥ ४ ॥
बहुरि राममायहि सिरु नावा । प्रेरि सतिहि जेहिं झूठ कहावा ॥ ५ ॥

taba saṅkara dēkhē'u dhari dhyānā. satīm jō kīnha carita sabu jānā. 4.

bahuri rāmamāyahi siru nāvā. prēri satihi jēhim̐ jhūm̐ṭha kahāvā. 5.

Then Lord Shiva closed his eyes and contemplated in order to see beyond the visible spectrum of sight. In this transcendental state of the mind he came to know whatever Sati had done¹. (4)

Having realised the truth, Shiva bowed his head to Lord Ram's Maya (delusion creating powers) which is so powerful that it had provoked Sati to tell lies². (5)

[Note—¹It is well known that Lord Shiva is the patron deity of ascetics, and remains perpetually submerged in deep meditation and contemplation. The Upanishads dealing with Yoga tell us that in this state of existence, the person acquires a state of transcendental consciousness when he goes above and beyond the gross and mundane level of existence to reach a higher state to observe things in their real form from a neutral and detached perspective.

The transcendental state of consciousness is obtained by practicing Yoga and Dhyān (meditation and contemplation) which enables the practitioner to rise above the grossness and the mundane plane of physical existence in this world to get a truthful and honest picture of any given thing or situation from a higher viewing point that lends the viewer to have a broader bird's eye perspective which is untainted by worldly pre-conceived ideas, and is not distorted by the grossness of the various organs of perception of the viewer's physical body when the same thing or situation is observed from the physical plane limited to this gross world.

Since Lord Shiva is expert in meditation and contemplation, he immediately employed this tool to find out the truth. When he saw Sati, her fidgety behaviour, demeanours and countenance clearly indicated to him that there was something wrong, and Sati was not telling him the truth. There was no use in trying to extract the truth from her by either persuasion or threat. So it's better to investigate the matter himself, he thought, and the best way to do it was to contemplate or do "Dhyān".

²Not only telling lies, but the Lord's Maya had even eclipsed Sati's wisdom and sense of probity when it inspired her to assume the form of Sita (refer: Doha no. 52). Not only this, Maya had even made her so arrogant and over confident of her own intelligence that she thought Shiva to be wrong in assuming that Lord Ram, who was roaming on the ground in search of his wife Sita, was no one else but the Supreme Being himself in a human form. 'How can it be?' thought Sati (refer: Doha no. 50 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-2).

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas—(a) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 51; (b) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2; and (c) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 59; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72.]

हरि इच्छा भावी बलवाना । हृदयँ बिचारत संभु सुजाना ॥ ६ ॥
 सतीं कीन्ह सीता कर बेषा । सिव उर भयउ बिषाद बिसेषा ॥ ७ ॥
 जौं अब करउँ सती सन प्रीती । मिटइ भगति पथु होइ अनीती ॥ ८ ॥

hari icchā bhāvī balavānā. hr̥dayam̃ bicārata sambhu sujānā. 6.
 satīm̃ kīnha sītā kara bēṣā. siva ura bhaya'u biṣāda bisēṣā. 7.
 jaum̃ aba kara'um̃ satī sana prītī. miṭa'i bhagati pathu hō'i anītī. 8.

Lord Shambhu (Shiva) thought to himself, ‘The wish of Lord Hari (Vishnu; Lord Ram), as well as one’s own destiny (or fate) are very powerful forces (as they determine what course a person’s life would take)¹.’

[To wit, it is almost impossible to oppose them. Whatever Lord Hari wants will happen. Whatever is written in one’s destiny is destined to happen. One has almost no control over these factors. Yes, it is true that one can always act diligently and change the course of his life, but this can only happen by the grace of Lord Hari, and this indirectly means that a person has to be mindful of the fact that nothing can happen without keeping the Lord in the loop.] (6)

The fact that Sati had assumed the form of Sita caused immense grief and sorrow in the heart of Shiva. He felt very disconsolate within, and confounded. [Why was he so dismayed and in a state of profound dilemma? This question is answered below.] (7)

He decided—‘If I now show any affection to Sati, and tend to neglect or overlook her actions, it would be gravely improper and tantamount to destroying the path of Bhakti (having devotion and loyalty for one’s chosen deity, who in the case of Shiva was Lord Ram)².’ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 128; line no. 1 of Doha no. 174; and Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 171.

²Sita was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi and the consort of the Lord (Sri Ram) whom Shiva worshipped as his chosen deity. This being so, Sita was like a ‘mother goddess’ for Shiva. Therefore, to assume the form of Sita was an unpardonable sin on the part of Sati.

Secondly, it is totally unethical and immoral for someone’s loyal and chaste wife to play the role of another person’s wife under any circumstance. This is another great sin that Sati committed.

Thirdly, she had tried to play dirty tricks with Lord Ram whom her husband reveres, especially when her husband had tried his best to dissuade her from doing so.

And all these sins were compounded when she boldly told lies to Shiva without fearing the consequences. It would have been much better for her to come out clean and tell him the truth at the outset, asking for forgiveness and praying that the intensity of punishment which was now due to her be reduced. But again, thought Shiva, it was Lord Ram’s Maya which prevented Sati from taking this straight path. It was Lord Ram’s wish and the destiny of Sati which have together brought things to such a pass.

If Shiva accepts Sati inspite of her sins, then obviously it would create a bad precedent, especially when Shiva was not an ordinary person but the most exalted amongst the gods. He is regarded as the wisest, the most enlightened and the greatest devotee of Lord Ram as well as the Lord’s original form as Lord Vishnu. Think, what will the other gods say of him if he stoops low to overlook the grave mischief of Sati just because she is his wife and he loves her dearly? Is his love for his wife more important than his love for his Lord God, Sri Ram, whom he worships day and night?

The path of Bhakti demand total surrender and loyalty towards the chosen deity, and a devotee's relationship with his or her chosen deity takes precedence over all other relationships that exist in the world. So, thought Shiva, should he compromise on this sacrosanct principle of Bhakti? Is Lord Ram's will and the holiness of the position of the Lord's consort (his wife Sita) worthy of neglect to please his own wife Sati who has committed such horrible sins as telling lies even to her husband and not paying heed to his advice?

Perhaps, Shiva thought to himself, Lord Ram wants him not to accept such an un-respectful and deceitful lady as his wife, a lady who has no faith in her husband, a lady who can play dirty tricks, a lady who does not bat an eyelid before telling lies. This is why Lord Ram created a situation whereby Lord Shiva would become aware of the true nature of his wife and be warned that she is not worthy to remain by his side. After all, her father insults Shiva and treats him with utter contempt (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 62). Is it ever advisable to have someone as one's wife under these circumstances?]

दो०. परम पुनीत न जाइ तजि किँ प्रेम बड़ पापु।

प्रगटि न कहत महेसु कछु हृदयँ अधिक संतापु ॥ ५६ ॥

dōhā.

parama punīta na jā'i taji ki'ēm̃ prēma baṛa pāpu.

pragaṭi na kahata mahēsu kachu hṛdayam̃ adhika santāpu. 56.

Shiva was confounded and on the horns of a dilemma literally. He thought to himself that Sati was otherwise most immaculate and chaste, and so it looks difficult to abandon her outright. On the other hand, it would be a grave sin to show affection to her (for reasons cited in the above verses).

Though Shiva did not say anything overtly, but these opposing thoughts churned his heart and extremely tormented it. (Doha no. 56)

[Note—Shiva realised the gravity and the perplexities unique to the situation that confronted him. He realised that except for the sins she has committed in the present case, like not believing him, or taking the form of Sita, or telling lies, she was otherwise pure and incorruptible. Having doubts is not a sin par-se; everyone has his doubts. After all, Sati did not argue with Shiva or insult him in public, or said any words of insult. She had kept quiet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 51.

She had assumed the form of Sita not to lure Lord Ram with any passion in her mind; her intention was just to find out if the Lord recognises her as Sati or falls into the visual trap and thinks her to be Sita. If the latter thing would have happened then surely it would be established that Ram was just an ordinary prince who could see things with his gross organ of sight, i.e. the eye, and had no power to see beyond. So, though assuming the form of Sita was a wrong thing to do as such, but the intention was not sinful.

The third error of Sati was to speak lies. Once again, she did so to escape harsh punishment, and not done out of habit. Hence, this was also pardonable to some extent.

These arguments are alright in themselves. But the problem was that all these acts of Sati were sinful and fell within the ambit of impropriety and unethical conduct from the perspective of the principles of Dharma—which means conduct that is ethical, proper, righteous and noble. So she deserved punishment, and not condoned for her wrong-doing, as to accept her without her undertaking any kind of punishment by way of repentance to atone for her serious demeanours would go against the laws of Dharma.

These contradictory thoughts filled the heart of Shiva with grief and sorrow. It would be hard to abandon Sati, and it would be equally hard to accept her now.]

चौ०. तब संकर प्रभु पद सिरु नावा । सुमिरत रामु हृदयँ अस आवा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

taba saṅkara prabhu pada siru nāvā. sumirata rāmu hr̥dayam̐ asa āvā. 1.

Then, Shankar (Shiva) bowed his head (mentally) at the holy feet of the Lord (Sri Ram). As soon as Shiva remembered the revered Lord (Ram), the latter emerged in his heart (to bless Shiva and give him internal peace, as well as to guide him to decide what is the proper thing for him to do now in the given set of situations that had torn his mind).

[This verse has another interpretation and can also be read as follows: “Then (when?—after Sati told him lies and he came to know the truth by contemplation), Shiva mentally bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ram (in order to invoke the Lord and request him to show the correct path to be followed at this juncture). As soon as he invoked the Lord, he appeared in Shiva’s heart to inspire him to think in the manner as described in the following verse.”] (1)

[Note—As we have read in Doha no. 56, Shiva could not decide what to do. In this dilemma, he decided to take refuge with his beloved Lord Ram and seek the latter’s guidance.

How does one seek the Lord’s advice and guidance? Here is the answer: first pay your respect to the Lord God by bowing your head at the Lord’s holy feet and invoking him in your heart. Then the Lord would answer your queries by inspiring your soul to think in the way the Lord wants you to act.

Now, this is a great lesson for all of us. Remember: the voice of the soul is the voice of the Lord God, and it reveals in the form of what we call the “voice of conscience”. One who heeds the voice of one’s conscience treads the righteous path, and one who neglects it turns a deaf ear to the Lord.

So, what was the advice of Lord Ram? The answer is found in the following verse no. 2 herein below.]

एहिं तन सतिहि भेट मोहि नाही । सिव संकल्पु कीन्ह मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥

ēhim tana satihī bhēṭa mōhi nāhīm. siva saṅkalpu kīnha mana māhīm. 2.

Shiva decided in his Mana (mind and heart)—‘I cannot have any connection (relationship) with Sati as long as she remains in the present body.’ (2)

[Note—This is a prelude of things to come. Shiva has not completely abandoned Sati; he has decided to have no relationships with Sati “in the present body”. This is because she has polluted her body by assuming the form of Sita, and she has committed the sin of telling lies with this body. But at the same time, she is otherwise immaculate. So what is the practical solution? The answer is this: Sati should first discard this body and take another birth, or ‘her soul should live this tainted body and enter a new fresh one’ so that Shiva can accept her.

Remember: it is the gross body that becomes tainted by worldly corruptions, but the ‘soul’ always remains pure and immaculate. This is the lesson of this verse. A person’s sins and the body which commits these sins are to be punished, but not the ‘person himself’. Incredulous it seems, but it is the truth—for the true identity of the person is not his or her gross body, but the Atma, the soul, which is absolutely immaculate and eternal. The Atma remains above the mundane deeds done by the gross body, and is never involved in grossness.

It is when a person overlooks the voice of the Atma, known as the “voice of conscience; the inner voice”, that he or she commits sins. Even in the case of Sati this has been true. Her Atma, her “inner voice”, had warned her not to disbelieve Lord Shiva, but she had overlooked it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 51. Had she paid heed to the voice of her “conscience”, she would not have had to suffer now.

So, this was the guidance Shiva got from Lord Ram. ‘He should abandon Sati in her present form, but should accept her when her Atma takes a new form or assumes a fresh new body, which in practical terms means to take a new birth.’ We shall read a little while later that eventually this is what has happened. Sati burnt her corrupted body in the sacrificial fire of her father Daksha, and at that time had prayed to the creator to give her another birth where she can be accepted by Lord Shiva once again. Hence, she took birth in the household of Giriraj, the king of mountains, as Parvati. She did severe penance and was accepted by Shiva as his divine consort once again.

Sati’s Atma, i.e. her pure conscious soul which was her “true self”, remained the same; it was the gross body that changed. It was like a person discarding dirty clothes, taking a bath, and then doning fresh new clothes.]

अस बिचारि संकरु मतिधीरा । चले भवन सुमिरत रघुबीरा ॥ ३ ॥

asa bicāri saṅkaru matidhīrā. calē bhavana sumirata raghubīrā. 3.

Deciding thus, Lord Shankar (Shiva), who is very wise and patient, started on his journey for his abode (on Mt. Kailash), all the while remembering Lord Ram (“Raghubir”) on the way. (3)

[Note—Shiva was going to his abode at Mt. Kailash from sage Agastya’s hermitage when this episode of Sati took place. So he had waited under the shadow of a banyan tree till Sati came back to him after testing Lord Ram. Now that things have taken a nasty turn and it became clear to him that he has to neglect the presence of Sati henceforth, he got up to move onwards to his abode in Kailash. For all practical purposes, Shiva considered himself alone hereafter.

That is why he kept his mind submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram which amounts to him remaining engrossed in meditating upon the Lord even as his physical body was moving towards his hermitage.]

चलत गगन भै गिरा सुहाई । जय महेस भलि भगति दृढ़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

अस पन तुम्ह बिनु करइ को आना । रामभगत समरथ भगवाना ॥ ५ ॥

calata gagana bhai girā suhāī. jaya mahēsa bhali bhagati dr̥ḥāī. 4.
asa pana tumha binu kara'i kō ānā. rāmabhagata samaratha bhagavānā. 5.

Even as Lord Shiva moved forward on his journey to his abode, a pleasant disembodied voice was heard in the sky¹. It complimented Shiva for his decision (of abandoning Sati in her present body to uphold the laws of Dharma and Bhakti). This voice said—‘Glory to Mahesh! You have done well to reinforce and uphold the virtue of Bhakti². (4)

Who else would have taken this stern decision that you have taken³? Indeed, you are a great devotee of Lord Ram, and are an able Lord God in your own right.’ (5)

[Note—¹The disembodied voice was the voice of the ‘Super Consciousness, the Supreme Atma’. It has approved the decision of Shiva not to accept anyone who has become corrupted, and especially one who cast doubts on the divinity of the Supreme Lord himself who was in the form of Lord Ram.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 186, as well as Chaupai line no. 6 that follows below.

²For a true devotee of Lord Ram, there is no other relationship more important than the Lord, and anyone who shows disrespect to the Lord is obviously worthy of abandonment no matter how close or dear he or she may be. The only relationship that a devotee values is one with his revered Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 72; (ii) Doha no. 130 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 5; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131.

In the present case, Sati has cast doubts on the integrity of Lord Ram and has shown disrespect to him by assuming the form of his wife Sita. It ought to be noted carefully here that when she appeared before Lord Ram disguised as Sita, she had not bowed before the Lord or shown any other sign of respect to him. This in its self was showing great disrespect to Lord Ram whom Shiva reveres and worships. So, Shiva was right in abandoning her to uphold the principles of Bhakti and Dharma. And his decision was endorsed by the supreme Atma. That is, Shiva’s “higher Self” approved of his decision.

³Lord Shiva’s decision is narrated in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above.

Even Lord Ram praises the steady devotion of Lord Shiva and his ability to stick to strict codes of self-discipline. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 76.]

सुनि नभगिरा सती उर सोचा । पूछा सिवहि समेत सकोचा ॥ ६ ॥
कीन्ह कवन पन कहहु कृपाला । सत्यधाम प्रभु दीनदयाला ॥ ७ ॥

suni nabhagirā satī ura sōcā. pūchā sivahi samēta sakōcā. 6.
kīnha kavana pana kahahu kṛpālā. satyadhāma prabhu dīnadayālā. 7.

When Sati heard the voice from the sky, she became anxious and nervous, not knowing what it meant or indicated. She became suspicious and began pondering its meaning in her heart, and unable to determine anything, she hesitantly asked Lord Shiva—(6)

‘Oh merciful Lord! You are an abode of truthfulness, and are compassionate towards the humble, the meek, the lowly and the downtrodden. Tell me please, what vows have you taken?’ (7)

[Note—Like any guilty person, Sati was suspicious of what next step Shiva would take to punish her. If Shiva had said something openly to admonish Sati for her mischief and misdemeanours, it would have been better for Sati because by this method the anger of Shiva would have been vented out. But when he decided to keep quiet and move on, not saying anything to Sati by way of even slightest of reprimand in spite of her grave and unpardonable sins, this did not portend good for her. When an able person or senior authority is offended by another person but decides to keep quiet, it is not a good sign for the latter, for this anger keeps boiling inside only to erupt like a volcano later on.

Sati’s conscience was pricking her like a crown of thorns. So when she heard the heavenly voice praising Lord Shiva’s stern vows, she immediately became suspicious that there was something grave in it.

She was ‘hesitant’ because she knew she was guilty of a grave and unpardonable sin, for otherwise she knew that Lord Shiva loved her very much and there was no cause of her feeling terrified to ask him such basic questions as ‘what vow have you taken?’

We must also note that she has used pleasing words to appease her angry husband—such as he being merciful, truthful, compassionate etc. This was her subtle way of pleading with Shiva to have mercy and compassion on her even if she had committed a grave error and even if he was angry at her.]

जदपि सतीं पूछा बहु भाँती । तदपि न कहेउ त्रिपुर आराती ॥ ८ ॥

jadapi satīm pūchā bahu bhāntī. tadapi na kahē'u tripura ārātī. 8.

Though Sati asked Shiva to tell her what vows he had taken and what the heavenly voice meant, Lord Tripurari (Shiva) kept quiet and did not reply to her¹. (8)

[Note—¹Shiva’s quiet and reluctance to reply to Sati added to her woes, as she was now sure that Shiva is very angry at her and has virtually abandoned her for all practical purposes. This will be clear in the following Doha no. 57.

Lord Shiva had decided that he has got nothing to do with Sati any more, and treated her as a stranger with whom he did not wish to interact. He chose to keep quiet

because if he opened his mouth to reply to her there were fair chances that his suppressed anger and annoyance would burst forth, which he wished to avoid as he loved Sati whom he knew to be an extremely faithful and devoted to him other than the one grave sin that she had committed, which was to disbelieve him, and then compounding matters further by telling a lie to cover up her follies.]

दो०. सतीं हृदयँ अनुमान किय सबु जानेउ सर्बग्य ।
कीन्ह कपटु मैं संभु सन नारि सहज जड़ अग्य ॥ ५७ (क) ॥

dōhā.

satīm hṛdayam̃ anumāna kiya sabu jānē'u sarbagya.
kīnha kapaṭu mair̃ sambhu sana nāri sahaja jaṛa agya. 57 (a).

Sati concluded in her heart that the all-knowing Lord Shiva has come to know all the misdeeds she had done. She thought to herself, 'Lord Shiva has become aware of all the cunning and deceit I had undertaken, all the mischief I have committed.'

She realised that she has behaved like an ordinary silly and stupid woman (instead of being wise and prudent as was expected from the divine consort of such a wise and enlightened god as Shiva). (Doha no. 57 Ka)

सो०. जलु पय सरिस बिकाइ देखहु प्रीति कि रीति भलि ।
बिलग होइ रसु जाइ कपट खटाई परत पुनि ॥ ५७ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

jalu paya sarisa bikā'i dēkhahu prīti ki rīti bhali.
bilaga hō'i rasu jāi kapaṭa khaṭā'ī parata puni. 57 (b).

It is well said by the wise ones the unifying and bonding power of love is like the relationship of water and milk because when ordinary water (which has no special monetary value independently) is mixed with milk, it blends so perfectly with the latter that it becomes as valuable as milk and acquires the same sale value as pure milk. But when even a drop of acid symbolising falsehood and lack of trust and faith is added to this homogenous liquid, the water and milk are not only separated but the taste of milk sours and becomes too horrible to be palatable. (Sortha no. 57 Kha)

[Note—This metaphor is employed to say that as long as Sati had not used falsehood and deceit against her loving husband Lord Shiva, as long as she had full trust in him and his words, Lord Shiva and Sati were inseparable from each other. Wherever Shiva went, Sati accompanied him. But now this acid of lies and mistrust has soured their cordial relation so much so that Shiva turned away from Sati and completely neglected her.

This episode and Sortha has a great practical message for all of us—it is that we must be true and honest with our partner if we wish to sustain the relationship and be cordial with each other. Otherwise, sooner or later the relation would sour.]

चौ०. हृदयं सोचु समुझत निज करनी । चिंता अमित जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥ १ ॥
कृपासिंधु सिव परम अगाधा । प्रगट न कहेउ मोर अपराधा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hṛdayam̐ sōcu samujhata nija karanī. cintā amita jā'i nahim̐ baranī. 1.
kṛpāsindhu siva parama agādhā. pragaṭa na kahē'u mōra aparādhā. 2.

Sati's heart was overwhelmed with grief and contrition as she realised her stupidity and misdeeds. She was extremely worried, but did not know what to do now. (1)

She was extremely perturbed and thought to herself—'Lord Shiva, who is like a fathomless ocean of mercy and grace, has known my mischief and misdeeds, but he's so merciful and kind that he refrains from overtly telling me about my sins.¹ (2)

[Note—¹Shiva did not want to add to her woes by admonishing her or telling her what nonsense she has done. The Lord did not want to hurt Sati any more because he understood that she was already full of regret as she has realised her mistakes by then, and when she would come to know that he has abandoned her, the intensity of her torments would be beyond measurement. Being loving, merciful, compassionate and gracious, Lord Shiva did not wish to add fuel to her tormenting fire any more. So he decided to keep quiet.]

संकर रुख अवलोकि भवानी । प्रभु मोहि तजेउ हृदयं अकुलानी ॥ ३ ॥
निज अघ समुझि न कछु कहि जाई । तपइ अवाँ इव उर अधिकाई ॥ ४ ॥

saṅkara rukha avalōki bhavānī. prabhu mōhi tajē'u hṛdayam̐ akulānī. 3.
nija agha samujhi na kachu kahi jā'ī. tapa'i avām̐ iva ura adhikā'ī. 4.

When Sati observed the behaviour and attitude of Shiva (that clearly hinted at his disenchantment with her), Sati's heart trembled (in fear) because she realised that the Lord has abandoned her. (3)

Since it was she who was at grave fault and had committed a horrific sin, she did not know what to say to the Lord in her defense; she could not protest to Shiva that he should not be so heartless with her so as to abandon his chaste and loyal wife.

Perturbed and distressed beyond measure, Sati's heart was smouldering in grief and contrition like being put in a furnace. (4)

[Note—Through these verses, the great saint Tulsidas wishes to tell all of us what fate awaits us if we take recourse to falsehood, deceit and pretensions in our lives, if we tell lies and disbelieve our well-wishers like Sati had disbelieved and lied to Shiva who was her best well-wisher in this world.

Even the best of relationship, the most cordial and the coveted relationship, would crumble like a house of cards and sour like milk in which acid is dropped if one is not careful not to use cunning and falsehood, distrust and dishonesty in it.]

सतिहि ससोच जानि बृषकेतू । कहीं कथा सुंदर सुख हेतू ॥ ५ ॥
बरनत पंथ बिबिध इतिहासा । बिस्वनाथ पहुँचे कैलासा ॥ ६ ॥

satihi sasōca jāni bṛṣakētū. kahīm kathā sundara sukha hētū. 5.
baranata pantha bibidha itihāsā. bisvanātha pahumṅcē kailāsā. 6.

When Lord Brishketu (literally the Lord who has the sign of a bull marked on his standard/flag; i.e. Lord Shiva whose mount is a bull) realised that Sati was very sad and contrite, he narrated different stories to divert her mind and keep her engaged¹. (5)

In this way, while narrating stories from the different Purans and Itihasas (ancient scriptures and mythological histories) on the way, the Lord of the world, “Vishwanaath”, reached Kailash, his abode. (6)

[Note—¹Shiva is a very merciful Lord. The measure of his graciousness and kindness is that instead of taking any severe punitive action against Sati and scolding her using stern language, he remained quiet. Then when he observed that Sati is suffering from guilt and remorse, and feeling contrite, he decided to divert her attention by telling her stories so that her pain and sorrows are diffused a bit.

The use of the epithet “Vishwanaath”, the ‘Lord of the world’, is significant here. It implies that Lord Shiva was aware of the fact that this world is not perfect; it is full of contradictions. Delusions and ignorance, falsehood and deceit are as much part of it as are enlightenment, knowledge and wisdom, as well as truthfulness and honesty. They coexist in this world; they are a part of the nature of creation.

Another point to note is that it is said in verse no. 4 herein above that “Sati’s heart was so much tormented by grief as if it was put in a furnace”. It means that she was already getting self-punished by her own conscience, and this was more effective than any other form of external punishment. She has realised her mistake, and she is already suffering like hell inside, so, being a merciful Lord, Shiva thought that it would be extremely cruel to torment her any further. Therefore he decided to comfort her a bit by telling stories.]

तहँ पुनि संभु समुझि पन आपन । बैठे बट तर करि कमलासन ॥ ७ ॥
संकर सहज सरूपु सम्हारा । लागि समाधि अखंड अपारा ॥ ८ ॥

taham̃ puni sambhu samujhi pana āpana. baiṭhē baṭa tara kari kamalāsana. 7.
saṅkara sahaja sarūpu samhārā. lāgi samādhi akhaṇḍa apārā. 8.

When Shiva reached Kailash, he remembered his vows (that he would have nothing to do with Sati any longer, and would instead spend his days like a lonely hermit or ascetic). So, he sat down under a banyan tree¹ in a meditative posture known as the ‘lotus posture’. [This is the posture adopted by ascetics when they meditate upon the ‘pure conscious Self’.] (7)

Shiva immersed himself in deep meditation, concentrating his thoughts on his true Self, the pure consciousness known as the Atma or Soul. In this way, he entered the

state of steady Samadhi—a perpetual state of transcendental existence of consciousness when the practitioner experiences absolute bliss and tranquility even as he remains completely unaware of the external world because all his gross organs of action and perception go to virtual sleep. (8)

[Note—¹It has been affirmed elsewhere also that the banyan tree is the preferred tree under the shadow of which Shiva meditates and rests in his abode at Mt. Kailash—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 106.

Kailash is the well-known abode of Lord Shiva on earth—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 105.]

दो०. सती बसहिं कैलास तब अधिक सोचु मन माहिं ।
मरमु न कोऊ जान कछु जुग सम दिवस सिराहिं ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

satī basahim̐ kailāsa taba adhika sōcu mana māhim̐.
maramu na kō'ū jāna kachu juga sama divasa sirāhim̐. 58.

Meanwhile, Sati lived a lonely and forlorn life at Kailash. Her mind and heart were overcome with worry and grief. The secret of her sorrows was not known to anyone as she kept quiet and to herself. In this way, days that passed away seemed like long eras (years; ages) to her. (Doha no. 58)

[Note—Life seemed like a burden to her. There was no one with whom she could share her pain and woes. Shiva was lost in meditation, and there was an eerie silence all around. It was like living alone in a cremation ground.

The internal grief and mental agony of a woman whose husband has abandoned her is portrayed here. Though physically she may be alive, but mentally she feels herself no better than one who is dead. Life becomes a burden for her, and days seem like ages.]

चौ०. नित नव सोचु सती उर भारा । कब जैहउँ दुख सागर पारा ॥ १ ॥
मैं जो कीन्ह रघुपति अपमाना । पुनि पतिबचनु मृषा करि जाना ॥ २ ॥
सो फलु मोहि बिधाताँ दीन्हा । जो कछु उचित रहा सोइ कीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
अब बिधि अस बूझिअ नहिं तोही । संकर बिमुख जिआवसि मोही ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

nita nava sōcu satī ura bhārā. kaba jaiha'um̐ dukha sāgara pārā. 1.
mair̐m̐ jō kīnha raghupati apamānā. puni patibacanu mṛṣā kari jānā. 2.
sō phalu mōhi bidhātām̐ dīnhā. jō kachu ucita rahā sō'i kīnhā. 3.
aba bidhi asa būjhi'a nahim̐ tōhī. saṅkara bimukha jī'āvasi mōhī. 4.

Contrition and grief held Sati's heart in their firm grip. She was tormented daily with guilt, and wondered when it would be possible for her to cross this endless ocean of sorrows and miseries¹. (1)

She gravely regretted, lamenting thus—'I have insulted Lord Ram and slighted his dignity (by playing dirty tricks with him and trying to trap him by disguising myself as his wife Sita), and I had compounded my follies by not believing the words of my husband (Lord Shiva)². (2)

The creator Vidhaata (Brahma) has given me the bitter fruit (punishment) that I deserved for my own misdeeds (and therefore I can't blame either him or anyone else). Indeed, the Creator has done what was correct and judicious³. (3)

Still, oh Creator, it is unfair and cruel for you to force me to live separate from my beloved husband⁴ (to whom I am totally devoted). (4)

[Note—¹Sati has been tormented ever since she realised that whatever Shiva had told her regarding Lord Ram was the absolute truth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 53 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

Then once again when there was a heavenly voice praising Shiva for his vow not to accept a tainted Sati as his consort any longer, her apprehensions were further reinforced. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57.

²To wit, surely I have committed two grave sins—one was to play fools with the Supreme Lord, Sri Ram, and undermining the Lord's dignity and holiness by taking recourse to deceit and pretending to be his wife in spite of my husband clearly warning me not to do so. To add to my woes, I was so stupid and deluded that I did not even pay my obligatory obeisance to Lord Ram before I went ahead to test him. Not only this, I dared to think that my husband is attempting to mislead me, and by not believing in his words about the divinity and greatness of Lord Ram I have implied that he lacks wisdom and knowledge. Now, this has thrown me in a whirlpool of miseries and grief because my husband had abandoned me for all practical purposes. He has not even asked me to repent for my sins, nor has he admonished me, or told me how to do penance to neutralise the bad effects of my sins. So it's clear that Shiva is firm not to accept me under any circumstance.

³That is, I have no right to blame either the creator Brahma or my husband Shiva for my self-inflicted miseries and torments. I have myself invited and courted trouble. Whom should I blame?

⁴Therefore let me die and leave this mortal body. I don't want to keep this tainted body with which I have committed such sins. On the one hand I have offended my husband Shiva by slighting the authority and dignity of Lord Ram who is worshipped by him. It is tantamount to desecrating the deity he worships. Then I have disobeyed him and treated his word with doubts. As if this was not enough, I lied to my husband! Couldn't I tell Shiva the truth of my misdeeds and ask him for forgiveness, in which case I could have invoked his merciful and forgiving nature to get my punishment reduced or kept in abeyance to let me repent and reform my self and my foolish nature. But I did not do so. So, whom shall I accuse for my horrors than my

own self? One reaps what one sows, and it is not otherwise: this is the universal Law of Nature that also applies to me now.]

कहि न जाइ कछु हृदय गलानी । मन महँ रामहि सुमिर सयानी ॥ ५ ॥
 जौं प्रभु दीनदयालु कहावा । आरति हरन बेद जसु गावा ॥ ६ ॥
 तौ मैं बिनय करउँ कर जोरी । छूटउ बेगि देह यह मोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 जौं मोरें सिव चरन सनेहू । मन क्रम बचन सत्य ब्रतु एहू ॥ ८ ॥

kahi na jā'i kachu hṛdaya galānī. mana mahum̃ rāmahi sumira sayānī. 5.
 jaum̃ prabhu dīnadayālu kahāvā. ārati harana bēda jasū gāvā. 6.
 tau maim̃ binaya kara'um̃ kara jōrī. chūṭa'u bēgi dēha yaha mōrī. 7.
 jaum̃ mōrēm̃ siva carana sanēhū. mana krama bacana satya bratu ēhū. 8.

The intensity of regret, contrition and grief in the heart of Sati were so huge that they could not be measured or described. Then, the wise/clever Sati¹ finally sought refuge with Lord Ram. Thus, she invoked the Lord in her heart by remembering him. (5)

She prayed to him (Lord Ram)—‘Oh Lord! If you are indeed the merciful Lord so much praised by all and honoured as such by the Vedas who univocally assert that you eliminate the sorrow and grief of those who seek your refuge and pray to you for help, (6)---

---Then I join my palms as a sign of submission before you to earnestly plead with you that let me shed this gross body (with which I have committed such grave sins, and which will never be accepted by my husband Shiva). (7)

And if I have true devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Shiva (like a loyal wife and true devotee must have), and this statement of mine is true to its core in all respects, if I am truthfully dedicated to Shiva’s feet with my entire being employing my Mana (mind and heart), my actions, and my words, (8)---

[Note—¹Sati has been called “wise or clever” (“sayānī”) because at last she came to her senses. She has now sought the refuge of Lord Ram, which was a very intelligent decision on her part. This is because she realised that the best way to seek pardon for her sins was to surrender before Lord Ram whom she had insulted and shown disrespect to. This would be the best way to seek forgiveness from her husband because he had taken more umbrage at her showing disrespect to the Lord whom he worships (i.e. Lord Ram), rather than her disobeying him (Shiva).

The root of all the trouble was her disbelieving Shiva’s words that Lord Ram was indeed the Supreme Being who is the almighty Lord of creation. Now, this being the case, the wise course of action for her was to pray to the ‘Supreme Being’ himself whom she had insulted. When someone asks to surrender and prays to a senior Authority, it becomes virtually impossible for the latter to refuse. Committing mistakes or sins, and then accepting one’s errors and asking to be forgiven, in any manner that the sinner thinks fit, is a sufficient ground for commuting of punishment.

We shall read below in Doha no. 59 that Sati asks that she be allowed to die because she was certain her husband, Lord Shiva, would not accept her in her present body under any circumstance.

Sati's decision to pray to Lord Ram stood her in good stead as will be clear when we read a little later that it was Lord Ram who had intervened on her behalf to persuade Shiva to marry her in her next birth as the daughter of Himwan, the king of mountains. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 77.]

दो०. तौ सबदरसी सुनिअ प्रभु करउ सो बेगि उपाइ ।
होइ मरनु जेहिं बिनहिं श्रम दुसह बिपत्ति बिहाइ ॥ ५९ ॥

dōhā.

tau sabadarasī suni'a prabhu kara'u sō bēgi upā'i.
hō'i maranu jēhim binahim śrama dusaha bipaniā bihā'i. 59.

---Then oh all-knowing¹ Lord (Ram), please listen to my earnest plea. Make an arrangement soon whereby I can die without sufferings so that all my torments and bad days are done with (and I am relieved from this ignoble life).' (Doha no. 59)

[Note—So we see that at last Sati had to seek refuge with the same Lord Ram upon whom she had cast so much doubts and aspersion. Her episode is an example of the power of the Lord's Maya, and the fact that in the final analysis it is the Lord who will come to our rescue inspite of our mischief and irreverent behaviour.

¹Addressing Lord Ram as being “all-knowing” is significant. Sati meant to convince Lord Ram that whatever she had said to him by way of prayer was the truth, and there was no deceit in it. This was necessary because for all practical purposes Sati has created a very bad reputation for herself—as a liar and deceitful woman. So, let Lord Ram be convinced that notwithstanding whatever lies and cunning she may have adopted earlier, but this time around she is being absolutely truthful and honest.

There are umpteen numbers of verses that reiterate that Lord Ram is all-knowing. For instance, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 53.

Now, why was Sati so confident that inspite of being offended, Lord Ram would still heed her requests if she prayed to him with total truthfulness and surrender? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219 which affirms that “Lord Ram always keeps the wishes of his followers, and this habit of his is endorsed and witnessed by the Vedas, the Purans, the gods and saintly people”.

There are some interesting aspects to this tale. Sati has stated while praying to Lord Ram: “if I have true devotion and affection for Lord Shiva's feet” (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 59—like a loyal wife must have), then she should die without suffering (refer: Doha no. 59). In other words, she makes two important requests: one is that inspite of her mistakes she still has true and undiluted devotion and affection for Lord Shiva, and wishes to serve the Lord's feet, and the other is that she wishes to leave this body but do it without pain. The first request—that she be allowed to serve Lord Shiva's holy feet may not be explicit here, but all

ambiguity about it is removed later on in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65, and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 64—where she explicitly asks this blessings from Lord Hari or Lord Ram (because Ram is an incarnation of Hari).

The all-forgiving, all-merciful and most considerate Lord Ram has accepted all her requests. (i) She will get to marry Shiva again in her next life as Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 65. (ii) She would not have to suffer long and indefinitely as she would die soon by jumping in the sacred fire at her father’s fire-sacrifice—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

Another interesting aspect is the way Sati left her body. It is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64 that Sati burnt herself by jumping into the raging fire of the sacrificial pit at her father’s fire sacrifice ritual. Fire is a well-known and reputed medium of purification because it burns all impurities without affecting the original material. Even gold is purified by putting it in fire. Shiva had taken a stern vow that he will have nothing to do with Sati in her present body because she had committed a grave sin by disguising herself as Sita, Lord Ram’s wife—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57. And then Sati asks Lord Hari to bless her that she be Shiva’s wife in the next birth so that she is able to serve the Lord’s holy feet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65.

These two apparently opposing situations had to be reconciled. The only way was to “purify Sati’s tainted body” so that she becomes acceptable to Shiva, and the best medium to do so was to put her in the ‘fire’. It is interesting to note that this “purifying by fire” is also carried out on Sita at the end of the war at Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 109. Quite a coincidence indeed! That is why Lord Shiva’s consort was called “Sati”—it was a traditional process in ancient Indian society wherein a woman proved her chastity and loyalty to her husband by burning herself in the cremation fire with her dead husband’s body. If she resisted or abstained from doing so, more often than not she was scorned at and castigated by the rest of the clan.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि दुखित प्रजेसकुमारी । अकथनीय दारुन दुखु भारी ॥ १ ॥

बीतें संबत सहस सतासी । तजी समाधि संभु अबिनासी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi dukhita prajāśakumārī. akathanīya dārūna dukhu bhārī. 1.

bītēm sambata sahasa satāsī. tajī samādhi sambhu abināsī. 2.

In the above narrated way, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati (i.e. Sati) suffered from horrible grief and misery which cannot be described (because it was immense and constantly tormenting her). (1)

Eighty-seven thousand Samvats (years) passed while the immortal (eternal and imperishable—“Abinaashi”)¹ Shiva remained deeply submerged in the transcendental state of consciousness known as Samadhi (or “meditative trance”).

At the end of this period, he woke up from this transcendental state of existence to the realities of the gross world². (2)

[Note—¹The word “abināsi” (Abinaashi) literally means that which does not decay and die, that which is eternal and imperishable, that which is immortal. Shiva is a god, and from the perspective of creation he is ‘immortal’ in the sense that unlike the rest of creation which perishes at the end of each Kaal (era; epoch), he remains perpetual.

The time frame of 87,000 Samvats is not a joke. It’s a very long period of time from human perspective. The gross body will naturally age and become feeble during the course of this long time. But ascetics overcome this problem by immersing themselves in Samadhi. It is believed that all physical functions of the body go into hibernation mode during Samadhi, and that period when the ascetic remains in Samadhi is not added to his physical age. Thus for instance, if an ascetic enters into Samadhi when he is say 13 years old, and remains in Samadhi for say next 100 years, then when he wakes up from Samadhi his age would still be 13 years. In other words, the body will not grow old by 100 years for the entire period of Samadhi. This is why our ancient sages, seers, hermits and ascetics could live for ‘thousands of years’.

This is the physical perspective. From the metaphysical angle however, the word “Abinaashi” refers to the soul, the Atma, the pure conscious ‘self’ of any living being, which is eternal and imperishable by nature. Only those who are ‘self-realised’ know this fact because they identify themselves with the Atma and not the physical body. Shiva is the most enlightened and highly self-realised god in the entire pantheon of gods—and therefore this epithet of being “Abinaashi” aptly applies to him.

²This is because while he remained totally oblivious of his surroundings during the period of Samadhi, when he left it he became aware of the world. That is why he realised Sati was there now. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that follow below.]

राम नाम सिव सुमिरन लागे । जानेउ सतीं जगतपति जागे ॥ ३ ॥

जाइ संभु पद बंदनु कीन्हा । सनमुख संकर आसनु दीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

rāma nāma siva sumirana lāgē. jānē'u satīm jagatapati jāgē. 3.

jā'i sambhu pada bandanu kīnhā. sanamukha saṅkara āsanu dīnhā. 4.

As soon as he woke up from the state of Samadhi, he started muttering the holy name of Lord Ram¹. When Sati heard it she realised that the Lord of the world has woken up from his meditative trance. (3)

She went and offered her obeisance to the holy feet of Lord Shambhu (Shiva). Shankar acknowledged her gestures, and politely gave her a seat to sit down in his front (facing him)². (4)

[Note—¹When a true devotee of Lord Ram wakes up to the realities of the gross world after sleep during which time his sub-conscious mind was detached from the affairs of the external world, he is characterised by first remembering and uttering the name of Lord Ram as a means of paying obeisance to his Lord as well as symbolically offering his new day to the Lord with a subtle prayer to take care of him during his waking time. We see this happening in the case of Vibhishan who uttered the name of Lord Ram the first thing upon waking up in the morning, and like Sati here, this pronouncing the Lord’s name helped Hanuman realise that Vibhishan was a true

friend and devotee of the Lord in the jungle-like fort of demons at Lanka, the capital of the demons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 6.

Uttering the holy name of Lord Ram the first thing upon getting up from sleep also proves that even during sleep the devotee's sub-conscious mind was focussed on the Lord because the two states of existence of consciousness, viz. 'the waking state' and the 'sleeping state' are relative by nature vis-à-vis the relationship of the creature's body with the physical world of material existence. In both these cases, the mind and sub-conscious remains active—the only difference is that while in the 'waking state' the external organs of the body such as those of perception (eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin) and action (hand, leg, mouth, genital and excretory) are active, in the 'sleeping state' they become inactive. But the mind and sub-conscious continues to work behind the curtain. Therefore, since the muttering of the name of the Lord is done by the tongue it only indicates that the concerned person has 'woken up' from sleep, that his gross organs, such as the tongue, have become active. But it does not mean that while asleep his mind was not thinking of the Lord—only that during sleep the tongue remained inactive.

So, when Shiva started uttering the name of Lord Ram, Sati realised that he has woken up from his Samadhi (meditative trance like state), which for an ascetic like Shiva is akin to an ordinary person's 'sleep'.

Lord Shiva always chanted Lord Ram's holy name day in and day out as a spiritual formula that gave him eternal peace at all levels, the external world as well as his inner-self. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108 that is explicit on it.

²A wife is seated to the left of her husband—and not in front. By making Sati sit in his front, Shiva clearly indicated that he has stopped treating her as his consort. This is clear later on in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 107 where it is said that when Parvati, who was actually Sati in her new birth, came to Lord Shiva to ask the Lord to tell her the story of Lord Ram once again because she was still confused about the Lord's holy essential form and divine nature, something for which she had to suffer in her previous birth as Sati, Lord Shiva had "given her a seat to his left".]

लगे कहन हरिकथा रसाला । दच्छ प्रजेस भए तेहि काला ॥ ५ ॥

देखा बिधि बिचारि सब लायक । दच्छहि कीन्ह प्रजापति नायक ॥ ६ ॥

lagē kahana harikathā rasālā. daccha prajāsa bha'e tēhi kālā. 5.

dēkhā bidhi bicāri saba lāyaka. dacchahi kīnha prajāpati nāyaka. 6.

Shiva began narrating to Sati various interesting stories related to Lord Hari (Vishnu)¹.

Meanwhile, sometime during that time, Daksha (Sati's father) became a guardian of all living beings in this creation. (5)

The creator Bidhi (Brahma) deemed him suitable in every possible way to be a guardian of his creation. Hence, he appointed Daksha as the leader (king) of all living beings in his kingdom (creation)². (6)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that when Shiva was on his way to Kailash from the hermitage of sage Agastya and Sati had played mischief on the way, Shiva had mentally abandoned her. This made Sati very sad. When the Lord found Sati extremely distressed, he had narrated many stories to her to keep her mind diverted from her miseries—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 58.

But the irony is that inspite of suffering so much, and inspite of getting to hear Lord Hari's divine stories at least three time by now—once in the hermitage of sage Agastya, then on the way to Kailash, and the third time now—Sati was still disillusioned. This is why she has asked Shiva for the 'fourth time' to tell her the divine story of Lord Hari (Ram): refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110.

²The story of Daskha: According to Padma Puran, the creator Brahma, in order to roll out this creation and make it self-sustaining, created the first human in his own likeness, and named him 'Manu'. This Man was a sort of a revealed form of the invisible Brahma. He was called 'Swayambhu Manu' or the self-created Manu because he had no physical parent.

It is also written that Bhrigu, Pulaha, Kratu, Angiraa, Marichi, Daksha, Atri and Vasistha were the mentally-created "Manas Putra" of Brahma, and similar to him in all respects—i.e. had the same mystical powers and knowledge as the creator himself. These nine are also known as the 'Nine Brahmas'.

In Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 1, verse no. 1-2, sage Maitreye had told Bidur that the Swayambhu Manu had a wife named Shatrupa. From her he begot three daughters—viz. Aakuti, Devhuti and Prasuti. 'Aakuti' was married to Prajapati Ruchi.

Then later on in Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 1, verse nos. 10-11, sage Maitreye had told Bidur that Swayambhu Manu had married his second daughter named 'Devhuti' to sage Kardam, and his third daughter 'Prasuti' to Daksha Prajapati, the son of Brahma.

According to Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 1, verse nos. 47-53, Manu married his daughter Prasuti Daksha Prajapati, the son of the creator Brahma. Prasuti gave birth to sixteen daughters, out of whom thirteen elder ones were married to Dharma, one was married to Agni (Fire God), one to all the Pittars (spirits of dead ancestors who have become demi-gods), and one to Lord Shiva.

The eleven daughters who were married to Dharma were the following—Shraddha (who gave birth to Shubha), Maitri (who gave birth to Prasaad), Dayaa (who gave birth to Abhaya), Shaanti (who gave birth to Sukha), Tushti (who gave birth to Moda), Pushti (who gave birth to Ahankaar), Kriyaa (who gave birth to Yoga), Unnati (who gave birth to Darpa), Buddhi (who gave birth to Artha or financial well-being), Medhaa (who gave birth to Smriti or memory), Titikshaa (who gave birth to Kshema or taking care of necessities of life), Hrii or Lajja {modesty and dignity} (who gave birth to Prasraya or prayerful submission), and Murti (who gave birth to two great sons named Nar and Naaraayan).

The youngest daughter who was married to Lord Shiva was called Sati. This lady later on burnt herself out of anger and insult in the fire sacrifice of her own father. This incident however is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand,

from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 65.

At the time of death however, she wished to be married to Lord Shiva once again as she was fully devoted to the Lord and did not want to marry anyone else in her next birth. So took birth as Parvati in the household of the king of mountains known as Himwaan. Parvati did severe Tapa to marry Lord Shiva. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 72—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103.

A different version is narrated in Garud Puran. According to it the story is as follows:—With the aim of creating a world with living beings, the creator Brahma created five “Manas Putras” or mental-born sons in his own likeness. They were Dharma, Rudra, Manu, Bhrigu and Sankaadi. Then with his right thumb, Brahma created Daksha, and with his left thumb he created the wife of Daksha who produced 16 daughters. They were the following—Shradhaa, Maitri, Dayaa, Shaanti, Tushti, Pushti, Kriyaa, Unnati, Buddhi, Medhaa, Murti, Titikshaa, Hli, Swaahaa, Swadhaa and Sati.

Swaahaa was married to Agni, Swadhaa to the Pittars, and the other thirteen daughters were married to Dharma. The 16th daughter, Sati, was married to Rudra whose other name is Shiva. When Daksha had insulted Shiva by not inviting him to the fire sacrifice he had organized, and in which Sati had burnt herself as narrated in Ram Charit Manas (Baal Kand, from Doha no. 61—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 65), Shiva had cursed him (Daksha) that he would be demoted to become a human being and take birth in the family of Dhruv. One of the descendents of Dhruv was known as Prachetaa who did severe Tapa (penance) to get the power of reproduction and spread his progeny. He married the daughter of Kanduu, named Maarishaa, and from her he begot a son named Daksha. Then this Daksha produced so many living beings by his mere mental wish men that they filled all the four corners of the world. But the irony was that these mental-born creatures were unable to reproduce themselves—i.e. they could not beget children in order to perpetuate this creation consisting of living beings on earth. In other words, once they died the land would be barren once again.

In order to overcome this problem, Daksha married Asikni, the daughter of Veeran Prajapati. From her he produced thousand sons and countless daughters. These daughters were the ones from whom Kashyap and others were able to perpetuate this creation. In other words, this present generation of living beings, of all genres and families, has Daksha as their ancestor in the present cycle of creation.

More information pertaining to the story of Daksha and his sons (numbering ten thousand) is narrated as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 79.]

बड़ अधिकार दच्छ जब पावा । अति अभिमानु हृदयँ तब आवा ॥ ७ ॥

नहिं कोउ अस जनमा जग माहीं । प्रभुता पाइ जाहि मद नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bara adhikāra daccha jaba pāvā. ati abhimānu hrdayam̐ taba āvā. 7.
nahim̐ kō'u asa janamā jaga māhīm̐. prabhutā pā'i jāhi mada nāhīm̐. 8.

When Daksha acquired an exalted stature of being appointed as the guardian of the living beings of the kingdom of the Creator by the latter himself, immense sense of self-pride and arrogance took root in his heart¹. (7)

Indeed it is true that there is no one who has taken birth in this world but does not have pride and ego if he or she gets to acquire high stature and position, or is honoured by someone who is great (like the creator Brahma who had honoured Daksha by making him the guardian of his creation)². (8)

[Note—¹Daksha became exceedingly proud of himself, thinking—“Oh, I am so great and able that the Creator has selected me to lead the world out of all the candidates for this coveted position. Now I am the king of the world, rivaling Indra who is the king of gods. No one can match me now. Oh, I am the undisputed sovereign now. None can challenge my position now because I have been appointed by the Creator himself.

²This is an important observation. It is worth noting here that only those who have taken birth in this world created by Brahma, the creator are prone to this negative trait of becoming arrogant and haughty. That is why the ‘self-born’ Supreme Being is free from this taint—because he is not created by Brahma, the creator.

So therefore, Lord Ram was never subjected to being influenced by the negative traits of ego, pride, arrogance or haughtiness for the simple and straight reason that he had come to this world out of his own free will, and not created by Brahma, the creator, like other living beings.]

दो०. दच्छ लिए मुनि बोलि सब करन लगे बड़ जाग ।
नेवते सादर सकल सुर जे पावत मख भाग ॥ ६० ॥

dōhā.

daccha li'ē muni bōli saba karana lagē barā jāga.
nēvatē sādara sakala sura jē pāvata makha bhāga. 60.

To celebrate his newly acquired stature, Daksha summoned all the sages and began to perform a huge fire sacrifice. He sent invitations to all the gods, respectfully inviting them to come and take their respective shares of the offerings during the fire sacrifice. (Doha no. 60)

[Note—Who were invited? This is answered below in verse nos. 1-2. It ought to be noted that Shiva is left out.]

चौ०. किंनर नाग सिद्ध गंधर्वा । बधुन्ह समेत चले सुर सर्बा ॥ १ ॥
बिष्णु बिरंछि महेसु बिहाई । चले सकल सुर जान बनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

kinnara nāga sid'dha gandharbā. badhunha samēta calē sura sarbā. 1.
biṣṇu birañci mahēsu bihā'ī. calē sakala sura jāna banā'ī. 2.

The Kinnars (celestial dancers), the Naagas¹ (subterranean serpents), the Siddhas (mystics), the Gandharvas (celestial musicians and singers), and all the rest of the gods², accompanied by their respective consorts, proceeded to attend the fire sacrifice of Daksha. (1)

All the gods and their consorts—except the three chief gods of the Trinity, viz. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder³—boarded their decorated aerial chariots and headed to the fire sacrifice of Daksha. (2)

[Note—¹The “Naagas”—Though the word ‘Naag’, simply put, means a serpent or snake, from mythological point of view they are semi-gods. The brief story of their origin is as follows—Sage Kashyap and his wife Kadru had 1000 sons who had 1000 hoods each. They were called the ‘Naagas’, and they ruled over the subterranean world. Out of them, there were 26 main Naagas such as Anant, Vaasuki, Shesh, Karkootak, Shankha, Kambal, Mahaaneel, Takshak, Padma, Mahaapadma, Mahaashankha, etc. The story is narrated in Padma Puran, Sristi Khanda, and Vishnu Puran, Section 1, Canto 21, verse no. 1-3.

²The Gods and their sub-classes—The creator Brahma created ten levels in creation. Out of them, the ‘gods’ constitute one level. According to Bhagwat Maha Puran, 3/10/27-28, the ‘gods’ themselves are classified into eight sub-classes or sections—viz. (i) Devta (the higher immortal gods), (ii) Pittar (spirit of dead ancestors), (iii) Asur (non-gods, but not mortal creatures), (iv) Gandharva and Apsara (celestial singers and musicians and their women), (v) Yaksha and Raksha (lower forms of Asurs and demoted spirits; demons in spirit form), (vi) Siddha (mystics), Chaaran (bards) and Vidyaadhar (lower spirits who possessed special skills and were learned but not qualified to become full gods), (vii) Bhut-Pret-Pishach (ghosts, phantoms, evil spirits), and (viii) Kinnars (celestial dancers). Refer also to: Amarkosh, Swarga Varga 1, verse no. 11.

The Gandharvas have a yellow complexion. They are said to be the sons of Kashyap Prajaapati and his wife Arishta. The Apsaraas are said to be their wives. They are regarded as the custodians of ‘Soma’ (the elixir of the gods that is stored in the Moon), medicine men of gods (because they give the Soma as a miracle potion for all ailments), propagators of heavenly knowledge, the controllers of the Nakshatras (zodiac signs and stars), etc. The patron god of the Gandharvas is ‘Varun’, the Water-God, and their chief or leader is Chitra-rath. The main Gandharvas are eleven in number as follows—Haha, Huhu, Chitrasen/Chitra-rath, Vidhyaadhar, Hansa, Vishwaa-vasu, Paraa-vasu, Gomaau, Tumburu, Viraadha and Nandi.

According to Taittiriya Aaranyaka, (i, 9, 3), there are eleven sub-classes of Gandharvas. But according to Agni Puran, the Gandharvas have twelve sub-classes, and they are Abhrajya, Andhaari, Rambhaari, Suryavarchaa, Kridhu, Hasta, Suhasta, Hans/Swan, Murdahwaan, Mahaamanaa, Vishwaa-vasu, and Krishnaanu.

³Daksha had become so arrogant that he did not even invite his mentor, the creator Brahma. Daksha kept ill-will with Shiva, and since all the gods of the Trinity were deemed to be the same Brahm, the Supreme Being, in three different forms to carry out three different functions of creation, viz. to create (Brahma), to sustain (Vishnu) and to conclude (Shiva), Daksha decided to neglect all of them. But the other gods should have paid attention to the fact that these three gods of the Trinity were the senior most amongst them, and to by-pass them just to get their own share of the

sacrificial offerings by someone (Daksha) who has insulted the Trinity Gods by not inviting them, and to whom all the gods paid their obeisance and bowed before, was an unacceptable thing by any criterion. The gods had to pay a heavy price for this deemed insult to the Trinity Gods—because we shall read a little later how Lord Shiva sends his disciple named Veerbhadra to destroy the fire sacrifice of Daksha and punish the gods—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 65.]

सतीं बिलोके व्योम बिमाना । जात चले सुंदर बिधि नाना ॥ ३ ॥
सुर सुंदरी करहिं कल गाना । सुनत श्रवन छूटहिं मुनि ध्याना ॥ ४ ॥

satīm bilōkē byōma bimānā. jāta calē sundara bidhi nānā. 3.
sura sundarī karahim̐ kala gānā. sunata śravana chūṭahim̐ muni dhyānā. 4.

Sati observed different types of decorated aerial vehicles flying through the sky. (3)

In them, beautiful women-folk of the gods were singing such melodious songs with a sweet voice that if sages heard them they would be so enchanted that they would be inspired to abandon their meditative trance to listen and enjoy them (i.e. the meditating sages would be sufficiently enticed to stop their meditation and hear these pleasant songs and see the sight of magnificently decorated aerial vehicles flying through the sky in colourful formations). (4)

पूछेउ तब सिवँ कहेउ बखानी । पिता जग्य सुनि कछु हरषानी ॥ ५ ॥

pūchē'u taba sivaṁ kahē'u bakhānī. pitā jagya suni kachu haraṣānī. 5.

When Sati asked Lord Shiva about this wonderful sight and what it meant, he told her everything (regarding Daksha's fire sacrifice and the gods going to attend it).

When Sati heard of the fire sacrifice at her father's place, she felt a bit excited. (5)

[Note—Amid the gloom and despair that had surrounded Sati because of Shiva adopting a detached attitude towards her, this news was a sort of diversion for her depressed mind that would give her some moments of pleasure and comfort, as well as a chance to recover her emotional bearing and a bit of mental peace. So she asked Shiva to give her permission so that she can go and attend this fire sacrifice—refer: Doha no. 61 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 herein below.]

जौं महेसु मोहि आयसु देहीं । कछु दिन जाइ रहौं मिस एहीं ॥ ६ ॥
पति परित्याग हृदयँ दुखु भारी । कहइ न निज अपराध बिचारी ॥ ७ ॥

jauṁ mahēsu mōhi āyasu dēhīm̐. kachu dina jā'i rahauṁ misa ēhīm̐. 6.
pati parityāga hṛdayaṁ dukhu bhārī. kaha'i na nija aparādha bicārī. 7.

She thought to herself—If Mahesh gives me permission then I can go and live there (at my father's place) for some time on this excuse (of having come to attend the fire sacrifice). (6)

[The reason why she wanted to go to her father's place for some days, and why she was reluctant to freely ask her husband to give her permission, is this—] Her heart was full of sorrow and grief because her husband had abandoned her. So therefore, she was very hesitant to approach him due to the guilt of her sins bearing heavy on her mind and heart.

[To wit, she feared he would become more annoyed with her that instead of doing penance to atone for her sins she wishes to enjoy the celebrations at her father's place, and therefore perhaps he would not allow her to come back to him when she returned from her father's place at the end of the fire sacrifice.] (7)

बोली सती मनोहर बानी । भय संकोच प्रेम रस सानी ॥ ८ ॥

bōlī satī manōhara bānī. bhaya saṅkōca prēma rasa sānī. 8.

[But unable to resist herself, she approached Shiva.] Sati spoke to Shiva hesitantly and most politely because she was afraid of him (i.e. she was uncertain how her husband would respond to her).

But nevertheless, when she finally spoke it was with a very pleasant and polite tone as if her words were soaked in affection (for she tried her best not to annoy Shiva any more by showing a hint that she is uneasy and feels the need to have a change of environment to calm her nerves and sooth her mind). (8)

[Note—Sati knew of her mistakes, and was scared that her asking Shiva to give her permission to go to her father's place to attend celebrations instead of doing something to atone for her sins would not go down well with her husband. He could have sternly admonished her that at a time when she was expected to do some sort repentance and show remorse for her misdeeds, she wants to enjoy celebrations at her father's place. Wasn't she concerned about who would serve her husband during her absence? Even after suffering so much, hasn't she learnt any lesson in life?

So, Sati was unusually polite when she finally gathered courage to ask Shiva to give her permission and let her go to her father's place, in order to diffuse the tension as best as she could and behave normally as if nothing has happened.]

दो०. पिता भवन उत्सव परम जौं प्रभु आयसु होइ ।
तौ मैं जाउँ कृपायतन सादर देखन सोइ ॥ ६१ ॥

dōhā.

pitā bhavana utsava parama jaum prabhu āyasu hō'i.
tau maim jā'um' kṛpāyatana sādara dēkhana sō'i. 61.

Sati requested Lord Shiva—‘There is a celebration at my father’s place. So, oh compassionate Lord (kr̥pāyatana), if I am given your kind permission then I respectfully say that I could go there and see it.’ (Doha no. 61)

चौ०. कहेहु नीक मोरेहुँ मन भावा । यह अनुचित नहिं नेवत पठावा ॥ १ ॥
दच्छ सकल निज सुता बोलाई । हमरें बयर तुम्हउ बिसराई ॥ २ ॥
ब्रह्मसभाँ हम सन दुखु माना । तेहि तें अजहुँ करहिं अपमाना ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kahēhu nīka mōrēhum̃ mana bhāvā. yaha anucita nahim̃ nēvata paṭhāvā. 1.
daccha sakala nija sutā bōlā’im̃. hamarēm̃ bayara tumha’u bisarā’im̃. 2.
brahmasabhām̃ hama sana dukhu mānā. tēhi tēm̃ ajahum̃ karahim̃ apamānā.
3.

Lord Shiva replied to Sati, ‘What you said is primarily alright, and on the face of it, it is okay to my mind as well.

But there is a problem here, and it is this: it is not proper to do so (i.e. to go to your father’s place to attend the fire sacrifice ceremony) because he (your father, Daksha) has not sent us an invitation¹. (1)

Daksha has invited all his other daughters, but he has not invited you and has ignored you because of his animosity and grudge with me. (2)

He once took an offence at me in the heavenly court of Brahma, the creator, and ever since that time he has been insulting me². [And this is why he has not sent an invitation to either me or you.] (3)

[Note—¹When a religious function is underway in a person’s father’s home, there is no harm in going and attending it. So, primarily Sati’s request was okay. But the problem was that her father harboured severe ill-will with Sati’s husband, Lord Shiva. Going uninvited to someone’s place irrespective of who he or she is, and how closely he or she is related, is sure to invite rebuke, insult, scorn and ridicule. Sati did not think of this. The fact of the matter is that she was so overcome by the powerful forces of Maya that she had lost wisdom to judge what is good and what is bad.

This error of judgment and inability to think wisely and intelligently as to what is good and what is not is at the root cause of all her miseries in the first place. It is this lack of wisdom which prevailed upon her to test the authenticity of Lord Ram by disguising herself as the Lord’s wife without thinking of the consequences of such an action, and it was the same lack of wisdom that later on made her tell lies to her husband. And now it is the same lack of wisdom that prevented her from understanding that it is highly improper to go to someone’s place without a proper invitation, especially when that person keeps ill-will with one’s closest kin, and for a wife her husband is obviously the closest relation.

Sati forgot that if she did go uninvited to her father’s place it would send a strong signal to all those present there that she did not bother about the insult that has been cast upon her husband, Lord Shiva. And this wrong signal would boomerang upon her as the entire community of gods and goddesses assembled there would ridicule her and treat her with contempt as someone who has no respect for her

husband. It would result in all her self-respect, dignity and honour being sent for a toss. As the events unfolded, this is exactly what has happened—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 63 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

²This episode of Daksha taking offence at Shiva's behaviour is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran, Skandha no. 4, Canto no. 2, verse nos. 4-33. Briefly it is as follows—

Once, the creator Brahma had organised a fire sacrifice in which all the gods and semi-gods as well as the all the sons of Brahma who were assigned the task of propagating this creation were invited. Both Shiva and Daksha were invited too. It so happened that when Daksha entered the venue, all other gods got up to show their respects to him, but Lord Shiva kept sitting. This is because Daksha was not even a senior god, and was merely a "Prajapati" (caretaker of Brahma's creation). But those who are of a low mentality and are full of ego think themselves to be too big or higher in stature than they actually are. So, Daksha took offence at Shiva's behaviour.

Daksha was so haughty that he immediately rebuked Shiva and told the latter that he would excommunicate him from his society and avenge his insult by not inviting Shiva to participate and accept any offerings during any fire sacrifice that Daksha would organise in his kingdom. Shiva is an exemplarily self-restrained and highly dispassionate Lord God as he is an ascetic of the highest order, and so it did not matter to him whether or not Daksha insulted him, or did not invite him to a fire sacrifice, or didn't offer Shiva his share of the sacrificial offerings.

The question is 'why did Daksha take special offence at Shiva when Brahma and Vishnu too had not got up as he entered the venue'? The answer is this—'Daksha's daughter Sati was married to Shiva, and therefore the latter was his son-in-law. Daksha took special umbrage at Shiva because he treated Shiva's showing indifference to him as an insult inflicted upon his dignity and stature by his son-in-law. Daksha forgot, in his misplaced sense of false importance and ego, that Shiva was one of the almighty gods of the Trinity and not merely his son-in-law. The other two senior gods, i.e. Brahma and Vishnu, were not related to Daksha as was Shiva, and this was the reason why he was especially very angry with Shiva.

But Shiva's insult did not go down well with Nandi (the Bull) who is his devout follower and mount. So Nandi counter-cursed Daksha that if he did so (i.e. if he did not offer the required share of sacrificial offerings to Shiva as ordained by the scriptures) then his fire sacrifice would be ruined.

Shiva all but forgot about this incident, but Daksha tied a firm knot in his mind that he will definitely insult Shiva by holding a fire sacrifice and neglecting him.

During the fire sacrifice organised by Brahma, when Daksha entered the venue, not only Lord Shiva but the other two senior-most gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, and Vishnu the sustainer, too had not got up. This is the reason why we learn here that Daksha had not invited even Brahma and Vishnu in his fire sacrifice—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 61.]

जौं बिनु बोलें जाहु भवानी । रहइ न सीलु सनेहु न कानी ॥ ४ ॥

जदपि मित्र प्रभु पितु गुर गेहा । जाइअ बिनु बोलेहुँ न सँदेहा ॥ ५ ॥

तदपि बिरोध मान जहँ कोई । तहाँ गएँ कल्यानु न होई ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ binu bōlēṁ jāhu bhavānī. raha'i na sīlu sanēhu na kānī. 4.
jadapi mitra prabhu pitu gura gēhā. jā'i'a binu bōlēhum' na sam'dēhā. 5.
tadapi birōdha māna jaham' kō'i. tahām' ga'ēm' kalyānu na hō'i. 6.

Oh Bhavani (another name of Sati)! If you go there without any invitation, then your honour, self-respect and dignity would suffer. (4)

Although it is alright, without doubt, to go to the house of one's friend, one's Lord, or one's father even without a formal invitation, (5)---

---but still it is not good for anyone to go to the place of someone who harbours any kind of hard-feelings, jealousy, animosity or ill-will.' (6)

[Note—Whatever Shiva warned Sati proved to be true. She was neglected and insulted at her father's place: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 63 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

भाँति अनेक संभु समुझावा । भावी बस न ग्यानु उर आवा ॥ ७ ॥
कह प्रभु जाहु जो बिनहिं बोलाएँ । नहिं भलि बात हमारे भाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

bhām'ti anēka sambhu samujhāvā. bhāvī basa na gyānu ura āvā. 7.
kaha prabhu jāhu jō binahim' bōlā'ēm'. nahim' bhali bāta hamārē bhā'ēm'. 8.

Shiva tried his best to explain things to Sati (and try to persuade her not to go to her father's place without an invitation), but so powerful is one's fate and destiny that wisdom eluded her; she would not see the reason and remained adamant.

[It is this stubborn nature of hers that had led to her miseries in the first place. She had not listened to Shiva's advice not to cast doubts on Lord Ram's divinity and integrity, and Sati's stubbornness had resulted in Shiva's abandonment of her when she assumed the form of Sita to test Lord Ram, and later resorted to telling lies in order to hide her misdemeanours. She is once again repeating the error of disobeying Lord Shiva and not paying heed to his advice.] (7)

Deciding that she won't listen to his advice, Lord Shiva finally gave up and said in a remorseful mood—'Well, if you go without being invited, do as you like, but I don't think it to be a good thing to do. I don't like it, and nor do I agree with it.

[Do as you think fit because you are stubborn and won't heed sane advice. But don't think I have given any bit of consent to it. I do not like your going to your father's place when he has completely neglected us, but you seem to be adamant. So, I think that it is wise for me to keep quiet now as it is clear that your fate is doomed.]' (8)

दो०. कहि देखा हर जतन बहु रहइ न दच्छकुमारि ।
दिए मुख्य गन संग तब बिदा कीन्ह त्रिपुरारि ॥ ६२ ॥

dōhā.

kahi dēkhā hara jatana bahu raha'i na dacchakumāri.
di'ē mukhya gana saṅga taba bidā kīnha tripurāri. 62.

Lord Har (Shiva) tried his best to persuade the daughter of Daksha¹ (Sati) not to go (uninvited to her father's place), but unfortunately she would not listen.

So finally, Lord Tripurari² (Shiva, the Lord of the three dimensions of the world) sent her (i.e. allowed her to go to her father's place) along with his chief attendants to accompany her. (Doha no. 62)

[Note—¹The epithet “daughter of Daksha” is used here to indicate that after all Sati had inherited the character and the genes of her father—to be stubborn, to lack wisdom, and inclined to show disrespect to Shiva and his words by disobeying him—inspite of the fact that Shiva was not an ordinary god but ‘Tripurari’, “the Lord of the entire world consisting of three levels of existence, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world”.]

चौ० पिता भवन जब गई भवानी । दच्छ त्रास काहुँ न सनमानी ॥ १ ॥
सादर भलेहि मिली एक माता । भगिनीं मिलीं बहुत मुसुकाता ॥ २ ॥
दच्छ न कछु पूछी कुसलाता । सतिहि बिलोकि जरे सब गाता ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

pitā bhavana jaba ga'im bhavānī. daccha trāsa kāhum' na sanamānī. 1.
sādara bhalēhi milī ēka mātā. bhaginīm milīm bahuta musukātā. 2.
daccha na kachu pūchī kusalātā. satihī bilōki jarē saba gātā. 3.

When Bhavani (i.e. the wife of Lord Bhava, Shiva) reached her father's house, no one welcomed her due to fear of inviting the wrath of Daksha. (1)

However, her mother was the only person who met her respectfully. [That is, Sati's mother met her affectionately, and she was the only person who welcomed her.]

Her sisters too met her, but all of them were smiling (in a sarcastic manner)¹.
(2)

*Daksha did not as much as asked for her well-being even as a matter of formal courtesy. Instead, when he saw her he was so agitated that his body burnt like it was afire. [His blood-pressure rose and he became exceedingly annoyed.] (3)

[Note—¹Why were they ‘smiling in a sarcastic manner’? Because Sati had come alone, without being accompanied by her husband Shiva, whereas the rest of her sisters were accompanied by their respective husbands. Besides this, they smiled scornfully to indicate that though they were sisters but in the present situation Sati was the lowliest amongst them as not only her husband Lord Shiva was an ascetic but he had discarded her. A lady abandoned by her husband does not deserve respect in society.

Another reason for their scornful smile is that Sati deemed it fit to come to her father's place inspite of knowing that he is opposed to her husband Lord Shiva, inspite of her not being invited by her father, and inspite of the rejection of her by her own husband, a situation which was extremely humiliating and ought to have put Sati

to so much of shame that she would avoid meeting anyone, let alone her relations who would naturally ridicule and scorn at her. She looked most odd and virtually outcast in the whole household of Daksha. It looked as if Sati had no self-respect or a sense of probity, and that she had gone nuts.

To add to her woes, she wasn't received well by her father, and her husband had been excommunicated from the community of gods so that he could not participate and take his share of the offerings of the fire sacrifice. Being fully aware of this, Sati chose to come, and this meant that she had no sense of self-respect, dignity and honour, something that was bound to invite scorn and ridicule.

*This verse no. 3 can be interpreted as follows: Daksha did not welcome her, and did not even ask for her welfare. When Sati observed this rude attitude of her father, as well as the scornful smile of her sisters, she became very angry and her entire body became so agitated as if it was burning in fire.

What made Sati so angry, especially when Shiva had forewarned her of the type of reception she must expect at her father's place? Well, firstly, Sati had little faith in her husband's wisdom as is evident when she had not believed him with respect to his advice on Lord Ram. So, even in the case of her father she had not paid much weight to Shiva's advice that she won't be welcome—because she thought that her father may harbour ill-feelings for her husband but he will not have any hard feelings against her as all fathers love their off-springs.

Her father may not have invited her husband out of personal enmity, but she thought that when she would meet him he would naturally show a father's inherent affection for his daughter, and would treat her in the same way he treated his other daughters, her sisters. But as the event turned out, it was not to be so. All her sisters had nothing but scorn for her, and quite the contrary to her expectations he father loathed her more than anyone else.

In this scenario, Sati became very agitated and angry. The “burning of the body as if on fire” is a figure of speech to imply that the concerned person is highly agitated and angry as if his or her body is being scorched by heat.]

सतीं जाइ देखेउ तब जागा । कतहुँ न दीख संभु कर भागा ॥ ४ ॥

तब चित चढ़ेउ जो संकर कहेऊ । प्रभु अपमानु समुझि उर दहेऊ ॥ ५ ॥

satīm jā'i dēkhē'u taba jāgā. katahum'na dīkha sambhu kara bhāgā. 4.

taba cita caṛhē'u jō saṅkara kahē'ū. prabhu apamānu samujhi ura dahē'ū. 5.

[Sati virtually bit her lips in disgust and somehow managed to suppress her anger in the initial phase. But then her anger burst out in the open when—] Sati went to see the fire sacrifice, but she could not find Lord Shiva's share of offerings. [During a fire sacrifice, offerings meant for the different gods are kept aside. Sati looked over them and found that no offering has been set aside for Shiva.]¹ (4)

At that moment she recalled what her husband, Lord Shiva, had told her (or had warned her—that it is sure that Daksha wouldn't offer any sacrificial offerings to him due to past animosity)².

Interpreting this as an affront to the honour of the Lord (Shiva) and a clear public insult of him, her heart was outraged and it began burning with anger and seething with disgust (with a desire to seek retribution). (5)

[Note—¹When Sati glanced over the offerings she discovered to her dismay that though the other two gods of the Trinity, viz. Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma, had not come, but still their share of sacrificial offerings had been kept aside. Only Lord Shiva had been singled out for utter neglect and contempt as not even a trace of the offerings were set aside for him even in a token and perfunctory manner as absolutely necessary to be done during a fire sacrifice. This is because during such religious rites, offerings must be made to ‘all the gods without exception’.

Had no offerings been kept aside for Vishnu and Brahma, the affront to Shiva would not have been so marked, but as the things stood Sati could not digest that Shiva be singled out for such brazen insult.

²Refer notes appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 62 herein above.]

पाछिल दुखु न हृदयँ अस व्यापा । जस यह भयउ महा परितापा ॥ ६ ॥
जद्यपि जग दारुन दुख नाना । सब तें कठिन जाति अवमाना ॥ ७ ॥

pāchila dukhu na hṛdayam̐ asa byāpā. jasa yaha bhaya'u mahā paritāpā. 6.
jadyapi jaga dārūna dukha nānā. saba tēm̐ kaṭhina jāti avamānā. 7.

The previous sorrows from which she was already suffering till now (that her husband had repudiated her) had not tormented her heart as much as this new horror (of witnessing her husband’s public insult and the scorn heaped on him). This new torment was intolerable, and it shook her heart from its core. (6)

Although there are many types of great sorrows and grief that torment a person during his or her interaction with the world, but the greatest amongst them is being insulted, scorned at and rebuked in front of the society.

[*This verse can be interpreted in another way also as follows: “Although there are many types of great sorrows and grief that torment a person during his or her interaction with the world, but the greatest amongst them is the insult, the rebuke and the scorn that is heaped on one’s own people, such as one’s kith and kin.”] (7)

[Note—The reader would note that all of Sati’s miseries have their genesis in her stubborn nature and lack of faith and trust in her husband who was not an ‘ordinary husband’ but the wisest of all the gods. The lesson that one learns is that one ought to pay attention to one’s sincere advisor, especially when he is a learned and wise one, and not be too stubborn or over-confident about one’s own wisdom and intelligence.

The second lesson to be learnt is that one should never go anywhere uninvited, no matter what happens, especially at a place where one is certain that he or she would not be welcome because the host harbours ill-feelings towards one’s close relatives. In the present case we observe that Sati had not personally offended her father Daksha in any way, and on the contrary had come to her father’s place in good faith and with full confidence that he would show fatherly affection for her, but as it

turned out, she discovered to her dismay, that since he had ill-will for her husband he treated even his own daughter with disdain.]

समुझि सो सतिहि भयउ अति क्रोधा । बहु बिधि जननीं कीन्ह प्रबोधा ॥ ८ ॥

samujhi sō satihi bhaya'u ati krōdhā. bahu bidhi jananīm kīnha prabōdhā. 8.

This thought (as described in verse nos. 5 and 7 herein above) made Sati furious with indignation and anger. Her mother tried to calm her down in various ways.

[Her mother tried to soothe her hurt feelings in the best way she could, and tried to dissuade her from taking any reckless action in anger. But as it turned out, the events had gone out of hand, and it was too much for Sati to cope with Shiva's public insult and humiliation—as will be clear in the following narrative.] (8)

दो०. सिव अपमानु न जाइ सहि हृदयँ न होइ प्रबोध ।
सकल सभहि हठि हटकि तब बोलीं बचन सक्रोध ॥ ६३ ॥

dōhā.

siva apamānu na jā'i sahi hṛdayam' na hō'i prabōdha.
sakala sabhahi haṭhi haṭaki taba bōlīm bacana sakrōdha. 63.

Insult to Lord Shiva was unbearable and unacceptable for Sati, and she could not pacify her heart on this count. So, outraged and unable to restrain herself, she poured scorn at the whole assembly and reproached it sternly in angry words—(Doha no. 63)

चौ०. सुनुहु सभासद सकल मुनिंदा । कही सुनी जिन्ह संकर निंदा ॥ १ ॥
सो फलु तुरत लहब सब काहूँ । भली भँति पछिताब पिताहूँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu sabhāsada sakala munindā. kahī sunī jinha saṅkara nindā. 1.
sō phalu turata lahaba saba kāhūm'. bhālī bhāmtī pachitāba pitāhūm'. 2.

The extremely peeved Sati angrily snubbed the whole assembly, and said vehemently in a voice full of wrath and curse—'Listen all the members of this assembly, including the sages who are present here. Listen all of you who have criticised Lord Shiva or have heard such insults being inflicted upon the Lord. (1)

All of you will immediately be given the fruits of your deeds (i.e. you will be summarily punished for your insulting Shiva). Let my father also regret fully and repent (for his misdeeds and sin of insulting Lord Shiva). (2)

संत संभु श्रीपति अपबादा । सुनिअ जहाँ तहँ असि मरजादा ॥ ३ ॥
काटिअ तासु जीभ जो बसाई । श्रवन मूदि न त चलिअ पराई ॥ ४ ॥

santa sambhu śrīpati apabādā. suni'a jahām̃ taham̃ asi marajādā. 3.
kāṭi'a tāsū jībha jō basāī. śravana mūdi na ta cali'a parāī. 4.

It is a matter of rule that wherever and whenever you hear saints, Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu (“Sri-Pati”, the Lord of Sri or goddess Laxmi) being reviled (abused, insulted, scorned at or criticised) [1], then if it is within your means you should chop-off the tongue of the reviler, and if it is not possible to do so then you should close your ears (so that you don't have to listen such vile words) and run away (get away) from the place [2]. (1-2)

जगदात्मा महेसु पुरारी । जगत जनक सब के हितकारी ॥ ५ ॥
पिता मंदमति निंदत तेही । दच्छ सुक्र संभव यह देही ॥ ६ ॥

jagadātamā mahēsu purārī. jagata janaka saba kē hitakārī. 5.
pitā mandamati nindata tēhī. daccha sukra sambhava yaha dēhī. 6.

It is such an irony that Lord Mahesh (Shiva), who is the universal Atma (soul) of the entire creation (“jagadātamā”), who is the Lord of the entire world (“purārī”), who is the Father of the whole world (“jagata janaka”), and who is the well-wisher of all (“hitakārī”) [5]---

---My father is so stupid and of a low intellect that he has chosen to criticise and revile the same great Lord of creation! And it is an irony and my bad luck that this body of mine is produced by his sperms (sukra) (because most unfortunately I happen to be his daughter) [6]. (5-6)

तजिहउँ तुरत देह तेहि हेतू । उर धरि चंद्रमौलि बृषकेतू ॥ ७ ॥
अस कहि जोग अगिनि तनु जारा । भयउ सकल मख हाहाकारा ॥ ८ ॥

tajiha'um̃ turata dēha tēhi hētū. ura dhari candramauli bṛṣakētū. 7.
asa kahi jōga agini tanu jārā. bhaya'u sakala makha hāhākārā. 8.

It is for this reason (as narrated in verse nos. 3-6 herein above, but especially verse no. 6) that I will leave my sinful, hateful and vile body immediately (because it is born out the despicable sperms of my sinful father Daksha). And while I do so, I will enshrine Lord Shiva, who is adorned with the crescent moon on his forehead and whose flag has the emblem of the Bull (“Brish”—which stands for the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, and noble conduct), in my heart.¹ (7)

Saying thus, Sati burnt her physical gross body in the fire of produced by doing Yoga². As soon as she burnt herself, there was a tumultuous plaintive cry of dismay and horror³. (8)

[Note—¹Sati has now realised that the root cause of all her miseries is that she carries the genes of her sinful, stubborn, stupid and haughty father Daksha. He had not understood the divine nature of Lord Shiva, and had treated him as an ordinary god. That Shiva had married his daughter Sati further reduced the stature of the Lord in his eyes—for Daksha started treating Shiva as being inferior to him by the virtue of him being Shiva’s father-in-law. In his ignorance, naivety and sense of false self-importance, Daksha had forgotten that Shiva was the Lord of creation, and that is why he is honoured by the epithet “Maha-Deva”, the Great God. No other god has this honour.

Lord Shiva is a highly self-realised and enlightened Lord who knows that the gross physical body is not the true self of any living being, but that the true self is the Atma, the Soul which is a universal pure conscious entity that lives in the body of all living beings. That is why Shiva is called “Jagdaatma”—the universal Soul of the entire world.

It is said that when a person dies, the last thoughts that are in his or mind decide where he or she goes in re-birth. For instance, if one thinks of Lord God then after death his soul migrates to the abode of the Lord. If he thinks of this world and its pleasures, then he is reborn in the world to fulfill his desires to enjoy it.

In the case of Sati, she enshrined Shiva in her heart, which is saying that her mind and sub-conscience was fixed on Shiva, and therefore she was bound to go where Shiva was in her next birth. As it eventually happened, Sati was re-born as Parvati in the household of Himvaan, the king of the snow-covered mountains known as Himalayas. She married Lord Shiva in this new incarnation.

²The word used in the text for the fire in which Sati burnt herself is “Yog Agni”. This is the type of fire that is kindled inside one’s body by friction caused by the vital winds. Usually this is the sort of death achieved by ascetics who are expert in doing Yoga. Since Sati was the consort of Shiva who is an expert ascetic himself and the patron god of all ascetics, it is natural to expect that she had full knowledge of this sort of death. It is painless and voluntary.

According to some versions, however, the phrase “Joga Agni” (Áô» ¥ç»çÛ) refers to the fire of the sacrificial pit. If this is to be treated as the means by which Sati left her body then it would obviously mean that she jumped into the fire sacrifice to burn herself. The word “Sati” refers to ancient practice in India wherein the dead man’s widow burnt herself in the cremation fire lit to cremate her husband’s body. In this case, the widow rode atop the funeral pile consisting of firewood, and then fire was lit.

³Sati’s burning of herself during the process of the sacrifice was tantamount to it getting disrupted. A disrupted fire sacrifice portends great evil for the patron who hosts it. As we shall read below, Lord Shiva sent his chief disciple named Birbhadra who came angrily and not only completely defiled and upturned the fire sacrifice ritual but also severely punished all the gods and sages who were present there.]

दो०. सती मरनु सुनि संभु गन लगे करन मख खीस ।
जग्य बिधंस बिलोकि भृगु रच्छा कीन्हि मुनीस ॥ ६४ ॥

dōhā.

satī maranu suni sambhu gana lagē karana makha khīsa.
jagya bidhnsa bilōki bhṛgu racchā kīnhi munīsa. 64.

As soon as the attendants of Lord Shiva, who had accompanied Sati on the instructions of Shiva (see line no. 2 of Doha no. 62 herein above), heard of her death¹, they immediately began to spoil the fire sacrifice.

When sage Bhrigu* saw that the fire sacrifice was being ruined, he intervened and saved it from complete destruction². (Doha no. 64)

[Note—¹This shows that the attendants of Shiva who had accompanied Sati were not allowed to enter the venue, but stood guard outside the gates. When Daksha had decided to completely neglect Shiva it is natural that the latter's attendants would also be boycotted. So, when Sati burnt herself inside the pavilion and a huge tumult was raised, these Shiva's attendants rushed inside to find out what had happened. And as soon as they saw that Sati had died, they became furious and drew their weapons, creating mayhem inside the pavilion to avenge Sati's death and Shiva's insult.

²When Shiva's attendants started ruining the fire sacrifice, sage Bhrigu invoked some mystical Mantras (secret formulas) of the Yajur Veda which help to overcome those forces that disrupt a fire sacrifice. Bhrigu invoked those specialised Mantras and offered oblations to the fire once again. This resulted in creation of thousands of semi-gods named "Ribhu", who immediately chased away Shiva's attendants. This saved the fire sacrifice from immediate ruin.

This statement that the 'fire sacrifice was saved by sage Bhrigu' shows that he was the priest presiding over the performance of the sacrifice. But it was a temporary relief because soon Lord Shiva sent Birbhadrā who came angrily to completely ruin the sacrifice and punish all those present, including Daksha. Refer verse nos. 1-3 herein below.

*Sage Bhrigu is a well known sage and seer who appears in a number of Vedic and Purnaic works. His name 'Bhrigu' is derived from the root word 'Bhrij' or 'Bhraaj' which literally means to roast or burn, and therefore it could mean the sage, who was a fire sacrifice priest, had some mystical powers which allowed him to kindle the altar fire automatically by use of Mantras. According to mythological history, the patron God of lightning, Lord Maatarishwan, brought the celestial lightning down to earth and taught three priests the art of kindling the sacred altar fire using the Aranis ('the fire sticks' used to kindle fire by vigorous rubbing together). These three priests were the Bhrigu, the Angiras, and the Atharvan.

Sage Bhrigu has is regarded as being one of the nine 'Manas Putras' of Brahma, the creator. [That is, Bhrigu was born as the son of Brahma because the latter wished in his mind and heart, the 'Mana', to have a son, a 'Putra', rather than the usual process by which a son is born, i.e. the physical process of procreation by intercourse.]

He is one of the seven celestial sages known as "Sapta-rishis".

He is also stated elsewhere as being the son of Indra (the king of Gods). The Taittiriya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its Valli 3, Anuvak 1 describes him as 'Bhṛgu Vaaruni', i.e. the son of Varun (the Water God). He was the father of Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation. That is why Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, is also known as Bhargavi, the daughter of Bhargava, or Bhrigu.

According to Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 1, verse nos. 43-45, sage Bhrigu had a wife named 'Khyaati' from whom he begot two sons named Dhaataa and Vidhaataa, and a daughter named Sri. 'Sri' (whose another name was Laxmi) was later married to Vishnu. Meanwhile, sage Meru married his daughters Aayati and Niyati to Dhaataa and Vidhaataa respectively. Aayati gave birth to Mrikand, and Niyati gave birth to Praan. Mrikand's son was the famous sage Markendeya, and Praan's son was Ved-shiraa. Hence, sage Markendeya was a great grandson of Bhrigu.

According to Bhagwat Maha-puran, 3/24/21-24, and 4/1, it is narrated that in the epoch called Swayambhu-Manwantar, king Manu's daughter named Devhuti was married to sage Kardam from whom she begot nine daughters. They were named Kalaa, Anusuya, Shraddha, Havirbhu, Gati, Kriyaa, Urjaa or Arundhati, Chiti and Shaanti, and Khyaati. They were married respectively to sages Marichi, Atri, Angiraa, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasistha, Atharvan and Bhrigu.

In other births sage Bhrigu is regarded as the grand-father of Shukracharya (also known as Ushnaa), the moral preceptor of the Demons (Refer: Bhagwat, Skandha 4, Canto 1, verse no. 45). [Bhrigu's son was Kavi, and the latter's son was Shukracharya.]

He was one of the ancient sages after whom a lineage was established—and his descendents assumed his name as their surname or title. It is 'Bhargava' or 'Bhrigu'. Some well known names of sages who followed him in this lineage are sages Jamdagni and Parashuram.

He is one of the four sages (the others being Marichi, Atri and Kashyap) who had elaborately described the Vakhaanas Aagam followed by some Vaishnav sects (followers of Vishnu worship).

He performed severe austerity and penance at a place called Bhrigu Kaccha located on the banks of river Narmada where it merges with the Arabian Sea. It is situated in the Broach area of Gujrat state of western India.

He is credited with composing the tome of astrology and horoscopes known as 'Bhrigu Sanhita'. It is said to contain a data base of all possible horoscopes that can be created by considering all possible permutations and combinations of the nine planets and twelve zodiac signs.

The third chapter, called Valli no. 3, of the famous Taittiriya Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition is revealed by Varun to Bhrigu when the latter approached his father Varun to ask him the method by which Brahm can be realised. He once tested the Trinity Gods (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) and determined that Vishnu is the best amongst them and alone deserves worship. This story in brief is as follows—

Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself. Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the

Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhṛigu great respect and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhṛigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhṛigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.]

चौ०. समाचार सब संकर पाए । बीरभद्रु करि कोप पठाए ॥ १ ॥

जग्य बिधंस जाइ तिन्ह कीन्हा । सकल सुरन्ह बिधिवत फलु दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

samācāra saba saṅkara pā'ē. bīrabhadru kari kōpa paṭhā'ē. 1.

jagya bidhansa jā'i tinha kīnhā. sakala suranha bidhivata phalu dīnhā. 2.

When Lord Shiva got the news (of Sati's death and the cause of it)¹, he became furious. He angrily sent Birbhadrā² to take revenge and punish the perpetrators. (1)

He (i.e. Birbhadrā) went immediately and laid to waste the fire sacrifice of Daksha, punishing the various gods and other attendees in a proper manner. (2)

[Note—¹How did Shiva come to know of the developments that resulted in the death of Sati? One answer is that his attendants, whom he had sent with Sati to escort and protect her (as narrated in Doha no. 62), came rushing back to inform him of the developments at Daksha's place.

But there is a different version given in Shiva Puran, Kashi Khand, Canto 89, verse nos. 5-12. According to it, sage Narad came to Shiva and reported how and why Sati had died. Shiva showed indifference, saying that it is the way of the mortal world, that one should be detached from such developments and remain aloof from being honoured or insulted, or being attached to worldly relationships such thinking someone as one's wife or father-in-law. Sage Narad told Shiva that though this is a highly correct way of spiritual thinking but from the practical point of view it is counter-productive. Say, what will the world think if Shiva remains indifferent and does not take any action? The wicked world, which does not realise Shiva's stellar spiritual philosophy and highly enlightened state of being, would think that Shiva was afraid to take action, or he was too weak or impotent to seek retribution for his own insult as well as the ignominious way his wife Sati had died. His exalted stature in the community of gods would be severely undermined. This motivated Shiva to send Birbhadrā to punish those who were responsible for Sati's death.

The same story is narrated in Kedar Khand, Canto 3.

²Birbhadra (also Virbhadra)—The name means “a gentleman (“Bhadra”) who is very brave (“Beer’ or ‘Veer’”).

According to Kedar Khand, Canto 3, angry Shiva tore at the lock of hairs on his head and uprooted some of its strands. Then he slammed them angrily on the side of the mountain at Kailash. This produced Birbhadra and his army of attendants.

Birbhadra’s birth and the subsequent destruction of Daksha’s fire sacrifice is narrated in detail in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 5 as follows:-- According to its verse nos. 1-6—“As soon as Shiva heard of how he was insulted in the fire sacrifice of Daksha that resulted in Sati’s death, he became furious. Chewing his lips with his teeth in anger, he got up, tore at the lock of hairs on his head, uprooted some of its strands, and slammed them against the earth. This produced Birbhadra. He had a colossal body, thousand arms that held countless forms of weapons, three eyes as brilliant as the sun, ferocious sharp teeth, hairs that resembled leaping flames of a raging fire, dark complexion, and he wore a garland of skulls.

Birbhadra stood before Lord Shiva with palms joined in submission, and asked Shiva for instructions. Shiva told him—‘Oh son, you have been created from a fraction of my own body (because Birbhadra was created from Shiva’s hairs). You will be called another Rudra like me. Go and punish Daksha in an appropriate manner.’ Birbhadra lifted his trident and rushed to the fire sacrifice of Daksha. At that time it appeared that a huge storm has arrived.”

Mahabharat, Shanti-parva, however, presents a little variation of how Birbhadra was created. Here, Vaismapaayan Veda Vyas told Janmanjaya that “Shiva produced Birbhadra from his mouth. The latter was an image of Shiva, and a personified form of anger. Hence, Birbhadra was called ‘Rudra’, meaning the angry form of Shiva. When Shiva ordered him to go punish Daksha and ruin his sacrifice because it was not being conducted according to the sanction of the scriptures, Birbhadra produced countless devil warriors from each root of his hair on his skin. They were aided by Mahakaali, the ferocious form of Sati’s spirit.

Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 5, verse nos. 13-26 describe in detail the destruction of the fire sacrifice of Daksha and how those who had caused insult to Shiva, such as the selfish gods, the priests, as well as Daksha were punished. So, as soon as Birbhadra reached the site of the fire sacrifice, he and his warriors surrounded the venue of the sacrifice and laid everything to ruin (verse nos. 13-15).

To punish sage Bhrigu who had taken the side of Daksha and scorned at Shiva in as much as he not only sneered at the Lord and challenged his authority but also helped Daksha to resume the fire sacrifice and chased away Sati’s escorts by creating demi-gods by the virtue of mystical powers of Mantras of the Yajur Veda in which he was an expert.

As soon as Birbhadra reached the venue of the fire sacrifice, he took Daksha Prajapati as captive. His companion Chandish held Pusha as hostage, and Nandi (the Bull of Shiva) caught hold of Bhagdeva (the personified forms of various gods who were there to take their shares of the offerings made to the sacred fire).

Then Birbhadra pinned Bhagdeva to the ground and gorged out his eyes because he had used his eyes to signal encouragement to Daksha to insult Shiva in the court of Brahma earlier (verse no. 20).

Then he pulled out the teeth of Pusha because when Daksha was insulting Shiva in the same court of Brahma, Pusha was laughing with an open mouth and showing his thirty-two teeth in mirth (verse no. 21).

Finally, Birbhadrā pushed Dakṣha to the ground, sat on his chest, squeezed and wringed his neck so as to break it from the shoulders like one breaks the neck of a sacrificial animal. Then he threw this severed neck into the fire pit. After thus punishing all chief offenders, Birbhadrā returned to Lord Shiva at Kailash—(verse nos. 22-26).

The remaining gods, sages and others were obviously so terrified that they made good their escape before Birbhadrā could turn his attention at them—Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 6, verse no. 1.

In Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 7, verse no. 60, sage Maitreya told Bidur that the former had heard of this story of how Dakṣha's fire sacrifice was ruined because he had insulted Lord Shiva from Uddhav.

The story of how Dakṣha had insulted Shiva in the court of Brahma is narrated in Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 2, verse nos. 4-33.

At that time Birbhadrā had cut-off the head of Dakṣha and threw it in the fire pit of the sacrifice. This fire was called "Dakshinaagni", the same one in which sage Bhrigu was offering oblations. After this incident, Brahma etc. prayed to Lord Shiva to forgive Dakṣha as the latter was Brahma's son who was created by him to oversee this creation as its guardian. The all-forgiving and merciful Lord Shiva agreed, and to revive Dakṣha he stitched the head of a goat on his torso. Dakṣha came alive, and he thanked Shiva by praying to him in the voice of a goat, but bleating meekly. This pleased Shiva. Henceforth, Shiva blessed Dakṣha that whenever anyone offers worship to him (Shiva) then the worshipper should conclude his prayers by making the sound similar to that made by a goat.

This entire episode is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-puran, Skandha 4— (i) Canto 6, verse nos. 1-8, 33, 41-53 (where Brahma has prayed to Shiva to forgive the punished gods and revive them); (ii) Canto 7, verse nos. 5, 7-8 (Shiva stitching the head of a goat on Dakṣha), verse nos. 9-15 (where Dakṣha has prayed to Shiva), and verse no. 16 (where it is said that Dakṣha, who now had the head of a goat, resumed his fire sacrifice after being forgiven by Shiva).]

भै जगबिदित दच्छ गति सोई । जसि कछु संभु बिमुख कै होई ॥ ३ ॥

यह इतिहास सकल जग जानी । ताते में संछेप बखानी ॥ ४ ॥

bhai jagabidita daccha gati sōī. jasi kachu sambhu bimukha kai hōī. 3.
yaha itihāsa sakala jaga jānī. tāte maim sanchēpa bakhānī. 4.

The ignoble and contemptible fate of Dakṣha and all others who had the temerity and the audacity to insult Lord Shiva (the greatest amongst the gods) was in line with the fate of anyone who dares to insult or oppose the Great Lord, Lord Shiva. (3)

This history is known by the whole world (and narrated in detail in the Purans), and therefore I (sage Yagyawalkya¹) have narrated it in brief. (4)

[Note—¹Remember: This story of Lord Shiva's marriage is being narrated by sage Yagyawalkya to sage Bhradwaj when the latter asked him to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram. Yagyawalkya started his narration with the visit of Lord Shiva to sage Agastya's hermitage and subsequent events that led to the narration of Shiva's

marriage with Parvati. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 47 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.]

सतीं मरत हरि सन बरु मागा । जनम जनम सिव पद अनुरागा ॥ ५ ॥
तेहि कारन हिमगिरि गृह जाई । जनमीं पारबती तनु पाई ॥ ६ ॥

satīm marata hari sana baru māgā. janama janama siva pada anurāgā. 5.
tēhi kārana himagiri gr̥ha jāī. janamīm pārabatī tanu pāī. 6.

At the time of her death, Sati asked Lord Hari (Vishnu, the Supreme Being), to bless her with a boon that she may have affection and devotion for (i.e. serve) the holy feet of Lord Shiva in all her successive births. (5)

It is for this reason that she was re-born in the household of the king (or the patron deity) of the snow-covered mountains (known as the Himalayas) as Parvati. (6)

[Note—An exactly the same thing is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 7, verse no. 58.

An interesting thing is to be noted here. Sati had requested Lord Hari “to grant her a boon so that she may serve or have devotion for the feet of Lord Shiva in all her forthcoming births”, instead of seeking “final dissolution of her gross body so that her soul finds its liberation and deliverance, or in other words, seek final emancipation and salvation for herself”. This is because she had a desire to serve Lord Shiva like all ‘Bhakts’ or devotees want. In order to serve Shiva’s holy feet it was necessary to take a birth once again. If she had sought final dissolution for her soul, if she had sought final emancipation and salvation for her soul it would have meant that the soul would merge with its primary source, the cosmic Soul known as Brahm, and there would be no rebirth for her. This destiny of the soul is known as “Moksha”. If she had sought Moksha then in this situation it would have been the end of the cycle of birth and death for her, and this meant she wouldn’t be able to fulfil her desire to serve Lord Shiva any longer.

A ‘Bhakta’ (devotee) does not want Moksha; he or she wants to be able to serve the object of his or her adoration and devotion for a long-long time. Ascetics and hermits, those who are self-realised and well-versed in the higher learning of the metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads, however, prefer dissolution of their gross body and find final freedom for their soul for all times to come. In other words, they seek ‘Moksha’.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 10 where we read that Baali, the monkey king of Kishkindha, had sought a similar sort of boon from Lord Ram at the time of his death.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 24 we find that the friends and common citizens of Ayodhya pray to God that they be so blessed that in every birth they have to take due to the cumulative effect of their deeds in any given birth, they can have unstinted devotion for Lord Ram and are able to serve him.

Even sage Vasistha, who was the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya and the son of the creator Brahm, had also sought this type of blessing in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 49.

Now, why was she born in the household of ‘Himwaan’, the king or the deity of the snow-covered mountains known as Himalayas? There are the following possible reasons for it—

(i) At the time of death she had asked that in her next birth she could serve Lord Shiva, and it is well known that Shiva’s terrestrial abode is in Mt. Kailash which is located in the northern fringes of the Himalayas.

(ii) Sati was scorched in heat of two kinds—one was the heat generated by her anger, and the other was the heat that burnt her physical body. So her soul wished to be born in a cold environment, and no other place suited its desire better than the ‘snow-covered mountains’.

(iii) Her soul wished to take birth in a home where the general ambience was of contentedness, calmness and tranquility as opposed to ambition, greed, and a false sense of pride, arrogance and ego. Himwaan, the king of the mountains, was inherently cool and calm by temperament as symbolised by the snow that covered his kingdom. Himalayan mountain ranges are by their inherent nature a tranquil and serene place where hermits and ascetics seeking solace and succour for their souls can live in peace, as opposed to kingdoms in the plains where agitation, restlessness, greed, arrogance, strife, jealousy, malice and other worldly taints are order of the day and the dominant features.

Sati had had enough of it when she was born as the daughter of Daksha Prajapati. So she wanted peace in her new birth, and therefore her soul chose to take re-birth in the Himalayas.

(iv) It was destined for the soul of Sati that it would serve Lord Shiva again in her next birth. But to attain Shiva was not easy; it required doing severe Tapa (penance and austerity). Himalayas are the ideal place for doing Tapa. Even those who are born in the plains go to the Himalayas in the last days of their lives when they decide to do Tapa to attain emancipation and salvation for their tormented soul. This is also one of the prime reasons why Sati was born in the lap of the Himalayas themselves so that she finds it easy and convenient to do Tapa in a place close to her birth place, a place that has an environment and topography with which she is familiar since birth so as to facilitate her to cope with the rigours of doing severe Tapa.]

जब तें उमा सैल गृह जाई । सकल सिद्धि संपति तहें छाई ॥ ७ ॥

जहँ तहँ मुनिन्ह सुआश्रम कीन्हे । उचित बास हिम भूधर दीन्हे ॥ ८ ॥

jaba tēm umā saila gr̥ha jā’īm. sakala sid’dhi sampati taham̃ chā’īm. 7.
jaham̃ taham̃ muninha su’āśrama kīnhē. ucita bāsa hima bhūdhara dīnhē. 8.

Ever since Uma (Sati’s name in her new birth; the other name being ‘Parvati’) took birth in the household of the king of mountains (“Sail Griha”*), all imaginable sorts of prosperity and well-being spread in all the directions of the realm. The mountains became an abode of blessings and abundance. (7)

Sages and hermits established their holy hermitages here and there, everywhere, and the king of the realm (Himwaan) gave them land and other facilities for the purpose. (8)

[Note—*The word “saila” means ‘mountain’, and ‘Griha’ (gr̥ha) means ‘home’.

Ever since the time Uma was born in the lap of the grand mountain ranges of the Himalayas, it became a preferred destination for sages and hermits seeking to establish their hermitages and spend their lives in tranquility, serenity, solitude and peace, doing meditation and penances, and initiating disciples into the eclectic disciplines of spiritualism and metaphysics. It is a remarkable thing to note that even today this tradition continues, though of course the present corrupt age of Kaliyug has had its negative effect on this noble and holy tradition.

When a divine and blessed soul lives at a place, it is transformed miraculously from being a god-forsaken abhorable place to an oasis of blessedness, happiness, peace and well-being. We shall read later on in Ram Charit Manas that when Lord Ram came to live in Chitrakoot, an otherwise densely forested area pregnant with wild animals and far away from any civilised habited part of any kingdom, the place metamorphosed into a virtual heaven-on-earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Once again we find that when Lord Ram went to live on Mt. Prabarshan near Rishyamook mountain range, the hill became heavenly with its magnificent beauty and outworldly charm—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17.]

दो०. सदा सुमन फल सहित सब द्रुम नव नाना जाति ।
प्रगटीं सुंदर सैल पर मनि आकर बहु भाँति ॥ ६५ ॥

dōhā.

sadā sumana phala sahita saba druma nava nānā jāti.
pragaṭīṁ sundara saila para mani ākara bahu bhāntī. 65.

In those mountains there sprang up countless verdant forests of beautiful ever-green lush trees that were laden with flowers, fruits and leaves of various kinds. These trees flourished everywhere irrespective of the season.

Likewise, mines of precious stones (gems, jewels) emerged on the mountains.
(65)

[Note—Refer note appended to verse nos. 7-8 herein above.]

चौ०. सरिता सब पुनीत जलु बहहीं । खग मृग मधुप सुखी सब रहहीं ॥ १ ॥
सहज बयरु सब जीवन्ह त्यागा । गिरि पर सकल करहिं अनुरागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saritā saba punīta jalu bahahīṁ. khaga mṛga madhupa sukhī saba rahahīṁ. 1.
sahaja bayaru saba jīvanha tyāgā. giri para sakala karahīṁ anurāgā. 2.

All the rivers flowed with clean water, and all the birds (“Khaga”), the animals (“Mriga”) and the insects (“Madhup”) lived happily. (1)

All those who lived on the mountains abandoned their natural apprehensions, their animosities and antipathies with one another, and lived in perfect harmony. (2)

[Note—Refer note appended to verse nos. 7-8 herein above.

Life was full of joy and happiness in the realm of Himwaan, the king of the Himalayas, ever since Uma was born there. Her birth proved very auspicious for the whole kingdom of the Himalayas.]

सोह सैल गिरिजा गृह आँ । जिमि जनु रामभगति के पाँ ॥ ३ ॥
नित नूतन मंगल गृह तासू । ब्रह्मादिक गावहिं जसु जासू ॥ ४ ॥

sōha saila girijā gr̥ha ā'ēṃ. jimi janu rāmabhagati kē pā'ēṃ. 3.
nita nūtana maṅgala gr̥ha tāsū. brahmādika gāvahiṃ jasu jāsū. 4.

When Girijaa (the daughter of 'Giri', a word that stands for a personified form of the mountains where she was born) made her advent in the household of the king of the mountains, his home as well as the rest of his realm became as cheerful and enlivened with happiness as when a devotee of Lord Ram gets access to Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord¹. (3)

Indeed it is expected that every day there would be renewed auspiciousness, cheerfulness and delight in the household where someone whose glories and virtues are sung regularly by the creator Brahma and others is born. [This 'someone' is Uma, the Mother Goddess who is the divine consort of Lord Shiva, the "Mahadeva" or the 'Great God' of creation.]² (4)

[Note—¹To wit, everyone was cheerful and contented ever since Uma took birth in the mountains. Just like a devotee feels fulfilled and absolutely contented when his desire for having Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord God bears fruit, the entire realm of the mountains effused an aura of vibrancy, abundance, liveliness and cheerfulness after the birth of Uma there. A devotee of Lord Ram does not want any other thing in this world except devotion for the Lord and a chance to serve the Lord. If this desire of his is fulfilled, he regards himself as the happiest person in existence. The same feeling of contentedness, happiness, joy and delight permeated in the kingdom of the mountains when Uma was born there.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Parvati Mangal", verse nos. 7-8 also describe the prosperity in the household of Himwaan when Parvati (the daughter of the mountains) was born.

²Later on in the story of Ram Charit Manas we shall read that when Lord Ram was born in the household of Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya, a similar environment of auspiciousness and happiness prevailed, and the king felt that he is most fortunate that the Lord of the world has come to his home as a child—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193.]

नारद समाचार सब पाए । कौतुकहीं गिरि गेह सिधाए ॥ ५ ॥

nārada samācāra saba pā'ē. kautukahīm giri gēha sidhā'ē. 5.

When the celestial sage Narad (pronounced as “Naarad”) heard of this whole episode, he was amazed and very astonished. So, he set off for the household of the king of mountains (to learn the truth and see things for himself). (5)

[Note—Narad was astonished and amazed at this development, and he wished to examine it closely. So he decided to go and see everything first hand.

Why was Narad so amazed and astonished? The home where Sati took birth as Uma was the household of ‘Himgiri’, the king or the deity of the snow-covered mountains (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 65). Now, “Him” means snow, and “Giri” means mountain. The lofty peaks of the Himalayan mountain ranges are covered round the year with snow. Everyone knows that there are no forests in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, but we read in Doha no. 65 that ever since Uma took birth in the lap of the mountain ranges, the entire place was covered with lush green trees laden with fruits, flowers and leaves. Then in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 65 we read that sages and hermits established their hermitages there.

Another stunning development was that those animals who were inherently inimical towards each other became friendly and lived together, sharing their forested habitat and its assets—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow Doha no. 65.

All these developments were most unusual and stunning. So Narad wondered at the cause of all these miraculous developments, and how it all came about.

Another point that can be deduced is that the time when Narad came to pay a visit at Himgiri’s house was much later after Uma’s birth. We have read that “ever since Uma took birth in the Himalayas, there was all-round happiness, prosperity and auspiciousness; even sages and hermits came from other places to establish their hermitages there; there were ever-green trees laden with succulent fruits, colourful flowers and vibrant leaves; the rivers flowed with clean sparkling water; all animals were happy and friendly”. All these developments took some time to unfold; they can’t happen overnight.

Then we shall read below that when Narad came to pay a visit, Himwaan, the father of Uma, called her and asked Narad to prophesise her fate and destiny. Narad foretold that she would be married to an ascetic, though he did not know even himself who that ‘ascetic’ would be. However, Uma got an inspiration that she should do Tapa to attain the hand of Lord Shiva. Then we learn that Parvati or Uma actually did Tapa. This means she had reached an age when it was possible to do Tapa; she wasn’t an infant, or a toddler or a child still too young for Tapa.

Hence, it is reasonable to assume that Narad had heard of the miracles unfolding in the Himalayan region much after the day when Uma was born. Perhaps he was wondering in the universe as was his wont when somewhere he had heard of the mystical things happening in the mountains. So he decided to come and see things. By reading verse nos. 9-10 of Parvati Mangal, a book dedicated to the marriage of Shiva and Parvati written by Goswami Tulsidas, it becomes clear that the time when Narad arrived at the house of Himgiri was when Parvati or Uma was grown up and her parents were worried about finding a suitable groom for her.]

सैलराज बड़ आदर कीन्हा । पद पखारि बर आसनु दीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

नारि सहित मुनि पद सिरु नावा । चरन सलिल सबु भवनु सिंचावा ॥ ७ ॥
निज सौभाग्य बहुत गिरि बरना । सुता बोलि मेली मुनि चरना ॥ ८ ॥

sailarāja bara ādara kīnhā. pada pakhāri bara āsanu dīnhā. 6.
nāri sahita muni pada siru nāvā. carana salila sabu bhavanu sincāvā. 7.
nija saubhāgya bahuta giri baranā. sutā bōli mēlī muni caranā. 8.

When sage Narad arrived, ‘Sailraaj’, the king of the mountains, welcomed him with great respect and honour. The king duly washed the feet of the guest and gave him a comfortable mat to sit¹. (6)

Then he, along with his wife, bowed his head at the feet of the sage, and sprinkled the water that was used to wash the sage’s feet throughout his house to sanctify it and invoke auspiciousness. [This sprinkling of water everywhere in the house is a symbolic gesture that implies that every nook and corner of the house is sanctified by the holiness associated with great sages. It is a symbolic gesture that means that the sage has walked in the house to purify its environment.] (7)

The king of the mountains praised his extremely good luck that he has had the privilege of welcoming and serving a great sage² of the stature of Narad. Then, as is the custom, he called his daughter (Uma) and made her prostrate before the feet of the sage. (8)

[Note—¹When sage Vishwamitra visited the court of king Dasrath of Ayodhya, the same process is observed there as well—the king first bowed and welcomed the sage, gave him a nice seat, summoned his four sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers, and made them bow before the feet of the great sage. The king praised his good luck that a sage of the exalted stature of Vishwamitra has come to pay a visit to his household even without an invitation, something to be exceedingly glad about. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 207.

The king praised his good luck because exalted saints and sages are met only when a person is rewarded for some good deeds done by him, and not otherwise: refer—Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7; and (ii) Uttar Kand, the 1st half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45.

When sage Vasistha went to meet Lord Ram, the latter had praised his own good luck because it is a privilege to have a person of high stature as an honourable guest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 9.

²Refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 207 where king Dasrath has praised his luck in exactly the same way when sage Vishwamitra arrived in his court.]

दो०. त्रिकालग्य सर्वग्य तुम्ह गति सर्वत्र तुम्हारि ।
कहहु सुता के दोष गुन मुनिबर हृदयँ बिचारि ॥ ६६ ॥

dōhā.

trikālagya sarbagya tumha gati sarbatra tumhāri.
kahahu sutā kē dōṣa guna munibara hṛdayam³ bicāri. 66.

The king said to sage Narad—‘Oh Lord! You are ‘Trikaalagya’, i.e. you are able to see (know) everything of the past, the present and the future (the three dimensions of time). Hence, everything is known to you, and you have access to all the divisions or spheres of the world as well as the phases of time.

Oh the greatest and the most exalted of all sages (“Munibar”)! Please contemplate in your heart and tell me truthfully the virtues and the shortcomings of my daughter. [That is, please tell me what fate holds for her; what will be good for her future, and what precautions I should take.] (Doha no. 66)

[Note—In Tulsidas’ “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 9 it is said that Parvati’s parents were worried about finding a suitable groom for her, and in verse nos. 13-14 it is said that Maina, the wife of Himwaan and the mother of Parvati, fell at the feet of Narad and requested him to tell her about a suitable groom for Parvati.

There is another episode narrated in Ram Charit Manas where Narad had been asked to outline the goodness and drawbacks in a girl when he visited her parent’s palace—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 130.]

चौ० कह मुनि बिहसि गूढ़ मृदु बानी । सुता तुम्हारि सकल गुन खानी ॥ १ ॥

सुंदर सहज सुसील सयानी । नाम उमा अंबिका भवानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha muni bihasi gūṛha mṛdu bānī. sutā tumhāri sakala guna khānī. 1.
sundara sahaḥja susīla sayānī. nāma umā ambikā bhavānī. 2.

The sage smiled and said pleasant words that had a significant meaning and were cloaked in mystery¹.

He said—‘Your daughter is a mine of all good virtues. (1)

She is pretty, simple, courteous, wise and dignified. Her name is ‘Uma’, and she is the ‘Mother of the world’ (“Ambikaa”) known as Bhavaani². (2)

[Note—¹What was significant and mysterious in Narad’s words will be revealed shortly.

Narad was “Trikaalagya”, i.e. he knew well that Uma was Lord Shiva’s consort Sati in her previous life, and that she was destined to marry Lord Shiva in her present life too. But he restrained from telling everything in detail and divulging the truth. Why? Because Uma’s previous form as Sati had many negative characters as we have already read about in the previous verses. She had burnt herself in anger, she had lied to her husband, and she had disobeyed him and shown disrespect even to an incarnation of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram. If Narad had divulged these facts, Uma’s parents would have gone in severe depression and may be they would have begun loathing her and treating her with contempt. This would be an ugly situation which Narad wished to avoid.

So, whatever he said was cloaked in mystery and had a double-meaning. He did not wish to divulge that Shiva would be her husband according to destiny because

of one very obvious reason—Parvati’s father was the king of the mountains, and Shiva was a renunciate ascetic-god living in Mt. Kailash which also fell within his kingdom or realm. A king worth his name would never like his daughter, the princess of the kingdom, to marry such a person!

Himwaan was also well aware of the unconventional life-style of Shiva, and the fact that Shiva lived like a hermit, was an ascetic par-excellence, had ghosts and phantoms as his attendants as he is the God of death, and he was attired in the most unusual way with serpents wrapped around his body that is smeared in ash, remained half-naked, and was generally detached from the affairs and attractions of the world. Say, which parent would like to marry his or her daughter with such a groom, especially if this groom is a ‘subject’ of the kingdom of the princess’ father?

²Though Narad did not directly tell Uma’s father that she is destined to marry Shiva, but he has given ample hints. “Bhavaani” and “Ambikaa” point in this direction. ‘Bhava’ is one of the many names of Lord Shiva, and therefore ‘Bhavaani’ clearly hints that Uma would be Shiva’s wife. Again, since Shiva is the Father of the world, his consort would obviously be the ‘Mother of the world’, the ‘Ambikaa’.]

सब लच्छन संपन्न कुमारी । होइहि संतत पियहि पिआरी ॥ ३ ॥
सदा अचल एहि कर अहिवाता । एहि तें जसु पैहहिं पितु माता ॥ ४ ॥

saba lacchana sampanna kumārī. hō'ihī santata piyahi pi'ārī. 3.
sadā acala ēhi kara ahivātā. ēhi tēm̄ jasu paihahim̄ pitu mātā. 4.

Your daughter is endowed with all the good characters and virtues. She would be loved by saints and sages*, and she would win the unfailing love and affection of her dear husband as well. (3)

Her husband will live an eternal life*. And her glory would help her parents themselves to achieve good name and fame. [You and your wife will bask in the glory of your exalted and virtuous daughter. She would outshine you and your fame; you will become famous and honoured in the whole world by the virtue of her being your daughter. What more would any parent want!] (4)

[Note—Refer also to: Parvati Mangal, verse nos. 15-16.

*Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 334 where Sita’s mother has blessed her in the same way.]

होइहि पूज्य सकल जग माहीं । एहि सेवत कछु दुर्लभ नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
एहि कर नामु सुमिरि संसारा । त्रिय चढ़िहहिं पतिब्रत असिधारा ॥ ६ ॥

hō'ihī pūjya sakala jaga māhīm̄. ēhi sēvata kachu durlabha nāhīm̄. 5.
ēhi kara nāmu sumiri sansārā. triya caḍhahim̄ patibrata asidhārā. 6.

She would be worthy of praise, honour and worship in the whole world. Nothing would be inaccessible or un-obtainable for someone who worships her and offers his or her obeisance to her. (5)

By remembering her name and invoking it, women-folk of the world would be successful in following the path of being loyal and submitted to their husbands (known as “Pati-brat Dharma”)¹, a path that is as difficult and testing as walking on the sharp edge of a sword². (6)

[Note—¹This path is known as “Pati-brat Dharma”. It is a righteous and noble path that all married women are expected to follow. It has been explained to Sita, the divine consort of Lord Ram, by Anusuiya, the chaste wife of sage Atri during Lord Ram’s forest wonderings. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-19.

²This path is compared to the edge of a sword as it is very difficult to observe its strict principles. But if a woman succeeds in doing so, she acquires immense religious merit that virtually empowers her with the same strength as possessed by goddesses in heaven.]

सैल सुलच्छन सुता तुम्हारी । सुनहु जे अब अवगुन दुइ चारी ॥ ७ ॥
अगुन अमान मातु पितु हीना । उदासीन सब संसय छीना ॥ ८ ॥

saila sulacchana sutā tumhārī. sunahu jē aba avaguna du'i cārī. 7.
aguna amāna mātu pitu hīnā. udāsīna saba sansaya chīnā. 8.

Oh Sail¹ (the king of the mountains)! Your daughter has all the good virtues one can expect to have. However, there are some two-or-four negative traits: now listen to them. (7)

[Now, I (Narad) shall tell you the characters of her future husband—] Someone who has no remarkable attributes (“Agun”; is neutral; is free either being judged as having any good quality or possessing any bad one), who has no ego and a sense of self-pride (“Amaan”—is not bothered if he is honoured or insulted because he is highly self-restrained, dispassionate, self-realised and enlightened), who has no father or mother (because he is ‘unborn’ and ‘eternal’), who is uninterested in anything or any affair of the gross visible world of material sense objects, is detached and dispassionate towards everyone and everything (“Udaaseen”), and is free from all confusions and doubts (“Sansaya Chhina”)---(8)

[Note—¹The word “Sail” (pronounced as “saila”) literally means a ‘mountain’. Parvati’s father was known by this name as he was the supreme ‘king of the mountains’ just like we have an emperor. His name became synonymous with the mountains. In the Indian context, the Himalyan Mountain in the north is the loftiest and the longest of all the mountains and hill ranges. So, the king who ruled over this mountain was deemed to be the king of all the mountains and hills of the country.

In literary lore, the different aspects of Nature have been personified and assigned a name that identified the latter with the former.]

दो०. जोगी जटिल अकाम मन नगन अमंगल बेष ।
 अस स्वामी एहि कहँ मिलिहि परी हस्त असि रेख ॥ ६७ ॥

dōhā.

jōgī jaṭila akāma mana nagana amaṅgala bēṣa.
 asa svāmī ēhi kaham̐ milihi parī hasta asi rēkha. 67.

---He who is a stern ascetic and hard to deal with or please (“Jogi; Jatil”), whose mind and heart have no desires and passions (“Akaam Mana”), who remains naked (“Nagan”—i.e. he has nothing to hide, he wears the sky as his garment like a true ascetic and hermit), whose attire is unconventional and unholy from the perspective of the world (“Amangal Vesha”—because he wears snakes and skulls on his body, keeps it smeared with ash, has a tiger skin wrapped around the hips, and so on)---

Well unfortunately, this is the sort of husband she is destined to get. It is written in the lines marked on her palms.’ (Doha no. 67)

[Note—We have read in verse no. 1 that preceded this Doha no. 67 that Narad’s words were ‘significant and cloaked in mystery’. So, Narad gave enough hints to Parvati’s father Himwaan who her future husband would be, but at the same time he kept the name secret.

This is the reason for it: Shiva’s characters seemed so odd and unconventional on their face that any father would wince at the thought of marrying his daughter with such a weird man as the one whose characters Narad described in the above verses. From the worldly perspective all these traits are negative, but from the view point of metaphysics and spiritualism these same characters are much sought after by aspirants who seek to attain higher levels of existence of consciousness. Great mystics and sages laud such characters as they are the noble and auspicious virtues of the Supreme Being known as Brahm.

Narad has already told Himwaan that his daughter would give him immense fame and honour—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 herein above. Indeed she will—just like Sita gave honour and fame to her father Janak when she was married to Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chanda line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 326; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 340; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 342.

But Uma’s parents did not get this hint as would be clear in the next verse no. 1 that says that when the parents heard Narad’s words, they felt very sad and remorseful.

In “Parvati Mangal” verse no. 17 we read that Narad has clearly told Parvati’s parents that she is destined to get a mad and weird husband. Further on we read in Parvati Mangal that when Lord Shiva had disguised himself as a Brahmin and had gone to test the sincerity of Parvati and her firm determination of marrying Shiva inspite of all the advice to the contrary, he (Shiva in disguise) has outlined the characters of her future husband in almost the same language as Narad has done here. Refer: Parvati Mangal, verse nos. 49-54.]

चौ०. सुनि मुनि गिरा सत्य जियँ जानी । दुख दंपतिहि उमा हरषानी ॥ १ ॥

नारदहूँ यह भेदु न जाना । दसा एक समुझब बिलगाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suni muni girā satya jiyam̃ jānī. dukha dampatihi umā haraṣānī. 1.
nāradahūm̃ yaha bhēdu na jānā. dasā ēka samujhaba bilagānā. 2.

Hearing the words of the sage and knowing fully well in their hearts that what he has said is the truth (because Narad was a “Trikaalagya” sage who knew everything of the past, the present and the future, and therefore whatever he says cannot be wrong—refer: Doha no. 66), the couple (the parents of Uma) were sorrowful, but Uma felt elated and pleased in her heart¹. (1)

Even the all-knowing and wise Narad wasn't aware of this difference in attitude with which his prophesy was received by them. It was because externally all of them (Uma and her parents) showed no signs of emotions and appeared to be stoically calm (as if nothing special was said, though internally they received the news and interpreted its meaning differently)². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, verse nos. 17-18 which also say the same thing.

²Narad did not know that the things he had told Uma's parents about their daughter in Doha no. 67 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 were received as bad news by them, but it made Uma happy instead. Outwardly they maintained their composure, but internally they received the same news with different attitudes. Whereas Uma's parents were shaken by it—because it meant that Uma's husband would be someone who was very unsuitable for a married way of life of a householder, that her future husband would be virtually mad and weird, which would in turn mean that Uma would have to live unhappily for the rest of her life.

On the other hand, Uma was very happy because her soul was the same that had previously dwelt in the body of Sati, and in that body she had prayed to Lord Hari that she may be so blessed that in whatever body she is reborn she can have unflinching devotion for Lord Shiva and be able to serve him (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65). Since the soul or the pure conscious Atma is the ‘true identity’ of any individual, the essential ‘self’ of Sati and Uma were the same, and it was only her gross physical body that has changed from one known as Sati to one known as Uma. Hence, as soon as her Atma heard Narad say that her future husband would possess such and such characteristics that were similar to those of Lord Shiva, Uma immediately realised in her internal self that her prayers seem to have been answered, that she is destined to be reunited with the beloved Lord of her dreams and of her previous life, i.e. Lord Shiva.

This secret was known only to her and not to her parents. That is why they were dismayed at Narad's prophesying, but Uma was happy. She was happy that she would be reunited with her beloved Lord Shiva in this birth too, but her parents were worried that her stars were so bad that she is destined to have a weird husband.

Refer verse no. 3 herein below which describes how externally the reactions of everyone who heard the words of Narad were the same though internally they interpreted them differently as stated in verse no. 2 above.]

सकल सखीं गिरिजा गिरि मैना । पुलक सरीर भरे जल नैना ॥ ३ ॥

sakala sakhīm girijā giri mainā. pulaka sarīra bharē jala nainā. 3.

All those who were present on the occasion, viz. the female friends of Girija (Uma, the ‘daughter of Giri’), Giri (the king of hills or mountains), and Maina (his wife; the mother of Uma), were thrilled in their bodies, and tears welled-up in their eyes. (3)

[Note—We have read in the previous verse no. 2 that Narad did not understand the reason or the secret of why Uma had felt happy and her parents had become remorseful internally at his words because externally they behaved in the same way. What was their external reaction to Narad’s prophesies is described in this present verse no. 3.

Uma (Girija), her friends, her father Giri and her mother Maina—they were “thrilled in their bodies” and “their eyes were filled with tears”.

Uma was thrilled and had tears in her eyes because she was exceedingly happy and exhilarated that her prayers made in her previous life as Sati that she be reunited with Lord Shiva in her next birth have been answered.

Her parents and friends were thrilled at the words of Narad that listed her exemplary virtues as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 and 1st half of Chaupai line no. 7 that preceded Doha no. 67. But when they heard the bad news as mentioned in Doha no. 67 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 regarding Uma’s husband, they were very dismayed and worried. This is the reason why they had tears in their eyes. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 8 herein below.]

होइ न मृषा देवरिषि भाषा । उमा सो बचनु हृदयँ धरि राखा ॥ ४ ॥
उपजेउ सिव पद कमल सनेहू । मिलन कठिन मन भा संदेहू ॥ ५ ॥

hō'i na mṛṣā dēvariṣi bhāṣā. umā sō bacanu hṛdayam̐ dhari rākhā. 4.
upajā'e'u siva pada kamala sanēhū. milana kaṭhina mana bhā sandēhū. 5.

‘The great sage’s words can’t go in vain’—Uma was convinced of this and had firmly established his words (regarding her future husband) in her heart. (4)

This inspired a natural affection for Lord Shiva and devotion for his lotus feet in her heart. But since it was very difficult to attain the Lord, she had her doubts. (5)

[Note—Once again we see that Uma has not discarded her natural habit to have ‘doubts’, even in the words of great sages. In her previous life as Sati it was the character that led her to her ruin—(i) she knew that Lord Shiva’s words cannot be false but still she had doubted them regarding the divinity of Lord Ram (refer: Doha no. 51 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8), and (ii) she had doubted the wisdom of Shiva’s advice when the Lord had tried to persuade her not to go to her father’s place without an invitation, especially when he harbours ill-will against her husband (refer: Doha no. 61—to Doha no. 62).

But there is a perceptible difference here. In her previous birth as Sati, when she had doubts she had insisted on doing what pleased her. For instance, she went ahead to test the authenticity of Lord Ram inspite of her husband Lord Shiva telling

him that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human, and later on she had gone to her father's home to attend the fire sacrifice inspite of Lord Shiva advising her that it would give her sorrow.

This was not so in her present birth as Uma though she still had the habit of having 'doubts'. When she learnt that her husband would be someone with the unique characters that matched that of Lord Shiva, she did feel that it is a far-fetched idea because it is 'very difficult to attain Lord Shiva' but 'she believed in Narad's words'. She did not doubt his words par-se, but only did not understand how it would materialise—that was her only doubt. But since she firmly believed in Narad's words—that what he said can't be in vain, she went out to make all efforts to put it into practice: she did severe Tapa, and she never got distracted from her chosen path. This will be clear as we read on further.

Uma had started treating Narad as her 'Guru' or moral preceptor and guide. It was he who had shown her the way ahead for her future, albeit in a veiled term. It was on his words that she relied firmly and decided to do severe Tapa to attain Lord Shiva (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha). Since it is wise to have a firm faith in the words of one's guru, and a great sage of the exalted stature of Narad is no less than a guru, Uma succeeded in her mission. She has clearly affirmed her faith in Narad and his words in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 80.

Refer also to "Shiva Puran", 8/14.]

जानि कुअवसरु प्रीति दुराई । सखी उछँग बैठी पुनि जाई ॥ ६ ॥

jāni ku'avasaru prīti durā'ī. sakhī uchamṅga baiṭhī puni jā'ī. 6.

Realising that the time was not proper to openly express her affection and devotion for Lord Shiva that had naturally sprouted in her heart after she had heard the words of Narad, Uma concealed her emotions within herself, and went to sit on the lap of one of her dear friends¹. (6)

[Note—¹Sitting on the lap of her friend is just a figure of speech to indicate that Uma was very young in age at the time, and this 'friend' perhaps was her maid who was much elder to her and so close to her that she treated the latter as one of her dearest friends. So she went and shyly sat down on her friend's lap, for this 'friend' also happened to be her maid and a constant companion with whom Uma shared all her private thoughts and emotions.]

झूठि न होइ देवरिषि बानी । सोचहिं दंपति सखीं सयानी ॥ ७ ॥

उर धरि धीर कहइ गिरिराऊ । कहहु नाथ का करिअ उपाऊ ॥ ८ ॥

jhūṭhi na hō'i dēvariṣi bānī. sōcahiṁ dampati sakhīṁ sayānī. 7.
ura dhari dhīra kaha'i girirā'ū. kahahu nātha kā kari'a upā'ū. 8.

'The celestial sage's words can't be false'—thought the couple (i.e. Uma's parents) and her friends. (7)

So, keeping patience in his heart and gathering courage, the king of the mountains (“Gri-raau”; “Giri” = mountain; “Raau” = king) asked the sage (Narad), ‘Oh Lord! Please advice me what solution can be devised (to help us overcome the predicament about Uma’s future in relation to the sort of husband you have described for her¹)’. (8)

[Note—¹The father of Uma was naturally worried about her future because of the sort of weird husband Narad said she was destined to get—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 67 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8. Therefore he requested the sage to tell him if any way can be found to bypass or overcome this negativity.

This verse also explains why he and his wife had tears in their eyes according to verse no. 3 herein above.]

दो०. कह मुनीस हिमवंत सुनु जो बिधि लिखा लिलार ।
देव दनुज नर नाग मुनि कोउ न मेटनिहार ॥ ६८ ॥

dōhā.

kaha munīsa himavanta sunu jō bidhi likhā lilāra.
dēva danuja nara nāga muni kō'u na mēṭanihāra. 68.

The sage replied—‘Listen Himwant (the king of the snow-covered mountains)! Whatever the ‘Bidhi’¹ (the creator who determines the destiny of the entire creation) has written in a person’s destiny and decided to be his or her fate cannot be changed or erased by anyone, be it a god, a demon, a human being, a Naga (serpents who have mystical powers) or even a sage (no matter how powerful and resourceful he may be)^{2*}. (Doha no. 68)

[Note—¹Bidhi is the creator Brahma. Out of the three Trinity Gods, he is the one who writes or determines a creature’s fate. The other two gods, viz. Vishnu and Shiva, are responsible for sustenance and conclusion of the creation, but not tamper with destiny determined by Brahma. There is a clear demarcation of duties of the three gods; no one of them interferes with the duty and responsibility of the other.

Hence, if it is written in the fate of Uma that her husband would be a person like the one described by Narad, then it cannot be changed. However, there may be many candidates who may all have the characteristics outlined by Narad, but by effort a solution can be devised in the sense that the best amongst them can be found for Uma. And Narad advised this solution below.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 97 where Parvati has affirmed the same thing while pacifying her mother Maina who was excessively agitated to see the physical unconventional form of Lord Shiva when the latter came to marry Parvati.

*Narad had said that whatever the creator of one’s destiny, the Creator known as Vidhi or Brahma, has written, no god, demon, human, serpent or sage can alter. But he has cleverly skipped the names of ‘Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu’ from this blanket immunity. The reason is that these two are senior Gods, and not ordinary junior rung gods. They are part of the Trinity of Gods, the third God being Brahma himself. These

three gods of the Trinity, Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, are merely three manifestations of the same universal Supreme Being known as “Brahm” who has metamorphosed into three distinct forms to carry out three distinct functions of creation—viz. origin, sustenance, and conclusion.

It’s like the same Sun seen at three times of the day—at sunrise, at mid-day, and at sunset. Does the different colours of the sky and the way the Sun is seen at these three main points during its journey across the sky in anyway affect the basic identity of the Sun or its character? Similarly, the three gods of the Trinity have equal powers, but they refrain from interfering into the jurisdiction of the other to maintain order and system in this creation. Otherwise, there would be chaos.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 70 herein below where this observation is endorsed, because Narad says that “Lord Shiva is able to erase the destiny if he is pleased by penances”.]

चौ०. तदपि एक मैं कहउँ उपाई । होइ करै जौं दैउ सहाई ॥ १ ॥
 जस बरु मैं बरनेउँ तुम्ह पाहीं । मिलिहि उमहि तस संसय नाही ॥ २ ॥
 जे जे बर के दोष बखाने । ते सब सिव पहिं मैं अनुमाने ॥ ३ ॥
 जौं बिबाहु संकर सन होई । दोषउ गुन सम कह सबु कोई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tadapi ēka mair̄ṁ kaha'um̄ upāī. hō'i karai jaur̄ṁ dai'u sahāī. 1.
 jasa baru mair̄ṁ baranē'um̄ tumha pāhīṁ. milihi umahi tasa sansaya nāhīṁ. 2.
 jē jē bara kē dōṣa bakhānē. tē saba siva pahīṁ mair̄ṁ anumānē. 3.
 jaur̄ṁ bibāhu saṅkara sana hōī. dōṣa'u guna sama kaha sabu kōī. 4.

Nevertheless, I shall advice you of one solution. If the Lord God wants, it may help you and serve your purpose. (1)

The sort of groom I have described to you shall be found for Uma. (2)

In my opinion, whatever so-called faults or shortcomings that are destined to be in the groom of Uma are all present in Lord Shiva (one of the great three gods of the Trinity). (3)

Therefore, if she is married to Lord Shiva then it will be best for her. If this happens then all the demerits (faults or shortcomings) in the would-be husband of Uma would turn out as merits. No one in the world would ever scorn at Uma’s fate of having a husband with this odd characters if that husband is Lord Shiva because the world had great respect for the Lord. [It is because all the so-called negativities of characters that I have listed herein above are deemed to be praise-worthy and positive characters when they are applied to Lord Shiva.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Saying this, Narad then goes on to explain with examples in verse nos. 5-8 that follow herein below why the some set of characters that are surely negative in the conventional view of thinking are viewed differently by the world as being positive when they are present in powerful entities in this creation.

A close examination of all the characteristics listed by Narad in Doha no. 67 and its Chaupai preceding line no. 8 show that they are unique qualities of Lord Shiva who is lauded as being the wisest, the most enlightened, the most exalted, a highly self-realised and the senior-most amongst the entire pantheon of gods. Shiva is honoured by the title of ‘Maha-Deva’ which means a ‘Great God’, an epithet that no other god is honoured with, not even the creator Brahma or the sustainer Vishnu.

Remaining detached from the material world and its temptations, being aloof from its charms and sensual pleasures, keeping the mind focused on mediation and contemplation instead of allowing it to be indulgent in the gross world and its affairs, turning oneself away from enticing sights and pleasures and instead turning inwards to face the Atma which is the pure conscious ‘self’, observing exemplary self-restraint over the sense organs of perception and action that helps the person to maintain internal tranquility, stability, calm and poise, and such like characters that are unique to Lord Shiva are not negative traits at all, but highly praised positive ones according to the scriptures such as the Upanishads that deal with the eclectic philosophy of metaphysics and spiritualism.

So, the fear of Uma’s husband being ‘weird and mad and unsuitable to be her partner if he has these characters’ is absolutely unfounded, imaginary and relative by nature because the same characters are present in Lord Shiva, and no one in this creation says that Shiva is unholy or mad. On the contrary, if these characters are present in any other ordinary living being then of course he would be laughed at and no one would dare to marry his daughter with such a mad person.

Therefore, since it is not possible to change Uma’s destiny with respect to the characters her husband would have, the best way out is to select someone who has these traits, but at the same time is honoured by the world for possessing the same set of character that have instilled fear and worry in the heart of the parents of Uma. These so-called negative traits in Shiva are praised by the world instead of being scoffed or riled at.]

जौं अहि सेज सयन हरि करहीं । बुध कछु तिन्ह कर दोषु न धरहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 भानु कृसानु सर्ब रस खाहीं । तिन्ह कहँ मंद कहत कोउ नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 सुभ अरु असुभ सलिल सब बहई । सुरसरि कोउ अपुनीत न कहई ॥ ७ ॥
 समरथ कहँ नहिं दोषु गोसाईं । रबि पावक सुरसरि की नाईं ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ ahi sēja sayana hari karahīm. budha kachu tinha kara dōṣu na dharahīm. 5.

bhānu kṛsānu sarba rasa khāhīm. tinha kaham̃ manda kahata kō'u nāhīm. 6.

subha aru asubha salila saba baha'ī. surasari kō'u apunīta na kaha'ī. 7.

samaratha kahum̃ nahīm dōṣu gōsā'īm. rabi pāvaka surasari kī nā'īm. 8.

[In these 4 verses, nos. 5-8, Narad gives the reason why the so-called negative traits are not regarded as being ‘negative’ when applied to Lord Shiva.]

Though Lord Hari (Vishnu) sleeps on the back of a poisonous snake (known as ‘Seshnath’ while it floats on the surface of the celestial ocean known as ‘Kshirsagar’), no wise one finds fault with it and regards this as a condemnable thing to do by any account. [Instead of finding fault with Lord Vishnu for selecting this

weird way of sleeping, the world pays its greatest of respects to him and deems him to a manifestation of the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]¹. (5)

The Sun and the Fire are known to absorb all sorts of “rasa” (moisture; vapour) from all sorts of things in this world, but they are not decried by anyone in this world for doing so. [On the contrary, people praise the Sun-God and the Fire-God and say that they purify the world by absorbing or burning all its impurities.]² (6)

All sorts of things—some that are acceptable and not so bad, while others that are utterly reprehensible and polluting—float in the water of a river, but no one says that the water of the river Ganges has been made unclean or unholy, no one says that the sanctity of Ganges has been eroded by the debris floating in it.³ (7)

Therefore we conclude that those who are powerful and authoritative are not accused of any wrong-doing or possessing any negative character just like the examples of the Sun, the Fire and the river Ganges.⁴ (8)

[Note—¹That is, though it is unconventional, weird and sheer madness to sleep on the coiled body of a poisonous sea-serpent as it floats on the surface of water, with its thousand hoods hissing and spouting hot gas on the head of Vishnu as he reclines on its body, no sage, seer or scripture has ever condemned this act of Vishnu and derided him to choose this weird way of sleeping.

²The heat of the sun dries water in all sorts of water-bodies—be it an ocean, a river, a stinking drain, a swamp from where poisonous fume emanates, or a dirty pond. This ‘dried water’ is in the form of vapour that ultimately forms the cloud, and when this cloud gives the same water extracted from say a filthy stinking drain or swamp no one criticises it. Rather, all people pray and offer their respects to the Sun-God and proclaim that no life is possible without the Sun. The world forgets that the Sun inhales toxic fumes emanating from swamps, drains and marshes.

Similarly, the fire dries up everything put near it—it would as easily dry a wet rug that is clean as one that stinks. When any wet thing is put in the fire, the latter extracts the moisture from it and makes it stiff and dry. No one accuses the fire of accepting rubbish and despicable things as its food; no one says that the fire has become corrupted by its association with dirty things. Rather, the world universally believes that the fire is incorruptible and purifies the world by burning its impurities.

³All sorts of things float on the surface of the water of river Ganges: Some are acceptable such as flowers and other things that do not cause any pollution in the water, and were duly offered to gods and deities before being put in the river. Other things are horrible—such as filth and effluent from cities and factories situated all along the river’s course, the carcasses that float in the water, the dirt and garbage that the river collects from its banks all along its journey from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal. In spite of knowing this, the world regards Ganges as a holy river; the world never winces from taking a purifying dip in its water. That is, the Ganges is universally regarded as a holy river in spite of all its shortcomings.

⁴A similar idea is expressed in Shiva Puran, 2/3/8/20.

The examples that Narad has cited have a direct relation with Lord Shiva. Now, let’s see how:--

(i) Vishnu sleeps on the coiled body of a poisonous serpent, and Lord Shiva has serpents coiled around his body.

(ii) The sun and the fire burn everything and it is not wise to play fools with them, so is with Shiva—his ‘third eye’ located on the forehead spews fire and had actually burnt Kamdeo when the latter tried to act smart with the Lord (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87).

Shiva is believed to live in cremation ground surrounded by cremation fires.

(iii) Shiva has given river Ganges a respectful place in the thick lock of hairs on his head.

So, even as no one finds faults with Vishnu, Sun, Fire and Ganges, no one finds fault with Shiva who represents all these four entities at once. Therefore, if Uma marries Shiva, there shall be no problem with her also in any way whatsoever.]

दो०. जौं अस हिसिषा करहिं नर जड़ बिबेक अभिमान ।

परहिं कलप भरि नरक महुँ जीव कि ईस समान ॥ ६९ ॥

dōhā.

jauṁ asa hisiṣā karahim̃ nara jaṛa bibēka abhimāna.

parahim̃ kalapa bhari naraka mahum̃ jīva ki īsa samāna. 69.

If a person is foolish enough that he starts comparing his gross mortal existence in this world with the exalted nature of God due to his misplaced sense of wisdom driven by ignorance and pride, then surely such stupid person falls in the great hell for a Kalpa (the duration of one life-time of the universe).

Say, can a ‘Jiva’ (a living being with a gross body which dies and takes birth in an endless cycle and remains engrossed in the world that itself is gross and perishable) ever be like the ‘Ish’ or the Lord God (who has characters and virtues just the opposite of a Jiva). [The answer is ‘No’.]¹ (Doha no. 69)

[Note—¹The “Jiva” is a living being who takes a birth, has a gross body, remains involved in the affairs of the gross world of material objects, dies and is re-born, is subjected to the laws of ‘Karma’ (which states that he is rewarded or punished according to the deeds that a Jiva does in his life), and so on and so forth. A Jiva has no control over his fate. He has physical limitations due to his gross physical body.

On the other hand, “Ish” (meaning Lord God) has none of these limitations. The Lord God neither takes a birth nor dies as he is eternal; he has no physical gross body; he is not bound to either the deeds or the world; he has no physical limitations as he is omnipresent, all-pervading, as well as sublime and subtle by nature instead of being gross and mundane.

The point to note here is that Vishnu and Shiva are manifestations of the supreme Brahm, the Lord of creation. The Sun is visible manifestation of the supreme powers of Brahm and also of the fire element which is one of the five basic elements of creation. The other element is water whose manifested form is river Ganges. None of these highly placed entities are corruptible by the lower entities of the world.

The entities listed by Narad (i.e. Vishnu, Sun, Fire and river Ganges) are not regarded as faulty though they possess characters that are ordinarily considered as negative because they are above the level of lowly existence of the world that is gross and mundane. Their existence is at a level that is subtle, sublime and transcendental.]

चौ०. सुरसरि जल कृत बारुनि जाना । कबहुँ न संत करहिं तेहि पाना ॥ १ ॥
सुरसरि मिलें सो पावन जैसें । ईस अनीसहि अंतरु तैसें ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭī.

surasari jala kṛta bārūni jānā. kabahum̃ na santa karahim̃ tēhi pānā. 1.
surasari milēm̃ sō pāvana jaisēm̃. īsa anīsahi antaru taisēm̃. 2.

[Narad gives more reasoning why even apparently negative traits are deemed to be positive when they are applied to Lord Shiva.]

Even if wine is mixed with the otherwise holy waters of river Ganges, saints and holy people will not drink it. [For saints and holy people, wine is a prohibited liquid. Merely adding the holy water of river Ganges won't change wine's basic character; it will still remain a prohibited drink.]¹ (1)

But the same wine becomes acceptable when it is added (or poured) into the main body of the river Ganges. [No matter how many bottles of wine are poured in the river Ganges, no one says that the river has become defiled and its water has lost its sanctity as being a purifying liquid. People continue to take bath in it and sip the water of Ganges.]²

This is the difference between 'Isha' (pronounced as "Eesha"; the Lord God) and a 'non-Isha' (the Jiva, the living being)^{3*}. (2)

[Note—¹The main part of the liquid is 'wine', and the water of Ganges is only an addition to it to make wine dilute. No saint or holy men would drink wine in the mistaken belief that since the holy water of river Ganges has been added to it, wine has become drinkable for them. Since 'wine' is an intoxicating liquid that is prohibited for holy people, mere addition of water of the Ganges would not change the former's basic character as being a prohibited drink.

²But suppose we pour bottles full of wine in river Ganges; will it mean that the water of Ganges becomes undrinkable? No, it is not so. The river Ganges and its water would continue to be respected and regarded as holy irrespective of addition of how much wine is poured into the water of the river. Ganges won't lose its holy and sanctified character.

This can be easily explained with the help of an example. Suppose water is added to pure milk, would this change the basic nature, nomenclature, character or virtue of the white liquid known as 'milk'? Milk would still be known as 'milk' no matter how much quantity of water is added to it.

On the other hand, suppose a huge canister full of pure milk is poured into a river, will anyone in his senses call the water of the river as 'milk'? No, the answer is that no matter how much milk is added to a river, the latter would always be said to contain 'water' and 'not milk'.

³'Isha' is the supreme God and Lord of everything that exists. This entire universe with all its diversity has its origin in him. He lives inside and outside this creation. He has all the exemplary good virtues in creation. He is eternal, immortal, uncorrupt, without attributes, subtle, sublime, pure Consciousness; he remains even, uniform and

steady in the midst of the ever-changing nature of universe; he is all-pervading and all-encompassing; he is omniscient and omnipresent. In other words, 'Isha' is beyond measurement by any yardstick by which we measure the rest of the entities of creation; he is beyond comprehension and grasp of the limited abilities of the mind and intellect just like the sky that cannot be measured.

The 'non-Isha' or the Jiva, the living being, on the other hand, cannot become equivalent to 'Isha' though it is true that the Jiva is a 'fraction of Isha'. A 'fraction' obviously cannot be the 'whole'!

The metaphysical reason behind saying that Jiva is a fraction of Isha is that the true identity of their 'self' is the pure conscious Atma, the essential element known as the 'Soul'. This Atma is nothing but pure Consciousness. In the case of 'Isha', this Consciousness exists in its purest form and exalted state of transcendental existence. It has no physical limitations or barriers; it is subtle and sublime instead of being gross and mundane; it is eternal and imperishable instead of being mortal and subject to death and birth. Isha has no gross physical body as opposed to a Jiva that lives in a gross physical body.

So, since the 'Consciousness' is the true and factual identity of the 'self' in both the cases of an Isha and a non-Isha or Jiva, they appear to be the same in theory. But the similarity ends there—because Isha has a greater density of wholesome pure Consciousness as opposed to a Jiva or non-Isha which has only a 'fraction' of this Consciousness. So the distinction is crystal clear.

It is like the case of 'water in a glass of milk' and 'milk in the water of a river'. In the former case, the liquid will still be called 'milk', whereas in the latter case no one calls the 'water of a river' as being milk.

In this example, the milk is like the Jiva, and the water is like the Consciousness. The Jiva gets its identity and life because of the Consciousness present in it just like the milk getting its identity as a liquid which is life-sustaining because of its basic water content. Without water milk would be a solid chunk just like a Jiva whose body would be life-less without the presence of Consciousness in it. But water in milk is invisible; one sees only the white colour of the milk. Similarly, one sees the gross body of a Jiva while the Consciousness remains hidden from view. The situation is reversed in the case of Isha. Here, the Consciousness dominates, and all the grosser aspects of creation lay hidden just like the case of milk in the water of a flowing river. We recognise the 'water' of the river, and 'not the denser liquid known as milk' that is present in it.

Now, the question is: If 'Isha' is supposed to be pure and holy Consciousness, then why should it have even a trace of negativity in him? The answer is clear: The whole creation is a visible manifestation of the invisible Isha. Isha permeates every pore of this creation, surrounding it from the outside and living within it at the same time. This being the case, all the traits of this creation, whether good and positive, or bad and negative, would be reflected in and tagged to Isha. Being an integral part of this creation, Isha cannot remain immune to the effects of the good or the bad traits of creation. But that is all, for none of these traits actually define the true nature of Isha. The traits are, at the most, sticking to or hanging superficially to the main body of immaculate virtues that define the true character of Isha, and as soon as this creation dissolves, these external add-ons also vanish, and out comes the original immaculate nature of Isha.

*The difference between an Isha and a Jiva, and the relationship between them has been narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16.]

संभु सहज समरथ भगवाना । एहि बिबाहँ सब बिधि कल्याना ॥ ३ ॥

sambhu sahaja samaratha bhagavānā. ēhi bibāham̐ saba bidhi kalyānā. 3.

Lord Shiva, put in simple words, is the all-able Lord God (“Bhagwaan”). Hence, this marriage (between Uma and Shiva) will be auspicious and a provider of well-being in all possible ways¹. (3)

[Note—*Refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70 herein below.

¹This verse concludes what has been said by Narad earlier in verse no. 4 that preceded Doha no. 69. He clearly indicates in this verse that Himwaan and Maina should stop worrying about who would be a suitable groom for Uma, and also remove their fears about the perceived negative traits of Shiva. Instead, they should not focus their attention as to how their daughter could find the hands of Shiva in marriage.

Narad was all-knowing and wise (refer: Doha no. 66), so he could easily realise the storm blowing in the minds of the parents. So he told them, in the following verse nos. 4-8 and Doha no. 70, how to bring into effect what he has just prophesied.]

दुराराध्य पै अहहिं महेसू । आसुतोष पुनि किँ कलेसू ॥ ४ ॥
जौं तपु करै कुमारि तुम्हारी । भाविउ मेटि सकहिं त्रिपुरारी ॥ ५ ॥

durārādhyā pai ahahim mahēsū. āsutōṣa puni ki'ēm̐ kalēsū. 4.
jauṁ tapu karai kumārī tumhārī. bhāvi'u mēṭi sakahim̐ tripurārī. 5.

Though it is certainly true that it is very difficult to please Lord Mahesh (Shiva), yet it is also true that he is as easily and quickly pleased (“Aashutosh”) if one is determined to do so and takes the necessary trouble to propitiate him (by doing penance and undergoing hardships with a single-minded devotion for the Lord). (4)

Therefore, if your daughter does severe Tapa (penance, austerity and suffering of hardship for a cause) to please Lord Tripurari (Shiva), then be reassured that the all-able Lord can even erase the lines of fate that seem to be detrimental for her future happiness and well-being¹. (5)

[Note—¹In other words, even if there are any traces of negativity that may be lurking in your daughter’s fate that was determined as her destiny by the Creator at the time of her birth, but there is nothing to worry about it. This is because if your daughter manages to please the almighty Lord Tripurari, if he is satisfied by her sincerity, devotion and faith as well as her austerity and penance, then be assured that he is fully capable and competent to remove the darker sides of your daughter’s fate, and instead ensure a bright and happy future for her.

So, you must stop worrying and procrastinating, and instead follow my wise advice to prevail upon your daughter to do Tapa to please Lord Shiva.

In Doha no. 68 above, Narad had said that whatever the creator of one's destiny, the Creator known as Vidhi or Brahma, has written, no god, demon, human, serpent or sage can alter. But he has cleverly skipped the names of 'Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu' from this blanket immunity. The reason is that these two are senior Gods, and not ordinary junior rung gods. They are part of the Trinity of Gods, the third God being Brahma himself. These three gods of the Trinity, Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, are merely three manifestations of the same universal Supreme Being known as "Brahm" who has metamorphosed into three distinct forms to carry our three distinct functions of creation—viz. origin, sustenance, and conclusion.

It's like the same Sun seen at three times of the day—at sunrise, at mid-day, and at sunset. Does the different colours of the sky and the way the Sun is seen at these three main points during its journey across the sky in anyway affect the basic identity of the Sun or its character? Similarly, the three gods of the Trinity have equal powers, but they refrain from interfering into the jurisdiction of the other to maintain order and system in this creation. Otherwise, there would be chaos.]

जद्यपि बर अनेक जग माहीं । एहि कहँ सिव तजि दूसर नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

jadyapi bara anēka jaga māhīm. ēhi kaham̃ siva taji dūsara nāhīm. 6.

Although there may be many eligible grooms in the world that may fit the description I have made¹, but for her there is no other suitable groom other than Lord Shiva². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 67 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 where Narad outlines the negativities in the character of the future groom of Uma, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 69 where he has explicitly said that if Uma marries Lord Shiva then all the negative traits that destiny has written her future husband will have, and which is the cause of worry for her parents, would automatically turn out to be laudable characters that are praised by the world instead of being criticised.

Then we have read how Narad explains this is possible in Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 68, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²It is said in Doha no. 66 herein above that Narad is "Trikaalagya" (one who can see the events of the past, the future and of course the present) and "Sarvagya" (one who is all-knowing). This naturally means he knows about the past life of Uma, that she was Sati in that life, and why and how she died to take birth as Uma. He was privy to the secret that Uma's eternal husband is no one else but Lord Shiva, and that at the time of death in her previous life she had prayed to Lord Hari to let her serve the feet of Shiva in her future birth too—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65.

That is why Narad was so certain and positive in his assertion that for Uma there is no other groom except Shiva.]

बर दायक प्रनतारति भंजन । कृपासिंधु सेवक मन रंजन ॥ ७ ॥
इच्छित फल बिनु सिव अवरार्धे । लहिअ न कोटि जोग जप सार्धे ॥ ८ ॥

bara dāyaka pranatārati bhanjana. kṛpāsindhu sēvaka mana ranjana. 7.
icchita phala binu siva avarādhēm. lahi'a na kōṭi jōga japa sādhem. 8.

[Now, Narad lists the other positive virtues of Lord Shiva in order to reassure the parents of Uma as well as herself. It acted as a motivation for Uma to help set aside all her initial inhibitions and reservations, and declare her allegiance to Shiva.]

He (Lord Shiva) is the one who grants desired boons to seekers; he is the one who eliminates the sorrows of those who seek refuge and succour with him; he is an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness; he is the one provides happiness and bliss to the Mana (heart and mind) of his followers and devotees; (7)---

---He is the one who gives the desired fruits and fulfils the wishes of his devotees. Verily, without worshipping Lord Shiva and pleasing him, one cannot expect to fulfil one's wishes no matter how hard one tries or whatever means one adopts to achieve one's objective¹.

[In other words, if one wishes to see success in fulfilment of his or her dreams, then the only way is to please Lord Shiva. If Shiva is pleased, then even those wishes of the worshipper which may be against what is written in his or her destiny can be realised. Even things unimaginable and almost impossible to be realised can be made within one's reach if Lord Shiva so wants.]' (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 310.]

दो०. अस कहि नारद सुमिरि हरि गिरिजहि दीन्हि असीस ।
होइहि यह कल्यान अब संसय तजहु गिरीस ॥ ७० ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi nārada sumiri hari girijahi dīnhi asīsa.
hō'ihi yaha kalyāna aba sansaya tajahu girīsa. 70.

Saying this, Narad invoked Lord Hari (Vishnu) and blessed Girija (Uma, the daughter of the mountains).

He then reassured her father with these words—‘This (doing of Tapa for Shiva by your daughter Uma, and the subsequent marriage of the two) will pave the way for all-round welfare and auspiciousness. So now, oh Girish (the king of the mountains), set aside all your doubts and inhibitions (and instead become cheerful; stop worrying and procrastinating).’ (Doha no. 70)

चौ०. कहि अस ब्रह्मभवन मुनि गयऊ । आगिल चरित सुनहु जस भयऊ ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

kahi asa brahmabhavana muni gaya'ū. āgila carita sunahu jasa bhaya'ū. 1.

Saying thus, the sage (Narad) went on his way to the abode of Brahma (the heavenly abode of the Creator).

Now, listen to what happened next. (1)

पतिहि एकांत पाइ कह मैना । नाथ न मैं समुझे मुनि बैना ॥ २ ॥
 जौं घरु बरु कुलु होइ अनूपा । करिअ बिबाहु सुता अनुरूपा ॥ ३ ॥
 न त कन्या बरु रहउ कुआरी । कंत उमा मम प्रानपिआरी ॥ ४ ॥
 जौं न मिलिहि बरु गिरिजहि जोगू । गिरि जड़ सहज कहिहि सबु लोगू ॥ ५ ॥
 सोइ बिचारि पति करेहु बिबाहू । जेहिं न बहोरि होइ उर दाहू ॥ ६ ॥

patihī ēkānta pā'i kaha mainā. nātha na mair̄ samujhē muni bainā. 2.
 jaur̄m gharu baru kulu hō'i anūpā. kari'a bibāhu sutā anurūpā. 3.
 na ta kan'yā baru raha'u ku'ārī. kanta umā mama prānapi'ārī. 4.
 jaur̄m na milihi baru girijahi jōgū. giri jara sahaja kahihi sabu lōgū. 5.
 sō'i bicāri pati karēhu bibāhū. jēhir̄m na bahōri hō'i ura dāhū. 6.

When Maina (mother of Uma) found her husband (“Gririraaj”, the king of mountains) alone, she pleaded with him earnestly—‘Oh Lord! I could not understand the meaning of what the sage has said. (2)

Please search and find a suitable home and a groom (i.e. a groom from a reputed family) for our daughter, and then get her married. (3)

Otherwise, let her remain unmarried (because she can't be allowed to get married to a groom not suitable for her). Oh dear husband, I love her very much; she is dear to me like my own life. (4)

If a suitable groom is not found for her (and you marry her to someone who is weird as advised by Narad), then the world will scorn at us, saying sarcastically that the king of the mountains is as dumb and dull by nature as the realm of the heartless stony mountains (“Giri”) over which he rules.¹ (5)

So oh dear husband, think over the matter with due diligence and act with wisdom so that later on our hearts are not subjected to torment and grief arising out of regret and repentance.’ (6)

[Note—¹There is a clever play on the word “Giri” here. It applies both to the mountains as well as its king.

The mother was very worried about her daughter's fate. She felt that her husband has been carried away by Narad's prophesies. Instead of trying to do his best to find a suitable groom for Uma, he seems to have become biased after Narad's advice, and seems to resign to Uma's fate. This is not a good thing to do for him. She thought that the king has come to believe in the words of Narad who first told them about the fate of Uma that her groom would have such-and-such negative traits (as

narrated in Doha no. 67 and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it), and then went on to insist that Shiva is the most suitable groom for Uma (as narrated in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70).

Not limiting himself to making a prophesy alone, Narad had gone further and had tried to brainwash the father of Uma by saying that if she does Tapa and pleases Lord Shiva, then the Lord can even change the course of her destiny (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 70).

All this discourse has affected the rational thinking of the king of mountains, Giriraj. And so Uma's mother tried to persuade him to neglect Narad's advice and become more practical. He should search for a suitable groom for her instead of relying on a soothsayer's words. Otherwise the world would laugh at him and say that he was as stupid, dull and ill-witted as the lifeless and gross mountains over which he rules—because he had not applied his mind and intelligence but had relied on hearsay and words of a soothsayer to put the future of his daughter at peril.]

अस कहि परी चरन धरि सीसा । बोले सहित सनेह गिरीसा ॥ ७ ॥
बरु पावक प्रगटै ससि माहीं । नारद बचनु अन्यथा नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi parī carana dhari sīsā. bōlē sahita sanēha girīsā. 7.
baru pāvaka pragaṭai sasi māhīm. nārada bacanu an'yathā nāhīm. 8.

Saying this, she (Maina; the mother of Uma) humbly fell at the feet of her husband and placed her head on them to plead with him.

Girish, the king of the mountains, politely lifted her and said to her lovingly—
(7)

‘Listen dear. It may be possible that fire erupts on the moon, but it is certain that Narad's words cannot go in vain or that his words are lies. (8)

[Note—The king tries to explain to his wife Maina that she must not think that he is being stupid or dumb by believing Narad's words. He does not believe in soothsayers par-se, but Narad was not an ordinary sage but someone who was “Trikaalagya and Sarvagya” (Doha no. 66). Therefore, what Narad has said can't be overlooked, and it would be rather naïve and stupid to do so.

It would be dumbness to by-pass Narad's advice to let Uma do Tapa to seek Shiva in marriage, and instead go around looking for another suitable groom for her.]

दो०. प्रिया सोचु परिहरहु सबु सुमिरहु श्रीभगवान ।
पारबतिहि निरमयउ जेहि सोइ करिहि कल्यान ॥ ७१ ॥

dōhā.

priyā sōcu pariharahu sabu sumirahu śrībhagavāna.
pārabatihi niramaya'u jēhīm sō'i karihi kalyāna. 71.

Therefore, oh dear, discard all worries and stop grieving. Instead, invoke and remember Lord God (“Sri Bhagwaan”; the Supreme Being). ‘He’ (i.e. the Sri

Bhagwaan) who has created Uma, ‘he’ who has given her birth, ‘he’ is the one who will take care of her and her welfare in an auspicious way and in a manner that is best for her. (Doha no. 71)

[Note—A similar idea is expressed in “Parvati Mangal”, Chanda no. 13 and verse no. 109.]

चौ०. अब जौं तुम्हहि सुता पर नेहू । तौ अस जाइ सिखावनु देहू ॥ १ ॥
करै सो तपु जेहिं मिलहिं महेसू । आन उपायँ न मिटिहि कलेसू ॥ २ ॥
नारद बचन सगर्भ सहेतू । सुंदर सब गुन निधि बृषकेतू ॥ ३ ॥
अस बिचारि तुम्ह तजहु असंका । सबहि भाँति संकरु अकलंका ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

aba jaurm tumhahi sutā para nēhū. tau asa jā'i sikhāvanu dēhū. 1.
karai sō tapu jēhim milahim mahēsū. āna upāyam'na miṭihi kalēsū. 2.
nārada bacana sagarbha sahētū. sundara saba guna nidhi bṛṣakētū. 3.
asa bicāri tumha tajahu asaṅkā. sabahi bhāmṭi saṅkaru akalaṅkā. 4.

[Giriraj, the king of mountains and the father of Uma, told his wife, Maina—] ‘Now, taking into consideration what I have said above, if you have sincere affection for our daughter and are concerned about her future welfare, then you should go and give her a wise advice (1)---

---so that she does Tapa (penance and austerity) in order to attain Lord Shiva¹. Otherwise, there is no other way to eliminate the grief and worries (that have overwhelmed both of us)². (2)

Remember: The words of Narad are rich in subtle meaning and very reasonable. [Don't think that he is an ordinary clairvoyant who has cast his magical spell on me to mislead me to fall into some kind of trap. What he has said is not without reason, and it has some secret meaning of which, may be, we are not aware. He is a “Trikaalagy and Sarvagya” sage; he knows about the past life of Uma as well as what is in store for her future. Narad is a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, and when he says that our daughter must seek the hand of Shiva in marriage, he must surely have some sound reason behind it. He is not the type of sage who will tell a lie to suit his vested interest.]

[He has already told us that—] Lord Brishketu (i.e. Lord Shiva whose flag has the emblem of a Bull which stands for Dharma, or the virtues of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and nobility) is indeed glorious and a treasury of beautiful virtues in all imaginable ways³. (3)

Think this over and recognise the truth of what I am saying. So, you must dispel all your doubts, misgivings and consternations. Shiva is absolutely free from all perceived taints and negativities that can be ever imagined. [Hence, you need not unnecessarily worry.]⁴ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 70.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 70.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5, and 7-8 that precede Doha no. 70.

⁴Here the king has answered his wife's concerns expressed in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 71 where she says that he must weigh all the pros and cons before deciding on the groom for their daughter Uma so that later on they are not tormented by grief and remorse at having made a wrong choice due to reliance on the word of a sage who has already said so many negative things about the future of their beloved daughter in order to fill their minds with fear and doubt.

Uma's father, king Giriraj, told her mother Maina: "Remember: Narad has been truthful to us by telling us the reality about our daughter's future. That is a good thing to do. Say, is it not wise to know the truth so that a person can make amends and find a wise way out while still there is time, instead of being in the dark and landing in an unforeseen trouble at a later date when it is already too late?"

His advising us about the possibility of choosing Lord Shiva as a groom for Uma was out of his sincere desire to help us out of the quagmire we have found ourselves in. Since no one can change a person's destiny (refer: Doha no. 68), what the wise, compassionate and noble-hearted sage Narad did was to give us a ray of hope amidst the gloom of darkness, saying in effect that everything is not lost and doomed, and that there is still hope. Though it is not possible to change the destiny of Uma that she will get a husband with the negative traits listed by the sage (refer: Doha no. 67 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8), but in the given circumstances if efforts are made to please Shiva sufficiently by doing Tapa, then the Lord can turn the doomed future of our daughter into a glorious one by accepting to become her husband (refer: Chaupai line no. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 69).

My dear Maina, Narad has no ill intent whatsoever; he is not against our welfare and happiness. Please remove your misgivings about him and his integrity. He is not wicked sage.

Remember: It will be a great privilege for Uma to be the consort of Lord Shiva who is the greatest of gods and one of the Trinity Gods. Say, who can ever imagine of this good fortune coming his way; and you worry about it?

Don't allow your mind to go astray; have faith in Narad's words because he is a wise one. Remember: Uma is dear to me as she is to you. How can I ever disregard her welfare? But we must not turn our blind eyes to reality, and it is always wise and prudent to pay heed to wise ones like Narad, because if we try to act smart it is then we shall have to regret and not by heeding Narad's advice.

So, cheer up and go to Uma, cheer her up also, and persuade her to do Tapa in order to attain Shiva. Remember what Narad said: 'It is only Lord Shiva who can change her destiny if the Lord is pleased by her Tapa, because the Lord is all-able and competent to change the course of one's destiny (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 70)'.

Therefore, Narad is not misleading us by hiding anything—neither the future destiny of Uma nor the character traits of Shiva. He has told us the truth. But while telling us that the characters of Lord Shiva are negative when viewed from the perspective of the world and its mortal beings, he has sought to allay our fears by

emphasising they the same set of characters acquire a complete different meaning, a positive one, when applied to the Lord. He has explained to us why it is so in detail while advising that the best course of action for Uma would be to please Shiva and request him to accept her as his consort to overcome the negativities of her fate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 69—to Chaupai line nos. 3 and 5 that precede Doha no. 70.”]

सुनि पति बचन हरषि मन माहीं । गई तुरत उठि गिरिजा पाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
उमहि बिलोकि नयन भरे बारी । सहित सनेह गोद बैठारी ॥ ६ ॥

sunī pati bacana haraṣi mana māhīm. gaī turata uṭhi girijā pāhīm.
umahi bilōki nayana bhare bārī. sahita sanēha gōda baiṭhārī. 3.

Hearing the encouraging and reassuring words of her husband, she (Maina) felt delighted at heart (and all her doubts, worries, misgivings and consternations abated). She immediately went to Girija (Uma). (5)

She called Uma and, with eyes filled in tears (of affection for her)¹, she lovingly made the latter sit on her lap. (6)

[Note—¹Maina had tears in her eyes. When her husband had explained things to her she had felt reassured. But when she saw the face of her daughter, all her misgivings resurfaced, and she became highly emotional. She slipped into depression and worries once again, thinking about the sage’s prophesy regarding her daughter’s doomed fate, and the fearful prospect of her being forced to do severe Tapa and endure its hardship if this doomed fate is to be somehow mended in her favour.

Uma has had a pampered upbringing, and now she faced the horror of doing severe penance and austerity, and suffering hardship to which she was not accustomed. This very thought send a chill down the spine of Uma’s loving mother, forcing tears to well-up in her eyes.

Later on in Ram Charit Manas we shall read another incident when the eyes of mother Kaushalya are filled with tears when she learns that her son, Lord Ram, has been ordered to go to forest exile for 14 years. It was a natural emotional reaction of a loving mother because she could visualise the hardship her son will have to undergo in the wilderness of the forest, something for which he was not trained. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 54.

See also verse no. 7 herein below and its accompanying note no. 1.]

बारहिं बार लेति उर लाई । गदगद कंठ न कछु कहि जाई ॥ ७ ॥
जगत मातु सर्बग्य भवानी । मातु सुखद बोलीं मृदु बानी ॥ ८ ॥

bārahīm bāra lēti ura lāī. gadagada kaṇṭha na kachu kahi jāī.
jagata mātu sarbagya bhavānī. mātu sukhada bōlīm mṛdu bānī. 4.

The mother repeatedly held her daughter to her bosom and hugged her. The mother's throat was choked with emotions so much so that she could not speak a word to her daughter. (7)

Realising the predicament in which her mother found herself to be in, Bhavani (Uma, the future consort of Bhava, Lord Shiva)¹, who is the Mother of the whole world and Sarvagya (all-knowing) broke the ice and spoke sweet words to comfort her mother. (8)

[Note—¹By addressing Uma as “Bhavaani”, the author of this epic, i.e. Goswami Tulsidas, has given us a subtle hint of what is to come next. This hint is this: that from this moment Uma has determined in her mind that she will become a consort of Lord Bhava, another name of Shiva. She did not need any persuasion from her mother for she had already decided to do Tapa to attain Lord Bhava and acquire the right to be called ‘Bhavaani’, ‘Lord Bhava’s consort’.]

दो०. सुनहि मातु में दीख अस सपन सुनावउँ तोहि ।
सुंदर गौर सुबिप्रबर अस उपदेसेउ मोहि ॥ ७२ ॥

dōhā.

sunahi mātu maim dīkha asa sapana sunāva'um' tōhi.
sundara gaura subiprabara asa upadēsē'u mōhi. 72.

Bhavaani (alias Uma) told her mother, ‘Listen mother! I have seen a dream, and I shall tell you what I have seen.

A handsome, fair-complexioned and noble Brahmin had given me an advice (as described in the following verses). (Doha no. 72)

[Note—In ‘Shiva Puran’, 2/3/9/15-18, Parvati, who was none else but the all-knowing goddess Kalikaadevi, the Supreme Goddess known as Parmeshwari, tells her mother: “Mother, listen. In the early morning hours of the previous night, I had a dream. An honourable and noble Vipra (Brahmin) has told me affectionately that I must do Tapa for attaining Lord Shiva.”]

चौ०. करहि जाइ तपु सैलकुमारी । नारद कहा सो सत्य बिचारी ॥ १ ॥
मातु पितहि पुनि यह मत भावा । तपु सुखप्रद दुख दोष नसावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

karahi jā'i tapu sailakumārī. nārada kahā sō satya bicārī. 1.
mātu pitahi puni yaha mata bhāvā. tapu sukhaprada dukha dōṣa nasāvā. 2.

The noble Brahmin told me in my dreams—‘Oh Sailkumari (the daughter of the mountains)! Go and do Tapa, realising the truth of Narad’s words. (1)

Even your parents (mother and father) have agreed to this viewpoint that Tapa is always a provider of happiness and an eliminator of all sorrows and grief.¹ (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 163.]

तपबल रचइ प्रपंचु बिधाता । तपबल बिष्नु सकल जग त्राता ॥ ३ ॥
 तपबल संभु करहिं संघारा । तपबल सेषु धरइ महिभारा ॥ ४ ॥
 तप अधार सब सृष्टि भवानी । करहि जाइ तपु अस जियँ जानी ॥ ५ ॥

tapabala raca'i prapañcu bidhātā. tapabala biṣnu sakala jaga trātā. 3.
 tapabala sambhu karahiṁ saṅghārā. tapabala sēṣu dhara'i mahibhārā. 4.
 tapa adhāra saba sṛṣṭi bhavānī. karahi jā'i tapu asa jiyam' jānī. 5.

The creator Vidhata has created this complicated and diversified universe on the strength of Tapa (austerity, penance, suffering hardship for some noble cause). It is on the strength of Tapa that Lord Vishnu is able to eliminate all miseries that afflict this creation and is able to sustain and look after its welfare. (3)

It is on the strength of Tapa that Lord Shambhu (Shiva) finally annihilates the world (when its life ends and the time comes to wind up one cycle of creation so as to pave the way for a new one). It is on the strength of Tapa that Lord Seshnath (the legendary celestial serpent) is able to bear the weight of the earth on his hood (because it is believed that the earth is supported from below by Seshnath who holds it on his hood). (4)

Oh Bhavaani!¹ The entire creation is founded on the strength of Tapa (i.e. all the activities associated with this creation—its origin, sustenance and conclusion; its various activities and changes; its evolution and diversity, et-al—derive their energy and momentum by the virtue of its patron deities responsible for its various functions doing Tapa to enable them to carry out their assigned duties)².

Therefore, realising the stupendous strength and immense potentials of Tapa (and how its practice enables the practitioner to achieve super-natural powers that makes it possible for one to do feats that would be otherwise beyond imagination and one's abilities), you must go and do Tapa (to overcome the hurdles in your fate, and to attain the hands of Lord Shiva in marriage as advised by Narad).³ (5)

[Note—¹Bhavaani is the divine consort of Lord Bhava, Shiva. By addressing Uma as 'Bhavaani', the Brahmin who appeared in Uma's dream implied that if she wishes to attain this exalted stature of being the consort of Lord Bhava, then the only way it to do Tapa.

²A similar idea exhorting the virtues and astounding empowering abilities of Tapa is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 163.]

सुनत बचन बिसमित महतारी । सपन सुनायउ गिरिहि हँकारी ॥ ६ ॥
 मातु पितहि बहुबिधि समुझाई । चलीं उमा तप हित हरषाई ॥ ७ ॥

प्रिय परिवार पिता अरु माता । भए बिकल मुख आव न बाता ॥ ८ ॥

sunata bacana bisamita mahatārī. sapana sunāya'u girihi hamkārī. 6.
mātu pitahi bahubidhi samujhā'ī. calīm umā tapa hita haraṣā'ī. 7.
priya parivāra pitā aru mātā. bha'e bikala mukha āva na bātā. 8.

Hearing these mysterious words from her daughter, the mother was amazed. She called her husband Giri, and narrated the daughter's dream to him. (6)

The parents, the mother as well as the father, explained the things to their daughter in various ways (to remove her doubts and confusions, as well as to inject confidence and determination in her mind and heart so that she does Tapa with a firm conviction and succeeds in it).

Then, encouraged and convinced, Uma cheerfully (and with great confidence) started-off on her mission of doing Tapa. (7)

As she went away to do Tapa, her dear kith and kin, her loving family members, her parents, everyone, were overcome with grief so much so that they could not utter a word.¹ (8)

[Note—¹Doing Tapa is not a joke nor a child's play. Its severity would shake the confidence of even the hardened war veterans. Just how tough it is to do Tapa and how severely punishing it is will be clear if one reads the following instances in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Uma's Tapa as described in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 74; (ii) Manu and Satrupa's Tapa as described in from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 144—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 145.

Even a single casual reading of the way Tapa is done and its effect on the body will make even those with stern hearts wince in fear. It is imaginable how hard and difficult it would have been for a girl as young as Uma to bear with the rigidities and hardships of doing Tapa. The mere imagination of the hardships and sufferings involved in doing Tapa sent chill down the spine of the loved ones of Uma, viz. her friends, family members and parents, and they were all drowned in gloom and despair. But there was no way out; Uma was determined to do Tapa.

An interesting lesson is to be learnt here: If a person has firm determination, if one is convinced of the path he or she has chosen, of one has self-confidence in the strength of the Spirit, then there is no hurdle in this creation that can come in his or her path, and for such a resolute person victory and success are virtually served on a platter.]

दो०. बेदसिरा मुनि आइ तब सबहि कहा समुझाइ ।
पारबती महिमा सुनत रहे प्रबोधहि पाइ ॥ ७३ ॥

dōhā.

bēdasirā muni ā'i taba sabahi kahā samujhā'i.
pārabatī mahimā sunata rahē prabōdhahi pā'i. 73.

At the time when all the family members were thus overwhelmed by distress and gloom, sage Ved-siraa (bēdasirā) came and consoled them, explaining the glories of Parvati and extolling her divine virtues.

Learning about Parvati's divinity and heritage (that in her previous life as Sati she was already the consort of Lord Shiva, that she herself had sought to be Shiva's consort in her next life, the present one, at the time of death, and that she was thus an eternal partner of Shiva and therefore is sure to succeed in her Tapa), all the family members and her friends felt reassured and comforted. Their sense of despair and gloom was dissipated, and they became calm. (Doha no. 73)

चौ०. उर धरि उमा प्रानपति चरना । जाइ बिपिन लागीं तपु करना ॥ १ ॥
अति सुकुमार न तनु तप जोगू । पति पद सुमिरि तजेउ सबु भोगू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ura dhari umā prānapati caranā. jā'i bipina lāgīm tapu karanā. 1.
ati sukumāra na tanu tapa jōgū. pati pada sumiri tajē'u sabu bhōgū. 2.

Enshrining the holy feet of her beloved Lord (Shiva) in her heart, she (Uma/Parvati) went to the forest and began doing Tapa (to attain her beloved Lord)¹. (1)

Her body was very delicate and fragile, not at all suitable for Tapa. In spite of this, she invoked the holy feet of her husband (Lord Shiva) in her heart, and remembering him she discarded all thoughts of comfort and pleasures that are associated with the body and related to the world². (2)

[Note—¹Uma had decided that Shiva would be her eternal husband, and this determination made her all the more resolute and firm in doing Tapa.

Her Tapa was different from the Tapa done by others to propitiate the chosen deity. While the rest of the world does Tapa to seek some reward, whether it is worldly or spiritual, some kind of blessing from the worshipped deity by way of a boon or two, or for fulfilment of some other kind of desire that is otherwise difficult or almost impossible to achieve, Uma did Tapa to be an 'eternal companion of the deity'.

Her interaction with the deity, in this case Lord Shiva, was not for some moments when the Lord appears before his devotee, grants him or her some boon, and then vanishes from sight. She wanted to be with her deity for the rest of her life. And so this Tapa was special because the desire that needed to be fulfilled was also unique. Consequentially, the intensity and dimension of Uma's Tapa also had to be special and different from the way others did Tapa. In other words, her Tapa was more severe and its sufferings were more intense as compared to the Tapa done by others.

When examined closely we observe that when Manu and Satrupa did Tapa to request Lord Vishnu to become their son, which resulted in the Lord incarnating as Lord Ram to become the son king Dasrath (Manu) and queen Kaushalya (Satrupa), the couple had to do severe Tapa that matched that done by Uma. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 144—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 145.

²Tapa involves stern self-restraint, and overcoming all temptations for comfort and pleasure. As we shall be reading shortly below, all desires to please the gross organs of the body, such as the desire of tongue to eat delicious things, the desire of the skin to seek physical comfort, and so on are to be overcome if one were to succeed in Tapa. This exercise of exemplary self-restraint and self-denial is treated as an ideal way of offering that is made to the deity worshipped during a religious sacrifice. Tapa is a sacrifice of one's own self, an exercise that is far better and more effective than making offerings of things that are bought by money, that may cause harm or pain to others (such as animal sacrifices or forcing others to donate against their wishes), and that is done by professional priests for monetary considerations.

To understand how penances and sacrifices done by one's own self are more fruitful and effective than hiring priests to do so we may draw a parallel with going on a pilgrimage to any holy site. The pilgrim who walks up the arduous path to the shrine has done more religiously meritorious deed than the pilgrim who hires an air-conditioned taxi to go there. Though both the persons have gone to the same place with the same religious value, but the first one is a true 'pilgrim' who has walked on foot, and he is the one who gets more credit points and therefore is better rewarded than the air-conditioned taxi-riding 'tourist'.]

नित नव चरन उपज अनुरागा । बिसरी देह तपहिं मनु लागा ॥ ३ ॥

nita nava carana upaja anurāgā. bisarī dēha tapahim manu lāgā. 3.

Every passing day saw renewed affection for the holy feet of the Lord (Shiva) sprouting in the heart of Uma so much so that gradually she lost consciousness (awareness) of even the basic comforts of her physical gross body, and instead her mind and heart ("Mana") got deeply involved in doing Tapa (for which she had set out from her home). (3)

[Note—This verse is significant. It underlines the psychological aspects of entering into enterprise, such as Tapa in this case. When a person sets out from the comfort zone of his home to achieve his goal in life, he is very enthusiastic in the beginning. But as soon as he starts to feel the heat of the new path that is not so well-trodden, an unconventional path that he has chosen for himself, his enthusiasm and zest begins to ebb, and he may become disillusioned and disheartened by initial hardships and failures. But if he is resolute and firm in his convictions, if he has faith in himself and his spirit, if he is determined to succeed, then after the initial hiccoughs all obstacles vanish in thin air and the path clears out of its own for him.

Uma was raised in a king's household, being pampered and well-looked after. The initial days were most testing for her. The hardships of living alone in a forest, being deprived of food and basic physical comforts that she was so accustomed of at her home, may have made her disillusioned and jittery. But this did not happen. She was determined to attain Lord Shiva as the only single goal of her life. So what happened? She succeeded.

The first few days of Tapa life were sort of acclimatization and test for her when she was to judge for herself if she can actually cope with the rigours of Tapa. 'Yes, she could'—she found out to her joy. And from then onwards the journey was much easier!]

संबत सहस मूल फल खाए । सागु खाइ सत बरष गवाँए ॥ ४ ॥
 कछु दिन भोजनु बारि बतासा । किए कठिन कछु दिन उपबासा ॥ ५ ॥
 बेल पाती महि परइ सुखाई । तीनि सहस संबत सोइ खाई ॥ ६ ॥
 पुनि परिहरे सुखानेउ परना । उमहि नामु तब भयउ अपरना ॥ ७ ॥
 देखि उमहि तप खीन सरीरा । ब्रह्मगिरा भै गगन गभीरा ॥ ८ ॥

sambata sahasa mūla phala khā'ē. sāgu khā'i sata baraṣa gavāmē. 4.
 kachu dina bhōjanu bāri batāsā. ki'ē kaṭhina kachu dina upabāsā. 5.
 bēla pāti mahi para'i sukhā'ī. tīni sahasa sambata sō'i khā'ī. 6.
 puni pariharē sukhānē'u paranā. umahi nāmu taba bhaya'u aparānā. 7.
 dēkhi umahi tapa khīna sarīrā. brahmagirā bhai gagana gabhīrā. 8.

[Now in the following verses, we shall read about the severity of Uma's Tapa. Refer also to "Parvati Mangal", verse nos. 38—40.]

She survived by eating edible roots and fruits for a thousand years, and then for the next hundred years ate only leaves and stems. (4)

For some days she lived by eating and drinking only air and water, and for some days she abstained from all foods by observing stern fast. (5)

For three thousand years she survived by eating creepers and leaves that had fallen on the ground and had dried up in a natural way. (6)

Then she abstained from eating even dried and fallen leaves etc. It is from that time that she was called 'Aparnaa' (to commemorate the severity of her Tapa). [The word "Aparnaa" means one who had denied himself even the leaves.] (7)

Observing that Uma's body had become extremely emaciated due the severity of the Tapa done by her, a divine voice known as 'Brahm's voice' (the formless sound heard from the heaven and is believed to be spoken by the Holy Spirit, the Lord God; the voice of an Oracle; the voice of Brahma the creator speaking on behalf of the Lord God)# said from the sky (the heaven)¹. [Next Doha no. 74 and its following verses narrate what this Brahm's voice said to Uma.] (8)

[Note—The way Uma did Tapa for particular numbers of days coincides symbolically with numbers of Mantras used for offering worship to Lord Shiva as ordained in the Shukla Yajur Veda. Out of the many Mantras of this Vedas, those that are exclusively dedicated to Shiva were extracted and listed as a body of Mantras known as "Rudri". There are said to be 11 forms of Lord Shiva, known as the "11 Rudras".

Uma did Tapa as follows: 1000 years + 100 years (verse no. 4) = '11'00 ('eleven' thousand) years. They symbolise the 11 Rudras or 11 Rudri Mantras.

Then the next verse no. 5 says that she spent some days eating air, drinking water and fasting. Since a Tapa is done in a systematic manner, therefore we can assume that this second phase also followed the same pattern: that is, she survived on air and water for 1000 years and ate nothing for the next 100 years, bringing the total

number of days to 1100 years. Like in the previous instance, this completed her 'second' round of Rudri.

This was followed by the third round as narrated in verse nos. 6-7 by which time she had done Tapa for 3000 years + 300 years = '33'00 years. The figure of '33' in '3300' stands for $11 \times 3 = 33$ Rudri Mantras. That is, Uma symbolically worshipped all the 11 Rudras for 'three times' to imply that she is devoted to them in all the three dimensions of time—the past, the present, and the future.

The 'zero' that is added to the numerals 1, 11, 3 or 33 mean the number of times the main Tapa was multiplied in terms of magnitude or intensity. That is, if others did a Tapa say for 11 years with a certain degree of intensity, the Tapa of Uma was a hundred times more intense.

¹When the Tapa was successful, there was always a voice from the heaven to indicate it to the person who was engaged in doing Tapa, and this was followed by a request to him or her to seek the desired boon.

When Manu and Satrupa's Tapa was successful, a similar voice was heard from the sky, asking them to seek a boon—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 145.

Similarly, when the Tapa of the demon king Ravana and his brothers were successful, the creator Brahma had spoken to them and asked them to seek a boon: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 177.

#Usually it was 'Brahma, the creator' who spoke on behalf of the Supreme Being. Hence, this voice is aptly called the "voice of the Oracle".]

दो०. भयउ मनोरथ सुफल तव सुनु गिरिराजकुमारि ।
परिहरु दुसह कलेस सब अब मिलिहहिं त्रिपुरारि ॥ ७४ ॥
dōhā.

bhaya'u manōratha suphala tava sunu girirājakumāri.
pariharu dusaha kalēsa saba aba milihahim̐ tripurāri. 74.

[The voice from the heaven said—] 'Listen, oh daughter of Giri! All your desires have been fulfilled; all your wishes are granted.

Now henceforth, set aside all your sorrows and grief, and you need not suffer any longer for now you will have access to Lord Tripurari (Shiva). (Doha no. 74)

चौ०. अस तपु काहुँ न कीन्ह भवानी । भए अनेक धीर मुनि ग्यानी ॥ १ ॥
अब उर धरहु ब्रह्म बर बानी । सत्य सदा संतत सुचि जानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

asa tapu kāhum̐ na kīnha bhavānī. bha'ē anēka dhīra muni gyānī. 1.
aba ura dharahu brahma bara bānī. satya sadā santata suci jānī. 2.

[The voice from the sky, the heaven, which was like the voice of an Oracle, said—] ‘Oh Bhavaani! No one has ever done the type of Tapa as you have done, though there were many a patient, courageous and wise sages and hermits¹. (1)

Now have faith in the eclectic and wise words of Brahm, the supreme Lord of creation. Realising that these words are always truthful, honest and sincere, as well as sacred and venerable, you must keep them in your heart². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 40 also.

Sages and hermits did Tapa as a routine affair. Their whole life was virtually devoted to Tapa, but it had become more of a religious duty and a sort of ritual for them rather than a concerted and single-minded effort to achieve a particular goal. And amongst them who actually did Tapa in the rigorous and intensive way Uma had done, they were successful in acquiring special super-natural powers and spiritual seniority that others lacked.

Patience and courage are the hall-marks of all dedicated saints, sages and hermits because without these virtues they can’t cope with the rigour of the life they have chosen for themselves, a life that requires strict self-discipline, remaining distanced from the charms of the physical world, overcoming the natural instincts of the body and the desire of the sense organs for gratification, and the other natural pulls and tugs of worldly life.

It’s like the case of a university class. Hundred and thousands of students pass through the portals of a university, but only a few selected ones do something that is path-breaking and unique which will make them remembered in history as legends.

The severity of Uma’s Tapa was one of its kind, and no one had suffered so much for the objective she had in mind—viz. to have a husband. Refer also to: Kalidas’ “Kumar Sambhava”, Canto 5, verse no. 29 which also says that the severity of Uma’ Tapa was unprecedented.

So, the voice of Brahma, the Creator, praised Parvati for her Tapa.

²The voice Uma heard was not the voice of an ordinary creature, not even of any ordinary god, but the voice of the Lord of creation. The words that the Lord speaks are never false or cloaked in deceit or driven by vested interest; these words are sacred and honourable. Not everyone is fortunate to hear them; only a few privileged ones hear it. The words of Brahm are always for the good and welfare of the devotee of the Lord. So, mindful of this fact, Uma is advised to bring them to her heart and do as advised by it.

Remember: Brahm does not speak often, and it is only when the Lord is pleased by the devotee that he chooses to address him or her directly. There are other instances where this has happened in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 148 (with respect to Lord Vishnu blessing Manu and Satrupa); and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 177 (with respect of Brahma blessing the demon brothers, Ravan etc.).

Not only the supreme Lord, even ordinary human sages blessed those upon whom they were pleased—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 164 where we read that the hermit has blessed king Pratapbhanu and asked him to seek any boon he wishes.]

आवै पिता बोलावन जबहीं । हठ परिहरि घर जाएहु तबहीं ॥ ३ ॥

मिलहिं तुम्हहि जब सप्त रिषीसा । जानेहु तब प्रमान बागीसा ॥ ४ ॥

āvai pitā bōlāvana jabahīm. haṭha parihari ghara jā'ēhu tabahīm. 3.

milahim tumhahi jaba sapta riṣīsā. jānēhu taba pramāna bāgīsā. 4.

When your father comes to call you back home¹, at that time you must not resist him but return home immediately² (with him). (3)

When you meet the seven celestial sages known as ‘Sapta-rishis’, then you would be reassured about the authenticity of this prophesy made by this Oracle³.’ (4)

[Note—¹It was Uma’s father who was instrumental in sending her to do Tapa by overruling her mother’s initial doubts and objections (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 71—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 72). So, when her father himself comes to her to ask her to go back home, Uma would have no doubts about his intentions.

Another interesting observation is that Uma has been advised to go home without “resistance”. This means that her father had tried to bring her home on previous occasions as well when he had learnt about the immensity of her sufferings as outlined in verse nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 74. Remember: Her father was the king of the mountains, and so obviously he must have kept someone to keep a watch on her. So he was aware of her sufferings during the process of Tapa. He must have either come himself or sent someone in order to persuade Uma to return home, but she must have refused. That is why this Oracle had to tell her “not to resist her father when he comes to ask her to return home”.

²The next question is: After doing Tapa, why was it necessary for Uma to “go home” instead of remaining in the hermitage where she did Tapa? Well, the answer to this question is as follows: Uma did Tapa to ‘marry Shiva’, and marriage necessitates that she remains in with her parents at her parental home so that all the formalities and rites associated with marriage and its religious ceremonies can be done according to the sanctioned process of the scriptures. Marriage cannot be done with full rituals and ceremony in a forest hermitage.

³Why was it necessary for the voice of Brahm to give a proof of its authenticity to reassure Uma when it said that “when you meet the Sapta-rishis, you will be assured of the truthfulness of this voice and prophesy”.

Well, the reason is that when someone does Tapa, the deity who is offered this form of sacrifice is the one who reveals before the devotee to bless him or her. For instance, when Manu and Satrupa did Tapa, they did it for Lord Vishnu, and it was Vishnu who appeared before them to bless them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 143 (where it is said that they worshipped Lord Vasudeo, another name of Vishnu), and from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 148 (where we learn that the Lord Vishnu revealed himself as Lord Ram with Sita representing goddess Laxmi by his side).

But this did not happen in the case of Uma. It was “Brahm’s voice” and not “Shiva’s voice”. So, in order to remove her doubts, the voice had to give her certain proof by citing events in the future. And the two events that it cited are: (i) her father coming to her with a request to go home, and (ii) the seven sages coming to her.

Brahma, the creator, had made predictions elsewhere also. For instance, later on in the story of Ram Charit Manas it is narrated that when Hanuman entered Lanka and was confronted by the demoness called Lankini, he had hit her viciously with his fist, leading her to fall and vomit blood. At that time Lankini recalled the prophesy made by Brahma when he saw her after granting boons to the demon king Ravana and his brothers Kumbhakaran and Vibhishan. Brahma had told her that “when she would fall down upon being hit by a monkey, she should be warned that the end of the cruel demons was near”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 4.]

सुनत गिरा बिधि गगन बखानी । पुलक गात गिरिजा हरषानी ॥ ५ ॥

sunata girā bidhi gagana bakhānī. pulaka gāta girijā haraṣānī. 5.

Hearing the instructions of the sacred voice of Vidhi (the creator Brahma) from the heaven, Girijaa’s body was thrilled with happiness and she was very delighted. (5)

[Note—The reason for her happiness and joy was obvious: it was now certain that her efforts at acquiring Lord Shiva as her divine husband were successful. What more would any person want?]

उमा चरित सुंदर मैं गावा । सुनहु संभु कर चरित सुहावा ॥ ६ ॥
जब तें सतीं जाइ तनु त्यागा । तब तें सिव मन भयउ बिरागा ॥ ७ ॥
जपहिं सदा रघुनायक नामा । जहँ तहँ सुनहिं राम गुन ग्रामा ॥ ८ ॥

umā carita sundara mair̄m gāvā. sunahu sambhu kara carita suhāvā. 6.
jaba tēm̄ satīm̄ jā’i tanu tyāgā. taba tēm̄ siva mana bhaya’u birāgā. 7.
japahim̄ sadā raghunāyaka nāmā. jaham̄’ taham̄’ sunahim̄ rāma guna grāmā.
8.

[Now there is a pause in our narration. We shall read below what happened during the intervening time after Sati had died by burning herself in fire at her father Daksha’s place, and the present sequence of events in her new birth as Uma when she was blessed by Brahma that her wishes to marry Shiva are sure to be fulfilled.]

I (sage Yagyawalkya said to sage Bharadwaj) have narrated the beautiful and interesting events in the life of Uma. Now, listen to the other interesting events that are associated with the pleasant story of Lord Shiva. (6)

Ever since the time Sati had gone (to her father’s place during the fire sacrifice) and left her gross body (i.e. died by burning herself in the fire of Yoga), Shiva’s mind and heart became like a recluse: he assumed a renunciate attitude, becoming totally aloof and detached from everything. (7)

[So, what was he doing in the meantime?] He spent his time constantly repeating (doing “Japa” of) the holy name of Lord Ram¹, as well as preaching and listening to

the divine story of Lord Ram and the sacred events associated with the life and times of the Lord while he lived on earth². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48. It is fascinating to research where Lord Shiva heard the divine story of his beloved Lord Ram during this time. The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas itself, in its Uttar Kand, which is its last Canto or Chapter. There, Lord Shiva himself tells Parvati that in the intervening period of time, from her death in her previous life as Sati, till her reunion with the Lord in her current life, Shiva had been wondering from place to place to listen the divine story of Lord Ram being narrated by renowned sages and saints. During one of such sojourns he had heard the story at the place of saintly crow named Kaagbhhusund. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

दो०. चिदानंद सुखधाम सिव बिगत मोह मद काम ।
बिचरहिं महि धरि हृदयँ हरि सकल लोक अभिराम ॥ ७५ ॥
dōhā.

cidānanda sukhadhāma siva bigata mōha mada kāma.
bicarahirṁ mahi dhari hr̥dayam̐ hari sakala lōka abhirāma. 75.

Lord Shiva—who is eternally blissful, who is an abode of abiding happiness and joy, and who is free from all kinds of worldly taints such as ‘Moha’ (attachments, delusions), ‘Mada’ (arrogance, haughtiness, ego and false pride) and ‘Kaam’ (passions, desires and lust)—roamed freely on this earth with Lord Hari (Vishnu; Lord Ram), who is the Lord who gives eternal peace and bliss to the entire creation, reverentially enshrined in his heart. (Doha no. 75)

चौ०. कतहुँ मुनिन्ह उपदेसहिं ग्याना । कतहुँ राम गुन करहिं बखाना ॥ १ ॥
जदपि अकाम तदपि भगवाना । भगत बिरह दुख दुखित सुजाना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

katahum̐ muninha upadēsahirṁ gyānā. katahum̐ rāma guna karahirṁ bakhānā.
1.
jadapi akāma tadapi bhagavānā. bhagata biraha dukha dukhita sujānā. 2.

While roaming on earth, Lord Shiva visited the hermitages of sages, seers and saints, preaching them and dispensing knowledge of metaphysics and spiritualism at some places, while at other places he described the divine virtues and glories of Lord Ram. (1)

Though he was dispassionate and detached from everything, having no desire whatsoever in his heart, but still he was a compassionate Lord who was moved by the

grief and misery of his devotee (here alluding to the sufferings of Uma who had done severe Tapa for him)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Externally, Lord Shiva maintained a stoic expression of dispassion and neutrality, but internally his heart was uneasy. This uneasiness was not because he had some hidden passions inside him, but because his devotee known as Uma was suffering for him. Being a compassionate Lord, this made him restless, and this is the primary reason why he left his mountainous abode in Mt. Kailash to come down to the plains and visit the different hermitages of sages to preach and listen to the stories of Lord Ram. This helped him to keep his remorseful heart at peace and engaged so that it is kept diverted from his deep-seated sorrows generated by his awareness of the sufferings of Uma.

Shiva has acknowledged this fact—that he was remorseful, very sad and overcome with grief at his separation from Sati due to unfortunate circumstances—later on in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56.]

एहि बिधि गयउ कालु बहु बीती । नित नै होइ राम पद प्रीती ॥ ३ ॥

ēhi bidhi gaya'u kālu bahu bītī. nita nai hō'i rāma pada prītī. 3.

In this way, a lot of time passed away. In the meanwhile, affection and devotion for Lord Ram kept on sprouting in the heart of Lord Shiva with renewed vigour and freshness on a daily basis. (3)

नेमु प्रेमु संकर कर देखा । अबिचल हृदयँ भगति कै रेखा ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रगटे रामु कृतग्य कृपाला । रूप सील निधि तेज बिसाला ॥ ५ ॥
 बहु प्रकार संकरहि सराहा । तुम्ह बिनु अस ब्रतु को निरबाहा ॥ ६ ॥

nēmu prēmu saṅkara kara dēkhā. abicala hṛdayam' bhagati kai rēkhā. 4.
 pragaṭē rāmu kṛtagya kṛpālā. rūpa sīla nidhi tēja bisālā. 5.
 bahu prakāra saṅkaraḥi sarāhā. tumha binu asa bratu kō nirabāhā. 6.

Observing the steadfastness and sincerity of Shiva's self-discipline and affection for him (for Lord Ram), and the fact that the eclectic virtue of Bhakti (devotion, submission and dedication) was as permanent in Shiva's heart as an indelible line (marked on stone), (4)---

---Lord Ram felt highly thankful and grateful to Lord Shiva, and was obliged to reveal himself before the latter. When Lord Ram appeared before Shiva, the Lord (Ram) looked most amiable and charming in his beautiful and splendorous form that was radiant with a bright halo of exceptional brilliance and divinity. (5)

Lord Ram praised Shiva in many ways, lauding the latter's virtues and glories. Lord Ram told Shiva—'Who else would have been successful in observing so strict vows as you have done? [That is, no one in this world can be so strict and steady in

observing the disciplined way of life as Shiva does—both from the perspective of remaining detached from everything associated with this world as well as from the spiritual perspective by having steady and robust devotion for Lord Ram who personifies the Supreme Being himself.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 57 which endorses this statement.

Lord Ram explains why he was obliged to manifest himself before Lord Shiva. Lord Ram saw that Shiva's devotion for him was unprecedented, that Shiva remembers him day in and day out, and that Shiva's heart was not at peace (refer: verse no. 2 herein above). Since Shiva was Lord Ram's ardent and most faithful devotee, the Lord felt obliged to intervene and help find a way to remove the cause of unease in Shiva's heart.

As we shall find soon, this is exactly what has happened. Lord Ram knew the cause of pain in Shiva's heart: being a compassionate god himself, Shiva was tormented by the sufferings of Uma who wanted Shiva to be her husband. So, Lord Ram advised Shiva to marry her: refer: Doha no. 76 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Remember: Lord Vishnu, whose manifested form is Lord Ram, reveals himself instantly anywhere if his devotee invokes the Lord with intense love and affection just like the omnipresent 'fire element' that can be produced anywhere if the conditions are proper—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, and 5-7 that precede Doha no. 185.

So, when Lord Ram found that Shiva's heart was ripe with devotion for him, the Lord immediately revealed himself before Shiva.]

बहुबिधि राम सिवहि समुझावा । पारबती कर जन्मु सुनावा ॥ ७ ॥
अति पुनीत गिरिजा कै करनी । बिस्तर सहित कृपानिधि बरनी ॥ ८ ॥

bahubidhi rāma sivahi samujhāvā. pārabatī kara janmu sunāvā. 7.
ati punīta girijā kai karanī. bistara sahita kṛpānidhi baranī. 8.

Lord Ram explained to Lord Shiva things in various ways while narrating to him the birth of Parvati. (7)

The merciful Lord Ram narrated the finer details about the immaculate virtues of Girija (the daughter of the mountains; Parvati or Uma). (8)

[Note—Lord Ram knew the reason why Shiva had decided to renounce his ties with Uma/Parvati, the daughter of the king of mountains, in her previous birth as Sati. Shiva had taken a vow that he will not have anything to do with her because she had taken the form of Sita, the consort of Lord Ram whom Shiva adores as his deity and Lord God, because it violated the basic principle of Dharma. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 2 that follows this Doha.

Lord Ram pointed out to Shiva that his vows have been upheld, and that he (Lord Ram), whom Shiva reveres so much, is very pleased with him and his devotion. But now if he marries Uma he would not be violating any of the vows he had taken.

This is because Shiva's vow was that he would not accept Sati in her present form or body (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57). That tainted body of Sati has been burnt in fire, and therefore all its impurities have also been burnt with it. The soul is untainted and eternal; the body commits a sin and is subject to punishment for those sins, but the soul remains pure and holy.

Shiva was a highly self-realised and enlightened god, and he knew this fact. Lord Ram only reminded him of it. Lord Ram explained to Shiva that the tainted body of Sati is already burnt and dead, and that her soul was pure and holy. The soul cannot be blamed for the mischief committed by the body. Besides this, Shiva must remember that he has an obligation to fulfil the desire of his own devotees just like Lord Ram has towards his devotees. So, since Sati's death-wish was to be reunited with Shiva and at the time of death she had invoked Lord Ram to request him to grant her this single wish (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65), he (Ram) was under obligation to fulfil that wish—because the wish of a dying person must be fulfilled. And therefore, he (Lord Ram) has now come personally to Shiva to intercede on behalf of Uma that Shiva must forgive her for past sins and accept her as his wife.

After all, Sati had committed an offence against Lord Ram, so if the latter is ready to forgive her and has even come personally to advocate her cause, then Shiva must relent and also be reasonable enough to forgive her and accept her hand in marriage.]

दो०. अब बिनती मम सुनहु सिव जौं मो पर निज नेहु ।

जाइ बिबाहहु सैलजहि यह मोहि मार्गें देहु ॥ ७६ ॥

dōhā.

aba binatī mama sunahu siva jaurṁ mō para nija nēhu.
jā'i bibāhahu sailajahi yaha mōhi māgēm dēhu. 76.

Lord Ram pleaded with Lord Shiva—‘Now oh Shiva, please pay heed to my prayers if you really have affection for me. [In other words, if you respect me and think that I cannot give you a wrong advice, then you must pay attention to my request.]

I have one request to make to you which please accept—Go and marry the daughter of the mountains.’ (Doha no. 76).

[Note—Lord Ram has virtually instructed Shiva to “go and marry Uma”. Though this instruction is made in polite manner by using such words as “it is my prayer or request; if you have affection for me then please grant me one wish” etc., but after all it was an explicit “order”, a clear “instruction” to “go and marry the daughter of the mountains”.

So we see Shiva had no choice, and he has made this clear in verse nos. 1-4 that follow herein below. Shiva could not imagine defying the orders of his most beloved Lord Ram. It also helped Shiva to overcome his reluctance and any sense of guilt at having to break his vows of remaining a renunciate for the rest of his life—for he had to obey his Lord, Sri Ram whose commands take a precedence over everything else.]

चौ०. कह सिव जदपि उचित अस नाहीं । नाथ बचन पुनि मेटि न जाहीं ॥ १ ॥
सिर धरि आयसु करिअ तुम्हारा । परम धरमु यह नाथ हमारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha siva jadapi ucita asa nāhīm. nātha bacana puni mēṭi na jāhīm. 1.
sira dhari āyasu kari'a tumhārā. parama dharamu yaha nātha hamārā. 2.

Lord Shiva said to Lord Ram—“Though it is not proper to do so¹ (i.e. marry Uma), but nevertheless oh Lord, it is not possible to defy your words. (1)

It is my most auspicious and holy duty to obey your orders by keeping them on my head (i.e. by bowing my head and accepting your orders)².

[That is, it is obligatory for me, who am your devotee and worshipper, to honour your words and do as you tell me without asking questions. I accept your advice with a bowed head.] (2)

[Note—¹What was “not proper to do?” Why was Shiva reluctant to marry Uma?

After Shiva had decided that he will renounce all links with Sati and lead a life of renunciation and dispassion like a hermit, spending his time in meditation and contemplation, repeating the holy name of Lord Ram, preaching about him and hearing his divine stories being narrated at different hermitages on sages and saints on earth, and generally living a life of a Sanyasi (a reclusive hermit or ascetic), it will be highly inappropriate to marry and go back to the life of a householder. In this context, refer to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas—(a) Baal Kand:-- (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 76; and (b) Aranya Kand:-- (iv) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44 (where Lord Ram explains to sage Narad why the former prevented the latter from getting married).

It is not expected even from human beings that once they have renounced the world and declared that they will live a life of a hermit or ascetic, they go back on their vow and re-enter a householder’s life by marrying and living with a female partner. If an ordinary human is not expected to do so because it is violative of the sanctions of the scriptures, then how someone as exalted and honourable as Lord Shiva is expected to do so? It will be a highly unacceptable act.

This being the situation, how do we justify the position that Lord Ram is not giving Shiva a wrong advice or instruction that violates the scriptures by telling him to marry Uma? Well, the answer is this: Firstly, Shiva had taken a vow that he will have nothing to do with Sati in her present body because she had unfortunately assumed the form of Sita, Lord Ram’s consort (refer: from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57). But that does not mean that Shiva would not accept Sati with a new body, in her new life that had nothing to do with her previous life. The sin that Sati’s body committed was burnt with the body of Sati. The Atma or the soul is eternal and incorruptible. So, the Atma of Sati was not tainted by the sins committed by her body. When her Atma assumed a new body of Uma, this new form had no links with the tainted body of the previous life; that body had been ‘burnt to ashes’ (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64). This fact is alluded to by Lord Ram when he tells Shiva that his vows of not accepting Sati as his wife is already fulfilled, and thus Shiva should now honour the

Lord's words of marrying Uma (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 77 herein below).

Secondly, Shiva is also an exalted senior God, one of the Trinity Gods. This being the case, it is obligatory upon him to fulfil the wishes of his devotees who do Tapa to please him. There are countless instances in the Purans and other scriptures that when someone did Tapa to please Lord Shiva, the latter appeared and granted the worshipper his desired boon. Therefore, Shiva just could not refuse this privilege to Uma when she did Tapa to have him as her husband.

We have already read that Sati had burnt her body which had become tainted by her assuming the form of Sita, and so all her sins were burnt along with that body. Uma's Tapa had further purified her of whatever traces of past sins that may have dogged her into her new birth. She had reiterated her loyalty towards Lord Shiva by single-mindedly pursuing Tapa to attain the Lord, and in spite of provocatory statements made by the Sapta-rishis who had come to test her sincerity and loyalty, he had remained steadfast in her vows to be loyal to Lord Shiva and accept him as her husband no matter what happens.

Thirdly, Uma had already got the blessing of Brahma, the creator, when he appeared before her upon completion of her Tapa to grant her the wish that she would marry Shiva (refer: Doha no. 74 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8). Brahma's words cannot go wrong because he is the one who determines the fate of all living beings; Brahma's words have to be kept.

Shiva regards Lord Ram as his revered deity and Lord, and therefore it is obligatory for him to obey the latter. This is why Shiva says "that Lord Ram's words must be honoured without asking any questions". A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 177 in relation to Bharat accepting the principle that one should always obey his seniors such as parents and guru (moral preceptor and teacher).

Shiva explains why he has decided to accept Lord Ram's "orders", which is actually a polite request, in verse nos. 3-4 herein below.

All these events add upto one conclusion: There was no problem if Shiva marries Uma.]

मातु पिता गुर प्रभु कै बानी । बिनहिं बिचार करिअ सुभ जानी ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्ह सब भाँति परम हितकारी । अग्या सिर पर नाथ तुम्हारी ॥ ४ ॥

mātu pitā gura prabhu kai bānī. binahim bicāra kari'a subha jānī. 3.

tumha saba bhānti parama hitakārī. agyā sira para nātha tumhārī. 4.

One should keep the words of one's parents, a guru (moral preceptor and teacher) and the Lord (here meaning both the worshipped deity as well as one's Master)¹. (3)

You are my well-wisher in every imaginable way, and therefore I will willingly accept your orders by keeping them on my head (which is another way of saying that I am bowing my head before you and accepting your instructions without questions).'

(4)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed at other places in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 177 in relation to Bharat

accepting the principle that one should always obey his seniors such as parents and guru (moral preceptor and teacher); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 315 where Lord Ram gives this advice to his younger brother Bharat, saying that if one follows the path advised by one's parents, guru and Lord, then even if that path is not auspicious, the person's efforts still won't go in vain.]

प्रभु तोषेउ सुनि संकर बचना । भक्ति बिबेक धर्म जुत रचना ॥ ५ ॥

कह प्रभु हर तुम्हार पन रहेऊ । अब उर राखेहु जो हम कहेऊ ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu tōṣē'u suni saṅkara bacanā. bhakti bibēka dharma juta racanā. 5.
kaha prabhu hara tumhāra pana rahē'ū. aba ura rākhēhu jō hama kahē'ū. 6.

The Lord (Sri Ram) was satisfied when he heard Lord Shiva's words which were infused with elements of 'Bhakti' (devotion), 'Vivek' (wisdom) and 'Dharma' (righteousness, propriety, noble conduct)¹. (5)

The Lord (Sri Ram) told Shiva—'Oh Har (Shiva)! Your vows have been kept². Now please be kind to keep in mind what I have told you.' (6)

[Note—¹Three things are mentioned here—viz. 'Bhakti', 'Vivek' and 'Dharma'. Lord Shiva was a devotee of Lord Ram, and had the highest degree of devotion for his revered Lord, i.e. for Lord Ram. Bhakti requires that one should be submissive, devoted and loyal towards the revered deity whom he worships. A devotee must regard his worshipped Lord as his best well-wisher, and all the orders of the Lord are to be honoured without question. So, since Shiva humbly accepted whatever his revered Lord Ram advised him to do, the former's answer is said to be soaked in 'Bhakti'.

Shiva's acceptance had elements of 'Vivek' and 'Dharma' because he was aware of the principle that one must honour the words of his parents, his guru and his Lord. He was also aware of the fact that the body that commits a sin must be punished, but the Atma is incorruptible. Sati had been severely punished because she died by burning herself. Uma was absolutely flawless. Whatever vestiges of past sins that might have remained clinging to her Atma were eliminated when Uma did severe Tapa. Remember: Tapa is highly purifying and enabling. Besides this, it was obligatory for Shiva to honour the wish of his devotee—in this case Uma—who wants to have him as her life-partner. Shiva did not violate any of the principles of moral law and ethics when he decided to obey his Lord's words instructing him to marry Uma.

Shiva's decision to accept Lord Ram's instructions were in line with the principles of Dharma and Vivek, besides being in accordance with the principles of Bhakti.

²Shiva had taken a vow that he will not accept Sati in her present body or form because she had assumed the form of Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 2 that follow this Doha. He had kept this vow as long as Sati lived as is clear from reading the subsequent verses, viz. from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 57—right upto Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60. Shiva had abandoned Sati from his

mind and heart; mere presence of her meant nothing to him just like a renunciate ascetic or hermit who is unconcerned and unaffected by his surroundings.

Later on we read that Sati had burnt herself—and this ended her existence once and for all. So, in effect, Shiva lived upto his vows—“not to have any thing to do with Sati as long as she lived”. This is history now. Uma is a new individual, born at a new place, has her own fate and life. So, this was a new beginning, a new chapter. Shiva won't break his vows if he accepted Uma.]

अंतरधान भए अस भाषी । संकर सोइ मूरति उर राखी ॥ ७ ॥

तबहिं सप्तरीषि सिव पहिं आए । बोले प्रभु अति बचन सुहाए ॥ ८ ॥

antaradhāna bha'e asa bhāṣī. saṅkara sō'i mūrati ura rākhī. 7.

tabahiṁ saptariṣi siva pahīṁ ā'ē. bōlē prabhu ati bacana suhā'ē. 8.

Giving his instructions to Lord Shiva as narrated above, Lord Ram vanished from sight. Lord Shiva enshrined that divine image of his revered Lord Ram in his heart. (7)

Just at that time, the seven celestial sages, known as the 'Sapta Rishis', came to Lord Shiva (as prophesised by Brahma)¹. Lord Shiva spoke to them in pleasant words (as narrated herein below). (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75.

The “Sapta-rishis” was a group of seven ancient sages or seers consisting of the following—Kashyap, Atri, Jamdagni, Vishwamitra, Vasistha, Bharadwaj and Gautam.

Here in Ram Charit Manas it is just said that the seven sages came to Lord Shiva after Lord Ram vanished from sight. That means, the seven sages were askewd by the creator Brahma to go and meet Shiva before proceeding to meet Parvati.

But in Tulsidas' “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 75, it is said that the sages came when Lord Shiva remembered them.

These seven sages were the following—Kashyap, Atri, Jamdagni, Vishwamitra, Vasistha, Bharadwaj and Gautam.

The same narration of coming of the Sapta-rishis when Lord Shiva remembered them is also mentioned in Shiva Puran, 2/3/25/7-11.

Another variation in the narrative of Ram Charit Manas and other books, such as Parvati Mangal and Shiva Puran, is that while Lord Shiva asks these sages to go and test the sincerity of Parvati in Ram Charit Manas (refer: Doha no. 77 herein below), he has sent them to the father of Parvati to fix a date for the marriage and do whatever is necessary in Parvat Mangal, verse no. 78.]

दो०. पारबती पहिं जाइ तुम्ह प्रेम परिच्छा लेहु ।

गिरिहि प्रेरि पठएहु भवन दूरि करेहु संदेहु ॥ ७७ ॥

dōhā.

pārabatī pahim jā'i tumha prēma paricchā lēhu.
girihi prēri paṭha'ēhu bhavana dūri karēhu sandēhu. 77.

First of all, you go and test the sincerity of affection and devotion of Parvati. Once you are satisfied, then go to Giri (her father) and inspire him to persuade his daughter Parvati to return home. Dispel all his doubts and clear the air of confusion and uncertainties that have clouded his mind and heart. (Doha no. 77)

[Note—Brahma knew that Shiva would like to test Parvati's sincerity and devotion. This is because Brahma is the 'creator' and is 'all-knowing'. He knows what will happen in the future point of time. That is why he had told Uma that, first the Sapta Rishis would come to you, and then her father would come to persuade her to return home, at which time she must not resist but oblige him.

The question arises: When Lord Ram has already requested Shiva to marry Parvati, and Shiva has accepted it, then why did he wish to "test Parvati's devotion and sincerity"? The probable reason is that Shiva was sceptical of Parvati as he knew her nature from her past life as Sati—that she was of a fickle mind. Shiva had accepted Lord Ram's orders rather 'reluctantly'—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 77. He wanted to be sure if Parvati has changed for good, or whether she still has the same nature as was in her previous life as Sati.

If Parvati had by chance still exhibited even a trace of her past self, then Shiva would have found an excuse to refuse Parvati's marriage with him. Shiva would then have invoked Lord Ram to tell him that she hasn't changed a bit, that she still carries the old corrupt habit in her new life as Parvati, and therefore it is not at all advisable for him to accept her as his consort, especially when he had taken a stern vow of having nothing to do with her.

But on the contrary, if she had completely undergone a transformation, if she shows reformation and resolution in character, then surely she can be forgiven and accepted in the fold. Even Lord Ram tests the sincerity of his devotee before accepting him or her as one of his own; testing a devotee's sincerity and dedication is acceptable.

Another interesting interpretation is this: Lord Shiva was aware of Parvati's love for him as is clear when we read Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76 above which says, in essence, that "though Shiva was a renunciate and a recluse, still he was feeling sorry because his devotee (here meaning Parvati) was suffering due to the pain of his separation". So, Shiva had no doubts about Parvati's sincerity, but the world wasn't aware of it, and the world is so nasty that if Shiva accepted Parvati without any test then a lot of wicked tongues would start wagging. Hence, it was necessary to tell the world that he had accepted Parvati after due testing, and this testing was done not by him but by "a jury of seven celestial sages" so that no trace of doubt is left in anybody's mind about the purity and holiness of Parvati. This was very crucial because all the gods and their respective goddesses, as well as the great sages and Brahmins who had gathered to attend the fire sacrifice of Daksha had scorned at Sati's loyalty and faith when she had defied her husband (Shiva) to go and attend her father Daksha's fire sacrifice against his advice not to do so (refer: Doha no. 62 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8), leading to her getting angry and burning herself in disgust—refer: from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64).

Later on in the story of Ram Charit Manas we shall read that Lord Ram had subjected Sita to the "fire test of purity" at the end of the war at Lanka—refer: Ram

Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 108—to Doha no. 109. Does this mean that Sita was corrupt, or that Lord Ram doubted her integrity? The whole war was fought to liberate her from the clutches of the demons, and then this to happen was incredulous? But Lord Ram was very wise: he knew that it was necessary to keep tongues from wagging and making false accusations.]

चौ०. रिषिन्ह गौरि देखी तहँ कैसी । मूरतिमंत तपस्या जैसी ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

riṣinha gauri dēkhī taham̃ kaisī. mūratimanta tapasyā jaisī. 1.

The (seven celestial) sages saw Gauri (Parvati) there (i.e. at the place where she had been doing Tapa) as if she was a personified form of Tapa (penance, austerities and sufferance for a noble cause) itself. [She was radiant with the divine aura acquired by doing penances and observing austerities. She personified all the virtues of Tapa, and when the sages saw her they found her in a state of exalted existence that can come only when one has attained the highest level of purity as a fruit of successful Tapa.] (1)

[Note—Refer also: Shiva Puran, 2/3/25/19.

Even the first glance of Parvati convinced the sages that she was absolutely immaculate and worthy of being Shiva's partner. Whatever may be her sins in her previous life as Sati, all those sins have been burnt along with her physical body when she burnt herself in the fire of Yoga (as narrated in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64).

Presently in her new birth as Parvati, her Atma (i.e. her 'pure self' or Soul) was as divine, as holy and as immaculate as it could ever be. Even as the ordinary fire burns all the impurities of anything that is put into it, the rigours of Tapa too leaves the person who undertakes it fully purified and free of any after-effects of sins committed by him or her. This results in the shine of the Atma coming to the fore in the form of a radiant and glorious halo around the concerned person just like the brilliant halo that surrounds the sun in the sky.]

बोले मुनि सुनु सैलकुमारी । करहु कवन कारन तपु भारी ॥ २ ॥
केहि अवराधहु का तुम्ह चहहू । हम सन सत्य मरमु किन कहहू ॥ ३ ॥

bōlē muni sunu sailakumārī. karahu kavana kārana tapu bhārī. 2.
kēhi avarādhahu kā tumha cahahū. hama sana satya maramu kina kahahū. 3.

The sages said to Sailkumari (the daughter of the mountains; Parvati)—'Listen to us, oh Sailkumari! Why are you doing such a severe Tapa? (2)

Whom do you worship, and what is your wish? Why don't you tell us the secret of your heart (that has led you to undertake doing such a severe Tapa)?' (3)

[Note—Refer also: Shiva Puran, 2/3/25/21 where the sages have asked Parvati—“Oh Sailkumari; why are you doing such severe Tapa? Which deity do you worship; what do you want as a reward? Tell us everything.”

An interesting point to note here is this: The sages did not adopt any conceit or a fictitious form when they went to Parvati to test her. Compare this to Sati who had assumed the form of Sita, Lord Ram’s wife, when she had gone to test the Lord (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 52). In a way the sages told Parvati that the proper way to test someone is to be honest with him. They had straightforwardly asked Parvati why she was doing Tapa without using any disguise to hide their identity to mislead her.]

कहत बचन मनु अति सकुचाई । हँसिहहु सुनि हमारि जड़ताई ॥ ४ ॥
 मनु हठ परा न सुनइ सिखावा । चहत बारि पर भीति उठावा ॥ ५ ॥
 नारद कहा सत्य सोइ जाना । बिनु पंखन्ह हम चहहिं उड़ाना ॥ ६ ॥
 देखहु मुनि अबिबेकु हमारा । चाहिअ सदा सिवहि भरतारा ॥ ७ ॥

kahata bacana manu ati sakucā'ī. haṁśihahu suni hamāri jaṛatā'ī. 4.
 manu haṭha parā na suna'i sikhāvā. cahata bāri para bhīti uṭhāvā. 5.
 nārada kahā satya sō'i jānā. binu paṅkhanha hama cahahim urānā. 6.
 dēkhahu muni abibēku hamārā. cāhi'a sadā sivahi bharatārā. 7.

Parvati (“Sailkumari”) was very hesitant¹ as she replied—‘Oh Sages! You will laugh when you hear my stupidity, stubbornness and ill-wittedness (“Jad-taai”). (4)

My Mana (heart and mind) has become adamant and it won’t listen to any advice or imploring. It wants to raise a wall on water! [This is a metaphoric way of saying that “my mind and heart want something as impossible as desiring to erect a wall on the flowing water of a river or ocean, something which is absolutely impossible. But what can I do? As I have already told you, my Mana is very stubborn.”] (5)

Believing in the words of sage Narad, I am trying to fly in the air without having wings! [That is, like making an impossible attempt to fly without wings, I too am trying to make an attempt to marry Shiva without having the required qualifications for it.] (6)

Oh sages, look at my stupidity that I am trying to become a wife of Lord Shiva! [I know that what I am trying is impossible to achieve—i.e. to marry Shiva. But what can I do? I am stubborn by nature; my mind and heart won’t hear reasoning and logic.] (7)

[Note—Parvati did not wish to be disturbed. She had a hunch that these seven sages will prod her to abandon her Tapa and forget about marrying Shiva as this is impossible to achieve. In fact, this is what would happen soon. In their attempt to test the sincerity of Parvati’s devotion for Lord Shiva and her determination to have the Lord as her husband, they will try their best to deter her from pursuing this objective of marrying Shiva and change course. They will go to the extent of highlighting all the perceived negativities of character in Shiva and provide her with better options,

such as opting for Lord Vishnu who has fine characters, in order to see how firm she is in her devotion for Shiva, how resolute her mind is, and if she harbours any kinds of doubts about him.

Parvati was fully devoted and committed to Lord Shiva, and so she wanted to pre-empt any nonsensical talk by the sages that would irritate her. That is why she said up front that her mind is stubborn and her heart is not ready to reason. So the sages should please better shut up!

¹Parvati was “hesitant” to reply. Why was she reluctant? She knew that the persons who have asked her the reason for her Tapa were great sages and they have already told her to speak the truth. For a girl to say that she wants to marry such and such person is a bit difficult for her if she has to say this to even her father in private audience, and here she is forced to disclose this secret desire in public, and that too in front of not one, not two nor three—but ‘seven’ sages. This made her very uneasy because this was a private affair for her. She even could not take the recourse of lies before the sages, not could she refuse to reply. She was in a sort of a quandary.

She feared that the seven sages would ridicule her for her outlandish decision and far-fetched desire to marry Shiva. That is why she said even before they could make any adverse comments that her wish to marry Shiva was like (i) erecting a wall on water (verse no. 5), and (ii) flying without wings (verse no. 6). She expected that these comments would make the sages keep their quiet and go away. But this was not to be. Just like Sati hadn’t got the hint when Shiva had tried to enlighten her about the divinity of Lord Ram and had instead gone ahead to test the latter, these sages too didn’t get a hint of what Parvati meant. Instead, they continued with their ‘testing assignment’.

Such is the wonder of the Lord’s “Maya” (delusion-creating powers) that even the wisest ones fail to pick up the hint when something is destined to happen as devised by the supreme Creator!]

दो०. सुनत बचन बिहसे रिषय गिरिसंभव तव देह ।
नारद कर उपदेसु सुनि कहहु बसेउ किसु गेह ॥ ७८ ॥
dōhā.

sunata bacana bihasē riṣaya girisambhava tava dēha.
nārada kara upadēsu suni kahahu basē'u kisu gēha. 78.

When the sages heard the words of Parvati, they laughed in derision, saying—‘After all, you have been born as a daughter of Mountains!

[There is a sarcastic undertone in this comment. It means that like the grossness and the dullness of the mountains, whatever is produced in their realm too acquires their basic nature of being gross and dull. The mountains lack greenery and vibrancy of life; they are made up of lifeless and hard rocks. These are metaphors for dullness and grossness of mind and heart. In other words, Parvati is dull and stupid as well as stubborn and hard to reason with like the place where she is born.]

Say, has anyone’s home established if he or she had heeded the words (advice; suggestions) of Narad? (Doha no. 78)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 97 where Maina, the mother of Parvati, also accuses Narad in a similar way. A note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 therein explains the matter further and why the accusations against Narad are misplaced and unjustified.

Narad was the greatest devotee of Lord Vishnu, and a true sage and saint. His constant endeavour was to help the creature attain freedom from the endless cycle of birth and death. Narad always tried to wean away the creature's Atma, i.e. his soul, from being entangled with this world, and instead move towards attaining permanent liberation and deliverance. Narad was a 'Sanyasi' par-excellence, and a Upanishad named "Narad Parivraajak Upanishad" that describes in detail the philosophy of Sanyas (life of worldly renunciation) is attributed to him. This Upanishad is one of the best of its category.

This being so, Narad always dissuaded those with whom he came in contact from getting entangled into the world by marrying and raising a household because then the creature gets sucked in a vortex of worldly attachments, charms and responsibilities from which he finds himself difficult to extract later on in life. It's like putting a foot in quicksand or quagmire or whirlpool: it's quick and easy to get in, and virtually impossible to get out.

What the seven sages meant here is that Parvati was being misled into believing Narad that she can lead a happy householder's life by marrying Shiva. Didn't she know that Shiva lives like an ascetic; in fact he was a patron god of all ascetics? Didn't she know that he has no permanent house, but lives alone in the mountainous caves of Mt. Kailash? Didn't she know that he has taken a vow of not marrying anybody after the incident of Sati defying his advice and assuming the form of Sita?

They meant "Isn't she being stupid to expect the impossible prospect of being happily married to a renunciate ascetic such as Shiva just because a sage named Narad, who is reputed to turn creatures away from getting entangled in worldly affairs, advised her to do Tapa to do so, knowing fully well that Shiva is a reclusive ascetic and can never qualify as a good householder? Isn't she dull-witted and a block-head in the given circumstances to believe Narad and pursue a path that would not give her happiness, but ridicule her instead?"

चौ०. दच्छसुतन्ह उपदेसेन्हि जाई । तिन्ह फिरि भवनु न देखा आई ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

dacchasutanha upadēsēnhi jāī. tinha phiri bhavanu na dēkhā āī. 1.

[The Sapta-rishis said to Parvati—] 'He (Narad) went and gave some advice to the sons of Daksha¹. The result was that they did not come back to see their homes again. [After hearing Narad's advice, the sons of Daksha developed profound renunciation in their hearts, and so they took to the lives of a 'Sanyasi', i.e. the life of a renunciate mendicant or hermit. They decided not to do Tapa to start a family, and instead do it to attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death. They therefore renounced the world completely, never to return home.]² (1)

[Note—¹The word "Daksha" means one who is wise, skilled and expert in things. Narad had motivated the thousands of sons of Daksha to renounce the world, forego

family life and become mendicants. What the Sapta-rishsis meant to tell Parvati is that when even the sons of an expert father like Daksha were misled by Narad to renounce their homes, how can anyone expect that the daughter of the king of mountains who is surely not as wise as Daksha will not be an easy prey to Narad's tricks?

If Narad had successfully turned thousands of sons of the wise caretaker of the world, i.e. Daksha Prajapati who was appointed by the creator Brahma himself expressly for the purpose of propagating this creation, away from their homes and become mendicants like himself (i.e. like Narad), forgetting about their duty towards their father who had ordered them to do Tapa to start the process of creation, what better can be expected from Narad in the case of Parvati who was also doing Tapa to marry Lord Shiva and start a home and a family?

So, Parvati must be aware of Narad's tricks and be careful in following him. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 60 and note no. 2 that is appended to it.

²The story of Daksha and his sons is narrated in (i) Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto 5, verse nos. 1-43, and (ii) Matsya Puran, Canto 5, verse nos. 4-12. The story in brief is as follows:--Daksha married the daughter of another Prajapati named Panchajan. From her he begot ten thousand sons who were jointly called 'Haryashva'. Perhaps the eldest one had this name, and all his siblings were known after him. {According to Matsya Puran, there were only a thousand sons, and not ten thousand.}

Since Daksha had a desire to expand his kingdom to all corners of the earth, he advised his sons to go and do Tapa (penance and austerity) to acquire the ability to populate the earth. They went to a place known as Narayansar where the river Sindhu meets the Arabian ocean. There they took their bath and started doing Tapa.

Sage Narad was on his wonderings, and coincidentally he came that way. Seeing these sons doing Tapa, he asked them the reason. When he learnt that they have decided to endure so much hardship to empower themselves to produce children who would fill all corners of the world, Narad thought that it was a waste of precious time and energy because the same effort could be devoted for attaining spiritual liberation and achieving nobler goals of life. So he decided to enlighten the sons about the futility of the exercise they were undertaking as it would only entangle their souls in the web of worldly affairs and trap them for eternity in the cycle of deeds and their effects. This Tapa could instead be used to give them eternal peace and bliss by way of liberation from this delusory world of falsehoods, illusionary charms and material entanglements that lead to nowhere, and which results in nothing but constant pain and misery instead of happiness, bliss and peace.

Narad approached them and said—'Have you seen the end of the earth? Without this knowledge, how do you know how many children you need to fill it, what is the size of your kingdom, and what resources you have? Even though you are the sons of Prajapati Daksha (who is supposed to be an expert of this knowledge because the word "Daksha" literally means one who is an expert of a subject and skilled in knowledge), it looks you are inept to handle the cosmic machine of the creator because one should not do anything without proper knowledge of its consequences. {That is, you don't know that you will be trapped in your own web if you start procreating and populating the world, that you will be sucked-in the quagmire of worldly miseries and worries once you start a large family, and then your soul will never find peace anywhere in life. A wise man does not do engage in doing Tapa for such a mundane and worldly thing as producing children. Tapa is a highly

evolved spiritual exercise one should undertake to attain higher goals of life such as obtaining spiritual bliss and salvation that are not attainable by other ordinary means, and it should not be bartered for such worthless things as desiring sons and daughters, or for any other thing related to a material world that is perishable, a world that is full of pain and grief!

You don't have even the basic knowledge any learned man is expected to have. So how will you ever succeed in doing Tapa which is an extremely hazardous journey, and even if you do succeed you will not know how to judiciously use its eclectic rewards. It's like sitting on a dynamite power-keg which would blow you off if you are not careful.

Let me see. Do you know the answers of the following ten questions that would show you are wise and enlightened enough to be eligible to do Tapa? The questions are these: (i) Do you know that country where there is only one 'Purush' (Chief; Lord; Authority; Sovereign)? (ii) A 'hole' in which one can find a way to go in, but from which no one knows the way out? (iii) A 'river' that flows both ways—up and down (i.e. which rises to inundate high ground on one side of its bank, and undercuts the ground of the other side of its bank)? (iv) A 'house' made of 25 mysterious 'elements'? (v) A 'Swan' who speaks in a mysterious tongue? (vi) A self-rotating 'wheel' which has sharp serrated edges like that of a saw, which is as strong as the Vajra, the formidably hard material used to make the weapon of the king of gods known as Indra? (vii) A 'woman' who can assume countless forms? (viii) A 'Purush' (male) who is the 'husband of Punchaleek'? (ix) The 'end of the earth'? (x) And do you really know the 'meaning of your father's instructions'? If you do not know the correct answers of these questions, you are not competent to do Tapa.'

The sons of Daksha were taken aback. They huddled around the sage and contemplated upon the answers. After a lot of deliberations and discussions, the answer that came to their minds opened a flood-gate of true spiritual wisdom for them, filling them with renunciation and propelling them towards seeking spiritual liberation and deliverance by dropping off the desire to do Tapa to procreate and expand their families. Instead, they became renunciate mendicants who spent the rest of their lives in preaching and seeking self-realisation which led to their ultimate emancipation and salvation.

The answers to Narad's ten questions that dawned upon their mind and intellect after due diligent contemplation and concerted deliberations are summarised as follows—

(i) The 'ling-deha' (the gross physical body) is the country in which the only Purush (Authority) who resides to rule it as its sovereign is known as the 'Atma', the pure consciousness that is also called the individual's 'soul'.

The only 'Purush' or sovereign Authority in this creation is the Supreme Being known as "Ishwar" or Lord God. The rest of this creation is the city under his control.

(ii) The gross physical body of the creature is the symbolic 'hole' in which the Atma remains trapped for eternity if it does not make efforts to leave it and become free. It is easy for the Atma to enter a body, but once it does enter the latter it gets so entangled with the body that it forgets about its true independent identity, and instead begins to treat this body as its 'self'. Hence, it never sees an end to this hole as it remains perpetually 'holed' in it.

(iii) Ishwar is supreme and a witness to all. He is the most exalted and almighty. He is self-sustaining and a sustainer of the rest of this creation. The Atma is a miniscule form of this Ishwar who lives inside each individual as the individual's

“self”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 117.

Once this enlightenment dawns on a person, he enters a state of internal bliss and obtains spiritual liberation from where there is no re-entering into the hole created by ignorance and delusions.

(iv) The ‘woman’ is the person’s own “Buddhi” (intellect) which can direct him in any direction it wishes. A man is subject to the whims of his intellect just like a man who is under the control of a woman.

(v) The “Maya” (delusions and its attendant ignorance, worldly attachments and desires) is the so-called ‘woman who changes colours and assumes many forms’. It is hard to recognise the true intentions of such a deceitful woman known as Maya. It is like a dancer who assumes so many postures and changes them so frequently that a man loses his bearings. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117.

(vi) The ‘river with two banks and flowing both ways’ is the world of birth and death, the world that has two banks symbolised by a beginning and an end, the world that gives happiness as well as sorrows. On the one hand it gives the creature an opportunity to attain higher goals in life that provide him with happiness and bliss if he is careful, and on the other hand it can push him into the slush of miseries and pain and make him slide further down to the pit of hell. The river flowing upwards and well as downwards is a metaphor for this world having opposite characteristics.

(vii) The creature’s body made up of 25 elements is that mysterious ‘house’ in which the Purush (i.e. the pure consciousness known as the Atma representing the ‘self’ and the Supreme Being) lives. These 25 subtle elements are the building-blocks used to create this house. They are enumerated in the Upanishads as follows—

The Maha Upanishad of Sam Veda, in its Canto 1, verse nos. 4-6 gives a list of the twenty-five Tattvas in the specific sequence as follows—the five sense organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) [these are the 1st five Tattvas] + the five sense organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and reproductive) [these are the 2nd five Tattvas]+ one Mana (mind) [this is the 11th Tattva] + one Ahankar (pride and ego) [this is the 12th Tattva] + one Pran (vital airs or life-giving winds) [this is the 13th Tattva] + one Atma (consciousness) [this is the 14th Tattva] + one Buddhi (intellect) [this is the 15th Tattva] + the five Tanmatras (the five subtle senses of perception such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching) [these are the 16th to 20th Tattvas] + the five primary elements called the Panch Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air and sky) [these form the 21st to 25th Tattvas] = total twenty five Tattvas. [5 + 5 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 5 + 5 = 25.]

Atharva Veda’s Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 2, stanza no. 6 enumerates the twenty-five Tattvas as follows—“The subtle body has twenty-five components or parts or organs called the Tattvas (elements), and they are the following—the five perceptions (of smell, sight, hearing, taste and touch), the five faculties of action (accepting, going, speaking, sensual or sexual awareness and the desire to excrete or eliminate waste), the five Prans (i.e. the vital winds or airs that sustain life inside the body—Pran or breath, Apaana, Samaana, Vyan and Udaana), the five objects of perception (things seen, things heard, things smelt, things tasted and things felt), the four Antahakarans (i.e. the four aspects of the inner self which are Mana or mind, Buddhi or intellect, Chitta or sub-conscious, and Ahankar or ego), and one un-manifest Prakriti (or the latent, hidden but inherent nature and temperament of a creature). [Refer also to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 6 of Sam Veda tradition.]”

The Shaarirako-panishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse no. 18-20, describes the twenty five elements of creation at the macro level of creation. To quote—“The five gross organs of perception present in the body such as the ear, skin, eye, tongue and nose make up the five gross units or elements of creation at the micro level of the body of the creature. [Total 5 organs of perception.]

Then there are the five organs of action such as the anus, genital, hand, leg and speech (mouth). These are the five gross organs which add their count to the number of elements or units or dimensions that exist in this creation at the micro level. [Total 5 organs of action.]

Besides these, there are the five subtle sense perceptions such as the perceptions of hearing (relevant to the ear), feeling or touching (relevant to the skin), seeing various forms and shapes (relevant to the eye and the faculty of sight), taste (relevant to the tongue) and smell (relevant to the nose). [Total 5 senses of perception.]

Thus the tally comes to twenty three elements of creation as follows—8 Vikaars¹ + 5 organs of perceptions² + 5 organs of action³ + 5 senses of perceptions⁴ = total 23 (18-19).

The twenty fourth element or unit or dimension of creation is said to be the invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature. [This brings the tally to 23 + 1 = 24.]

And finally, there is the ultimate chief Authority of creation, called the supreme Purush, the Supreme Being, who forms the last unit of creation. This entity is immutable and indivisible, it is non-dual and eternal, it is infinite and imperishable, and it is all-pervading, all-incorporating and all-encompassing. Therefore there is nothing beyond it to count; it is the final frontier; there is nothing that exists beyond it that can be counted as an independent entity superseding the Chief Purush.

Thus we come to the total tally of twenty five elements. [The tally is arrived as follows—23 elements + 1 invisible and un-manifest cosmic Nature called Prakriti + 1 Supreme Being called Brahm or the Viraat Purush = total 25 elements.]

In this way, the entire universe or cosmos is made up of twenty five elements.”
 {1The eight Vikaars according to verse no. 17 of the Shaarirak Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, they are the following— They are the following—one Mana (mind) + one Buddhi (intellect) + one Ahankar (pride and arrogance) + one Akash element + one air element + one fire element + one water element + one earth element = total of eight elements that cast their shadow on the purity of Nature (just like the shadow of the earth casts its shadow on the bright moon to result in the lunar eclipse).

²The five organs of perception are the following—ear, eye, nose, tongue and skin.

³The five organs of action are the following—hand, leg, mouth, genitals and excretory.

⁴The five perceptions are the following—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching.}

According to Sankhya Shastra, there are twenty-five fundamental Elements or Tattwas as follows—one Avyakta (the un-manifest entity known as Prakriti or cosmic Nature) + one Buddhi (intellect, wisdom, discrimination) + one Ahankar (the inherent ego and pride that is integral to all the creatures) + five Tanmatras (senses—sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) + eleven organs (five organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, skin and tongue respectively + five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) + one Purush (the macrocosmic Consciousness; the cosmic Self

or Atma or Soul; the Male aspect of creation; the Viraat Purush who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, eternal, infinite, un-manifest and almighty Lord of creation; the macrocosmic gross body of creation).

There is another version as to what constitutes the twenty-five Tattvas. They are the following—Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), Prakriti (primal Nature), Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), Ahankar (ego, pride), the five organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), the five organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), the Mana (mind), the five perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), the five Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

(viii) The ‘Swan’ that speaks in a mystical and mysterious language is the scripture that teaches a creature to become free from worldly delusions and see the path of truth and reality. The scriptures are compared to the Swan because this bird is believed to pick up only the best and the purest things to eat, lives in clean water, and is coloured white which is the colour of purity and holiness. The language the scriptures speak is ‘mystical and mysterious’ because it is difficult to understand them and their true intent. More often than not they are misinterpreted. And their teaching is also unconventional as they tend to pull the creature away from the entanglements of the material world that look so enticing and attractive on their face that anyone who says that the charms of the world would lead to pain and misery is deemed to be out of his senses.

(ix) The ‘self-rotating wheel’ is the “Kaal Chakra”, the wheel of time and destiny. This wheel keeps on rotating endlessly and sucks in everything that comes within its grasp, sparing none and compromising on nothing.

(x) The ‘father’ is the selfless scripture, and the ‘real meaning or the real intent of the orders’ of this father is to attain eternal peace, happiness and bliss. This is possible by self-realisation that comes by meditating upon ‘self’ and contemplating upon the truth and reality of creation and its various components. This will help the ‘son’, the creature, to attain eternal peace, happiness and bliss. Doing Tapa is one of the ways to attain this objective in life. It teaches the creature to practice exemplary self-restraint and austerity; it inculcates in him the desire to atone for his past sins by doing penance that purifies his inner-self and enables him to attain the higher state of existence at a transcendental plane of Consciousness.

Just as no loving father would want that his son should suffer and no father would give his son a wrong advice, the scriptures also do not misguide anyone. In other words, Narad advised the sons of Daksha that they should use the energy derived from Tapa for their spiritual well-being and upliftment because it would benefit them in every way, and they should not fritter away this opportunity by wasting their energy in gross activities as procreation and indulgence in worldly affairs.

The effect of this confabulation with Narad was so profound that these thousand sons of Daksha did Tapa but utilised its rewards for their spiritual upliftment. They renounced the material world and decided to become mendicants. They never went back to their homes and forgot about raising families and populating the world.

Now when their father Daksha came to know about all this, he became angry. But the creator Brahma, the father of Narad as well as of Daksha, intervened to pacify him. Brahma requested Daksha to try all over again.

Hence, Daksha once again produced another batch of a thousand sons named ‘Sablaashva’ from his wife, the daughter of Panchajanya. Like his earlier sons, Daksha advised these sons to go and do Tapa to get themselves empowered to populate the earth. These sons were also preached by Narad in the same way as he had done to the first batch of Daksha’s sons. The ‘Sablaashva’ sons too renounced the world and became mendicants.

This time Daksha was furious. He cursed Narad that he would never be able to marry and settle down to raise a family and enjoy its comforts and pleasures, and that he would always remain wondering from place to place in the 3 Lokas (worlds) like a friar or mendicant or hermit. {Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto 5, verse no. 43.}

The second part of the story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto 6. In its verse nos. 1-3 it is narrated that Daksha Prajapati begot sixty daughters from his wife named ‘Asikni’. These daughters were married off to different Rishis (ancient sages), and their children then populated the world. Out of the sixty daughters, ten were married to Dharma, thirteen to sage Kashyap, twenty-seven to the Moon God, two each to Bhut, Angiraa and Krishaashva, and the remaining four daughters to Taaksharya (serpent).

The rest of this Canto no. 6, verse nos. 4-45 then goes on to describe in detail the names of these sixty daughters of Daksha Prajapati and the huge families they produced which finally populated the entire earth.]

चित्रकेतु कर घरु उन घाला । कनककसिपु कर पुनि अस हाला ॥ २ ॥

citrakētu kara gharu una ghālā. kanakakasipu kara puni asa hālā. 2.

Similarly, Narad had ruined the household of Chitraketu¹, and the fate of Kanakakshipu was no better². (2)

[Note—The Sapt-rishis cite two more instances to persuade Parvati to not follow Narad’s advice. One was related to the story of king ‘Chitraketu’, and the other to Prahalad, the son of Hiranayakashipu who was also known as ‘Kanakakshipu’.

¹The story of “Chitraketu” appears in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto nos. 15-17. The relevant part of this story is as follows—

Chitraketu was the sovereign of the country called Shursen. It is believed that he had 1 crore [1 crore = 10 million] queens, but no children. One day sage Angiraa came to his court. The king reverentially welcomed the sage. After formalities were over, the sage asked the king why he looked so worried and gloomy. The king replied that he has no sons (heirs) and it is causing him immense distress. He asked the sage if there is a solution for it.

Sage Angiraa organised a son-begetting fire sacrifice, and at the end of the rituals he told the eldest and the best queen of Chitraketu, named Krit-duti, to eat the remaining part of the sacrificial pudding as sanctified food that was especially empowered by relevant Mantras of the deity known as ‘Twastaa’, the deity which fulfils all desires and gives contentedness to the worshipper. The sage told the king that with this empowered food, he will beget a son, but this son will be the cause of his happiness as well as sorrows. Then the sage went away.

When the son was born, the king donated liberally. Since Krit-duti, his eldest queen, had borne a son, the king began to give her preferential treatment which created jealousy among his other queens. Once when the child was asleep and the mother was engaged in some household affair, the jealous step-mothers put some kind of poison on his lips because of which the boy died.

For quite some time, the child's mother was unaware of his death. When she sent an attendant to bring the child to her, the latter fainted when she saw the boy dead on his couch. Both the parents, the king and the queen, were overcome with grief.

Just at that moment, sages Angiraa and Narad came there disguised as mendicants. They consoled the king by saying—'Why do you grieve? Think who this boy was for whom you lament so much. Think: what relationship this boy has with you; who were you of this boy in his previous life, and would be in his next life. Even as grains of sand flow in a river and collect to form big mounds at remote places from the place of their origin, a creature trapped in the endlessly rotating wheel of Kaal and Karma (time and deeds) is born and reborn in the endless cycle of birth and death as this wheel turns. This naturally causes a continuous cycle of union and separation.

Just as some of the seeds produce fruits (trees) and some don't, the influence of Maya (delusions) creates a sense of a happy union and a sorrowful separation between two independent individuals. Just like the grains of dust or sand coming together or parting away as they flow with the current of water in a river, the individuals come together or move away as they flow in the current of the river of Kaal (time and circumstance) and Karma (deeds and their effects).

All such relationships are transitory and illusory; nothing is permanent. Why do you grieve; why and for whom do you lament? I, you and the rest of the creatures of this world were not in their previous birth as they are now, and nor will they be after their death at the end of this life.' {Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto 15, verse no. 108.}

The king was consoled and enlightenment dawned on his mental horizon. He wiped his tears and asked the mendicants who they were. Indeed you are highly enlightened and wise, and it is so fortunate that great souls like you wonder in this world to console ordinary people like us when they are submerged in a dark ocean of grief and sorrows, and provide them mental peace, succour and solace.'

Then sage Angiraa revealed the true identity of himself and Narad, and told king Chitraketu—'You are a devotee of the Lord and wise, therefore it is not proper for you to feel as sorrowful as it seems you are for such mundane worldly affairs as losing a son with whom your soul has no relationship. When I visited you last time I found that it was fruitless to preach you the profound philosophy of spiritualism and metaphysics because you had still not tasted the bitter fruit of worldly attachments and involvements. So I agreed to give you a son so that you can have a first-hand experience of how miserable is this world and how miserable life becomes once one gets entangled in its affairs—such as first raising a family, then spending the entire rest of the life caring for it, and even at the final moments just before death worrying about it and the things left undone. That is, once you allow yourself to get entangled in worldly relations and developing a fallacious notion that such and such person is my son, my daughter or my family, you get sucked in a vortex of eternal misery and grief. Whatever happiness and comfort you do get are all transitory as well as illusory by their inherent nature because in the long run they only give pain, grief and unhappiness.

A home, a family, a wife and a son, wealth and worldly prosperity—all are transient, imaginary, and give nothing but misery and grief in the long run. All things

related to this material world are as transient and hollow as the world, which forms their basis, is.

Hence, be at peace with yourself; don't allow yourself to be trapped in a mirage.'

After this, Narad preached the Mantro-panishad to the king, and advised him to faithfully recite it (i.e. contemplate upon its meaning and try to understand its subtle spiritual implications; not just read it mechanically) for seven days at the end of which Lord Sankarshan would reveal himself before him.

Then Narad decided to further enlighten the king about what sage Angiraa spoke above. So he told the Spirit of the son whose body was lying on the ground, 'Oh Jivatma (the pure conscious Soul of the living being)! Look at the way the king, the queen and others are grieving for you. Re-enter your body which is lying on the ground to provide them mental peace; live upto your duties and expectations in this world. Provide comfort to your so-called father, and sit on the throne as ordered by him because once you have entered the body which the world recognises as being that of the king's son, you must live to fulfil your moral obligations as ordained by the Creator.'

The son woke up as from a deep sleep. He said—'I have been wondering in countless lives in different worlds, assuming countless forms and having as many relationships, according to the deeds I had done in my previous births. Who is anybody's parent or child? In some birth these people may have been my children, and in others I was their child. I had been a child of so many faceless and unknown creatures in my previous lives on the one hand, and had parented so many of them in my other lives on the other hand. Everyone is someone's parent, child, friend, foe, partner, servant or lord in one or the other birth.

So, how do these people think that I am their child and grieve for me; it is not possible that I was their greatest enemy in my previous life where they simply loathed me?

Just as gold, silver and other commodities keep changing hands amongst the traders, the Jivatma keeps on changing relationships in every new birth depending upon the obligations it had incurred during the course of its previous life just like an accountant carries forward the credit or the debit balances from the previous accounting year to the next. Till the time two individual Jivatmas are together, they have some relationship with each other. Once they separate, this relationship vanishes like a bubble of water.

[The gold or silver remains the same, only the person who holds control over them for a certain period of time changes. For a given period of time, the gold belongs to a certain person named "A", and then it changes hand to belong to another person named "B". As long as "A" has this gold, he loves it as his asset and cares for it. Once the same piece of gold goes to "B", the first person loses interest in it.]

The Atma (Soul; the pure Consciousness that is the real 'self' of all living beings as opposed to their gross body) is eternal and independent; it is subtle and sublime; it is self-illuminated and without any relationships.' {Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Cantos. 14-15; Canto 16, verse nos. 1-11.}

After this initial enlightening discourse, the Jivatma said—'Listen, I will tell you about my previous life. I was a king of a country called Paanchaal. I had developed a sense of profound detachment and renunciation. I had once gone to a village. This lady who has become my 'mother' in this birth had given me some dry cakes made from cowdung to light up a fire to cook my meal because I was feeling hungry. These cakes had a large colony of black ants. I did not pay much attention

and set these cakes on fire to cook my meal, as a result of which all the ants died. I cooked my frugal meal and after offering it to Shaligram (a pebble-like stone worshipped as a symbol of Lord Vishnu), I ate the food. The ants which died have become my step-mothers in this life. They wished to take revenge upon me, and therefore they killed me by poisoning. Since the food cooked by burning the cowdung cake infested with ants was duly offered to Lord Vishnu before I ate it, and since I had done it without any knowledge of killing of the ants, my sin was not so serious and its after-effects were reduced substantially. Hence, all those ants got together as my step-mothers to kill me in one go (i.e. only once) in this life. Otherwise, I would have had to suffer in thousands of more births.

I have fulfilled my obligations; I have repaid for my sins. I have nothing to do with these people any more. [My ‘mother’ gave me happiness by providing the cowdung cakes so that I could cook and satisfy my hunger. So I repaid my debts to her by giving her the joys a mother yearns for by becoming her child. Similarly, I repaid my debts to the ants by giving pleasures to these step-mothers who avenged my past mistake of killing them all in their previous life as ants.]

Saying this, the Jivatma left the body permanently. King Chitraketu was stunned and enlightened at the same time. He renounced the world and left home. Sage Narad gave him the Mantra of Lord Sankarshan (Vishnu), and advised him to pray to the Lord by offering hymns to him. When the king did Japa with this Mantra (i.e. repeated the Mantra) for seven days with devotion, he had a vision of Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent on whose coiled back Lord Vishnu reclines on the ocean of milk in the heaven. King Chitraketu was given an air-vehicle on which he used to roam in the sky. Once he was cursed by Parvati, as a result of which he became the demon named Vrittasur. {Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto nos. 9-12.}

²The reference to “Kanakashipu”—This is the story of Prahalad, the son of the demon Hiranyakashapu. The entire episode is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 7, Cantos 3—9.

When Prahalad was still in his mother’s womb, sage Narad had taught her about the principles of spiritualism and devotion for Lord Vishnu. {Refer: Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 7, Canto 7, verse nos. 15-55.}

Prahalad’s father was a demon and a sworn enemy of Vishnu. This led to bitterness between the son and the father. Hiranyakashapu never derived any pleasure and peace one expects from having a son. On the contrary, his son was a source of perpetual pain for him. It was his son Prahalad that ultimately led to Hiranyakashapu’s death when Lord Vishnu revealed himself as half-man and half-lion, an incarnation known as “Narsingh”, to slay Prahalad’s father because the latter was tormenting his son, a devotee of Lord Vishnu, and had even tried to kill him with a sword.

The idea behind the Sapta-rishis citing these two instances was to persuade Parvati not to heed Narad’s advice as it always led to family discord. Remember: The Sapta-rishis were tasked by Lord Shiva to test the level of devotion that Parvati had for the Lord, to see if she is fickle minded or has firm determination. So, the Sapta-rishis hit at the very root of Parvati’s conviction in order to test her determination by telling her that if she followed Narad’s advice she is bound to suffer like Chitraketu and Hiranyakashapu.]

नारद सिख जे सुनहिं नर नारी । अवसि होहिं तजि भवनु भिखारी ॥ ३ ॥
मन कपटी तन सज्जन चीन्हा । आपु सरिस सबही चह कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

nārada sikha jē sunahim nara nārī. avasi hōhim taji bhavanu bhikhārī. 3.
mana kapaṭī tana sajjana cīnhā. āpu sarisa sabahī caha kīnhā. 4.

[The Sapta-rishis continued to admonish Parvati and tried to sway her decision of firmly following the path advised by sage Narad—‘that she should do Tapa to request the Supreme Lord to grant her the boon of marrying Shiva as the latter was her eternal husband’. To achieve this aim, the Sapta-rishis derided Narad and told Parvati that anyone who had believed him and followed the path showed by him had been deprived of his home and hearth; they had to leave the comfort of their homes to spend the rest of their lives begging for food like wondering mendicants. So, what happiness does she expect by following Narad’s advice? It’s insane to do so.]

‘Any man or woman who pays attention to the advice of Narad is sure to leave his or her home to become a begger (i.e. a mendicant who begs for food). [In other words, it is insane for you to believe that if you do as Narad had advised you, you will get happiness in life. You want to marry and settle down with your husband in a home. This is not possible if you do as Narad has told you for the simple reason that whosoever followed his advice had become homeless. They had become mendicants and hermits who had to beg even for the basic requirement of food to feed themselves, let alone derive comfort of a happy married life which you aim to achieve.] (3)

His (Narad’s) Mana (heart and mind) is full of deceit though he looks so saintly from his external appearances. Indeed, he wishes everyone to become one like him¹. (4)

[Note—¹This statement has two connotations—(i) On the face of it this means that Narad is so wicked that he wants everyone to become wondering mendicants as he himself is. He does not want others to enjoy the comforts of a homely life; he is jealous of others. (ii) But the other meaning is the real substance of this statement: it means that Narad wants the creature to find liberation for his soul from the entangling web of this world. Narad is not jealous of anyone’s happiness and comfort, but he wants that the creature’s happiness and peace is not limited to being superficial and transient but that it should be permanent and real. This is possible only when the creature frees himself from the entanglement of this material world of countless contradictions, and instead of pursuing this world the creature pursues the path of spiritual enlightenment and self-realisation that leads to liberation and deliverance for his soul, his Atma. Whereas pursuing the world would give him only transient happiness and illusive peace, pursuing the path of self-realisation and enlightenment would bestow upon him eternal happiness and peace of the highest kind.

It’s such an irony that a great and pious sage of an immaculate character and noble intentions as Narad is accused repeatedly of being deceitful and wicked. Even Parvati’s mother has vehemently accused Narad of spoiling the life of her daughter by advising her to do Tapa for such an odd husband as Lord Shiva—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 97.

Even in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 6, Canto 5, verse no. 36 we read that Daksha has also accused Narad of the same things as the Sapta-rishis have alleged here—that “Narad assumes the external form of a holy man but is wicked internally, wishing bad of everyone.”]

तेहि कें बचन मानि बिस्वासा । तुम्ह चाहहु पति सहज उदासा ॥ ५ ॥
 निर्गुन निलज कुबेष कपाली । अकुल अगेह दिगंबर ब्याली ॥ ६ ॥
 कहहु कवन सुखु अस बरु पाएँ । भल भूलिहु ठग के बौराएँ ॥ ७ ॥
 पंच कहें सिवँ सती बिबाही । पुनि अवडेरि मराएन्हि ताही ॥ ८ ॥

tēhi kēm̐ bacana māni bisvāsā. tumha cāhahu pati sahaja udāsā. 5.
 nirguna nilaja kubēṣa kapālī. akula agēha digambara byālī. 6.
 kahahu kavana sukhu asa baru pā'ēm̐. bhala bhūlihu ṭhaga kē baurā'ēm̐. 7.
 pañca kahēm̐ sivam̐ satī bibāhī. puni avaḍēri marā'ēnhi tāhī. 8.

It is such an irony that you have believed such a (dubious) sage and have relied upon his words to wish to have a husband who is by nature dispassionate and disinterested in worldly affairs (such as marrying and raising a family, or seeking comforts and pleasures associated with a householder's life)¹. (5)

[Now, the Sapta-risihis sort of exaggerate the perceived negativities in the character of Lord Shiva in an attempt to see if this sways Parvati's resolve to devote her life to the Lord, and to examine whether she demurs and gives a second thought to her decision to marry Shiva after learning about his superficial drawbacks².]

He is 'Nirguna' (i.e. has no worthwhile quality)³, he is 'Nirlajja' (has no shame or does not feel guilty for the way of life he leads)⁴, he has a weird appearance and wears a garland of skulls, he has no family line ("Akul"; has no parents and ancestors)⁵, he has no home and therefore no designated place where he could be found for sure ("Ageha")⁶, he remains naked ("Digambar")⁷, and has serpents wrapped around his body ("Vyaali")⁸. (6)

Tell us, what comfort or happiness does one expect to get by marrying such a groom? It is such a foolish thing for you to be misled by the advice of an imposter (Narad)⁹! (7)

Lord Shiva had first married Sati at the instance of some friends (i.e. his compatriots, the gods)¹⁰, but later on he had manouvered things in such a way that Sati had to kill herself. [This refers to Parvati's earlier life in which she had died by burning in the fire of Yoga at her father's place.]¹¹ (8)

[Note—¹This is a reference to Lord Shiva who is a renunciate God not interested in mundane affairs of life, who lives like a mendicant or an ascetic who prefers to remain submerged in deep mediation for most of the time, who remains aloof from all material pleasures and indifferent to all worldly attachments, who has no home per-se and lives on the snow-covered peaks of Mt.Kailash, who wanders alone in cremation grounds trying to provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of the dead by uttering the holy and divine name of Lord Ram in the latter's ears, and so on and so forth. In short, Lord Shiva whom Parvati wants to marry is not at all fit to become a husband of a lady who wishes to establish a home and live a peaceful life as a householder.

²For a self-realised and enlightened person who has tasted the nectar of eternal bliss and peace obtained by maintaining a safe distance from the turbulent world, whether he is an immortal god or an ordinary mortal creature, remaining aloof from involvement with the world and renouncing any links with it comes naturally—because such renunciation and detachment gives him his peace of mind and bliss of heart. Since getting tied in the bond of marriage sucks a person in the whirlpool of worldly responsibilities and obligations from which, once accepted, it is difficult to get out, a self-realised and spiritually enlightened person would always strive to avoid this shackle and would prefer to remain free as a sky-borne bird.

The Atma is like a free bird that wishes to remain free from any bondage, whilst the bond of marriage is like the same bird being caged for life.

The character traits that are considered as negative or shortcomings in Shiva's character appear to be so when one views them from the perspective of the world and how it judges someone. The gross world regards possession of material things and enjoying them as positive signs of success and a healthy mind that thinks of material growth, development, enhancement and expansion. But the world forgets that all things that are related to the sense organs of the gross body are as transient and perishable as the body and the world itself in which the body lives. The world and its physical charms are like the mirage of a dry desert that pulls a thirsty person toward itself only to lead him to his death because there is no water in that mirage.

Similarly, imagining peace, happiness, joy, pleasure and comfort in the world and its material things is as foolish as trying to find water in the desert mirage. Only a few who are self-realised and exceptionally wise and enlightened strive to rise above the grossness of the world and attain a level of exalted existence, but for this to happen, for this noble aim to be realised they have to distance themselves from the world, become detached from it and renounce its illusionary charms and comforts.

Lord Shiva is one such god. Being the Lord in-charge of death, he has witnessed the pain associated with life in this world, and how a creature feels unfulfilled at the end of his life in spite of his having gained every possible success in life. Shiva sees that even those who claimed the highest degree of achievement and success in this world do not find peace at the time of death. They have to take a new birth because they are trapped in the wheel of Karma, the wheel that traps a creature's Atma or soul in an endless cycle of birth and death depending on the deeds he or she does in previous life. On the other hand, those who had realised the futility of worldly pursuit and had spent their time in introspection and self-realisation find peace at the time of death; they have no desires left to be fulfilled and they die peacefully and happily.

Having realised that there is no pith in this world, that the gross physical world of material sense objects does not give any kind of sustainable happiness, joy, comfort, peace and bliss, Lord Shiva had decided to keep a safe distance from it. Rather he prefers to remain submerged in the ocean of eternal bliss that comes by meditation and contemplation, by remaining aloof from the turmoil of the surrounding world and maintaining internal calm and poise. This is possible only when one voluntarily abstains from getting sucked in the quagmire known as the world. And for this freedom to be maintained it is necessary to avoid all kinds of shackles and bonds that come on their own, even uninvited, once one marries and allows himself to be involved in the affairs of the gross world that is engaged in an endless cycle of procreation and death, a world where needs and desires have no end, and where one success, achievement or acquisition stokes the fire for newer and more of such things.

³The word “Nirguna” means without any attributes. The supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being, is said to be “Nirguna” by the scriptures such as the Upanishads because he possesses all the attributes that exist in this creation, which nullify or neutralise each other to render Brahm a neutral entity. It is like the case of an “Atom” which is neutral from the outside because it’s negatively and positively charged particles, the electrons and the protons, cancel each other out to produce a neutral Atom.

But does this neutrality of the Atom mean that it is powerless and impotent? Who in this modern world not knows the stupendous power of ‘Atomic energy’ and its astounding potentials? Similarly, though Brahm is a neutral entity, its powers are so immense that not only has Brahm unleashed the genie known as this creation but expertly handles its affairs and exercises full control over it.

Lord Shiva is not an ordinary god, but Brahm personified; he is a “Maha-Deva”, the ‘Great God’.

The word itself briefly means the eclectic, glorious and beautiful virtues of truthfulness, purity, auspiciousness, wisdom, enlightenment, erudition, sagacity, blissfulness, dispassion, detachment, holiness and divinity. These are accompanied by a high degree of peace, tranquility, serenity, and their attendant happiness, joy and bliss. Since ‘truthfulness and auspiciousness’ are qualities that are beautiful, this word also means something that is beautiful and beyond reproach.

Briefly therefore, the word ‘Shiva’ means ‘one who is auspicious, always pure, holy, divine, truthful, beautiful and blissful’. Shiva is the Lord who is self-realised and a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth.

The *Maho-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 describes that Shiva was born from the forehead of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, invisible and all-inclusive gross body of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 41 espouses that Shiva lives in the heart of the creature as an embodiment of ‘Sat-Chit-Anand’, i.e. as his Atma—“Shiva, as Sat-Chit-Anand personified, always lives in the heart. He is a constant witness of all that is happening. That is why the heart is regarded as the doorway to liberation and deliverance from the traps that have been laid out by this delusory and cunning world of artificiality to ensnare the creature in its tentacles.”

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition was preached by Lord Shiva himself to sage Jabal Bhusund, and it highlights the fact that Lord Shiva is no ordinary God, or even a senior one being a member of the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, but is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself personified. Shiva is the Supreme Being himself. Refer *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3, 6-8.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 10, 14 assert that Shiva is the creator of everything in this creation, and Canto 1, verse no. 13 says that Shiva represents the creation itself much like Brahm, the Supreme Being who is also treated as being an embodiment of the entire creation.

⁴Lord Shiva is not at all ashamed of the way he lives because he knows that he is following the Truth and the call of his inner-self that gives him eternal peace, happiness and bliss, and that he is fortunate not to have been misled by the illusive charms of the material world. He is proud of his renunciate way of life instead of feeling guilty and ashamed of it.

⁵Only a living being who has a gross physical body has a parent. One who has no physical body does not have a parent. The parent is the one who gives shape to the gross physical body of the living organism, while the Atma or the soul that lives inside this body of the organism is independent of the parent.

Shiva is not a god with a physical body, but the eternal and pure cosmic Consciousness that is known variously as the Atma or the Soul, or even as Brahm. The Atma is pure Consciousness that has no beginning or end. That is Lord Shiva, who is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, is also eternal and imperishable. The entire creation has its origin in Brahm represented by Shiva, and it is not vice versa. This being the case, Shiva has no parent from whom his origin can be traced in the conventional sense. Only mortal beings who have a gross body can trace their origin to a parent who gives birth to the body that the world recognises as a particular creature. But the Atma or the pure conscious soul of the living being that lives in his gross body is not created by any of the parents. Shiva represents this element known as the 'Atma' which is not related to anyone, and is not created by anyone for the simple reason that it is an eternal and imperishable entity that was present before this creation came into being, and will be there after this creation.

⁶Lord Shiva is said to be "Ageha"—i.e. he has no known or certain home, and there it is difficult to know where he is or how to access him.

It will be very easy to understand this aspect of Shiva if one understands that "Shiva" represents the essential element known as the "Consciousness" of this creation. This element is subtle and sublime; it is uniformly distributed throughout the creation, and there is no place where it is not present. So it is very difficult to say that Shiva ("Consciousness") is present or not present here or there in any certain term. Remember: The scriptures have unanimously declared that Brahm (Shiva) is 'Neti-Neti', i.e. 'not this not that'. Therefore, it is unwise to delineate any specific place as the habitat of Shiva. He lives in the form of the 'Truth' everywhere; he lives as the 'Atma' everywhere.

The elements of 'Truth' and the 'Atma' are so unique by their inherent nature that while for some they are easily accessible, for others they defy understanding. That is, they are "Ageha"—not known, understandable or accessible easily.

⁷The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 98-102 says that Shiva is the patron deity and personification of the sky element. Since Shiva represents Brahm who is attributeless, all-pervading and all-encompassing, an entity that is uniformly present in this creation, enclosing the entire creation from the outside and at the same time permeating in each of its pore, the only element that is the nearest analogue to it is the 'sky element'.

Remaining "naked" is a metaphoric way of saying that Shiva has nothing to conceal, that he wears the sky as his garment. A true ascetic also lives in this way as he has nothing to hide from the world and he has no possession to conceal from theft.

⁸Refer also to "Parvati Mangal", verse nos. 49, 51, 53-56 which says exactly a similar thing.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 92-94 says that Lord Shiva, in his form as Rudra, is the patron deity and personification of the fire element, and it is no wonder then that he is surrounded by 'fire-spitting' serpents as a symbolism of this fact.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19 affirms that Shiva is invariably wrapped by serpents.

The significance of the serpents wrapped around his body—The snakes that are wrapped around Lord Shiva show that he is beyond the power of death and poison.

These coiled serpents around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death, because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. They also remind him about the unholy and poisonous nature of the gross world. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them.

The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called 'Mrityunjay', the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the 'Kundalini', the coiled subtle cosmic energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has 'girdled' or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature's spiritual well being.

⁹Narad has been called an 'imposter'—a "Thug"—by the Sapta-rishis to impress upon Parvati that she thinks he is a saint because of his external features and clothes, but she is not aware how he acts as a spoil-sport for all who want to fall in the trap of worldly affairs. Parvati has done severe Tapa, and instead of seeking spiritual liberation, deliverance, salvation and emancipation, she seeks to get entangled in relationships by getting married. Marriage is certainly a shackle for the creature as it forces him or her into a bond and its associated obligations and responsibilities that later on it becomes virtually impossible to break free. It is like bartering eternal freedom and its inherent peace and happiness for imaginary comfort and pleasure that comes with marriage.

This statement has a double meaning—on the face of it the statement seems to be highly derogatory for Narad and scorns at him, but when looked deeply it means that Narad is so holy, pious and noble that in spite of inviting ridicule and scorn he continues to do his moral duty of pulling away the creature from falling into the vicious whirlpool of worldly entanglements, and instead showing him the path that

would give eternal peace and happiness that comes by having devotion for Lord God and by renouncing all attachments with this gross material world.

¹⁰Shiva was not at all interested in marrying. It was on the insistence of Brahma the creator and other gods that he had consented to marry Sati, the daughter of Daksha Prajapati. This story is narrated in Padma Puran, Sristi Khanda, Canto 24. It was narrated by sage Pulastya to Bhisma as follows—

In some ancient time, the entire creation consisting of different worlds such as the Bhuloka (earth), the Bhurvaloka (the sky), the Swargaloka (the heaven), and Maharloka (the nether world) came to an end by being burnt. At that time, the essential life-forces of all living beings, i.e. their individual Atma or soul, got together into a single entity known as the cosmic Atma and went to take rest in the heart of Lord Vishnu who was none but the “Viraat Purush”, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being who is the final resting place for all the creatures.

After the ‘cooling-off period’ when the time came for reactivating the process of creation (because creation and destruction is an endless cycle for the simple reason that the energy of one creation does not vanish but re-emerges in another form and at another time according to the principle that “energy can change form but never vanish”; the ‘energy’ here refers to the cosmic Consciousness that is an eternal non-perishable power-house of all life in this universe), two primary entities first emerged—(i) one was the “Purush” (the positive charge or aspect of the cosmic energy that was represented by the ‘cosmic Male’), and (ii) the other was the “Prakriti” (the negative charge or aspect of the cosmic energy that was represented by the ‘cosmic Female’).

The “Purush” and the “Prakriti” were two faces of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness from which the creation would emerge.

These two opposing factors neutralized each other when they were in the form of their primary aspect of Brahm, but when they were separated as “Purush” and “Prakriti” and brought together, a third element emerged. This was known as “Ahankar” (pride in one’s ability to do something). That is, now they (Purush + Prakriti) thought they could together ‘do’ something that was extraordinary, and ‘achieve’ something stupendous and astounding.

Thus, the primarily neutral Brahm now had become tainted with ‘Ahankar’, leading him to fall in the quagmire known as “Sristi” or creation which was nothing but the ‘creation’ of his own mind that thought that it ‘can do this and that’.

If something is created, it must be sustained and looked after. This cosmic need translated into the formation of Brahma the creator, and Vishnu the sustainer. [In other words, these two primary and senior gods were actually the same Brahm assuming two functions of creation in two distinct forms—one was to ‘create’ in the form of Brahma, and the other was to ‘sustain’ what has been created in the form of Vishnu.]

These two entities developed competitive attitude and were jealous of each other. They competed with each other—‘let’s see who produces a creation first and who would successfully populate the world below, i.e. the earth’. [Remember: This is how and why the world that would eventually come into being had these attributes firmly ingrained in its psyche—having pride, competition and envy.]

Since Vishnu is regarded as the first and foremost form of Brahm (the Supreme Being; the cosmic Soul) in his cosmic form known as the “Viraat Purush” (literally meaning a vast and colossal form of the Supreme Being that encompasses everything in creation), all these developments created a lot of agitation in his heart. This agitation literally heated his heart where the ‘souls of all the creatures of the

previous creation, which had joined together to form one composite mass, had come to take rest'. In other words, the souls of all these creatures had merged with the soul of Vishnu to become one with it and indistinguishable from it. In fact, this is the metaphysical philosophy of the destiny of the individual soul of all living beings—that they would ultimately find rest when they merge with the primary Soul of creation.

The heat generated in the agitated Vishnu's heart caused the ignition of a fire with bright yellow flames like the raging fire of a furnace. This resulted in the melting of the combined souls of the creatures of the previous creation. This melted matter began to flow downwards towards the earth and was about to land on it (in order to 'seed' the earth with the first elements of life represented by the 'soul') when Brahma's son known as Daksha held the flowing liquid in the sky itself before it could actually touch the surface of the earth, and then drank it.

Since this divine liquid which Daksha drank was empowered to 'create life', he begot a daughter with a body as beautiful and charming as a blue lotus. The reason was that Vishnu, from whom this liquid emerged, too had a body as charming as a blue-coloured lotus flower. In other words, the daughter of Daksha bore the genes of Lord Vishnu and had inherited the latter's character. This daughter was known as "Lalitaa".

[The 'blue colour' represented the sky element, and indicated that Lord Vishnu is indeed the Viraat Purush who not only pervades the entire creation but also harbours this creation in his body like the 'sky' which not only fills the entire space of this creation, but the creation itself is lodged in the bosom of the sky.]

Daksha then married Lalitaa, who had a body like a 'blue-lotus', to Lord Neel-Kantha (Shiva) because his features—'blue throat'—matched with the bride. This marriage was formalized on the day of Chaitra Shukla Tritiyaa (i.e. the 3rd day of the bright half of the 1st lunar month of the Hindu calendar, which is roughly March-April).

According to 'Kalika-Puran', when the time of creation arrived, both Brahma (creator) and Vishnu (sustainer) started making efforts in this direction by coordinating their efforts and invoking their own 'Shaktis' (dynamic powers). But the third god of the Trinity, i.e. Lord Shiva, took no interest and continued to remain submerged in the bliss obtained by meditation. Seeing that Shiva is disinterested, Brahma motivated his son Daksha to pray to Lord Vishnu so that the latter gives his "Maya" (delusion creating powers) personified as a maiden to him (Daksha) as his daughter.

As the name suggests, this daughter, who was a personified form of "Maya" (delusions), was successful in casting a spell of magical charm on Shiva's mind and heart that for once the Lord fell for the trap and gave his consent to marry her when he saw her outstanding beauty, and also because she had done Tapa to have him as her husband.

The fact that it was on the insistence of Brahma and others that Daksha married his daughter Sati to Shiva is reiterated by Daksha himself in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 4, Canto 2, verse no. 17.

This facet of the story is also reiterated in Skanda Puran, Maheshwar Khanda, Canto 1.

¹¹This entire episode of Sati killing herself and the reason for it has already been narrated earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

This is very interesting. In a subtle way, the Sapta-rishis are reminding Parvati about her previous life and the fact that she had asked Lord Hari at the time of her death to grant her a boon that she remains devoted to Lord Shiva even in her new life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65. Therefore, she is being warned not to deviate from her chosen path inspite of all the nonsense the Sapta-rishis are saying. It was also to give her a hint that whatever they are saying is wrong because she was well aware that the cause of her death as Sati was not due to any machinations of Shiva but her own fault. She had realised her mistake even as Sati, and wished to atone for it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 54; (ii) Doha no. 57 along with its following Chaupai line nos. 1-4; and (iii) from Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60.

Well, as we read on we shall discover that Parvati had caught this hint, and so she remained steadfast on her vows of marrying Shiva inspite of these seven sages trying their best to dilute her determination. She rejects all their contentions and arguments and tells them to scoot from there.]

दो०. अब सुख सोवत सोचु नहिं भीख मागि भव खाहिं ।

सहज एकाकिन्ह के भवन कबहुँ कि नारि खटाहिं ॥ ७९ ॥

dōhā.

aba sukha sōvata sōcu nahim bhīkha māgi bhava khāhim.
sahaja ēkākinha kē bhavana kabahum̃ ki nāri khaṭāhim. 79.

Now he (Lord Shiva) sleeps peacefully without any regrets or worries (with reference to what has been said in verse no. 8 herein above). He begs for food and eats the whole mortal world as his meal (a reference to the fact that Lord Shiva is the God of the Trinity who is responsible for conclusion of creation, being the patron god of death).

Say, can a woman ever find a right place to live in the home of someone who is inherently single and prefers to live alone, shunning all company? (Doha no. 79)

[Note—A similar narration is given in Shiva Puran, 2/3/25/50-51.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 50.

In Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha, the Sapta-rishis have told blatant lies to Parvati about Shiva maneuvering Sati’s death. Now they compound the lie by saying that Shiva ‘sleeps peacefully without a worry in the world’, i.e. lives happily once he has got rid of Sati. This is not the case at all as is clear when we read the text from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76 that clearly tell us that ever since Sati had died Shiva’s mind and heart were uneasy because the Lord was tormented due to the sufferings of his devotee. Here this ‘devotee’ is Sati and no one else. This is also proved when we read how Sati had deeply regretted her mistake of assuming the form of Sita, the consort of Lord Ram, a misdeed for which her husband Shiva had decided to leave her. Her mind and heart were on the boil and she wished to die because living without having respect and affection from her husband was unbearable for her, and life for her had become a constant torment (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha

no. 58). She decided to die (refer: Doha no. 59 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8).

At the time of death, she had prayed to Lord Ram, the Supreme Being whom her husband adored and worshipped, to let her serve Shiva even in her next birth, and it is for this reason that she was born as Uma or Parvati, the daughter of the king of mountains (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65).

Earlier we have also read that it was she who had been stubborn to test the integrity of Lord Ram inspite of her husband's insistence not to do so (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 51 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8). In the process she had committed two grave sins—one was to disbelieve her husband (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 54), and the other was to tell him lies (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1, 5 that precede Doha no. 56).

In other words, all the sufferings of Sati were her own doing, and Lord Shiva was not the cause of any of them. There is no question therefore of Shiva being the cause of Sati's death as alleged by the Sapta-rishis.

In this new birth, Parvati had done severe Tapa out of her own free will to marry Shiva; no one had forced her to do it, and when she had left her home to do Tapa she was very happy and cheerful about it (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 72—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73).

She was also aware that Shiva was the Lord who had always lived like an ascetic, and he was indeed the patron deity of ascetics. She was also aware that Shiva was the third God of the Trinity who was responsible for bringing about the conclusion or end of whatever that is born or created. She was, after all, Shiva's consort in her past life as Sati, and therefore these facts were not hidden from her. But this does not mean that Shiva was a fiend who would first get his wife killed by machinations, then go around like a mad person begging for food and feeding his stomach with non-eatables as implied by the Sapta-rishis when they derided Shiva by saying he "begs for food and eats the whole world after having first gotten rid of his wife Sati". It was utterly nonsense!

As far as Shiva not being the proper companion for a woman because he prefers to live like an ascetic or sage engrossed in deep meditation and contemplation, this is a wrong surmising because there were numerous great sages and seers who lived a life of exemplary self-restraint like an ascetic or hermit but at the same time had wives. Some of these examples in Ram Charit Manas itself are the following—(i) sage Vasistha, the royal priest of Ayodhya and the guru of Lord Ram, who had a wife named Arundhati, (ii) another is sage Atri who had a wife named Anusuya, (iii) and then we have sage Gautam whose chaste wife was Ahilya. So to say that a woman has no place in the home (hermitage) of a learned ascetic is wrong.

The one-sided monologue of the Sapta-rishis was causing immense irritation to Parvati as will be clear when she sternly ridicules and admonishes them, and tells them to mind their own business, to shut up and leave her alone as she will not abandon the advice given by Narad nor her decision to marry Shiva (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 81 herein below).]

चौ०. अजहूँ मानहु कहा हमारा । हम तुम्ह कहूँ बरु नीक बिचारा ॥ १ ॥
अति सुंदर सुचि सुखद सुसीला । गावहिं बेद जासु जस लीला ॥ २ ॥

दूषण रहित सकल गुण रासी । श्रीपति पुर बैकुंठ निवासी ॥ ३ ॥

अस बरु तुम्हहि मिलाउब आनी । सुनत बिहसि कह बचन भवानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

ajahūṁ mānahu kahā hamārā. hama tumha kahum̃ baru nīka bicārā. 1.
ati sundara suci sukhada susilā. gāvahim̃ bēda jāsu jasa līlā. 2.
dūṣana rahita sakala guna rāsī. śrīpati pura baikunṭha nivāsī. 3.
asa baru tumhahi milā'uba ānī. sunata bihasi kaha bacana bhavānī. 4.

It is still not too late (to make amends). Listen to our advice—we have thoroughly thought over the matter and have arrived at the choice of a wonderful groom who is most suitable for you. (1)

This groom whom we advice for you is very handsome, most holy and divine, one who provides happiness and joy, and one who is most polite and civilised (as opposed to the one whom you wish to marry, i.e. Lord Shiva). Even the Vedas (the scriptures) sing and praise glories and virtues of the groom we are suggesting for you. (2)

He is free from all the faults (which we have enumerated above in preceding verses), and instead he is a treasury of all the good qualities and virtues. He is the Lord of ‘Sri’ (“Sripati”; husband of Laxmi)¹, and lives in the exalted heaven known as “Vaikuntha”. [This is a clear reference to Lord Vishnu as he is the Lord of Laxmi and resides in Vaikutha too.] (3)

We shall bring such a magnificent groom to meet you².

When Bhavani³ (Parvati) heard them out, she smiled (sarcastically and annoyingly) and said—(4)

[Note—The naughty Sapta-rishis continued to tease Parvati in their attempt to test her devotion for Lord Shiva, and whether or not she was sincere about it. First they tried to sway her determination by criticising Shiva and her decision to marry him, and then presuming that she had developed some doubts in her mind and was thus open to having second thoughts, they advocated an alternative to her. They did not realise that their effort was infuriating Parvati, and she was losing her cool with them—as will be clear in the following verses.

¹Any alert observer will note that the Sapta-rishis are giving enough hints to Parvati that she must be very careful and take their advice with a lot of salt, not a pinch of salt but a spoonful as it were. They propose a groom for her who is already ‘married’, as he is a husband of Laxmi—is “Sri-Pati”. Then they say that he is immaculate and his glories are sung by the scriptures. How would the scripture favour someone who keeps ‘two wives’, symbolising that he is polygamous, passionate and lustful, who is not contented by having one devoted wife but wants to satisfy his passions by having two wives?

They were criticising Lord Shiva who was highly enlightened and practiced exemplary self-restraint, and now praise someone who seems to be a passionate fellow who would like to have two wives. Even a casual attention would have alerted Parvati that these so-called saintly people standing before her were cunning and deceitful, and so she would be wise to be careful and not fall in their trap.

After all, the way the Sapta-rishis talked and used disparaging language to criticise Lord Shiva (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 79), sage Narad (refer: Chaupai line nos. 4, 7 that precede Doha no. 79), Parvati herself and her father (calling the two dumb and stupid like the mountains—refer: Doha no. 78) must have been enough to make Parvati angry at them.

She surely must have realised by now that these fellows who had been trying to persuade her to abandon her decision to marry Shiva were not holy men at all, as holy men never talk the way they were talking. Holy men would never pour scorn on Lord Shiva who is an exalted God and one of the Trinity Gods. Holy men never criticise any other sage or saint as these fellows were doing for Narad. Any civilised person would not tell a daughter that she is as stupid as her father who is dumb like the mountains where he and his daughter live.

And to add salt to injury, these fellows give her the advice that she marries a god who is already married!

²What nonsense, thought Paravati. These Sapta-rishis seem to have some vested interest. Why are they so much in a hurry that they would ‘bring the groom here’ in the forest? Don’t they know anything about good behaviour and ethical conduct? Parvati’s parents live; they aren’t dead. How can she say ‘yes’ to someone else other than Lord Shiva to become her husband without the approval of her parents, especially when her parents had given her permission to do Tapa with the express condition that she would accept Shiva as her husband if the Tapa is successful and she is asked to chose a boon? Don’t they know that their proposal is extremely unrighteous and unethical? How can they even gather the guts to say such a nasty thing to her?

³The use of the word “Bhavaani” for Parvati is very significant here as it paves the way for her stern reply that follows. One of the name of Lord Shiva is “Bhava”, and therefore by calling Parvati as “Bhavaani” it is clearly meant that she is already a wife of Lord Shiva. Hence, trying to cheat her and poison her mind to become disloyal to her husband is a very sinful act that the Sapta-rishis are committing.

If this is the case, then why weren’t they punished? The answer is that they were merely ‘testing Parvati’s devotion for Shiva and her sincerity’, and they had no malafide intentions. They had not come out of their own will to tease her or insult her or anyone else, but were doing so to test her. They had been expressly sent by Shiva himself to test Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 77 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

We shall read below that finally the Sapta-rishis have bowed before Parvati and paid their obeisance to her by lauding her and hailing her devotion for Shiva—refer: Doha no. 81 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

सत्य कहेहु गिरिभव तनु एहा । हठ न छूट छूटै बरु देहा ॥ ५ ॥
कनकउ पुनि पषान तें होई । जारेहुँ सहजु न परिहर सोई ॥ ६ ॥

satya kahēhu giribhava tanu ēhā. haṭha na chūṭa chūṭai baru dēhā. 5.
kanaka'u puni paṣāna tēm hōī. jārehum̐ sahaju na parihara sōī. 6.

[*Parvati had tried her best to hear out the Sapta-rishis patiently, but her patience was progressively wearing out in the light of the way the seven sages had tried to deride Lord Shiva, her object of adoration and devotion, in addition to defaming sage Narad, her father and even herself by proposing to marry her to Vishnu who was already married to Laxmi, and even that by doing it secretly without the knowledge and consent of her parents. This was surely incredulous and unethical act on their part, and it hugely embarrassed and infuriated Parvati.

So now we find that when she had had enough of this nonsense, she finally decided to cut it short. Hence, she curtly told the Sapta-rishis—]

‘Yes, you are truthful when you say that I am stubborn because I am born in the land of the mountains (and therefore inherit the dumbness and stubbornness of the mountains)¹.

This being the case, I will not abandon my vows or rescind on my decision (to marry Lord Shiva) even if I have to leave this body (or die for my stubbornness and stupidity). (5)

See, gold is also produced from a rock (i.e. from the gold mines found in the earth, and is as hard and lifeless as the rock of a mountain). But when this gold is put in fire (in a symbolic gesture to punish it so that it can change its rocky, hard and gross nature), it does not yield but remains as stubborn as before².

[The gold is not afraid of being punished by being put in fire, but continues to remain hard, rocky and lifeless. But tell me oh sages, can anyone say a piece of gold is the same as a piece of ordinary rock? Fire only enhances its value and purifies it further; the stubbornness of gold pays it rich dividends in the sense that it becomes more valuable. My Tapa and my firm determination to remain steadfast in my vows to marry Shiva will come in good stead for me. You need not worry about me or my future. Thank you!!] (6)

[Note—*Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse nos. 58—65 which are very explicit in the way Parvati has defended her position and her decision to marry Lord Shiva. Refer also to Shiva Puran, 2/3/25/57.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 78.

²A similar idea is expressed elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 205. It is in the context of Bharat who says that the unique quality of gold is that the more you heat it in fire the more purified and valuable it becomes instead of evaporating like water or getting reduced to ashes like wood, or even cracking and getting dark by heat and soot as in the case of rock or stone.]

नारद बचन न मैं परिहरऊँ । बसउ भवनु उजरउ नहिं डरऊँ ॥ ७ ॥

गुर केँ बचन प्रतीति न जेही । सपनेहुँ सुगम न सुख सिधि तेही ॥ ८ ॥

nārada bacana na maim̐ parihara'ūm̐. basa'u bhavanu ujara'u nahim̐ dara'ūm̐.
7.

gura kēm̐ bacana pratīti na jēhī. sapanēhum̐ sugama na sukha sidhi tēhī. 8.

I am not going to overlook the advice given by sage Narad; I am not going to disregard his words and discard them for being useless and meant to mislead me¹. I am not afraid if by doing so my home is established or it is ruined and demolished for good. (7)

A person who doubts the words of his or her Guru (teacher, preceptor and guide) can never find happiness or any success even in his or her dream. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 81.

This is one important lesson we learn here—that one should rely upon one’s guru and have faith in him. If one does so, one is sure to end up happy and satisfied as it happened with Parvati. Suppose she had been distracted by the proddings and allurements of the Sapta-rishis, and had doubted Narad’s sage advice to her father. What would have been her fate then? She would have lost the chance to atone for the sins she had committed in her previous life as Sati for disobeying Lord Shiva by committing herself to loyally serve the Lord in her new birth. She would have fallen in the eyes of the world as an indecisive and fickle-minded lady who had first disobeyed her husband Lord Shiva in her previous life as Sati, and once again she had disobeyed Narad in her present life as Parvati. It would be an ignominious way to live with these scars on her character. Who will marry her then?

In the event as it happened, we shall read that being loyal to her guru’s words paid rich dividends to her: she was profusely praised by her tormentor sages, the Sapta-rishis (in Doha no. 81 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8), and later on lived a happy and contented life as a consort of Lord Shiva. This was a rare honour because her marriage with Lord Shiva bestowed upon her the privilege of being called the “Mother of the world” (refer: 1st half of Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

दो०. महादेव अवगुण भवन बिष्णु सकल गुण धाम ।

जेहि कर मनु रम जाहि सन तेहि तेही सन काम ॥ ८० ॥

dōhā.

mahādēva avaguna bhavana biṣṇu sakala guna dhāma.
jēhi kara manu rama jāhi sana tēhi tēhī sana kāma. 80.

It’s alright (what you say) that Mahadeva¹ (the Great God; Lord Shiva) is an abode of all vices and faults, and Vishnu is an abode of all good virtues.

But the point is that one is concerned with and attracted to him alone who gives comfort, happiness and peace to one’s Mana (mind and heart)².

[Therefore, may be it is true that Vishnu is an excellent god who possesses all the fine virtues that exist in this creation, but sorry Sirs, I am not at all interested in him. I admire Lord Shiva and have fallen for him whom you say is a den of faults, but what can I do? Love is such a bad thing that once it gets hold of you, your mind and heart becomes as dumb as you yourself have told me I am in Doha no. 78 herein above. So please don’t insist because I won’t mend my ways.] (Doha no. 80)

[Note—¹The use of the word “Mahadeva” is very significant here. The word means “a Great God”, someone who is superior to others. Here, Parvati has not used any honourable title for Vishnu, she has just called him by his name, whereas for Shiva she uses an honourable title of a “Mahadeva”. In other words, she wants to tell the Sapta-rishis that as far as she is concerned, Vishnu is one of the other so many gods of the pantheon, while Shiva is the ‘greatest of them all’, being a ‘Maha (great) Deva (god)’.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 81 where Parvati is very explicit in her proclamation that this is her firm determination that she would either marry Shiva or remain unmarried for thousand of births.

Parvati rebukes the Sapta-rishis by saying that what they had said about Vishnu as being full of excellent virtues may be correct, but she isn’t bothered. She has fallen in love with Shiva, the Maha-Deva, and love being a blinding force, she can’t see anything else.

Further, she told the Sapta-rishis that they have already proclaimed her to be as dumb and stupid as the mountains where she was born (Doha no. 78), so what’s the use of preaching wisdom to a dumb-witted blockhead in any case? Therefore, it will be good if they please shut-up and go away—refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 81.]

चौ०. जौं तुम्ह मिलतेहु प्रथम मुनीसा । सुनतिउँ सिख तुम्हारि धरि सीसा ॥ १ ॥
अब मैं जन्मु संभु हित हारा । को गुन दूषन करै बिचारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ tumha milatēhu prathama munīsā. sunati'um̃ sikha tumhāri dhari sīsā. 1.
aba mair̃ janmu sambhu hita hārā. kō guna dūṣana karai bicārā. 2.

[Parvati did not wish to look insulting to the Sapta-rishis in order to avoid any unpleasant situation when they could find an excuse to curse her for not obeying them. So she played it cool and acted in a diplomatic manner.]

‘If you had met me first (i.e. prior to Narad), I would have put my head at your feet and would have listened to your advice and accepted it with due respect. (1)

But (it is too late now because) I have sacrificed my life in favour of Shambhu (Lord Shiva), and once this is done there is no use in thinking of the virtues and faults at this late stage. (2)

[Note—This statement of Parvati was clearly intended to pacify the Sapta-rishis. Parvati has told them that she would not defy the words of Narad no matter how much they entreat her to do so—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 80, and (ii) once again in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 81.

She feared that these seven sages would treat her decision not to overlook Narad’s words as an affront to themselves, especially when they were so critical of Narad (refer: Baal Kand, 2nd line of Doha no. 78 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-5 herein above).

So she acted wisely by saying that if they had come to her first, she would have “put her head at their feet, and obeyed their advice”. But they must realise, being sages themselves, that it is unrighteous and unethical to disobey one’s Guru as a matter of principle (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 80 herein above). This logical and intelligent handling of a sticky situation pleased the Sapta-rishis as they could not counter it.

Putting one’s head at the feet of elders and obeying them is an honourable thing to do. There are many references in Ram Charit Manas where this tradition is upheld. Some of the instances are the following—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 77; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 174; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 177; (iv) Ayodhya Kand, 2nd line of Doha no. 269; and (v) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 318.]

जौं तुम्हरे हठ हृदयँ बिसेषी । रहि न जाइ बिनु किँ बरेषी ॥ ३ ॥
 तौ कौतुकिअन्ह आलसु नाहीं । बर कन्या अनेक जग माहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 जन्म कोटि लगि रगर हमारी । बरउँ संभु न त रहउँ कुआरी ॥ ५ ॥

jauṁ tumharē haṭha hṛdayam̐ bisēṣī. rahi na jā'i binu ki'ēṁ barēṣī. 3.
 tau kautuki'anha ālasu nāhīm̐. bara kan'yā anēka jaga māhīm̐. 4.
 janma kōṭi lagi ragara hamārī. bara'um̐ sambhu na ta raha'um̐ ku'ārī. 5.

If your heart is so determined that you can’t refrain yourself from match-making (and perhaps finding a suitable partner for Vishnu for whom you act like a marriage agent)-
 --(3)

---Then for active and diligent persons who do not know what is laziness as they are very energetic in whatever they decide to do, there is no dearth of either a groom or a bride in this vast world because they are plenty of them there.¹ (4)

Now listen to me. It is my firm vow that I will marry only Shiva and no one else even if I have to remain unmarried for thousands of births. (5)

[Note—¹Parvati must have told the Sapta-rishis—“I preethee, you can find so many eligible bachelors to become a groom, and equal numbers of girls to become a bride for them. Why do you insist and poke me unnecessarily when I am unwilling and not interested in playing ball with you! This world is a vast place, and you can surely find greener pastures elsewhere. You have already said that I belong to the mountains which are un-inhabitable places. Please go to greener pastures where you will find wonderful maidens eagerly wanting to line-up for an interview with you so that you can help them find a suitable match. Or else, you would find a suitable maiden for Vishnu who has commissioned you to find a girl for him!

Forget about me, and also forget about finding a suitable bride for Vishnu in the hostile mountainous terrain. Go to the world where I am sure you will meet not one, not two, but countless girls suitable for your purpose. Please don’t waste your precious time here.”]

तजउँ न नारद कर उपदेसू । आपु कहहिँ सत बार महेसू ॥ ६ ॥
मैं पा परउँ कहइ जगदंबा । तुम्ह गृह गवनहु भयउ बिलंबा ॥ ७ ॥

taja'um̃ na nārada kara upadēsū. āpu kahahim̃ sata bāra mahēsū. 6.
mair̃m̃ pā para'um̃ kaha'i jagadambā. tumha gr̃ha gavanahu bhaya'u bilambā.
7.

I will not abandon or disregard Narad's words (advice) even if Lord Shiva (for whom I have done such a severe Tapa, who is the Lord of my life, and to whom I am fully devoted and committed) himself tells me to do so.¹ (6)

[Parvati was very exasperated by now, so she bluntly told the sages—] I fall at your feet and most politely ask you to go home as it is getting too late. [I am fed-up with you. Please go away from here and leave me alone. Thank you for all your time and advice which, however, I don't need.]' (7)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 80. The reason is implied in these two verses: “One should not disobey one's guru. If one does so, he can never hope to have happiness and success anywhere in the world. Since Narad is my guru in the sense that he was the first sage who had shown me the light at the end of the dark tunnel represented by bad fate, I must not and would not disobey him no matter what happens.”

We have read in Doha no. 67 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that Parvati's groom was destined to have certain peculiar characters which are like those of a hermit or an ascetic, and certainly not like a householder. When her parents were shell-shocked to hear this prophesy, they had requested Narad to advice a way out of this logjam (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68). It was then the noble sage had advised them that if Parvati does Tapa and manages to please Lord Shiva to accept her, then it is possible that the miseries in her fate could be mitigated to a great extent because Lord Shiva has that power which can mitigate sufferings of his devotees (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1, 4 that precede Doha no. 69; and Chaupai line nos. 3, 5-8 that precede Doha no. 70).

Narad was not trying to push her downstream to drown in the river of her fate, but he was being helpful by showing a way out from the whirlpool in which she was bound to fall and get sucked if no remedial measures were devised now. And this remedy that could change her fortune was doing Tapa and pleasing Lord Shiva, which she followed diligently. She had succeeded in her endeavour as is clear when the heavenly voice endorsed her efforts (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 74 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8).]

देखि प्रेमु बोले मुनि ग्यानी । जय जय जगदंबिके भवानी ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi prēmu bōlē muni gyānī. jaya jaya jagadambikē bhavānī. 8.

When the wise sages (i.e. the Sapta-rishis) observed the high level of devotion and affection that Parvati had for Lord Shiva, they exclaimed in joy—‘Glory to you oh Jagdama (Mother of the world)! All glory to you oh Bhavaani (the divine consort of Lord Bhava, one of the many names of Lord Shiva)!¹ We hail you and glorify you. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 88 where the same words have been used and the same idea expressed by sage Narad later on in the story when he comes with these Sapta-rishis and Parvati's father to reassure her wailing mother and the rest of the family who were utterly confused about the glory of Lord Shiva by merely watching the Lord's external features and physical appearance which were most unconventional and on the face belied everything about his divinity and mystical powers.]

दो०. तुम्ह माया भगवान सिव सकल जगत पितु मातु ।
नाइ चरन सिर मुनि चले पुनि पुनि हरषत गातु ॥ ८१ ॥

dōhā.

tumha māyā bhagavāna siva sakala jagata pitu mātu.
nā'i carana sira muni calē puni puni haraṣata gātu. 81.

You are indeed a personified form of “Maya” (the dynamic power of the Lord God which is responsible for the creation coming into being), and Shiva is indeed the “Bhagwaan” (the Lord God, the Supreme Being).

Indeed you two are the Father and the Mother of the entire world¹.

Saying this and bowing their heads at the holy feet of Parvati, the seven sages went away from there, their bodies getting thrilled repeatedly. (81)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 98.

The sages were feeling highly privileged and glad that they had the rare opportunity to have such a close interaction with Parvati that they would cherish for the rest of their lives. They were happy that they would be remembered in history as being the ones who were instrumental in bringing about the union of Parvati and Shiva. This is because Shiva would depend upon their report, and since they had decided that they will give a brilliant report card for Parvati, it was sure that Shiva would marry her, making them and their role immortal in the annals of history.

They knew that after the marriage of Shiva and Parvati, no one would ever get another chance to interact so closely with Parvati and question her. So, this was a rare privilege that they had had.

Parvati must have given a huge sigh of relief when her tormentors, the Sapta-rishis, had gone their way.

This fulfilled the first prophesy of the heavenly voice which had said that the Sapta-rishis would be visiting Parvati. So now she prepared herself for the second prophesy which was that her father would come soon to her with a request to go home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 75.]

चौ०. जाइ मुनिन्ह हिमवंतु पठाए । करि बिनती गिरजहिं गृह ल्याए ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

jā'i muninha himavantu paṭhā'ē. kari binatī girajahim gr̥ha lyā'ē. 1.

The sages went away from there, and sent Himwant (the father of Parvati and the king of the snow-covered mountains) to where she was doing Tapa. He prayed to Girija (the daughter of the mountains) and persuaded her to return home. (1)

[Note—The sages are following the instructions of Lord Shiva as narrated in Doha no. 77 where they were ordered to “test Uma first to remove all doubts, and then motivate her father to bring her home”.

The place where Parvati did her Tapa was away from the capital of the kingdom of the mountains. The place of her Tapa was situated in the ‘Gandhamaardhan mountain’, while the capital was located at ‘Aushadhi-Prastha’ (literally a place rich in medicinal plants and herbs)—refer: Kalidas’ epic poem “Kumar-Sambhav”, Sarga (Canto) 6, verse no. 33, 36-46.]

बहुरि सप्तरिषि सिव पहिं जाई । कथा उमा कै सकल सुनाई ॥ २ ॥
भए मगन सिव सुनत सनेहा । हरषि सप्तरिषि गवने गेहा ॥ ३ ॥

bahuri saptariṣi siva pahim jā'i. kathā umā kai sakala sunā'i. 2.
bha'e magana siva sunata sanēhā. haraṣi saptariṣi gavanē gēhā. 3.

After that, the Sapta-rishis went back to Lord Shiva to report on the developments. They told him the entire episode related to Uma as it happened. (2)

Lord Shiva listened to it attentively and with immense satisfaction. He became delighted to learn about Parvati’s affection and devotion for him.

Having finished their mission, the exhilarated Sapta-rishis went back to their own abode. (3)

मनु थिर करि तब संभु सुजाना । लगे करन रघुनायक ध्याना ॥ ४ ॥

manu thira kari taba sambhu sujānā. lagē karana raghunāyaka dhyānā. 4.

Then, the wise Lord Shiva exercised self-restraint over him Mana (mind and heart) and began to meditate upon Lord Ram (who was his revered deity). (4)

[Note—Shiva is a highly exalted ascetic who practices meditation and contemplation as a routine matter. He is invariably depicted in all iconography as being seated in a meditative Mudra (posture) with half-closed eyes and lost in contemplation and deep thought. He closed his eyes and remembered the image of his beloved Lord Ram. This helped him to stabilise his mind and heart (Mana) and prevent himself to become excited and lose self-control. Being an ascetic he was fully aware of the importance of maintaining internal calm and poise so that the perpetual bliss that he enjoyed is not at all disturbed by any of the mundane affairs related to the many activities and processes of this creation from which he wished to remain aloof.

Shiva had always taken recourse to this method of meditating upon Lord Ram as a means to calm down and find internal peace for himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 57; Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 58; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52; Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 75; and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83. In each of these cases we find that Shiva draws peace by meditating upon Lord Ram.

The lesson that one draws from these verses is that in order to maintain internal calm and blissful state one should rely upon meditation and contemplation as an infallible instrument.]

तारकु असुर भयउ तेहि काला । भुज प्रताप बल तेज बिसाला ॥ ५ ॥
तेहि सब लोक लोकपति जीते । भए देव सुख संपति रीते ॥ ६ ॥

tāraḥ asura bhaya'u tēhi kālā. bhuja pratāpa bala tēja bisālā. 5.
tēhim saba lōka lōkapati jītē. bha'ē dēva sukha sampati rītē. 6.

It so happened that around that time, a demon named Tarkaasur¹ was born. He was very strong-armed, majestic and powerful. (5)

He conquered all the three worlds², resulting in the gods being deprived of their peace and prosperity. (6)

[Note—¹“Tarkaasur”—Tarakasur was the son of Vajraanga and his consort Varaangi. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) as a result of which the creator Brahma had granted him several boons which had made him invincible. He was killed by Lord Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati. He had three sons—Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali. They had also pleased Brahma and by his blessings built three great cities, collectively called ‘Tripura’. These cities were made of gold, silver and iron. These three demon brothers were collectively called Tripurasur—the demons of the three cities. When they became a nuisance for the Gods, Shiva destroyed these three cities and the demons with one arrow. Therefore he got the name of Tripurari—one who destroyed the three enemy cities.

The story of Tripurasur with a slight variation is narrated in Bhagwat Mahapurān, 7/10/53-58. According to it, once when the demons were defeated by the gods, they went to take refuge with the greatest demon of them all, the mighty demon named ‘Maya Daanav’. He was the one who had created the golden city of Lanka for Ravana.

Maya Danav created three huge planes made of gold, silver and iron. These planes were so huge that they resembled entire cities and were well provided for with all the things necessary for comfortable living. Maya Daanav handed them to the three chief demons named Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali who were said to be the son of Tarkasur. The special quality of these planes was that they were hidden from view and flew stealthily. Emboldened by being invisible, the demons went on the rampage, plundering and laying to waste the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the sky. The gods could not fight them as these demons were invisible. Besides this, these three city-like planes had a pond of nectar each, the contents of which made the demons invincible and beyond the reach of death.

Frustrated and flabbergasted, the gods approached Lord Shiva to get rid of the demons. Lord Shiva invoked his specially empowered arrow known as the 'Pashupatastra'. When shot, it produced countless arrows spewing fierce tongues of flame. Though these arrows burnt the three cities or planes ("Tripurs"), the demons however managed to survive by taking a dip in the pond of nectar that was present in each of the three places.

Confused, Lord Shiva invoked Lord Vishnu, the maverick Lord who knows every trick in creation as he is the Supreme Being, to find some solution. Vishnu disguised himself as a cow and made the Creator Brahma a calf. They went to these ponds and drank the nectar. The demons were so dazed by the Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers) that they could not respond and react. After that, Vishnu prepared for the great war—creating the chariot from Dharma (righteousness), the charioteer from Gyan (knowledge), the war standard from Vairagya (renunciation), the horses from Aishwarya (fame and might), bow from Tapa (penance), the body armour from Vidya (skills), arrows from Kriya (deeds and dynamism), and all other paraphernalia of war by employing other mystical powers he had.

Then, on an auspicious moment of the asterism of "Abhijit" (conquer now), Lord Shiva rode this chariot and burnt the three cities by a single arrow.

According to the Ramayana of Valmiki, Baal Kand, Canto 75, two great bows were made from the bones of Dadhichi. One was known as "Sarang" and the other was known as "Pinak". The former was held by Lord Vishnu, and the latter by Lord Shiva. Vishnu killed the demons with his Sarang bow, while Shiva used his Pinak to destroy the three cities.

Another version of who the demon "Tripurasur" was appears in Skanda Puran, Aawantya Reva-Khand. It says that the son of the demon king Bali was known as 'Baana-sur'. He had thousand arms. He worshipped Lord Shiva for a thousand years. Pleased with him, Lord Shiva asked him to seek a boon, upon which Baanasur requested the Lord to provide him with a city that is so invincible that none of the gods can ever conquer it, except of course by Lord Shiva whom he had worshipped as his deity. Shiva granted him his wish.

The cunning Baanasur then decided to please the other three gods of the Trinity, i.e. Lords Vishnu and Brahma. So he worshipped them one by one and extracted similar boons from them as he had done from Shiva. Once done, he now had three invincible cities that symbolized his sway and domain covering the three dimensions of creation—viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world. Then he went mad with recklessness, plundering and pillaging at will. Terrified, the gods approached Lord Shiva as he was the one who had initially blessed Baanasur, and also because the demon had himself exempted Shiva from the boon of immunity from destruction. Then, Shiva stringed his bow called Pinak, mounted an arrow called Aghor, and angrily shot it at the three cities ruled by Baanasur. This arrow instantly burnt and reduced the three cities to ashes. Their residue fell in the holy river Narmada. Then Baanasur fervently prayed to Lord Shiva to be pleased with him and give him abode in his own divine Loka known as the 'Shiva-Loka', the divine abode of Shiva in the heaven.

The *Sharav Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 describes that Lord Shiva is also known as the slayer of the demon Tirpurasur. Hence, Shiva or Rudra is also called Tripurari. The three cities ruled by Tripurasur symbolised the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world.

The story of the birth of Tarkaasur in 'Padma Puran, Sristi Khanda' is as follows—By the blessings of sage Kashyap, mother Diti gave birth to a son named

‘Vajraanga’ because his body was as strong as Vajra, the hardest and the strongest material in existence. [Vajra + Anga (body)]

As soon as he was born he became an expert in the knowledge of all the scriptures. On the instructions of his mother he went to the heaven and ensnared Indra (the king of gods) and brought him captive before his mother. At the intervention of Brahma (the creator) and sage Kashyap (his father), Vajraanga freed Indra. He then requested Brahma that he may be inspired to do Tapa and succeed in it.

Brahma created a girl named ‘Varaangi’ and gave her to him as his bride. Then, both the husband and the wife, i.e. Vajraanga and Varaangi, began doing severe Tapa (penance). Brahma was pleased and blessed Vajraanga that demonic tendencies would not emerge in his heart.

After successfully completing his Tapa, Vajraanga returned home but did not find his wife Varaangi there. When he went out to search for her, he saw her crying in the forest. On enquiry she told him that Indra had not only tormented her and made her miserable but had even compelled her to leave home. She wished to have retribution, and therefore asked her husband (Vajraanga) to provide her with a son who would punish Indra and avenge her insult at his hands.

Vajraanga did Tapa once again, and Brahma blessed him with a son as desired. This son was “Taarak” as he liberated his mother from her torments by severely punishing Indra: he captured Indra and put him in shackles. [A similar narration of doing Tapa and receiving a son as a boon is narrated in ‘Matsya Puran’, Chapter 147, verse no. 17.]

Varaangi had borne the child in her womb for a thousand years before he was born. Taarak, her son, was a brave and invincible warrior. To avenge his mother’s insult at the hands of Indra (king of gods), he went to Mt. Paariyaatra and did so severe Tapa that the gods and the rest of the world began to get scorched by the heat generated by it. [Refer: (i) ‘Matsya Puran’, Chapter 148, and (ii) Kalidas’ ‘Kumar Sambhav’, Sarga 1, verse no. 56.]

According to ‘Matsya Puran’, Chapter 148, verse no. 18 onwards, Taarak prayed to Brahma as follows—‘Oh Lord! You live in the heart of all living beings, and as such nothing is hidden from you. Everyone wants to treat others the way the latter treat him. The gods have an eternal jealousy with us (the Asurs, the non-gods, the sons of Diti) and do not want us to live peacefully and prosper. I want to liberate the demon race. Hence, please grant me the boon that no warrior can kill me with any weapon. This is all I want.’

According to ‘Padma Puran’, Taarak asked Brahma for the grant of a boon that he is not killed by any living being.

In both the cases Brahma told him that this is impossible because all those who are born must die, without exception. So it is better if he re-phrases his request and specifies the person or entity from which he seeks immunity. Taarak then asked that he may not die at the hands of anyone except an infant of seven days of age or younger—in the hope that it would be impossible for such a small child, who is not even eight days old, to kill him, thereby making him invincible and immune to be killed by anyone who is old enough to confront him.

After the granting of the desired boon, both Brahma and Taarak went back to their respective homes. When the news spread that Taarak has successfully acquired a unique boon which would make him virtually immune from defeat and death, all the known famous demons of the time, viz. Mahish, Kaalnemi, Jambha, Grasan, Shumbha etc., came and joined forces with him, vowing their allegiance to him and

declaring him as their chief. [Refer: ‘Matsya Puran’, Chapter 148, and Chapter 154, verse nos. 20-26, 47-49.]

Thus emboldened, Tarkaasur unleashed mayhem and terror in the heaven: rampaging and plundering, imprisoning the gods and terrorizing them. The entire composite army of the gods failed to dent his strength and stop his seeking revenge from the gods. The gods approached their patriarch Brahma to help them. Brahma told them about the boon he had to grant Taarak, and advised them that since only a child below the age of seven days could kill the demon, they should make an effort in this direction and see how Shiva can be motivated to marry and beget a son. Brahma then told them (the gods) about Parvati’s Tapa with the intention of marrying Shiva, and that he has already granted her wish alongside Lord Ram requesting Shiva to forgive her for her past sins in her previous life as Sati (when she had defied Shiva and had assumed the form of Lord Ram’s wife Sita in order to test the integrity of Lord Ram) and marry her.

Meanwhile, Shiva is submerged in doing meditation, so the gods must try to devise a method whereby Shiva would marry Parvati. Their son would then kill Tarkaasur. [Refer—(i) ‘Matsya Puran’, Chapters 146 and 154; and (ii) Kalidas’ ‘Kumar Sambhav’, Canto 2, verse nos. 57, 59, 61.]

In Goswami Tulsidas’ epic story of Lord Ram by the name of ‘Ram Charit Manas’, this entire episode of Tarkaasur is narrated in Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 89; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 103.

The Tapa done by Parvati and the reason for it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 75.

The sin of Parvati in her previous life as Sati is also narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 65.

²“The three worlds”—The three worlds are the three divisions of creation consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world.

Each world has its patron gods and presiding deities. When the demons conquered any part of the world, the gods and the deities were the first to be chased away or imprisoned by them so that they could rule over the inhabitants of that world ruthlessly and cruelly in the manner that suited them. Later on in the narration of Ram Charit Manas we learn that when the demon Ravana successfully did Tapa and succeeded in getting boons from Brahma, the creator, he had also went on the rampage, pillaging, killing and causing general mayhem so much so that the gods and all the living beings on earth were tormented beyond measure. The Gods and the Mother Earth had then prayed to Lord Vishnu to help them and salvage the creation from complete annihilation. It was then that the Lord promised them that he would come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate this scourge of the demons.

Similarly, in the case of Tarkaasur, the son of Lord Shiva was destined to eliminate him, but Shiva lived alone after the death of Sati. Hence, it became imperative that Shiva marries once again and begets a son (Kartikeya) who would then kill Tarkaasur.]

अजर अमर सो जीति न जाई । हारे सुर करि बिबिध लराई ॥ ७ ॥

तब बिरंचि सन जाइ पुकारे । देखे बिधि सब देव दुखारे ॥ ८ ॥

ajara amara sō jīti na jā'ī. hārē sura kari bibidha larā'ī. 7.
taba biran̄ci sana jā'i pukārē. dēkhē bidhi saba dēva dukhārē. 8.

This fellow Tarkaasur was imperishable and immortal because he could not be conquered by anyone, including 'Death'. The gods tried hard to defeat him but were frustrated even after waging countless wars with him. (7)

At last, they went to the creator 'Biran̄ci' ("Brahma") and pleaded with him to help them. 'Vidhi' (the creator Brahma) saw that all the gods were extremely distressed. (8)

दो०. सब सन कहा बुझाइ बिधि दनुज निधन तब होइ ।
संभु सुक्र संभूत सुत एहि जीतइ रन सोइ ॥ ८२ ॥

dōhā.

saba sana kahā bujhā'i bidhi danuja nidhana taba hō'i.
sambhu sukra sambhūta suta ēhi jīta'i rana sō'i. 82.

Vidhi (the creator) explained to all the gods how their misery could come to an end. He advised them—'The death of the demon (Tarkaasur) would be possible only when a son is born out of the sperms of Lord Sambhu (Shiva). Only such a son would have the ability to win this demon in the battle-field. (Doha no. 82)

[Note—Refer an elaborate note on Tarkaasur appended to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes this Doha no. 82 herein above.]

चौ०. मोर कहा सुनि करहु उपाई । होइहि ईस्वर करिहि सहाई ॥ १ ॥
caupā'ī.

mōra kahā suni karahu upā'ī. hō'ihī īsvara karihi sahā'ī. 1.

Listen to what I say, and work accordingly. You will attain success, and may the Lord God help you. (1)

सतीं जो तजी दच्छ मख देहा । जनमी जाइ हिमाचल गेहा ॥ २ ॥
तेहिं तपु कीन्ह संभु पति लागी । सिव समाधि बैठे सबु त्यागी ॥ ३ ॥

satīm jō tajī daccha makha dēhā. janamī jā'i himācala gēhā. 2.
tēhim tapu kīnha sambhu pati lāgī. siva samādhi baiṭhē sabu tyāgī. 3.

[Now, what should you do?] Sati has left her body during the fire sacrifice of Daksha¹, and has taken a birth in the household of the king of the mountains known as Himaachal². (2)

She has done severe Tapa with the express desire to have Lord Shiva as her husband³. But here arises the main problem: Lord Shiva has renounced everything and has sat down to do deep meditation known as “Samadhi”⁴. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 74.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82.]

जदपि अहइ असमंजस भारी । तदपि बात एक सुनहु हमारी ॥ ४ ॥
पठवहु कामु जाइ सिव पाहीं । करै छोभु संकर मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
तब हम जाइ सिवहि सिर नाई । करवाउब बिबाहु बरिआई ॥ ६ ॥

jadapi aha'i asamanjasa bhārī. tadapi bāta ēka sunahu hamārī. 4.
paṭhavahu kāmū jā'i siva pāhīm. karai chōbhū saṅkara mana māhīm. 5.
taba hama jā'i sivahi sira nāī. karavā'uba bibāhu bari'āī. 6.

Although this is an extremely piquant situation that seems to baffle me (because on the one hand Parvati has successfully done Tapa to marry Shiva, and on the other hand Shiva has renounced everything and sat down to do meditation and has lost awareness of his surroundings because he has entered in the transcendental state of Samadhi), still I will tell you a way out it. Listen to my words. (4)

Send ‘Kaam-deo’ (cupid) to Shiva so that he creates distraction in the mind and heart (“Mana”) of the latter by his cunning manoeuvring and machinations. (5)

When he (Kaamdeo) succeeds in distracting Lord Shiva from his Samadhi (deep meditation) and wakes up the Lord, then I will go and bow my head before him and insist that he marry. (6)

एहि बिधि भलेहिं देवहित होई । मत अति नीक कहइ सबु कोई ॥ ७ ॥
अस्तुति सुरन्ह कीन्हि अति हेतू । प्रगटेउ बिषमबान झषकेतू ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi bhalēhim dēvahita hōī. mata ati nīka kaha'i sabu kōī. 7.
astuti suranha kīnhi ati hētū. pragaṭē'u biṣamabāna jhaṣakētū. 8.

This is the only way I can think of by which the good of the gods can be achieved. [There is no other way out.]’

All the assembled gods endorsed this advice unanimously, saying that it was excellent. (7)

To implement Brahma’s advice, the gods prayed to “Jhakha-ketu¹” (Kaamdeo) who revealed himself holding a very sharp and formidable (“Visham”) arrow in his hand². (8)

[Note—¹“Jhakha-ketu”—The word “Jhakha” means a fish, and “ketu” means a flag. So, the flag of Kaamdeo has the sign of a fish on it.

²Kamdeo is said to hold a symbolic arrow consisting of five types of flowers. The ‘flower’ is however misleading as it implies that this god, who is the patron god of passion, yearning, lust, emotions and love, uses quiet, polite and subtle methods to conquer his enemies by secretly hitting them hard at their heart and forcing them to be subdued with his quality of generating passion, yearning, lust and desire for sensual gratification.

His arrow is not like the conventional arrow used in a battle-field that produces a bleeding wound. He uses ‘flowers’ symbolic of softness and pleasing demeanours that have a malafide intention to trap the victim in a snare, forcing the trapped creature to obey what Kaamdeo orders. A creature ensnared by Kaamdeo would not listen to the advice of his or her intellect and wisdom, but would be driven by emotions and sentiments having their seat in the heart that has already been conquered by Kaamdeo and injected with the poison of passion, lust, yearning, love and a desire for sensual gratification.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 84 which clearly states that Kaamdeo holds a bow and arrows made of flowers. .

Kamdeo is so powerful and clever in his tactics that he has succeeded to distract even Lord Shiva who is a renowned god of ascetics and one who has exemplary self-control over his sense organs. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 87.

It is another matter that Lord Shiva became so angry at Kaamdeo’s temerity, impertinence and irreverence that the Lord opened his ‘third eye’ of wisdom located on his forehead to burn Kamdeo to ashes (refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87). But inspite of this, the fact cannot be denied that Kaamdeo did succeed in waking Shiva from his transcendental state of Samadhi and mellowed enough to accept the proposal to marry Parvati (refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 88—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 89).]

दो०. सुरन्ह कही निज बिपति सब सुनि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।

संभु बिरोध न कुसल मोहि बिहसि कहेउ अस मार ॥ ८३ ॥

dōhā.

suranha kahī nija bipati saba suni mana kīnha bicāra.

sambhu birōdha na kusala mōhi bihasi kahē'u asa māra. 83.

The gods told Kamdeo about their entire problem¹. He thought over the matter in his Mana (mind and heart) and came to the conclusion that by opposing Lord Shiva, no good would come to him (and he will have to suffer its consequences).

Therefore, “Maar²” (the one who hurts or kills; Kamdeo) smiled wryly and said to the gods, ‘By opposing Lord Shiva I cannot expect any sort of welfare. --- (Doha no. 83)

[Note—¹The gods explained how the demon Tarkaasur was tormenting the entire heaven and that he can be killed only by the son of Shiva. But Shiva was submerged in deep meditation. It was necessary to distract him and ignite a desire to marry inside his heart so that he could be married to Parvati, who has already done successful Tapa to get him as her husband. The son produced as the result of this union would kill the demon and free the gods from his constant terror.

Kamdeo was in a dilemma. If he refused it would mean betraying his brother gods who might declare him an outcaste and force him out of the kingdom of heaven. If that happens, he would lose protection of the combined might of the gods and would become an easy target for the demons who are sure to capture and kill him.

On the other hand, it is sure that if he disturbs the meditation of Lord Shiva he cannot escape the Lord’s wrath.

He found himself in a logjam. He thought over the matter and decided that he is held in a piquant situation and forced to choose between the ocean and the deep sea. This being the case and death being a certainty, it is far better to die serving the cause of the brother-gods and while having a divine view of Lord Shiva from close quarters (known as having “Darshan”) and dying at the hands of the Lord than being tortured and killed by a demon (Tarkaasur) and having the ignominy of betraying his brother gods and not being selfless in his service to creation.

Therefore, Kamdeo “smiled wryly” as he knew he was trapped and there was no way out for him.

²He is addressed with the word “Maar”, meaning to kill or hurt or harm, because his deeds would harm Lord Shiva by robbing the Lord of the perpetual peace and bliss that he was getting while involved in Samadhi (deep meditation).

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84 herein below where Kamdeo has been addressed as “Maar”. Surely, the word fits in properly here because Kamdeo is on a mission to ‘kill the state of eternal peace in which Shiva was submerged while meditating’. It also means that Kamdeo was on a mission to wage war on Lord Shiva, and in a war it is ‘either kill or get killed’. In fact, both happened in this case: Kamdeo successfully eliminated (“killed”) Shiva’s peace of mind on the one hand, and got himself eliminated (“killed”) in the process on the other hand.]

चौ०. तदपि करब मैं काजु तुम्हारा । श्रुति कह परम धरम उपकारा ॥ १ ॥

पर हित लागि तजइ जो देही । संतत संत प्रसंसहिं तेही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tadapi karaba mair̄m kāju tumhārā. śruti kaha parama dharama upakārā. 1.
para hita lāgi taja'i jō dēhī. santata santa prasansahim̄ tēhī. 2.

---Inspite of this (i.e. inspite of all the dangers and uncertainties involved in attempting to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva, and despite the fear I have of being killed in this endeavour), I will still do the work for you¹. The ‘Srutis’ (the Vedas)² say the best meritorious thing for a person to do is to do something that helps or benefits others (in a selfless manner, which is the opposite of being selfish)³. (1)

Indeed, if a man leaves his body (dies) to serve others, he is always praised by saintly people⁴.’ (2)

[Note—¹What was the work that was to be done? It is outlined in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 83.

²Kamdeo was apprehensive of death by playing dirty tricks with Shiva as is clearly written in line no. 2 of Doha no. 83, and in verse no. 4 herein below. And what was the apprehension? It was certain that disturbing Shiva would invite his wrath, and there were fair chances that this would mean death. This is exactly what had happened—extremely exasperated by Kamdeo’s insistent impertinence and causing nuisance for him, Shiva had opened his ‘third eye’ that spewed fire and burnt Kamdeo to death. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.

³The word “Sruti” means ‘that which is heard’ as opposed to that which is read. The ancient texts of the Vedas were first revealed to the meditating seers and sages while their minds were submerged in deep meditation and contemplation upon the Absolute Truth of creation. Meditation helped them concentrate the various faculties of their bodies so as to synchronise the vibrations caused by the flow of consciousness inside their own bodies with the cosmic vibrations created in the ether by the supreme Consciousness. The net effect was that they could virtually hear the Consciousness ‘speak’ to them in a voice and tone that only they could understand and decipher. It is much like the case of a radio receiver: only when the receiver is tuned to the broadcasting station’s frequency do we hear the radio ‘speak’ to us. And then when we have heard the radio ‘say’ something, we immediately become aware of this bit of information that others aren’t even aware of.

What the first sage or seer heard, he transmitted it to his followers or disciples, and they in turn passed it down the line to others just like when we hear some news for the first time on the radio we tell others about it, and soon the news spreads.

In ancient times there was no method to keep a written record of what was heard by the first sage or seer. The method of transmission was oral, from generation to generation, from the ‘guru’ (the teacher) to the disciple (the student).

Such body of knowledge is called the ‘Veda’. The Veda encapsulates all the knowledge that the creator deemed fit to pass down to the inhabitants of his creation so that they can know what to and what not to do. Thus, the Vedas are the primary and the most ancient body of knowledge on which the rest of the codes and laws governing the conduct of the society were built.

Now, since the method of transmission of knowledge that was ‘first heard’ (Sruti) was oral (instead of being written), the teacher had to rely on his memory and the power of recollection. Therefore, the knowledge that was transmitted from the ‘hearer’ to the ‘listener’ was known as “Smriti”—simply because it was based on memory and recollection.

⁴A similar idea of altruism (i.e. selfless concern for the welfare of others) is expressed in Ram Charit Manas at two other places, viz. (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 121.]

अस कहि चलेउ सबहि सिरु नाई । सुमन धनुष कर सहित सहाई ॥ ३ ॥
चलत मार अस हृदयँ बिचारा । सिव बिरोध ध्रुव मरनु हमारा ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi calē'u sabahi siru nāī. sumana dhanuṣa kara sahita sahāī. 3.
calata māra asa hr̥dayam̃ bicārā. siva birōdha dhruva maranu hamārā. 4.

Saying this (i.e. assuring the gods that inspite of the dangers involved in the mission and its incredulity, he will still go ahead as it involves larger good of the community of gods who were all his brethren), Kamdeo bowed before all of them to take his leave, and departed from there on his mission. For help, he took along his bow and arrows made of flowers¹. (3)

When “Maar” (Kamdeo)² was on his way to accomplish his mission, he thought to himself—‘By opposing Lord Shiva it is certain that I will die.’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83 and its accompanying note no. 2 where this concept of Kamdeo holding a bow and arrows made of flowers has been explained.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 83 where Kamdeo is referred to as ‘Maar’. The implication of this word, which literally means to kill or one who kills, is explained as a note appended to this Doha.

A similar situation has arisen in Aranya Kand when Marich was forced by the demon king Ravana to come along with him and disguise himself as a golden deer so that Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, could be kidnapped. Marich had decided that now his death was near, but it is good to die while serving his Lord (Ravana) on the one hand, and seeing Lord Ram at close quarters as the Lord pursues him from behind. ‘Serving his lord’ may have a different meaning here—it may not mean ‘serving Ravana’ but ‘serving Lord Ram’, because the mission of the Lord was to eliminate Ravana whose cruelty was unbearable for the world, and this would be possible only when a war is waged where Ravana is killed. For this war to be waged, it was necessary that a reason is created, and Sita’s abduction by Ravana was to be that ‘reason’. So in effect, Marich was serving Lord Ram and helping the Lord in his divine mission. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Doha no. 26.]

तब आपन प्रभाउ बिस्तारा । निज बस कीन्ह सकल संसारा ॥ ५ ॥

taba āpana prabhā'u bistārā. nija basa kīnha sakala sansārā. 5.

Then, to successfully accomplish his mission, Kamdeo expanded his influence in world so much so that he brought the entire world under his magical spell. (5)

[Note—The way Kamdeo spread his tentacles in the world and sucked even the wise and the dispassionate in the whirlpool of passions and lust have been graphically described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 85.

Hitherto the influence of passion, lust and desire to enjoy the world and its material sense objects was limited to worldly men and women who had no interest in spiritual matters or worried for the welfare of their souls. Ascetics, hermits and other holy men were exempt from such temptations. But the mischief of Kamdeo entangled them all in its knotty web of delusions leading to passions, lust, yearnings and other forms of worldly attachments.

This answers a very important but rarely asked question: why did Shiva burn Kamdeo to death (as narrated in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 87)? On the face of it, the apparent and obvious answer is: because Kamdeo disturbed Shiva in his meditation (refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 87).

But when we delve deeper into this episode we deduce that Shiva was angry because Kamdeo was forcing creatures of the whole world to relinquish the path of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility and modesty) and move towards the path of gross indulgences and a life of immoderation. The whole edifice of Dharma was crumbling under the evil eye of Kamdeo. Even those who were respected by the society and regarded as holy men became pervert and morally corrupt. The grand virtue of 'Vivek' (meaning wisdom, and the ability to determine what is righteous and noble and what is not) took the greatest beating; it vanished from society when passions, lust, desires and indulgences became dominant features. The same people who had hitherto paid respect to such virtues as dispassion and detachment not began to loathe them and became excessively indulgent and promiscuous. The degeneration and degradation of society reached its pinnacle when Kamdeo took hold of the people's Mana (mind and heart). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 85.

Being the senior-most God and the most enlightened one, this outrageous development was unacceptable to Shiva. Had Kamdeo limited his mischief to Shiva alone and would not have encircled the rest of the world in its lusty tentacles, Shiva would not have become so angry with him so as to completely eliminate him. Shiva had other ways of punishing Kamdeo if his nuisance was limited to the Lord, but Shiva thought that if he spares Kamdeo then the whole world would lose the strength of its moral fibre and fall apart in tatters.

Even the holy men and those who were called ascetics and hermits fell in the trap laid by Kamdeo. Since Lord Shiva is their patron deity, he decided to end this scourge inflicting the society by eliminating the root of the evil—which was Kamdeo. So the Lord burnt Kamdeo to death.

The statement that "Kamdeo extended or spread his influence over the whole world" implies that he was preparing a background to launch his final attack on Shiva. Shiva is the 'Lord of the world', which means that Shiva is like a 'king-emperor' in the context of the mortal world, and like a 'king-emperor' he is also responsible for the conduct of his subjects, the creatures of the world. To bring a king-emperor down and defeat him, a clever enemy first corrupts the subjects of his kingdom and brings them under his influence so that when he launches his attack on the sovereign there would be no support from his own subjects, which would demoralise the king-

emperor and bring about his downfall. A lord who cannot exert control over his subjects and in whose realm anarchy prevails has no moral right to rule. Such a lord is isolated and easy to defeat.

This was in essence the plan of Kamdeo—he would first corrupt the world and bring it under his own influence by showing the world the pleasures that are synonymous with Kamdeo, and then telling them to abandon the path shown by Shiva which robs them of all these worldly pleasures. This would ensure that when he launches his attack on Shiva, the latter would find no support even from his own devotees and followers. Thus isolated, it would be easy to trap Shiva and enforce passion and desire on him so that he may agree to enjoy the life of worldly indulgences like the rest of the world over which he rules.

Kamdeo thought that when Shiva realises that the whole world has started following the path shown by the former, it would be prudent on the latter's part to adapt to the changed scenario and toe the line of Kamdeo out of apprehension of mass revolt by the subjects of the world over which Shiva rules if both of them, Shiva and Kamdeo, confront each other.]

कोपेउ जबहिं बारिचरकेतू । छन महुँ मिटे सकल श्रुति सेतू ॥ ६ ॥

kōpē'u jabahim bāricarakētū. chana mahum' mitē sakala śruti sētū. 6.

[The following narration tells us how Kamdeo influenced the world.]

As soon as Kamdeo, whose flag bears the emblem of a fish, unleashed his angry outburst upon the world, all the bridges established by the Vedas (that took a creature across the whirlpool of worldly delusions and entanglements, and helped in maintaining self-restraint) were swept away in an instant. (6)

[Note—The “bridge” is a metaphor for all the laws and codes of conduct established by the scriptures that help to regulate the society and maintain the path of Dharma. They are called a ‘bridge’ because by following the path of self-restraint and detachment from worldly indulgences as shown by the Vedas it becomes easy for the creature to cross over this world of miseries and a constant cycle of birth and death to find eternal freedom and peace much like a man easily crossing a turbulent river with the help of a bridge. Just like an enemy first destroys the bridge, Kamdeo's first move was to sweep away the laws as envisioned by the Vedas for regulation of society and helping its members to lead a life of morality and nobility. This means, the people no longer followed the path of Dharma as pronounced by the Vedas, and instead they became fallen and sinful, and there was widespread moral anarchy, chaos and spiritual degradation.]

ब्रह्मचर्ज ब्रत संजम नाना । धीरज धरम ग्यान बिग्याना ॥ ७ ॥

सदाचार जप जोग बिरागा । सभय बिबेक कटकु सबु भागा ॥ ८ ॥

brahmacarja brata sanjama nānā. dhīraja dharama gyāna bigyānā. 7.

sadācāra japa jōga birāgā. sabhaya bibēka kaṭaku sabu bhāgā. 8.

[What did this mean? Here is the answer in the following verses:--]

The grand virtues of 'Brahmacharya' (continance; self-restraint over one's natural instincts), 'Vrat' (steadfastness in following a righteous path and observing religious vows), different types of 'Sanjam' (observing self-restraint of all kinds in ever matter of life), 'Dhiraj' (patience, courage, resilience, fortitude), 'Dharma' (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, noble way of life), 'Gyan and Vigyan' (knowledge, wisdom and enlightenment, especially in spiritual matters), (7)--

---'Sadaachar' (righteous behaviour; morality; modesty), 'Japa' (repetition of the holy name of the Lord God as a means of doing meditation and focusing the mind on holiness and divinity), 'Yoga' (meditation), 'Vairagya' (renunciation, detachment and dispassion from all things pertaining to the gross material world of sense objects), 'Vivek' (wisdom and discrimination between the right and the wrong)—all these virtues fled en-masse in terror (when Kamdeo attacked the moral fibre of the world, shredding it into pieces). (8)

छं०. भागेउ बिबेकु सहाय सहित सो सुभट संजुग महि मुरे । १ ।
सदग्रंथ पर्वत कंदरन्हि महुँ जाइ तेहि अवसर दुरे ॥ २ ॥
होनिहार का करतार को रखवार जग खरभरु परा । ३ ।
दुइ माथ केहि रतिनाथ जेहि कहुँ कोपि कर धनु सरु धरा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bhāgē'u bibēku sahāya sahita sō subhaṭa sanjuga mahi murē. 1.
sadagrantha parbata kandaranhi mahum' jā'i tēhi avasara durē. 2.
hōnihāra kā karatāra kō rakhavāra jaga kharabharu parā. 3.
du'i mātha kēhi ratinātha jēhi kahum' kōpi kara dhanu saru dharā. 4.

The grand virtue of 'Vivek' ran away with all its associates; all the renowned warriors of this virtue could not stand their ground in the battle field (when Kamdeo attacked them) and turned their back to run away. (Chanda line no. 1)

All of them went away and hid themselves in the caves of mountains symbolised by sacred books¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

There was a huge tumult in the world. All the righteous people (who relied on Vivek in their daily lives) were dismayed and distressed, wondering who would now give them protection and who would now show them the way (once Vivek was eclipsed under the dark shadow of Kamdeo). (Chanda line no. 3)

They wondered—'Lord of Rati (i.e. Kamdeo who is the husband of Rati) has already conquered all the creatures that have a single head. Who is that abnormal creature or a super-human person with two heads for whom Kamdeo carries a bow and arrows so that he can use this weapon to defeat him?'² (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹This verse has two meanings: One is a literal meaning, and the other is the allegorical meaning. Now let us examine them.

The literal meaning is this: Unable to cope with the ferocity of attack by the army of Kamdeo, the virtue of 'Vivek' (in a personified form) thought it prudent to escape from being annihilated completely by withdrawing itself and confining its principles to the pages of good books so that when evil times ended and good times came again, these principles could be resurrected and made to live again. The generation that survived the onslaught of evil and sins perpetuated by Kamdeo, would be able to revive the ancient principles of 'Vivek' (wisdom) and once again lead a life in accordance with the path shown by the sacred books. The virtue of 'Vivek', i.e. the fundamental principles that help the world to decide what is good for it and what is not, would once again be available to the world if it reads the sacred or good books when the bad times are over.

It is just like the case of a wise king who does not show false daredevilry in the battle-field and gets killed, but rather shows prudence by escaping from there and hiding in a cave along with his close associates to wait for an opportune time to come out alive to reclaim his kingdom when the time is right and the enemy is gone.

The allegorical meaning is that all the virtues associated with the term 'Vivek' (wisdom; the principles upon which one relies to discriminate between the right and the wrong) vanished from the world when it was overcome by Kamdeo. In other words, when one is overcome with passions, lust, yearnings and desires to gratify the sense organs of the body and its natural urges to enjoy the material world and its comforts and pleasures, one's wisdom fails him. Under the onslaught of the negative virtues symbolised by Kaamdeo, a person becomes blind and loses the foresight to see what is good for his well-being and what is harmful for him. All his good virtues go for a big toss.

The "associates of Vivek" mean the different aspects and components of the virtue of wisdom that together help a person to decide what is righteous and what is not when he is given a choice between two situations or things or deeds. When Kamdeo became dominant, this ability vanished.

Let us examine this phenomenon from the metaphysical perspective of the Upanishads. The body of a living being consists of three basic components: viz. the gross body, the subtle body and the causal body. The 'gross body' consists of the external organs of perception (ears, nose, eyes, tongue, skin) and action (hands, legs, mouth, genital and excretory). The gross organs are under the control and command of the subtle body consisting of the Mana—i.e. the heart and the mind. Kamdeo (which term refers to the emotions of passion, lust, love, desires and yearnings, and sentiments attached to them) has his seat in the heart, while the mind is the seat of wisdom (Vivek) and intelligence (Buddhi). As long as the mind remains in charge, everything runs fine. When, on the other hand, the emotions symbolising Kamdeo take over and force the mind (wisdom and intellect) to retreat, the things take a bad turn for the creature and his well-being. A creature under the influence of Kamdeo is tempted towards the comfort and pleasure of the sense organs and their respective objects in the material world, desiring self gratification and indulgences with no holds.

A life without the active control of wisdom and intellect becomes animal-like and degenerated. Kamdeo forces the creature to barter his long term spiritual welfare for short term sensual pleasures and comforts that come from the world and its sense objects.

Another interesting point to note is that the principles that governed Vivek are said to have hidden themselves in "pages of sacred or good books". This means that at the point of time when Kamdeo unleashed his reign of moral terror and turpitude, the

codes of conduct for the society and principles of Dharma had already been ‘codified in writing, in the form of books’. This is why these principles and glorious traditions survived without distortion—because they had been written. Had they been still in the oral tradition of remaining as “Srutis”, we would have perhaps lost knowledge of all the good virtues that the scriptures originally contained; they would have been lost for good.

²All ordinary living beings have one head. Since the whole world had begun to toe the line of Kamdeo by becoming passionate, lustful, immodest and indulgent, those who were elderly in the society and still managed to retain their sense of thought and wisdom began to ponder as to why Kamdeo was still so angry, and why was he carrying a raised bow with a mounted arrow when he has already conquered the entire world? It meant that some formidable enemy of Kamdeo was still to be conquered by him. The “two heads” is simply a metaphoric way of saying that the still-unconquered enemy of Kamdeo is certainly not an ordinary member of the world; he must be an ‘extra-ordinary person like someone having two heads’.

Subtly this points fingers to Lord Shiva because till this point of time, Kaamdeo has not conquered Shiva, and sure enough Lord Shiva is definitely super-human and extra-ordinary even amongst the pantheon of gods.]

दो०. जे सजीव जग अचर चर नारि पुरुष अस नाम ।
ते निज निज मरजाद तजि भए सकल बस काम ॥ ८४ ॥

dōhā.

jē sajiṃva jaga acara cara nāri puruṣa asa nāma.
tē nija nija marajāda taji bha'e sakala basa kāma. 84.

All the inhabitants of this living world—where they could move or could not move (such as the animals and the plants respectively), and who could be categorised as the ones who were ‘males’ and ones who were ‘females’—all of them came under the grip of Kamdeo. As a result, they abandoned self-restraint and propriety, became immodest and indulgent in sensual pleasures and comforts. (Doha no. 84)

[Note—Kamdeo, in Indian literary tradition, refers to a personification of such negative traits in a person’s character as being passionate, lustful, lascivious and promiscuous. The whole living world, whether it is the plant kingdom or the animal kingdom, is divided into two primary segments—the male and the female. In the scheme of things devised by the Creator, a union between the male and the female helps to keep the wheel of creation rolling forward without intervention of the Creator every now and then. This devise freed the Creator from unnecessarily worrying about creating newer members to fill the gap in the world when its older members died. The Creator, in other words, made this gigantic machine of creation ‘self sustaining’.

In order to give effect to his grand plan to perpetuate his creation, the Creator created “Kamdeo”, i.e. a mutual attraction between the male and the female, which resulted in their union or conjunction, which in turn helped in procreation.

In order to keep things under control and maintain the ecological balance of Mother Nature, this Kamdeo was also subject to certain rules and laws as applied to other gods created by the supreme Creator. Till this point everything ran in an orderly

fashion in accordance to the laws established by the creator Brahma to regulate and govern life in this world.

But the situation drastically changed when the same creator Brahma and all other gods needed the help of Kamdeo to enforce marriage upon Shiva who was steadfast in his vows of remaining a reclusive hermit submerged in meditation instead of marrying and raising a family. As we have read, this need arose due to the ascendance of the demon Tarkaasur who was making life hell for the gods (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precedes Doha no. 82).

Special occasions require special actions and provisions of law. So, the gods and the creator Brahma were forced to give extra special powers and authority to Kaamdeo so that this difficult task—of making Shiva marry and produce an off spring who would kill the demon Tarkaasur—could be successfully accomplished.

If an unscrupulous and pervert man gets special powers, they go to his head, and he becomes tyrannical. This has happened with the demons (Tarkaasur and Ravana), and this happened with Kamdeo. And what was the result? It led to their ultimate downfall and elimination. The demons had all died, and so did Kamdeo (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87).]

चौ०. सब के हृदयँ मदन अभिलाषा । लता निहारि नवहिं तरु साखा ॥ १ ॥
नदीं उमगि अंबुधि कहूँ धाई । संगम करहिं तलाव तलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

saba kē hrdayam̐ madana abhilāṣā. latā nihāri navahim̐ taru sākḥā. 1.
nadīm umagi ambudhi kahum̐ dhāīm. saṅgama karahim̐ talāva talāīm. 2.

[The following verses describe the situation that prevailed in this world when Kamdeo, the god who personifies lust, passion, desires and yearning for sensual gratification, spread his tentacles to embrace every form of life. Not only the members of the animal kingdom who are less likely to hide their innate desire for sensual gratification and longing for sex, but even the plants and other entities such as the rivers and lakes that usually do not show any visual signs of such desires too began to exhibit these traits in an immoral manner.]

Everyone (the animate creatures as well as the inanimate constituents of the world) were overcome with lust and passions. All desired sensual gratification and yearned for sexual pleasures. For instance, the branches of trees (considered to be a male gender) bowed to reach and touch the creepers (considered to be a female gender) as soon as they sighted the latter¹. (1)

Rivers (considered to be a female gender) could not contain their passion, and therefore heaved in spate as they rushed towards the ocean (considered to be a male gender).

Even the lakes and ponds² broke all rules of Nature and overran their banks to meet each other to unite. (2)

[Note—¹Usually the creeper moves up the trunk of a tree and wraps itself around the branches. But under the influence of Kamdeo, the branches lost their patience, and instead of waiting for the creepers to come up and wrap themselves around these

branches, the latter bent down as soon as they saw the creepers so that they can touch them and caress them even while the creepers were still on the trunk of the tree.

²The lakes are larger water bodies as compared to the ponds. But both are of the same gender as primarily both exhibit the same basic characteristic feature of being static water bodies as compared to the river and the ocean which are flowing water bodies. Therefore, the lake and the pond are metaphors for the transgender or transsexual component of the world. Even these components of creation could not exercise restraint, and broke all norms of Nature to engage in union and embrace. This is indicated by the statement that the lakes and ponds broke the barrier of their banks and united.]

जहँ असि दसा जड़न्ह कै बरनी । को कहि सकइ सचेतन करनी ॥ ३ ॥
पसु पच्छी नभ जल थलचारी । भए कामबस समय बिसारी ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̃ asi dasā jaranha kai baranī. kō kahi saka'i sacētana karanī. 3.
pasu pacchī nabha jala thalacārī. bha'e kāmabasa samaya bisārī. 4.

When this was the lustful condition of the inanimate component of this world, who can say (i.e. who can describe in words) what could have been the condition of the animate component (consisting of the living beings)? [That is, when even the inanimate things such as the plants and trees, the rivers and the oceans, as well as the ponds and the lakes had shown such tendency towards lust and sensuousness, one can well imagine how promiscuous and lascivious the animate creatures would have been when Kamdeo had unleashed his rein of passion and lust and desire for sensual gratification in this world.] (3)

Every form of living being, whether they be animals or birds—those who lived and moved in the sky (such as the birds and insects), those who lived and moved on the earth (animals of all species) or in the water (aquatic animals and birds)—all of them were overcome with lustfulness and sensuousness, all became victims of passion and lust, all the time yearning for sensual pleasures irrespective of the time and the place. (4)

[Note—All living beings were so overwhelmed with a desire for sensual gratification and sexual pleasures that they lost all sense of propriety and morality, not bothering about whether or not it was the proper time to indulge in sexual activity, or if the place was suitable for such activities. Lust and passion had blinded everyone, both the animate as well as the inanimate components of this world.

It will be interesting to note that the sort of lustfulness and sensuousness that has been depicted here is also found later on in Ram Charit Manas when we read about the evil characters of Kaliyug in Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99, and once again in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100.]

मदन अंध व्याकुल सब लोका । निसि दिनु नहिं अवलोकहिं कोका ॥ ५ ॥

madana andha byākula saba lōkā. nisi dinu nahim̄ avalōkahim̄ kōkā. 5.

Blinded under the influence of Madan (Kamdeo), all the parts (components; segments; aspects; divisions; societies and races; all the living beings of every denomination as would be elaborated herein below) of the world had become restless and agitated due to the onslaught of desires, passions and lust.

Even the bird (“Kokaa”) paid no heed to the time of the day or night in its desire to unite with each other¹. (5)

[Note—¹The “bird” cited here is the male bird known as “Chakva” and its female counterpart known as “Chakvi”. They are the ruddy geese. The male and the female birds usually unite only during the day time, and they separate from each other as soon as night falls, though there is no physical barrier to separate them during the night. This is the law of Nature. But at the point of time when Kamdeo spread his vicious tentacles, even these bird-couples overran the laws of Nature and sought each other even during the night-time.

Another significant point is the use of the word “Koka”—which also means the womb, referring to the female genital organ as a whole. The science of sexual intercourse and child-bearing comes under the purview of the term “Koka”. This science is called the “Koka-Shastra”, the intricate knowledge pertaining to sexual intercourse and pregnancy. Hence, the word “Kokaa” itself is self-explanatory in the context of the subject matter being discussed here—i.e. sexual arousal that stokes passion and lust.

In short, these birds not only wanted to be together merely in physical terms but indulged in sexual intercourse and other types of sexual behaviour for most of the time while they were together, and in their lust they did not bother whether it was day or night.]

देव दनुज नर किंनर ब्याला । प्रेत पिसाच भूत बेताला ॥ ६ ॥
इन्ह कै दसा न कहेउं बखानी । सदा काम के चरे जानी ॥ ७ ॥
सिद्ध बिरक्त महामुनि जोगी । तेपि कामबस भए बियोगी ॥ ८ ॥

dēva danuja nara kinnara byālā. prēta pisāca bhūta bētālā. 6.
inha kai dasā na kahē'um̄ bakhānī. sadā kāma kē cērē jānī. 7.
sid'dha birakta mahāmuni jōgī. tēpi kāmabasa bha'ē biyōgī. 8.

The gods, the demons, the ordinary human beings, the Kinnars (dancers of the heaven), the serpents (representing the reptiles), the evil spirits, the ghosts, the phantoms, the ogres and the vampires (6)---

---I (Yagyawalkya¹) will refrain from narrating their condition because they are eternal slaves of passion and lust (and therefore they had a field day during the reign of Kaamdeo). (7)

What can I say about these above-mentioned creatures (who are naturally sensuous and prone to be passionate and lustful) when even the ‘Siddhas’ (mystics), the ‘Viraktas’ (those who had renounced the world and had taken the vow of leading a dispassionate life like that of a hermit or a monk), the ‘Maha-Munis’ (great and

acclaimed hermits and sages) as well as the 'Jogis' (ascetics; renunciates) had given up their vows of self-restraint and dispassion, and had instead felt sad and miserable at being separated from partners². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 75.

²The mystics, the sages, the hermits, the mendicants, the monks, the ascetics and other such highly respected members of the society who had taken the vow of self-restraint, who were supposed to have voluntarily renounced the physical charms and temptations of the material world and had willingly overcome the desire for gratification of the sense organs, who had been held in high esteem by the world for their virtuous way of life and exemplary lifestyles—they too fell victim of lust and passion. If this was the condition of such exalted and respected people as listed in verse no. 8, one can imagine the state of moral degradation, social degeneration and mental turpitude that prevailed amongst those who were inherently passionate and lustful like the entities listed in verse no. 6 herein above.]

छं०. भए कामबस जोगीस तापस पावँरन्हि की को कहै । १ ।
देखहिं चराचर नारिमय जे ब्रह्ममय देखत रहे ॥ २ ॥
अबला बिलोकहिं पुरुषमय जगु पुरुष सब अबलामयं । ३ ।
दुइ दंड भरि ब्रह्मांड भीतर कामकृत कौतुक अयं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bha'e kāmabasa jōgīsa tāpasa pāvam̐ranhi kī kō kahai. 1.
dēkham̐ carācara nārimaya jē brahmamaya dēkhata rahē. 2.
abalā bilōkahiṁ puruṣamaya jagu puruṣa saba abalāmayaṁ. 3.
du'i daṇḍa bhari brahmāṇḍa bhītara kāmakṛta kautuka ayam̐. 4.

When even Yogis (ascetics) and Tapas (those who were practicing austerities and penance) had become a victim of Kaam (lust, passion and desire for sensual gratification) and were virtually possessed by these negative traits, what can be said of those who were naturally low-minded and inherently lustful and wicked. [When those who were highly self-restrained and observed continence in their lives had fallen victims of lust and passions, it is natural that those who were already lustful and passionate would slide further down and fall head on in the chasm of lasciviousness and promiscuity.] (Chanda line no. 1)

Those who had been as highly wise and enlightened as to have seen the supreme Brahm (the all-pervading Lord of creation and the cosmic Consciousness) in every creature and aspect of this world had now begun to see the world as being full of females¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Women perceived the whole world as being full of men, and men saw the world as being full of women². (Chanda line no. 3)

The magic played by Kamdeo lasted in the entire length and breath of the universe (world; creation) for a time period of approximately “two Dandas”³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1, and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 99; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 10 that precede Doha no. 100; and the general description of the era of Kaliyug as described from Doha no. 97—to Doha no. 102 Ka.

²The implied meaning is this: women and men had become so blind in their drive for seeking sensual pleasures, had become so extremely sensuousness, lustful and passionate that they did not distinguish between a legitimate relationship and illegitimate liaison. Sexual perversion and promiscuity ruled the land, and the people failed to distinguish between a mother and a father, a brother and a sister, a wife and a casual friend. No morality existed, and one felt free to have a sexual relationship with anyone with whom he or she took fancy.

³1 “Danda” = 1 hour. Hence, 2 Dandas = 2 hours. It ought to be noted here that these “2 Dandas” are only symbolic representation of time, with ‘1 Danda’ standing for ‘1 day’. Therefore, 2 Dandas refer to approximately 2 days.

In Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86 herein below, it is said that the time during which this miracle happened was “two Gharis”. Now, 1 Ghari is technically equivalent to 24 minutes, but when used in poetry it can stand for a period of time that can be measured in minutes and has a component of 24 attached to it. Hence, 1 Ghari can mean a period of time that is equivalent to 24 hours (instead of 24 minutes), or ‘1 day’. Hence, “2 Gharis” would be roughly “2 days”.

It is said that the influence of Kamdeo extended throughout the whole universe or the entire creation. This means it was not limited to the earth, but extended to the heaven and the nether worlds also. Measurement of time on earth is different than in heaven. For instance, 1 day in the life of Brahma the creator who lives in heaven is equivalent to 1 Kalpa. In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion (4.32 x 10⁹) years.

Thus, the main idea behind the time period mentioned in these verses is that the bad effect of Kamdeo’s intervention lasted for quite some time, but it was only a short duration when measuring it against the scale of creation which runs into millions and trillions of years. It may also mean that the promiscuity and lasciviousness propagated by Kamdeo was limited to one generation of creatures represented by a period of one day (i.e. one lifetime). That ended soon because Lord Shiva would burn Kamdeo to death, thus bringing the curtain down on the drama that Kamdeo had stage-managed to camouflage his attack on Shiva.]

सो०. धरी न काहूँ धीर सब के मन मनसिज हरे ।
जे राखे रघुबीर ते उबरे तेहि काल महुँ ॥ ८५ ॥
sōraṭhā.

dharī na kāhūṁ dhīra saba kē mana manasija harē.
jē rākhē raghubīra tē ubarē tēhi kāla mahūṁ. 85.

No one was able to exercise self-restraint and practice vigilance upon one's sense organs because Kamdeo had usurped (or stolen) their power of wisdom and discrimination. [Under the onslaught of passion and lust unleashed by Kamdeo, all the creatures of the world forgot to exercise caution in their actions and deeds, throwing all prudence and propriety to the wind as they indulged in sexual perversion, lustfulness and promiscuity.]

Verily, only those who enshrined Lord Ram in their hearts, and upon whom the brave Lord of the Raghus (“Raghubir”) was benevolent, were able to successfully tide over these bad times and emerged unscathed and unharmed. [To wit, only those people who had thoroughly cleansed their inner-self and had enshrined Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, in their hearts were able to stand against the moral storm created by Kamdeo. Such people successfully maintained their inner calm and got protection from Lord Ram who ensures that his devotee is not offended by Kamdeo, nor affected by any other worldly taints. Rest of the people fell in the vicious trap laid by Kamdeo.] (Sortha no. 85)

[Note—Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 126 that asserts the same idea that when Lord Ram is a protector of someone, no power in this creation can harm even a single hair of such a person.

Refer also to “Geetawali”, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 11 of verse no. 49.]

चौ०. उभय घरी अस कौतुक भयऊ । जौ लागि कामु संभु पहिं गयऊ ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

ubhaya gharī asa kautuka bhaya'ū. jau lagi kāmu sambhu pahim gaya'ū. 1.

*This wonderful miracle (of the entire world becoming lustful and promiscuous without any sort of reservation) lasted for roughly two Gharis¹, the time it took Kaamdeo to reach Shambhu (Lord Shiva).

[*This verse can be interpreted as follows also: The wonder that struck the world under the influence of Kamdeo lasted for two Gharis while he (Kaamdeo) prepared his strategy for approaching Lord Shambhu to achieve his objective of disturbing the latter's meditation.] (1)

[Note—¹Technically, the word “Ghari” means an hour, and hence “two Gharis” mean ‘two hours’. But it is a metaphoric way of saying that the wild influence of Kamdeo lasted for a length of time that is equivalent to two hours on earth in a relative way. That is, it could mean two days, or a period of time that was equivalent to two hours when measured according to the scale used in the heaven—which may mean a long time on earth. For clarification, please see a note appended to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 85.

*Kamdeo had to plan his attack on Lord Shiva properly so that he succeeds in disturbing the Lord's meditation so that he wakes up. Then the gods would go and request him to marry. Kamdeo could not afford to fail in this venture, because no one else would be able to inject in the heart of Lord Shiva a desire to marry other than Kamdeo. As has been explained earlier, Kamdeo had to prepare a background that would be conducive to his campaign just like a clever strategist prepares a

comprehensive plan to succeed. The time that elapsed between Kamdeo taking his leave from the gods and going on his mission, and his actually reaching Lord Shiva was approximately two Gharis as cited here. This was the time when lasciviousness and promiscuity spread like a moral contagious disease throughout the length and breadth of the world.]

सिवहि बिलोकि ससंकेउ मारू । भयउ जथाथिति सबु संसारू ॥ २ ॥
 भए तुरत सब जीव सुखारे । जिमि मद उतरि गएँ मतवारे ॥ ३ ॥

sivahi bilōki sasankē'u mārū. bhaya'u jathāthiti sabu sansārū. 2.
 bha'ē turata saba jīva sukhārē. jimi mada utari ga'em̐ matavārē. 3.

As soon as Kamdeo saw Lord Shiva, he was so scared that all his enthusiasm vanished, his zeal ebbed, and he felt crestfallen and limp (like a deflated balloon or a flaccid and shrunken flower)¹. And as soon as this happened, the world regained its earlier composure and stability of the mind and heart². (2)

As soon as stability returned and the restlessness caused by the fire of lust and passion that was aroused by Kamdeo doused itself, all the Jivas (living beings) became calm and happy just like a drunken person who feels relieved when his intoxicated feeling subsides and his severe hangover ends³. (3)

[Note—¹Kamdeo had a premonition of death when the gods had asked him to go and disturb Lord Shiva's meditation—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84.

Remember: It is very dangerous to disturb an ascetic's meditation, and it a sure way of inviting his wrath. When Kamdeo saw Lord Shiva sitting in deep meditation, a chill ran down his spine, and he was sure that he is playing with fire. Just as fire is unforgiving, Shiva's wrath would certainly be ruinous for Kamdeo. The Lord's formidable personality and his awe-inspiring posture adopted during meditation were chilling like ice.

²The negative quality of lust, passion, lasciviousness, promiscuity and sexual perversion makes a man weak in his heart, anxious in his mind, and wobbly in his knees. He loses his strength that comes with morality and good character, and instead of being bold, straightforward and outgoing he becomes sly, deceitful, surreptitious and scheming, suspicious of all around him and losing faith in his own self as well as others. It is just like a thief who wishes to hide his real intentions when interacting with the world, and is always suspicious of everyone around him. Surely, one cannot expect to have mental peace and calmness of the heart in this condition. Immoral conduct keeps pricking at the sub-conscious mind of all the creatures, robbing them of their happiness and peace. They are filled with unending anxiety and restlessness.

So, as soon as Kamdeo, who is the patron god ruling over these negative trait of lust and passion and their attendant problems which make a creature overactive and fidgety, felt terrified on seeing Lord Shiva's majestic form while the Lord was submerged in deep meditation, the dare-devilry in his heart subsided and he felt flaccid and limp like a shrunken flower or a deflated balloon. This effect cascaded down to all the creatures, affecting their behaviour: all their enthusiasm and zeal

towards sexual inclinations immediately ebbed and abated like a river whose source of water has suddenly gone dry, or a balloon from which the air suddenly escapes.

³If a man, who has not drunk wine in his life, is made to gulp down a glass of the intoxicating liquid, he feels very uneasy till the time the drink remains inside his system. As soon as the after-effects of wine ends, or if the drunken man is able to vomit the alcohol out and take some rest to recover himself, he feels light, fresh and rejuvenated. He vows never to fall in the trap again, or ever try to taste an unknown liquid out of fear.

The same thing happened here. As soon as Kamdeo felt scared, the negative traits he represented, such as passion and lust, suddenly became limp and lustre-less throughout the world. All the creatures who were intoxicated with this ‘drug’ suddenly found its effect neutralised. Their zeal and dare-devilry towards sexual behaviour and sensuousness caused by the arousing effects of Kamdeo suddenly subsided. This brought peace and calm to their restless mind and heart. Then the creatures realised that they had been virtually taken for a ride by Kamdeo, and they thanked Lord Shiva for restoring their peace and happiness once again.]

रुद्रहि देखि मदन भय माना । दुराधरष दुर्गम भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

फिरत लाज कछु करि नहिं जाई । मरनु ठानि मन रचेसि उपाई ॥ ५ ॥

rudrahi dēkhi madana bhaya mānā. durādharāṣa durgama bhagavānā. 4.
phirata lāja kachu kari nahim̄ jāī. maranu ṭhāni mana racēsī upāī. 5.

When Madan (Kamdeo) saw Rudra (the angry form of Shiva)¹, he was terrified. He realised that the Lord God (i.e. Lord Shiva) was too formidable and majestic to be overcome (conquered and swayed from his posture of meditation). (4)

Kamdeo was in a quandary, uncertain of what to do: To return empty-handed (i.e. to fail in his mission of disturbing Shiva’s meditation) was a shameful act, and it was a virtually impossible task to wake Shiva from his meditative trance (without inviting the Lord’s wrath).

Deciding that death was now a foregone conclusion (because returning without accomplishing the assigned task was humiliating, and it was not possible to disturb Shiva without inviting his anger), Kamdeo contemplated in his Mana (mind and heart) and decided upon a course of action. (5)

[Note—1The use of the word “Rudra” here is significant. Lord Shiva has many names, and “Rudra” is one of them. “Rudra” is a synonym for anger and wrathfulness. So here it means Kamdeo was terrified to his bare bone because he was facing a formidable Lord who was a personified form of anger. To make matters worse for Kamdeo, going back without waking Lord Shiva was a humiliating option as the gods would laugh at his failure. Disturbing Shiva was like playing with fire of anger, and it was sure to invite the Lord’s wrath with a vengeance.]

प्रगटेसि तुरत रुचिर रितुराजा । कुसुमित नव तरु राजि बिराजा ॥ ६ ॥

बन उपबन बापिका तड़ागा । परम सुभग सब दिसा बिभागा ॥ ७ ॥
जहँ तहँ जनु उमगत अनुरागा । देखि मुएहुँ मन मनसिज जागा ॥ ८ ॥

pragaṭēsi turata rucira riturājā. kusumita nava taru rāji birājā. 6.
bana upabana bāpikā tarāgā. parama subhaga saba disā bibhāgā. 7.
jaham̃ taham̃ janu umagata anurāgā. dēkhi mu'ēhum̃ mana manasija jāgā. 8.

[Lord Shiva was meditating in the serene and barren part of the snow-covered mountains where there was complete silence and no form of disturbance. Now we shall read that Kamdeo converted that area into a vibrant and lush-green forest having flowering trees bearing colourful and scented flowers, complete with chirping birds and humming insects, a fragrant breeze blowing softly, and gurgling brooks singing their own melody. He did this in order to create disturbance to Shiva, but failed in his endeavour.]

Kaamdeo immediately created the pleasant spring season which is regarded as the king of seasons. Rows of young trees that were laden with fragrant flowers of varying colours and shapes sprouted everywhere¹. (6)

There were lush-green forests and gardens, water-filled ponds and lakes everywhere, in every direction so much so that all the parts and divisions of the world became exceptionally charming and enthralling for the senses. (7)

The Nature appeared to be overflowing with the emotions of love and passion. It looks so delightful and tempting that it aroused passion and longing even in the heart of dead souls (i.e. lifeless entities). (8)

[Note—Being a poet, Tulsidas was an expert describer of the beauty of Nature. His expertise comes to the fore when we read Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17 where he describes the tempting beauty of the mountain where Lord Ram had stayed for four months in Kishkindha in his wait for the rainy season to end so that efforts can be launched to search for Sita, his wife who was abducted by the demon king Ravana.

Another sterling example is Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 40 where he describes the tempting beauty of lake Pampaa where Lord Ram stayed for a while after meeting the old woman devotee called Sabari.

¹More specifically, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 40.]

छं०. जागड़ मनोभव मुएहुँ मन बन सुभगता न परै कही । १ ।
सीतल सुगंध सुमंद मारुत मदन अनल सखा सही ॥ २ ॥
बिकसे सरन्हि बहु कंज गुंजत पुंज मंजुल मधुकरा । ३ ।
कलहंस पिक सुक सरस रव करि गान नाचहिं अपछरा ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jāga'i manōbhava mu'ēhum³ mana bana subhagatā na parai kahī. 1.
 sītala sugandha sumanda māruta madana anala sakhā sahī. 2.
 bikasē saranhi bahu karṇa guṇjata puṇja maṇjula madhukarā. 3.
 kalahansa pika suka sarasa rava kari gāna nācahim apacharā. 4.

*Even those who were lifeless and gross by nature (i.e. the inanimate entities of creation) were aroused by passion. The stunning beauty and temptation of the surroundings were so immense that they cannot be narrated in words.

[*This verse can also be read as follows: The forest and its surroundings were so beautiful and charming that it tempted the mind and heart of all those residing there so much so that even the lifeless entities were aroused and showed signs of passionate life.] (Chanda line no. 1)

The breeze that blew was cool, fragrant and soft¹. It stoked the fire of passion and lust like a true companion of Kamdeo. [The breeze helped Kamdeo ignite passion and lust in all the creatures by caressing them and kissing them with its soft touch, arousing them by its sweet fragrance, and easing their tension with its cool flow.] (Chanda line no. 2)

Many varieties of lotus flowers sprouted in the countless ponds and lakes; they were abuzz with the hum of bees hovering over them in search of nectar². (Chanda line no. 3)

Swans, cuckoos and parrots sang in merry abundance³, while the Apsaras (celestial damsels) sang and danced alongside to add charm to the composite scene⁴. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—A similar description is found in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 40.

¹More specifically, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 40.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 40.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 40.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 61.]

दो०. सकल कला करि कोटि बिधि हारेउ सेन समेत ।
 चली न अचल समाधि सिव कोपेउ हृदयनिकेत ॥ ८६ ॥
 dōhā.

sakala kalā kari kōṭi bidhi hārē'u sēna samēta.
 calī na acala samādhi siva kōpē'u hrdayanikēta. 86.

No matter how hard Kamdeo and his army of followers¹ tried to disturb Shiva's meditative trance with all the nasty tricks they were aware of, they failed miserably in their nefarious designs.

This utter defeat infuriated the god of passion who lives in a subtle manner in the hearts of all living beings². (Doha no. 86)

[Note—¹Kamdeo's followers are the tempting features of Nature listed in the above verses—viz. fragrant and colourful flowers, breeze that is cool, sweet-scented and soft, lush-green gardens and forests laden with trees bearing flowers and succulent fruits, dancing and singing birds, insects and damsels, water bodies that lure a person with their cool and crystal clear nectar-like water, and so on and so forth.

These verses tell us how difficult it is to be able to remain dispassionate and detached when one is surrounded by a world of immense physical charm. These countless charms of the world are like the symbolic army of Kamdeo.

These verses also tell us that when an ascetic is submerged in meditation he is unconcerned about his surroundings, and the bliss and peace that he gets when he reaches higher stages of transcendental existence during meditation are more robust and sustainable as compared to the pleasures and comforts obtained from the objects of this material world. Therefore, an ascetic is unmoved by the temptations of the world just like Lord Shiva remaining steadfast in his meditation in spite of all the tricks that Kamdeo played to disturb him.

²This is a very important point: It tells us that Kamdeo resides in our own selves, inside our own hearts, and not somewhere in the imaginary heaven or outside world. It is a warning to all of us to be wary of negative traits as lust and passions that may lead to ruin and rob a person's peace and calm if the person falls in their trap and fails to exercise self-restraint. Kamdeo is an integral part of every living being's nature just like the virtues of wisdom and the ability to discriminate between the good and the bad is. So long as Kamdeo is kept under check he will not attack a person and leave him in peace. But should one become careless, Kamdeo will attack with viciousness. He is like a resident enemy who hits from within.]

चौ०. देखि रसाल बिटप बर साखा । तेहि पर चढ़ेउ मदनु मन माखा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi rasāla biṭapa bara sākḥā. tēhi para caṛhē'u madanu mana mākhā. 1.

Madan (Kamdeo) saw a thick green branch of a mango tree¹. He climbed it angrily² (because he was determined to wreak vengeance upon Lord Shiva for spurning all his efforts to be lured and fall in his trap, and remaining steady in his meditation). (1)

[Note—¹Kamdeo had climbed the branch of a mango tree for three reasons: One was that he wished to hide himself and shoot his arrow at Lord Shiva from a secure place where the chances of his getting located or traced were remote. So he hid himself behind thick foliage of the mango tree. The other reason is that Kamdeo wanted a vantage point from where he could properly see and aim at Shiva who was meditating quietly at some place. And the third reason is that the mango fruit is very sweet and succulent, and it is a metaphor that fits in well with the enticing lure of passion and lust which Kamdeo stood for in a symbolic way.

²Kamdeo was angry because this was the first time that he faced the humiliating prospect of failure. The gods had assigned him the task of waking up Lord Shiva from his meditative trance, and in spite of all his best of efforts Kamdeo had failed to move Shiva. Kamdeo had prided himself as being invincible when it came to luring a creature into the honey-trap of passions and lust as is proved by the fact that even the wisest of sages and hermits had fallen victims to his schemes as is clearly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 85.

Now, he would have to face scorn and ridicule at the hands of his peers if he went back and told the gods that he accepts defeat. The gentleman who has defeated him for the first time in his life was Shiva, and it was too much for Kamdeo to bear this failure. This filled him with enmity for Shiva.

From a broader perspective the message in this verse is clear that passions and lust are so great an evil thing that if their intentions are not met they turn hostile towards the person harbouring them, making him or her frustrated and agitated to such an extent that all sense of propriety and wisdom abandon him or her, and this leads to the ruin of the person as was the case with Kamdeo who lost control over himself and was ultimately punished by Lord Shiva who killed him by burning him to death.]

सुमन चाप निज सर संधाने । अति रिस ताकि श्रवन लगि ताने ॥ २ ॥
छाड़े बिषम बिसिख उर लागे । छूटि समाधि संभु तब जागे ॥ ३ ॥

sumana cāpa nija sara sandhānē. ati risa tāki śravana lagi tānē. 2.
chārē biṣama bisikha ura lāgē. chūṭi samādhi sambhu taba jāgē. 3.

Kamdeo mounted his arrow on the bow made of flowers¹, and angrily looking towards Shiva he pulled the string back to his ears². (2)

Then he shot his formidable sharp arrow which went and slammed at the heart of Lord Shiva. Being thus hit, Lord Shiva woke up from his meditative trance. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 83 and its accompanying note.

²During the epic war at Lanka between Lord Ram and the demon king Ravana, when Lord Ram had become very angry he too had shot fierce arrows at Ravana by pulling the string of his bow right back to his ears to give stronger thrust to the arrow so that it moved ahead with great speed and struck at the object with intense force—refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 91.

And to be angry at one's enemy and adversary is a common feature in any war-like situation. Even Lord Ram had lost his patience with Ravana during the heat of battle and had become very angry and wrathful—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91.]

भयउ ईस मन छोभु बिसेषी । नयन उघारि सकल दिसि देखी ॥ ४ ॥

bhaya'u īsa mana chōbhū bisēṣī. nayana ughāri sakala disi dēkhī. 4.

Lord Shiva's heart was filled with extreme annoyance at being so rudely disturbed from his meditation. Angrily he opened his eyes and looked in all the direction to locate the person who had dared to interfere with his meditation and agitate his eternally calm and peaceful mind. (4)

सौरभ पल्लव मदनु बिलोका । भयउ कोपु कंपेउ त्रैलोका ॥ ५ ॥

तब सिवँ तीसर नयन उघारा । चितवत कामु भयउ जरि छारा ॥ ६ ॥

saurabha pallava madanu bilōkā. bhaya'u kōpu kampē'u trailōkā. 5.

taba sivam' tīsara nayana ughārā. citavata kāmu bhaya'u jari chārā. 6.

When he (Shiva) saw Kaamdeo hiding behind the leaves of the mango tree, the Lord flew into a ferocious rage¹ so much so that the entire world consisting of three divisions (viz. the earth, the heaven and the nether world) trembled with fear. (5)

Then Shiva wrathfully opened his legendary 'third eye'² (located in his forehead) and sternly looked towards Kamdeo. This third eye spewed a tongue of fire which immediately reduced Kamdeo to ashes. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is an ascetic, and an ascetic has the unique character of being as calm, cool and tranquil as the surface of a placid lake. But at the same time, an ascetic should not be taken for granted and played fools with, because his nature is like the fire element which may remain dormant and is always beneficial for the living world, but it erupts in a fierce rage if stoked and prodded to rise up, unleashing its anger by reducing everything to ashes.

In spite of this observation, Shiva is renowned to be calm and peaceful Lord, the very embodiment of the virtues of mercy and compassion. Then why did he become furious at Kamdeo? Shiva was repaying Kamdeo with the same currency the latter had used to trap the former; Shiva was paying Kamdeo with the same coin which the latter had used against the Lord. Shiva was merely reciprocating Kaamdeo's attitude or behaviour towards him.

And what was this attitude or behaviour? It was 'anger'. Kaamdeo was 'angry' at Shiva at the time of shooting his arrow at the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 87. So Shiva also hit back with 'anger'. Kamdeo had used the best weapon he had in his arsenal—the arrow. Therefore, Shiva too used the best weapon he had in his possession—and it was the fire spewing from his third eye. It is another matter that in such a duel it is the warrior with the stronger weapon who wins: hence, Shiva won the battle of wits with Kamdeo!

²Lord Shiva's two conventional eyes represent the Sun and the Moon, while the 'third eye' represents the fire element that burns all forms of corruptions and perversions prevalent in this world and purifies it from its impurities. That is why it is called the 'eye of wisdom'—the eye that helps a creature to eliminate all forms of delusions and

its attendant moral corruption and evil tendencies so that his mind and heart becomes holy and pure.

The possession of the third eye has entitled Lord Shiva to be called 'Trinetrum', the Lord with three eyes.]

हाहाकार भयउ जग भारी । डरपे सुर भए असुर सुखारी ॥ ७ ॥
समुझि कामसुखु सोचहिं भोगी । भए अकंटक साधक जोगी ॥ ८ ॥

hāhākāra bhaya'u jaga bhārī. ḍarapē sura bha'ē asura sukhārī. 7.
samujhi kāmasukhu sōcahiṁ bhōgī. bha'ē akaṅṭaka sādhaḥa jōgī. 8.

As soon as Kamdeo was reduced to ashes, a wail of lamentation resounded through the world which instilled fear in the heart of gods (i.e. they were alarmed) while the demons felt happy and gratified¹. (7)

The thought of having to lose the pleasure derived from sensual gratification and sexual fulfilment made those who were passionate and lustful by their nature sad, whereas spiritual aspirants and ascetics for whom such temptations were causing a lot of misery and headache were relieved because this tormenting thorn was removed from their way². (8)

[Note—¹Why were the gods alarmed and scared, while the demons felt happy? Here's the answer: The gods had sent Kaamdeo to wake Shiva up from his meditation so that the latter could be married and produce a son who would kill the demon Tarkasur (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 83). But unfortunately Shiva has burnt Kaamdeo who was the patron deity of love and passion. This being the case, it became very difficult to make Shiva fall in love with Parvati and be passionate enough to produce a son from her.

Another reason for the gods feeling afraid is that they apprehended that when Shiva comes to realise, sooner or later, that it was at the behest of the gods that Kaamdeo had disturbed him, he would surely punish the entire pantheon of gods as he had once done earlier when he (Shiva) had sent his disciple Virbhadrā to punish the gods because they had tacitly supported Daksha Prajapati by participating in the fire sacrifice organised by him though Daksha had insulted Shiva. Virbhadrā had beaten the gods mercilessly without exception, and had chased them away (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 65). So now, the gods feared that the same fate awaits them once again when Shiva comes to know the facts.

The reason for the demons feeling glad is now they were sure that Shiva would not fall in the honey-trap of marriage and loving a woman, and without these preconditions being fulfilled there was no chance of him ever producing a son who would kill them (the demons) as prophesied by Brahma (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 82).

²The innate desires for physical comfort and pleasure, for self gratification and seeking happiness from the gross sense objects of this material world that are present in every human being are very strong and too difficult to resist and overcome.

Ascetics and hermits are supposed to lead an austere life marked by renunciation, detachment and dispassion; they are supposed to exercise exemplary self-control over all their instincts and impulses. Kamdeo constantly plays spoil-sport with them. Since Kamdeo resides in the heart of all living beings, he keeps nudging at the ascetics and hermits, instigating these ascetics and hermits to waver from their vows of austerity and penance, and instead swerve towards the basic pleasures and comforts that are sought after by their sense organs. Once Kamdeo, their greatest hidden enemy, was destroyed, the ascetics, hermits and other spiritual aspirants felt that the greatest ‘thorn’ or hurdle was removed from their path.

On the other hand, those creatures who were not spiritually inclined but preferred to wallow in the slushy world of lust and passion felt miserably because their protector and patron Kamdeo was no more. Who will now support them; how will they now enjoy sensuous pleasures of the world once their hearts had become bereft of passions and lust and their driving force, the god of love and passion known as Kamdeo? This worried such creatures a lot.]

छं०. जोगी अकंटक भए पति गति सुनत रति मुरुछित भई । १ ।
रोदति बदति बहु भाँति करुना करति संकर पहिं गई ॥ २ ॥
अति प्रेम करि बिनती बिबिध बिधि जोरि कर सन्मुख रही । ३ ।
प्रभु आसुतोष कृपाल सिव अबला निरखि बोले सही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jōgī akaṅṭaka bha'e pati gati sunata rati muruchita bhāī. 1.
rōdati badati bahu bhāṁṭi karunā karati saṅkara pahim gaī. 2.
ati prēma kari binatī bibidha bidhi jōri kara sanmukha rahī. 3.
prabhu āsutōṣa kṛpāla siva abalā nirakhi bōlē sahī. 4.

[The first line of this Chanda picks up the thread from the last line no. 8 of the previous set of Chaupais by citing the ascetics who felt glad that Kamdeo had been destroyed by their patron deity, Lord Shiva, because the former had been constantly disturbing them during their meditation sessions.]

The ascetics (“Yogis”) felt that a great thorn had been removed from their way. When Rati¹, the consort of Kamdeo, heard or learnt of the ill fate of her husband (that he had died when Shiva burnt him to ashes)², she fainted. (Chanda line no. 1)

Wailing loudly and lamenting in various ways, she approached Lord Shiva. (Chanda line no. 2)

She joined her hands in prayerful supplication and most humbly stood before the Lord (in a silent gesture asking the Lord to show mercy, compassion, kindness and grace upon her as well as her husband). (Chanda line no. 3)

The merciful and gracious Lord Ashutosh Shiva (i.e. Lord Shiva who is easy to please and eternally contented)³ observed the lady standing before him helplessly and in abject despair. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Rati is said to be a daughter of Daksha Prajapati because she was born from the sweat of his body. She was believed to be the most beautiful damsel in creation. She aroused passion and lust even in the hearts of gods, and hence she got the name “Rati” which means sensual arousal.

²It is said here that Rati ‘heard or learnt of the ill fate of Kamdeo’. This means she was not present at the site where her husband, Kamdeo, was causing nuisance to Shiva. The question is: how did Rati come to know that her husband has died? The first sign is given in Chanda line no. 1 itself—she learnt of it when she saw or heard that the ascetics had become happy because a thorn from their way was removed. These ascetics must have applauded Lord Shiva for having killed Kamdeo so that the latter would no more disturb them.

Then there was another reason also: as soon as Kaamdeo was reduced to ashes, there was uproar in the world—especially amongst the gods: refer—Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 87 herein above. Rati lived in the heaven, and surely this news could not have remained hidden from her.

³Lord Shiva is an ascetic par excellence. He is a patron deity of ascetics. Therefore he possesses all the eclectic virtues that an ascetic is supposed to possess, and being eternally contented and easy to be pleased are some of Shiva’s wonderful qualities. Though he had burnt Kamdeo for the mischief the latter committed, Shiva harboured no personal enmity with him—as a true hermit and ascetic who harbours no personal ill-will against anyone in this world. Kamdeo had invited trouble himself, and Shiva immediately regained his composure after punishing him.

The gracious, kind, merciful and compassionate nature of the Lord is evident from the very fact that Rati had no fear while approaching him directly immediately after the Lord had burnt her husband to death in a fit of anger. Rati was not terrified that the same fate would await her if she dared to come close to Shiva in the immediate aftermath of his angrily burning her husband to death—because she was aware of Shiva’s merciful and compassionate nature. She knew full well that his anger vanished as quickly as it came. She also was certain that the Lord would not punish her for the misdemeanours of her husband, and on the contrary he would surely bless her if she gathered courage to go and plead with him.

Rati was not to be let down in her confidence as she is fully rewarded for her humility and courage. It so transpired that Shiva blessed her that she would be reunited with her dear husband during the incarnation of Lord Vishnu as Lord Krishna—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow Doha no. 87 herein below.

Another significant point to note here is that Rati has not uttered a word, but has simply bowed before the Lord and stood silently in prayerful submission. Shiva learnt what was in her heart even without her saying anything. In the context of recent developments, Shiva needed no words to understand why Rati had come. Another important message here is that one need not express his wishes to the Lord God in explicit terms because the Lord knows every thought and every emotion that arises in the mind and heart of all the creatures.

In other words, ‘silence is the best form of prayer one can say to the Lord God’.]

दो०. अब तें रति तव नाथ कर होइहि नामु अनंगु ।

बिनु बपु व्यापिहि सबहि पुनि सुनु निज मिलन प्रसंगु ॥ ८७ ॥

dōhā.

aba tēm rati tava nātha kara hō'ihī nāmu anaṅgu.

binu bapu byāpihi sabahi puni sunu nija milana prasaṅgu. 87.

Lord Shiva told her—‘Rati, from now onwards your husband shall live without a physical body. He will be known as “Ananga”—one without any physical organs. He will dominate all the creatures in this subtle form (without a physical body)¹.

Now listen to the way you will meet and be united with him once again. (Doha no. 87)

[Note—¹That is why, Kamdeo is said to reside in the heart of all living beings in an invisible form by way of the emotions of love, passion and desire for gratification. In this form, Kamdeo became all-pervading and omnipresent throughout the length and breadth of creation.

The way Rati would meet her husband once again is narrated in detail in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 10, Canto 55. A brief outline is summarised in the following verse nos. 1-2 herein below.]

चौ०. जब जदुबंस कृष्ण अवतारा । होइहि हरन महा महिभारा ॥ १ ॥

कृष्ण तनय होइहि पति तोरा । बचनु अन्यथा होइ न मोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaba jadubansa kṛṣṇa avatārā. hō'ihī harana mahā mahibhārā. 1.

kṛṣṇa tanaya hō'ihī pati tōrā. bacanu an'yathā hō'i na mōrā. 2.

Lord Shiva told Rati—‘When the Lord (Vishnu) will manifest himself as Lord Krishna in the clan (family) of Yadus (of Vrindavan) for the purpose of removing (eliminating) the burden of the earth (just like the case of Lord Ram’s incarnation in the race of king Raghu of Ayodhya) (1)---

---Your husband would be born as Krishna’s son (named “Pradumna”). [In other words, Krishna’s son would be your husband.]¹

My words don’t go in vain². [Therefore, please have patience and wait till that time, and be assured that you will be reunited with your husband Kamdeo at that time.] (2)

[Note—¹The story of Pradumna and his marriage with Rati is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-Puran, Skandha 10, Uttaraardha, Canto 55. This story in brief is this:

Krishna’s son named ‘Pradumna’ was stolen by the demon named ‘Shambraasur’ from his parent’s home while still he was an infant of 10 days. Shambraasur threw the infant in the ocean to kill him. Luckily, one huge fish gulped him down. This fish was caught by fishermen who were surprised at its huge size. So they decided to gift it to their king Shambraasur to please him. When his cook cut the abdomen of this fish in order to cook it, he saw the child cocooned inside it. He gave the child to the head of the royal kitchen, a lady named ‘Mayawati’. This lady was actually Rati who was waiting to be reunited with her husband Kamdeo.

At that moment, the celestial sage Narad arrived and informed her about this child being Kamdeo. Mayawati took proper care of Pradumna till he grew up. She enlightened him about everything—his past life and who she was. She taught him the secret way of killing Shambraasur by using Maya (delusions and deceit).

After freeing themselves from the clutches of this demon, both Mayawati and Pradumna went to Rukmani, the consort of Lord Krishna and narrated the entire episode to her. Pradumna's parents, Lord Krishna and Rukmani, were very happy on seeing their son once again. In due course of time, Pradumna was married to Mayawati who had saved his life.

²When Manu and Satrupa had done Tapa to have the rare privilege of seeing Lord Vishnu as their son, the Lord had revealed himself before them and had assured them that he will become their son as desired by them. The Lord had told them that there is no doubt that this will happen as he is true to his words just like Shiva telling Rati that what he has told her would really come true. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 152.]

रति गवनी सुनि संकर बानी । कथा अपर अब कहउँ बखानी ॥ ३ ॥

rati gavanī suni saṅkara bānī. kathā apara aba kaha'um' bakhānī. 3.

Reassured by the words of Lord Shiva, Rati went away satisfied.
Now, let me narrate the story after this episode. (3)

देवन्ह समाचार सब पाए । ब्रह्मादिक बैकुंठ सिधाए ॥ ४ ॥
सब सुर बिष्णु बिरंचि समेता । गए जहाँ सिव कृपानिकेता ॥ ५ ॥

dēvanha samācāra saba pā'ē. brahmādika baikuṅṭha sidhā'ē. 4.
saba sura biṣṇu birañci samētā. ga'ē jahām' siva kṛpānikētā. 5.

The gods heard all the news. [In fact, they were anxiously waiting for the news of Shiva waking up from his meditative trance.] All of them, including Brahma the creator, went to Vaikuntha (which is the abode of Lord Vishnu). (40)

Then, all of them, including Brahma and Vishnu, went to the place where Lord Shiva, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness, was present. (5)

पृथक पृथक तिन्ह कीन्हि प्रसंसा । भए प्रसन्न चंद्र अवतंसा ॥ ६ ॥

pr̥thaka pr̥thaka tinha kīnhi prasansā. bha'ē prasanna candra avatansā. 6.

All these gods honoured and glorified him (Shiva) separately. Their independent prayers pleased the Lord (Shiva) who bears the crescent moon on his forehead. (6)

बोले कृपासिंधु बृषकेतू । कहहु अमर आए केहि हेतू ॥ ७ ॥
कह बिधि तुह प्रभु अंतरजामी । तदपि भगति बस बिनवउँ स्वामी ॥ ८ ॥

bōlē kṛpāsindhu bṛṣakētū. kahahu amara ā'ē kēhi hētū. 7.
kaha bidhi tumha prabhu antarajāmī. tadapi bhagati basa binava'um' svāmī. 8.

The Lord who is like an ocean of mercy, compassion, grace and kindness, and whose standard (flag) has the emblem of a Bull, asked the gods—‘Say, why have you all immortal beings (a reference to the assembled gods) come here?’ (7)

Vidhi (the creator Brahma) spoke on the behalf of all the gods¹, ‘Oh Lord, you are all-knowing and well aware of the inner thoughts of everyone because you reside in the inner-self of all (i.e. you are “Antar-yaami”; one who lives in the inner-self of all living beings). So, though you know what is in our heart, I shall still pray to you to express our ‘Bhakti’ (devotion and respect) for you. (8)

[Note—¹Brahma was the senior-most amongst the gods. He was old and wise. So the gods had made him their spokesman.

Vishnu did not say anything. Why? It is because Vishnu, in his manifested form of Lord Ram, had already requested Shiva to marry Parvati who had done severe Tapa to be accepted by the Shiva as his consort—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 76 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8. So, Lord Vishnu preferred to be discreet and kept quiet. When the gods’ spokesman Brahma was pleading their case with Shiva, it was civil to let him present the case of the gods without unnecessary interference.

Another reason why Brahma chose to act as the spokesman for the gods is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 83. It is said here that Brahma assured the gods that once Kamdeo successfully wakes Shiva from his meditation, he will go and pray to Shiva to get married.]

दो०. सकल सुरन्ह के हृदयँ अस संकर परम उछाहु ।
निज नयनन्हि देखा चहहिं नाथ तुम्हार बिबाहु ॥ ८८ ॥

dōhā.

sakala suranha kē hṛdayam' asa saṅkara parama uchāhu.
nija nayananihī dēkhā cahahim' nātha tumhāra bibāhu. 88.

‘Oh Lord Shankar (Shiva)! All the gods have a strong desire in their hearts that they wish to see the auspicious celebration of your marriage with their own eyes. [To wit, the gods want to enjoy the spectacle of seeing you married. They want to witness this auspicious and happy occasion and participate in your marriage ceremony.] (Doha no. 88)

चौ०. यह उत्सव देखिअ भरि लोचन । सोइ कछु करहु मदन मद मोचन ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

yaha utsava dēkhi'a bhari lōcana. sō'i kachu karahu madana mada mōcana. 1.

Oh Lord who has trounced the pride of Madan (Kamdeo)¹! Please let our eyes feast on the wonderful spectacle of your marriage. Please do whatever is appropriate so that we can have the privilege of seeing the ceremony of your marriage till our eyes feel contented (and we can fully enjoy the spectacle by witnessing the ceremony ourselves). (1)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva had vanquished Kamdeo's pride of being able to detract everyone in this creation without exception from their vow of self-restraint over their natural instincts of passion and lust. Kamdeo had failed to arouse lust and passion in Shiva as he had successfully done with even the sages, seers, hermits and ascetics on the one hand, and gods etc. on the other hand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 85.

No one had dared to confront Kamdeo, and all became an easy victim of his nefarious design, except Shiva. Shiva had burnt Kamdeo because the latter was breaking all barriers and had become reckless and uncontrolled. If Kamdeo was not punished, the moral fabric of the entire creation would lie in tatters. The moral decline had already started, and the downward slide was rapid. But it was still not too late and a break had to be applied. Though the current generation had become depraved and pervert, but the future generations could be saved. Lord Shiva thought that it was his moral obligation to eliminate Kamdeo whose behaviour was no different from the demons. The system established by the scriptures for the regulation of the society and proper conduct of its members had crumbled under the onslaught of Kamdeo just like it was under the rule of the demons. This will be clear when we compare the events that unfolded in the world under the influence of Kamdeo as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 84 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4, with the developments under the rule of the demons led by their king Ravana as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 184.

In this context, it will be interesting to read note no. 1 appended to Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 87 herein above.]

कामु जारि रति कहँ बरु दीन्हा । कृपासिंधु यह अति भल कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

सासति करि पुनि करहिं पसाऊ । नाथ प्रभुन्ह कर सहज सुभाऊ ॥ ३ ॥

kāmu jāri rati kahum̐ baru dīnhā. kṛpāsindhu yaha ati bhala kīnhā. 2.
sāsati kari puni karahim̐ pasā'ū. nātha prabhunha kara sahaja subhā'ū. 3.

Oh Lord who is like an ocean of mercy and kindness! You had done a very good thing by blessing Rati (that she would be reunited with her husband once again) after having burnt Kaamdeo¹. (2)

Oh Lord, it is natural habit for you to first punish the guilty and the culprit, and then show mercy and compassion upon him². [We, the gods, honestly appreciate this virtue in you; it shows that you are worthy to be honoured by the title of a 'Maha-Deva', the 'Great God' of creation. You are like an Emperor, punishing the guilty but harbouring

no personal enmity or ill-will against anyone whatsoever. It also shows your inherent nature of being eternally forgiving and merciful.] (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 88.

²It shows that you have followed the established doctrine of judicious governance, administration and polity that the guilty should first be punished and then mercy and compassion should be shown towards him. You are a senior God, the ‘Maha-Dev’, and therefore you are like an Emperor of the entire world. Hence it was necessary for you to punish Kamdeo because he had exceeded our brief to him—which was merely to ensure that you woke up from your meditation so that we can arrange for your marriage. And oh Lord, we did not wish to play fools with you by disturbing you in your meditation, but were forced to do so because a demon named Tarkasur has wreaked havoc on the world and it is so destined that he can only be killed by your son. How was this to be realised if you didn’t marry and remained all the time immersed in meditation and contemplation? That’s why we had no option but to make you get married, and for this waking you up from your meditation was obligatory.

But in any case, we hadn’t asked Kamdeo to insult you by becoming angry at you and shooting an arrow at you as if you were his enemy. If he had failed in his mission, he could have come back to us and told us that it was not possible for him to wake you up. Then we, the gods, would have devised some other means. Instead of adopting a straightforward approach, Kamdeo felt that his pride and ego were hurt, and he trespassed all laws and regulations by shooting an arrow angrily at a meditating ascetic. This is surely not acceptable and needed to be punished.

Not limiting himself to playing mischief with you and becoming angry at you, which in itself was a despicable deed, this fellow Kamdeo had violated all norms of proper behaviour by unnecessarily disturbing the entire world by becoming angry at even the innocent creatures of the world (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 84), and had pushed the whole world on the brink of moral degradation by unleashing lust, passions, lasciviousness and promiscuity in every entity of this creation, whether it was a mortal living being or an inanimate thing on earth, or the immortal gods in heaven (refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 85). It was absolutely necessary to punish him for otherwise the edifice of Dharma (proper and ethical behaviour) that I, the creator Brahma, had so assiduously established, would have crumbled and fallen apart.

Therefore, you have done nothing wrong by burning Kamdeo. It is to your immense credit and a measure of your compassionate and merciful nature that inspite of showing anger at Kamdeo, you had immediately calmed down and blessed his wife Rati that her husband would be restored to her in his next life as the son of Lord Krishna (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 88). This is really wonderful and highly laudable.]

पारबतीं तपु कीन्ह अपारा । करहु तासु अब अंगीकारा ॥ ४ ॥

pārabatīm tapu kīnha apārā. karahu tāsu aba aṅgīkāṛā. 4.

[Now let all of us, the gods, inform you that—] Parvati has done severe Tapa (to have you as her husband, and I, Brahma, have already blessed her that her wishes would be fulfilled)¹. So, please accept her by your side (as your consort)².’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 74.

²Brahma had earlier advised the gods that when Kaamdeo is successful in waking Shiva up from his Samadhi (meditative trance), he (Brahma) would accompany the other gods to request Shiva to marry Parvati and beget a son who would kill the demon Tarkasur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 83.]

सुनि बिधि बिनय समुझि प्रभु बानी । ऐसेइ होउ कहा सुखु मानी ॥ ५ ॥

suni bidhi binaya samujhi prabhu bānī. aisē'i hō'u kahā sukhu mānī. 5.

Hearing the words (request) of Bidhi (Brahma, the god who determines the destiny of all living beings in this creation) and recalling the words of the Lord (i.e. of Lord Ram who had also asked Shiva to marry Parvati¹), Shiva agreed and said—‘Alright, so be it. It shall happen as you wish (or say).’ (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 77.]

तब देवन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाई । बरषि सुमन जय जय सुर साई ॥ ६ ॥
 अवसरु जानि सप्तारिषि आए । तुरतहिं बिधि गिरिभवन पठाए ॥ ७ ॥
 प्रथम गए जहँ रहीं भवानी । बोले मधुर बचन छल सानी ॥ ८ ॥

taba dēvanha dundubhīm bajā'īm. barāṣi sumana jaya jaya sura sā'īm. 6.
 avasaru jāni saptariṣi ā'ē. turatahīm bidhi giribhavana paṭhā'ē. 7.
 prathama ga'e jaham' rahīm bhavānī. bōlē madhura bacana chala sānī. 8.

Cheer rang out in the rank and file of the gods. Excited and exhilarated, they sounded their kettle-drums enthusiastically, showering flowers and applauding in a loud chorus—‘Hail the Lord of the gods. Glory be to you!’ (6)

Realising that it was the proper time, the seven celestial sages known as the Saptarishis came there. Bidhi (Brahma) immediately sent them to the home of Giri, the father of Parvati (to convey the good news and ask him to prepare for the marriage of Shiva with Parvati). (7)

The Saptarishis first went to the place where Bhavaani (Parvati) was (instead of going to her father's place as asked by Brahma)¹. When they reached there, they spoke to her sweetly but with cunning in their words². (8)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that Parvati was living at her parent's home at the time Sapta-rishis met her for the second time to test her faith and devotion for Lord Shiva as will be narrated in the verses that follow below. She was brought home by her father after he was instructed to do so by the same Sapta-rishis when they had tested her at the end of her successful Tapa—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 82.

The question is: why did the Sapta-rishis not go straight to Giri, Parvati's father, as asked by Brahma, but instead went to Parvati? Well, they wished to be absolutely certain about Parvati's devotion, faith and steadfastness in her vows of marrying Shiva. Perhaps it is also possible that Shiva had quietly, by a wink of his eyes, hinted to them to go and test Parvati's loyalty once again, to be doubly sure and counter-check the facts.

This being so, the next question is: why would Shiva still wish to test her integrity though this testing had already been done before—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 77—to Doha no. 81. The answer is this—Shiva had had a bitter experience of Parvati when she was his consort in her previous life as Sati. Though her physical body had changed, but the essential element, the Atma or the soul, of Parvati was the same as that of Sati. So, Shiva was very sceptical of her.

Another reason is that at the time of disowning Sati, he had taken a vow that he will have nothing to do with her any longer in this life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 56; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1, 4 that precede Doha no. 57; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 58.

That is why when Lord Ram requested Shiva to marry Parvati, the latter had first expressed his strong reservations against it but had accepted the orders of the Lord because it would be improper to disobey one's revered deity, in Shiva's case Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 77).

So Shiva wanted to be doubly sure if Parvati had amended her nature and ways, and if she would not give him more trouble once again after marriage. If even a minute fault could be found with her, Shiva would get an excuse to avoid marrying her; he would have told both Lord Ram and Brahma that it is not possible to follow their requests because of the faults discovered in Parvati's character or nature.

²The Sapta-rishis had done the same thing on the earlier occasion also when they had gone to test Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 80. Especial attention should be given to Doha no. 78 that says that when Parvati had tried to stop them from disturbing her, they had smiled cunningly and gone ahead with their testing.]

दो०. कहा हमार न सुनेहु तब नारद केँ उपदेस ।

अब भा झूठ तुम्हार पन जारेउ कामु महेस ॥ ८९ ॥

dōhā.

kahā hamāra na sunēhu taba nārada kēṁ upadēsa.

aba bhā jhūṭha tumhāra pana jāre'u kāmu mahēsa. 89.

The Sapta-rishis told Parvati—‘You did not listen to our advice the last time we came to you. You insisted that you will follow the advice given by Narad¹.

Now your vow (of marrying Shiva) has become false and unrealisable because Mahesh (Shiva) has burnt Kamdeo, the god of love². (Doha no. 89)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 81.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87. What the sages meant is that Shiva has burnt whatever vestiges of love and passion that had remained in his heart by symbolically burning the patron god of such emotions, i.e. the god named Kaamdeo. Shiva has now become a stern ascetic, and therefore how can Parvati expect to marry him now?

Parvati immediately recognised the Sapta-rishis. She recalled how they had tried to derail her determination to marry Shiva on the earlier occasion. Therefore as soon as she saw them she was on her guard, guessing that these fellows will surely create more mischief for her once again. In fact, the Sapta-rishis should have thought of it, and should have not gone to test her in their original form as ‘Satpa-rishis’, but rather should have disguised themselves as some other group sages or saints to throw Parvati off her guard so that the reality emerged.]

मासपारायण, तीसरा विश्राम

(māsapārāyaṇa, tīsarā viśrāma)

[The third pause in the 30-day recitation of Ram Charit Manas.]

चौ०. सुनि बोलीं मुसुकाइ भवानी । उचित कहेहु मुनिबर बिग्यानी ॥ १ ॥
तुम्हरेँ जान कामु अब जारा । अब लगि संभु रहे सबिकारा ॥ २ ॥
हमरेँ जान सदा सिव जोगी । अज अनवद्य अकाम अभोगी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

suni bōlīm musukā'i bhavānī. ucita kahēhu munibara bigyānī. 1.
tumharēm jāna kāmu aba jārā. aba lagi sambhu rahē sabikārā. 2.
hamarēm jāna sadā siva jōgī. aja anavadya akāma abhōgī. 3.

Hearing the words of the Sapta-rishis, Bhavaani (Parvati) smiled and replied to them—‘Oh learned sages, whatever you have said is correct according to your wisdom. [But my respected sages, your judgement is erroneous. I will tell you why you are wrong.] (1)

You believe that Lord Shiva has burnt Kaam (representing emotions of love, passion and desire) only now¹, but till this day he had harboured some kind of emotional, moral or spiritual faults or shortcomings that are universally associated with Kamdeo.

[This is what ‘you’ think. You believe that till now Shiva had been a victim of such negative traits as passion, lust and love—traits that are synonymous with Kamdeo. That is why you have given this event of Lord Shiva burning Kamdeo so great an importance that you have come running to me in order to convey some great news as if I was under the delusion that Shiva had Kaam in his psyche till now. You think that you are doing me a great favour by telling me that all my efforts to be a companion of Lord Shiva were based on a wrong premise that Shiva had ‘Kaam’ in his mind and heart till now, and that I was longing to marry him because I believed that he would satisfy my desire for sensual fulfilment. But my dear sages, I was not under any sort of delusion when I decided to do Tapa for Shiva.] (2)

But as far as I am concerned, I am fully aware that Shiva is eternally an exemplarily renunciate ascetic, totally detached from all the grossness associated with this world. I know that Shiva is eternal in the sense that he does not take a birth like other creatures including me. I know he is irreproachable²: he has no Kaam (desires, lust, passion) in him; he is not interested in enjoying the pleasures of the sense organs or the sense objects of the world. (3)

[Note—¹Parvati addresses this issue of Shiva burning Kamdeo in Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 90 herein below.

²This observation that Shiva is beyond reproach and is free from any taints is significant in the context of what the sages have said and intended to mean. They have said that Shiva has burnt Kamdeo (refer: Doha no. 89)—that means he has a lot of anger inside him and is short-tempered. Would he also not show this anger towards Parvati for all the misdeeds she had committed in her previous life as Sati, or for daring to propose marriage to him especially when he has already declared his intention to discard her for life (refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57) and she was fully aware of this determination of Shiva (refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58)?

By burning Kamdeo, Shiva gave a clear hint that he abhors love and passion. So would he not pour his wrath on Parvati if she dares to show that she loves him and wishes to marry him? Would Shiva not sternly punish Parvati for her stubborn attitude like he has done with Kamdeo by burning him when the latter had obstinately acted in a manner that disturbed the Lord’s meditation?

So, Parvati addresses this issue by saying that Shiva is irreproachable; that he cannot be accused of harbouring any kind of fault—whether it be lust and passion, or anger and being short-tempered. It was Kamdeo’s own fault that Shiva punished him. After all, being the Lord God of creation, is it not one of the responsibilities of Shiva to protect the norms of Dharma in this world? Kamdeo had spread nuisance in this world; the world had lost all sense of propriety and ethical behaviour under his influence (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 85). So, should Shiva not punish the perpetrator of this mischief? So what wrong did Shiva do by punishing Kamdeo by burning him to death? After all, the good and well-being of the world at large was a greater priority for Shiva than overlooking the misdemeanours of one single individual who was wreaking havoc by sparing his life.

As far as ‘lust and passion’ are concerned, everyone knows that Shiva remains deeply submerged in meditation and its accompanying Samadhi (a trance-like state of transcendental existence when the practitioner is totally oblivious of the surrounding

world)—a state of existence that necessitates complete self-restraint of all the sense organs. This precludes indulgences in lust and passion.

And as for ‘anger’ etc., Parvati knew that Shiva was calm and patient as one can ever be. Shiva had not shown any visible sign of anger towards Sati even though she had done grave wrong to him—by disobeying him and showing lack of faith in his advice. This will be amply evident when we read the sequence of events as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 52; and (ii) from Doha no. 55—to Doha no. 62.

In fact, Shiva was concerned that Parvati was suffering due to separation from him and that she had done severe Tapa (penance) to atone for her past sins so that she can be reunited with her beloved Lord once again (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76).]

जौं मैं सिव सेये अस जानी । प्रीति समेत कर्म मन बानी ॥ ४ ॥

तौ हमार पन सुनहु मुनीसा । करिहहिं सत्य कृपानिधि ईसा ॥ ५ ॥

jauṁ mairṁ siva sēyē asa jānī. prīti samēta karma mana bānī. 4.
tau hamāra pana sunahu munīsā. karihahim satya kṛpānidhi īsā. 5.

If I have served Lord Shiva with full knowledge of these facts, if I have served Lord Shiva with affection and devotion using all my faculties such as my deeds, heart and mind, as well as words¹ (4)---

---Then listen sages, Isha (Lord God; Shiva), who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, will surely make my vows fruitful and oblige me². (5)

[Note—¹Sati had expressed this same confidence when she had prayed to Lord Ram while asking the latter to relieve her of the agony of separation from Shiva: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 59 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

Even Shiva had acknowledged Sati’s love and devotion for himself: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 56.

²Parvati’s devotion for Shiva was unquestioned because even at the time of her death in her previous life as Sati, she had asked Lord God to be able to serve Lord Shiva in her next life: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65.]

तुम्ह जो कहा हर जारेउ मारा । सोइ अति बड़ अबिबेकु तुम्हारा ॥ ६ ॥

तात अनल कर सहज सुभाऊ । हिम तेहि निकट जाइ नहिं काऊ ॥ ७ ॥

गएँ समीप सो अवसि नसाई । असि मन्मथ महेस की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

tumha jō kahā hara jārē'u mārā. sō'i ati baṛa abibēku tumhārā. 6.
tāta anala kara sahaja subhā'ū. hima tēhi nikṛṭa jāi nahim kā'ū. 7.

ga'ēm̃ samīpa sō avasi nasā'ī. asi manmatha mahēsa kī nā'ī. 8.

Now let me (Parvati) come to your statement that 'Har (Shiva) has burnt Kamdeo to death' (refer: Doha no. 89). This shows that you are very ignorant of facts. [You look as if you are a group of seven wise sages, but in fact it appears to me that you are foolish beyond imagination. Your statement that Shiva burnt Kamdeo is a proof of this. Do you realise why I am saying this? Well, listen to me—] (6)

Revered sages, it is a fact of Nature that snow never goes near 'fire'. [Don't you know why? Well, I will tell you—] (7)

It is certain that if snow goes near fire then it is definitely going to be annihilated. [The heat of the fire would surely melt snow even if the former does not wish to do so, or the latter had involuntarily come near the fire. It is the inherent character of fire that it does not allow snow to survive in its vicinity.]

The same principle applies to Mahesh (Shiva) and Manmath (Kamdeo)². [That is, just like snow cannot survive in the presence of fire, the negative trait of passion and lust cannot exist within the jurisdiction of Shiva. Therefore, what is surprising in Shiva burning Kamdeo? You can't play fools with fire; it is surely going to scorch you. I had thought that seven were elderly wise sages, but your intellect seems inadequate.]' (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 92 where Laxman tells Nishad, the chief of the boatmen community, that "no one is responsible for one's sorrows or happiness except one's own self and the deeds one does in his life".

In the present context this means (i) Parvati had to suffer so much due to her own misdeeds in her previous life as Sati; and similarly (ii) Kamdeo had to suffer death due to his own misdeeds.

²The word "Manmath" means 'one that churns the mind and heart'. It is a metaphor for Kamdeo because the emotional traits he represents, i.e. passion, lust and desire for sensual gratification, are so strong that a person's mind and heart are churned vigorously if Kamdeo manages to get its hold on them. A person under the spell of Kamdeo would be restless, anxious and agitated like a leaf that is tossed around in a gust of wind or swirls vigorously in a whirlpool in water.]

दो०. हियँ हरषे मुनि बचन सुनि देखि प्रीति बिस्वास ।
चले भवानिहि नाइ सिर गए हिमाचल पास ॥ ९० ॥

dōhā.

hiyam̃ haraṣē muni bacana suni dēkhi prīti bisvāsa.
calē bhavānihi nā'i sira ga'ē himācala pāsa. 90.

The sages felt exhilarated in their hearts when they heard the words of such confidence, faith and devotion from Bhavaani (Parvati). Then they reverentially bowed their heads to her and went to Himaachal (the king of mountains, Parvati's

father) to meet him (and advice him of the latest developments with a request to start preparations for the divine marriage)¹. (Doha no. 90)

[Note—¹A similar narrative is given when the sages had met and tested Parvati for the first time at the end of her Tapa—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 81 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.]

चौ०. सबु प्रसंगु गिरिपतिहि सुनावा । मदन दहन सुनि अति दुखु पावा ॥ १ ॥
बहुरि कहेउ रति कर बरदाना । सुनि हिमवंत बहुत सुखु माना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sabu prasaṅgu giripatihi sunāvā. madana dahana suni ati dukhu pāvā. 1.
bahuri kahē'u rati kara baradānā. suni himavanta bahuta sukhu mānā. 2.

The Sapta-rishis then went to the king of mountains, Giripati, and narrated all the events to him. He was very sad when he heard about the burning of Kaamdeo¹. (1)

Soon after this narration, the sages told him about the boon that was granted by Shiva to Rati, the wife of Kaamdeo. When Himwant, the king of the snow-covered mountains, heard of this, he felt very glad². (2)

[Note—¹Parvati's father was sad when he heard that Shiva had burnt Kamdeo because it indicated three possible things—one: that Shiva was given to becoming angry quickly, two: that he had vented his ire on Kamdeo to signal that he is no longer interested in love and establishing any kind of affectionate relationships, and three: he had killed Kamdeo because the latter was trying to persuade Shiva to abandon his lonely life as an ascetic who is constantly doing mediation and instead marry Parvati and start a homely life.

These reasons, or any other reason that implied that Shiva is not interested in marrying and establishing any family relationships based on affection and love, and that he is of a quick temper, naturally worried Parvati's father because it will directly affect his daughter's future. No father would want his daughter to be married to someone who is so angry and unforgiving by nature, and who has no desire to welcome emotions of love and affection, one who is not passionate about his relationships and responsibilities.

²But as soon as he heard that Shiva had blessed Rati immediately after having burnt her husband Kamdeo, that she will be reunited with him, he felt reassured, because this meant that Shiva's anger was superficial and transient, that he was very merciful, compassionate and considerate by his nature inspite of showing apparent anger, and that he did not despise a union between a faithful and loving wife and her husband. Therefore, if his daughter Parvati has true love for Shiva then she can expect consideration and compassionate treatment from him though he is an ascetic who has renounced all family ties.]

हृदयं बिचारि संभु प्रभुताई । सादर मुनिबर लिए बोलाई ॥ ३ ॥

सुदिनु सुनखतु सुघरी सोचाई । बेगि बेदबिधि लगन धराई ॥ ४ ॥
पत्री सप्तारिषिन्ह सोइ दीन्ही । गहि पद बिनय हिमाचल कीन्ही ॥ ५ ॥

hṛdayam^३ bicāri sambhu prabhutā^१. sādara munibara li'ē bōlā^१. 3.
sudinu sunakhatu sugharī sōcā^१. bēgi bēdabidhi lagana dharā^१. 4.
patrī saptariṣinha sō^१i dīnhī. gahi pada binaya himācala kīnhī. 5.

Himwaan thought over the matter and glorified Lord Shiva's virtues in his heart. After that, he respectfully summoned the sages¹ (who had been residing in his realm to consult them and seek their blessings so that the marriage process could be taken forward). (3)

The king consulted them and got an auspicious day, asterism and time fixed for the marriage ceremony in accordance with the procedure and principles fixed by the Vedas (primary scriptures) for this purpose². (4)

Then Himaachal got this written in the form of a formal proposal-letter known as a "Patri" that made this announcement, and handed it over to the Sapta-rishis after paying his due respects to them by clapping their feet as a token gesture to express his gratitude towards them³. (5)

[Note—¹It was an established custom that all elders and wise people living in a king's kingdom were called by him on special occasions. This was done to discuss the situation with them and seek their overall guidance and blessings. The seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-rishis were already present, and so the king summoned other sages who had been living in the mountains to pursue their spiritual objectives in life. There were a lot many sages, saints, seers and hermits living in the peaceful environs of the mountains where Parvati's father ruled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 65. All of them were invited.

²We find a parallel to this sequence of events when Sita was married to Lord Ram. Sita's father, king Janak, too had sent a "Patri" to king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, inviting the latter to attend the marriage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 287; Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 290; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 295.

³King Himwaan was highly grateful towards the Sapta-rishis because they had been instrumental in removing any iota of doubt relating to mutual trust and faith between his daughter Parvati and her future husband Shiva. They had put themselves at grave risk by teasing Parvati inspite of knowing that she is destined to be a divine and powerful consort of Lord Shiva, the mighty Lord God who controls death. What if she decided to take revenge upon them after she marries Lord Shiva and acquires her powerful position as a great goddess in the hierarchy of heaven?

Also, what would have happened if they had tweaked the result of their tests and given a wrong impression about Parvati to Shiva, or about Shiva to Himwaan? Therefore, Parvati's father wished to thank the Sapta-rishis for their courage and their effort to bring about a union between Parvati and Lord Shiva (who is the 3rd God of the Trinity and responsible for conclusion of creation), thereby entitling his daughter to acquire the exalted position of a great goddess that would be equivalent to the

position occupied by Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Lord Vishnu (the sustainer of creation), and Brahmaani, the consort of Brahma (the creator of creation).]

जाइ बिधिहि तिन्ह दीन्हि सो पाती । बाचत प्रीति न हृदयँ समाती ॥ ६ ॥
 लगन बाचि अज सबहि सुनाई । हरषे मुनि सब सुर समुदाई ॥ ७ ॥
 सुमन बृष्टि नभ बाजन बाजे । मंगल कलस दसहुँ दिसि साजे ॥ ८ ॥

jā'i bidhihi tinha dīnhi sō pātī. bācata prīti na hṛdayam̃ samātī. 6.
 lagana bāci aja sabahi sunāī. haraṣē muni saba sura samudāī. 7.
 sumana br̥ṣṭi nabha bājana bājē. maṅgala kalasa dasahum̃ disī sājē. 8.

The Sapta-rishis went away and gave the 'Patri' to Bidhi (Brahma, the creator, who was waiting for it along with other gods who had assembled near Shiva). When he read it, there was so much delight in his heart that it failed to contain his exhilaration. [Brahma was very happy and delighted to learn that Parvati's family has accepted the proposal, and there is no last minute hitch to the marriage.] (6)

He read aloud the auspicious time and date as contained in the 'Patri' so that everyone can hear it. Sages and gods who were present on the occasion were exhilarated when they heard it¹. (7)

As soon as this auspicious news was announced, there was celebration all around: flowers rained down from the sky and musical instruments began playing in the heaven. Pitchers and jars that are exhibited on such auspicious occasion were put up everywhere², in all the ten directions³ of the compass. (8)

[Note—¹A similar scene is observed in Ayodhya when the "Patri" containing the news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita arrived. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 287; Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 290; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 291; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 295; and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296.

³The 'ten directions' are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

दो०. लगे सँवारन सकल सुर बाहन बिबिध बिमान ।
 होहिं सगुन मंगल सुभद करहिं अपछरा गान ॥ ९१ ॥
 dōhā.

lagē samṅvārana sakala sura bāhana bibidha bimāna.
hōhim saguna maṅgala subhada karahim apacharā gāna. 91.

All the gods began decorating their different types of vehicles¹ in many ways in preparation to accompany the marriage procession.

Meanwhile, auspicious omens began to happen, and celestial damsels known as the ‘Apsaras’ sang and danced in merry abandon². (Doha no. 91)

[Note—¹The different gods had different types of personal means of transport. Some of them are the following—Vishnu (the sustainer) has Garud (the celestial heron), Brahma (the creator) has Hansa (a swan-shaped airplane), Indra (the king of gods) has Erawaat (the elephant), Yam (the god of death and hell) has a male buffalo, Kuber (the treasurer of gods) has the Pushpak (a self-driven air-plane), Varun (the Water-God) has Magar (alligator), Agni (the Fire-God) has a he-goat, Pawan (the Wind-God) has a deer, Ishaan (one of Shiva’s various forms) has Brishava (the bull), and Nairitta has phantom.

When Lord Ram was married to Sita at Janakpur, all the gods had decorated their mounts and joined the marriage procession as it headed towards the venue of the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 314.

²A similar situation is narrated while describing the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. When the marriage party was ready for departure from Ayodhya, the auspicious omens which revealed themselves are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 303 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8, and Chaupai line no. 3 that follows this Doha.]

चौ०. सिवहि संभु गन करहिं सिंगारा । जटा मुकुट अहि मौरु सँवारा ॥ १ ॥

कुंडल कंकन पहिरे ब्याला । तन बिभूति पट केहरि छाला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sivahi sambhu gana karahim singārā. jaṭā mukuṭa ahi mauru samṅvārā. 1.
kuṅḍala kaṅkana pahirē byālā. tana bibhūti paṭa kēhari chālā. 2.

The attendants of Lord Shiva began grooming and adorning their Lord (to prepare him as a groom). [Shiva had never bothered about his appearances. He was an excellent ascetic, and like all ascetics he was never concerned about his external features, whether he looked attractive and charming to others or not. But this was a different situation. Now he was to be married, and a groom is not expected to look like a hermit or an ascetic. Therefore, the close attendants of the Lord began adorning him so that he looks attractive in his role as a groom.]

They cleaned and tied his thick lock of usually unkempt hairs into a decent-looking plait that was turned around in a spiral to form a wonderful crown that adorned the Lord’s head. Then they decked it up with a crest of serpents. (1)

The ear-rings and bracelets that he (Shiva) wore also consisted of serpents. His body was smeared with ash¹ (from the fire sacrifice), and skin of a lion was used as his wrap-around garment. (2)

[Note—¹Shiva's natural complexion is blue like that of Lord Vishnu. But when ash was smeared on his body, he looked fair-complexioned.]

ससि ललाट सुंदर सिर गंगा । नयन तीनि उपबीत भुजंगा ॥ ३ ॥

गरल कंठ उर नर सिर माला । असिव बेष सिवधाम कृपाला ॥ ४ ॥

sasi lalāṭa sundara sira gaṅgā. nayana tīni upabīta bhujāṅgā. 3.
garala kaṅṭha ura nara sira mālā. asiva bēṣa sivadhāma kṛpālā. 4.

His head looked beautiful with a crescent moon on his forehead, and river Ganges swirling in the matted hairs adorning the crown of his head. He sported three eyes (two conventional eyes and one in the center of his forehead). A huge serpent dangled across his chest to represent the sacred thread worn by other gods. (3)

His neck was darkened by the poison he had swallowed (at the time of the churning of the ocean by the gods and demons), and he wore a garland of human skulls around his neck.

Though Shiva was attired in an inauspicious manner and looked very ghastly, he nevertheless was a merciful Lord who was an abode of all virtues associated with auspiciousness and compassion¹. (4)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva wore human skulls as a garland; he wore a serpent like a sacred thread; he kept poison in his throat; he looked very odd with three eyes. In brief, Shiva's external appearance was very unconventional and fearful. No holy person, let alone a 'god', would like to sport this ghastly appearance. But this was very misleading; it was perhaps a guise adopted by Shiva so that the world leaves him alone, thinking that he is a mad god or a patron deity of phantoms and ghosts, so that he can concentrate upon his meditation and contemplation.

But the fact is that Shiva is not what he appears to be, but is true to his name—because the word "Shiva" means one who is truthful, immaculate, pure and holy. Shiva is a 'merciful' god, and therefore he does not enjoy killing humans as indicated by his wearing a garland of skulls. On the contrary it means that he wishes to remind himself constantly that this world is going to perish one day, and the beautiful physical body of which the humans are so proud of is actually nothing but a cover for bones and skulls. Shiva has witnessed death and grief at close quarters because he is the god responsible for concluding this creation, the god who observes death and its accompanying pain and horrors from up close.

The garland of skulls around his neck constantly reminds him of the mortal nature of this physical world and the futility of pursuing its material pleasures and comforts—because death is certain to come one day. This realisation helps Shiva to remain detached from the world and overcome all temptations for gratification of the senses.]

कर त्रिसूल अरु डमरु बिराजा । चले बसहँ चढ़ि बाजहिं बाजा ॥ ५ ॥

देखि सिवहि सुरत्रिय मुसुकाहीं । बर लायक दुलहिनि जग नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kara trisūla aru ḍamaru birājā. calē basaham̃ caḍhi bājahim̃ bājā. 5.
dēkhi sivahi suratriya musukāhīm̃. bara lāyaka dulahini jaga nāhīm̃. 6.

He (Shiva) held a trident and a tabor (drum shaped like an hour-glass) in his hands.

Thus attired, he rode a bull and moved ahead to go the bride's place even as various musical instruments were being played. (5)

Seeing the most unconventional form of Shiva donned in the attire of a groom, the consorts of different gods could not restrain themselves from smiling. They said amongst themselves in jest—'There is not a single bride fit for such a groom in this world!' (6)

बिष्णु बिरंछि आदि सुरब्राता । चढ़ि चढ़ि बाहन चले बराता ॥ ७ ॥
सुर समाज सब भाँति अनूपा । नहिं बरात दूलह अनुरूपा ॥ ८ ॥

biṣṇu birañci ādi surabrātā. caḍhi caḍhi bāhana calē barātā. 7.
sura samāja saba bhām̃ti anūpā. nahim̃ barāta dūlaha anurūpā. 8.

Lord Vishnu, Biranchi (i.e. Brahma) and a host of other gods rode their respective vehicles and proceeded to join the marriage procession. (7)

The society of gods that constituted the marriage party looked exceptionally marvellous in every possible way, but this marriage procession did not match the type of groom for whom it was meant¹. (8)

[Note—¹All the gods had magnificent forms, looked divine, and were well decorated. Their vehicles and attendants were also wonderful to behold. But the main hero of this gathering, the 'groom', i.e. Lord Shiva, was at odds with this grand setup.

We shall soon read about the attendants and followers of Shiva who were accompanying him as his close friends and confidantes: they were fear-inspiring ghosts, phantoms, ogres and spirits of all denominations and descriptions (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 93 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4). This group was obviously at odds with the group that consisted of gods and their attendants who were all divine-looking and charming in their appearance.]

दो०. बिष्णु कहा अस बिहसि तब बोलि सकल दिसिराज ।
बिलग बिलग होइ चलहु सब निज निज सहित समाज ॥ ९२ ॥

dōhā.

biṣṇu kahā asa bihasi taba bōli sakala disirāja.
bilaga bilaga hō'i calahu saba nija nija sahita samāja. 92.

Lord Vishnu then summoned all the different guardians of the world (i.e. the different gods) and advised them with a smile—‘Look, every one of you should march separately with your own retinue (group of companions).’ (Doha no. 92)

[Note—Till this point no attendant of Shiva has joined the marriage procession. All of them longed to do so; all of them wished to join in the celebration of the marriage of their Lord, Shiva. But they were hesitant to do so; they were feeling shy and reluctant to step forward because of the presence of a large number of magnificent looking gods and their divine attendants.

Vishnu realised this. After all, this was Shiva’s marriage procession, and not of any one of other gods. So therefore, the marriage procession should represent the groom, i.e. Lord Shiva, and this would be possible only when Shiva’s close attendants took the lead and joined the celebrations. The marriage party as of now looked like it was the procession of gods, with none of Shiva’s attendants in sight.

Vishnu is a wise and intelligent god. So he devised a method to help Shiva’s attendants join the procession. It would be possible only when he directs all the gods to move in separate groups, surrounded by their companions. For instance, the Water-God would move ahead with his companions, such as all the aquatic creatures. Shiva will find himself alone, and so he will be constrained to call his own attendants to mill around and form a distinct group around him.

When the rest of the gods would have moved away from Shiva to form their own groups, sufficient space would be created around Shiva so that his personal group of attendants can join him.]

चौ०. बर अनुहारि बरात न भाई । हँसी करैहहु पर पुर जाई ॥ १ ॥

बिष्णु बचन सुनि सुर मुसुकाने । निज निज सेन सहित बिलगाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bara anuhāri barāta na bhāī. haṁsī karaihahu para pura jāī. 1.

biṣṇu bacana suni sura musukānē. nija nija sēna sahita bilagānē. 2.

Lord Vishnu told the gods—‘Oh brothers! The marriage procession does not match the groom; it does not seem to be worthy of the groom¹. Do you all want to make yourselves a butt of ridicule, become laughing stocks, and invite jeers and cat-calls in someone else’s city²?’ (1)

The Gods smiled³ at the words of Vishnu (because they understood what he meant). So they collected their own armies (companions, friends and attendants) and formed independent groups as they moved ahead in the marriage procession. (2)

[Note—¹The gods looked splendid in their best of attire and surrounded by heavenly paraphernalia. But a groom is the focal point of a ‘marriage procession’, and not the guests. In the present case, the groom was Shiva, and he was dressed in the most unconventional form, almost like a hermit (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 92 herein above). So it was obvious that the marriage procession did not match the groom; it was exactly the opposite of what it ought to ideally be. Had it been a marriage procession of some god it would have been a perfect party, but in the present situation it was at odds with the groom.

When the bride's people would see such a procession, it is natural that they would laugh and jeer at it. And when this happens, Vishnu feared that these gods would immediately take offence because he knew about their nature of being very proud and egoist. There were chances that some amongst these gods would lose his cool and begin a ruckus in the bride's place. This scenario would obviously most unsavoury, especially when it is the occasion of the marriage of one of their senior members, Lord Shiva.

There were also grave chances that Shiva himself would lose his cool and curse the gods for creating a situation that puts him in a precarious and hilarious position because it was on their behest that he had agreed to marry Parvati in the first place after being highly reluctant to do so initially.

²The gods live in the heaven, while Parvati's father is the king of mountains on earth. Lord Shiva has two abodes—one is in the heaven like all other gods, and the other is on earth, on Mt. Kailash. He was doing meditation in the vicinity of Kailash. The marriage party of the bridegroom goes from the city of his residence to the city where the bride lives. This is what Vishnu meant—the gods had assembled from the heaven, 'their city or place of residence', and they were going to the bride's place on earth, in the realm of the lofty snow-covered mountains of the mighty Himalayan range, i.e. 'someone else's city'.

The family of the bride, i.e. Parvati, and all the residents of that place were well aware that the groom, i.e. Shiva, is an ascetic, and that his attendants consist of ghosts and phantoms. Shiva is sure to call his faithful followers, the ghosts and the phantoms, to accompany him as his companions, friends and attendants. Obviously, the gods mingling with Shiva's followers would be such a horrifying sight. The residents of Parvati's place will laugh at the gods.

So it's better that they segregate themselves from Shiva's followers and move in independent groups.

³We shall read below that even Shiva has 'smiled' at Vishnu's words. No one took offence of his words which were spoken in a light-hearted manner without any prejudice and intent to offend anyone.]

मनहीं मन महेसु मुसुकाहीं । हरि के बिंग्य बचन नहिं जाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

अति प्रिय बचन सुनत प्रिय केरे । भृंगिहि प्रेरि सकल गन टेरे ॥ ४ ॥

manahīm mana mahēsu musukāhīm. hari kē bingya bacana nahīm jāhīm. 3.
ati priya bacana sunata priya kērē. bhṛṅgihi prēri sakala gana tērē. 4.

Lord Mahesh (Shiva) smiled subtly in his Mana (mind and heart; without any outwardly expression to indicate how he felt at Vishnu's comments). He thought to himself that Hari (Vishnu) does not desist from his innate habit of cracking jokes and being humorous.¹

[Instead of taking Vishnu's word in the wrong light as being taunting, Shiva liked them and felt that his friend Vishnu is cracking a joke on the occasion of his marriage as friends often do. Shiva and Vishnu are of the same stature, and people of the same standing in society do not insult each other in public as a matter of principle.

So, Shiva understood that the words of Vishnu are to be taken in the correct spirit and no wrong intention is to be construed in them.] (3)

Hearing these affectionate words from his dearest Lord² (Vishnu), Shiva summoned Bhringi (his constant companion and mount called Nandi or the Bull)³ and asked him to call all his (Shiva's) attendants. (4)

[Note—¹We draw an interesting conclusion if we examine the sequence of events here. Shiva's attendants, the ghosts and phantoms, were feeling shy to join the marriage procession of their Lord, Shiva, because of the huge gathering of gods in their splendid attires and paraphernalia. Shiva too did not wish to make his friends, the gods, feel ill-at-ease and odd by having to walk alongside such horrifying creatures, so Shiva kept quiet. Vishnu was watching everything closely. Since he was confident that Shiva will not take him wrong in any way, he decided to take the initiative and asked the other gods to move away and make space for Shiva's attendants.

Shiva realised what Vishnu meant, and that is why the former did not take umbrage at the latter's comments about the marriage party not being worthy of the groom and therefore the gods should move away.

Shiva was rather thankful to Vishnu that he enabled him to call his attendants without causing any discomfiture to other members of the marriage party, the gods. That is why Shiva 'smiled' thanfully at Vishnu's words, and immediately asked his mount, the Nandi or Bhringi, to call other followers to join the procession.

Shiva understood what Vishnu meant. He understood that Vishnu is hinting at his (Shiva's) followers who were ghosts and phantoms. But he did not feel offended at Vishnu's implied remarks—because though these words seemed to be taunting on their face value and would have angered any other god in Shiva's place, but they did not affect Shiva because they were a statement of facts, and were correct. It goes to the credit of Lord Shiva that he does not take offence when the truth is spoken, and he is unaffected by any comments made for him by anyone. This is the true way an ascetic and hermit should act in this world—he is expected to be above all emotions; he is expected to have full control over his sentiments; he is expected to be calm and poised in the face of the gravest provocation; he is expected to be unmindful of what the world says of him, good or bad, for the simple reason that he is detached from and dispassionate towards everything related to the gross world. 'Marriage' and 'phantoms as followers' as well as the physical description of Shiva with serpents wrapped around his body, garland of skulls dangling from his neck, ash smeared on the body etc., pertain to Shiva's that form which relates to the physical world of birth and death. They do not describe Shiva's eternal, invisible, all-pervading and cosmic form as the 'Great Lord of Gods', the 'Maha-Deva'.

²The fact is, both Vishnu and Shiva are the same Supreme Being's two manifested forms with which the latter carries out two functions in creation—that of sustenance as Vishnu, and of conclusion as Shiva. Primarily therefore, Shiva and Vishnu are the same Supreme Being known as "Brahm". Hence, it does not matter what Vishnu says about Shiva, and vice versa.

Remember: Shiva is an ardent devotee of Lord Ram, and it is well known that Lord Ram is none but Lord Vishnu in his manifested form as a human. Shiva has Lord Ram firmly enthroned in the sanctum of his heart as his revered deity and Lord. He constantly repeats this holy name of Lord Ram and uses it not only to do

meditation himself (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60) but also as a means of providing liberation and deliverance to a dying man by uttering this holy name in the latter's ears (refer: Baal Kand—Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51).

The fact is that the divine story of Lord Ram's activities on earth were first conceptualised in the heart of Lord Shiva before they came to be known to the world as the epic known as "Ramayan" (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35).

In a similar vein, Lord Ram—who was a visible form Lord Vishnu who is primarily invisible—had explicitly said that no one is as dear to him as Lord Shiva (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 2). The Lord has gone further to clearly assert that if one wishes to attain him then he must first worship Lord Shiva, thereby unequivocally establishing the mutual respect Ram and Shiva have for each other (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3)

The idea is that one should not think that Vishnu had insulted Shiva in anyway whatsoever. That is why Shiva smiled and accepted Vishnu's advice as is evident here—Shiva has immediately called his Bull and asked him to summon all the attendants so that they can accompany him in the marriage procession. If the gods will move with their own armies of followers and attendants, why should the main hero, the 'groom', be left behind from following suit?

³Shiva's Bull is his nearest and constant companion. He is also known by the name of "Brhingi" –refer: Amarkosha, 1/1/43.

Nandi is also Shiva's mount, guard and gate-keeper—refer: Kalidas' "Kumar Sambhava", 3/41.

So, when the need arose to call others, Shiva asked Nandi, or "Bhringi", to call out aloud and summon all the other attendants who were eagerly awaiting orders from their Lord to join his marriage procession.]

सिव अनुसासन सुनि सब आए । प्रभु पद जलज सीस तिन्ह नाए ॥ ५ ॥
 नाना बाहन नाना बेषा । बिहसे सिव समाज निज देखा ॥ ६ ॥
 कोउ मुखहीन बिपुल मुख काहू । बिनु पद कर कोउ बहु पद बाहू ॥ ७ ॥
 बिपुल नयन कोउ नयन बिहीना । रिष्टपुष्ट कोउ अति तनखीना ॥ ८ ॥

siva anusāsana suni saba ā'ē. prabhu pada jalaja sīsa tinha nā'ē. 5.

nānā bāhana nānā bēṣā. bihasē siva samāja nija dēkhā. 6.

kō'u mukhahīna bipula mukha kāhū. binu pada kara kō'u bahu pada bāhū. 7.

bipula nayana kō'u nayana bihīnā. riṣṭapuṣṭa kō'u ati tanakhīnā. 8.

Hearing the command of Lord Shiva, their Master and Lord, all his attendants came there and bowed their heads in respect at the holy feet of the Lord (Shiva). (5)

They had varying kinds of vehicles, and were in different forms and attires. Even Lord Shiva could not resist at smiling at his own entourage! (6)

*¹Some of them had no mouths, while others had countless mouths.
Some of them had no legs or hands, while others had numerous limbs. (7)

Some had many eyes, while other had no eyes at all.
Some were well-fed and muscular, while others were emaciated and skinny.
(8)

[Note—*Remember: It is an army of Lord Shiva who is the Lord responsible for bringing to an end the life cycle of a creature who was created by Brahma (the creator), and was sustained by Vishnu (the sustainer) till the time the creature lived in this world.

The wise Supreme Being had to maintain some sort of ecological balance in his creation—so he devised a method to ensure this. He decided that all who were born would die one day. Otherwise, the earth will be overflowing with living beings and there would be neither space left for the new generation nor would the earth be able to sustain the increasing population which would be crowding its surface. Eventually, when the surface of the earth would be full and no space left on it, its inhabitants would be tumbling over to fill the space of the sky. If there was no such thing as ‘death’ then millions of years from the beginning of creation a time will come when the entire universe would be chock-a-block with creatures who would be baying for each other’s blood and grabbing each other’s throats to find place to make a foothold and stand!

Therefore, Shiva, the ‘god of death’, is a necessity of creation. Being the patron deity of death, Shiva is ‘surrounded by death’ at all times of his existence. Phantoms and ghosts represent this aspect of creation—death and the period of time when the dead creature lives as a ‘spirit’ till the opportunity comes to take a new birth once again. This is an endless cycle constituting of birth and death.

Hence, Shiva’s companions have been depicted in the scriptures as consisting of symbols of death—viz. spirits, ghosts and phantoms.

¹Some ate by absorbing nutrition through their bodies because they had no mouths, while others had countless little holes in their bodies to represent mouths.

Similarly, some simply rolled along like an amoeba because they had no limbs, while others were like octopuses with many tentacles representing as many limbs.

This basic idea applies to all the oddities in the attendants of Lord Shiva.]

छं०. तन खीन कोउ अति पीन पावन कोउ अपावन गति धरें । १ ।
भूषन कराल कपाल कर सब सद्य सोनित तन भरें ॥ २ ॥
खर स्वान सुअर सूकाल मुख गन बेष अगनित को गनै । ३ ।
बहु जिनस प्रेत पिसाच जोगि जमात बरनत नहिं बनै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

tana khīna kō'u ati pīna pāvana kō'u apāvana gati dharēm. 1.
bhūṣana karāla kapāla kara saba sadya sōnita tana bharēm. 2.
khara svāna su'ara ṣṛkāla mukha gana bēṣa aganita kō ganai. 3.

bahu jinasa prēta pisāca jōgi jamāta baranata nahim banai. 4.

Some of Shiva's attendants had an emaciated and skinny body, while others were stout and muscular. Some were clean in their appearance, while others were dirty and had bad habits. (Chanda line no. 1)

The ornaments they wore were fearsome, and they held skulls in their hands. Their bodies were smeared with fresh blood. (Chanda line no. 2)

Their faces were like that of donkeys, dogs, pigs and jackals. In fact, they were so many variations in their forms and attire that it is not possible for one to count or enumerate them. (Chanda line no. 3)

There were rows after rows of hobgoblins, spirits, ghosts and ascetics¹ which no one can describe. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The spirits, hobgoblins, phantoms and ghosts represented Shiva's association with 'death' as explained in a note appended to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above.

The 'ascetics' who accompanied Lord Shiva represented the community of sages, ascetics and hermits for whom Lord is the patron deity.]

सो०. नाचहिं गावहिं गीत परम तरंगी भूत सब ।

देखत अति बिपरीत बोलहिं बचन बिचित्र बिधि ॥ ९३ ॥

sōraṭhā.

nācahiṃ gāvahiṃ gīta parama taraṅgī bhūta saba.
dēkhata ati biparīta bōlahiṃ bacana bicitra bidhi. 93.

All the ghosts merrily sang and danced to melodious tunes. They spoke funny languages and said words which were as absurd as their appearances.

Taken all in all, this sight was most ridiculous and absurd to behold¹. (Sortha no. 93)

[Note—¹Why was the 'sight so ridiculous to behold'? Well, it was a 'marriage party', and not a 'funeral procession'! It's so ridiculous, absurd and incredulous that ghosts and phantoms would accompany a bridegroom and his party of marriage guests. The groom is not going to attend someone's funeral but to the venue of his own marriage, and ghosts and phantoms have their place in a cremation ground or a graveyard, but definitely not at a marriage venue!]

चौ०. जस दूलहु तसि बनी बराता । कौतुक बिबिध होहिं मग जाता ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

jasa dūlahu tasi banī barātā. kautuka bibidha hōhiṃ maga jātā. 1.

[Sage Yagyawalkya observes—] The marriage procession finally took a shape that matched the groom¹.

As the party moved ahead (towards the bride's place), there was a lot of fun and gaiety on the way². (1)

[Note—¹This verse answers the objection raised by Lord Vishnu that the marriage party was not in concordance with the personality of the groom, in this case Lord Shiva, the Great God, and the Lord of all the Gods—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 92 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

²A parallel can be drawn with the events associated with Lord Ram's marriage. When his marriage procession headed by his father was on its way from Ayodhya, the capital city of Lord Ram, to Janakpur, the city of his bride Sita, similar gaiety and merry-making are observed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 302 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.]

इहाँ हिमाचल रचेउ बिताना । अति बिचित्र नहिं जाइ बखाना ॥ २ ॥

ihām̃ himācala racē'u bitānā. ati bicitra nahim̃ jā'i bakhānā. 2.

Meanwhile, Himaachal (the king of the mountains and the father of Parvati) began preparations for the marriage ceremony of his daughter.

He got a wonderful marriage pavilion erected. It was so fantastic that it defies description¹. (2)

[Note—¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 289 that describe the pavilion that was prepared for the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram with Sita. Though it is not described elaborately here, it is certain that Himaachal would have got a similar pavilion constructed for the marriage ceremony of his daughter Parvati with Lord Shiva.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 86.]

सैल सकल जहँ लगि जग माहीं । लघु बिसाल नहिं बरनि सिराहीं ॥ ३ ॥

बन सागर सब नदीं तलावा । हिमगिरि सब कहँ नेवत पठावा ॥ ४ ॥

saila sakala jaham̃ lagi jaga māhīm̃. laghu bisāla nahim̃ barani sirāhīm̃. 3.
bana sāgara saba nadīm̃ talāvā. himagiri saba kahum̃ nēvata paṭhāvā. 4.

All the mountains and hills that were in existence anywhere in this world, whether they were small or huge but were nonetheless beyond description or counting (3)---

---All the different forests, oceans, rivers and ponds—Himgiri (or “Himaachal”, the king of snow-covered mountains) sent invitations to all of them to come and attend the marriage ceremony of his daughter. (4)

[Note—‘Himaachal’, the personified form of the mighty Himalayan mountain range, was the emperor amongst all the primary inhabitants of earth since the time the latter came into existence. Other primary inhabitants of earth were the countless mountains, hills, forests, rivers, lakes and ponds that covered the surface of the earth before other living beings began to make it their home.

The world is divided into two major categories—viz. the inanimate world and the animate world. The mountains, forests and rivers constitute the first category. However, for the purpose of our narration, these entities have been personified into virtual living entities.

Since “Himaachal” represented the mighty Himalayan mountain range which is the greatest mountain on earth, ‘he’ (personified Himalayas in the form of ‘Himaachal’) was like an emperor in the society of mountains and hills, and their cousins represented by the countless forests, rivers and ponds all of which were part of earth ever since its origin. So when his daughter was to be married he naturally invited all the members of his society consisting of other mountains, hills, rivers and ponds to participate in the ceremony.

Therefore, all these aspects of Nature and primary inhabitants of Mother Earth took the form of attractive males and females to join in the celebration marking the union of Lord Shiva with Parvati as narrated in verse no. 5 herein below. Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse nos. 84—85.]

कामरूप सुंदर तन धारी । सहित समाज सहित बर नारी ॥ ५ ॥

गए सकल तुहिनाचल गेहा । गावहिं मंगल सहित सनेहा ॥ ६ ॥

kāmarūpa sundara tana dhārī. sahita samāja sahita bara nārī. 5.
ga'e sakala tuhinācala gēhā. gāvahim maṅgala sahita sanēhā. 6.

They (mountains, hills, forests, rivers, ponds and lakes) assumed beautiful physical forms, and formed groups of attractive males and charming ladies [5], who then went to the abode of Himaachal, all the while affectionately singing auspicious songs befitting the occasion¹ [6] (5-6)

[Note—This scene is reminiscent of the one which was witnessed at the time of Lord Ram’s marriage. At that time, the gods and goddesses had assumed human forms and joined the celebrations.

¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 318; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 322.]

प्रथमहिं गिरि बहु गृह संवराए । जथाजोगु तहँ तहँ सब छाए ॥ ७ ॥

पुर सोभा अवलोकि सुहाई । लागइ लघु बिरंचि निपुनाई ॥ ८ ॥

prathamahim giri bahu gr̥ha sam̐varā'e. jathājōgu taham̐ taham̐ saba chā'e. 7.
pura sōbhā avalōki suhā'ī. lāga'i laghu biran̐ci nipunā'ī. 8.

Giri (the king of mountains) had already got a number of guest-houses readied for the invited guests. So these guests (who had come to attend the marriage ceremony) lodged themselves in suitable accommodations according to their liking¹. (7)

The city was beautifully decked up and made to look so exceptionally charming and fascinating to the beholder that even the wonderful abode of Brahma, the creator, in heaven, faded in comparison to it². (8)

[Note—¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 306 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 6, as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it that describe how the guests of Lord Ram's marriage party were lodged in pleasant guest-houses.

²A similar idea is expressed when the city of Janakpur, the place where Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, lived, is being described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 214; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 314.]

छं०. लघु लाग बिधि की निपुनता अवलोकि पुर सोभा सही । १ ।
 बन बाग कूप तड़ाग सरिता सुभग सब सक को कही ॥ २ ॥
 मंगल बिपुल तोरन पताका केतु गृह गृह सोहहीं । ३ ।
 बनिता पुरुष सुंदर चतुर छबि देखि मुनि मन मोहहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

laghu lāga bidhi kī nipunatā avalōki pura sōbhā sahī. 1.
 bana bāga kūpa tarāga saritā subhaga saba saka kō kahī. 2.
 maṅgala bipula tōrana patākā kētu gr̥ha gr̥ha sōhahīm. 3.
 banitā puruṣa sundara catura chabi dēkhi muni mana mōhahīm. 4.

[This Chanda continues with the description of the majesty and prosperity of the city of Parvati's father Himwaan. Compare its magnificence with (i) the city of Janakpur, the capital of king Janak, the father of Sita and the father-in-law of Lord Ram as described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 214; and (ii) the city of Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Ram, as described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 31.]

When one beheld the beauty and the majesty of the city of Himwaan, it appeared to him that the expertise of Bidhi (or Vidhi), the creator of the world, was no comparison when his product, the rest of the world, was compared to the city of Himwaan¹. [In other words, the city of Himwaan was so grand and wonderful to behold that it did not appear that the creator has erected it. It appeared to be heavenly and out-of-the world in its beauty, grandeur and majesty.] (Chanda line no. 1)

Who can describe the beauty and charm of the (many) forests, gardens, wells and ponds as well as rivers and streams that were present there?² [That is, the wonderful

city was well endowed with the elements of exceptional natural beauty in their best of finery.] (Chanda line no. 2)

Auspicious festoons, hangings, flags and banners in countless numbers adorned every household of the grand city³. (Chanda line no. 3)

The citizens of the city, all the ladies and the gents, had excellent personalities and were so ingenious that they captivated the mind and heart of wise sages⁴. [The sages were attracted by their good manners and behaviour. The citizens were well- cultured and educated; they led an exemplarily honourable life in a manner advised by the scriptures.] (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 314.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 212 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that describes the beauty of Janakpur, the capital city of Sita, the wife of Lord Ram; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos.1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 29 that describes the city of Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Ram.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 296, and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 9.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Parvati Mangal", verse nos. 86-87.

⁴Refer also to Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 213 which describes the citizens of Janakpur, the city of Sita; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 26 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that praises the citizens of Ayodhya, the captital of Lord Ram.]

दो०. जगदंबा जहँ अवतरी सो पुरु बरनि कि जाइ ।
रिद्धि सिद्धि संपत्ति सुख नित नूतन अधिकाइ ॥ ९४ ॥

dōhā.

jagadambā jaham' avatārī sō puru barani ki jā'i.
rid'dhi sid'dhi sampaniā sukha nita nūtana adhikā'i. 94.

How can one describe the grandeur, the majesty, the charm and the splendour of the city where the Mother of the World (i.e. Parvati, the cosmic Mother) has chosen to reveal herself (literally, has "taken birth" as the daughter of Himwaan named Parvati).

All the Riddhis and Siddhis (prosperities, successes and well-beings) as well as all sorts of wealth, happiness and joy overflowed in that city with renewed vigour and colour with the dawn of ever new day.¹

[That is, each day appeared to be better than its previous one. Happiness, joy, prosperity and wealth increased day-by-day in the city of Himwaan. There is no surprise in it—because the Goddess of the World, the Mother of the World, who controls all such virtues that grant happiness, joy, well-being, prosperity and

successes in all spheres of life, had herself decided to come and take up a residence at that place.]² (Doha no. 94)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram's marriage procession arrived at Janakpur, Sita had summoned all the Siddhis and Riddhis and had ordered them to serve the marriage party. Her orders were carried out immediately and the marriage party was hosted to the grandness that put to shame even the comfort and pleasure of heaven—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 306 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 289 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that describe the city of Janakpur, the capital city of Janak, the father of Sita, and (ii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that asserts that it is not possible to describe the beauty and grandeur of Ayodhya where the supreme Lord of creation has himself revealed in a human form as Lord Ram.

The idea of happiness and cheer spreading everywhere, in all the directions, and increasing day-by-day in the context of the birth of Lord Ram at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 26, and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29 it is stated that the beauty and grandeur of Ayodhya was so great that it defied description even by experts.

The central idea in these narrations is that not only skilled humans like bards, poets and sages who were experts in narrating events as they happened, but even super-humans such as gods and celestial bards such as Narad were not able to describe the magical effect of the supreme Lord's sport in this world.

Firstly, there are not enough words that can truly describe the grandeur of the Lord's creation, and secondly, even if there were sufficient words to do so, those who think themselves to be experts in this job fail miserably in this endeavour because the greatness, the grandness and the magnificence of the Lord's creation is so huge and un-imaginable that their mind and its faculty simply cannot grasp it let, alone describe it.]

चौ०. नगर निकट बरात सुनि आई । पुर खरभरु सोभा अधिकाई ॥ १ ॥

करि बनाव सजि बाहन नाना । चले लेन सादर अगवाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nagara nikaṭa barāta suni āī. pura kharabharu sōbhā adhikāī. 1.

kari banāva saji bāhana nānā. calē lēna sādara agavānā. 2.

When the news arrived that the marriage procession (of Lord Shiva) has arrived, there was a cheerful commotion in the city as it erupted in spontaneous joy that added to its charms¹. (1)

The reception party assigned the task of welcoming the guests adorned itself in all its finery and assembled all the paraphernalia needed to usher-in the honourable guests with all the grandeur and majesty suitable for the occasion². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 302 and Doha no. 304 that describe the cheerful commotion at the time of the departure of the marriage part of Lord Ram from Ayodhya and its arrival at Janakpur respectively.

The “commotion and tumult” can be due to a pleasant news as in the present case, or it can be due to some mischief created by a powerful force as was the case when Kaamdeo created a huge tumult in the world as specifically mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 84. The reason for this tumult has been described in the verses that precede and follow this Chanda.

Another reason for a huge commotion in a city is when dark clouds of war hover over the horizon and a powerful army is poised for attack. This will be evident upon reading Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 35 that describe the assembly of the huge army of monkeys and bears that Lord Ram gathered together to launch an assault on Lanka, and when the Lord’s army actually attacked Lanka as described in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 40.

We also read that when Lord Ram sent Angad as his emissary to Ravana in a last-minute attempt to avoid the war, there was a huge tumult in Lanka as soon as Angad arrived there—refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Yet another reason when there is a tumult and commotion in any city is when some bad news breaks—as was the case in Ayodhya when the citizens learnt that their beloved prince, Lord Ram, was being sent to forest exile due to some whim of his step-mother Kaikeyi. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 49.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 304—to Doha no. 305 that describe how the reception party went out to welcome the marriage procession of Lord Ram at Janakpur.]

हियँ हरषे सुर सेन निहारी । हरिहि देखि अति भए सुखारी ॥ ३ ॥

सिव समाज जब देखन लागे । बिडरि चले बाहन सब भागे ॥ ४ ॥

hiyam̃ haraṣē sura sēna nihārī. harihi dēkhi ati bha'ē sukhārī. 3.
siva samāja jaba dēkhana lāgē. biḍari calē bāhana saba bhāgē. 4.

When the members of the reception team saw that section of the marriage party which consisted of the gods and their accompanying retinue, all of them felt delighted in their hearts. When they saw Lord Hari (Vishnu), their joy increased manifold and they felt very happy¹. (3)

But their enthusiasm ebbed and was replaced by horror when they saw Lord Shiva and his companions². Virtually all of them³ were so scared and terrified that they fled from there along with their vehicles. [That is, the majority of the members of the reception party sent by king Himwaan to receive the incoming guests were horrified at the sight of ghosts and phantoms who accompanied Lord Shiva as part of the marriage procession that they mounted their vehicles and fled from the site.] (4)

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu or Hari was the most charming in the entire procession. The stunning beauty and fabulous charm of the Lord has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 148 when the Lord had revealed himself before Manu and Satrupa to bless them upon successful completion of their Tapa (penance and austerity) that they did with the wish to see the Lord.

Again, we read about the Lord heavenly charm when his physical form as Lord Ram is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8; (ii) Doha no. 233 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (iii) Doha no. 327 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-10, and Chanda line nos. 1-4.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 93 along with its Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 herein above that describe the unconventional members of the retinue that accompanied Lord Shiva in the marriage procession.

³But, not all fled; only the weak-hearted ran away. This will be clear in the next verse which says that some of the courageous and wise had patience, and they stayed put there. Those who ran away were generally the youngsters who had accompanied the elders to enjoy the novel spectacle of receiving a marriage party and its accompanying gaiety and merriment.]

धरि धीरजु तहँ रहे सयाने । बालक सब लै जीव पराने ॥ ५ ॥
 गाँ भवन पूछहिं पितु माता । कहहिं बचन भय कंपित गाता ॥ ६ ॥
 कहिअ काह कहि जाइ न बाता । जम कर धार किधौं बरिआता ॥ ७ ॥
 बरु बौराह बसहँ असवारा । ब्याल कपाल बिभूषन छारा ॥ ८ ॥

dhari dhīraju taham̐ rahē sayānē. bālaka saba lai jīva parānē. 5.
 ga'ēm̐ bhavana pūchahiṁ pitu mātā. kahahiṁ bacana bhaya kampita gātā. 6.
 kahi'a kāha kahi jā'i na bātā. jama kara dhāra kidhauṁ bari'ātā. 7.
 baru baurāha basaham̐ asavārā. byāla kapāla bibhūṣana chārā. 8.

Those who were wise and sensible (a reference to the elderly members of the reception party) maintained their cool and showed patience. But children and youngsters (who had no knowledge of the reality of the situation) fled for their lives in terror¹. (5)

When they ran to their homes, their parents were aghast when they observed their condition, and enquired from them the reason for their fear and terrified appearances. The children trembled in fear as they answered their parents as follows—(6)

‘What can we say; there is nothing worthy of narrating (about the marriage party). The sight we saw is incredulous: is it an army of Yam (the god of hell and death) or a marriage procession? [With ghosts and phantoms dancing merrily, it looks as an army of the god of death has come to invade our city. It is not believable that a marriage party can consist of ghosts and phantoms and be such absurdly horrifying!] (7)

Listen—the bridegroom is sitting on a bull and is covered with snakes, skulls and ash²! [What kind of a groom is he? It's a nightmarish scene.]³ (8)

[Note—¹Those who were elderly and wise knew all about Parvati's Tapa and the reason for which she did it—i.e. that she wanted to marry Shiva. These elderly people knew who Lord Shiva was and about his companions. They were well aware that these ghosts and phantoms don't mean any harm, and that their master, Lord Shiva, is the most compassionate and kind Lord in creation. How can he ever cause harm to the city as well as its inhabitants when he has come to marry its princess, Parvati, the daughter of king Himwaan? Refer: Doha no. 95 herein below which precisely addresses this point, along with the note that accompanies it.

But the 'children'—a metaphor used to include all those who were ignorant of the reality like young and inexperienced children—became horrified at the sight of Lord Shiva's companions. They did not know the significance of Parvati's Tapa, and who Lord Shiva actually was whom she wanted to marry.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 92 herein above, and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 95 herein below.

³It is a scene straight out of a comedy. Where has anyone seen a groom as described in these lines, and furthermore where has anyone seen a marriage party of ghosts and phantoms?]

छं०. तन छार ब्याल कपाल भूषन नगन जटिल भयंकरा । १ ।
 सँग भूत प्रेत पिसाच जोगिनि बिकट मुख रजनीचरा ॥ २ ॥
 जो जिअत रहिहि बरात देखत पुन्य बड़ तेहि कर सही । ३ ।
 देखिहि सो उमा बिबाहु घर घर बात असि लरिकन्ह कही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

tana chāra byāla kapāla bhūṣana nagana jaṭila bhayaṅkarā. 1.
 saṅga bhūta prēta pisāca jōgini bikaṭa mukha rajanīcarā. 2.
 jō ji'ata rahihi barāta dēkhata pun'ya baṛa tēhi kara sahī. 3.
 dēkhihi sō umā bibāhu ghara ghara bāta asi larikanha kahī. 4.

[The terrified children reported to their parents—] 'The groom has his body smeared in ash, and he wears serpents and skulls by way of ornaments. Except these coverings, he is otherwise naked, sports a thick lock of knotted hairs on his head, and generally looks very fearful¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

He is accompanied by horrifying ghosts, phantoms, ogres and female spirits who have strange faces and mouths, and who move out only during the night ("Rajnichar")². (Chanda line no. 2)

Anyone who survives even after seeing this sort of a marriage procession is very lucky and fortunate (because the sight of ghosts, phantoms, ogres and spirits is so

horrifying that it is sufficient to make an ordinary person faint out of fear and die due to shock that accompanies it). (Chanda line no. 3)

---Only such a person who survive this shock and awe would be able to see (witness) the marriage (of Shiva with Parvati) (because the rest would be already dead by the time the ceremony actually starts)³.

Children said such kinds of things in each household of the city (when they rushed-in terrified to report to their parents about what they had seen on the outskirts of the city where the marriage procession of Lord Shiva had arrived). (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 and 4 that precede Doha no. 92.

²The entities mentioned here are called “Rajnichar” because they move out and wander in the world only during the dark hours of the night. The word “Rajnichar” has two parts—viz. “Rajni” = night, “Char” = to move about.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 93.

³In other words, only those persons who do not die out of shock when they see such a wild-looking groom and his horrifying companions in the marriage party would be able to actually witness the marriage ceremony, because the rest of the people would die out of shock at this sight.]

दो०. समुझि महेस समाज सब जननि जनक मुसुकाहिं ।
बाल बुझाए बिबिध बिधि निडर होहु डरु नाहिं ॥ ९५ ॥
dōhā.

samujhi mahēsa samāja saba janani janaka musukāhim.
bāla bujhā'ē bibidha bidhi niḍara hōhu ḍaru nāhim. 95.

When the parents realised that the children meant the marriage procession of Lord Shiva, they smiled and reassured their wards in a variety of ways that they have nothing to fear about, and so they must cheer up. (Doha no. 95)

[Note—We have read in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 95 herein above that while the children had run away in terror at the sight of Lord Shiva’s marriage procession, those who were wise and knowledgeable, i.e. the elderly citizens, maintained their calm and poise. The reason is obvious—the children did not know anything about the groom, i.e. Lord Shiva, and being ignorant of the Lord’s cosmic form as the Lord who is one of the mighty Trinity Gods who is responsible for conclusion of creation, the children became terror-stricken just because they saw the ghosts, phantoms, ogres and spirits. The ignorant children did not know that these entities simply represented the third element of creation, i.e. ‘death’, over which Lord Shiva presides. They did not know that contrary to this visually horrifying spectacle, the Lord himself is quite the opposite of it as he is an embodiment of the grandest virtues of benediction, benevolence, mercy, compassion, kind and grace.

But the elders in the society were aware of these facts. So the parents remained calm and smiled at the ignorance of the children as well as the way their wards trembled in fear just like parents would react when they see their children getting unnecessarily scared at the sight of the most harmful of things such as a rope or a hopping balloon thinking them to be snakes or hobgoblins respectively.]

चौ०. लै अगवान बरातहि आए । दिऐ सबहि जनवास सुहाए ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

lai agavāna barātahi ā'ē. di'ē sabahi janavāsa suhā'ē. 1.

The receiving party welcomed the marriage procession (on the outskirts of the city) and escorted it to the city where the members of the marriage party were given beautiful lodging places that were comfortable and pleasant¹. (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4, 6 that precede Doha no. 306, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha where it is narrated how the marriage party of Lord Ram was welcomed by the advance reception party that was sent to welcome it, and then brought inside the city of Janakpur and lodged at pleasant places especially earmarked for them that had all the things of comfort one could expect.

Refer also to Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 99 herein below that says that after the feast organised to welcome the marriage party was over, all its members went back to their respective lodges.

This means that each important member of the marriage party was provided an independent residential unit where he and his companions stayed. There were countless gods, some senior and other juniors, and they were all given appropriate lodges. Lord Shiva was given a wonderful place to stay that must have been different from those of others for two reasons—one reason is obvious, and it is that he was the 'bridegroom', and the second reason is that he was a senior god being the third god of the Trinity who is responsible for the conclusion of creation, and occupies an honourable place in the hierarchy of the heaven just like Lord Vishnu who is the sustainer of creation and is the second god of the Trinity, and Lord Brahma who is the creator and is the first god of the Trinity.]

मैनाँ सुभ आरती सँवारी । संग सुमंगल गावहिं नारी ॥ २ ॥

कंचन थार सोह बर पानी । परिछन चली हरहि हरषानी ॥ ३ ॥

mainām' subha āratī sam'vārī. saṅga sumaṅgala gāvahim nārī. 2.
kañcana thāra sōha bara pānī. parichana calī harahi haraṣānī. 3.

Maina, the mother of Parvati, arranged auspicious items needed to perform an "Aarti"¹ of the groom, and was accompanied by honourable women who sang auspicious, melodious songs befitting the occasion². (2)

She had arranged the items of the Aarti on a golden plate which looked beautiful as she held it in her well adorned hands³. Then she proceeded to welcome the bridegroom and wave lighted lamps before him in an auspicious gesture that is traditionally employed to welcome and show great respect to honourable guests⁴. [And in this particular case, it's not only a gesture to welcome and show honour to the bridegroom but also marks the beginning of the marriage celebrations.] (3)

[Note—¹The “Aarti” is a formal gesture wherein lighted earthen lamps filled with oil are waved before an honourable guest as a sign of welcome and respect. The plate in which these earthen lamps are arranged also contains other items that are regarded as auspicious, such as rice grains, turmeric, blades of ‘Durba grass’, which is a special class of grass that is dark in shade, and other such items.

In the present case however, this Aarti marks the beginning of the marriage ceremony with the formal welcoming of the bridegroom.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 346 that describes the same scene when Sita's mother had arranged the Aarti to welcome the bridegroom, Lord Ram.

³Maina's hands were adorned with bangles and garlands etc. Her palms were coloured with “Mehandi”, or a paste made from leaves of the myrtle plant.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 where we read about Sita's mother going to welcome her Lord Ram, the bridegroom, with Aarti arranged on a golden plate which was full of other items needed for such auspicious occasions.]

बिकट बेष रुद्रहि जब देखा । अबलन्ह उर भय भयउ बिसेषा ॥ ४ ॥

भागि भवन पैठीं अति त्रासा । गए महेसु जहाँ जनवासा ॥ ५ ॥

bikaṭa bēṣa rudrahi jaba dēkhā. abalanha ura bhaya bhaya'u bisēṣā. 4.
bhāgi bhavana paiṭhīṁ ati trāsā. ga'ē mahēsu jahām' janavāsā. 5.

[A repeat of the events that occurred on the outskirts of the city, where the children were so terrified when they saw Lord Shiva for the first time that they ran away from there in fear, is witnessed once again here when Maina and her companions saw Lord Shiva, also known as “Rudra”, for the first time.]

When they (Maina and her companions) saw the strange form of Rudra¹ (another name of Lord Shiva) and his accoutrements (snakes wrapped around his near naked body, skulls worn as a garland, ash smeared on the entire body, huge lock of matted hairs on the head etc.), the women were overcome with great fear in their hearts². (4)

They were so terrorised at this scary sight that they ran away in fear to their respective homes (like the children had done earlier)³.

Meanwhile, Lord Mahesh (Shiva) went away to his own place of residence where the marriage party was lodged⁴. (5)

[Note—¹Lord Rudra is that form of Shiva that concludes this creation. The word “Rudra” itself means ‘anger’. It implies that when this creation becomes highly sinful and pervert, when moral turpitude and degeneration is at its zenith, Lord Rudra who represents that aspect of the Supreme Being which is responsible for maintaining discipline in this creation, becomes angry. He then decides to severely punish the offenders by unleashing death and destruction, but at the same time ensuring that the noble and the wise creatures of this creation do not suffer for no fault of theirs. However, since “Rudra” represents the angry form of the Supreme Being that unleashes death and destruction on the wayward world, he is iconographically depicted to be accompanied by elements that represent ugly faces of this creation and its result in the form of death and destruction—viz. the ghosts, the phantoms and the spirits.

The use of the word “Rudra” here is significant—because it indicates clearly that the groom is none else but the almighty ‘Third God of the Trinity’.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 16 where it is said that it is a nature of women to be easily frightened.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 95 that describe how the children were so scared when they saw Shiva and his fearful companions that they ran away from the site out of fear.

⁴When we closely read the sequence of events it will be clear that Maina and her companions had went out to welcome Lord Shiva at the time the marriage party had entered the city and was heading to the place where they were to be lodged. Since Shiva was the bridegroom, he occupied a pride-of-place in the long procession and could be easily located.

Another thing to note is that Shiva remained unaffected by such a reception on two occasions—once on the outskirts of the city when the children raised a hue and cry and ran away screaming, and now once again inside the city when the terrified women did not even perform the Aarti, which is customary and essential, but ran away from the place. Imagine how bad one would feel if he is shown such a reception by the host? Not doing the Aarti and running away is an insult of the guest.

But Lord Shiva is so forgiving and compassionate that he did not mind anything. He is so detached from the world and so unconcerned with its formalities that nothing mattered to him as long as he fulfils the desire of his devotee who in this case was Parvati who had done Tapa to access the Lord has her companion for life. Being a true ascetic, worldly expression of honour and respect was meaningless for Shiva.]

मैना हृदयँ भयउ दुखु भारी । लीन्ही बोलि गिरीसकुमारी ॥ ६ ॥
 अधिक सनेहँ गोद बैठारी । स्याम सरोज नयन भरे बारी ॥ ७ ॥
 जेहिं बिधि तुम्हहि रूपु अस दीन्हा । तेहिं जड़ बरु बाउर कस कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

mainā hr̥dayam̐ bhaya'u dukhu bhārī. līnhī bōli girīsakumārī. 6.
 adhika sanēham̐ gōda baiṭhārī. syāma sarōja nayana bharē bārī. 7.

jēhim bidhi tumhahi rūpu asa dīnhā. tēhim jaṛa baru bā'ura kasa kīnhā. 8.

Maina was especially very sad in her heart and full of remorse. She called her daughter (Parvati) [6] and made her sit on her lap with great affection¹. Her dark eyes were full of tears (of regret, remorse, pain and sorrowfulness at the fate of her daughter, and the uncertainty that now bares its tongue)².

Maina spoke to her daughter in an affectionate tone that was tinged with sadness and remorse—‘It’s such an irony that the creator who has bestowed upon you such grace and beauty is the same one who has made the groom so fearful and ugly.

[What an irony it is really. Couldn’t the creator, who is supposed to be wise and who is supposed to be the one who decides the fate of every single creature of his creation, select a suitable groom for you when such a choice is in his discretionary powers? Couldn’t he see that there is no match between you and the groom? What grave error of judgement has he made?]³ [7-8] (6-8)

[Note—¹The mother felt very sorry and pitiful concerning her daughter’s fate. Though she loved Parvati very much and was concerned for her welfare as is evident from reading Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 71, but her love for her daughter had now overwhelmed her and aggravated her emotional condition because she had never expected that her beloved daughter is to be married to such a groom as Shiva appeared to be in physical terms.

Earlier when her husband had tried to assuage her feelings and get over her fears and apprehensions by convincing her that the best line of action for Parvati would be to do Tapa to be able to marry Shiva as prophesised by sage Narad (refer: Doha no. 71 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it), she had thought that her fears were groundless as the father of Parvati too loved his daughter as much as she does, and therefore he cannot think ill of her.

But now when Maina saw her future son-in-law, she was horrified. Love and affection for her daughter heaved inside her sad heart as she became remorseful and regretted her decision to allow Parvati to do Tapa to have Shiva as her husband. She regretted that had she been aware of the type of groom Parvati is fated to have, she would have not allowed her to do Tapa under any circumstance. This will be clear below when we read Doha no. 96 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4, as well as Chaupai line nos. 1-4.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256 which describe a similar situation when Sita’s mother was very sad that after no one had been successful in lifting the bow upon which the marriage of her daughter hinged, the delicate prince of Ayodhya, i.e. Lord Ram, has now been asked to accomplish this almost impossible task. Now what would happen if he too fails?

³There are other instances in Ram Charit Manas where the creator is accused of acting irrationally and unwisely. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 119; (iii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201; (iv) Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 276.]

छं०. कस कीन्ह बरु बौराह बिधि जेहिं तुम्हहि सुंदरता दई । १ ।
 जो फलु चहिअ सुरतरुहिं सो बरबस बबूरहिं लागई ॥ २ ॥
 तुम्ह सहित गिरि तें गिरौं पावक जरौं जलनिधि महुँ परौं । ३ ।
 घरु जाउ अपजसु होउ जग जीवत बिबाहु न हौं करौं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kasa kīnha baru baurāha bidhi jēhim tumhahi sundaratā da'ī. 1.
 jō phalu cahi'a surataruhim sō barabasa babūrahim lāga'ī. 2.
 tumha sahita giri tēm giraurṁ pāvaka jaraurṁ jalanidhi mahumṁ paraumṁ. 3.
 gharu jā'u apajasu hō'u jaga jīvata bibāhu na haumṁ karaumṁ. 4.

‘How strange it is that the creator who has made you so lovely has chosen to make your groom so ugly and unconventional! (Chanda line no. 1)

The wonderful fruit that is supposed to adorn the tree of gods is forced to appear, against its will, on the acacia tree¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

I will jump off this mountain, or burn myself, or fall into an ocean with you (i.e. commit suicide with you)--- (Chanda line no. 3)

---But I will not allow this marriage to happen as long as I am alive, irrespective of whatever bad name it gives to the family.² (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Here, Parvati’s beauty is compared to the wonderful ‘fruit’, and her marriage to a handsome groom is compared to the association of this fruit with the evergreen ‘tree of gods’. Instead of this, the foolish creator had chosen to marry Parvati with the odd-looking Shiva which is likened to forcing the wonderful fruit to appear on the acacia tree much against its wishes and contrary to natural justice. But what can one do if the creator goes off his mind and creates nuisance because he is so powerful, and he lords over the fate of all in this creation, with no one to challenge his authority?

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252 where Sita’s father king Janak has also expressed similar distress when none of the invited kings and princes could lift and break the bow to qualify to marry Sita. At that time he has declared that inspite of the ignominy attached to his daughter remaining unmarried, he will not break his vows.]

दो०. भई बिकल अबला सकल दुखित देखि गिरिनारि ।
 करि बिलापु रोदति बदति सुता सनेहु सँभारि ॥ ९६ ॥

dōhā.

bha'īm bikala abalā sakala dukhita dēkhi girināri.
 kari bilāpu rōdati badati sutā sanēhu sambhāri. 96.

All the women-folk became restless when they observed that the wife of the king of the mountains (i.e. Maina) had become exceedingly sad and remorseful.

Maina was lamenting and wailing in a woeful manner when her love for her daughter heaved in her heart, forcing her to be overwhelmed with emotions of regret, remorse and sorrow (at the misfortune that has befallen her beloved daughter who stared at the prospect of having a bleak future if she was forced to marry a groom who was not suitable for her)¹. (Doha no. 96)

[Note—¹Even Sita’s mother lamented woefully, felt very distressed and sad when no one could break the bow to qualify to marry her daughter—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 255.]

चौ०. नारद कर में काह बिगारा । भवनु मोर जिन्ह बसत उजारा ॥ १ ॥
अस उपदेसु उमहि जिन्ह दीन्हा । बौरै बरहि लागि तपु कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

nārada kara mairṁ kāha bigārā. bhavanu mōra jinha basata ujārā. 1.
asa upadēsu umahi jinha dīnhā. baurē barahi lāgi tapu kīnhā. 2.

[Maina, the mother of Parvati, continued to lament—] ‘What offence did I do to Narad that he sought vengeance upon me by throwing a spanner in the happiness of my home and ruining it¹--- [1] --- by giving such an advice to my daughter Uma that she would do severe Tapa (penance) to secure a crazy husband for herself²? [2] (1-2)

[Why has Narad created this mischief? What wrong did I do to him that he became so angry with me that he decided to punish me by undermining the peace and happiness of my family by brain-washing my innocent daughter to undergo severe hardships associated with doing Tapa just to request for a absurd boon that would make it possible for her to marry the craziest of husbands one can ever imagine in this world? Narad behaved as if he is our well-wisher and a saintly person, but I could not imagine that he had some ulterior motives in his heart. I could not imagine that my beloved daughter’s groom would be so odd and repugnant that one would even tremble by simply looking at him.]

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 78 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 74 that describe the sort of Tapa Parvati did; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 75 where Brahma, the creator, has acknowledged the severity of Parvati’s Tapa, saying that no one had ever done such a severe Tapa in the past; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 78 where the Sapta-rishis too have acknowledged this fact that Parvati had done a very severe Tapa.

Even the Sapta-rishis had accused Narad of ruining the life of Parvati by giving her a wrong and misleading advice—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 80.

Though Narad has been accused by Maina here and by the Sapta-rishis earlier of misleading Parvati to do Tapa for having Shiva, who looked most crazy and unconventional from his external appearances, as her husband, but when we examine

the story closely we come to the conclusion that the great celestial sage Narad had no intentions whatsoever of harming the interests of Parvati or her family at all. It was her father Himwaan who had asked Narad to prophesise about her future as the great sage was a “Trikaalagya”, i.e. one who could see the events that occur in a creature’s life, in the present, in the past as well as the future.

Now, since it was written in Parvati’s destiny that she would be married to someone who matched the crazy appearance of Lord Shiva, what would one expect Narad to say—tell lies to please Parvati’s parents that everything was rosy and honey in her life, or tell them the truth? Well, being a sage, it was not expected that Narad would tell the parents of Parvati any sort of lie, and therefore he divulged the truth. Then, Parvati’s anxious father had himself asked Narad to advice some way out. The sage had clearly told him that though it is not possible to change one’s destiny that has been already decided by the Creator, but efforts can be made to select the best possible choice from the available options. In the present set of circumstances, the best line of action for Parvati was to marry Lord Shiva because the Lord is all-powerful and almighty, and therefore his majestic presence by the side of Parvati would neutralise all the negative effects that her bad stars portend for her future. So what wrong was he doing? All these events are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 71.

*A girl of a marriageable age and her parents try their best to get a good groom for her. After all, the girl has to spend the rest of her life with the chosen man. If the girl is pretty like Parvati was, it is natural to expect that her future husband would be smart and handsome, and not as odd as Lord Shiva is. This was the precise point that the Spata-rishis had raised when they tried to prevail upon Parvati to abandon the idea of having Shiva as her husband because he would not fit to be by her side, and instead opt for Lord Vishnu who is fabulous to behold and is praised even by the Vedas and other Holy Scriptures. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 80.]

साचेहुँ उन्ह केँ मोह न माया । उदासीन धनु धामु न जाया ॥ ३ ॥

पर घर घालक लाज न भीरा । बाँझ कि जान प्रसव कै पीरा ॥ ४ ॥

sācēhum’ unha kēm mōha na māyā. udāsīna dhanu dhāmu na jāyā. 3.
para ghara ghālaka lāja na bhīrā. bām̐jha ki jāna prasava kai pīrā. 4.

Indeed it is true that he (Shiva, the groom) has no worldly attachments and attractions of any kind (because neither does he long for respect and expect honour, nor does he show-off his powers and majesty by external pomp and pageantry like the other gods were doing)¹. He is dispassionate and detached so much so that he has no (yearning for) wealth, a home, or an off-spring. (3)

[Now, turning her ire on Narad, Maina pours scorn at him—] Really, he (Narad) has no shame or any fear worth the name in ruining the home of others². Say, what does a barren woman know about the pain of childbirth?³ (4)

[Note—¹Shiva's external appearances and demeanours clearly showed that the Lord had no attractions for worldly things and materials of comfort and glamour. He appeared to be an incarnate ascetic who is not at all concerned about what to wear and how the world treats him. Shiva showed his true nature and life-style by coming to the bride's place dressed in his usual attire, and surrounded by his usual companions. There was no trace of pretension or glamour with Shiva. This in itself is a wonderful character and shows honesty and trustworthiness.

When Maina went to perform Shiva's "Aarti", her companions ran away in terror at the Lord's sight—because he was half-naked, had ash and serpents all over his body, wore a garland around his neck. Obviously, no one would expect a 'bridegroom' to be dressed like this. Even Maina did not perform the Aarti to welcome Lord Shiva. Let alone the Lord being her daughter's future husband, not doing Aarti is an insult to a guest; it is highly uncivil and in-courteous not to do Aarti of a guest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 96.

The remarkable thing to note here is that Lord Shiva did not mind and take offence at this apparent rude reception that he received at Himwaan's place. Earlier also, when the marriage party had arrived on the outskirts of the city, the children had run away screaming when they saw Lord Shiva, an action that would normally be deemed as being highly rude and insulting for the guest and his companions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 95.

But Shiva had not taken affront at all, and had remained calm and neutral. He had cheerfully entered the city and gone to the place assigned to lodge in before the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 96.

All these events clearly hint that the great Lord Shiva had no concern for such worldly gestures and formalities. He was merely fulfilling the wish of his dearest of Lord, Sri Ram, who has asked him to marry Parvati, as well as to fulfil the wish of his devotee in the form of Parvati who had done severe Tapa to have him as her husband. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 77 where the conversation between Lord Ram and Shiva is narrated; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 76 that clearly say that Lord Shiva was anguished by the mental sufferings of his devotee, who in this case is quite obviously Parvati.

So we come to the incontrovertible conclusion that all the observations of Maina here are correct. Shiva is dispassionate and detached from the affairs of this mundane world so much that he was not at all affected and ruffled by such a rude reception; he is semi-naked and wears no ornaments to mean that he has no attraction for worldly wealth and a desire to show-off his majesty, and no amount of temptations would lure him to get distracted from his path of renunciation; he is accompanied by ghosts and phantoms implying he has no home but prefers a cremation ground instead; he has ash smeared over his body to clearly indicate that he is an ascetic, and so on and so forth.

²That is, Narad is not afraid of the sin he is committing by robbing the peace and happiness of others by giving them such advice as he has given my husband Himwaan, and my daughter Parvati due to which I have had to face such an

unsavoury situation of having to have a wild person as my daughter's future husband, something I had never imagined would happen.

³The woman who gives birth to a child has to suffer immense pain at that moment which is beyond imagination of a woman who has never borne a child. This is a figure of speech to mean that since Narad is a wondering mendicant, he cannot understand the pain and agony a householder suffers from when the girl of the family is married to a crazy groom who is absolutely not suitable for her. This mental agony and emotional suffering is experienced by only those who have a family and have to face constant ridicule and scornful remarks from the world, from their kith and kin, if one of the members of the family gets an unsuitable spouse, and that too, willingly, and not out of ignorance. In this case, Parvati had done voluntary Tapa to get Shiva as her husband, and had the permission of her parents. The latter cannot feign ignorance or say that Parvati did not pay heed to their advice and blame her bad luck that she got a crazy husband. The world would ask them—"Then, why did you allow your daughter to do Tapa to get such a wild husband when you were aware of her fate? Couldn't you, as parents, find a better groom for her?" What answer will they give to the world?

Maina means that since Narad is a wondering mendicant who has no family or home, he does not understand the pain and suffering parents have to undergo if their child's future is jeopardised.]

जननिहि बिकल बिलोकि भवानी । बोली जुत बिबेक मृदु बानी ॥ ५ ॥
 अस बिचारि सोचहि मति माता । सो न टरइ जो रचइ बिधाता ॥ ६ ॥
 करम लिखा जौं बाउर नाहू । तौ कत दोसु लगाइअ काहू ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह सन मिटहिं कि बिधि के अंका । मातु व्यर्थ जनि लेहु कलंका ॥ ८ ॥

jananihi bikala bilōki bhavānī. bōlī juta bibēka mṛdu bānī. 5.
 asa bicāri sōcahi mati mātā. sō na ṭara'i jō raca'i bidhātā. 6.
 karama likhā jaurā bā'ura nāhū. tau kata dōsu lagā'i'a kāhū. 7.
 tumha sana miṭahim ki bidhi kē aṅkā. mātu byartha jani lēhu kalaṅkā. 8.

When Bhavani (Parvati) saw the immense emotional turmoil through which her mother was passing, she spoke to her in pleasant, calm and reassuring voice. Her words were mature and laced with great wisdom. (5)

She said, 'Mother, realise that whatever the Creator has written in one's destiny cannot be changed by anyone; it is irrevocable¹. (6)

If it is written in my fate that I will get a crazy groom, why should anyone blame others (in this case Narad)². (7)

Is it possible for you to change what the Creator ("Bidhi" or "Vidhi") has written (in my destiny)³? [Since the answer is a definite "no", then—] Oh Mother, why do you unnecessary invite infamy and taint (to the name of our honourable family by throwing tantrums and creating an unsavoury scene when the eyes of the whole world

is upon our family and when the marriage party and the groom have already arrived; do you think that it is possible and wise to call-off the marriage now at this late stage without inviting scorn and ridicule for the rest of my life?’ (8)

[Note—¹The same idea was conveyed by sage Narad to Parvati’s father, Himwaan, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 68.

²Parvati had defended Narad even in the front of her detractors, the Sapta-rishis as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 80; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 81.

The sort of groom that Parvati was destined to have is described earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 67 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

³A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 282 where Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, says that one has to either suffer from pain or enjoy things in one’s life depending on one’s own actions and deeds, and no one should be either blamed or credited for any of the eventualities.]

छं०. जनि लेहु मातु कलंकु करुना परिहरहु अवसर नहीं । १ ।
दुखु सुखु जो लिखा लिलार हमरें जाब जहँ पाउब तहीं ॥ २ ॥
सुनि उमा बचन बिनीत कोमल सकल अबला सोचहीं । ३ ।
बहु भाँति बिधिहि लगाइ दूषन नयन बारि बिमोचहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jani lēhu mātu kalaṅku karunā pariharahu avasara nahīm. 1.
dukhu sukhu jō likhā lilāra hamarēm jāba jaham̃ pā'uba tahīm. 2.
suni umā bacana binīta kōmala sakala abalā sōcahīm. 3.
bahu bhām̃ti bidhihi lagā'i dūṣana nayana bāri bimōcahīm. 4.

‘Oh Mother! Don’t do anything that will scar the great reputation of our honourable family and create a situation that will give nothing but ignominy. Keep aside emotions, stop wailing and being sentimental for this is not the time for these things. (Chanda line no. 1)

Whatever is written in my fate, sorrow or happiness, I will get it wherever I go. [Even if you become stubborn and force me to retract from my vows of marrying Shiva in the hope that you will marry me to someone else where I will find happiness, you are sadly mistaken because if my destiny ordains sorrows and sufferings for me I will have to face them and endure them no matter where I go. Even if you keep me unmarried, I will still have to suffer. So please act wisely and abandon this childishness that you are showing now.]¹ (Chanda line no. 2)

When all the assembled women heard these polite and pleasant words of Uma (Parvati)--- (Chanda line no. 3)

---all of them blamed the Creator in various ways (that he is accustomed to creating confusing by making the world full of oddities, ironies and paradoxes)² even as tears (of grief and sympathy for her) flowed from their eyes. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 150.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 119 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it where such ironies and paradoxes are described.]

दो०. तेहि अवसर नारद सहित अरु रिषि सप्त समेत ।
समाचार सुनि तुहिनगिरि गवने तुरत निकेत ॥ ९७ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi avasara nārada sahita aru riṣi sapta samēta.
samācāra suni tuhinagiri gavanē turata nikēta. 97.

At that time, the king known as “Tuhin-giri” (i.e. Himwaan) went to his home (where Parvati was trying to pacify her agitated mother) along with sage Narad and the Sapta-rishis. (Doha no. 97)

[Note—The king was very wise. He brought along with him all the sages who were involved in this episode: (i) Narad because he was the one who had been instrumental in motivating Parvati to do Tapa for Shiva, and because he was accused both by the Sapta-rishis as well as by Parvati’s mother of ruining her future, and (ii) the Sapta-rishis because they had tried to detract Parvati on two occasions by trying to persuade her to abandon her vows of marrying Lord Shiva, and giving the general impression that Narad always throws a spanner in the future happiness of a person by giving a wrong advice.

He did this to clear the air and remove all traces of doubts in the mind of his daughter as well as her mother. When Narad and the Sapta-rishis would stand shoulder-to-shoulder in a friendly manner and explain things up front, all confusions and consternations would be dispelled. It is necessary to do it because otherwise both Parvati and her mother would harbour ill-will towards these great and holy sages who were honourable and had no ill-intention to run the future of Parvati. They were just doing their duties as best as they could.

Narad would get a chance to explain why he had suggested Lord Shiva as the possible groom for Parvati (refer: Doha no. 98 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4).

The Sapta-rishis would get a chance to signal that whatever they had said about Narad was part of a strategy to test Parvati’s devotion for Shiva and her sincerity, and they had not actually meant to decry Narad or deride Narad’s character. It was just a part of the test that they were asked to conduct by Lord Shiva himself.]

चौ०. तब नारद सबही समुझावा । पूरुब कथाप्रसंगु सुनावा ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

taba nārada sabahī samujhāvā. pūruba kathāprasaṅgu sunāvā. 1.

Then Narad reassured everyone (that there was no wrong-doing on his part by advising Parvati to do Tapa to have Lord Shiva as her husband, and that everything will be okay) by telling them the story of the previous life of Parvati¹. (1)

[Note—¹This story has been narrated earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 75.

Narad told the entire story to defend himself before everyone and to tell them the reason why he had given Parvati the advice which he did, because it was he who had motivated her to do Tapa to obtain Lord Shiva as her husband in the first place, and in the second place because the Sapta-rishis as well as Parvati's mother Maina have openly accused him of malfeasance and misusing his stature as a great sage on whom every one relies by giving a wrong advice to Parvati and her parents which has resulted in so much consternation and turmoil in their lives.]

मयना सत्य सुनहु मम बानी । जगदंबा तव सुता भवानी ॥ २ ॥
अजा अनादि सक्ति अबिनासिनि । सदा संभु अरधंग निवासिनि ॥ ३ ॥
जग संभव पालन लय कारिनि । निज इच्छा लीला बपु धारिनि ॥ ४ ॥

mayanā satya sunahu mama bānī. jagadambā tava sutā bhavānī. 2.
ajā anādi sakti abināsini. sadā sambhu aradhaṅga nivāsini. 3.
jaga sambhava pālana laya kārini. nija icchā līlā bapu dhārini. 4.

Extolling the divine nature of Parvati, Narad said to Maina, her mother—‘Listen to my truthful words¹ Maina. Your daughter is no ordinary girl; she is the Mother of the Universe or the living world (“Jagdamba”) and is universally known as “Bhavaani”, the eternal consort of Lord Bhava (which is one of the many names of Lord Shiva)². (2)

She is the ‘Shakti’ (cosmic Energy, Power and Authority) that is ‘Aja’ (an entity that is without a birth; an entity that simply ‘reveals or manifests’ without undergoing the usual process of coming into being or getting born like ordinary living beings), that is is ‘Anaadi’ (an entity without a beginning and an end; an entity that is eternal), and is ‘Avinaashi’ (that which is imperishable and not subject to decay)³.

She occupies an eternal place by the side of Lord Shiva as his divine consort, and is an inseparable half of the Lord⁴. (3)

It is she, as the cosmic Mother of creation, who has made it possible for the world to come into being. She is originator, the sustainer and care-taker, and the final concluder of this creation. She takes a form as she wishes (and no one is responsible for it)⁵. (4)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 68 that also reiterates the fact that Narad never speaks a lie.

²Even the Sapta-rishis have praised Parvati by honouring her with this title of being a “Jagdamba”, as well as the fact that she is the eternal companion of Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 81 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

³Even modern science has proved that “cosmic energy” of the creation possesses these virtues—it is unborn, it is everlasting, and it is imperishable. Energy can be converted from one form to another, but it does not decay and vanish into oblivion. For example, energy of friction converts into heat, sound and light energies; the kinetic energy converts into electric energy in an electric generator, and electric energy converts into light and heat energies in an electric bulb. But energy never vanishes for good.

The word “Shakti” means ‘power and authority’. Here the word alludes to the metaphysical concept of creation and its regulation by Brahm, the Supreme Being, who uses his cosmic dynamic powers to control it. Brahm himself does not physically involve in any activity, but employs his power and authority to carry out his wishes just like an emperor who does not do anything personally, physically, but employs his powers and authority as an emperor to get thing done as he wishes them to be done.

⁴The power and authority of Brahm, and the dynamic energy needed to carry out his wishes are represented by Brahm’s “Shakti”. Shakti is as indispensable for Brahm as an emperor’s power and authority is for him. This fact is metaphorically and iconographically depicted in the form of Shakti being the consort of Brahm, or Parvati being the inseparable half of Shiva.

Here, the cosmic “Shakti” (dynamism, power, energy and authority) of “Brahm” (the Supreme Being and the cosmic Lord of creation), and “Brahm” himself have been personified in the form of ‘Parvati’ and ‘Shiva’ respectively.

⁵This is because of what has been said in Chaupai line no. 3—viz. she is ‘without a birth’, she is ‘eternal’, she is ‘imperishable’. These virtues preclude her taking a physical birth with a gross body in the usual manner in which ordinary mortal creatures are born by the process of conception in a mother’s womb. She just ‘reveals or manifests’ herself like fire and wind elements.]

जनमीं प्रथम दच्छ गृह जाई । नामु सती सुंदर तनु पाई ॥ ५ ॥
तहँहुँ सती संकरहि बिबाहीं । कथा प्रसिद्ध सकल जग माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

janamīm prathama daccha gr̥ha jā’i. nāmu satī sundara tanu pā’i. 5.
tahaṁhum’ satī saṅkaraḥi bibāhīm. kathā prasid’dha sakala jaga māhīm. 6.

[Now, Narad tells the assembly the story of Parvati’s previous life in brief.]

In her previous life she went and took birth¹ in the household of Daksha as his daughter named “Sati” who had a beautiful form. (5)

Even in that birth as Sati, she was married to Lord Shiva. This story is world-famous (and therefore I am not cooking-up any cock-and-bull imaginary story to justify my actions or to mislead you). (6)

[Note—¹The wording is perfect; it endorses what has already been said in verse nos. 3-4 herein above. The cosmic Shakti went and revealed it's self in a physical form which the world recognised as the 'birth of a daughter of Daksha Prajaapti'. In that manifestation of Shakti, her father named her Sati in accordance with the convention amongst all the living beings who assign a name to their sons and daughters. Like in the present case where revelation of Shakti as "Parvati" has not been recognised by anyone around her, "Sati's" true form was also unknown to her father Daksha in the previous case.]

एक बार आवत सिव संगे । देखेउ रघुकुल कमल पतंगा ॥ ७ ॥
भयउ मोहु सिव कहा न कीन्हा । भ्रम बस बेषु सीय कर लीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

ēka bāra āvata siva saṅgā. dēkhē'u raghukula kamala pataṅgā. 7.
bhaya'u mōhu siva kahā na kīnhā. bhrama basa bēṣu sīya kara līnhā. 8.

*Once upon a time, she was coming alongside (i.e. accompanying) Lord Shiva to his abode¹ when they saw Lord Ram² who is like a sun for the lotus-like race of kings tracing their lineage to Raghu³. (7)

Unfortunately, Sati was overcome with delusions (and thought that Lord Ram was an ordinary human prince)⁴. Lord Shiva tried his best to overcome Sati's doubts and delusions about Lord Ram (by trying to convince her that what she thinks of Lord Ram is not correct, and that she should banish such irreverent and impertinent thoughts from her mind)⁵, but she wouldn't listen to his advice⁶.

She was so overcome with delusions and its accompanying doubts that she (did not believe what Shiva had said and therefore) assumed the form of Sita (Lord Ram's wife) (in order to verify Shiva's assertions about Lord Ram and to ascertain the Lord's divinity by testing him personally)⁷. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 49.

³This is a metaphoric way of saying that just like the sun makes the lotus flower open its petal and reveal its magnificent beauty, the birth of Lord Ram (who was Lord Vishnu in a human form) in the family of kings descending from the ancient king Raghu of Ayodhya added glory and honour to the entire race of these kings.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 50 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 51.

⁷Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 52.

*This entire episode of Sati's delusion, her assuming the form of Sita, and being abandoned by Lord Shiva has been narrated elsewhere also—(i) Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 7; and (ii) Shiva Puran, Rudra Samhita, Sati-Khanda, Canto nos. 24—26.]

छं०. सिय बेषु सतीं जो कीन्ह तेहिं अपराध संकर परिहरीं । १ ।
हर बिरहँ जाइ बहोरि पितु कें जग्य जोगानल जरीं ॥ २ ॥
अब जनमि तुम्हरे भवन निज पति लागि दारुन तपु किया । ३ ।
अस जानि संसय तजहु गिरिजा सर्बदा संकर प्रिया ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

siya bēṣu satīm jō kīnha tēhīm aparādha saṅkara pariharīm. 1.
hara biraham' jā'i bahōri pitu kēm jagya jōgānala jarīm. 2.
aba janami tumharē bhavana nija pati lāgi dārūna tapu kiyā. 3.
asa jāni sansaya tajahu girijā sarbadā saṅkara priyā. 4.

Lord Shankar (Shiva) had then discarded Sati for the sin she had committed by assuming the form of Sita (because Lord Shiva worshipped Sita's husband Lord Ram as his revered deity and honourable Lord God, and Sati had violated all norms of ethical behaviour, known as "Dharma", by assuming the form of another person's wife, and that too of Lord Ram in order to test his integrity)¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

Sati was overcome with immense sorrow and grief arising out of Shiva abandoning her, and she then went and burnt herself in the fire during the religious sacrifice of her father (Daksha)². (Chanda line no. 2)

Now she has taken a birth in your (Maina's) home, and she has done a severe Tapa for her own husband³. (Chanda line no. 3)

Understand this situation, and realising the fact of the matter you must abandon doubts of every kind, and harbour no consternations of any kind whatsoever. Understand the fact that "Girijaa" (literally, the daughter of Giri, the king of the mountains) is eternally dear to Lord Shankar (Shiva) and is the Lord's eternal beloved consort.³ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 56; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 58; (ii) Doha no. 59 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 61—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 65.]

दो०. सुनि नारद के बचन तब सब कर मिटा बिषाद ।
छन महुँ ब्यापेउ सकल पुर घर घर यह संबाद ॥ ९८ ॥

dōhā.

suni nārada kē bacana taba saba kara miṭā biṣāda.
chana mahum̐ byāpē'u sakala pura ghara ghara yaha sambāda. 98.

*Hearing the reassuring words of sage Narad, all the grief and sorrow that had been overwhelming everyone till now were dispelled (immediately)¹.

In a moment this news spread like a wild-fire throughout the city, and every household became aware of it. (Doha no. 98)

[Note—¹The family members of Parvati as well as the citizens of the kingdom of the mountains had thought that Narad had misled Parvati and given her a wrong advice—that she should do Tapa to get a crazy husband like Shiva appeared to be when one limited his vision to the Lord's external form and features. But now they became aware of Parvati's true identity as being the cosmic "Shakti" and the eternal consort of Shiva. Hence, it will be actually wrong on her part to marry someone else, especially when she had asked the Lord God, at the time of her death, to grant her the boon that in whatever life-form she is born she should have unwavering devotion and love for Lord Shiva and be able to serve the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65.

An important observation is to be made here. Till now everyone doubted Narad; even the seven Sapta-rishis had openly accused him of giving a wrong advice to Parvati to do Tapa for Shiva—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 78—to Doha no. 79. Then how come suddenly they all began to trust him now?

The answer is obvious: Narad has now revealed the past of Parvati in the presence of the Sapta-rishis, which means they are upholding the truth of what he says, they stand witness to his statement. He hadn't done it earlier, which was the reason why doubts existed in everyone's mind. No one knew who Parvati actually was, that she had herself chosen to be eternally devoted to Lord Shiva even before she took birth in the present form as the daughter of Himwaan and Maina. So this clarification by Narad settled the dust and made everyone happy.

*According to "Shiva Puran", 2/3/8/29-48, Narad had explained these things to Himaachal, the father of Parvati, in the very beginning, which is perhaps the reason why he was calm and convinced throughout.]

चौ०. तब मयना हिमवंतु अनंदे । पुनि पुनि पारबती पद बंदे ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

taba mayanā himavantu anandē. puni puni pārabatī pada bandē. 1.

[The revelations of Narad had a profound and stunning affect on everyone so much so that besides erupting in joy at the thought that they are lucky to have the cosmic

Shakti of the Supreme Being amongst them in a living form as their beloved princess and loving daughter by the name of Parvati, the parents felt obliged to worship Parvati's feet as a token of showing respect to the 'living goddess' and thanking her for choosing them to be her parents.]

Then, Maina and Himwant were overjoyed with delight. They repeatedly worshipped the holy feet of Parvati (because they now realised that she is not their daughter in the conventional sense, but was the cosmic Shakti who has given them the rarest of rare privilege to become her 'parents' when she decided to reveal herself in their household as the living goddess by the name of Parvati). (1)

नारि पुरुष सिसु जुबा सयाने । नगर लोग सब अति हरषाने ॥ २ ॥
लगे होन पुर मंगलगाना । सजे सबहिं हाटक घट नाना ॥ ३ ॥

nāri puruṣa sisu jubā sayānē. nagara lōga saba ati haraṣānē. 2.
lagē hōna pura maṅgalagānā. sajē sabahim hāṭaka ghaṭa nānā. 3.

[Not only Parvati's parents, but the entire city erupted in joy.]

All the citizens of the city, whether they were women, men, children or adults, all of them were very jubilant and exhilarated. (2)

Auspicious songs were sung, and their accompanying music began playing in the entire city. Everyone decorated their homes and home-fronts by putting up decorated golden pitchers (or vases) and other paraphernalia. (3)

[Note—A moment ago there was all-encompassing gloom, dejection and despair. But the tide turned all of a sudden, and cheer rang out through the length and the breath of the city as soon as the news spread of what Narad had said.

We observe a similar development unravelling itself in relation to Lord Ram's marriage with Sita. Sita's marriage was centered on a vow made by her father, king Janak, that anyone who would break a bow known as "Pinak" would marry her. A huge congregation was arranged where all the mighty kings and princes of the time had assembled to try their luck. But no one could as much as move the bow, let alone lifting it and breaking it. Even Janak had declared that Sita will have to remain unmarried for life. Obviously this was bad news for all, and a thick pall of gloom and despair descended upon the city of Janakpur. Then as it happened, Lord Ram broke the bow, and as soon as the bow broke the city erupted in a thunder of cheer and joy. These developments have been elaborately narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

भाँति अनेक भई जेवनारा । सूपसाङ्ग जस कछु व्यवहारा ॥ ४ ॥
सो जेवनार कि जाइ बखानी । बसहिं भवन जेहिं मातु भवानी ॥ ५ ॥

bhāmṭi anēka bha'ī jēvanārā. sūpasāstra jasa kachu byavahārā. 4.
sō jēvanāra ki jā'i bakhānī. basahim bhavana jēhim mātu bhavānī. 5.

On this occasion, a grand feast was organised for the marriage party in which delectable food of so many different varieties and having all hues of tastes were served that no one could count them. (4)

How can one be able to describe the variety and taste of the dishes that were served at this feast at a place where Mother goddess known as “Bhavaani” herself lived? (5)

[Note—A similar grand feast was organised for the marriage party of Lord Ram at Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 328 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow it.]

सादर बोले सकल बराती । बिष्नु बिरंचि देव सब जाती ॥ ६ ॥
बिबिध पाँति बैठी जेवनारा । लागे परुसन निपुन सुआरा ॥ ७ ॥
नारिबृंद सुर जेवँत जानी । लगीं देन गारीं मृदु बानी ॥ ८ ॥

sādara bōlē sakala barātī. biṣṇu biran̄ci dēva saba jātī. 6.
bibidha pām̄ti baiṭhī jēvanārā. lāgē parusana nipuna su'ārā. 7.
nāribṛnda sura jēvam̄ta jānī. lagīm̄ dēna gārīm̄ mṛdu bānī. 8.

When the meal was ready, Himwaan respectfully invited for all the members of the marriage party to come and partake of the meal¹. He invited everyone, such as Lord Vishnu, Biranchi (the creator Brahma), and all other gods of all denominations. (6)

All of them sat down in many rows to eat the meal which was then served by rows and rows of cooks and their helpers². (7)

When the women-folk came to know that the guests have starting eating their meals, they began singing melodious songs befitting the occasion. These songs were full of jest and contained taunting or teasing lyrics. [This was done to entertain the guests as they ate their meals.]³. (8)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 328 which tells us that king Janak, the father of Sita, had invited the members of the marriage party of Lord Ram at the time when a feast was held to celebrate the Lord's marriage at Janakpur.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 7 that precede Doha no. 328 which tell us that every guest was given an appropriate seat by Janak when they came to partake of the meal served during the feast organised to celebrate the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita.

³During this meal too, the women sang songs with teasing lyrics as this was the custom in those days. It was done to entertain the guests. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 6-7 that precede Doha no. 329.]

छं०. गारीं मधुर स्वर देहिं सुंदरि बिंज्य बचन सुनावहीं । १ ।

भोजनु करहिं सुर अति बिलंबु बिनोदु सुनि सचु पावहीं ॥ २ ॥
 जेवँत जो बढ्यो अनंदु सो मुख कोटिहूँ न परै कह्यो । ३ ।
 अचवाँइ दीन्हे पान गवने बास जहँ जाको रह्यो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

gārīm madhura svara dēhim sundari bingya bacana sunāvahīm. 1.
 bhōjanu karahīm sura ati bilambu binōdu suni sacu pāvahīm. 2.
 jēvamṭa jō barhyō anandu sō mukha kōṭihūm̃ na parai kahyō. 3.
 acavāmī dīnhē pāna gavanē bāsa jaham̃ jākō rahyō. 4.

Pretty women sang sweet and melodious songs that had teasing lyrics. (Chanda line no. 1)

The gods enjoyed these songs and felt very amused¹ so much so that they prolonged their meals and ate for an unduly long time. (Chanda line no. 2)

The atmosphere of joy and happiness that prevailed on that occasion when the guests were enjoying their meals was so exhilarating that it is not possible for one to either measure it or narrate it. (Chanda line no. 3)

At the end of the meal, the guests were offered water to rinse their mouth. After that, betel leaves were served as mouth-freshners. Then, all the invited guests went back to their respective places where they had been lodged². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 329 where it is described that the guests enjoyed the meal as such songs were sung during the marriage feast organised to mark the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita at Janakpur.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 329 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

दो०. बहुरि मुनिन्ह हिमवंत कहूँ लगन सुनाई आइ ।
 समय बिलोकि बिबाह कर पठए देव बोलाइ ॥ ९९ ॥

dōhā.

bahuri muninha himavanta kahum̃ lagana sunā'ī ā'i.
 samaya bilōki bibāha kara paṭha'ē dēva bōlā'i. 99.

The sages (here referring to the Sapta-rishis) once again¹ called Himwant (the father of Parvati) and told him the auspicious time that was fixed for the marriage rituals.

When the right time arrived for the marriage rituals arrived, he (Himwant) sent an invitation to the gods to come². (Doha no. 99)

[Note—¹The sages had told Himwaan the time of marriage earlier also—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 91

²Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 115.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 312—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 313 with respect to the invitation that was sent by king Janak, the father of Sita, to king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, to come and participate in the marriage rituals when the right time arrived.

In the case of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita, it was Narad who had brought the time-table outlining the auspicious moments as determined by Brahma, the creator, and gave it to Sita’s father Janak (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 312). In Shiva’s case, the auspicious moment was determined by savants whom Himwaan consulted, and this time-table was then taken by the Sapta-rishis and handed over to Brahma (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 91).]

चौ०. बोलि सकल सुर सादर लीन्हे । सबहि जथोचित आसन दीन्हे ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

bōli sakala sura sādara līnhē. sabahi jathōcita āsana dīnhē. 1.

He (Himwaan) respectfully invited all the gods to the venue of the marriage rituals, and escorted each of them to their respective seats. (1)

[Note—King Janak had also done the same thing during the marriage of his daughter Sita with Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 321.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, Chanda no. 14.]

बेदी बेद बिधान सँवारी । सुभग सुमंगल गावहिं नारी ॥ २ ॥

bēdī bēda bidhāna samvārī. subhaga sumāṅgala gāvahim nārī. 2.

A beautiful altar (where the religious rituals related to marriage, such as worship of gods etc., were to be conducted) was consecrated in accordance with the directions given in the Vedas (the ancient scriptures) by the ladies even as they sang with a melodious voice auspicious songs befitting the occasion. (2)

सिंघासनु अति दिव्य सुहावा । जाइ न बरनि बिरंछि बनावा ॥ ३ ॥

बैठे सिव बिप्रन्ह सिरु नाई । हृदयँ सुमिरि निज प्रभु रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥

siṅghāsanu ati dibya suhāvā. jā'i na barani biran̄ci banāvā. 3.

baiṭhē siva bipranha siru nāī. hr̄dayam̄ sumiri nija prabhu raghurāī. 4.

There was a magnificent and divinely beautiful throne which was so fabulous and wonderful to look at that it is not possible to describe its majestic sight, its glamour and its charm. It appeared to have been made by ‘Biran̄chi’ (the creator Brahma)

himself (especially for this occasion).[That is, the throne on which the groom was to be seated was exceptionally fabulous and grand so much so that it appeared that the creator had designed and moulded it himself with his expert hands and employing his skills as an expert craftsman.] (3)

On this remarkable throne sat Lord Shiva after he had customarily bowed his head before the Brahmins and other elders of the society (“Vipra”)¹, and had remembered (his dear and revered) Lord Ram in his heart². (4)

[Note—¹Paying one’s respects to elders and the learned Brahmins is a tradition from ancient times. It is observed at the beginning and the end of any function. If the Brahmins and other elders are present personally, then one actually lowers one’s head before them as a gesture of respect, and if they are not physically there then this is done mentally.

²Lord Ram is the Lord God and the most beloved deity of Lord Shiva. It is Lord Ram’s holy name “RAM” that Shiva uses as a tool during meditation, employing it as a sacred Mantra or spiritual formula.

So, when he stepped on the throne kept reserved for him, he paid his respects to the elders represented by the Brahmins by bowing before them, and to his beloved deity and Lord, Sri Ram, by remembering him in his heart.

When Lord Ram had arrived at the marriage pavilion, he was also seated on a specially earmarked throne—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 319.]

बहुरि मुनीसन्ह उमा बोलाई । करि सिंगारु सखीं लै आई ॥ ५ ॥
देखत रूपु सकल सुर मोहे । बरनै छबि अस जग कबि को है ॥ ६ ॥

bahuri munīsanha umā bōlā’īm. kari singāru sakhīm lai ā’īm. 5.
dēkhata rūpu sakala sura mōhē. baranai chabi asa jaga kabi kō hai. 6.

Once Shiva (the bridegroom) was seated, the sages (who were conducting the marriage rituals) called for Uma (the bride) to be brought in. Uma’s companions adorned her in the finest of ornaments in the best of finery and brought her (to the marriage pavilion)¹. (5)

She looked so pretty, glamorous and majestic that the gods were overwhelmed by her charm and majesty. Indeed, who is so competent in this world so as to be able to describe the fabulous image of Uma (who was the Mother of the Universe or the entire living world; a personified form of Mother Nature whose beauty is beyond the abilities of humans to describe in words that have limited scope)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 322 where it is described how Sita was adorned and brought inside the marriage pavilion by her friends.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 322 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it where we read almost the same happenings in relation to Sita when she came to the pavilion. Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 126.]

जगदंबिका जानि भव भामा । सुरन्ह मनहिं मन कीन्ह प्रनामा ॥ ७ ॥
सुंदरता मरजाद भवानी । जाइ न कोटिहुँ बदन बखानी ॥ ८ ॥

jagadambikā jāni bhava bhāmā. suranha manahim mana kīnha pranāmā. 7.
sundaratā marajāda bhavānī. jā'i na kōṭihum' badana bakhānī. 8.

Realising that she was the Mother of the Universe or the entire living world (“jagadambikā”)¹, and the eternal divine consort of Lord Bhava (i.e. Lord Shiva, who was a “Mahadeva”: the Great God who was senior to all the gods taken together)², all the assembled gods paid their obeisance to her by mentally bowing their heads before her³. (7)

Bhavaani (the consort of Bhava) was so beautiful and charming to behold that she represented the bench-mark by which one measures the virtues of beauty, prettiness and loveliness. There was no one who was more pretty and lovely than her in this world. It is not possible even by millions of tongues attempting to describe her glamorous appearance and her charming image to be ever able to do so.⁴ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 98 herein above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 98 herein above.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 323 with respect to Sita.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 127.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 where the same thing is asserted with respect to Sita’s beauty.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 126.]

छं०. कोटिहुँ बदन नहिं बनै बरनत जग जननि सोभा महा । १ ।
सकुचहिं कहत श्रुति सेश सारद मंदमति तुलसी कहा ॥ २ ॥
छबिखानि मातु भवानि गवनीं मध्य मंडप सिव जहाँ । ३ ।
अवलोकिक सकहिं न सकुच पति पद कमल मनु मधुकरु तहाँ ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kōṭihum' badana nahim banai baranata jaga janani sōbhā mahā. 1.
sakucahim kahata śruti sēṣa sārada mandamati tulasī kahā. 2.

chabikhāni mātu bhavāni gavanīm madhya maṇḍapa siva jahām̃. 3.
avalōki sakahīm na sakuca pati pada kamala manu madhukaru tahām̃. 4.

*Even by millions of tongues it is not at all possible to describe the great beauty and exceptional charm of the form of the Mother of the Universe or the entire living world. (Chanda line no. 1)

Who is the dim-witted Tulsidas (the narrator of this epic story called Ram Charit Manas) when even such great orators as the Sruti (the Vedas), the Sesh (the legendary serpent with a thousand head and equal number of tongues) and goddess Saarda (goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech, language and learning) are unable to do so. [In other words, when such experts with words and languages as the (a) ‘scriptures’ who were able to put into words all that could be said and explained, (b) the ‘Sesh’ who has thousands of tongues, and (c) even the patron goddess of speech, learning and languages, goddess Saraswati, fail to even give an idea of how glamorous and magnificent Uma looked during that time, how is it therefore possible for Tulsidas, who is a mere mortal human being, to ever scratch even the surface of such description?]¹ (Chanda line no. 2)

Mother Bhavaani (Parvati, or Uma), who was an embodiment of beauty, majesty and glamour, went to the center of the pavilion where Lord Shiva was already seated. (Chanda line no. 3)

She was hesitant to look directly at her eternal husband, so her mind was fixed on the lotus-like feet of Lord Shiva² just like a bee fixes its attention on the lotus flower. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—*Refer also to “Parvati Mangal, verse nos. 123—126.

¹This is a standard method and a figure of speech adopted by Tulsidas when he wishes to restrain himself from describing some scene because he feels that his description would never do justice to the actual sight because of the limitations that a language and its words inherently have.

A typical example is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 318 where Tulsidas says that no attempt to describe the delight that was felt by Sita’s mother when she saw Lord Ram as a bridegroom can be successful even if thousands of Saarda and Sesh try to do it in seven Kalpas—or virtually countless numbers of years.

Besides this, Tulsidas has clearly stated in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103 that “he will refrain from narrating or describing the glamour of Lord Shiva and his divine consort Bhavaani because they are the Father and the Mother of this entire creation or the whole living world (and hence it would be indecent, rude, imprudent and impertinent for him to do so).”

²A similar situation is described on different occasion with respect to Lord Ram and Sita in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand where we read that Sita too had felt shy from looking directly at her beloved Lord, Sri Ram. Some of the instances are the following: (i) Chanda line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 325; (ii) Doha no. 326; (iii) Chanda line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 327; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 264.

The reason for such hesitation on part of Sita is explained by Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 248 which essentially mean that though Sita longed to look unblinkingly at Lord Ram yet she refrained from doing so because it would look very indecent and impolite for her to do so in the midst of an assembly where all the elders of the society were present and closely watching her every move.]

दो०. मुनि अनुसासन गनपतिहि पूजेउ संभु भवानि ।
कोउ सुनि संसय करै जनि सुर अनादि जियँ जानि ॥ १०० ॥

dōhā.

muni anusāsana ganapatihi pūjē'u sambhu bhavāni.
kō'u suni sansaya karai jani sura anādi jiyam' jāni. 100.

Receiving instructions from the sages who were conducting the rituals, Lord Shambhu (Shiva) and Bhavaani (Parvati or Uma) together worshipped Lord Ganpati (Ganesh).

Let no one express incredulity at this (i.e. at Shiva and Parvati worshipping Ganesh) because the Gods are immortal and eternal¹. (Doha no. 100)

[Note—¹Lord Ganesh is worshipped in the beginning of any religious event; his worship is obligatory for success in any endeavour. Now the paradox is that Ganesh is a son of Shiva and Parvati, and therefore it looks absurd and unbelievable that he is worshipped by his own parents.

This apparent paradox and unconventional thing is answered in the 2nd line of this Doha which asserts that the gods are eternal and immortal, and therefore they do not take a birth again to become a son or daughter of someone. They are always present, the only thing is that at some point of time they become visible and at another point of time they are not.

Besides this, they have to conform to the law of Nature which says that everything that has a physical existence must come to an end. So therefore, these eternal and immortal gods exist in a subtle and sublime form as the 'Soul' that has no physical form or a gross body till the time they are required to assume one such form according to the exigencies of the situation. So is the case with Lord Ganesh. He is an eternal God who took the physical form as the son of Shiva and Parvati when it was required of him to do so.

Shiva and Parvati were not worshipping their 'son' here, but a symbolic form of the Supreme God who is eternal, and is revered by all the gods and worshipped at the beginning of any religious ceremony as one of the divine forms of Brahm, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being.

It is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 that Lord Ganesh was worshipped at the beginning of the marriage rituals of Lord Ram and Sita.

चौ०. जसि बिबाह कै बिधि श्रुति गाई । महामुनिन्ह सो सब करवाई ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

jasi bibāha kai bidhi śruti gāī. mahāmuninha sō saba karavāī. 1.

The great sages who were conducting the rituals of marriage had all the nuptial ceremonies and rites associated with marriage that are mentioned in the Srutis (Vedas) performed in great detail¹. (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323 where we read that during the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram with Sita, the priests had performed similar rites in accordance to established tradition.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, verse nos. 130-132 where Tulsidas has narrated the different steps of the marriage ritual in detail. These steps are narrated herein below also in Chaupai line nos. 2-3 in brief.]

गहि गिरीस कुस कन्या पानी । भवहि समरपीं जानि भवानी ॥ २ ॥

पानिग्रहन जब कीन्ह महेसा । हियँ हरषे तब सकल सुरेसा ॥ ३ ॥

gahi girīsa kusa kan'yā pānī. bhavahi samarapīm jāni bhavānī. 2.
pānigrahana jaba kīnha mahēsā. hiyam̐ haraṣē taba sakala surēsā. 3.

Girish (the king of the mountains and the father of the bride) held in his hands some blades of the Kush grass (which is dark in colour, thin, quite hard, straight and pointed at the end, and is used in all religious ceremonies), a little water, and the hands of his daughter Bhavaani, and then formally handed her over to Lord Bhava with the realisation that she was the eternal consort of the Lord¹. (2)

When Lord Mahesh (Shiva) formally accepted the hand of the bride by virtue of the ritual known as “Paani-Grahan²”, all the gods felt exhilarated in their hearts³. (3)

[Note—¹The word “Bhavaani” itself means the consort of “Bhava” which is one of the many names of Lord Shiva. Narad has already told him this fact earlier in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 98 herein above.

²The word “Paan-Grahan” has two parts—viz. (i) “Paani” which means ‘water’, and “Grahan” which means ‘to accept’. It’s a ritual whereby the bride’s father formally transfers the responsibility of his daughter to the groom, and the latter accepts it. The finer meaning of this ritual is that the father of the girl who had been taking care of her till now, formally transfers this responsibility of her safety, happiness and well-being to the groom who pledges to carry out his duty faithfully and diligently for the rest of his life. This promise is made in front of the sacred fire as witness as well as the assembly of guests who attend the ceremony. Going back on this pledge is regarded as a great sin.

³Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, verse no. 130 which precisely describes this ritual.

When the marriage rituals of Lord Ram were being performed, a similar process of Paani Grahan was done, and a similar exhilaration amongst the gods is observed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 324 along with Chanda line nos. 10-12 that precede it.]

बेदमंत्र मुनिबर उच्चरहीं । जय जय जय संकर सुर करहीं ॥ ४ ॥

बाजहिं बाजन बिबिध बिधाना । सुमनबृष्टि नभ भै बिधि नाना ॥ ५ ॥

bēdamantra munibara uccarahīm. jaya jaya jaya saṅkara sura karahīm. 4.
bājahim bājana bibidha bidhānā. sumanabrṣṭi nabha bhai bidhi nānā. 5.

The sages chanted the Mantras (sacred verses) from the Vedas even as the gods applauded in chorus, repeatedly hailing Lord Shiva and his glories by loudly exclaiming—‘Glory to Lord Shiva; Glory to him; Hail him and his glories!’ (4)

Different kinds of musical instruments were played in a variety of ways; flowers were showered from the sky (heaven) (to cerebrate the occasion)¹. (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 324 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7 where we read a similar chanting of the Vedas, playing of musical instruments, and showering of the flowers during the marriage rituals of Lord Ram.

Refer also to “Parvati Mangal”, Chanda no. 15 which also describes this celebration.]

हर गिरिजा कर भयउ बिबाहू । सकल भुवन भरि रहा उछाहू ॥ ६ ॥

hara girijā kara bhaya'u bibāhū. sakala bhuvana bhari rahā uchāhū. 6.

*In this way, the marriage of Lord Har (Shiva) with Girija (the daughter of the king of the mountains; or “the daughter of the mountains”¹) was formalised. There was celebration throughout the “Bhuvans”² (on this happy occasion). (6)

[Note—*Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, verse nos. 132, 147.

¹The word “Girija” has two meanings. It means (i) “the one who was born to the king of the mountains”; and (ii) “the one who was born in the lap of the mountains”. When we look at this story from worldly perspective where a man understands everything only from a gross physical angle, the first meaning applies. When we broaden our view to look at it from a subtler angle that relates to the universe and Nature, the second meaning applies.

Now the question is: which view, which perspective, which understanding is better and appropriate to be applied here? The answer is found in the word “Bhuvan”. This word means the universe as a whole, because the entire living creation is divided into 14 Bhuvans or segments, one of which is the world we live in. This cosmic view of Lord Shiva and his union with the cosmic Shakti fits in well with what Narad has said in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 98 herein above. It refers to Lord Shiva as the Supreme Lord of creation, the Maha-deva, the ‘Great God’, and Parvati as the Mother of the Universe.

Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, line no. 1 of Chanda no. 15 where it is said that there was joy in all the ‘ten directions’ of the world (“Dasa-Dishaa”).

Though two different terms, viz. “Bhuvan or world” and “Dishaa or directions”, have been employed in these two separate instances, they essentially

mean the same thing. The idea that is being conveyed is that when Lord Shiva and Parvati were united, there was celebration through the length and breadth of this creation. Everyone rejoiced in every corner of the world, whether it was in the heaven or the earth or the nether world, or whether one lived in the north, the east, the south or the west in any of the worlds.]

दासीं दास तुरग रथ नागा । धेनु बसन मनि बस्तु बिभागा ॥ ७ ॥
अन्न कनकभाजन भरि जाना । दाइज दीन्ह न जाइ बखाना ॥ ८ ॥

dāsīm dāsa turaga ratha nāgā. dhēnu basana mani bastu bibhāgā. 7.
anna kanakabhājana bhari jānā. dā'ija dīnha na jā'i bakhānā. 8.

[Parvati's father gave abundant marriage gifts which are briefly outlined here.]

Female and male servants and attendants, horses, chariots, elephants, milch cows, clothes, gems and other valuable things of different kinds---(7)

---Cereals and pulses, as well as golden utensils etc. were given as marriage gift by the cart-load by the father of Parvati. These gifts were so large and of such huge quantity that one is not able to describe them. (8)

[Note—Refer: “Parvati Mangal”, line nos. 3-4 of Chanda no. 15.

Sita's father, king Janak, too had given Lord Ram cart-loads of such marriage gifts as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 326; (ii) Doha no. 333 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.]

छं०. दाइज दियो बहु भाँति पुनि कर जोरि हिमभूधर कह्यो । १ ।
का देउँ पूरनकाम संकर चरन पंकज गहि रह्यो ॥ २ ॥
सिवँ कृपासागर ससुर कर संतोषु सब भाँतिहिँ कियो । ३ ।
पुनि गहे पद पाथोज मयनाँ प्रेम परिपूरन हियो ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

dā'ija diyō bahu bhāmṭi puni kara jōri himabhūdhara kahyāō. 1.
kā dē'umṃ pūranakāma saṅkara carana paṅkaja gahi rahyāō. 2.
sivamṃ kṛpāsāgara sasura kara santōṣu saba bhāmṭihimṃ kiyō. 3.
puni gahē pada pāthōja mayanāmṃ prēma paripūrana hiyō. 4.

Himwaan gave an abundance of marriage gifts. Then he respectfully joined his palms and stood before Lord Shiva. He said—(Chanda line no. 1)

‘Oh Lord Shankar, what can I give you? You have everything at your disposal in this creation, and there is nothing that you want.’ Saying this, and unable to say anything more (as he was overwhelmed with emotions), Himwaan reverentially clasped the holy feet of Lord Shiva*¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Lord Shiva, who is an ocean of grace, mercy and kindness, reassured and comforted his father-in-law (Himwaan) in every possible way. [The Lord assured Himwaan that he need not worry at all for he understood the latter's emotions as well as his affection for him.]². (Chanda line no. 3)

After Himwaan, Maina (Parvati's mother) went and clasped the holy feet of the Lord with her heart overflowing with love and affection (for her son-in-law, Lord Shiva)³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—*Himwaan's throat was choked with emotions, and words refused to come out of his mouth. He felt so privileged and honoured to have Lord Shiva as his son-in-law just like king Dasrath felt when his daughter Sita was married to Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 341 along with its Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

The marriage gifts which Himwaan gave were inconsequential in view of the majesty and lordship of Shiva who was the Lord of the whole world. But these gifts were to be necessarily given because it was an established tradition, and they were therefore a mere formality. They were not intended for showing off Himwaan grandeur or wealth, or to imply that Shiva needs these worldly articles of comfort because everyone knew that Shiva was an ascetic and lives in Mt. Kailash which is covered by snow the whole year round. These marriage gifts were merely a gesture of thanksgiving and gratitude on the part of Himwaan to express his appreciation of the eternal bond of marriage that was now established between Lord Shiva and his daughter Parvati.

By this humble gesture Himwaan requested Lord Shiva to overlook any shortcomings in these gifts because the Lord lacks nothing. These gifts had to be given as much to conform to tradition as to express Himwaan's token of thanksgiving and gratitude towards the Lord for accepting the hands of his daughter Parvati in marriage, but he did not intend to show-off his wealth.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 337 where we read that the mother of Sita falls at the feet of Lord Ram in the same way as Himwaan has done here.

Further on we read that king Janak, the father of Sita, has expressed his intense love and gratitude for Lord Ram in the same way as Himwaan has done for Lord Shiva here. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342.

Now, the question arises: did Janak touch the holy feet of Lord Ram, who was an incarnate Supreme Being, with the same reverence as Himwaan has done here with respect to Lord Shiva? The answer is “yes”, he definitely did. He not only clasped but had worshipped Lord Ram's feet with the greatest of respect at his command—this is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 324.

Thus we observe that the occasions were different, but the essence was the same.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 343 where Lord Ram has expressed the same sentiments to his father-in-law, king Janak.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 337 where the mother of Sita has fallen at the feet of Lord Ram to express her respect and love for him. Her heart was also overflowing with love and affection at that time like Maina's here.]

दो०. नाथ उमा मम प्रान सम गृहकिंकरी करेहु ।
छमेहु सकल अपराध अब होइ प्रसन्न बरु देहु ॥ १०१ ॥

dōhā.

nātha umā mama prāna sama grhakiṅkarī karēhu.
chamēhu sakala aparādha aba hō'i prasanna baru dēhu. 101.

[Parvati's mother Maina paryed to Lord Shiva—] 'Oh Lord! Uma (Parvati) is very dear to me as if she is a part-and-parcel of my own life. Please treat her with the same affection as you accept her as a humble member of your own home.

*As such (i.e. with this view in mind), please overlook and forgive all her faults and shortcomings. Now be pleased and grant me this boon (as desired by me).'

[*This second half of the Doha can also be read as follows: 'I request you that please be kind to me, and realising how Parvati is dear to me, assure me that you will treat her with the greatest of love and affection even as you accept her as an inseparable member of your home.'](Doha no. 101)

[Note—Refer: "Parvati Mangal", verse no. 142.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 336 along with Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede it where Sita's mother has made a similar request to Lord Ram.]

चौ०. बहु बिधि संभु सासु समुझाई । गवनी भवन चरन सिरु नाई ॥ १ ॥
caupāī.

bahu bidhi sambhu sāsu samujhāī. gavanī bhavana carana siru nāī. 1.

Lord Shiva comforted his mother-in-law in various ways (just like he had done with his father-in-law in Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 101)¹. After that, she went back to her home. (1)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 337 where Lord Ram has similarly comforted his mother-in-law.]

जननीं उमा बोलि तब लीन्ही । लै उछंग सुंदर सिख दीन्ही ॥ २ ॥
करेहु सदा संकर पद पूजा । नारिधरमु पति देउ न दूजा ॥ ३ ॥

jananīm umā bōli taba līnhī. lai uchaṅga sundara sikha dīnhī. 2.
karēhu sadā saṅkara pada pūjā. nāridharamu pati dē'u na dūjā. 3.

After Maina returned home, she called Uma and made her sit affectionately on her lap so that she could give some final good advice to her daughter before her departure with her husband. (2)

Maina advised her daughter—‘Always worship the feet of (your husband) Lord Shiva. (Remember that—) For a woman, her husband is like a revered god, and no other god is more respectable for her than her husband¹.’ (3)

[Note—¹A similar advice was given to Sita, the wife of Lord Ram, on three occasions. (i) The first was by her mother who had made Sita sit on her lap affectionately as she gave her the same advice as Maina has done to Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 334.

(ii) The second occasion was when her father king Janak had advised her at the time of her departure of the marriage party from Janakpur for Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 339.

(iii) And the third occasion was in the forest where Anusuiya, the wife of sage Atri, has explained the code of conduct for a wise wife—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 5 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-19.]

बचन कहत भरे लोचन बारी । बहुरि लाइ उर लीन्हि कुमारी ॥ ४ ॥
कत बिधि सृजीं नारि जग माहीं । पराधीन सपनेहुँ सुखु नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

bacana kahata bhare lōcana bārī. bahuri lā'i ura līnhi kumārī. 4.
kata bidhi srjīm nāri jaga māhīm. parādhīna sapanēhum² sukhu nāhīm. 5.

Maina's eyes were filled with tears as she spoke to Parvati. She once again embraced her beloved daughter¹. (4)

Say, why has the Creator written a destiny for a woman whereby she has to remain dependent upon others, and in this situation she can never dream of happiness that comes with freedom?² (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 334 where we read a similar narration with respect to Sita's mother showing her love for her daughter and lamenting at the compulsion that a woman has to face just prior to her departure from her parental home for the home of her husband, Lord Ram.

²The woman in a traditional household is supposed to rely on her husband for all her needs. This means she is not independent. Lack of independence robs a woman of her chance to enjoy the world and the life in it like a free person, because she has to take into account the preferences of her husband.

The main thrust of this statement is that after marriage, it is the girl who has to suffer the most as she is compelled to abandon the freedom that she enjoyed in her home where she was born and brought up to go to her husband's home which is alien

to her, and where she will be bound by its customs and traditions that are new to her. It is a virtual new life for her. She has to make a lot of sacrifices and adjustments in her personal life in order to fit in the new environment. The boy has no such compulsion because he does not have to leave his home and hearth after marriage.]

भै अति प्रेम बिकल महतारी । धीरजु कीन्ह कुसमय बिचारी ॥ ६ ॥

पुनि पुनि मिलति परति गहि चरना । परम प्रेमु कछु जाइ न बरना ॥ ७ ॥

bhai ati prēma bikala mahatārī. dhīrajū kīnha kusamaya bicārī. 6.

puni puni milati parati gahi caranā. parama prēmu kachu jā'i na baranā. 7.

The mother became very agitated due to surging emotions of love and affection for her daughter (because she was soon to be separated from the latter). But she managed to regain her composure as she realised that this was not the proper time to lament and weep¹. (6)

She repeatedly met (i.e. embraced; hugged) Parvati even as the latter fell down at her mother's feet again and again. The intensity of mutual love, affection and respect between them was so intense that it is not possible to describe it. (7)

[Note—¹Maina realised that she was grown-up while her daughter was still young and of an immature age. If Parvati sees her mother in such a pitiful condition at the time of separation, it will haunt her for a very long time to come, adding to her already intense pain of separation from her parents. This was a time to show courage and resilience, and not weakness of the heart. If Parvati is given a farewell with a smile, it will cheer her up; wailing and lamenting will make her sad and sulk in grief. Such a parting is never good. So, after the initial burst of emotions, her mother decided to control herself and show courage.

When Sita was about to bid farewell to her parents at the time of her departure with the marriage party of Lord Ram, a similar description is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 337. Sita's mother too had mustered courage to regain self-control even as she embraced her daughter repeatedly just like Maina does here.]

सब नारिन्ह मिलि भेटि भवानी । जाइ जननि उर पुनि लपटानी ॥ ८ ॥

saba nārinha mili bhēṭi bhavānī. jā'i janani ura puni lapaṭānī. 8.

Bhavaani (Parvati) met all the women-folk assembled there, and went once again to her mother, and, falling at her feet, she wrapped herself around it (i.e. she firmly clasped her mother's feet as a last emotional gesture to seek her mother's blessings before taking leave from her to depart for her husband's home). (8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 337 where we read a similar narration with respect to Sita's final hours with her lady companions and her mother.]

छं०. जननिहि बहुरि मिलि चली उचित असीस सब काहूँ दई । १ ।
 फिर फिरि बिलोकति मातु तन तब सखीं लै सिव पहिं गई ॥ २ ॥
 जाचक सकल संतोषि संकरु उमा सहित भवन चले । ३ ।
 सब अमर हरषे सुमन बरषि निसान नभ बाजे भले ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jananihi bahuri mili calī ucita asīsa saba kāhūṁ da'īm. 1.
 phira phiri bilōkati mātu tana taba sakhīm lai siva pahim ga'īm. 2.
 jācaka sakala santōṣi saṅkaru umā sahita bhavana calē. 3.
 saba amara haraṣe sumana baraṣi nisāna nabha bājē bhalē. 4.

Parvati met her mother once again for the last time, and made her departure for her husband's home. All those who were assembled there to bid her farewell uttered appropriate blessings for her. (Chanda line no. 1)

Even as Parvati moved away from her mother, she kept on glancing back repeatedly towards her mother (because she was extremely overwhelmed with love and grief of separation from her loving mother)¹. Her friends insisted that she refrain from being sentimental, and took her forward to where Lord Shiva was. (Chanda line no. 2)

Having satisfied the desires of all the alms-seekers who had gathered there, Lord Shiva started on his journey home (with his consort) Uma². (Chanda line no. 3)

As the marriage procession wend its way back to the home of Lord Shiva, all the gods (who had come to attend the marriage ceremony) became exhilarated and showered flowers. At the same time, musical instruments such as the kettle-drums were played melodiously in the sky (the heaven)³. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Compare these lines with the time when Sita took leave of her parents and joined her husband, Lord Ram, as the marriage party of the Lord made its ceremonial departure from Janakpur for Ayodhya, the capital city of Lord Ram.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 337 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 340.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 339.]

दो०. चले संग हिमवंतु तब पहुँचावन अति हेतु ।
 बिबिध भाँति परितोषु करि बिदा कीन्ह बृषकेतु ॥ १०२ ॥

dōhā.

calē saṅga himavantu taba pahumcāvana ati hētu.
 bibidha bhānti paritōṣu kari bidā kīnha bṛṣakētu. 102.

Himwaan personally accompanied Lord Shiva and escorted the marriage procession for quite some distance to show his affection for the Lord.

When he had come along for a long distance, Lord Brishketu (Shiva) comforted and consoled him in various possible ways, and then sent him back¹. (Doha no. 102)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram's marriage party departed from Janakpur, his father-in-law, king Janak, too was overwhelmed with affection, and he too had escorted the procession for quite a long distance out of the city. Though king Dasrath, Lord Ram's father, tried to persuade him to return, Janak insisted on going ahead. Finally, when he had come a very long way from the city, Dasrath stood on the ground and most humbly and affectionately requested Janak to return home.

All this is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 340—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.]

चौ०. तुरत भवन आए गिरिराई । सकल सैल सर लिए बोलाई ॥ १ ॥
आदर दान बिनय बहुमाना । सब कर बिदा कीन्ह हिमवाना ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

turata bhavana ā'ē girirā'ī. sakala saila sara li'ē bōlā'ī. 1.
ādara dāna binaya bahumānā. saba kara bidā kīnha himavānā. 2.

Himwaan returned home immediately and summoned all the mountains and rivers who had assembled at his place (to participate in the marriage ceremony of his daughter Parvati with Lord Shiva)¹. (1)

Then, Himwaan expressed his gratitude to all of them; he duly honoured them and showed his respect to them by giving them gifts, as well politely thanking them with humble words of thanksgiving. After this, he bid them all farewell². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 94 where we have already read how Himwaan had invited all the mountains and rivers to come and participate in the marriage ceremony of his daughter. They had assumed charming forms and had joined in the celebrations. The Mountains and the rivers have been personified here. Himwaan was like an emperor amongst them.

²In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 326 we learn how king Janak had prayed and showed his respects to the honourable guests who had come to participate in the marriage of his daughter Sita in a very similar fashion.]

जबहिं संभु कैलासहिं आए । सुर सब निज निज लोक सिधाए ॥ ३ ॥

jabahim sambhu kailāsahim ā'ē. sura saba nija nija lōka sidhā'ē. 3.

When Lord Sambhu (Shiva) arrived at Mt. Kailash (his abode), all the gods (who had joined the marriage party of the Lord) returned to their own respective homes¹. (3)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram's marriage party returned home to Ayodhya, king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, had expressed his thanks to all the guests who had come to join the marriage celebrations by showing great respect to them and giving them abundant gifts and honours. Then all of them, including the gods in the heaven, went away happily to their respective homes, cheerfully talking about the glorious events of the past days when they had witnessed the joyous events associated with the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, praising their own immense good luck at having been able to witness this divine ceremony, blessing the couple and their father king Dasrath, and in general being ecstatic and exhilarated at the wonderful experience they had had during the entire episode. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 353 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

जगत मातु पितु संभु भवानी । तेहिं सिंगारु न कहउँ बखानी ॥ ४ ॥
 करहिं बिबिध बिधि भोग बिलासा । गनन्ह समेत बसहिं कैलासा ॥ ५ ॥
 हर गिरिजा बिहार नित नयऊ । एहि बिधि बिपुल काल चलि गयऊ ॥ ६ ॥

jagata mātu pitu sambhu bhavānī. tēhim singāru na kaha'um' bakhānī. 4.
 karahim bibidha bidhi bhōga bilāsā. gananha samēta basahim kailāsā. 5.
 hara girijā bihāra nita naya'ū. ēhi bidhi bipula kāla cali gaya'ū. 6.

Lord Sambhu and Bhavaani are the Father and the Mother of the entire universe (the “Jagat”, the living world) respectively¹. I will therefore not describe (or I shall refrain from narrating about) their physical charm and their love for each other (because it would be highly indecent, indignified, and violating traditional norms of the society to do so). (4)

While living in Mt. Kailash with their attendants, Lord Shiva and Bhavaani enjoyed their married life in different ways. [And for reasons cited above in verse no. 4, it is absolutely not proper to detail how they lived in their marital home and how they enjoyed their married life.] (5)

Every day they enjoyed themselves, and every day there was a new way by which they jovially entertained each other. In this way, a long time passed cheerfully. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 98; and (ii) Chuapai line nos. 5-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 100.]

तब जनमेउ षटबदन कुमारा । तारकु असुरु समर जेहिं मारा ॥ ७ ॥
 आगम निगम प्रसिद्ध पुराना । षन्मुख जन्मु सकल जग जाना ॥ ८ ॥

taba janamē'u ṣaṭabadana kumārā. tāra ku asuru samara jēhim mārā. 7.
 āgama nigama prasid'dha purānā. ṣanmukha janmu sakala jaga jānā. 8.

In due course of time, ‘Shatbadan’ (i.e. Lord Kartikeya; the deity who has six heads) was born to them, who had later on killed the demon (Tarkasur) in battle¹. (7)

This story of the birth of Shiva’s son with six heads is well known in the world, and is also well documented in the scriptures such as the Aagams (the ancient Vedas), the Nigams (the Tantras; the scriptures that followed the original Vedas), as well as the Purans (ancient mythological history). (8)

[Note—¹Refer notes appended to Baal Kand, Doha no. 82, and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it.]

छं०. जगु जान षन्मुख जन्मु कर्मु प्रतापु पुरुषारथु महा । १ ।
तेहि हेतु मैं बृषकेतु सुत कर चरित संछेपहिं कहा ॥ २ ॥
यह उमा संभु बिबाहु जे नर नारि कहहिं जे गावहीं । ३ ।
कल्यान काज बिबाह मंगल सर्बदा सुखु पावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jagu jāna ṣanmukha janmu karmu pratāpu puruṣārathu mahā. 1.
tēhi hētu maim̐ bṛṣakētu suta kara carita sañchēpahim̐ kahā. 2.
yaha umā sambhu bibāhu jē nara nāri kahahim̐ jē gāvahim̐. 3.
kalyāna kāja bibāha maṅgala sarbadā sukhu pāvahim̐. 4.

The entire world knows about the birth of the deity with six heads, and about his glories deeds, as well as about his immense valour, courage and strength. (Chanda line no. 1)

That is why I¹ have briefly mentioned about the story of the birth and deeds of the son of Lord Brishketu (Shiva). [Since the story related to the birth of Kartikeya and how he slayed the demon Tarkasur is well documented in the scriptures and well known in the world, I have refrained from detailing it. Another reason for not narrating it in detail is that it would be out of context as the focus of my narration is the marriage of Lord Shiva, and to explain the reason as to why the Lord had married in the first place.] (Chanda line no. 2)

Verily, those men and women who narrate and hear this divine episode of the marriage of Uma with Lord Sambhu---(Chanda line no. 3)

---They would be blessed with auspiciousness and success in all their endeavours related to any activity pertaining to marriage (in their families and the society at large), and at the same time they would always find happiness and peace.² (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹This episode of Lord Shiva’s marriage with Parvati is being narrated by sage Yagyawalkya to sage Bharadwaj—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 47; and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 103.

However, this original narration is cited by the author of our present book “Ram Charit Manas” who is Goswami Tulsidas, and this is clear in Doha no. 103 herein below. So therefore, it can be either sage Yagyawalkya or Goswami Tulsidas who is meant by the pronoun “I” here.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 361 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4 where the same idea is expressed in relation to the story of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita.]

दो०. चरित सिंधु गिरिजा रमन बेद न पावहिं पारु ।
बरनै तुलसीदासु किमि अति मतिमंद गवाँरु ॥ १०३ ॥

dōhā.

carita sindhu girijā ramana bēda na pāvahir̄n pāru.
baranai tulasīdāsu kimi ati matimanda gavām̄ru. 103.

The life and deeds of the dear Lord of Girija (i.e. Lord Shiva, the dear husband of the daughter of the mountains, Parvati) are like an ocean, i.e. so vast and indescribable, that even the Vedas are unable to cross them (or fully narrate them).

Therefore, how can the humble Tulsidas, who has a limited intellect and is very foolish, ever be able to do so¹? (Doha no. 103)

[Note—¹This is merely an expression of Tulsidas’ excellent sense of humility and modesty that he does not want to take credit for whatever he has written. The fact remains that Tulsidas’ writings have remained unmatched in their beauty and spiritual depth in the annals of devotional literature anywhere in the world, and so this statement of his is simply to express his humility and modesty.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 361, the great poet-saint-savant Tulsidas has made it abundantly clear why he has decided to narrate the divine story which he titled “Ram Charit Manas”. He says that he has done it to “purify his own speech”.

Further, in the very beginning of this book he has expressed his humility and modesty while laying out the groundwork and outlining the reason why he chose to write this epic. Refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 15.]

चौ०. संभु चरित सुनि सरस सुहावा । भरद्वाज मुनि अति सुखु पावा ॥ १ ॥
बहु लालसा कथा पर बाढ़ी । नयनन्हि नीरु रोमावलि ठाढ़ी ॥ २ ॥
प्रेम बिबस मुख आव न बानी । दसा देखि हरषे मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sambhu carita suni sarasa suhāvā. bharadvāja muni ati sukhu pāvā. 1.
bahu lālasā kathā para bāṛhī. nayanānhi nīru rōmāvali ṭhāṛhī. 2.
prēma bibasa mukha āva na bānī. dasā dēkhi haraṣē muni gyānī. 3.

Sage Bharadwaj felt very happy and delighted when he heard this magnificent and auspicious story of Lord Shiva (as narrated by sage Yagyawalkya); the narration gave him much comfort, peace and happiness¹. (1)

His (Bharadwaj's) interest in hearing the rest of the wondrous story² grew manifold times even as he felt exhilarated, with tears filling his eyes, and his body feeling the thrill of it all. (2)

He was so ecstatic with joy and thrill that he could not speak a word as his emotions overwhelmed him and literally choked his throat. When sage Yagyawalkya observed Bharadwaj's condition, he too felt glad and exhilarated³. (3)

[Note—¹The 'story of Lord Shiva' referred to here is the one we have read in the previous verses, i.e. Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 47—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 103.

This verse rounds up the episode of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati which sage Yagyawalkya had narrated to sage Bharadwaj. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 47.

²What was the 'rest of the story' which sage Bharadwaj was now feeling so keen and eager to hear till its end? Well, the story of Lord Shiva which had so much enthused him had its genesis in the discourse between sage Agastya and Lord Shiva, where the divine story of Lord Ram was narrated, and the subsequent developments when goddess Sati had doubts about the divinity of Lord Ram which compelled Lord Shiva to abandon her, Sati's burning herself in the fire sacrifice organized by her father Daksha, and her taking birth as Uma or Parvati in the household of the king of Mountains, known as Himwaan, when she did severe Tapa (penance) to marry Lord Shiva.

Sage Bharadwaj grew very curious to learn more about the story of Lord Ram which sage Agastya had narrated to Lord Shiva (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 48), as all the subsequent developments concerning Lord Shiva's disillusionment with Sati, and then his marrying her again in the next birth as Parvati quite intrigued Bharadwaj, as all of it had its origin in the discourse of sage Agastya concerning Lord Ram. So therefore, sage Bharadwaj wished to hear the original story of Lord Ram from the beginning to its end. This eagerness of the great sage led Yagyawalkya to reveal the divine story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Charit Manas' which we are presently reading. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 30.}

³To wit, both the sages shared each other's joy and happiness as they drenched themselves in the warmth of the sunshine of bliss and ecstasy which spread over them in a symbolic way when the charming story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati was narrated. It was a shared feeling of bliss and ecstasy. For a while they must have forgotten about the world around them, or who the narrator was, and who the listener.

The reaction of the two illustrious sages shows how an attentive listener would react when he thoroughly enjoys what he hears, and how a good teacher would feel when he finds that his student has thoroughly enjoyed what was taught to him. It is also an example to show how a good thing benefits and cheers the giver as well as the receiver of it, for both Yagyawalkya, who was the 'giver' here, and Bharadwaj, the 'receiver', had equally felt blessed by the narration of Lord Shiva's story.

We discover two things here: One, that when a person eager to learn something or remove his doubts approaches a wise and learned teacher with a request to bless him with the required knowledge, the teacher would not refuse him. Of course it is obligatory on the part of a wise teacher to first determine how sincere the person is, and if he is eligible and competent enough to be told the secrets of desired knowledge. There is no harm or shame in having doubts about anything, but one should be careful not to use it as an excuse to ridicule the wisdom of his teacher, to find constant fault with his teaching, even going to the extent of ridiculing the knowledge itself, and therefore approaching the teacher with a wicked mind and firm intention to prick holes in his knowledge in order to mock him and undermine his reputation and self-respect.

And two, that if the narrator of a story is an expert orator and well versed in the subject matter he has taken up, and if the listener is sincere and really interested in hearing the story, if he has certain queries about the story and wishes to understand its intricacies, then both of them thoroughly enjoy the narration and the time spent on it.

These two observations are endorsed when we closely examine the following verses of Ram Charit Manas: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 111; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 114 (where we find that Lord Shiva, who is the narrator of the story of Lord Ram for the benefit of his consort Uma, feels glad that she wants to hear it and clarify her doubts); (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 120 (Uma expresses her joy when all her doubts were removed); (b) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 64; (v) Doha no. 69 (where we read that the saintly crow Kaagbhusund felt exhilarated when Garud approached him with a desire to learn the truth of Lord Ram, and asked him to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram for this purpose); and (vi) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 125 (where Garud has cheerfully expressed his gratitude to Kaagbhusund for removing all his doubts).

This is what has happened presently in the case of sages Bharadwaj and Yagyawalkya too: First Bharadwaj asked Yagyawalkya to tell him the secrets of the story of Lord Ram, then Yagyawalkya tested Bharadwaj's sincerity by narrating the story of Lord Shiva before beginning the actual story which Bharadwaj wished to hear in order to find out if the latter was earnest in acquiring knowledge, or if he was just testing Yagyawalkya, and finally when the teacher found that his student is eligible for receiving the sought knowledge, he was thrilled. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47; (b) Doha no. 47—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 104.}

The positive emotional response of sage Bharadwaj, as has been outlined here, would motivate sage Yagyawalkya to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram in great detail to him now onwards. It also acts an example for all others: a person is eligible to hear the story of Lord Ram only if he has true interest to hear it, finding emotional solace and peace by it, deriving immense spiritual bliss, joy and happiness by doing so. The Lord's divine story ought not to be told to people who are feeling bored, who find it boring and lacking of interest; people who yawn, look repeatedly at their wrist-watches, make side-glances, itch all over the body and scratch, or feel drowsy. These symptoms are the opposite of what sage Bharadwaj exhibited.

The question: 'Who is eligible to hear the divine story of Lord Ram, and who is not?' has been answered in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 9; (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 69; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2

that precede Doha no. 93; (iii) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.

Further, the hearer of the story must not hear it with a skeptical mind to find faults in it, to ridicule it, but with a sincere and honest desire to understand the mysteries associated with this divine story as well as the divinity of Lord Ram. Lord Shiva had himself used this criterion to start narrating the story of Lord Ram for the benefit of his consort goddess Parvati. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.}

There is another remarkable thing that we observe here: that the narrator, sage Yagyawalkya, has become ecstatic too. Well, other narrators of the divine story of Lord Ram have also become overjoyed when they got an opportunity to do so. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 (general observation); and Doha no. 111 (Lord Shiva); (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 69, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124 (Kaagbhusund).

It is a universal truth that when a good teacher preaches something meant for the good of others, then it definitely sends cheers all around. There are instances in Ram Charit Manas where we read that a message that grants truthful knowledge and peace is always received with great reverence by its hearer. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 48 (Lord Shiva feeling exhilarated when he heard the narration of Lord Ram's story from sage Agastya); (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17 (Laxman feeling joyful when Lord Ram taught him about the relationship between Bhakti and Yoga (devotion and meditation)); (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 53 (Uma feeling exceedingly glad upon hearing the story of Lord Ram as narrated to her by Lord Shiva); and (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 93 (Garud feeling ecstatic when he heard the narration of Lord Ram's divine story from the saintly crow Kaagbhusund).}

When a person is overcome with joy and emotions, he is unable to speak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 242.

And what can give more joy and happiness to a person than something that grants peace and bliss to his soul as is the case of narrating and hearing of the divine story of Lord Ram. Further, this is possible only when one meets a saint and a pious soul who would tell the story truthfully and without distortions. Hence, it is great blessing of the Lord upon a person who comes in contact with a saintly soul. This fact is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 123 where Garud has said that he feels exceptionally blessed and privileged that Lord Ram has granted him the opportunity for a meeting with a saintly soul, in this case it was the saint-crow Kaagbhusund.]

अहो धन्य तव जन्मु मुनीसा । तुम्हहि प्रान सम प्रिय गौरीसा ॥ ४ ॥

सिव पद कमल जिन्हहि रति नाहीं । रामहि ते सपनेहुँ न सोहाहीं ॥ ५ ॥

बिनु छल बिस्वनाथ पद नेहू । राम भगत कर लच्छन एहू ॥ ६ ॥

ahō dhan'ya tava janmu munīsā. tumhahi prāna sama priya gaurīsā. 4.
siva pada kamala jinhahi rati nāhīm. rāmahi tē sapanēhum'na sōhāhīm. 5.
binu chala bisvanātha pada nēhū. rāma bhagata kara lacchana ēhū. 6.

The illustrious sage Yagyawalkya was overwhelmed and delighted at seeing the ecstatic condition of sage Bharadwaj. He praised the latter and lauded him, saying: ‘Oh blessed sage; you are indeed very fortunate and great, and truly blessed is your birth, for Lord Shiva (who is the husband of Gauri, goddess Parvati) is as dear to your heart as life itself is dear to it! (4)

Those who do not have devotion and affection for the holy lotus like feet of Lord Shiva are not liked by Lord Ram even in a dream¹. (5)

To have a sincere and unpretentious devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Shiva is a sure sign of one being a true devotee of Lord Ram². (6)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram has himself said that if a person wishes to have devotion for him, then he must have devotion for Lord Shiva too. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; and (ii) Doha no. 45.

Lord Shiva worships Lord Ram as his revered deity; Lord Shiva uses the holy name of Lord Ram as a divine Mantra for his meditation purpose; the divine story of Lord Ram had first emerged in the heart of Lord Shiva while he was meditating upon Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 9, 11 that precede Doha no. 35; (v) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; (vi) and Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

To wit, it is clear that amongst all the Gods, none equals Lord Shiva in his devotion for Lord Ram, thereby making Shiva a favourite of Lord Ram.

²By feeling ecstatic upon hearing the story of Lord Shiva, sage Bharadwaj has proved his eligibility to hear the divine story of Lord Ram too. This is why sage Yagyawalkya praises him. Sage Bharadwaj becomes eligible to hear the divine story of Lord Ram.]

सिव सम को रघुपति ब्रतधारी । बिनु अघ तजी सती असि नारी ॥ ७ ॥
पनु करि रघुपति भगति देखाई । को सिव सम रामहि प्रिय भाई ॥ ८ ॥

siva sama kō raghupati bratadhārī. binu agha tajī satī asi nārī. 7.
panu kari raghupati bhagati dēkhāī. kō siva sama rāmahi priya bhāī. 8.

[In these verses, sage Yagyawalkya explains why Lord Shiva is so dear to Lord Ram.]

Say, who is more diligent, more steadfast, more sincere and more committed to having devotion for Lord Ram than Lord Shiva is—who had discarded even a perfectly chaste and loyal wife as Sati was, for she was surely sinless and immaculate of character. [Lord Shiva had snapped all his relations with Sati, his consort, just because she had doubted the divinity of Lord Ram, even though she was otherwise perfect in all other respects. Lord Shiva had acknowledged to himself that Sati was sinless, and breaking all relationship with her had made him uneasy too.]¹ (7)

But Lord Shiva showed his exemplary devotion and dedication to Lord Ram when he broke his own vows. [Lord Shiva had vowed never to accept Sati as his wife in future. But when she was born again as Parvati, known as Uma too, and did severe Tapa to have Lord Shiva as her husband, and Shiva was reluctant to oblige her, Lord Ram came to him and persuaded Shiva to accept her. Then Lord Shiva told Lord Ram that though it is not proper for him to do so, yet he will obey his revered Lord Ram's command and go back on his own vows.]

[Addressing sage Bharadwaj, sage Yagyawalkya says:] Say brother, who can be dearer to Lord Ram than Lord Shiva under these circumstances? [For, Lord Shiva didn't mind breaking his own vow if it pleased his dear Lord Ram.]²(8)

[Note—¹This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58.

Lord Shiva had felt uneasy ever since he had discarded Sati: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. that precedes Doha no. 76.

²This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 77.]

दो०. प्रथमहिं मैं कहि सिव चरित बूझा मरमु तुम्हार ।

सुचि सेवक तुम्ह राम के रहित समस्त बिकार ॥ १०४ ॥

dōhā.

prathamahim maim kahi siva carita būjhā maramu tumhāra.
suci sēvaka tumha rāma kē rahita samasta bikāra. 104.

[Sage Yagyawalkya continued—] ‘By narrating the story of Lord Shiva and by observing your reaction to it I have been able to ascertain the secret thoughts of your heart, and have determined (to my happiness) that you are indeed a true devotee of Lord Ram, and that you are free from all deceit, conceit and pretensions. [Truly, this makes you eligible to hear the divine story of Lord Ram which I shall be glad to recount to you now.]¹ (Doha no. 104)

[Note—¹Refer to the extensive note appended earlier to verse nos. 1-3 that follow Doha no. 103 herein above.

Sage Yagyawalkya has given three reasons in these verses which would make a person eligible to be a devotee of Lord Ram, as well as for hearing and reading the Lord's story. One: the person must have devotion for Lord Shiva; two: that he must be free from deceit, conceit and pretensions of all kinds; and three: that he must thoroughly enjoy the rendering of the story.

We can make certain important observation here: Goswami Tulsidas, the poet-saint who has composed Ram Charit Manas, has followed the same pattern while writing his own version of the story of Lord Ram that sage Yagyawalkya had followed while narrating it to sage Bharadwaj—viz. first telling the story of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati before the actual commencement of Lord Ram's story. Perhaps Ram Charit Manas is the only instance amongst any of the versions of the

story of the Ramayana where an event related to Lord Shiva appears before the story of Lord Ram actually begins.

Not only this, Tulsidas has gone a step ahead by including some other events before he commences the actual story. For instance, we shall soon be reading the incident of sage Narad's delusions (Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 139). This is immediately followed by the story of King Manu and queen Satrupa doing severe Tapa (penance) (Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Doha no. 152). And finally, we read the story of King Pratapbhanu and the birth of the demon race headed by their King Ravana (Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 183).

Though it can be argued that all these stories have a bearing on the main theme, i.e. why the Supreme Being came down to this mortal world in the form of Lord Ram, but they could have been added at the end too, as is the case with other versions of the Ramayana, where the story related to the demon king Ravana appears in the last Chapter, called the Uttar Kand—refer Valmiki's Ramayana and Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan. This approach would be justified in the sense that the top priority of a book is to go straight to the topic for which it is meant—which in this case is the narration of the story of Lord Ram, and not of Lord Shiva, or King Manu, or Narad's delusions, or Ravana's birth.

So then, why has Tulsidas chosen the new approach? Well, as Yagyawalkya would have said, it is to “test the patience and the sincerity of the reader”. If he is shallow in his enquiry, he would be easily put off by these stories which he would treat as superfluous and unrelated. It is only if he is sincere and eager to dig deep and go into the depths of the mystery associated with the mystical story of Lord Ram would he persist and go on reading. It's like a wise teacher taking an interview before selecting serious students for his class, because the crowd can easily be got rid of when not-so-serious students get bored by the many questions asked by the teacher which they consider an irrelevant joke and a waste of time.

Another reason is that all these small incidents help to build the foundation on which the rest of the story is built: they enlighten the reader of the importance of having devotion, faith and love for Lord Ram, why the Lord took the trouble of becoming a human being and undergoing sufferings which he could have easily avoided, and that there are umpteen numbers of reasons why the Supreme Being manifested himself as Lord Ram.

There is yet another crucial reason for Tulsidas to introduce the story of Lord Shiva and praise the Lord as being the greatest devotee of Lord Ram, as well as the one in whose Mana (heart and mind) the divine story of Lord Ram had originally sprouted prior to it becoming known to the rest of the world, before he actually commences narrating the story of Lord Ram to whom this book is dedicated. It was an honest, a sincere and a serious effort by the illustrious saint Tulsidas to put to rest and douse the fire of dissent, discontent, discord and distemper that prevailed between the worshippers of Lord Shiva, known as the Shaivas, and those of Lord Vishnu, called the Vaishnavas. Tulsidas sought to stress that both the forms of the Supreme Being are equally reverential; the followers of one deity ought to show full respect to the other deity. If Tulsidas had narrated the story of Lord Shiva before the story of Lord Ram in own book Ram Charit Manas, without any precedence to support him, then perhaps he would have been roasted for violating standards by both the sects; so therefore he invokes sages Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj to justify his stand.]

चौ०. मैं जाना तुम्हार गुन सीला । कहउँ सुनहु अब रघुपति लीला ॥ १ ॥
सुनु मुनि आजु समागम तोरें । कहि न जाइ जस सुखु मन मोरें ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mair̥m jānā tumhāra guna sīlā. kaha'um̃ sunahu aba raghupati līlā. 1
sunu muni āju samāgama tōrēm̃. kahi na jā'i jasa sukhu mana mōrēm̃. 2.

[Sage Yagyawalkya told sage Bharadwaj—] ‘Oh Sage! I have understood your noble virtues and auspicious desires. [To wit, I have realized that you are fully entitled to hear the divine story of Lord Ram—because for one, you have true interest in it as is evident by your emotional response to my narration till now, second, that you have shown your devotion for Lord Shiva which is a first sign of your devotion for Lord Ram, and three, you are free from the negative traits of deceit, conceit and pretensions. All these virtues make you eligible to hear the story of Lord Ram.]¹

Therefore, now I shall begin the narration of Lord Ram’s divine story. Listen to it carefully and with full devotion.’ (1)

[Praising sage Bharadwaj further, the enlightened sage Yagyawalkya said—] ‘Oh Sage! I cannot describe how great I feel, and how much blessed and honoured I consider myself to be for having had this opportunity to meet you and have a communion with you.’² (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 9; (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 69.

Observing Parvati’s eagerness to hear the divine story of Lord Ram, Lord Shiva has made a similar observation in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 120 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

²When Garud met the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and heard the story of Lord Ram, he too had felt the same way. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 69; (ii) Doha no. 93-a; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 125.

Even Kaagbhusund had felt delighted when he met Garud and got an opportunity to narrate the story of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 123—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124; and also to (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 64; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 70; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 93; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 95.

There is no greater joy than meeting a saintly soul—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 121.]

राम चरित अति अमित मुनीसा । कहि न सकहिं सत कोटि अहीसा ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि जथाश्रुत कहउँ बखानी । सुमिरि गिरापति प्रभु धनुपानी ॥ ४ ॥

rāma carita ati amita munīsā. kahi na sakahim̃ sata kōṭi ahīsā. 3.
tadapi jathāśruta kaha'um̃ bakhānī. sumiri girāpati prabhu dhanupānī. 4.

Oh Great Sage (Bharadwaj)! The story that describes the deeds of Lord Ram has an infinite limit; it is measureless and immense in its dimension and variety¹, so much so that it cannot be narrated in its entirety even by thousands of celestial Serpents, each having a thousand tongues, attempting their best to do so. (3)

However, inspite of this I (Yagyawalkya) shall try to tell you what I have heard myself from others (i.e. from illustrious sages who have quoted from the scriptures)². For this purpose I shall first invoke the blessings of Lord Shiva (girāpati#) as well as Lord Ram who holds a bow in his hands.

[#This verse can be interpreted slightly differently if we treat the word “girāpati” to mean ‘the patron deity of speech’—which would be goddess Saraswati. In this case, the reading would change a bit to mean ‘invoking of goddess Saraswati’ instead of Lord Shiva.] (4)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 52; (ii) Doha no. 92; (b) Baal Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13; (iv) Doha no. 33; (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 121.

²Even Lord Shiva, the all-knowing Lord God who was the first to have this divine story of Lord Ram revealed in his own heart during his meditation session, had said the same thing: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 114; (ii) Doha no. 120.

Later on, the saintly crow Kaagbhusund says a similar thing to Garud: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 92.

And finally, our revered poet Tulsidas too says the same thing: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 30-a and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

Lord Shiva, who being the omniscient Lord knowing the mystery of Lord Ram, must have known all the different versions of the story of Lord Ram, yet he says he will sight only a few of them: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122.

What do we conclude here? Obviously it shows that no one can claim full and exclusive authority over the divine story of Lord Ram, for the Lord and his divine story as well as his glories are infinite and beyond the reach of any individual. Even the Vedas, the ancient scriptures said to be a repository of all knowledge, could not find an end of it when they finally gave up and said “Neti-Neti”—i.e. not this, not this; or ‘neither this nor that is a complete picture of the infinite Brahm’. To wit, what they all said is true, but this truth does not exclude the fact there are other similar truths about the Lord which are yet untold and still unknown.]

सारद दारुनारि सम स्वामी । रामु सूत्रधर अंतरजामी ॥ ५ ॥

जेहि पर कृपा करहिं जनु जानी । कबि उर अजिर नचावहिं बानी ॥ ६ ॥

sārada dārunāri sama svāmī. rāmu sūtradhara antarajāmī. 5.

jēhi para kṛpā karahim̐ janu jānī. kabi ura ajira nacāvahim̐ bānī. 6.

Indeed, the goddess of speech, i.e. goddess Saraswati, is like a wooden puppet, for she would act on the instructions of the Supreme Lord, Lord Ram, who holds the string of this puppet as he controls everything in this creation¹. (5)

Forsooth and without gainsay, he is the fortunate one whom the Lord favours and selects as his chosen servant, transforming him into a learned savant or a skilled minstrel who would speak on the Lord's behalf and sing his glories². It is like the case of the puppeteer making the puppet dance in a royal courtyard³. (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 11; (ii) Doha no. 117 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 124 (in the context of the illustrious sage Narad getting deluded).

²A puppet does so many acts, but it does so only on the instructions of the puppeteer who remains behind the curtain and holds the string that moves the puppet. Likewise, there are so many poets and bards and minstrels and savants who sing the glories of Lord Ram, but it will be a grave error to think that they are doing it because they have the knowledge, aptitude, skill and the competence to do so. No, they do so because they are fortunate that the Lord has chosen them to spread his good word. If these people think that they are the ones who ought to be honoured and lauded for their excellent abilities and skills, surely then they are ignorant and deluded.

³Here, the learned poet or bard or minstrel or savant is like the 'puppet' who does and speaks what the 'puppeteer', here meaning Lord Ram, wants him to do or speak.]

प्रनवउँ सोइ कृपाल रघुनाथा । बरनउँ बिसद तासु गुन गाथा ॥ ७ ॥
परम रज्ज गिरिबरु कैलासू । सदा जहाँ सिव उमा निवासू ॥ ८ ॥

pranava'um̃ sō'i kṛpāla raghunāthā. barana'um̃ bisada tāsu guna gāthā. 7.
parama ramya giribaru kailāsū. sadā jahām̃ siva umā nivāsū. 8.

I therefore bow before the most merciful and compassionate Lord Ram (also known as Raghunath), and then begin to narrate the divine glories of the same Lord, glories that are holy, immaculate, legendary and infinite¹. (7)

[Now begins the actual narration of the story of 'Ram Charit Manas'. Starting his discourse, the illustrious sage Yagyawalkya said to his listener sage Bharadwaj—]

'There is a famed mountain called 'Mt. Kailash'; it is the best amongst all the mountains and is exceptionally pleasant. It is the abode of Lord Shiva where he resides with his consort goddess Uma². (8)

[Note—¹Other narrators mentioned in Ram Charit Manas have also invoked the blessings of Lord Ram while beginning to narrate the Lord's divine story. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 112 (Lord Shiva); (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28 and Doha no. 43 (Tulsidas).

In case of Kaagbhusund, he has repeatedly bowed his head before Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 124.

²Refer to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas where Mt. Kailash has been endorsed as the abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 58 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 103; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 60.]

दो०. सिद्ध तपोधन जोगिजन सुर किंनर मुनिबृन्द ।
बसहिं तहाँ सुकृती सकल सेवहिं सिव सुखकंद ॥ १०५ ॥

dōhā.

sid'dha tapōdhana jōgijana sura kinnara munibr̥nda.
basahim̐ tahām̐ sukṛtī sakala sēvahim̐ siva sukhakanda. 105.

It is the holy place where great Siddhas (mystics), Ascetics who are embodiments of the virtues of Tapa (penance and austerity—'tapōdhana'), Yogis (those who have renounced the world and are submerged in doing Yoga—meditation), Gods, Kinnars (a sort of demi-god; celestial dancers in the heavenly court of gods), and great sages and seers who are embodiments of excellent virtues and holy of soul abide. All of them serve Lord Shiva and derive immense pleasure in it. (Doha no. 105)

चौ०. हरि हर बिमुख धर्म रति नाहीं । ते नर तहँ सपनेहुँ नहिं जाहीं ॥ १ ॥
तेहि गिरि पर बट बिटप बिसाला । नित नूतन सुंदर सब काला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hari hara bimukha dharmā rati nāhīm̐. tē nara taham̐ sapanēhum̐ nahim̐
jāhīm̐. 1.
tēhi giri para baṭa biṭapa bisālā. nita nūtana sundara saba kālā. 2.

Those who are opposed to Lords Hara and Hari (Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu respectively)—i.e. those who do not have devotion for the Lords, as well as those who are not interested in obeying the laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility of thought and conduct) and prefer to undermine its principles, such persons cannot dream of ever going there¹. (1)

There on this holy mountain is a huge Banyan tree; it is evergreen and remains shady and comfortable all round the year². (2)

[Note—¹Where would they not go? Well, the answer is: to the holy abode of Lord Shiva, located on Mt. Kailash. This 'abode of Lord Shiva' has a symbolic meaning—i.e. such people will not think of going to a wise teacher to hear discourses on spiritual matters as they find it boring and outdated and irrelevant to life. They think that the physical world is the real truth, the reality and cause of existence, the destiny of all

efforts, all there is nothing beyond it. They think it a waste of time that is spent on spiritual discourses, for it would be rather better spent on learning things of the material world that give physical comfort and pleasure. Verily indeed, it goes without saying that such people can never hope to find peace and happiness in the true sense. What they think constitutes peace and happiness is like a thirsty man seeing water in a mirage in a hot desert—it's an illusion that vanishes soon, and only serves to drag him nearer to his own death.

Only foolish people expect to have happiness and peace if they are opposed to Dharma; what they get instead is suffering and grief. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 102.

²The Banyan tree, or the Indian Fig tree, is regarded as auspicious and holy. It has a wide girth, and its extended branches give shade over a large area so that a congregation of saints and seers can easily and comfortably assemble there and discuss spiritual matters. The saintly crow Kaagbhusund had also given his discourse under a Banyan tree—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 56; and Chaupai line nos. 1, 7 that precedes Doha no. 57.

Lord Shiva had one such tree in Mt. Kailash. He used to sit under its shade to meditate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 58.]

त्रिबिध समीर सुसीतलि छाया । सिव बिश्राम बिटप श्रुति गाया ॥ ३ ॥

एक बार तेहि तर प्रभु गयऊ । तरु बिलोकि उर अति सुखु भयऊ ॥ ४ ॥

tribidha samīra susīтали chāyā. siva biśrāma biṭapa śruti gāyā. 3.

ēka bāra tēhi tara prabhu gaya'ū. taru bilōki ura ati sukhu bhaya'ū. 4.

The Vedas (“śruti”; the ancient scriptures) say (literally sing; “gāyā”) that this wonderful Tree is the usual habitat of Lord Shiva where the Lord relaxes and meditates under its cool shade where a pleasant breeze having three excellent qualities constantly blows¹. (3)

Once upon a time, Lord Shiva went near this magnificent Tree. He looked up at it, and felt very happy and comfortable². (4)

[Note—¹What are these ‘three qualities’ of the breeze that makes it so pleasant and comfortable (tribidha samīra)? Well, it has a sweet fragrance, it is cool, and it is mild and soft. This is the opposite of a wind that carries stink, that is hot, and that blows fiercely as during a storm.

And what makes a tree so pleasant and attractive: It has a cool shade, and its environment is clean (susīтали chāyā).

²Shiva approached this Banyan tree, and felt its coolness and the sweet fragrance that spread all around it. It was a pleasant sight, and Shiva experienced bliss. So he decided to sit down under its shade and meditate.

A tree’s shade is always comfortable and soothing for the senses. Even Lord Ram felt delighted when he saw a tree under whose shade he could relax for a while on the way to the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai

line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 115; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 124; (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 41.

We read in Ram Charit Manas that at Chitrakoot, Lord Ram used to sit under a Banyan tree and many great sages assembled around him, and then spiritual subjects were discussed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Sage Kaagbhusund too had his seat under one Banyan tree where his disciples assembled to hear the divine story of Lord Ram narrated, and it was here that Garud too was preached. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 56 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 57; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 63.]

निज कर डासि नागरिपु छाला । बैठे सहजहिं संभु कृपाला ॥ ५ ॥
कुंद इंदु दर गौर सरीरा । भुज प्रलंब परिधन मुनिचीरा ॥ ६ ॥

nija kara dāsi nāgaripu chālā. baiṭhē sahajahim sambhu kṛpālā. 5.
kunda indu dara gaura sarīrā. bhuj pralamba paridhana municīrā. 6.

The most merciful and gracious Lord Shiva spread a sitting mat consisting of a tiger-skin under the shade of this magnificent tree, and sat down comfortably over it. (6)

His complexion was as fair and charming¹ as the jasmine flower, or the moon, or the conch shell. His arms were long², and he wore ochre clothes like a hermit³. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva rubs the ash of the fire sacrifice on his body; this gives him a fair or grey complexion.

²His long arms are symbolic of his ability to extend a long hand of protection and help to his devotees.

³Lord Shiva is a patron deity of ascetics. So he exemplifies the core values of an ascetic. He therefore dresses himself as an ascetic or hermit would dress.

In this context refer to his appearance when he was on his way to marry Uma. There also we read that Lord Shiva looked the same way as he appears now; he resembled more as an ascetic or a hermit than a groom on his way to his wedding venue. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 92.

So, what message does Lord Shiva intend to give to his devotees? Well, he tells them to remain free from attachments and treat oneself as a hermit internally, even if one has to live like an ordinary householder externally. This is true renunciation; this is true detachment; this is true enlightenment and self-realisation.]

तरुन अरुन अंबुज सम चरना । नख दुति भगत हृदय तम हरना ॥ ७ ॥
भुजग भूति भूषन त्रिपुरारी । आननु सरद चंद छबि हारी ॥ ८ ॥

taruna aruna ambuja sama caranā. nakha duti bhagata hr̥daya tama haranā.

7.

bhujaga bhūti bhūṣana tripurārī. ānanu sarada canda chabi hārī. 8.

Lord Shiva's holy feet are like a freshly blooming lotus flower with a red hue. The shine of his nails symbolically act as the light that removes the darkness in the heart of his devotees. (7)

Snakes wrapped around his body, and the ash from the fire sacrifice that is smeared over it, are his adornments.

The Lord is the one who had vanquished the demon Tripura—an accomplishment that gave him the title of Tripurari¹.

The charm of his face is so magnificent that it puts to shame the beauty of the full moon as it is seen in the month of autumn. (8)

[Note—¹The word 'Tripurari' also means the Lord of the three divisions of the creation—viz. the past, the present and the future; the heaven, the mortal world (earth) and the nether world (hell). This is why one of the many names of Lord Shiva is 'Maha-Deva', the Great God.

Lord Shiva is called Tripurari because he was an enemy of the demon Tripura and had vanquished the latter.

The story of demon Tripura and Taarkasur are closely related. Briefly it is as follows:

Taarkasur was the son of Vajraanga and his consort Varaangi. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) as a result of which the creator Brahma had granted him several boons which had made him invincible. He was killed by Lord Subramanya, the son of Shiva and Parvati. He had three sons—Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali. They had also pleased Brahma and by his blessings built three great cities, collectively called 'Tripura'. These cities were made of gold, silver and iron. These three demon brothers were collectively called Tripurasur—the demons of the three cities. When they became a nuisance for the Gods, Shiva destroyed these three cities and the demons with one arrow. Therefore he got the name of Tripurari—one who destroyed the three enemy cities.

The story of Tripurasur with a slight variation is narrated in Bhagwat Mahapurān, 7/10/53-58. According to it, once when the demons were defeated by the gods, they went to take refuge with the greatest demon of them all, the mighty demon named 'Maya Daanav'. He was the one who had created the golden city of Lanka for Ravana.

Maya Danav created three huge planes made of gold, silver and iron. These planes were so huge that they resembled entire cities and were well provided for with all the things necessary for comfortable living. Maya Daanav handed them to the three chief demons named Taaraaksha, Kamlaaksha and Vindyumaali who were said to be the son of Taarkasur. The special quality of these planes was that they were hidden from view and flew stealthily. Emboldened by being invisible, the demons went on the rampage, plundering and laying to waste the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the sky. The gods could not fight them as these demons were invisible. Besides this, these three city-like planes had a pond of nectar each, the contents of which made the demons invincible and beyond the reach of death.

Frustrated and flabbergasted, the gods approached Lord Shiva to get rid of the demons. Lord Shiva invoked his specially empowered arrow known as the

‘Pashupatastra’. When shot, it produced countless arrows spewing fierce tongues of flame. Though these arrows burnt the three cities or planes (“Tripurs”), the demons however managed to survive by taking a dip in the pond of nectar that was present in each of the three places.

Confused, Lord Shiva invoked Lord Vishnu, the maverick Lord who knows every trick in creation as he is the Supreme Being, to find some solution. Vishnu disguised himself as a cow and made the Creator Brahma a calf. They went to these ponds and drank the nectar. The demons were so dazed by the Lord’s Maya (delusion creating powers) that they could not respond and react. After that, Vishnu prepared for the great war—creating the chariot from Dharma (righteousness), the charioteer from Gyan (knowledge), the war standard from Vairagya (renunciation), the horses from Aishwarya (fame and might), bow from Tapa (penance), the body armour from Vidya (skills), arrows from Kriya (deeds and dynamism), and all other paraphernalia of war by employing other mystical powers he had.

Then, on an auspicious moment of the asterism of “Abhijit” (conquer now), Lord Shiva rode this chariot and burnt the three cities by a single arrow.

According to the Ramayana of Valmiki, Baal Kand, Canto 75, two great bows were made from the bones of Dadhichi. One was known as “Sarang” and the other was known as “Pinak”. The former was held by Lord Vishnu, and the latter by Lord Shiva. Vishnu killed the demons with his Sarang bow, while Shiva used his Pinak to destroy the three cities.

Another version of who the demon “Tripurasur” was appears in Skanda Puran, Aawantya Reva-Khand. It says that the son of the demon king Bali was known as ‘Baana-sur’. He had thousand arms. He worshipped Lord Shiva for a thousand years. Pleased with him, Lord Shiva asked him to seek a boon, upon which Baanasur requested the Lord to provide him with a city that is so invincible that none of the gods can ever conquer it, except of course by Lord Shiva whom he had worshipped as his deity. Shiva granted him his wish.

The cunning Baanasur then decided to please the other three gods of the Trinity, i.e. Lords Vishnu and Brahma. So he worshipped them one by one and extracted similar boons from them as he had done from Shiva. Once done, he now had three invincible cities that symbolized his sway and domain covering the three dimensions of creation—viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world. Then he went mad with recklessness, plundering and pillaging at will. Terrified, the gods approached Lord Shiva as he was the one who had initially blessed Baanasur, and also because the demon had himself exempted Shiva from the boon of immunity from destruction. Then, Shiva stringed his bow called Pinak, mounted an arrow called Aghor, and angrily shot it at the three cities ruled by Baanasur. This arrow instantly burnt and reduced the three cities to ashes. Their residue fell in the holy river Narmada. Then Baanasur fervently prayed to Lord Shiva to be pleased with him and give him abode in his own divine Loka known as the ‘Shiva-Loka’, the divine abode of Shiva in the heaven.

The Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 14 describes that Lord Shiva is also known as the slayer of the demon Tirpurasur. Hence, Shiva or Rudra is also called Tripurari. The three cities ruled by Tripurasur symbolised the three worlds, viz. the heaven, the earth and the nether world.

The story of the birth of Taarkasur in ‘Padma Puran, Sristi Khanda’ is as follows—By the blessings of sage Kashyap, mother Diti gave birth to a son named ‘Vajraanga’ because his body was as strong as Vajra, the hardest and the strongest material in existence. [Vajra + Anga (body)]

As soon as he was born he became an expert in the knowledge of all the scriptures. On the instructions of his mother he went to the heaven and ensnared Indra (the king of gods) and brought him captive before his mother. At the intervention of Brahma (the creator) and sage Kashyap (his father), Vajraanga freed Indra. He then requested Brahma that he may be inspired to do Tapa and succeed in it.

Brahma created a girl named 'Varaangi' and gave her to him as his bride. Then, both the husband and the wife, i.e. Vajraanga and Varaangi, began doing severe Tapa (penance). Brahma was pleased and blessed Vajranga that demonic tendencies would not emerge in his heart.

After successfully completing his Tapa, Vajraanga returned home but did not find his wife Varaangi there. When he went out to search for her, he saw her crying in the forest. On enquiry she told him that Indra had not only tormented her and made her miserable but had even compelled her to leave home. She wished to have retribution, and therefore asked her husband (Vajraanga) to provide her with a son who would punish Indra and avenge her insult at his hands.

Vajraanga did Tapa once again, and Brahma blessed him with a son as desired. This son was "Taarak" as he liberated his mother from her torments by severely punishing Indra: he captured Indra and put him in shackles. [A similar narration of doing Tapa and receiving a son as a boon is narrated in 'Matsya Puran', Chapter 147, verse no. 17.]

Varaangi had borne the child in her womb for a thousand years before he was born. Taarak, her son, was a brave and invincible warrior. To avenge his mother's insult at the hands of Indra (king of gods), he went to Mt. Paariyaatra and did so severe Tapa that the gods and the rest of the world began to get scorched by the heat generated by it. [Refer: (i) 'Matsya Puran', Chapter 148, and (ii) Kalidas' 'Kumar Sambhav', Sarga 1, verse no. 56.]

According to 'Matsya Puran', Chapter 148, verse no. 18 onwards, Taarak prayed to Brahma as follows—'Oh Lord! You live in the heart of all living beings, and as such nothing is hidden from you. Everyone wants to treat others the way the latter treat him. The gods have an eternal jealousy with us (the Asurs, the non-gods, the sons of Diti) and do not want us to live peacefully and prosper. I want to liberate the demon race. Hence, please grant me the boon that no warrior can kill me with any weapon. This is all I want.'

According to 'Padma Puran', Taarak asked Brahma for the grant of a boon that he is not killed by any living being.

In both the cases Brahma told him that this is impossible because all those who are born must die, without exception. So it is better if he re-phrases his request and specifies the person or entity from which he seeks immunity. Taarak then asked that he may not die at the hands of anyone except an infant of seven days of age or younger—in the hope that it would be impossible for such a small child, who is not even eight days old, to kill him, thereby making him invincible and immune to be killed by anyone who is old enough to confront him.

After the granting of the desired boon, both Brahma and Taarak went back to their respective homes. When the news spread that Taarak has successfully acquired a unique boon which would make him virtually immune from defeat and death, all the known famous demons of the time, viz. Mahish, Kaalnemi, Jambha, Grasan, Shumbha etc., came and joined forces with him, vowing their allegiance to him and declaring him as their chief. [Refer: 'Matsya Puran', Chapter 148, and Chapter 154, verse nos. 20-26, 47-49.]

Thus emboldened, Taarkasur unleashed mayhem and terror in the heaven: rampaging and plundering, imprisoning the gods and terrorizing them. The entire composite army of the gods failed to dent his strength and stop his seeking revenge from the gods. The gods approached their patriarch Brahma to help them. Brahma told them about the boon he had to grant Taarak, and advised them that since only a child below the age of seven days could kill the demon, they should make an effort in this direction and see how Shiva can be motivated to marry and beget a son. Brahma then told them (the gods) about Parvati's Tapa with the intention of marrying Shiva, and that he has already granted her wish alongside Lord Ram requesting Shiva to forgive her for her past sins in her previous life as Sati (when she had defied Shiva and had assumed the form of Lord Ram's wife Sita in order to test the integrity of Lord Ram) and marry her.

Meanwhile, Shiva is submerged in doing meditation, so the gods must try to devise a method whereby Shiva would marry Parvati. Their son would then kill Taarkasur. [Refer—(i) 'Matsya Puran', Chapters 146 and 154; and (ii) Kalidas' 'Kumar Sambhav', Canto 2, verse nos. 57, 59, 61.]

In Goswami Tulsidas' epic story of Lord Ram by the name of 'Ram Charit Manas', this entire episode is narrated in Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 89; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 103.]

दो०. जटा मुकुट सुरसरित सिर लोचन नलिन बिसाल ।
नीलकंठ लावन्यनिधि सोह बालबिधु भाल ॥ १०६ ॥

dōhā.

jaṭā mukuṭa surasarita sira lōcana nalina bisāla.
nīlakaṇṭha lāvan'yanidhi sōha bālabidhu bhāla. 106.

A crown of matted hairs from which emerges the holy river Ganges¹ adorns Lord Shiva's head. His eyes are large like the petals of a lotus flower.

His neck is of a blue hue², and a crescent moon adds to the overall attractiveness of Lord Shiva's appearance. Indeed, the Lord is an embodiment of the finest virtues of beauty and charm.# (Doha no. 106)

[Note—¹When the mighty river Ganges descended from heaven with a gigantic roar, the creator Brahma and other gods feared that its swift currents would crack the earth and completely drown the whole creation if something was not done quickly to contain it. They in fact needed a dam. So they requested Lord Shiva to trap the surging waters of Ganges in the tangled lock of his long hermit like hairs and dam it, or stop the flow of the Ganges in it. Later on, the river would be allowed to flow out in a restraint and controlled manner like water flowing out from a dam.

²When the scorching poison known as Halahal was produced at the time of the churning of the ancient ocean by the gods and the demons, everyone feared that even if a drop of it falls on the world then everything would be burnt alive. So Lord Shiva was kind enough to scoop it up and bottle it in his neck. The poison was so hot and dangerous that though it could not do much harm to Lord Shiva, yet the skin of the

neck got a blue tinge, implying that its tissues had suffered and stiffened. Even today, when anyone drinks poison, his body turns pale and blue.

#That said, it will be both pertinent and interesting for us to read a little more about the Great Lord Shiva. Here goes:

Meaning of the word Shiva: This word *Shiva* refers to the third God of the Trinity, and the one who has been assigned the task of bringing the world to an end. The word itself briefly means the eclectic, glorious and beautiful virtues of truthfulness, purity, auspiciousness, wisdom, enlightenment, erudition, sagacity, blissfulness, dispassion, detachment, holiness and divinity. These are accompanied by a high degree of peace, tranquility, serenity, and their attendant happiness, joy and bliss. Since ‘truthfulness and auspiciousness’ are qualities that are beautiful, this word also means something that is beautiful and beyond reproach.

Briefly therefore, the word ‘Shiva’ means ‘one who is auspicious, always pure, holy, divine, truthful, beautiful and blissful’. Shiva is the Lord who is self-realised and a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth.

The *Maho-panishad* of Sam Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, verse no. 7 describes that Shiva was born from the forehead of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, invisible and all-inclusive gross body of Brahm, the Supreme Being.

The *Panch Brahm Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 41 espouses that Shiva lives in the heart of the creature as an embodiment of ‘Sat-Chit-Anand’, i.e. as his Atma—“Shiva, as Sat-Chit-Anand personified, always lives in the heart. He is a constant witness of all that is happening. That is why the heart is regarded as the doorway to liberation and deliverance from the traps that have been laid out by this delusory and cunning world of artificiality to ensnare the creature in its tentacles.”

The *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition was preached by Lord Shiva himself to sage Jabal Bhusund, and it highlights the fact that Lord Shiva is no ordinary God, or even a senior one being a member of the Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Rudra the concluder, but is the supreme transcendental Brahm himself personified. Shiva is the Supreme Being himself. Refer Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 1, paragraph no. 1; Canto 2, paragraph no. 3, 6-8.

The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, in its verse nos. 92-94 says that Lord Shiva, in his form as Rudra, is the patron deity and personification of the fire element, and it is no wonder then that he is surrounded by ‘fire-spitting’ serpents as a symbolism of this fact. In this Upanishad’s verse nos. 98-102 it is asserted that Shiva is the patron deity and personification of the sky element.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, in its verse nos. 8, 10, 13, 15 and 19 affirms that Shiva is invariably wrapped by serpents.

The *Dakshin Murti Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda describes Lord Shiva as the south-facing Lord and elaborately elucidates the metaphysical significance of this form.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 4, verse no. 29 says that the Lord with three eyes (Trinetrum) is the bearer of this world having three aspects or the one who is the foundation upon which all the three Gunas such as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna rest (Trigunadhaaram) and is the one from whom the Trinity Gods (i.e. the creator Brahma, the sustainer Vishnu, and the concluder Rudra) are born. This Lord is none other than Lord Maheshwar, the great Ishwar or Lord of creation who is also known as Shiva, Ishan, Isha etc. This Lord is

synonymous with the supreme transcendental Brahm. This fact is endorsed Krishna Yajur Veda's *Varaaha Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 32, and in *Dakshin Murti* or *Dakshin Mukhi Upanishad*.

As the deity of the fire element, he is said to have 'three eyes' (*Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 93), and as the deity of the sky element he is depicted as having a moon tucked in his lock of hairs, besides having five mouths, ten arms and three eyes (*Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 100).

Tulsidas' epic *Ram Charit Manas* which endorses this view that Lord has three eyes and five heads. Refer: *Ram Charit Manas*, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 that says Shiva has 'three eyes'; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 220 which reiterates that Shiva has 'five heads'.

The *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, Canto 5, verse no. 4/42 says that it is Lord Ram who has manifested as 'Maheshwar', the great God. Since this term is conventionally applied to Lord Shiva, it follows that Shiva is actually Lord Ram in this form. Its verse no. 4/43 clearly endorses this view when it says that Lord Ram has manifested himself as Mahadev—the great God. This term 'Maha-dev' is also conventionally used for Lord Shiva.

The Atharva Veda's *Pashupat Brahm Upanishad*, Purva Kanda/Canto 1, verse no. 32 emphasises that Lord Rudra or Shiva is also known as *Pashupati*. To quote—"One must understand that the knowledge of the self-illuminated *Hans* that has been revealed in this Upanishad deals with the eclectic and the divine knowledge of the pure cosmic Consciousness known as the Atma as well as Brahm.

This 'Hans' is also revealed in the form of Lord Rudra (Lord Shiva), who is also known as Lord Pashupati¹.

It is this Brahm that is represented by Pranav, the cosmic ethereal sound encapsulated in the word Mantra OM. It is this Pranav representing Brahm that provides one with liberation and deliverance from this mortal gross world (32).

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 1, verse no. 8 says that Shiva is known as *Hans*; and Canto 1, verse no. 9 says that he is *Brahm*.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse nos. 10, 14 assert that Shiva is the creator of everything in this creation, and Canto 1, verse no. 13 says that Shiva represents the creation itself much like Brahm, the *Supreme Being* who is also treated as being an embodiment of the entire creation.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 11 says that *Shiva represents the third state of consciousness known as the Sushupta state*, and this is symbolized by the third eye which burns all delusions.

The Atharva Veda's *Bhasma Jabal Upanishad*, Canto 2, paragraph no. 6 asserts that Shiva and Rudra are one. The difference between the two names is due to the fact that the same Lord exists in two forms which appear to be diametrically opposite of each other in their characteristic features.

If we closely examine this verse we will understand the difference between the two terms 'Shiva' and 'Rudra' on the one hand, and between 'Brahm' and 'Shakti' on the other hand. Lord Shiva is extremely calm, serene, self-contented, self-realised and blissful like Brahm, and is therefore regarded as a personification of the latter (i.e. of Brahm). He remains perpetually involved in doing mediation and contemplation, remaining happy and submerged in the thoughts of the transcendental Truth. Hence, he is regarded as the patron deity of ascetics who themselves are regarded as personified forms of Brahm because they have become extremely self-realised, i.e. they have experienced the truth about themselves as being the Atma which is pure

consciousness. This Atma is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness and the Absolute Truth of creation known as Brahm.

When the same Shiva assumes an angry form of Rudra at the time of conclusion of creation, he shows an astonishing and an astounding level of dynamism, energy, power, strength and vigour that are synonyms of the cosmic Shakti of Brahm. It is like the case of lightening that is present in the dark rain-bearing clouds in the sky. This lightening appears suddenly, streaks across the sky and causes a huge blast of light and thunder, and if it happens to strike the earth leaves behind scorched trees and ruined buildings, only to vanish without trace in another moment in the sky, withdrawing itself into the thick bank of cloud from which it made its appearance.

This analogy of the lightening appearing from and disappearing into the clouds in the sky would explain the phenomenon of Rudra vis-à-vis Shiva, and Shakti vis-à-vis Brahm. Rudra appears momentarily from Shiva, accomplishes the task for which Shiva had to assume this ferocious and ruthless form of anger, wrath and vehemence personified, only to vanish into the calm and tranquil form of Shiva. Similarly Shakti appears from the neutral cosmic entity known as the divine Brahm, accomplishes what is expected of it, and then disappears into Brahm without trace. Since everything in creation is a manifestation of Brahm, this unique character of Brahm and its relationship with its dynamism revealed as Shakti is also revealed in all the five primary elements of creation such as sky, air, water, fire and earth. Let us take one example of earth to understand how it works out.

The earth is the grossest of the five elements, being heaviest and most dense. It is inert and lifeless on the outside like any other celestial body of the fathomless heaven, but still it conceives and harbours all imaginable forms of life, takes proper care of them and provides endlessly for their necessities of existence. The earth is self-sufficient in this respect, and it does not need any other help to sustain life, or even to replenish its reserves which never deplete in spite of constant exploitation. So in this sense the 'earth' is Brahm personified. But when the 'mother earth' becomes angry, she vents her anger as earthquakes, landslides, floods, tsunamis, famines and draughts, leading to large scale destruction and havoc. This is the Shakti form of earth.

Then again, the earth is a solid piece of cosmic body which is lifeless, neutral and barren at one place as evidenced by the endless stretches of rocks and sand seen at some place on its surface, but at the same time it constitutes of charming and vibrant forms of endless variety of fauna and flora symbolizing life in all its splendour and grandeur at the other place. Even when the earth seems to be neutral, lifeless and inane, it still has its inherent dynamism and energy as shown by its magnetic field and its movement not only around its own self but also around the sun. This means that 'earth' stands for Brahm as well as for Brahm's Shakti simultaneously.

Likewise, if we take the example of the fire and the water, we find that on the one hand they are harbingers of life, growth and development on the one hand, and when annoyed become the cause of widespread destruction and havoc on the other hand. For instance, fire is an essential component of life because without the fire there will be no warmth and light, and the resultant chill and darkness would snuff life out of this creation. But the same fire can scorch everything to ashes if it becomes annoyed and decides to punish the world it had so benevolently nurtured.

The water also behaves in a similar fashion. While water is called the benevolent 'elixir of life' as it is the only element which actually cradles life in its merciful arms by providing it with readymade nourishment and acts as a buffer, a coolant and a soft lubricant that helps this creation to overcome the harsh and abrasive

conditions on earth, which is nothing but a solid and rugged ball of thick and hardened rock that would have caused severe injury to the creation if it was not protected by the water, the same water can wipe out life if it turns malevolent as is evident during floods, high ocean tides and huge waves, tsunamis etc., or as observed during draughts when the water decides to withdraw itself and let the life parch itself out by thirst.

Air also exhibits similar characteristics. On the one hand the air is absolutely essential for life to exist in this world, because without air the life would suffocate to death, but the same air can cause ruin when it becomes angry, as is proved during fierce storms and cyclones.

The sky is the cosmic bowl which harbours everything that exists in this universe, from the smallest piece of cosmic debris to the huge galaxies and planetary systems. It is in the sky that our earth lives, and it is in the sky that the air we breathe is contained. But it is the same sky in from which devastating meteors and asteroids might strike upon the earth to wipe out entire generations of creatures. [It is one such event that had wiped out the ancient dinosaurs from the surface of earth, and more recently one such meteorite had blasted its way down to earth across the skies in the Ural Mountains of northern Russia which injured thousands of people and cause material damage to buildings and factories.] During severe thunderstorms, hurricanes and cyclones, it is the sky that is said to ‘open up’ and pour rain on the earth which cause deluge, or blow fierce winds that strike out viciously any thing standing up in its path much like the swing of the Vajra of Indra, the king of Gods. It is one such deluge pouring down from the sky or heaven that is expected to wipe out the present generation at the time of doomsday. Then again, during wars, it is from the sky that rockets, missiles and arrows shower down upon armies to kill and slay mercilessly.

So we conclude that while all the elements and all the units of creation are indeed manifestations of Shiva or Brahm, the latter’s life-fostering and benevolent nature is displayed in these units when they act as aids to development of life and its growth, while their destructive aspect is a representative of Rudra. The dynamism, energy, vigour, strength and abilities displayed by all the units of creation are, however, a manifestation of the Shakti in its many myriad forms.

To wit, Lord Shiva is the Lord God who has full control over his sense organs and their inherent animal-like instincts and behaviour—because he is a highly self-realised and enlightened deity who is chosen by exalted ascetics and spiritual aspirants as their patron God—is known as Pashupati, literally the Lord of animals. Since Lord Shiva tolerates no nonsense and ruthlessly overcomes the wayward tendencies of the sense organs and the mind, showing anger at them for their natural grossness and tendency to commit mischief and misdeeds, he is also known as ‘Rudra’, the angry one. Lord Shiva is uncompromising and unrelenting in his pursuit of immaculacy, purity, auspiciousness, righteousness, nobility, probity and propriety, and hence called Rudra, the angry God.

‘Rudra’ has zero tolerance for impertinence, mischief and nonsense. ‘Shiva’ is, on the other hand, calm, tolerant and forgiving. Shiva always remains in a state of meditation and contemplation, a state that is depicted in his posture of blissfulness and half-closed eyes. Rudra, on the other hand, spews fire and brimstone. While Shiva symbolizes the virtues of Brahm marked by blissfulness, tranquility, calmness, wisdom, enlightenment, self-awareness and contentedness, Rudra represents the qualities of dynamism, vitality, vigour, strength and energy present in Brahm.

The question arises ‘why did Shiva become Rudra (angry)?’ The answer is that when Shiva found that his sense organs and mind did not allow him the peace that

he sought by meditation and contemplation upon the ‘Atma, the self’, he became angry over them, and severely took them to task—i.e. he became ‘Rudra’ or angry. It is like the case of a teacher who is of a very calm nature and loves his students like they were his own sons, but when he finds that his kindness and loving nature is being misused by the students who create ruckus in the class, he has to become stern and spank them in order to restore discipline and decorum. But that does not mean that he is cruel or wishes to harm his students in the least. This same thing applies to Shiva.

Shiva becomes Rudra in order to ruthlessly punish the creatures of this creation who behave like savages or animals. This is necessary for him as he is the Supreme Being who has the mandate to maintain order and balance in this creation, and he would be failing in his moral duties and obligations if he tries to maintain a false exterior of calmness when his interior is agitated by the upheaval all around. The Supreme Being that Shiva is has an obligation to uphold positive traits and the virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity and propriety in this creation even if it means that his own image of being calm and forgiving is questioned and overshadowed by anger and vehemence.

Just as the case of severe and malignant diseases like cancer and tuberculosis requiring an equally strong medicine, the evil, pervert and demonic forces of creation require an equally strong antidote to be overcome.

Therefore, that aspect of Brahm, the Supreme Being, which helps the Jiva (the living beings of this creation) control evil tendencies and negativity which make him animal-like is known as ‘Pashupat Brahm’, and the effort that a Jiva makes to achieve this eclectic goal is known as ‘Pashu-harta Yagya’.]

Now let see the significance of the various symbols or accoutrements associated with Lord Shiva.

The *Shiva Lingam/Jyotirlingam*—References: The Atharva Veda’s (i) Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 11-12,14 refer to the Shiva’s ‘Lingam’ and to his ‘Jyotirlingam’; (ii) Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 12.

The Atharva Veda’s Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse no. 12 gives the *names* of some of the twenty *Shiva Lingams* as follows—“Vireshwar, Rudreshwar, Ambikeshwar, Ganeshwar, Neelkanth, Gopaleshwar, Bhadreshwar etc.”

The *Shiva Lingam* is a gross manifestation of Shiva who himself is a divine, subtle and sublime Being. Just like the case of the rest of this creation being a visible and gross manifestation of the supreme transcendental Brahm, the cosmic Supreme Being, Lord Shiva’s Lingams too represents the otherwise invisible, attribute-less, cosmic, all-pervading and the most sublime Lord Shiva’s subtle form in its grosser aspect or form that is visible, and has attributes like the other grosser manifestations of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. This is one of the primary reasons why Lord Shiva is also called ‘Maha-deva’, the Great God, because he is none other than Brahm himself.

The Shiva’s Lingam is like an icon that is normally used to stand as a unique symbol for a particular deity or God. It is an emblem of Shiva. If we look at the Lingam closely we observe that it is a cylindrical structure passing through the center of a circular girdle or ring. This structure reminds one of a wheel with the central axle. This imagery is used to indicate the fact that Shiva is the supreme transcendental Brahm around whom the whole of the creation rotates. ‘Rotates’ is a metaphoric way of saying that the entire creation depends upon Brahm; it is centered around Brahm; Brahm is the pivot that supports the entire edifice of creation. Just like the wheel cannot move if the axle is removed, this creation cannot survive if Brahm, the

Consciousness and the Truth of creation, is removed from it. The fact that this creation is like a wheel rotating around the central axle called Brahm is endorsed in a number of Upanishads, e.g. (a) Atharva Veda = Prashna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 11; Canto 6, verse no. 6; Mundak Upanishad, Mundak (Canto) 2, section 2, verse no. 6; Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 2-7; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 9, verse nos. 4, 6; Tripdvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 7, paragraph 3-14 (which describes the 'Sudarshan Chakra' of Vishnu); Shandilya Upanishad, Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 6-7 (which describes the wheel or Chakra that is present in the navel and how it keeps the creature trapped in it); Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2 (which describes the Sri Chakra dedicated to Goddess Tripura who is regarded as the Mother Goddess; Surya Upanishad, verse no. 1 (describes the Sun God as the one who keeps the wheel of life and death, known as the Kaal Chakra, rotating). (b) Krishna Yajur Veda = Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 4, 6; Canto 5, verse no. 12; Canto 6, verse nos. 1-3. (c) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingalopanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 3-4.

Besides this eclectic viewpoint we also observe that a cylinder is a smooth surface that is round from all sides. It appears the same from whichever side one sees it. This signifies the fact that Brahm is uniform and even in all respects, and neither does it have any specific form and feature. Like the Lingam passing through the circular girdle around it, the entire creation too forms a ring that moves around Brahm which holds the creation together and passes through its center. Now, this 'center' also means a core, and hence this refers to the Atma, the soul, that is the pivot or the core around which life revolves in this world.

If we look further ahead and observe a potter's wheel and how the potter moulds his pots and pans on it we find that it has a striking resemblance to the Shiva Lingam. As the wheel turns the potter expertly raises the shape of his wares at its center, and the rotating potter's wheel can be treated as an apt metaphor for the way the Shiva Lingam represents the phenomenon of creation moulded from the dynamic energy of Brahm revealed as the Shakti that continuously revolves around the principal known as Brahm.

Iconographically, the Shiva Lingam has three distinct parts—the lower part fixed to the ground stands for Brahma the creator; the middle part of the wheel stand for Vishnu the sustainer and protector of creation; and the upper part of the cylinder represents Rudra the concluder. These three Trinity Gods stand for the three basic and fundamental aspects of creation—birth, development and growth, and finally the end. They thus represent Brahm in its entirety.

The Shiva Lingam is called *Jyotirlingam* because it is mentioned in the Linga Puran, Chapters 17-20 that the Shiva Lingam appeared as an endless shaft of fire. And 'fire' is characterized by the virtues of light and illumination. It came to be known as the 'Linga' because all the creatures of this creation have a gross body in which their soul or their Atma lived, called the 'Linga Deha', and they reproduced themselves with the help of the genitals, called the 'Linga'. Since only the Supreme Being has this capacity to create and then sustain his creation, the grosser form of the Lord in the form of this creation and its self-replicating creatures was symbolized in the grosser symbol of the Linga. In other word, the Lingam represents the whole creation in a miniature gross form. This icon of Brahm is called 'Shiva' Lingam because Shiva is a personified form of Brahm.

It is also believed that it is called 'Lingam' because the entire creation would collapse at the end in Brahm, the ethereal cosmic Consciousness. The phrase 'Linga Deha' literally refers to the ethereal form of the corporal body of a creature. So when

the creature sheds the body, his Atma would merge with the cosmic Atma known as Parmatma. Since Lord Shiva is the Parmatma—the Supreme Being—of this creation, it is natural that his symbol would be called a Lingam. It is to emphasize the fact that one should not be misled by its outer gross structure of being merely a cylindrical structure made of stone or rock but a divine symbol of the cosmic Atma that cannot be visualized by the naked eyes.

The physical Lingam is the visible form of the invisible Linga Deha of Shiva which is the Lord's ethereal and cosmic form.

The fact that the Lingam is an image of Lord Shiva is affirmed by the Lord himself in the Atharva Veda's Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 12 where the Lord preaches about the immense symbolic metaphysical importance and significance of the Lingam, and in paragraph nos. 14-15 when he preaches about the great many *benefits of worshipping the Shiva Lingam* which is his image, and *how to worship it*. To quote—

“verse no. 12 =[This verse emphasizes the importance and the significance of the Shiva Lingam as follows—] Even the Sun God, the Moon God, the Fire God and the Wind God (i.e. the primary Gods) are unaware of the mysteries and enigmatic glories of this Shiva-Lingam.

The self-illuminated and self-emerged or self-created Lingam extends as far as the pit of the earth known as Paataal.

This Shiva-Lingam is an image of me who am the Lord of the world. Hence, it is known as ‘Vishwanaath’ Lingam.

Worshipping it and paying obeisance to it is directly worshipping and paying obeisance to me.

A worshipper who offers his worship and obeisance to me, who serves me and honours me with full devotion, sincerity and faith, by offering three leaves of the Bilva tree, and then offers the auspicious rewards of such exemplary worship to me (rather than expecting any gain for himself in return for such worship or service), who wears the Bhasma (sacred ash) and the Rudraksha beads as prescribed, who has sought my shelter and has taken refuge in my holy feet, and who is an unquestioned and most committed devotee of mine—verily I say that I accept his worship and free him from the fetter represented by the endless cycle of birth and death.

Even a great sin and its evil consequences are neutralized by offering daily worship to my Shiva-Lingam, by offering libations to me (a process known as ‘Abhishek’) and praying to me by reading or reciting the hymns of the Rudra Skuta daily with the greatest of devotion and faith, and then drinking the water left over after the completion of worship and offering of libations to my Lingam.

Such a devotee is free from all sorrows, grief, miseries and torments. He is freed from the shackling effect of this mundane and entrapping world. [12]

“verse no. 14 = (Benefits of worshipping the Shiva Lingam—) By offering libations to my Lingam, which is my image, with the milk drawn from a Kapila cow (i.e. a cow with reddish-brown, white, or white-spotted skin) while reciting the hymns of the Rudra Sukta, a devotee can obtain purification (pardon) from the horrendous sin of killing a Brahmin.

Offering of libations with the curd made from the milk of the Kapila cow helps one to eliminate or clean the great sin caused by drinking intoxicating liquids.

Offering of libations with clarified butter made from the milk of the Kapila cow helps one to overcome the grave sin caused by stealing gold (or theft of any kind).

Offering of libations with honey helps one to overcome the horrible ignominy and sin caused by being amorous towards the wife of one's Guru (teacher and moral preceptor).

Offering of libations with white sugar helps one to overcome the sin of being cruel to others.

Offering of libations with milk and other products (as prescribed above) helps the devotee fulfill all his aspirations, desires and wishes.

By offering libations one hundred times with quantity of materials that are one hundred times more than that used for one standard routine offering (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal by weight) helps the aspirant to free himself from the fetters that shackle him to this world. [14]

“verse no. 15 = (How to worship the Shiva Lingam—) My (Shiva's) image in the form of the Shiva-Lingam should be offered worship during the time of the Aadra Nakshatra (an asterism known as Aadra), on the full moon day, on the new moon day, the Vyatipaata Yoga (the seventeenth astrological union of stars), on the occasion of eclipses (solar and lunar), and on the day of the Sakranti (the summer and winter solstice).

During these days, worship should be done by first offering libations followed by oblations. For this, the following items are to be used—sesame seeds, rice, barley, three leaves of the Bilva tree, clarified butter made from the milk of the Kapila cow, scents and fragrances, incense sticks, lighted lamp, sweets, fruit etc. Then flowers and water in cupped palms of the hands should be offered most respectfully at the end of the worship.

By offering worship and service to me with devotion and faith, the devotee obtains Sayujya Mukti (i.e. he becomes one with me).

If the worship is done with rice of quantity that is one hundred times that used for standard routine worship (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal), the worshipper obtains the abode of the Moon God known as Chandra-loka.

If equal quantity of sesame seeds (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal) is used for worship, the worshipper obtains the abode of the Vayu God (the Wind God).

If equal quantity of horse beans (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal) is used for worship, the worshipper obtains the abode of the Varun God (the Water God).

If equal quantity of barley (i.e. roughly 100 kilograms or 1 quintal) is used for worship, the worshipper obtains the abode of the Surya God (the Sun God).

If twice the above amount of items are used for worship (i.e. if roughly 200 kilograms or 2 quintals are used), the worshipper obtains the higher heaven known as the Swarga-loka.

If four times the above quantity of items are used for offering worship to me (i.e. if roughly 400 kilograms or 4 quintals are used), the worshipper obtains the abode known as Brahma-loka, or the abode of Brahma the creator.

If worship is offered to me or my Lingam by using the items needed for such worship measuring one hundred times than the standard offerings (i.e. if roughly 100 x 100 = 10,000 kilograms or 100 quintals are used), the worshipper is freed from the jurisdiction of death, or clutches of death, as far as the Brahm-Kosha. [That is, he is freed from the fear of death till the time the creator would be born again. The word 'Kosh' means the source from which Brahma the creator was born, the point of time when Brahma was born. Refer paragraph no. 20 of this Canto 2 below.]

Since he is my devotee, he crosses over from the abode of Brahma and reaches my abode known as the Shiva-Loka that is beyond it. There is no abode or heaven better than it. He becomes free from all miseries and sorrows upon attaining it. He is freed from all fetters and encumbrances that had kept him shackled.

By worshipping me in my form as the Lingam, ascetics have attained great mystical powers. Those who do fire sacrifices (i.e. the worshippers of the sacred fire) are actually offering their obeisance to me when they offer their oblations to the sacred fire. It is me whose magnificence, holiness, eclectic glories and divine virtues are sung and lauded by the Vedas in their hymns.

It is proved beyond doubt by the great scriptures such as the Vedangas (branches of Vedas), the Upanishads, and the Itihasas (ancient mythological histories) that there is nothing besides me in this creation. Everything is me; everything is established in me; I am the foundation and basis of everything. [This is because Lord Shiva is the supreme transcendental Brahm personified. Nothing exists in this creation that is not Brahm; it is Brahm who has manifested or revealed in every single unit of creation.] [15]”

The significance of the *moon on his forehead*, and his *five heads and the ten arms*—

Lord Shiva has been depicted in the Purans as having a *crescent moon* on his forehead. The moon is said to have sixteen Kalaas or phases, symbolising the sixteen Kalaas or aspects out of the total of sixty four Kalaas of the supreme Brahm. These sixteen Kalaas represent the visible world which is one fourth part of the entire creation consisting of the remaining of the Kalaas of Brahm. The visible world is called ‘one Pada’ or one leg or one aspect or Kalaa of Brahm. So, Shiva is the Lord who presides over the entire visible part of creation, and this world is his ornamentation in the sense that the Lord appears to be so beautiful if we consider the beauty of Nature as the astounding beauty and the expert craftsmanship of Shiva on display.

The moon present on Shiva’s forehead also stands for the various eclectic qualities called Kalaas that he possesses and which adorn him like the moon. Symbolically, the devotee is advised to follow the example of his chosen deity Lord Shiva and note the symbolism of the Moon on his head. These eclectic qualities should be as prominent as the moon on the head of Shiva and they should form an integral part of the character of the devotee if he wishes to place himself in the position of being called a sincere follower and worshipper of Lord Shiva. Now let us have a glimpse of these *Kalaas*. They are the various eclectic qualities or attributes that an exalted man should possess, and briefly they are the following—(i) Shraddha (श्रद्धा—faith, believe, conviction, reverence, respect, devotion), (ii) Pran (प्राण—life; the very essence of creation; the vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life), (iii) Akash (आकाश—the all-pervading, all-encompassing sky or space element), (iv) Vayu (वायु—wind, air element), (v) Tej (तेज—energy, splendour, radiance, glory, might, majesty and fire element), (vi) Apaha (अपः—water element which is the all-important ingredient for life), (vii) ‘Prithivi’ (पृथ्वी—earth element which is the base or foundation for all mortal creation), (viii) Indriya (इन्द्रिय—the organs of the body, both the organs of perception as well as of action), (ix) Mana (मन—the mind and heart complex and their stupendous potentials), (x) Anna (अन्न—food, the element without which life is simply not imaginable because it provides it with the basic nourishment and energy), (xi) Virya (वीर्य—semen, sperms, standing for courage, valour, potency, vitality and prowess), (xii) Tapa (तपः—austerity and

penance, tolerance of hardship as a means of penitence, forbearance as well as carrying out strict religious vows in order to purify one's self) (xiii) Mantra (मंत्रा—the ability to give good advise, the power to contemplate and think, concentrate and focus, logically arrive at a conclusion), (xiv) Karma (कर्म—taking actions and doing deeds), (xv) Loka (लोक—worldly interactions and behaviours), and (xvi) Naam (नाम—good name, fame, reputation, honour and glory).

Reference should be made to the Chandogya Upanishad, 6/7/1-6 of Sam Veda tradition in this context.

The *five heads* of Shiva stand for the 'Panch Vyom' or the five forms that the sky element is said to have. According to Vedanta, the concept of the *sky* or 'Akash' has many connotations. According to one interpretation, there are *five* subtle skies representing the space surrounding the five sheaths or *Koshas* present in the body of a creature. They are the sheaths that surround the Atma and are called 'Panch Akash'. These are the following—(1) the Food Sheath called Anna Maye Kosh; (2) the Vital Air Sheath called Pran Maye Kosh; (3) the Mental Sheath called Manomaye Kosh; (4) the Intellectual Sheath called Vigyan Maye Kosh; and (5) the Bliss Sheath called Anand Maye Kosh. Refer—Mudgal Upanishad, 4/5 of the Rig Veda.

The *ten arms* of Shiva stand for the ten forms of the subtle sky element. They are the following—(1) Ghataakash—the space inside a hollow pot; (2) Mathakash—the space inside a holy building, such as a holy shrine, a monastery, an abbey etc.; (3) Hridayakash—the subtle space inside the heart; (4) Akash—the vacant or blank space above the earth; (5) Suryakash—the space of the solar system; the space around the sun, or the solar system illuminated by the light of the sun; (6) Paraakash—the space above or beyond the solar system, it is said to burn with the celestial fire; (7) Mahakash—the great sky that is aglow with divine illumination, the heaven; that space which is radiant with a divine glow; (8) Paramakash—the supreme sky beyond the Mahakash, it is said to be very magnificent and encloses everything that exists, including all the other skies; that space which is illuminated, all pervading, all encompassing and full of bliss and felicity; (9) Tattwakash—the elementary space that is at the core of the concept of space, or the space that surrounds the basic elements of creation; by natural corollary it refers to the subtle, sublime, ethereal and supreme space where the eternal, transcendental Brahm has his abode because Brahm is the cause of all the basic elements of creation; there is complete beatitude and felicity there; that space which surrounds the essential truth known as Brahm; and (10) Anatariksha—the physical space where stars are present in deep space; the intergalactic space. Besides these, there is one more space called 'Swarga' which means heaven or the Duloka.

These skies have been ascribed different names just to facilitate understanding, and not because any one form of sky is fundamentally different from the other. For example, the space present inside the mud-pot, called the Ghata-kash, is the same as the space present outside the body of the pot. When the pot is broken, the demarcation wall of the body of the pot is removed, and both the space inside and outside of the erstwhile pot become indistinguishably and inseparably the same. Therefore, the various names are artificial and misnomers.

To quote *Yogtattva Upanishad*, verse no. 100—"This Lord Shiva is most pure and immaculate, and as clear and clean as pure crystal¹. He has a crescent moon tucked in the lock of hairs on his head. He has five mouths, is very sober, gentle and pleasant, has ten arms and three eyes (100).

The significance of the *serpents* wrapped around his body—The *snakes* that are wrapped around Lord Shiva show that he is beyond the power of death and poison.

These coiled serpents around his body indicate the fact that he constantly reminds himself of imminent death, because serpents are very poisonous and symbolise immediate death. They also remind him about the unholy and poisonous nature of the gross world. This helps him to remain focused on his spiritual aim of self-realisation instead of being attracted by the material charms of this material world of sense objects and getting deluded by them.

The serpents also signify that Shiva is the Lord of death; he is death personified. Since he is able to wrap the serpents around his body and they cannot harm him, it indicates the fact that he has conquered death. That is why he is called ‘Mrityunjay’, the conqueror of death.

Again, the coiled serpents represent the Kundalini, the coiled subtle cosmic energy center at the base of the spine which when activated can entitle the spiritual aspirant to experience a burst of stupendous spiritual energy which provides him a glimpse of his own divine powers as well as the powers of the cosmic Consciousness present inside his bosom as his Atma. This Kundalini is activated by doing numerous Yoga exercises as described in the Upanishads on the subject of Yoga.

The coiled serpents may also represent cycles of time in the macrocosm and the basic energy of life in the microcosm in the form of sexual energy.

These reptiles are very ferocious, dangerous, poisonous, and a symbol of male potency. The symbolism is that Shiva is a very potent God who can be extremely ruthless and unforgiving towards sinful creatures. He has exercised extreme self control and has ‘girdled’ or readied himself in preparation for enduring the greatest of hardships and sufferance for self-realisation as well as to provide the world with liberation and deliverance. The serpents warn his enemies not to fool around with him. That is also why he has fire in one of his hands. This fire signifies his ability to reduce to ashes the entire physical world consisting of falsehood and sins as well as eliminate all impurities, imperfections, faults and shortcomings that cripple the creature’s spiritual well being.

The *Trident* of Lord Shiva is known as ‘Trishul’, and it represents the three Gunas, or the three natural tendencies or the three fundamental qualities that are inherent in this creation and they govern all characteristics in the living world. These three Gunas are known respectively as the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna, and the Tama Guna.

The Trident is known as the ‘Trishul’, and is one of the most popular symbols associated with Lord Shiva. It is a weapon used by Lord Shiva for the restoration of Dharma. But the Trishul has a deeper symbolic meaning as follows—

The Trishul symbolizes the balance of the three forces of preservation, creation and destruction. It represents the three aspects of consciousness—cognition, conation and affection.

The *sound* of Shiva's *two-sided drum* represents the cosmic sound known as Naad that reverberates in the background of the cosmos. This sound is symbolically represented by the sound that is produced by uttering the word OM.

The *vehicle or mount* of Lord Shiva is the white *bull called the Nandi*—which means the cheerful one, the joyful one. The bull on which Lord Shiva rides represents virility and strength, the animal-like power and basic instincts in a man.

In Shiva temples, there is always a reclining bull placed in front of the chief shrine or just outside it, with the head turned away from the deity but the gaze fixed on it. It is interpreted as the Jivatma, the individual soul of all living being, with its animal-like nature pulling it away from God, but the Lord's grace pulling it back towards him.

Lord Shiva is often depicted in the Purans and imagery as *seated* on a tiger skin or *wears* a tiger skin. Here, the tiger represents the stupendous power of the mind.

Lord Shiva *lives* on Mount Kailas that is located in the northern side of the mighty mountain range known as the Himalayas.

What is the Importance of having devotion for Lord Shiva according to Tulsidas?

Well, there are several reasons for it: One, that Lord Shiva was worshipped by Lord Ram himself, and the Lord asserted that without having faith and devotion for Lord Shiva, one cannot attain him; Two, that Lord Shiva worships Lord Ram and uses Ram's holy name as the Mantra for his spiritual pursuits; Three, the divine story of Lord Ram itself was conceived by Lord Shiva in his Mana (heart and mind) when he was meditating; Four, Lord Shiva is so devoted to Lord Ram that he even mutters the holy name of Lord Ram in the ears of a dying creature to ensure the soul's liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, and to provide the creature with emancipation and salvation; Five, Tulsidas says that it is due to Lord Shiva's grace and blessings that he had developed devotion for Lord Ram and was able to narrate the divine story of the latter in his book 'Ram Charit Manas' which the reader is currently reading.

{Here are the references: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 2 and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 45; (b) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3; (c) Baal Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52; (v) Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26; (vii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36; (ix) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 50; (x) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82.

Tulsidas has sung the glories of Lord Shiva in his book Kavitaawali in its Uttar Kand, verse nos. 149—164.

In another great and legendary narration of Lord Ram's divine story, the famous 'Adhyatma Ramayan' by sage Veda Vyas, the classifier of the Vedas and the author of the Purans, it is stated that after being crowned as the king of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had established countless numbers of Shiva Lingams in his kingdom—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 27.}]

चौ०. बैठे सोह कामरिपु कैसें । धरें सरीरु सांतरसु जैसें ॥ १ ॥

पारबती भल अवसरु जानी । गई संभु पहिं मातु भवानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

baiṭhē sōha kāmariṇi kaisēm. dharēm sarīru sāntarasu jaisēm. 1.

pārabatī bhala avasaru jānī. ga'īm sambhu pahim mātu bhavānī. 2.

While Lord Shiva, who was a vanquisher of Kamdeo (the patron deity of passion and lust)¹, sat calmly (under the shade of the magnificent Banyan tree), he looked truly like a personification of the grand virtues of peace, tranquility, bliss and beatitude. (1)

Observing that it was the right opportunity, mother goddess Parvati (the consort of Shiva) went near Lord Shiva². (2)

[Note—¹This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87. Lord Shiva had burnt Kamdeo to ashes when the latter tried to disturb his meditation. This is why Lord Shiva is also called ‘Kaamaari’-one who had slayed Kamdeo.]

²Parvati was fully aware of her husband’s stern nature. She had heard how Lord Shiva had angrily burnt Kamdeo to ashes. She had also experienced Shiva’s nature of not liking any kind of disturbance when he is meditating; she was also aware of the fact that Shiva is also known as ‘Rudra’, a personified form of anger and wrath. She herself was at the receiving end of Shiva’s curse when he had abandoned her in her previous birth as Sati. {We have read about it earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.}

So therefore, she was waiting for an opportunity when she can approach Lord Shiva and frankly speak to him, without fear of being punished or rebuked. Now she saw that Lord Shiva was in a calm mood; he was relaxed and cheerful as was evident from his calm demeanours and the smile on his face.

One must do anything at the right time and when the right opportunity presents its self in order to achieve success. There are other instances in Ram Charit Manas where we read this same thing—that a good use is made of the right opportunity. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 191; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 314; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 321; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 281; (c) Aranya Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 41; (d) Sundar Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38; (e) Lanka Kand, (vi) Doha no. 114-b.}

जानि प्रिया आदरु अति कीन्हा । बाम भाग आसनु हर दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥

बैठीं सिव समीप हरषाई । पूरुब जन्म कथा चित आई ॥ ४ ॥

jāni priyā ādaru ati kīnhā. bāma bhāga āsanu hara dīnhā. 3.
baiṭhīṁ siva samīpa haraṣāī. pūruba janma kathā cita āī. 4.

When Lord Shiva saw his dear consort approaching him, he welcomed her warmly and most affectionately, offering her a seat to his left to sit down¹. (3)

She sat down cheerfully near Lord Shiva. The events of her previous life became fresh in her memory². (4)

[Note—¹According to Hindu tradition, a wife sits to the left of her husband, and other women are made to sit in front. We have read earlier that when Lord Shiva decided to break his ties with Sati, he offered her a seat in front of himself, though he treated her with due respect as one ought to treat a woman who is a stranger. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60.}

At that time, Lord Shiva was also in a calm mood, so he could have easily forgiven Sati if she had begged for forgiveness. But as was the fiat of fate, she behaved otherwise, and to add fuel to the fire she defied Shiva's advice not to go to attend her father's fire sacrifice program as he was opposed to her husband Lord Shiva. Obviously, Sati's insistence on going and defying Shiva's advice was not acceptable to him, and so he decided to finally discard Sati for good. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 61—to Doha no. 62.}

²Parvati recalled how she was made to sit in front by Lord Shiva when she approached him in her previous life when she was called Sati. Now that Shiva had offered her a seat to his left assured Parvati that the Lord has at last forgiven her. She felt extremely glad and happy.

She recalled the events of her past life, as those events still intrigued her much. The main cause of Lord Shiva abandoning her was her doubts about Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 54.}

So, now finding her husband in a peaceful mood, she wished to ask him once again about the truth of Lord Ram, as this question was constantly nagging her since those last events.]

पति हिउँ हेतु अधिक अनुमानी । बिहसि उमा बोलीं प्रिय बानी ॥ ५ ॥
कथा जो सकल लोक हितकारी । सोइ पूछन चह सैलकुमारी ॥ ६ ॥

pati hiyaṃ^ṁ hētu adhika anumānī. bihasi umā bōlīm priya bānī. 5.
kathā jō sakala lōka hitakārī. sō'i pūchana caha sailakumārī. 6.

Realising that her husband had more affection for her this time than what he had for her in the previous meeting with him (in her last birth as Sati)¹, Uma (Parvati) smiled pleasantly and said words that were sweet to hear (because now she felt encouraged to ask Lord Shiva certain questions that had been troubling her for long). (5)

Verily indeed, Parvati, the daughter of the king of mountains (sailakumārī), wished to ask about the divine story (of Lord Ram) that would be exceptionally good and auspicious for the whole world². (6)

[Note—¹Sati had last met Lord Shiva before going to her father's place where she burnt herself in disgust upon finding that Lord Shiva was publicly rebuked. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60—to Doha no. 64.}

²The difference between this meeting and the previous one is obvious here: In the earlier meeting, Sati was very skeptical about Lord Ram's divinity as well as her

husband, Lord Shiva's wisdom in bowing to Lord Ram and praising him. But this time around, her approach is different—she now wishes that Lord Shiva narrate to her the whole divine story of Lord Ram. Here she does not cast aspersions either on Lord Ram or Lord Shiva's wisdom in worshipping the former.

She simply wants this divine story to be told, not only for herself but also for the good of the rest of the world. It was a charitable approach, done with a pure intention, without a trace of deceit or conceit, and therefore it was perfectly correct and acceptable to Lord Shiva, for he would willingly start the narration soon.]

बिस्वनाथ मम नाथ पुरारी । त्रिभुवन महिमा बिदित तुम्हारी ॥ ७ ॥
चर अरु अचर नाग नर देवा । सकल करहिं पद पंकज सेवा ॥ ८ ॥

bisvanātha mama nātha purārī. tribhuvana mahimā bidita tumhārī. 7.
cara aru acara nāga nara dēvā. sakala karahim pada pañkaja sēvā. 8.

Parvati said—‘Oh Lord of the universe (bisvanātha)! Oh my dear Lord (mama nātha)! Oh Lord known as Purari (purārī)!

Your glories are well known in all the three divisions of this creation. [To wit, you are equally famed in the heaven, the earth, and the nether world.] (7)

The whole creation consisting of the animate and the inanimate world, including the Nagas (the residents of the subterranean world), the Human Beings (of the terrestrial world), and the Gods (in heaven), serve and worship your holy lotus-like feet¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 50.]

दो०. प्रभु समरथ सर्बग्य सिव सकल कला गुन धाम ।
जोग ग्यान बैराग्य निधि प्रनत कलपतरु नाम ॥ १०७ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu samaratha sarbagya siva sakala kalā guna dhāma.
jōga gyāna bairāgya nidhi pranata kalapataru nāma. 107.

Oh Lord! You are all-able, all-knowing, an embodiment of auspiciousness, a repository of all excellent virtues and characters, a complete treasury of Gyan (true knowledge and wisdom; gnosis) and Vairagya (virtue of renunciation, detachment and dispassion).

Oh Lord, your holy name is like the all wish-fulfilling Tree, known as the ‘Kalpa Tree’, for those who come to seek refuge at your holy feet. [To wit, your holy name fulfils the desires of all your devotees; they get what they want by chanting your divine Mantras.] (Doha no. 107)

चौ०. जौं मो पर प्रसन्न सुखरासी । जानिअ सत्य मोहि निज दासी ॥ १ ॥

तौ प्रभु हरहु मोर अग्याना । कहि रघुनाथ कथा बिधि नाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaurṁ mō para prasanna sukharāsī. jāni'a satya mōhi nija dāsī. 1.
tau prabhu harahu mōra agyānā. kahi raghunātha kathā bidhi nānā. 2.

Oh Lord who is an embodiment of blissfulness and joy (sukharāsī)! If thou art pleased with me, and consider me as thy true and faithful maid¹ --- (1),

--- Then oh Lord, please be kind to remove my ignorance and get rid of my delusions by telling me the mystical story of Lord Ram in a comprehensive and extensive manner, narrating it from different angles, weaving in thy narration the many reasons for the origin of the story and why Lord Ram had to take birth as a human being, as well as the many intricate details of the story-line itself².

[Oh Lord, also be kind to put in a word of advice and caution here and there throughout thy narrative so as to clear doubts on the spot and prevent the mind from getting distracted and confused.] (2)

[Note—¹The word ‘maid’ does not mean a maidservant here in its literal term: one who does all the manual household chores of her lord. Here it means a wife who is very devoted and loyal to her husband, and who serves him faithfully and diligently.

²Parvati wished to delve deep into the mystery of Lord Ram in order to remove her doubts about him and become firm in her devotion for the Lord just like her husband Lord Shiva was. She knew that Lord Shiva was well acquainted with all the mystical aspects of Lord Ram, and so he was best suited as a teacher who could reveal everything to her and remove her delusions about Lord Ram.

Since she asked Lord Shiva to tell her the story of Lord Ram in a comprehensive manner, incorporating in it the different versions of the origin of the story, as well as the many details that vary from one version of the story from the other, Lord Shiva obliges her by telling the story in great detail, incorporating many different reasons for its origin, and variations in detail of the story-line itself in his own narrative. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Doha no. 120—to Doha no. 124; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 140—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 141; (iii) Doha no. 152 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.}

Shiva concluded his narration by telling Parvati that he has told her the divine story of Lord Ram as he observed that she was sincere in her quest to learn about the truth of the Lord and hear his glories, and then wound up his discourse by outlining the spiritual rewards that accrue to one who is fortunate to hear and read it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 129.}

And indeed it was so—for Parvati acknowledges her total satisfaction; she thanked her husband Lord Shiva for fulfilling her quest for truthful knowledge, as a result of which devotion for Lord Ram took firm roots in her heart. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129.}

जासु भवनु सुरतरु तर होई । सहि कि दरिद्र जनित दुखु सोई ॥ ३ ॥

ससिभूषण अस हृदयं बिचारी । हरहु नाथ मम मति भ्रम भारी ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu bhavanu surataru tara hōī. sahi ki daridra janita dukhu sōī. 3.

sasibhūṣana asa ḥṛdayam^१ bicārī. harahu nātha mama mati bhrama bhārī. 4.

Why should anyone who resides under the shade of the Kalpa Tree, the all wish-fulfilling tree, suffer from grief arising from any kind of unfulfilled desire or unsatisfied wants?¹ (3)

Keeping this point in mind (and considering me to be an honest seeker of truth and knowledge), oh Lord for whom the crescent moon is an ornament (sasibhūṣana)², please be gracious and kind to dispel my delusions and ignorance that have baffled my mind and confused my intellect³. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, since I have the good fortune to have you, the all-knowing Lord of the Universe and the greatest devotee of Lord Ram, as my beloved husband and well-wisher, why should I not enjoy the bliss that comes with hearing the divine story of Lord Ram in its entirety; why should any trace of doubt linger in me as to the holiness and divinity of Lord Ram with you by my side? It would be like the case of a person living right below the famed Kalpa Tree and still suffering from unsatisfied desires.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 267.

²The epithet “sasibhūṣana” is used for Lord Shiva as he wears the crescent moon on one corner of his forehead. Iconography depicts Lord Shiva as wearing the moon on the left top corner of his forehead, tucked in the lock of hairs on his head like an ornament.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 108 where Parvati has been honest in expressing her doubts about Lord Ram.]

प्रभु जे मुनि परमारथबादी । कहहिं राम कहुं ब्रह्म अनादी ॥ ५ ॥

सेस सारदा बेद पुराना । सकल करहिं रघुपति गुन गाना ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu jē muni paramārathabādī. kahahim rāma kahum^१ brahma anādī. 5.

sēsa sārada bēda purānā. sakala karahim raghupati guna gānā. 6.

Oh Lord! Wise and enlightened sages assert that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being, known as ‘Brahm’, who is eternal and infinite (brahma anādī)¹. (5)

Lord Ram’s divine glories are sung in laudatory terms by all those who are competent in this field, such as Lord Seshnath (the celestial serpent with his thousand tongues), goddess Saraswati (the patron deity of knowledge, speech and wisdom), the Vedas (ancient scriptures which are repositories of all knowledge) and the Purans (ancient histories)². (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 198; (b) Aranya Kand, Chanda line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 32; and (c) Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10; Doha no. 12.]

तुम्ह पुनि राम राम दिन राती । सादर जपहु अन्नंग आराती ॥ ७ ॥
रामु सो अवध नृपति सुत सोई । की अज अगुन अलखगति कोई ॥ ८ ॥

tumha puni rāma rāma dina rātī. sādara japahu anamṅa ārātī. 7.
rāmu sō avadha nṛpati suta sōī. kī aja aguna alakhagati kōī. 8.

Oh Lord who had vanquished Kaam (anamṅa ārātī; the patron deity of lust and passion who had been tormenting you)¹! Even thou repeat the divine name of Lord Ram day and night with great reverence². (7)

Is Lord Ram who had taken birth as a son of the king of Ayodhya the same Lord who is famed as the Supreme Being having no birth, no attributes, and who is all-pervading, invisible and beyond perception, or are these two forms of Lord Ram separate and different from one another³? (8)

(who is known as the Supreme Being and praised by great sages, Vedas, goddess Saraswati, Lord Seshnath etc.) the same;

[Note—¹Kamdeo, the deity of lust and passion, is called “anamṅa”, one without a physical body, because he has no perceptible and visible form as he lives quietly in the heart of a person and controls his passions and lustful desires from within. The word “ārātī” means one who torments, one who is aggressive and an intruder, one who creates chaos and uneasiness. Surely these are the characters of Kamdeo. Hence, he is referred to as “anamṅa ārātī”

Lord Shiva had himself named Kamdeo as ‘anamṅa’—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 87.

²There are umpteen numbers of verses in Ram Charit Manas where we read this fact. For instance, refer to: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Doha no. 46 and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes it; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119.

³We have read earlier that Lord Shiva has already answered such questions of Parvati in her previous birth when she was called Sati, but she was so stubborn that she still persisted with her doubts. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Sortha no. 51.

But this time around her attitude had changed, for she had suffered for her impertinence; now she seemed ready to accept the truth, and had no inclination to argue with and challenge Lord Shiva’s wisdom. This is very clear by Parvati’s own admission in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 and 7 that precede Doha no. 109 that she does not suffer from the same degree of delusions as was the

case during her previous birth as Sati, but she still wishes to get rid of whatever little doubts that still linger on in her mind. This will also be clear when we read how Lord Shiva welcomed her question, without getting annoyed as he was the last time, though he regretted that she still harboured doubts in her mind—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 114.

But at the same time, Shiva was also pleased with her as she has given him the chance to recall the divine story of Lord Ram once again to purify his mind and speech, and feel blessed thereby. It will also give the world a chance to hear the story of Lord Ram in detail. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 112—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 113; (ii) Doha no. 115.

And finally we read that Shiva had succeeded in his effort to convince Parvati about the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

दो०. जौं नृप तनय त ब्रह्म किमि नारि बिरहँ मति भोरि ।
देखि चरित महिमा सुनत भ्रमति बुद्धि अति मोरि ॥ १०८ ॥

dōhā.

jauṁ nṛpa tanaya ta brahma kimi nāri biraham̃ mati bhōri.
dēkhi carita mahimā sunata bhramati bud'dhi ati mōri. 108.

If Lord Ram is indeed the Supreme Being known as Brahm, then why was he so upset at losing his wife Sita¹? This has completely baffled me.

The Lord's deeds are at odds and incompatible with what one expects in the background of his fame and glories as a Supreme Being. This has confounded my intellect and bewildered me. (Doha no. 108)

[Note—¹This was the primary reason which had confused Sati, and culminated in Lord Shiva abandoning her because she defied all his advice and went to test Lord Ram by assuming the form of Sita herself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 8 herein above and the note appended to it, as well as Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow herein below.]

चौ०. जौं अनीह व्यापक बिभु कोऊ । कहहु बुझाइ नाथ मोहि सोऊ ॥ १ ॥
अग्य जानि रिस उर जनि धरहू । जेहि बिधि मोह मिटै सोइ करहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ anīha byāpaka bibhu kō'ū. kahahu bujhā'i nātha mōhi sō'ū. 1.
agya jāni risa ura jani dharahū. jēhi bidhi mōha miṭai sō'i karahū. 2.

Oh my Lord (nātha)! If Lord Ram is someone else who has no desires (anīha), who is sublime, all-pervading and omnipresent (byāpaka), and who is the Supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm, the Lord who has a cosmic existence in the form of the

Supreme Consciousness (bibhu)¹—then please enlighten me about that form of Lord Ram who is Brahm too². (1)

Please do not get annoyed with me for my delusion and folly, because I am humble, meek, ignorant and innocent. Taking into consideration my earnest quest to know the truth, and my innocence and humility, be gracious, oh kind Lord, to take necessary steps that would dispel my ignorance and delusions (and give me peace of mind)³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 13 which reiterates this idea that Lord Ram is indeed Brahm with the characters mentioned by Parvati—viz. “anīha, byāpaka, bibhu”.

Earlier too, Parvati in her previous life as Sati had a similar doubt about Lord Ram’s truth—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 50.

²Parvati was not alone to have such delusions about Lord Ram. Even great sages were not spared from such delusions regarding the truth of Lord Ram. The best example is that of sage Bharadwaj who expresses the same sort of confusion and doubts pertaining the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram, about the reality and the truth of the Lord, when he asked sage Yagyawalkya to enlighten him on this subject. The learned sage Yagyawalkya did not get angry, but said that it was an opportunity to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram which is good for one and all. This conversation appears in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Then we have the instance of Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu. He too was confounded by the way Lord Ram behaved like an ordinary human being inspite of being the Supreme Being himself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 55—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62; and (ii) Sortha no. 68—to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 69.

³Parvati was well aware of the risk of annoying Shiva; so she is very polite, humble and submissive in her query. She gives no hint of stubbornness or any intention to test Lord Shiva’s wisdom and knowledge. She says that as an honest seeker of truth she is within her right to approach a wise teacher to remove doubts and become enlightened, and at the same time the teacher too is obliged to tell her what she wishes to learn. She has not come to Shiva with a skeptical mind, but with a sincere desire to become enlightened.

Lord Shiva must have frowned at Parvati as she began asking him questions regarding Lord Ram, and this alerted her. She did not want to repeat the bad events of her previous life when the same sort of questioning had provoked her husband to abandon her. Her apprehensions were, to some extent, correct as soon we shall read that Shiva has expressed his annoyance at her for doubting Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 114 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it. So, Parvati immediately begged forgiveness and pre-empted any unsavoury development from precipitating.]

मैं बन दीखि राम प्रभुताई । अति भय बिकल न तुम्हहि सुनाई ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि मलिन मन बोधु न आवा । सो फलु भली भाँति हम पावा ॥ ४ ॥

mair̄m bana dīkhi rāma prabhutāī. ati bhaya bikala na tumhahi sunāī. 3.
tadapi malina mana bōdhu na āvā. sō phalu bhalī bhām̄ti hama pāvā. 4.

I had witnessed the mystical aspects of Lord Ram and experienced his divine powers and glories, but I was so stunned and scared of repercussions of my misdemeanours at the time that I dared not divulge anything to you, and thought it better to keep my discretion and hold the developments as a secret¹. (3)

Still my mind is so stupid and dumb that it could not become wiser, it could not convince itself about the truth of Lord Ram's divinity, and I have already suffered gravely on account of it². (4)

[Note—¹In her previous birth as Sati, Parvati had gone to test Lord Ram's powers and had disguised herself as Sita, the Lord's wife, to see if the Lord know who she actually was. As it turned out, Lord Ram smiled at her, immediately recognizing her as Sati, the consort of Lord Shiva; then he asked where her husband Shiva was, why was she wondering alone in the forest, and asked her to say his respect to her husband when she went back. Not only this, when the dazed and amazed Sati turned back to go to where Lord Shiva waited for her, she was stunned to see a magical scene—so many forms of Lord Ram and Sita, and each form was being served by numerous gods and goddesses. She saw the Lord everywhere before her, behind her, by the side of her, above her.

The sight numbed her senses; for some moment her mind was befuddled and her intellect muddled and completely lost its bearing. She was so terrified with what she had witnessed that more than this experience itself what worried her much was what answer would she now give to Lord Shiva when he asked her what she had found out about Lord Ram. She realized to her consternation and dismay that unwittingly she has offended Lord Shiva by defying him and questioning his wisdom. 'Oh gosh', she shuddered at the very thought, 'what will happen now to me?'

So she decided not to tell Lord Shiva about her experiences and what she witnessed. Eventually she lied to her husband, but Lord Shiva closed his eyes, and with the aid of his transcendental powers learnt about Sati's impertinent deeds that amounted to a grave sin. As a punishment, Lord Shiva decided to forsake her.

We have already read these events earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

²“Oh Lord”, quoth Parvati, “I was discarded by thee. But still I continued to defy thee, and went to attend my father's fire sacrifice against thine advise not to do so, where I burnt myself by jumping into the fire pit in aggravated anger. How much I suffered due to my stupidity and stubbornness! I sincerely regret it and ask for forgiveness.”

All the above developments are narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 57—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.]

अजहूँ कछु संसउ मन मोरें । करहु कृपा बिनवउँ कर जोरें ॥ ५ ॥

प्रभु तब मोहि बहु भाँति प्रबोधा । नाथ सो समुझि करहु जनि क्रोधा ॥ ६ ॥

ajahūṁ' kachu sansa'u mana mōrēm. karahu kṛpā binava'um' kara jōrēm. 5.
prabhu taba mōhi bahu bhāmṭi prabōdhā. nātha sō samujhi karahu jani
krōdhā. 6.

Some doubt still lingers on in my mind. I join my palms in supplication before you with a humble and polite request to please be kind upon me. (5)

Oh gracious Lord (prabhu)! During our previous interaction, you had tried repeatedly to convince me and explain to me the truth (about Lord Ram), but unfortunately I had paid no heed then¹. So Lord, do not become angry with me this time by recalling my previous impertinence. [Why? The answer is given in the next verse that follows herein below.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Doha no. 51.]

तब कर अस बिमोह अब नाहीं । रामकथा पर रुचि मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
कहहु पुनीत राम गुन गाथा । भुजगराज भूषन सुरनाथा ॥ ८ ॥

taba kara asa bimōha aba nāhīm. rāmakathā para ruci mana māhīm. 7.
kahahu punīta rāma guna gāthā. bhujagarāja bhūṣana suranāthā. 8.

Oh Lord! I don't have the same sort of delusions nor doubts (about the divinity and mystical powers of Lord Ram) that I had the last time¹. This time around, however, I have keen interest in the story of Lord Ram with a sincere desire to hear it in detail. (7)

Therefore oh Lord of the Gods (suranāthā), and the one who uses serpents as his ornament (bhujagarāja bhūṣana)! Please be kind to tell me the most holy and purifying story of Lord Ram in detail². (8)

[Note—¹Parvati is obviously referring to her previous birth as Sati when she was utterly confounded when she saw her husband, Lord Shiva, showing so much respect to and becoming overwhelmed with emotions when he saw Lord Ram whom Sati, on the contrary, thought to be an ordinary human being because of the Lord's ordinary human-like behaviour, for he grieved at the loss of his wife Sita who was abducted by the demon king Ravana, and was frantically searching for her in the wilds as if he did not know who had taken her away or what had actually happened to her, inspite of the fact that Lord Shiva asserted to Sati that Lord Ram was none else but the all-knowing and all-powerful Supreme Being himself. Lord Shiva's assertions about Lord Ram and what Sati actually saw in physical terms concerning the latter did not tally with each other, which made her bewildered and vexed. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52.}

So now, how come that her doubts about Lord Ram's mystical powers and divinity were reduced to a great extent as she says presently? Well, it is because when she went to test Lord Ram disguised as Sita herself in order to see if the Lord could see through her trick and recognize her, she witnessed a scene beyond her

imagination—Lord Ram not only recognized her but also bowed before her, asked about the welfare of Lord Shiva, her husband, and enquired from her why she was wondering alone in the wilds. To add to her embarrassment, she saw Lord Ram with Sita wherever her eyes could see, and all the gods and goddesses were serving them. Surely this sight convinced Sati that Lord Ram was definitely not a human being as she had assumed him to be, but was in fact what Lord Shiva had told her about him, i.e. that Lord Ram was none but the Supreme Being in his form. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.}

This incident, which she had witnessed herself, had convinced Parvati that Lord Ram was indeed not an ordinary human being as she thought him to be, and he himself appeared to be, but that the Lord had divine powers and mysticism about him that were in line with what Lord Shiva had asserted. So therefore, she wished to hear Lord Ram's story in detail, as all these mysterious developments had aroused in her a keen interest in the story of Lord Ram with an eagerness to delve deeper into the mysteries surrounding the Lord, and to learn more about him.

²The same thing had happened with Garud, who too was confused by Lord Ram's behaviour like an ordinary human being. Garud too, like Parvati, wished to hear the story of Lord Ram in detail to remove his doubts, and for this purpose he had visited the saintly crow Kaagbhusund to hear him narrate Lord Ram's story. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Sortha no. 68-a.}

दो०. बंदउँ पद धरि धरनि सिरु बिनय करउँ कर जोरि ।
बरनहु रघुबर बिसद जसु श्रुति सिद्धांत निचोरि ॥ १०९ ॥

dōhā.

banda'um̐ pada dhari dharani siru binaya kara'um̐ kara jōri.
baranahu raghubara bisada jasu śruti sid'dhānta nicōri. 109.

[Parvati made an earnest prayer to Lord Shiva thus—] 'I put mine head on the ground before thine holy feet, oh Lord, and pray to thee most humbly and earnestly, by joining the palms of my hands as a gesture of prayerful request to thee, to please narrate the divine story of Lord Ram by incorporating in it the essential spiritual wisdom of all the scriptures'¹. (Doha no. 109)

[Note—¹This Doha itself tells us the benefits of reading Ram Charit Manas—for, one, it was narrated by Lord Shiva himself, two, that it tells us the holy story of Lord Ram who was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, and three, it contains the essential spiritual wisdom of the scriptures collected together and placed at one place.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-13 that precede Doha no. 35; (iii) Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 114.

Parvati's sincerity and politeness was evident to Lord Shiva; he was sure that this time his consort was free from the evil character of stubbornness and skepticism that had had a firm grip over her the last time she questioned him concerning Lord

Ram. So, Lord Shiva would willingly oblige her as is evident in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 114 that would follow herein below soon.

Parvati said: “Oh merciful Lord! Glory be thine! I beg thee to tell me, thy humble maid and faithful wife, the divine story of Lord Ram in detail, in a simple language so that I can easily follow it, and include in thy narrative all the essential principles of spiritualism and metaphysics that the famed scriptures have all along been expounding, and of which you, in all sooth and without gainsay, are an expert exponent. Oh merciful Lord; I will be extremely grateful to thee! My simple mind is puzzled and befogged by the apparent contradictions in what I personally witnessed myself concerning Lord Ram as well as thine assertion about him, and what was physically seen on the ground while Lord Ram was wondering in the forest grieving and searching for his lost wife Sita, as both these things were completely at odds with each other#. I humbly request you, therefore, that as a true Guru (teacher) who is obliged to impart true knowledge to an earnest seeker who comes and submits himself or herself before the learned one, thou shouldest too enlighten me about the truth of Lord Ram, and thereby grant me peace of mind and soul. My mind and intellect have become muddled by the mystery surrounding Lord Ram, causing immense bewilderment and uneasiness to me. So oh kind Lord, please grant me thine gracious blessings in the form of narration of the holy and divine story of Lord Ram in its entirety.” {#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55}

One important point to be noted here is how Parvati requests Lord Shiva to tell her the story of Lord Ram, and compare it with her last interaction with her husband in her previous birth as Sati. Now she ‘puts her head on the ground before Lord Shiva, folds her hands and joins her palms to pray, and speaks in a most humble, polite and submissive way’. She even tells him that she does not have the delusions that had clouded her mind last time (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 herein above). We will observe that during her last interaction with Shiva, she appeared to be haughty and arrogant; she neither bowed before him nor seemed humble and prayerful at all. Even when Lord Shiva told her to go and test Lord Ram herself if she isn’t satisfied with what he has said, she did not as much as bow before her husband or show any sign of politeness and courtesy by seeking to take his leave before departing to test Lord Ram. And to add to her woes that compounded her follies and aggravated her indecent behavior was that when she came back to her husband, she once again did not show him basic courtesy by bowing before her husband, and made matters worse for herself by telling Lord Shiva lies that she hadn’t tested Lord Ram. This impertinent and rude behaviour of Sati had prompted Lord Shiva to abandon her. This is clear when we examine Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.]

चौ०. जदपि जोषिता नहिं अधिकारी । दासी मन क्रम बचन तुम्हारी ॥ १ ॥
गूढउ तत्व न साधु दुरावहिं । आरत अधिकारी जहँ पावहिं ॥ २ ॥
अति आरति पूछउँ सुरराया । रघुपति कथा कहहु करि दाया ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jadapi jōṣitā nahim̐ adhikārī. dāsī mana krama bacana tumhārī. 1.
gūṛha'u tattva na sādhu durāvahim̐. ārata adhikārī jaham̐ pāvahim̐. 2.

ati āрати pūcha'um^ॐ surarāyā. raghupati kathā kahahu kari dāyā. 3.

Although as an ignorant woman who is not at all aware of the profundity of spiritual and metaphysical philosophies and the wonderful principles related to them as expounded in the Upanishads and other scriptures, I feel that I am not qualified to comprehend the secrets and mysteries associated with the divine play of the Supreme Being in his manifestation as Lord Ram, nor competent enough to dive into the depths of the Lord's divine story to unravel and understand it in its entirety, yet I am but your humble and faithful maid in my thoughts, deeds and words¹. (1)

Verily indeed, great saints and enlightened teachers do not desist from revealing the profoundest of truths and expounding upon the greatest of mysteries² whenever they find an earnest seeker of knowledge pleading before them to be enlightened about it. (2)

Oh venerable Lord of the Gods (surarāyā)! This being the case, I plead before you most humbly and prayerfully to be kind upon me and narrate the divine story of Lord Raghbir (Lord Ram, the brave Lord of king Raghu's line).³ (3)

[Note—¹Parvati has said this same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 120.

²Lord Ram's story is no ordinary story; it has great depth and profound spiritual import; it is pregnant with metaphysical principles that present the essence of the scriptures. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 30-b; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 47.

³“Oh venerable Lord”, quoth Parvati, “So therefore, inspite of my being in-eligible to hear the divine story of Lord Ram and competent to understand its deep meaning, I still nevertheless think I am qualified to hear it at least, because, for one, I am a faithful and loyal follower of thine honourable self, being thy faithful wife, and second, being free from pretensions and deceit, I am a sincere seeker of knowledge who wants to know the truth of Lord Ram. Lord, I am not under the cloud of delusions that had confounded me last time, but now I have a noble intention in my heart to hear the story. Further, it will serve a greater purpose—for this holy story will do good to the world at large. So therefore, even if I don't fully grasp its mysteries, yet it will help others, a reason that would in its own self justify its telling. And, since an enlightened teacher ought not to turn away a seeker of knowledge if he or she comes to him with a humble request for the same, so likewise thou art also obliged to tell me the divine story of Lord Ram to satisfy my quest for knowledge.”

Did Lord Shiva oblige Parvati? Oh yes, sure enough he did. Lord Shiva narrated the full divine story of Lord Ram to Parvati as is evident from the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 120; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 128.]

प्रथम सो कारन कहहु बिचारी । निर्गुन ब्रह्म सगुन बपु धारी ॥ ४ ॥

पुनि प्रभु कहहु राम अवतारा । बालचरित पुनि कहहु उदारा ॥ ५ ॥

कहहु जथा जानकी बिबाहीं । राज तजा सो दूषन काहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 बन बसि कीन्हे चरित अपारा । कहहु नाथ जिमि रावन मारा ॥ ७ ॥
 राज बैठि कीन्हीं बहु लीला । सकल कहहु संकर सुखसीला ॥ ८ ॥

prathama sō kārana kahahu bicārī. nirguna brahma saguna bapu dhārī. 4 .
 puni prabhu kahahu rāma avatārā. bālacarita puni kahahu udārā. 5.
 kahahu jathā jānakī bibāhīm. rāja tajā sō dūṣana kāhīm. 6.
 bana basi kīnhē carita apārā. kahahu nātha jimi rāvana mārā. 7.
 rāja baiṭhi kīnhīm bahu līlā. sakala kahahu saṅkara sukhasīlā. 8.

*[Parvati now would outline herself the salient points in the story of Lord Ram which she wants to hear in detail, thereby indirectly asking Lord Shiva to tell her the story using these points as its landmarks, and not to miss anyone of them in his narrative, so that she can easily follow it. It also shows that Parvati was not totally ignorant about the story of Lord Ram as she knew its main outline, but what confounded her intellect and left her confused was the apparent mismatch between Lord Ram's human-like behaviour, as she had seen him wondering in the forest in search of his lost wife Sita, grieving for her and looking devastated at her lost, and what Lord Shiva had asserted about him as being a manifested form of the Supreme Being who is almighty, all-knowing, all-powerful and the Lord of the world. If Shiva was correct, reasoned Parvati, how come Lord Ram did not know who stole Sita, and what was the need for seeking help from the monkeys and bears to free her from the clutches of the demon king Ravana when Lord Ram could have easily slayed her abductor by mere his wish as he was the omnipotent Supreme Being as Lord Shiva affirmed?]

This was the reason why Parvati wished to hear the story once again to remove her doubts about Lord Ram that lingered on in her mind and had been nagging her since her last birth as Sati. So she says—]

To begin with, first of all please tell me why the Supreme Being who has no form and attributes, as his presence in this creation is subtle, invisible and all-pervasive, had assumed a visible form that had many physical attributes and characters¹. (4)

Then, please narrate about the manifestation of this Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram, incorporating details about Lord Ram's birth and his many childhood deeds². (5)

Then, tell me about the Lord's marriage to Janki (Sita, the daughter of king Janak)³.

Next, please narrate why Lord Ram had to discard his kingdom and go to the forest; who was responsible for this sad development, and how did it unfold⁴. (6)

Please tell me all about the Lord's life in the forest where he stayed for quite a time⁵, and then tell me how and why he slew the demon king Ravana⁶. (7)

Finally, Lord Ram came back and was crowned as the King of his kingdom (of Ayodhya)⁷, after which he ruled wisely like a great and noble King, doing auspicious deeds and ruling in accordance to the laws of righteousness⁸.

Oh gracious and kind Lord Shiva, the Lord who grants peace, bliss and happiness (saṅkara sukhasīlā)! Please tell everything in detail. (8)

[Note—*Parvati has outlined the whole story of the Ramayana here: right from the beginning where we read about the cause of Lord Vishnu manifesting as Lord Ram, followed by the Lord's birth in Ayodhya, his childhood days, marriage with Sita, going to the forest, life in the forest, killing of the demons in the fierce war of Lanka, his coming back to ascend the throne of Ayodhya, and culminating with the description of the Lord's long rule as a noble and righteous King-Emperor of a mighty kingdom.

¹This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

We shall read by-and-by that Lord Shiva has specifically answers this query of Parvati, that she wants to hear “why Brahm had manifested as Lord Ram”, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141 where he tells her that he would narrate the reason why the supreme Brahm manifested in this world as a king of Ayodhya known as Lord Ram. Lord Shiva then proceeds to narrate two particular events in this context—one was the event of Manu and Satrupa doing severe Tapa (penance and austerity) which pleased Brahm who appeared before them, and then promised the couple that he would become their son as they wished it to be so*; and then the second event was of king Pratapbhanu who had been cursed to become demon Ravana, upon which the gods had prayed to Brahm to protect them against the tyranny unleashed by him#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 152; and #Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.}

How do we know that during these two events it was Brahm, the Supreme Being who represents cosmic Consciousness, and who is the Father of the entire creation, who was speaking? The answer is clearly found when we read these two events—for the Lord who spoke on both these occasions, first to Manu and Satrupa, and then to gods and mother earth, was Brahm who had no form but whose voice filled the whole sky as if the entire firmament was speaking. It is because Brahm is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness that pervades throughout the universe and fills the whole of the sky. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 145; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150; (iii) Doha no. 186; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187.}

²This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 188—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206.

³This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Doha no. 361.

⁴This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 79.

⁵This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 17.

⁶This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 103.

⁷This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Doha no. 116—to Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 12.

⁸This part of the story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 51.]

दो०. बहुरि कहहु करुनायतन कीन्ह जो अचरज राम ।
प्रजा सहित रघुबंसमनि किमि गवने निज धाम ॥ ११० ॥

dōhā.

bahuri kahahu karunāyatana kīnha jō acaraja rāma.
prajā sahita raghubansamani kimi gavanē nija dhāma. 110.

Oh merciful Lord (karunāyatana)! Then, finally to conclude the narration, please tell me the strange and mystical event when Lord Ram, the jewel of king Raghu's line of great and famous Kings of Ayodhya (raghubansamani) left this mortal world and went to his primary abode in the heaven along with all the subjects of his kingdom¹. (Doha no. 110)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that this particular question of Parvati was not specifically answered by Lord Shiva in his narration of Ram Charit Manas that is available to us and which we are reading presently. However, in all other versions of the story of the Ramayana, this episode is narrated in detail. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 8 and 9. An English version of the Adhyatma Ramayan has been written and published by this humble author and is available at the same online internet platforms from the learned reader has accessed this book Ram Charit Manas.

Now, the question arises: why has this episode not been included by Tulsidas in his version of Lord Ram's story in 'Ram Charit Manas'? Well, the probable reason is that Tulsidas was a great devotee of Lord Ram who loved his Lord so dearly and intensely that he could not bear to suffer from the grief and agony that would overwhelm him if he went on to narrate the departure of his beloved Lord Ram from this world. For Tulsidas, Lord Ram had never left the world, for in his considered opinion the Lord has an eternal presence here amongst the creatures to bless them and help them at all times.

The grief and agony of the very idea of Lord Ram departing from this world was so overpowering that it made Tulsidas feel orphaned; he swooned at the very thought that his Lord has gone somewhere else, leaving him alone in this sorrowful world. So therefore, he thought it wise and better to omit this painful event altogether.

Another reason is this: Even Lord Shiva could not come to terms with the painful idea of having to narrate the departure of Lord Ram from this world. Shiva could not gather his wits together to narrate something that was out of the question for him—because he believed, and rightly so too, that Lord Ram has an eternal presence,

albeit in a subtle and sublime form, amongst us all. It is like the case of Jesus Christ: for he too was crucified and physically his body died, but his divine soul continued to live on for eternity amongst his followers, as is believed in the principle of Christ's resurrection, to bless them and help them right in this physical world. So is the case with Lord Ram—both Tulsidas and Lord Shiva could not endorse the idea of Lord Ram ever leaving this world to go elsewhere, leaving its creatures to their fate.

What is the significance of the above observations? Well, we must remember that Ram Charit Manas is a book that stresses on the virtue of devotion for Lord Ram, for its primary focus is on 'Bhakti', i.e. devotion and love for Lord Ram, as compared to other versions of the story of Ramayana where this particular virtue of Bhakti is not a prominent and defining feature of the narrative as it is in 'Ram Charit Manas', as this particular trait distinguishes this book from all other versions of the story.

A devotee can't tolerate separation from his revered and beloved deity, so speaking of the deity's leaving the devotee alone in this world is a notion with which the devotee cannot come to terms with, and this possibility is just out of the question as far as he is concerned. Since both Lord Shiva and Tulsidas are renowned devotees of Lord Ram, hence they could not bring themselves around to come to terms with the idea of Lord Ram leaving this world.

Remember: Goswami Tulsidas is the narrator of the present book 'Ram Charit Manas' that we are reading, and he quotes Lord Shiva as the primary narrator of the story. Both are sincere, faithful, ardent and dedicated devotees of Lord Ram, who venerate, worship, revere and adore the Lord as their only Lord God, Protector and Saviour. Hence, they could not cope with the notion of separation from their beloved Lord Ram on any account. Therefore, they skipped answering this particular question of Parvati as mentioned in Doha no. 110 herein above.

But it goes to Parvati's credit that she fully understood Lord Shiva's emotions that made him reluctant to describe the events leading up to Lord Ram leaving this mortal world and going to his abode in the heaven along with all those who lived with him in this world, such as the subjects of his kingdom. Her main objective in hearing the story was to remove her doubts about the divinity of Lord Ram, and to be convinced that he was not an ordinary human prince as his worldly deeds mislead one to think him to be, but the Supreme Being himself in his form, and therefore Lord Ram was to be venerated, worshipped, adored and praised as a personification of the Supreme Being himself.

The fact that Parvati was fully satisfied by the story which Lord Shiva had told her, and that no more doubts lingered in her mind inspite of her last question remaining unanswered is clear in the concluding verses of Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it. She never asked Lord Shiva why he didn't answer this question of hers.

To wit, she realized that for a devotee, the Lord God is always with him, for the Lord is eternal and infinite, he is the cosmic Spirit and supreme Consciousness that are beyond the purview of death and birth.]

चौ० पुनि प्रभु कहहु सो तत्व बखानी । जेहिं बिग्यान मगन मुनि ग्यानी ॥ १ ॥

भगति ग्यान बिग्यान बिरागा । पुनि सब बरनहु सहित बिभागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni prabhu kahahu sō tattva bakhānī. jēhirṁ bigyāna magana muni gyānī. 1.
bhagati gyāna bigyāna birāgā. puni saba baranahu sahita bibhāgā. 2.

* [Parvati continued—] ‘Oh Lord! Please expound elaborately on that essence of true spiritual knowledge and metaphysical principles (kahahu sō tattva bakhānī) which keep wise, self-realised and enlightened sages, seers, hermits and ascetics absorbed in meditation and contemplation¹. (1)

Not only that, please enlighten me about the various aspects of the virtues of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) and Gyan (gnosis; truthful knowledge; metaphysics, spiritual wisdom), the difference between them, and how one complements the other². (2)

[Note—¹To answer this question of Parvati, Lord Shiva had narrated the discourse between the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garuda in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 125.

²This query of Parvati is answered in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Doha no. 46 by Lord Ram; and by Kaagbhusund in (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 85, (iii) Doha no. 90 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it, and (iv) Doha no. 114—to Doha no. 122.

*In the verses that preceded Doha no. 110, Parvati had asked about the story of Lord Ram that describes the Lord’s ‘Saguna’ form, a form of the Supreme Being that is visible, that has attributes and characters like other mortal beings, albeit they are of a higher quality and exalted in nature, but nevertheless are related to the Lord’s life like an ordinary person in this mortal world.

But Lord Ram was no ordinary human, and the real and true benefit that one gets from hearing his story is not simple worldly entertainment to pass one’s time like one reads so many historical novels, but it is to become enlightened about spiritual and metaphysical wisdom that grants eternal peace and beatitude to the soul of the creature, helping him to attain liberation and deliverance from the cycle of transmigration, and leading to his emancipation and salvation.

Parvati’s second round of questions are aimed straight at this objective. And to speak the truth, this is the real benefit of reading the story of Ram Charit Manas; it is what distinguishes this book from other versions of the Ramayana. For, besides the process of telling the story of Lord Ram from the perspective of its historical chronology, this book Ram Charit Manas also presents to the discerning reader the essence of spiritual and metaphysical wisdom contained in the scriptures in a simple and straightforward manner, in a style that even an ordinary person can follow and understand easily, without the usual technical jargon and the complexities in the narratives so typical of ancient scriptures. In a gross mortal world that traps the creature in an endless whirlpool of miseries and pain and delusions, in which the creature swoons and yearns for deliverance, this divine story acts as a lighthouse of hope and salvation.]

औरउ राम रहस्य अनेका । कहहु नाथ अति बिमल बिबेका ॥ ३ ॥

जो प्रभु मैं पूछा नहिं होई । सोउ दयाल राखहु जनि गोई ॥ ४ ॥

aura'u rāma rahasya anēkā. kahahu nātha ati bimala bibēkā. 3.
jō prabhu mairṁ pūchā nahirṁ hōī. sō'u dayāla rākhahu jani gōī. 4.

Besides what I have asked, there may be many other secrets and mysteries associated with Lord Ram¹. So oh venerable Lord, please be kind to narrate them too, for your knowledge and wisdom are deep and pristine pure in this regard². (3)

Oh gracious and merciful Lord (prabhu -- dayāla)! Please do not avoid enlightening me about any other related matter even if I have inadvertently omitted it and not asked you about it specifically³. (4)

[Note—¹Indeed, there really were certain things that were secret, and Lord Shiva might have desisted from telling them had Parvati not particularly requested him to divulge them too. This will be evident in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 195 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow it (when Lord Shiva accompanied sage Kaagbhusund to witness the birth celebrations of Lord Ram); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 318 (when goddess assumed human form and participated in the festivities during Lord Ram's marriage); (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24 (when Lord Ram told Sita that the time had come for her to be abducted by Ravana as it would be used as a pretext by the Lord to eliminate the demons, so she must hide her true identity and leave her shadow behind); (c) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 79—to Doha no. 82 (where we read about the mysterious event when the saintly crow Kaagbhusund had entered the mouth of Lord Ram when the Lord was yet a child, and inside the Lord's belly he could see countless universes where he kept on wondering for a long time, till finally he came out in the present world when Lord Ram opened his mouth again).

Besides the above referred instances, the holy book 'Ram Charit Manas' is full of pearls of wisdom, both spiritual and metaphysical, spread throughout its text. The author of the current English version of Ram Charit Manas, which the esteemed reader is reading presently, has collated all such pearls and threaded them together in a garland and presented them in the form of two books titled 'Ram Geeta' and 'Bhakti Sutra Mala', which the reader can easily access from the same online internet platforms from where he or she has accessed this book.

²Parvati acknowledges finally that she was in grave error in questioning Lord Shiva's wisdom during her previous life as Sati when she had not believed him when he had told her about the divinity of Lord Ram and had advised her not to doubt him in this regard—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 51.

By praising Lord Shiva's wisdom and purity of wisdom presently, Parvati intended to pre-empt the possibility of repeat of what happened to her on that previous occasion when Lord Shiva had abandoned her in annoyance of her impertinence, stupidity and stubbornness—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

³The approach of Parvati is an excellent guide for a keen student and a true seeker of knowledge. First the student or the seeker must tell the teacher the specific purpose for which he has come to the latter, and then give the teacher freedom to enlighten

him about any other matter which the teacher things fit to be taught even if the student or the seeker had not specified it. In this approach, the imparted knowledge becomes comprehensive and broad, for otherwise there may be many important points that would remain unknown to the student or the seeker if the teacher were to stick only to answering specific questions asked of him.]

तुम्ह त्रिभुवन गुर बेद बखाना । आन जीव पाँवर का जाना ॥ ५ ॥
प्रस्न उमा कै सहज सुहाई । छल बिहीन सुनि सिव मन भाई ॥ ६ ॥

tumha tribhuvana gura bēda bakhānā. āna jīva pāmvara kā jānā. 5.
prasna umā kai sahaja suhāī. chala bihīna suni siva mana bhāī. 6.

You are the wisest teacher in all the three divisions of this world¹, so affirm the Vedas. All other teachers are but lowly mortal beings, how can they compare themselves with you, and how can they know the mysteries and secrets of Lord Ram as much as you do?' (5)

The questions of Uma (another name of Parvati) were honest queries, free from skepticism and ill-intentions, for she had no deceit, conceit and pretensions in her heart and mind. Hence, Lord Shiva was pleased by her enquiry as it appealed to his heart and mind too (for it would give him a chance to remember Lord Ram and narrate his holy story that would be for the good of the world and provide peace to him as well)². (6)

[Note—¹The three divisions of the world are heaven, earth, and nether world.

Lord Shiva is known as 'Maha Deva', the Great God. This epithet is used for him in acknowledgement of his stellar erudition, sagacity and wisdom. He is self-realised and the most enlightened God. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 107 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

When earth and the sages were horrified by the demons and were searching for Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, to request the Lord to protect them, but were unsure where to find him, it was Lord Shiva who finally came to their rescue by advising them "that the Lord is present everywhere, and he would reveal himself if the gods and earth prayed to him sincerely". {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 185.}

On another occasion, it was Lord Shiva who advised Garuda to go to Kaagbhusund to remove his delusions and confusions regarding Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

²The joy and thrill that Shiva experienced at this opportunity to remember Lord Ram and narrate his divine story would be evident in the verses that follow herein below.]

हर हिउँ रामचरित सब आए । प्रेम पुलक लोचन जल छाए ॥ ७ ॥
श्रीरघुनाथ रूप उर आवा । परमानंद अमित सुख पावा ॥ ८ ॥

hara hiyaṃ rāmacarita saba ā'ē. prēma pulaka lōcana jala chā'ē. 7.
śrīraghunātha rūpa ura āvā. paramānanda amita sukha pāvā. 8.

Lord Shiva recalled (or remembered) the whole divine and holy story of Lord Ram in his heart; this made his body experience thrill of ecstasy and tears welled up in his eyes. (7)

Lord Raghunath's (i.e. Lord Ram's) divine form appeared in his heart, and it gave Lord Shiva extreme bliss and joy. (8)

[Note—The question arises that if the story of Lord Ram had already revealed itself in the heart and mind of Lord Shiva on an earlier occasion#, and that if he was always submerged in the thoughts of Lord Ram as he repeated the Lord's holy name and meditated on him*, then what does it mean that “the story of Lord Ram and his image revealed themselves in his heart now”? {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, #Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 35; and *Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.}

Well, the answer is this: Lord Shiva used to meditate upon Lord Ram and employed the Lord's holy name “RAM” (pronounced Raam or Rām) as the Mantra (a spiritual formula) during it for the purpose of contemplation, focusing of his mind, and doing of Japa (repetition of a holy Name or Mantra of a revered deity). Lord Ram's divine image was enshrined in his heart as a deity is done in a physical temple, and the Lord's divine story had revealed in Shiva's heart as a lotus emerges in a pristine pure lake. Now currently, Parvati's questions gave an occasion for Lord Shiva to remember his revered Lord Ram afresh, and recall his holy story. It was a sort of a refreshing of his memory. The very thought that he would now be engaged in retelling the story to Parvati in detail filled Lord Shiva with enthusiasm and ecstasy. It was like the lotus flower opening its petals and blooming in all its beauty.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30, and Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35 it is said that “Lord Shiva had conceived the story of Lord Ram in his Mana (heart and mind), and at the opportune time he revealed it to Uma”. Well, this ‘opportune time’ referred to in these verses is now.

We experience this thing in our day-to-day lives too. There are many good and bad events in our lives that have left their permanent imprints on our mind and heart. Over time we tend to live with these memories; we don't pay special attention to them as life goes on. But it often happens that certain development or situation in the present time makes us recall these long-ago events afresh in our mind, which would either make us happy or sad depending on the sort of impression these events had cast on our memories and sub-conscious mind.

In the case of Lord Shiva, the very memory of Lord Ram was cheering for his spirits; it rejuvenated him and filled him with exhilaration. This was a good omen—because now he will tell the story of Lord Ram enthusiastically to Parvati, with a lot of emotional involvement and zeal put into the narrative.]

दो०. मगन ध्यानरस दंड जुग पुनि मन बाहेर कीन्ह ।
रघुपति चरित महेस तब हरषित बरनै लीन्ह ॥ १११ ॥

dōhā.

magana dhyānarasa daṇḍa juga puni mana bāhēra kīnha.
raghupati carita mahēsa taba haraṣita baranai līnha. 111.

Lord Shiva became meditative, and he remained in this state of bliss and ecstasy for around two quarters of an hour.

Then Lord Mahesh (Shiva) recovered from his trance and revealed the story of Lord Ram that was enshrined in his Mana (heart and mind). The Lord began to narrate it enthusiastically and with great zeal. (Doha no. 111)

[Note—¹There are many instances in Ram Charit Manas where we read that enlightened souls become thrilled when they reveal or hear something holy and divine. For instance, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41; (ii) Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 39 (Tulsidas); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 104 (sages Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj); Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64 (sage Kaagbhusund).]

चौ०. झूठेउ सत्य जाहि बिनु जानें । जिमि भुजंग बिनु रजु पहिचानें ॥ १ ॥
जेहि जानें जग जाइ हेराई । जागें जथा सपन भ्रम जाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jhūṭhē'u satya jāhi binu jānēm. jimi bhujāṅga binu raju pahicānēm. 1.
jēhi jānēm jaga jā'i hērāī. jāgēm jathā sapana bhrama jāī. 2.

[Now henceforth, Lord Shiva begins his discourse.]

Lord Shiva started his preaching as follows: ‘Out of ignorance and effects of delusions, a person treats something that is completely false as being true, just like the case of his erroneously treating a lifeless length of rope as a live snake (and becoming terrified by it)¹. (1)

Truthful knowledge and true enlightenment is that which helps one to overcome this delusion and ignorance, just like the case of person who wakes up from his sleep to realize that the world he was witnessing in his dreams has vanished instantly (as if it was a mirage)². (2)

[Note—¹Due to lack of knowledge about the reality of a length of rope, a person may think it to be a snake lying on the ground just because of the rope’s external appearance that resembles a serpent, and this misconception grossly agitates him.

²In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 93.

Lord Shiva hints at the confusions about Lord Ram that have so much bewildered Parvati. Lord Ram’s worldly behaviour is like that of an ordinary human being, leading to so much misconception about the Lord’s true identity. So here Shiva says that when Parvati or anyone else comes to learn about the Lord’s truth and why he behaved in the way he did, all confusions and delusions would vanish just like the world of dreams that vanishes as soon as the person wakes up from his sleep.

In the example of the rope and the snake, as soon as a person realises the truth that what had terrified him so much is nothing but a harmless length of rope, he will laugh at his own stupidity and fearlessly grab the rope and swing it.

Similarly, as soon as the reality of Lord Ram dawns on the horizon of the seeker's mind and intellect, all his doubts and confusions about the Lord would vanish in a trice.

So therefore, suggests Lord Shiva to Parvati, she must listen to the story of Lord Ram attentively.

The concept of a rope being mistaken for a snake has been employed in the Upanishads too. It is used as a standard metaphor to describe how lack of awareness of the truth leads an ignorant man to imagine that a harmless piece of rope is a vicious snake and instill in him a horrible fear of life. References of this concept—(a) Krishna Yajur Veda: Kathrudra Upanishad, verse no. 17; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse no. 34; Yogkundali Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 79-80; Yogshikha Upanishad, Canto 4, verse nos. 1-2, 22; Tejobindu Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 48-49; Canto 6, verse no. 77. (b) Shukla Yajur Veda: Niralamba Upanishad, verse no. 14. (c) Atharva Veda: Atma Upanishad, verse no. 27.

Now let us see what the Atharva Veda's *Atma Upanishad*, verse no. 27 has to say—"When one is under the false impression that a harmless length of rope is a dangerous venomous snake, he is afraid of the former; he becomes terrified of the rope. But when he comes to know the truth, this fear disappears on its own. He would no longer be afraid of the rope because he knows that it is not a snake.

This explains the difference between false and misleading knowledge, and true knowledge that shows the correct path. While the former kind of knowledge leads one to be trapped in fetters of ignorance and delusions, the latter type of knowledge is liberating and a provider of deliverance to the creature. While ignorance creates a trap that shackles a creature in a snare of delusions, knowledge frees him and is emancipating as well as empowering. While ignorance bogs him down, knowledge sets him free (27)."

The *Tejobindu Upanishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 6, verse no. 77 says "The erroneous belief that a harmless length of rope is a snake does not make the rope bite anyone. The world is also as imaginary as this snake in the rope. Similarly, a polished and brilliantly shining golden arrow that glints in the rays of the sun does not spew fire that can burn anything though its glint might resemble the spark from a burning fire. The world is also as imaginary as the presence of fire in this arrow.

To wit, "Even as a harmless length of rope imagined to be a snake does not bite, and an ordinary arrow of gold does not spew fire, this world too does not exist." (77)]

बंदुं बालरूप सोइ रामू । सब सिधि सुलभ जपत जिसु नामू ॥ ३ ॥

मंगल भवन अमंगल हारी । द्रवउ सो दसरथ अजिर बिहारी ॥ ४ ॥

banda'um̐ bālarūpa sō'i rāmū. saba sidhi sulabha japata jisu nāmū. 3.

maṅgala bhavana amaṅgala hārī. drava'u sō dasaratha ajira bihārī. 4.

[Oh Parvati! Continued Shiva, ---] 'I bow my head and revere the form of Lord Ram as a child (banda'um̐ bālarūpa sō'i rāmū) by doing Japa (repetition) of whose holy

name all successes and accomplishments are easily achieved (*saba sidhi sulabha*)¹.’
(3)

[Lord Shiva remembers the form of Lord Ram as a child and invokes the Lord’s divine grace and seeks his blessings before commencing the narration of the story of Ram Charit Manas. He prays:] ‘That Lord (Sri Ram) who is an embodiment of all auspiciousness and is a dispeller of all that is inauspicious, and who plays around (as a child) in the royal courtyard of king Dasrath (of Ayodhya where the Supreme Being manifested himself as Lord Ram)—let that Lord bless me and grant his grace upon me.’² (4)

[Note—¹We read that the saintly crow Kaagbhusund was also devoted to this form of Lord Ram which Lord Shiva adores. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 75; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 113.

Kaagbhusund also gives the reason why this form of Lord Ram as a child was very attractive to him—‘it is pleasant and charming, it gives immense joy and happiness to a creature when he thinks how the child-Ram plays around, laughing heartily, cheering and speaking with a lisp in his voice, stumbling and rising up to run away, dancing and frolicking merrily. Kaagbhsund had experienced the joy of being with Lord Ram during his childhood days, so the mere memory of those moments are so mesmerizing for him that he prefers no other form of Lord Ram but as a child. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Doha no. 77.}

Lord Ram’s form as a child was an innocent form and free from any taints. What Lord Shiva and sage Kaagbhusund wishes to hint here in a subtle way is that a child is an image of Lord God, for it is innocent and free from all worldly taints as attachments, longings etc. A child is easy to please like the Lord himself; the child pleases everyone around him like the Lord too does.

The glory of a child as a representative of the Lord God is stressed in the Holy Bible where we read the following verses of the Gospel of St. Matthew, 18/1-6—1: “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? 2: And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, 3: And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4: Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5: And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. 6: But whose shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Again, we read in the Gospel of St. Mark, 9/36-37—36: “And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, 37: Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me.”

The Atharva Veda’s *Annapura Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 38 says that a Brahm-realised man is as innocent and un-prejudiced as a child. To quote—“Be steady and calmed-down by obtaining the knowledge of Brahm by becoming like a child (who is innocent, untainted, unprejudiced and uncorrupt)¹.

The knowledge of Brahm makes a man Brahm-realised, and this eclectic mental state is equivalent to that of a child as it is not only innocent, untainted,

unprejudiced, uncorrupt and contented, but is also cheerful, happy, blissful and free from any worldly worries (38).”

Saint Tulsidas has written prolifically about Lord Ram as a child. He has described the beauty and the enchanting image of the Lord as a child, and becomes enthralled and captivated at the beauty of Lord Ram as a child. For Tulsidas, it is a sort of meditation on the Lord’s most pure, innocent and uncorrupt physical form as a human being. In his book *Dohawali*, verse nos. 117-122, Tulsidas has described the charms of the Lord of creation known as Ram in the form of a child when the Lord took birth on earth as a human being.

In the great epic *Ram Charit Manas*, *Baal Kand*, Doha no. 198, Tulsidas has affirmed the fact that the Supreme Lord of creation known as Brahm who is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and immanent in creation, the Lord who has no taints, shortcomings and faults that are associated with mundane existence in this world, the Lord who has no attributes and is free from the effects or influences of the three Gunas known as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna, and the Lord who is neutral and dispassionate and indifferent to sensory impulses that make a living being feel a sense of joy and happiness or inspires him to enjoy the pleasures and comforts of this world of sense objects—it is the same supreme Brahm who has today become a child named Ram in the lap of mother Kaushalya.

Ram Charit Manas, *Baal Kand*, *Chaupai* line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 200 proclaim that Lord Ram is the Supreme Father and Parent of this creation, and it is the same Lord Ram who had taken birth as a human being, and his childhood activities and playful pranks had given a lot of happiness and joy to the subjects of the kingdom of Kaushal (*Ayodhya*).

Ram Charit Manas, *Baal Kand*, Doha no. 199 explicitly affirm that Lord Ram who is performing enchanting deeds as a child is none but the Supreme Being who is an embodiment of happiness and bliss, is beyond the scope of doubts and confusions, is beyond the purview of delusions, transcends the three Gunas known as Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna, and is beyond the reach of speech and expressions—i.e. cannot be narrated or described, cannot be limited by words and languages on which expressions depend.

Ram Charit Manas, *Baal Kand*, *Chaupai* line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 204 clearly state that the Lord’s childhood activities are simple and pleasant. They have been sung by the Vedas, Lord Shiva, goddess of speech Saraswati, and Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth afloat in the vast ocean of ether. If any one does not find the enchanting image and the most pleasant deeds of Lord Ram as a child as being attractive to the mind and heart, then surely the creator is opposed to such an unfortunate person, i.e. he is very unlucky and stone-hearted, and he will never enjoy the nectar of bliss that comes by hearing of the Lord’s divine story.

In *Ram Charit Manas*, *Baal Kand*, *Chaupai* line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 203, it is said that “all the four brothers (Lord Ram and his brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) move around doing most pleasant and enchanting things. The Lord who is beyond the imagination of the mind, who cannot be attained by merely doing formal rituals, who is beyond the reach and purview of words and speech (i.e. who cannot be defined or described or explained or expressed by the spoken word), and who is invisible in his cosmic all-pervading subtle form, becomes a boy and moves in the royal courtyard of king Dasrath.”

Geetawali Ramayan, *Baal Kand*, verse no. 17 says that the childhood deeds and playful pranks of Lord Ram gives immense pleasure to saints and sages, and they

have been sung by the Gods. Tulsidas drinks this nectar and lives happily in the bliss obtained by it.

The beauty of the child Ram has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 199.

Tulsidas has also said in his Kavitaawali Ramayan, verse no. 6 that one should have love and devotion for the Supreme Being who manifested as child Ram if one hopes to obtain the same result as it got by doing Japa, Yoga and Samadhi. To quote—“Attractive shoes adorn his (the child Ram’s) feet, a tiny bow and arrow is in his small hands, and accompanied by children (of his age), he playfully moves about either on the banks of the river Saryu or the market places of Ayodhya. Tulsidas says that if one cannot develop love and affection towards such children, then what is the utility of doing Japa (reciting and repetition of the Mantras), practicing Yoga (meditation and concentration on the Pure-Self) or being in a state of Samadhi (a trance like state of consciousness when one is lost in deep contemplation)? Such people (who do all these exercises but cannot inculcate love and devotion for the Lord) are similar to donkeys, pigs and dogs. Say, of what use is their life (i.e. what fruit or benefit have they got from taking birth)?”

²This is a sort of a fresh invocation by Lord Shiva before he embarks on the actual narration of the story. This will be evident in the next verses that follow herein below.]

करि प्रनाम रामहि त्रिपुरारी । हरषि सुधा सम गिरा उचारी ॥ ५ ॥
धन्य धन्य गिरिराजकुमारी । तुम्ह समान नहिं कोउ उपकारी ॥ ६ ॥

kari pranāma rāmahī tripurārī. haraṣi sudhā sama girā ucārī. 5.
dhan'ya dhan'ya girirājakumārī. tumha samāna nahim kō'u upakārī. 6.

Lord Tripurari (i.e. Lord Shiva, the Lord of all the three divisions of the world)¹ bowed his head before Lord Ram, and then cheerfully spoke words that were like nectar (i.e. sweet, pleasant, rejuvenating, and a provider of exhilaration and profound bliss). (5)

[Expressing his gratitude to Parvati for asking him to narrate the holy story of Lord Ram, Shiva said—] ‘Oh the Daughter of the King of Mountains (gīrirājakumārī; i.e. Parvati); you are extremely fortunate and blessed indeed! Verily, there is no one who is a better benefactor and well-wisher than you are¹. (6)

[Note—¹Well-wisher and benefactor of whom? This question is answered by Lord Shiva himself in the next two verses that follow herein below.]

पूँछेहु रघुपति कथा प्रसंगा । सकल लोक जग पावनि गंगा ॥ ७ ॥
तुम्ह रघुबीर चरन अनुरागी । कीन्हिहु प्रस्न जगत हित लागी ॥ ८ ॥

pūm̃chēhu raghupati kathā prasaṅgā. sakala lōka jaga pāvani gaṅgā. 7.
tumha raghubīra carana anurāgī. kīnhihu prasna jagata hita lāgī. 8.

You have asked me about the divine and holy story of Lord Ram (raghupati kathā) which is purifying for the whole world just like the sacred river Ganges is¹. (7)

You have affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram (raghubīra), and I understand that you have asked questions regarding Lord Ram and his story just for the sake of the good and welfare of the world (and its creatures)². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, just like the waters of river Ganges is regarded as holy and purifying for the creatures of this mortal world as it symbolically washes away their sins and impurities by cleaning their bodies that represents their external self, the divine story of Lord Ram too washes away the sins and impurities sticking to the soul of the creature, thereby cleaning his inner self.

Even as the refreshing and cool waters of the river Ganges provides comfort to the physical body, the divine story of Lord Ram is refreshing and rejuvenating for the spirit of the creature.

Just like a weary traveler finding solace and succour by taking a bath in the waters of river Ganges, a creature who is tired of turning around endlessly in the wheel of transmigration, and is tormented by the countless miseries of mortal life in this gross world, would find peace and rest for his soul by hearing this story of Lord Ram.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 34 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

²A similar observation was made by sage Yagyawalkya for sage Bharadwaj when the latter asked him to narrate the story of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 47.

Just like the case of river Ganges which provides relief to one and all who come to its banks to sip its water or to take a bath in it, without any distinction regarding caste, creed, age, gender, faith and belief, Lord Ram's holy story also benefits one and all who listen to it, who read it, who recite and sing it, who preach it.

It's like nectar that tastes sweet and refreshing to everyone, irrespective of who the drinker or taster is.]

दो०. राम कृपा तें पारबति सपनेहुँ तव मन माहिं।
सोक मोह संदेह भ्रम मम बिचार कछु नाहिं ॥ ११२ ॥

dōhā.

rāma kṛpā tēm̃ pārabati sapanēhum̃ tava mana māhim̃.
sōka mōha sandēha bhrama mama bicāra kachu nāhim̃. 112.

Oh Parvati! In my opinion you have the blessing and grace of Lord Ram upon you, and so therefore I am certain you don't have the taint of worldly sorrows, delusions, doubts and confusions even in your dream¹. (Doha no. 112)

[Note—¹Shiva said: “See Parvati, you wish to hear the divine story of Lord Ram for the good and welfare of the world at large, and you feign ignorance about it merely in order to inspire me to retell the whole story to you once again. I have proof of your being aware of the story. Remember, just a while ago you have already outlined the main events of Lord Ram’s story, so how is it that you don’t know it. So therefore, I am convinced that you wished to hear the story of Lord Ram so that the world could benefit from it.” {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 110 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 113.}]

As we have noted earlier, the same observation was made by sage Yagyawalkya with respect to sage Bharadwaj. Refer to note appended to verse no. 8 herein above.

Another instance is found when sage Kaagbhusund tells a similar thing to Garud when the latter asked the former to tell the story of Lord Ram to him. Here, Kaagbhusund says that actually the fact is that Lord Ram wishes to honour him before the world and so he has motivated Garud to go and ask him to tell the Lord’s story and glories in detail as if no one else can do it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 70.

If we consider this view, then surely Lord Shiva means that he is blessed that his revered Lord Ram has given him another chance to recall the Lord’s holy story as a means of deriving fresh a round of joy and bliss. So therefore, Lord Shiva feels happy with Parvati instead of being annoyed at her. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

चौ०. तदपि असंका कीन्हिहु सोई । कहत सुनत सब कर हित होई ॥ १ ॥

जिन्ह हरि कथा सुनी नहिं काना । श्रवन रंध्र अहिभवन समाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tadapi asaṅkā kīnhihu sōī. kahata sunata saba kara hita hōī. 1.

jinha hari kathā sunī nahim kānā. śravana randhra ahibhavana samānā. 2.

[Lord Shiva continued—] ‘But still since you have expressed some form of doubts regarding Lord Ram¹ and wish to hear the Lord’s sacred story (in spite of my belief that you don’t have any real doubts about Lord Ram’s divinity and holiness, but you have asked me to tell you the Lord’s story with the intention that it would be for the larger good and auspiciousness of the world)—so therefore I will narrate it to you, as this story provides auspiciousness and does good to narrate as well as to hear it². (1)

Those who have not heard the auspicious story of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being who is an eliminator of all sorrows of the creature), their ears are like the dark holes where serpents live³. (2)

[Note—¹What was it about Lord Ram that had perplexed Parvati and vexed her mind so much? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Primarily, in the opinion of Parvati, Lord Ram’s worldly deeds and behaviour were not in line with what one expects from the Supreme Being who is supposed to be almighty, all-knowing and omnipotent, though Lord Shiva as well as the scriptures

have firmly affirmed the fact that Lord Ram was none but the Supreme Being himself. These two apparently contradictory aspects of Lord Ram—one as a human being, and the other as the Supreme Being, which did not tally with each other—was the primary cause of all confusions in Parvati’s mind.

²Quoth Lord Shiva to Parvati: “Verily indeed and forsooth, Parvati, both the narrator and the hearer benefit from Lord Ram’s glorious story as it grants bliss, beatitude, joy, happiness and auspiciousness equally to both of them. Hence, I, as its narrator, will enjoy the blissfulness and joy that accompanies this story naturally as much as you will, as its listener, and by extension all others too would derive immense spiritual bliss and beatitude who would be retelling it and hearing it later on. So it will serve a much larger purpose than merely a discourse between us two. Therefore, I am willing to tell you what you wish to hear. I am full of gratitude to you rather, for giving me a chance to recount the story of my beloved and revered Lord Ram, something that thrills me to the core of my heart, rejuvenates my mind and intellect, nourishes my soul, and lifts my spirits to great heights of ecstasy.”

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 112; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 47.

³The worthiness of the ears lie in hearing things that are truly good for the spiritual welfare and well-being of the creature, things that give his soul real and infinite joy and bliss, things that show him the correct path leading to liberation and deliverance from the miseries associated with life in this gross mortal world, things that lead to his emancipation and salvation, and not in hearing things that entangle him further in the knot of worldly delusions in which the unfortunate creature is already tied and bound.

So therefore, he whose ears are like an ocean that continues to receive so many rivers from every direction, rivers that represent the different versions of the holy story of Lord Ram told in different ways, and where all such stories converge to become one body of holy knowledge pertaining to the Lord like the waters of so many different rivers merging with each other to become one when they fall into the ocean—verily indeed, such a person is lucky who has this kind of ear. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128 (sage Valmiki tells this wisdom to Lord Ram when the latter asked the sage to tell him the places where he is expected to live).

Refer also to: Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 126 where Lord Shiva tells Parvati that “hearing of Lord Ram’s story helps one to free one’s self and his soul from the trap symbolized by this mortal world of delusions and transmigration that tie a creature down”. And of course, one can hear something with the ‘ears’ only.]

नयनन्हि संत दरस नहिं देखा । लोचन मोरपंख कर लेखा ॥ ३ ॥

ते सिर कटु तुंबरि समतूला । जे न नमत हरि गुर पद मूला ॥ ४ ॥

nayanānhi santa darasa nahim dēkhā. lōcana mōrapaṅkha kara lēkhā. 3.
tē sira kaṭu tumbari samatūlā. jē na namata hari gura pada mūlā. 4.

Those people whose eyes have not had the good luck to be blessed by the sight of saints are nothing more than the false eyes found on the tail of a peacock¹. (3)

Those unfortunate heads which do not bow before Lord God and one's Guru (teacher, preceptor and guide) are no better than bitter pumpkins². (4)

[Note—¹A peacock's tail has a colourful design marked in the center of it that is called the 'eye of the peacock's tail'; but it does not see anything, and is merely a decorative addition to the bird's plume. Likewise, eyes that are not fortunate to see saints and feel blessed by this sight are worthless instruments of the body.

Then, what is the good use of the eye? Valmiki answers it: "Oh Lord Ram! You must dwell abidingly in the heart of those people whose eyes derive immense pleasure in beholding your beauteous and divine form, and remains focused on it, just like the eyes of the bird known as Chatak that constantly looks up to the rain-bearing cloud to grant it nectar-like drops of water to quench its thirst." {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 128.}

To wit, the 'good use of the eye' is not to be attracted to worldly things and seek material pleasure, but to search for holy people, the saints referred to in this verse, who can show a person the correct way to live a happy life revolving around spiritualism and auspiciousness, a life of good conduct and morality that not only gives him abiding peace but also prepares him for deliverance from this world and its endless miseries.

In this context refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 127 where the good effect of company of saints is emphasized.

²An exactly similar idea is expressed by sage Valmiki to Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 129.]

जिन्ह हरिभगति हृदयँ नहिं आनी । जीवत सव समान तेइ प्रानी ॥ ५ ॥

जो नहिं करइ राम गुन गाना । जीह सो दादुर जीह समाना ॥ ६ ॥

jinha haribhagati hr̥dayam̐ nahim̐ ānī. jīvata sava samāna tē'i prānī. 5.
jō nahim̐ kara'i rāma guna gānā. jīha sō dādura jīha samānā. 6.

Those people who do not have the virtue of 'Bhakti' (devotion and affection for Lord God) in their hearts, the bodies of such people are no better than corpses¹. (5)

If the tongue does not use its abilities to speak to sing and praise Lord Ram's glories, holiness and divinity, then verily indeed, that tongue is no better than that of a frog (which does nothing else but catch flies and croak)². (6)

[Note—¹To wit, without having Bhakti for Lord God, a person's life is worthless. Those people who allow themselves to remain engrossed in worldly affairs, without bothering to take care of their spiritual interests, they are dumb and good for nothing just like a dead body that is of no use to anyone.

In this context we can refer to what Angad told Ravana in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 31. Angad says, inter alia, that: "Those who are opposed to Lord Vishnu (the Supreme Being) as well as the

scriptures and saintly people, those who are interested only in caring for their gross mortal bodies and gratification of their sense organs, those who are under the grip of passions and lust and greed, those who are extremely old and always sick, those who are exceptionally poor and deprived of even the basic needs of life, those who are a mine of vices and all sorts of evils—verily indeed, their life is no better than hell, and if they live in this world they live just like a corpse does.”

The idea behind comparing such persons to dead bodies is that their life has been spent in vain, and just like a corpse that serves no good to the society and is better disposed of as soon as possible, lest it would rot and spread a nasty stink all around it, it is better for a wise person to move away from the company of those who have neither any spiritual bent of mind nor any love for Lord God, for keeping company with people who are opposed to Lord God would have a negative and corrupting effect on a good person’s own psyche, and pollute his inner self in the long run.

The learned sage Kaagbhusund told Garud: “There is no better form of body that the soul of a creature can have than that of a human being, and if one does not develop Bhakti for Lord Ram inspite of acquiring this human body, and instead remains engrossed in worldly affairs and gratification of sense organs, then verily indeed such a creature is most unfortunate and an ill-fated, one who is doomed to live a miserable life and an existence like that of an animal. Such people are utter fools like those who throw away a priceless piece of gem and grab a worthless piece of glass in its place.” Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 121.

Refer also to sage Valmiki’s advice in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 131 where the sage tells Lord Ram: “Oh Lord, you must abide in the heart of those people who discard everything else in this world, such as wealth, relations, society, religious groups, family and kin etc. if they are not conducive to development of Bhakti and promote love for Lord God, and instead exclusively enshrine you in their hearts. To wit, whose hearts have place for nothing else but you, who have devotion and affection for you firmly established in their hearts to the exclusion of everything else—oh Lord, you must live there, for it is your holy abode.”

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 295, goddess Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, says in regard to Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram: “Lord Ram and his divine consort Sita live in the heart of Bharat (who loves them and is fully devoted to Lord Ram), say then, how can darkness (symbolizing all sorts of evil tendencies and taints of character) ever exist where there is the light of the sun? To wit, since Bharat has devotion for Lord Ram, it is not at all possible that negativities of any kind, such as greed for kingdom, selfishness, perversions, pretensions, deceit, falsehood, etc. can ever exist in the heart of Bharat.”

The idea is that a person who has the virtue of Bhakti for Lord God in his heart, his inner self is illuminated with the light of spiritualism just like a room is illuminated with a lighted lamp. In such a heart, there is no fear of gloom and darkness, there is no fear from fate and worrying about destiny—because a devotee is certain that his Lord God would take care of him.

The virtues and glories of Bhakti have been extolled in Ram Charit Manas at many places. For instance, we can cite Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 46 (as espoused by Lord Ram himself); (ii) Doha no. 78 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that

precede Doha no. 86; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84 (as expounded by sage Kaagbhusund).

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 128 where sage Valmiki reiterates exactly the same thing. The sage says: “Oh Lord, you must live in the purified heart of those who use their tongue to sing your glories, praise you, offer prayers to you, and pick gems of spiritual wisdom while discarding all other worthless clutter, much like a swan that can separate pearls from an assortment of gems.”

A frog has only two uses for its tongue: to croak, and to catch flies with it. The human tongue should not be allowed to go to such low levels as that of a frog by talking endlessly about worldly matters, and spending its entire life babbling and chattering and gossiping about worthless things, but finding no time to praise Lord Ram, or pronounce his holy name, or talk and discuss about spiritual matters that can give true peace and abiding happiness to the soul of the creature.]

कुलिस कठोर निठुर सोइ छाती । सुनि हरिचरित न जो हरषाती ॥ ७ ॥
गिरिजा सुनहु राम कै लीला । सुर हित दनुज बिमोहनसीला ॥ ८ ॥

kulisa kaṭhōra niṭhura sō'i chātī. suni haricarita na jō haraṣātī. 7.
giriajā sunahu rāma kai līlā. sura hita danuja bimōhanasīlā. 8.

That chest or bosom (here meaning the heart) of a person is to be regarded as extremely stern, emotionless and hard like the Bajra (kulisa; the hardest substance in existence) if it does not become thrilled and exhilarated by hearing the story of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram)¹. (7)

[Lord Shiva praised Parvati for her desire to hear the divine story of Lord Ram, telling her that those who wish to hear it are truly blessed. Therefore, she must now pay attention to the story of Lord Ram that he was about to narrate to her.]

Lord Shiva said, ‘Oh Girija (i.e. Parvati; the daughter of the king of mountains)! Now, listen to the sacred story of Lord Ram that narrates the Lord’s deeds and sports in this world. This story of the Lord gives joy to the gods (representing positive forces and holy souls in this creation), but it confounds the demons (representing negative forces and evil spirits of creation)².

[To wit, this mystical story of Lord Ram is beneficial for the Gods who represent holy souls as it grants blessedness and welfare to them, and on the other hand it deludes and confounds the Demons who represent evil souls as it completely bewilders them, mystifies their soul, and instills fear in their mind and heart.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 128 where sage Valmiki says: “Oh Lord! Those whose ears and hearts are never contented by hearing your holy stories just like the ocean that is never filled by so many rivers and streams falling into it continuously—you must live in the hearts of such pious people.”

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 where it is said that one should feel exhilarated and thrilled by hearing and narrating the divine stories of Lord Ram.

Sage Kaagbhusund says that those who do not like to hear the stories of Lord Ram are harming their own self and preventing their Atma from deriving eternal peace. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 53.

²Lord Vishnu came down to earth in the form of Lord Ram to grant fearlessness to gods and mother earth against the tyranny of the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187; (b) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; and (c) Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 10-11, and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 103, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 8-12 that precede Doha no. 110 (immediately after Ravana's death when the gods praised and thanked Lord Ram).

Verily, Lord Ram was the saviour and protector of pious souls, gods, saints, sages, ascetics, hermits etc., granting them joy, happiness, peace, solace, succour and hope, while those who were evil and sinful like the demons were scared of him, for the Lord eliminated them one by one so that peace-loving creatures of the world, the 'subjects of his kingdom', could live peacefully.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 127; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73.]

दो०. रामकथा सुरधेनु सम सेवत सब सुख दानि ।
सतसमाज सुरलोक सब को न सुनै अस जानि ॥ ११३ ॥

dōhā.

rāmakathā suradhēnu sama sēvata saba sukha dāni.
satasamāja suralōka saba kō na sunai asa jāni. 113.

The magnificent, glorious, divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram (rāmakathā) is like the all wish-filling cow of the gods known as Kaamdhenu, because it fulfils all the wishes of the devotees who serve it with faith and devotion.

In the same vein, the assembly of saints and pious people is equivalent to the abode of gods on earth. [It is in this assembly that the story of Ram Charit Manas is sung and explained; it is the community of saints where one would hear discussions on spiritual matters and discourses on Lord God.]²

Keeping this in mind, who would not love to serve it (i.e. enjoy the company of saints where the divine story of Lord Ram is narrated, spiritual discourses are held, and all doubts are removed)? (Doha no. 113)

[Note—¹The benefits of hearing the sacred story of Lord Ram have been enumerated at many places in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 53; (iii) Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede it; (iv) Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 130.

²Whereas it is extremely difficult to access and enjoy the environment of bliss and joy that prevails in the heaven where the gods live, its symbolic form can actually be

experienced right here on earth when one keeps the company of saints where the story of Lord Ram is recited, expounded, read and studied.

The glory of company of saints has been lauded in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45 (where Lord Ram has praised company of saints, saying that such company is sure to eliminate all form of sorrows associated with this mortal world and its miseries); (ii) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 121 where Kaagbhusund says that meeting there is no greater joy than meeting true saints.]

चौ०. रामकथा सुंदर कर तारी । संसय बिहग उड़ावनिहारी ॥ १ ॥

रामकथा कलि बिटप कुठारी । सादर सुनु गिरिराजकुमारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmakathā sundara kara tāri. sansaya bihaga uṛāvanihārī. 1.

rāmakathā kali biṭapa kuṭhārī. sādara sunu girirājakumārī. 2.

The ‘Ram Katha’ (meaning the sacred story that narrates the life, time and deeds of the Supreme Lord during his manifestation on earth as Lord Ram, the prince of Ayodhya) is like clapping together of the palms of the hands as it drives away all sorts of birds symbolising various spiritual delusions, miseries and doubts that cause immense bewilderments, consternation and perplexities in the heart and mind of a person (who is keen to find some source that would give him internal peace and happiness)¹.

[To wit, the magnificent, glorious, divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram (rāmakathā) is like the clapping of one’s hands which chases away birds symbolising doubts and confusions.] (1)

‘Ram Katha’ is like an axe that can chop off the huge and abominable tree representing all the miseries and torments associated with life in Kaliyug, the dark age of lack of spiritual peace and happiness, as well as uncertainty regarding one’s destiny².

[To wit, his wonderful and mystical story of Lord Ram acts as an axe by which one can chop-off the huge tree represented by Kaliyug.]

This being the case, oh daughter of the king of mountains (“girirājakumārī”; i.e. Parvati), listen to the narration of this divine, holy and sacred story of Lord Ram with full attention, respect, reverence, faith and belief³. (2)

[Note—¹In this analogy, recitation or narration of the ‘Ram Katha’ is like the clapping of the palms of the hands, and just like a farmer chases away myriad birds destroying his crop in the field by clapping loudly, the divine story of Lord Ram too eliminates all sorts of spiritual confusions and uneasiness that torment a person, thereby granting his soul abiding peace, comfort, solace and succour, as well as providing a hope for deliverance from the seemingly endless chain of miseries associated with the cycle of transmigration, assuring him of salvation and emancipation of his soul.

In the context of Lord Ram’s sacred story eliminating all delusions and spiritual uneasiness, refer especially to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 68 where we read that Garuda has told sage Kaagbhusund that after hearing this story all his delusions and confusions have vanished.

A similar idea is expressed by Parvati at the end of the narration by her husband Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

The mystical powers and glories of Lord Ram's sacred story known as 'Ram Charit Manas' have been extolled at numerous places in this holy book. For instance, refer to (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 32 (Tulsidas); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 52 (Lord Shiva to Parvati); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 53 (Parvati to Lord Shiva); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 64 (Garud to Kaagbhusund); (v) Doha no. 68 (Garud to Kaagbhusund); (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 123 (Kaagbhusund to Garud); (vii) Doha no. 126 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (Lord Shiva to Parvati); and (viii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 128—to Doha no. 129 (conversation between Lord Shiva and Parvati).

²The holy story of Lord Ram grants internal peace to its narrator, to its listener, as well as to the reader. Like a wood-cutter who is able to fell down even a huge tree if he has a good and sharpened axe in his hand, a devotee of Lord Ram and a wise person can also get rid of all sorts of internal uneasiness pertaining to his soul and the worry about his spiritual destiny if he listens to, reads and narrates this divine story that would act as a magic charm and a panacea for all his spiritual problems. It would stabilize his inner-self and give him internal peace and succour by removing all causes of his consternations and fears pertaining to this mortal gross world, and his fear of sinking in the choppy waters of this symbolic ocean represented by life in the dark age of Kaliyug just like a ship caught in a fierce storm fears of capsizing and sinking till the time it finds a lighthouse that directs it to a harbour where it can lay its anchor and lie at rest.

³It is important to listen to the story of Lord Ram keeping in mind Lord Shiva's advice. One must listen to it with due reverence, belief and faith; one must pay attention to it, and not feel bored by its narration. One must have faith in Lord Ram and be convinced of the Lord's divinity and holiness, because then the listener would listen to the Lord's story as something that is divine and holy and sacred, something that can help him out of his or her spiritual problems, something that can grant internal peace, happiness, stability, solace and succour. Otherwise it becomes an ordinary story, an imaginary tale that is full of fancies and contradictions, which skeptical people would tear apart at the drop of a hat with all sorts of arguments and logics in their zeal to punch holes in it and prove it incredulous and ridiculous.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 12; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 38; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46; (vi) Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 35 (Tulsidas); (vii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 47 (Yagyawalkya); (viii) Doha no. 124-b (Yagyawalkya to Bharadwaj); (b) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 95 (Kaagbhusund to Garud).]

राम नाम गुन चरित सुहाए । जनम करम अगनित श्रुति गाए ॥ ३ ॥

जथा अनंत राम भगवाना । तथा कथा कीरति गुन नाना ॥ ४ ॥

rāma nāma guna carita suhā'ē. janama karama aganita śruti gā'ē. 3.
jathā ananta rāma bhagavānā. tathā kathā kīrati guna nānā. 4.

The Vedas (śruti) have declared that Lord Ram is infinite and beyond measure and comprehension, and so are the Lord's many names, his countless virtues and glories, the countless mystical deeds done by the Lord in his different incarnations in different eras, so much so that they cannot be enumerated and listed exhaustively¹. (3)

Indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, just as Lord Ram is infinite and beyond measure and comprehension, so are the stories dedicated to him, and so are his glories and virtues (i.e. Lord Ram's virtues and glories are infinite and beyond comprehension)². (4)

[Note—¹This verse essentially says that Lord Ram, being the Supreme Being himself, as well as the cosmic Consciousness itself personified, is the One who has revealed himself in the form of this vast and infinite universe with its mind-boggling diversities and intellect-defying variations. Hence, it is impossible that the Lord be defined and comprehended. Each unit of this creation is a revelation of Brahm, the all-pervading and all-encompassing cosmic form of Lord Ram as pure Consciousness, and so therefore, it is impossible to count his names, virtues, glories and deeds which are as infinite and incomprehensible as the creation itself—because it is not possible to prepare a list all the units of creation as they are countless, and hence it is also not possible to comprehensively enumerate the virtues and glories of Lord Ram.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 23.

Meanwhile, the glories of Lord Ram's holy name have been extolled in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 22; (ii) Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28.

²A similar idea is expressed by Lord Shiva once again in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 17-24 that precede Doha no. 13 (prayer of the Vedas); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 52 (Lord Shiva's declaration); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 91 (sage Kaagbhusund's view).

All these verses say that both Lord Ram and his stories are infinite and beyond comprehension. Learned saints and illustrious sages describe them in accordance with their understanding, but they only say what they have understood, but there is much more that yet remains to be understood and narrated.]

तदपि जथा श्रुत जसि मति मोरी । कहिहउँ देखि प्रीति अति तोरी ॥ ५ ॥
उमा प्रसन्न तव सहज सुहाई । सुखद संतसंमत मोहि भाई ॥ ६ ॥

tadapi jathā śruta jasi mati mōrī. kahiha'um' dēkhi prīti ati tōrī. 5.
umā prasna tava sahaja suhāī. sukhada santasammata mōhi bhāī. 6.

[Lord Shiva continued—] ‘Yet, inspite of all the limitations in telling the story of Lord Ram fully and in a comprehensive way (as I have said herein above), I would still endeavour to narrate this glorious and sacred story to you because I find you have an affectionate interest in it and keen to hear it¹.

So let me tell you Lord Ram’s story in accordance to my understanding and wisdom, and also according to what I have heard of it myself². (5)

Oh Uma! Your query is polite and inherently free from deceit and skepticism; it is also a genuine desire to be enlightened about the mysteries of Lord Ram which even great sages and learned saints would welcome as it signifies a keen desire of a seeker to learn something about the Supreme Lord, a query which no wise teacher can ever refuse to answer. Besides this, it has given me joy too³. [So therefore, I am willing to narrate Lord Ram’s story to you.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 120-c; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 121; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 140 where Lord Shiva has asserted the same thing about Lord Ram’s story being infinite, and it being narrated by different narrators according to their understanding of it.

²Where has Lord Shiva heard this story? He has heard this story on two occasions at least as mentioned in Ram Charit Manas. One was from sage Agastya*, and the other was from the saintly crow Kaagbhusund#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, *Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 48; and #Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.}

Lord Ram’s story is infinite and varied because of the many manifestations of the Lord, as is clearly mentioned by Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 herein above; (ii) Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 140.

³A similar idea is expressed by Lord Shiva in precisely the same way in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 111 too.

Lord Shiva says Parvati’s query about Lord Ram and her eagerness to hear the Lord’s story would give Shiva joy as now he would have an opportunity to recall the holy story that he himself had first conceived in his Mana (heart and mind)*. This opportunity would also help Lord Shiva to revive the sacred memory of his revered Lord Ram. So obviously he welcomed it. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 35.}

एक बात नहिं मोहि सोहानी । जदपि मोह बस कहेहु भवानी ॥ ७ ॥

तुम्ह जो कहा राम कोउ आना । जेहि श्रुति गाव धरहिं मुनि ध्याना ॥ ८ ॥

ēka bāta nahim mōhi sōhānī. jadapi mōha basa kahēhu bhavānī. 7.
tumha jō kahā rāma kō'u ānā. jēhi śruti gāva dharahim muni dhyānā. 8.

[Lord Shiva expressed his displeasure with Parvati when he reprimanded her for questioning the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram as follows:-]

But however Uma, there is one thing which I don't like about your query, though you have said it out of your ignorance. (7)

[And what is it that Lord Shiva did not like about Parvati's question? Well, it is this:-]

I don't like your saying 'Is Lord Ram different from what the Vedas and great sages say of the Supreme Being'¹. (8)

[Note—¹Parvati has said this thing in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 109.

The question arises: inspite of expressing his displeasure with Parvati, why has Lord Shiva not become annoyed with her, and why does he say that her query is otherwise liked by him except for this little transgression and impertinence on her part?

The answer is this: Parvati has herself begged forgiveness and requested Lord Shiva not to get angry at her in the very beginning of her questioning him. She has honestly admitted that she has doubts and confusions, that she is not learned, that though she has some doubts yet she is free from the intensity of delusions that had effected her last time when she questioned Lord Shiva in her previous birth as Sati on the same subject. She politely tells Lord Shiva that inspite of these shortcomings, she has a genuine desire to learn the truth and become enlightened about Lord Ram, and that she can't find a better teacher than Shiva. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 108; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 109—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110.]

दो०. कहहिं सुनिहिं अस अधम नर ग्रसे जे मोह पिसाच ।
पाषंडी हरि पद बिमुख जानहिं झूठ न साच ॥ ११४ ॥

dōhā.

kahahim sunahim asa adhama nara grasē jē mōha pisāca.
pāṣaṇḍī hari pada bimukha jānahim jhūṭha na sāca. 114.

[Why was Lord Shiva dismayed by Parvati, and why did he not approve of her expressing her doubts about Lord Ram when she asked him to tell her the story of the Lord as she did in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 108 along with Chaupai nos. 5-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it? We read the answer in this Doha:-]

‘[Oh Parvati!] What you have said about Lord Ram (while asking me to tell you the Lord's sacred story) is insinuating, unwarranted, depraved, and wantonly deprecating in nature (for it shows you in extremely poor light).

Such evil, ignominious and blasphemous words (that question the authenticity, divinity, holiness and truth about Lord Ram, who the Vedas unequivocally assert is a

manifestation of the Supreme Being and an embodiment of pure cosmic Consciousness) are spoken and heard only by those who are vile and pervert by their inherent nature, who have no pangs of conscience when speaking such unwanted words, for they are lowly and morally corrupt, are under the influence of the devil¹ representing delusions and ignorance, are pervert, sinful and full of deceit, are opposed to Lord Hari (i.e. Lord God) as they are non-believers, agnostics and heretics, and are so dumb and ill-witted that they can't differentiate between the truth and falsehood.² (Doha no. 114)

[Note—¹How the Devil influences one's wisdom is hinted to in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 115; and Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 35.

²“Listen my dear Parvati”, quoth Lord Shiva with some dismay in his heart, “I understand that thine heart and soul are pure and immaculate, that thou hast no trace of ill-intention or skepticism when thou request me to tell thee the sacred story of Lord Ram, for it will not only benefit thee but would give me immense pleasure too, as well as would do good to the rest of the world. What pains me and surprises me is not that thou wish to hear the story of Lord Ram, but the reason which thee have put forward for hearing it—which unfortunately gives the impression that thou doubt the divinity, holiness and supremacy of Lord Ram as Lord God of this creation.

See, such words do not behoove thee as my wife, for thou hast been living with me for so long, and it immensely surprises me that this long association with me couldst have no effect on thee, and it couldn't remove thine delusions and ignorance that still cloud thy wisdom and intellect. Thou have thineself acknowledged that I meditate and contemplate on Lord Ram, and I use the Lord's holy name for doing Japa*. Do thou think I am a fool? Still, thou cast doubts on Lord Ram, and indirectly on my wisdom too for worshipping the Lord; how silly and foreboding a thought it is for thee to harbour in thine bosom, my dear Parvati, after being with me for so long! It's both disgusting and unbelievable for me that thee, my dear wife, wouldst have such lowly thoughts in thine heart at all. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.}

Nevertheless, I shall go ahead and narrate the divine story of Lord Ram to thee as it would do good to one and all, and also because thee hast already said that thou hast a sincere wish to hear the Lord's story, and thou hast requested me to forgive thee and not get angry with thee for thine temerity bordering on transgression of modesty and politeness in asking such ridiculous and untenable question as thou hast asked regarding the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram#. It is as ridiculous a question as asking someone in broad daylight if the sun has light in it! Anyhow, now listen attentively and with due reverence to what I am to narrate. {#Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 109.}

Lord Shiva outlines the characteristics of evil-minded and vile people who speak such nonsense about Lord Ram as hinted by Parvati, as a sort of warning to her not to repeat it again. Questioning the authenticity and divinity of the Lord, and uttering words that are unworthy for a sensible person to speak about Lord Ram, for such words are reprehensible for the conscience and mire the purity of the soul. {Refer to Doha no. 115 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow herein below.}

Later on, at the conclusion of his narration of Ram Charit Manas, Lord Shiva tells Parvati that he has told her the sacred story of Lord Ram as he found she has an

earnest desire to hear it, and then he outlines the character of people who ought not to be taught or told this holy story, as well as those who are eligible for it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 128 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

Earlier, poet Tulsidas, the saint who has authored the original written version of this divine story known as Ram Charit Manas in the vernacular that we are presently reading in English, has also outlined certain characters of people who are not entitled to hear or narrate it. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 39.}

चौ०. अग्य अकोबिद अंध अभागी । काई बिषय मुकुर मन लागी ॥ १ ॥

लंपट कपटी कुटिल बिसेषी । सपनेहुँ संतसभा नहिं देखी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

agya akōbida andha abhāgī. kāī biṣaya mukura mana lāgī. 1.

lampāṭa kapaṭī kuṭīla bisēṣī. sapanēhum̃ santasabhā nahim̃ dēkhī. 2.

[In the verse nos. 1-8 that follow, Lord Shiva outlines the characteristics of evil-minded and vile people who speak such nonsense about Lord Ram as hinted by Parvati, as a sort of warning to her not to repeat it again. Questioning the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram, and uttering words that are unworthy for a sensible person to speak about the Lord are reprehensible for the conscience, and mire the purity of the soul.]

[Lord Shiva warned Parvati—] ‘Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, those who are utter fools, ignorant and stupid, those who are so unfortunate that they are blind to the truth that is abundantly evident, those whose inner-self is smeared by a dark oily soot of worldly passions and desire for sense gratification, --- (1)

--- Those who are pervert, vile, pretentious, wicked and deceitful by nature, those who have never seen (i.e. never have had the chance to be in the) company of saintly people, even in their dreams¹ --- (2)

[Note—¹The importance of company of saints has been highlighted in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 3 (Tulsidas); (b) Kishkindha Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 17 (Tulsidas); (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram to Bharat and other citizens of Ayodhya); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 45 (Lord Ram to subjects of his kingdom); (v) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 61 (Lord Shiva to Garuda); and (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 128 (Lord Shiva to Parvati).]

कहहिं ते बेद असंमत बानी । जिन्ह केँ सूझ लाभु नहिं हानी ॥ ३ ॥

मुकुर मलिन अरु नयन बिहीना । राम रूप देखहिं किमि दीना ॥ ४ ॥

kahahim̄ tē bēda asammata bānī. jinha kēm̄ sūjha lābhu nahim̄ hānī. 3.
mukura malina aru nayana bihīnā. rāma rūpa dēkhahim̄ kimi dīnā. 4.

--- Those who are not aware of what is good and what is bad for them and their spiritual welfare, they are the ones who speak words that contradict the scriptures, and are blasphemous and sacrilegious in nature.

[To wit, only fools and depraved persons would cast aspersions on Lord Ram and doubt his divinity when all the Vedas and other scriptures unequivocally declare that the Lord is none but the Supreme Being himself in this form.] (3)

The mind and intellect of such pervert people are corrupted and tainted, and so, say, how can they see the truth of Lord Ram, for it is not possible to have a clear view of anything if one uses a scarred or tainted or stained glass through which to view it¹. (4)

[Note—¹One employs one's intellect and wisdom to see, analyse and understand the truth of anything in this world. So therefore, if the instrument of the mind that is employed for this purpose is corrupt, how can one properly see, correctly analyse and rightly understand the truth of anything. It is like the case of seeing the outside world through a window with glass panes that are dirty or stained or unclear for some or the other reason for this fault of the glass would obstruct a clear and un-interrupted view of the outside world to the viewer. For instance, if the glass pane is stained red, everything seen through it would be seen in a way that is conditioned by this colour.

Hence, people with a tainted intellect and corrupted wisdom aren't able to either see or understand the truth of Lord Ram inspite of the scriptures firmly affirming the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram as being a personification of the Supreme Being and an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness.

Lord Ram has himself endorsed a similar view in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 44.]

जिन्ह केँ अगुन न सगुन बिबेका । जल्पहिं कल्पित बचन अनेका ॥ ५ ॥
हरिमाया बस जगत भ्रमाहीं । तिन्हहि कहत कछु अघटित नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

jinha kēm̄ aguna na saguna bibēkā. jalpahim̄ kalpita bacana anēkā. 5.
harimāyā basa jagata bhramāhīm̄. tinahi kahata kachu aghaṭita nāhīm̄. 6.

Those who have no idea what is 'Saguna' and what is 'Nirguna' form of the Supreme Being¹—such people talk all sorts of imaginary things about the Lord that amount to rubbish and ignominy. (5)

Such people are caught in the whirlpool of delusions, for they keep on wondering endlessly in this world under the influence of Lord's Maya (i.e. the powerful force of creation that causes one to have delusions, and thereby get trapped in its ever-turning wheel)².* (6)

[Note—¹The word 'Sagnuna' means the form of the Lord that has visible attributes and characters. This form of the Lord God is the Lord's manifested form, such as the form of Lord Ram who appeared to be like any other human being, and since he had a physical body he also exhibited characteristics common to the gross human body.

On the other hand is the 'Nirguna' form of the Supreme Being. It is the form that has no discernible attributes, a form that is infinite, invisible, sublime, subtle and all-pervading. This form is called Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness itself.

But basically, there is no difference between these two forms; they are like the two sides of a coin, for they together complete the true picture of Lord Ram. To wit, from the perspective of the mortal world where ordinary creatures live, the Supreme Being lived in the form of Lord Ram, and from the perspective of the higher plane of existence he is nothing but cosmic Consciousness itself.

In this context of Saguna vis-à-vis Nirguna, Lord Shiva has himself removed all doubts in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 118.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 110; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-13 that precede Doha no. 111 where we read that sage Kaagbhusund had preferred to hear about the Saguna form of Lord Ram as it is easy to relate to, and easy to comprehend by the mind.

²Maya is a very powerful force in creation. Only true devotees of the Lord are free from its influences and tentacles. A person who is caught by Maya finds it difficult for himself to free from its clutches; only the grace of Lord Ram and devotion for him can deliver a person from it. Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.

Lord Ram has explained the concept of Maya elaborately to Laxman, his younger brother, in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 117; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 73 where sage Kaagbhusund narrates how a creature gets trapped in the wheel of delusions called Maya, and what are the various components of Maya.

*Sage Kaagbhusund says that those people who are under the grip of Maya are the ones who cast doubts and aspersions on Lord Ram, and they are the ones who are befuddled by and confused about the concept of Saguna and Nirguna. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 72; and (ii) Doha no. 73 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

बातुल भूत बिबस मतवारे । ते नहिं बोलहिं बचन बिचारे ॥ ७ ॥

जिन्ह कृत महामोह मद पाना । तिन्ह कर कहा करिअ नहिं काना ॥ ८ ॥

bātula bhūta bibasa matavārē. tē nahim bōlahim bacana bicārē. 7.

jinha kṛta mahāmōha mada pānā. tinha kara kahā kari'a nahim kānā. 8.

One should be warned to take care not to pay heed to the words spoken by those who are hallucinating and delirious under the influence of high fever as they utter incoherent words that amount to nothing but nonsense, and so do also those who are possessed by evil spirits, are mad, are deluded, and are under the influence of intoxicating drink.

Truly, a wise person in his right senses would not lend his ears to nonsensical words spoken by such people¹. (7-8)

[Note—¹A person suffering from high fever or is under the influence of an evil spirit would talk incoherently and blubber like a mad man in great agony. Any sensible person would simply neglect him. Likewise, those who cast aspersions on Lord Ram, who doubt the Lord's divinity, holiness and supremacy, are not to be paid attention to.

Kaagbhusund has categorically said a similar thing in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 73-a along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 28 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 122 where sage Kaagbhusund enumerates the various negative factors that torment the inner self of a creature and cause immense heart-burn to him, and how one can overcome them all by the grace of Lord Ram. To wit, if one falls prey to the temptations of listening to the garbage pouring out of the vent like mouth of evil people who question the very existence of Lord God, then only the Lord himself can save them and their unfortunate soul!

A similar idea as in the above paragraph has been reiterated by Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 73 also where he emphasizes how a man under worldly delusions gets caught in a trap of miseries and grief, and how he misinterprets even simplest of things that are evidently clear and obvious to others.]

सो०. अस निज हृदयँ बिचारि तजु संसय भजु राम पद ।

सुनु गिरिराज कुमारि भ्रम तम रबि कर बचन मम ॥ ११५ ॥

sōraṭhā.

asa nija hr̥dayam̃ bicāri taju sansaya bhaju rāma pada.

sunu girirāja kumāri bhrama tama rabi kara bacana mama. 115.

Oh Daughter of the King of Mountains (gīrirāja kumāri)! Consider what I have said to you and pay heed to my advice, and abandon all doubts and confusions regarding Lord Ram that you may have in your heart. Instead, be devoted to Lord Ram, worship him, and pay your obeisance to the Lord's holy feet.

Listen, my wise and enlightened words would be like the rays of the sun that would remove the darkness of doubts and delusions that cloud your inner-self.

[To wit, my discourse would enlighten you and eliminate all sorts of confusions about Lord Ram that have caused you so much bewilderment.]¹ (Sortha no. 115)

[Note—¹And indeed it was so, because we read that when Lord Shiva had concluded his discourse and told Parvati the whole story of Lord Ram, which we too are about to read, she was fully satisfied, and all her doubts and confusions were eliminated. She developed profound devotion for Lord Ram, and was convinced about the divinity and holiness of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.}

Lord Shiva's advice to Parvati is similar to what sage Vasistha has observed while talking with king Janak at Chitrakoot. The sage told the king that if a person has true knowledge, or 'Gyan', about anything, then his wisdom itself would act like the rays of the sun that makes the lotus flower bloom and open its petals. Verily indeed,

how can delusions and its attendant problems trouble a person who has affection for Lord Ram, wondered the sage. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 277.}

What Lord Shiva intends to tell Parvati here is that if she carefully listens to his narration of Lord Ram's sacred story known as 'Ram Charit Manas', she is sure to find peace of mind and feel blessed. Nay, not only that, but she would also develop an abiding devotion for Lord Ram and become his ardent worshipper. This is the reason why Lord Shiva included the discourse between the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and Garud in his own narrative before finally winding it up. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125.}

Shiva winds up his discourse by telling Parvati that a person who has affection for Lord Ram, who sincerely worships Lord Ram and has undiluted devotion for him—verily indeed, such a person is most fortunate and blessed in all possible ways; he is wise, erudite and well versed in the essence of the scriptures. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 127.}

Therefore, Lord Shiva advised Parvati, she ought not to have any misgivings regarding Lord Ram.]

चौ०. सगुनहि अगुनहि नहिं कछु भेदा । गावहिं मुनि पुरान बुध बेदा ॥ १ ॥

अगुन अरूप अलख अज जोई । भगत प्रेम बस सगुन सो होई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sagunahi agunahi nahim kachu bhēdā. gāvahim muni purāna budha bēdā. 1.
aguna arūpa alakha aja jōī. bhagata prēma basa saguna sō hōī. 2.

[Lord Shiva continued—] 'There is no fundamental difference between the two forms of Lord God (here referring to Lord Ram)—viz. the 'Saguna form' and the 'Nirguna form'¹. This is a well considered opinion of illustrious sages, Vedas (scriptures), and all others who are wise and enlightened². (1)

The Supreme Being who has no discernible qualities and attributes, who is formless and invisible, who has no birth as he is infinite and eternal, and is sublime and subtle, and whose essential form is cosmic Consciousness (i.e. a form that is known as Nirguna)—the same Lord God, out of affection for his devotees who too have affection for the Lord, as well as to oblige them, assumes a physical form that is visible, a form that has many attributes and characteristics common to all living beings who have a gross physical body that takes a birth, grows into adulthood, becomes old and finally die in this mortal world (i.e. a form that is called Saguna)³. (2)

[Note—¹What is 'Saguna' and 'Nirguna' forms of the Supreme Being? This question is answered immediately in verse no. 2 herein above. Essentially and etymologically, the word 'Saguna' means one having any kind of 'Guna', or quality and attribute, and 'Nirguna' means one that has no Guna.

²Lord Shiva makes this observation as a direct answer to Parvati's basic question pertaining to Lord Ram that she has asked him in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand,

Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 109.

³Kaagbhusund has reiterated the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72-a in very explicit terms.

In this context, we can cite Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 185. In these verses Lord Shiva advises mother earth, gods and sages who were searching the Supreme Being and wondering where to find him, that the Lord is accessible here and now if one has affection and devotion for him.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1, 3-7 that precede Doha no. 23; (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 12-13 that precede Doha no. 13; (c) Lanka Kand, (iii) Chanda line nos. 12-14 that precede Doha no. 113; and (d) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 2-11 that precede Doha no. 111.

It will be noted here that great sages and ascetics prefer the Saguna form of Lord Ram as compared to the Lord's Nirguna form, for the simple reason that it is much easier to relate to and meditate upon the Saguna form of the Lord as compared to the Nirguna form, as the latter form is not only very difficult to comprehend, but it is also too abstract and intractable to be made easily accessible to everyone.]

जो गुन रहित सगुन सोइ कैसें । जलु हिम उपल बिलग नहिं जैसें ॥ ३ ॥
जासु नाम भ्रम तिमिर पतंगा । तेहि किमि कहिअ बिमोह प्रसंगा ॥ ४ ॥

jō guna rahita saguna sō'i kaisēm. jalu hima upala bilaga nahim jaisēm. 3.
jāsu nāma bhrama timira patāngā. tēhi kimi kahi'a bimōha prasaṅgā. 4.

Verily indeed, the fact that an entity that is without attributes (Nirguna) can also exist simultaneously as an entity with attributes (as Saguna) is proved by taking the example of element called 'water' being inherently present in a ball of ice or a hail-stone¹. (3)

The Lord (i.e. Lord Ram) whose divine, holy and sacred Name is as powerful as the sun in its potential powers to eliminate darkness symbolising all sorts of spiritual delusions and dilemmas², say, how can that Lord ever have anything to do with Moha (delusions and dilemmas), how can he be influenced by Moha, how can Moha affect him³? (4)

[Note—¹If we analyse ice, snow or hail we would discover that 'water' is their essential ingredient, though of course in an invisible form, as ice, snow and hail all have a 'solid' form as opposed to the form of 'water' we are usually acquainted with in our day-to-day lives, i.e. as a 'liquid' which we drink and wash ourselves with, and which flows in rivers.

But a wise man will say that "ice, snow and hail are but different forms of the same element known as water as are the liquid we drink and wash with, and that which flows in the river".

The element called 'water', at the molecular level, is not visible to the eye, and neither has it any fixed physical shape or size, but this element is inherently present in all things made of water, of whatever shape they may be and contours they may have, such as ice, snow, hail, liquid, vapour, steam, mist, moisture, cloud etc., i.e. shapes

having different attributes and nomenclature. But all of them are essentially ‘water’ and nothing else.

Likewise, everything in creation, from the subtlest to the grossest, is a manifestation of the same Brahm, whose other name is the cosmic Consciousness. This cosmic Consciousness is called the ‘Parmatma’ or the Supreme Atma or the Supreme Being at the macrocosmic level of creation, and as the Atma of the individual creature, the living being, at the microcosmic level. So, obviously there is no fundamental difference between the two.

²The glory and divinity of Lord Ram’s sacred Name has been elaborately extolled in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28.

³A similar idea is expressed by sage Kaagbhusund to Garud in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 72.]

राम सच्चिदानंद दिनेसा । नहिं तहँ मोह निसा लवलेसा ॥ ५ ॥

सहज प्रकासरूप भगवाना । नहिं तहँ पुनि बिग्यान बिहाना ॥ ६ ॥

rāma saccidānanda dinēsā. nahim̐ taham̐ mōha nisā lavalēsā. 5.
sahaja prakāsarūpa bhagavānā. nahim̐ taham̐ puni bigyāna bihānā. 6.

Lord Ram is an embodiment of the virtues of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss combined into one divine entity (saccidānanda) that is as brilliant and self-illuminated as the Sun (dinēsā)¹.

This being the case, there is no question of darkness symbolizing the negative trait of Moha (worldly attachments, passions or desires arising out of delusions and ignorance of the Truth) ever having to do anything with Lord Ram². (5)

Lord Ram is inherently and eternally enlightened and self-illuminated (like the celestial sun), so there is no question of any light of a new day (representing new knowledge) dawning on his horizon (to make him majestic, well-known, divine, holy and supreme in this creation)³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50 where Lord Shiva has said the same thing in relation to Lord Ram while paying his respects to the Lord.

Other references that describe Lord Ram as “saccidānanda” are the following: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 50 (Sati wonders why Lord Shiva has used this honour for Lord Ram); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 47 (Lord Shiva); (iii) Doha no. 52-a (Parvati); (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 72 (sage Kaagbhusund); (v) Doha no. 68-b (Kaagbhusund); (vi) Doha no. 77 (Kaagbhusund).

The celestial sun is a self-illuminated body; it does not require anything else to make it shine. Rather, the rest of the world shines in the light of the sun.

Similarly, Lord Ram is an embodiment ‘Bliss’, pure ‘Consciousness’ and ‘Truth’ which are self-illuminated in the sense that there is no entity or element in creation that is superior to them, and these three elements combined are the

characteristic virtue of the Supreme Being which makes the Lord superior to all 'beings' or entities in creation.

Further, according to the metaphysical philosophy of the Upanishads, it is the 'Consciousness' that is the only Truth in creation, and a person who understands this universal fact and realizes that his own 'self' is also the same cosmic consciousness that drives the world and injects life into this creation, becomes blissful because no grief and worldly taints can ever affect such a wise, self-realised and enlightened person; he becomes an anchor for the rest of the society. His erudition, sagacity, knowledge, calmness, holiness, piety and divinity are virtually infectious and are like the rays of the sun, for they benefit the rest of the world, as anyone who comes in contact with such persons is sure to derive immense peace, happiness and glory by this association.

To wit, the grand virtues of Consciousness, Bliss and Truth, which are so characteristic of Lord Ram, would also have their positive and reinvigorating effect on all those who come in contact with the Lord, just like the case of the light of the sun that illuminates the whole world over which the sun shines.

²Wherever there is sun's light, there is no darkness of the night; the two can never exist simultaneously. Similarly, 'Moha', representing darkness, can have no existence in the presence of Lord Ram who is like the sun that automatically removes darkness.

³Taking the example of the sun and the earth, it is easy to understand what is being said here. The 'sun' has no night and day, as it is eternally self-illuminated, and therefore always lighted. On the other hand, the 'earth' has a night, after which the light of a new day dawns on its eastern horizon as the sun rises, because it has no light of its own but shines in the light of the sun.

Likewise, Lord Ram needs no light to illuminate him; he does not need anyone to bear witness for him, to certify his greatness and majesty, to praise him, glorify him and sing laurels in his honour to enable the Lord to be declared divine and holy and supreme in this creation, for these virtues belong to him by default.]

हरष बिषाद ग्यान अग्याना । जीव धर्म अहमिति अभिमाना ॥ ७ ॥

राम ब्रह्म व्यापक जग जाना । परमानंद परेस पुराना ॥ ८ ॥

haraṣa biṣāda gyāna agyānā. jīva dharmā ahamiti abhimānā. 7.

rāma brahma byāpaka jaga jānā. paramānanda parēsa purānā. 8.

There are certain characteristics that are common to all living beings who are born as mortals in this world—such as having the feeling of joy and grief (and getting affected by them), of being either wise, intelligent and skilled, or being stupid, dull and ignorant to a greater or lesser degree, and of having some kind of ego, arrogance, pride and a sense of self-righteousness in them. (7)

In sharp contrast to such mortal beings, it is well established and well known that Lord Ram is Brahm (the Supreme Being) himself personified, and therefore the Lord exhibits certain characters that are exclusive to Brahm alone, such as him being all-pervading and omnipresent in this creation, him being an embodiment of supreme bliss, beatitude and felicity, him being the Supreme Authority and the Lord God of

creation, and one who is worshipped, extolled and honoured by the ancient scriptures.
(8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva enlightens Parvati about the reality of Lord Ram, and advises her not to be misled by the latter's form as a human prince of Ayodhya. She will be well advised to understand that often what is seen is not the real truth like the case of water in a desert mirage, and that the real truth is often not visible like the case of the presence of the water element in a piece of ice or a bank of clouds in the sky.

This observation of Lord Shiva is aimed to answer Parvati's basic cause of confusion: that if Lord Ram was an ordinary human being, as the case apparently appears to be going by the Lord's deeds that mimic that of an ordinary man, then why did Lord Shiva bow his head reverentially before him as if Lord Ram was a revered deity worshipped by him; but on the other hand, if Lord Ram was indeed the Supreme Being who is supposed to be all-knowing and all-powerful, then why did he not know who had taken away his wife Sita, why did he grieve for her and wandered in the wilds searching for her like an ordinary man whose wife had been lost, and why did he have to wage a bloody war against her abductor, the demon king Ravana, with the help of an army of monkeys and bears to kill him and free her, because he could have done it easily by merely wishing to do so. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 109.}

What Lord Shiva has told Parvati in these verses finds a resonance in what the saintly crow Kaagbhusund told Garud in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 78, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 111. In these verses, sage Kaagbhusund has highlighted the difference between a mortal creature and the immortal Brahm represented by Lord Ram, yet emphasizing that if one were to analyse things deeply and understand the truth, one would conclude that there is no basic or elementary difference between the two, because while Brahm, the Supreme Being, represents cosmic Consciousness at the macrocosmic level of existence, the creature, the living being, represents the same Consciousness at the microcosmic level of creation.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 32 which says “wise and enlightened sages, who are well-versed in the essence of Brahm, practice equanimity, and they see no basic difference between any two entities in this creation as everything is a manifestation of one single entity known as Brahm representing cosmic Consciousness.” The following Doha no. 116 endorses this view.]

दो०. पुरुष प्रसिद्ध प्रकास निधि प्रगट परावर नाथ ।

रघुकुलमनि मम स्वामि सोइ कहि सिवै नायउ माथ ॥ ११६ ॥

dōhā.

puruṣa prasid'dha prakāsa nidhi pragaṭa parāvara nātha.

raghukulamani mama svāmi sō'i kahi sivam' nāya'u mātha. 116.

Lord Shiva finally bowed his head reverentially once again before Lord Ram and said, ‘Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, the Lord (Ram) who is famed and

honoured as the ancient Purush (the cosmic Male who is the Supreme Being and Father of creation, the Lord who has been lauded and applauded by using this term in the famous ‘Purush Sukta’, a hymn dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the Vedas), the Lord who is a fount of light as he is self-illuminated like the sun¹, the Lord who has revealed himself in all forms that the creation has taken, both the animate world as well as the inanimate world (and he is all-pervading in it)², and who is the Supreme Lord and Authority in this creation—it is the same Supreme Lord who took birth as a jewel (i.e. the most illustrious and exalted member) in the family of king Raghu³ whom I worship and adore as my Lord⁴.’# (Doha no. 116)

[Note--¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 116 herein above where this idea is reiterated.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116 herein above where this idea is similarly endorsed.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 188 where we read that the family of king Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, was an ancient family that was honoured even by the Vedas, ancient scriptures. And, in Doha nos. 191 and 192 we read that the Lord of creation took birth in this king’s household as Lord Ram.

⁴Lord Shiva addresses Paravati’s cause of confusion here by saying that Lord Ram whose sight had made him feel thrilled and tears of affection welling up in his eyes earlier*, an event that led to Sati being so much vexed and mystified that it led to her being abandoned by her husband Shiva, was none but the Supreme Being honoured by the Purans and Vedas, and was the same Lord whose eclectic virtues have been outlined in this Doha as well as in the verses preceding it. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 50}

So therefore now, she must set aside all doubts and confusions vis-à-vis Lord Ram, and pay attention and listen reverentially to the divine story of Lord Ram which he, i.e. Lord Shiva, was about to tell her.

#A similar theme is explained by sage Kaagbhusund to Garud elaborately in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72—to Doha no. 73.]

चौ०. निज भ्रम नहिं समुझहिं अग्यानी । प्रभु पर मोह धरहिं जड़ प्राणी ॥ १ ॥

जथा गगन घन पटल निहारी । झाँपेउ भानु कहहिं कुबिचारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nija bhrama nahim samujhahim agyānī. prabhu para mōha dharahim jaṛa prānī. 1.

jathā gagana ghana paṭala nihārī. jhāmpē'u bhānu kahahim kubicārī. 2.

Those who are fool and lack wisdom (as well as are haughty, arrogant, and too proud of themselves and their false sense of knowledge) will not accept their own error of

judgment and lack of correct understanding about Lord Ram, as a result of which they cast all sorts of ignorance-based aspersions on the Lord, on his divinity and holiness, attributing worldly characters and qualities on the Lord who is without any attributes¹. (1)

It is just like the case of a stupid person saying that the sun has lost its shine if a bank of dark clouds in the sky obstructs the light of the sun². (2)

[Note—¹The following verses of Ram Charit Manas also reflect the same idea: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 115 (words of Lord Shiva); and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2, 7-9 that precede Doha no. 73 (words of Kaagbhusund).

²A similar idea of a stupid man not being able to see the truth behind any event and making erroneous and absurd conclusions about it is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 73.

The sun has not lost its splendour even a wee whit, but it is the cloud that obstructs its light from reaching the earth. But a fool would not understand this obvious thing and say instead that the sun has lost its shine.

Similarly, fools and ignorant people say Lord Ram is not the Supreme Being but an ordinary man, because when they hear the Lord's story they learn that the Lord acted and behaved like an ordinary man. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 93.

These people do not have deep understanding of anything; they can't see the subtle truth that is hidden behind a veil of external appearances that are misleading, and their intellect is of such a low grade that they can't peer behind the curtain to analyse the events and put them in the correct perspective, nor are able to do some research work to find out the cause of any event.

To wit, people of low intelligence are unable to understand that it was the Supreme Being himself who had manifested as Lord Ram in order to fulfill certain obligations that constrained him to become a human being. They don't realise that there were some compelling situations that had obliged the Supreme Being to assume a human form for a while, and that once the Lord became a human being, he acted his role to perfection, for one ought to remember that the Supreme Being is 'supreme and perfect' in all respects, and this includes acting out his role as a human being in a perfect way, without any shortcoming in the act, like a skilled actor is expected to do while he is acting on stage. Verily, a skilled actor is one who assumes the personality he is expected to portray on stage, and as long as he is on the stage and acting out his assigned role, he would forget who he actually is in real life, becoming a changed man while carrying out his assigned role.]

चितव जो लोचन अंगुलि लाएँ । प्रगट जुगल ससि तेहि के भाएँ ॥ ३ ॥
उमा राम बिषइक अस मोहा । नभ तम धूम धूरि जिमि सोहा ॥ ४ ॥

citava jō lōcana aṅguli lā'ēm̃. pragaṭa jugala sasi tēhi kē bhā'ēm̃. 3.
umā rāma biṣa'ika asa mōhā. nabha tama dhūma dhūri jimī sōhā. 4.

If one holds a finger very close to one's eye and sees the moon, the latter would appear to be cleaved into two halves¹. (3)

[Lord Shiva said—] Oh Uma! Attributing worldly taints and assigning falsehoods to Lord Ram and casting so many aspersions on him are like attributing the sky, which is actually free from any impurity, with factors that question its purity, such as it having darkness, smoke or dust². (4)

[Note—¹But obviously this is not the case as it is simply a case of optical illusion, because the disc of the moon is one single whole, and not sliced into two halves as it erroneously appears to be. Likewise, if one is deluded and not aware of the truth, if one lacks proper wisdom, proper intellect and a proper sense of judgment, one would fail to interpret things and events correctly, they would appear distorted to him, and as a consequence he is unable to arrive at a right conclusion.

This example of a person believing that the moon is cleaved into two parts, and not realizing that this distorted view of the moon is no fault of the moon but is due to his own fault of looking at it with his fingers held close to the eye, is used here to explain how a deluded and ignorant person would attribute so many worldly faults to Lord Ram without realizing that it his own folly, his own stupidity, his own lack of proper judgment and understanding that has created this distorted view of the Lord, making the person question the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram, and harbouring doubts about the Lord's authenticity.

To wit, the true nature and identity of Lord Ram as the Supreme Being is not understood by a person if he looks at the Lord with a pre-conceived notion and distorted vision, with his mind corrupted, and its instrument called the intellect, which analyses things for the person and guides the mind, being tuned only to think negatively and perceive the negative side of everything.

Instead, it would be better for a person to analyse and understanding things judiciously and with the correct perspective, for then alone all falsehoods and ill-conceived notions about Lord Ram would be eliminated.

²The sky is pristine pure and free from any sort of corruption that can be said to be its inherent or natural character. But many external factors impinge on the sky's natural cleanliness and purity, thereby polluting it and giving a distorted view of it to the viewer.

For example, the sky has no light of its own, and neither is it dark; it is colourless. It is the light of the sun which makes it look blue or other shades of colour during the day, and the absence of sunlight makes the sky look dark in the night.

Similarly, if there is smoke and dust in the sky one would say that the sky is smoky or dusty, or that there is a smog in the sky which makes visibility poor, but this is obviously an erroneous statement as it gives a false description of the sky, for it imposes some attributes on the sky which it does not actually possess.

To wit, the sky is neither 'dark', nor 'smoky' or 'dusty' or has any smog in it; it is pristine clean and without any specific attributes that would characterize it. This fact is witnessed by astronauts who go out into space, for then they can witness for themselves that what is called the 'sky' is nothing but endless emptiness, it is nothing but a vast and endless element consisting of nothingness, a sort of vacuum with no gravity, where everything in physical creation floats.

So to say, for example, that the sky is bright during the day and dark in the night, or that it is foggy or smoggy or dusty on a particular day, is a wrong description

of the true character of the sky. The wise man would say instead that the sky has no colour, it has no light and therefore no darkness, and that it is pristine clean, although others would see it dark in the night, bright in the day, dusty during a dust-storm, and smoggy due to atmospheric pollution.

These two analogies of verse nos. 3 and 4 are employed here to stress one simple fact that it would be erroneous to say that Lord Ram was a human being just because he acted and behaved like a human being, because such conclusion about the Lord is not based on facts, but it is an error of understanding and faulty judgment. This is already said in Chaupai line no. 1 herein above.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Sortha no. 126—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 127; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72.]

बिषय करन सुर जीव समेता । सकल एक तें एक सचेता ॥ ५ ॥
सब कर परम प्रकासक जोई । राम अनादि अवधपति सोई ॥ ६ ॥

biṣaya karana sura jīva samētā. sakala ēka tēm ēka sacētā. 5.
saba kara parama prakāsaka jōī. rāma anādi avadhapati sōī. 6.

The objects of the senses, the sense organs themselves, the deities that preside over these sense organs and govern them, and the Jiva (the living being)—these four aspects of the world are like links in a chain, each related to and depending on the other to have any meaningful existence and remain active¹. (5)

But there is a Supreme Authority above all of them that governs and illuminates them all (just like the celestial sun that illuminates everything else below). This Supreme Authority is called Consciousness that illuminates all life in this creation², and it is this Supreme Consciousness that has manifested itself in the form of Lord Ram, the King of Ayodhya³. (6)

[Note—¹The Jiva, the living being, has two aspects—one is its gross body, and the other is its subtle body. The gross body has various sense organs with which the Jiva perceives the world and its objects, and interacts with them. The subtle body of the Jiva consists of its Atma, the consciousness that resides in the gross body and governs it from within. If there is no consciousness, the gross body is dead.

To understand the phenomenon of the world and how the Jiva is related to it, and then who controls the entire setup, we have to start from the bottom and move upwards like one would ascend a pyramid. The material world consists of basically five types of objects that are directly related to their respective sense organs in the gross body of the Jiva.

For example, the sense organ known as the ‘eye’ is related to the function of seeing that makes the Jiva aware of the existence of the physical world and the charm of its attractive objects; this lures the Jiva towards the world. The organ of the ‘ear’ enables the Jiva to hear about the charms of the world and its attractive objects, further enhancing his attachment and attraction for the world. The organ of the ‘nose’ then helps the Jiva to smell the enticing fragrance of the objects of the world, which is the Jiva’s first close encounter with the physical objects at a personal level. The organ of the ‘tongue’ enables the Jiva to test the objects of the world by tasting their sweetness, an experience that reinforces the Jiva’s attachment with the charms of the

objects of the world. And finally, the organ of the 'skin' makes him actually touch and feel the excitement and titillation of arousal that the object, which had already managed to attract him by its charming view, smell and taste, can give him. So now the Jiva gets attached with the objects of the world.

In this cosmic play, the five sense organs of perception (eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) and five of action (hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) work in tandem to relate the Jiva to the material world and its objects, each sense organ responding to its corresponding sense objects in the world. But this relationship is at the level of the gross body of the Jiva and the gross material world.

What makes the gross body of the Jiva alive; what motivates it to do or not do anything; what factor is that which injects actual life into the otherwise inane and lifeless gross body of the Jiva? This unseen and subtle factor is known as 'pure consciousness' that resides in the gross body of the Jiva and drives it from within. It's like the case of an engine that drives a car; the body of the car is visible and recognized as the identity of the car, with its particular model, a specific colour etc., but the engine is hidden within the car and is invisible. The car is worthless and immobile without the engine, and the engine has no use if there is no car. In this analogy, the Jiva is the car, the Jiva's gross body and its organs are the many components of the car, and the consciousness is the engine that drives the car.

Any given thing in this world has its value and importance only because the Jiva thinks it to be useful, and the Jiva becomes aware of the thing and its usefulness only via the medium of organs of perception. Once attracted to it, the Jiva endeavours to access it, acquire it, use it, and dispose of it.

Now, each sense organ (of perception and action) has its own deity, i.e. a force that controls it and enables it to perform its designated function. According to the Upanishads, there are certain vital winds in the creature's body that control its various functions. These vital winds are called the different Prans, or life forces present inside the gross body of a creature, and since these Prans control the functioning of the sense organs, they are called the symbolic deities of the sense organs upon which they exercise their control or influence.

These 'Prans' are representatives of the 'consciousness' present in the body of a living being; they are the driving forces that makes the Jiva 'alive'.

The Atharva Veda's Par Brahm Upanishad, verse no. 2 explicitly asserts that Pran is a synonym for 'consciousness', and therefore for the Atma which is also the pure consciousness residing in the gross body of the living being. Since the cosmic aspect of the 'consciousness' is known as Brahm, Pran is also synonym for Brahm.

The Atharva Veda's Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad, verse nos. 47/1, 3, 5, 7, 9 assert that the various vital winds are revelations of Brahm.

According to Subalo-panishad, Canto 9, verse no. 1-14 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, there are fourteen vital winds called Prans present in the body. It lists their functions as follows:

(i) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (ii) Apan—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (iii) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (iv) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (v) Samaan—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5); (vi) Vairambh—this controls speech (verse 6); (vii) Mukhya—this controls the hands (verse 7); (viii) Antarayaam—this controls the legs (verse 8); (ix) Prabhanjan—this controls the anus (verse 9); (x) Kurma—this controls the genitals (verse 10); (xi) Shyen—this controls the Mana or the thoughts and emotions (verse 11); (xii) Krishna—this controls the discrimination, intellect and wisdom (verse 12); (xiii)

Shwet—this controls Ahankar or the notion of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity etc. (verse 13); (xiv) Naag—this controls the ‘Chitta’ or the faculty of concentration, memory, sub-conscious, reasoning (verse 14).

The Purans however have assigned different names to the deities who control the different sense organs, both of perception and action.

(A) Deities of the organs of perception of the gross body of a creature are the following:

(i) ‘Disha’—(the God that rules over the directions). This is the deity of the organ of hearing, the ear, and it controls perception of sound.

(ii) ‘Pawan’—(the Wind God). This is the deity of the organ of touch and feeling, the skin, and it controls perception of feeling anything when it is touched.

(iii) ‘Surya’—(the Sun God). This is the deity of the organ of seeing, the eye, and it controls perception of sight.

(iv) ‘Varun’—(the Water God). This is the deity of the organ of taste, the tongue, and it controls perception of taste.

(v) ‘Ashwini Kumar’—(the God of medicinal herbs). This is the deity of the organ of smell, the nose, and it controls perception of smell.

(B) The Deities of the organs of action of the gross body of a creature are the following:

(i) ‘Agni’—(the Fire God). This is the deity of the organ of speaking and eating, the mouth, and it controls the ability to speak and eat.

(ii) ‘Indra’—(the King of Gods). This is the deity of the organ that accepts or holds anything, the hand, and it controls the ability to accept and hold anything.

(iii) ‘Upendra’—(a form of Lord Vishnu; the grosser form of the second of the Trinity Gods). This is the deity of the organ of walking and physical movement, the leg, and it controls mobility, the ability to move and go anywhere.

(iv) ‘Yama or Mitra’—(the Wind God). This is the deity of the organ of excretion, the rectum and bladder, and it controls the ability to pass stool and urine, the waste product of the body.

(v) ‘Prajapati’—(the God of Creation). This is the deity of the organ of procreation, the genitals, and it controls the ability to reproduce.

(C) The Deities that control the subtle body of a creature are the following:

(i) ‘Chandrama’—(the Moon God). This is the deity of the Mana, the heart and its emotions, and it controls emotions and sentiments of a creature.

(ii) ‘Brahma’—(the Patriarch of creation; the God who created the Vedas, the primary scriptures; the first of the Trinity Gods). This is the deity of Buddhi, the subtle organ called the mind, and it controls the intellect and the ability to think and analyse, the virtues of wisdom and erudition.

(iii) ‘Vishnu, or Achut’—(Lord Vishnu, the subtler form of the second God of the Trinity). This is the deity of ‘Chitta’, the sub-conscious mind.

(iv) ‘Ahankar’—(Rudra, the angry form of Lord Shiva, the third God of the Trinity). This is the deity that controls ego and pride. Since these create ‘anger’, it is said that the deity that controls Ahankar is Rudra, the angry form of Shiva.

²These above mentioned deities that govern the functioning of the different components or organs of the body of a Jiva are themselves controlled by a superior Authority known as the Atma of the Jiva. This Atma is pure consciousness; and as the name itself suggests, it is the only vital force present inside the body of a Jiva that

injects 'life' and 'consciousness' into it, making the otherwise lifeless and inane body alive and active.

The Atma and the living being called the Jiva are microcosmic manifestations of the pure Consciousness that is called the Parmatma and the Supreme Being respectively at the macrocosmic level of creation.

The creation works as a result of the combined effort of all its components working in coordination with each other while performing their assigned duties independently too. If one component fails, the system would grind to a halt. The overall Authority that controls the whole setup of existence known as the 'creation' or the 'universe' is the Supreme Being, who in turn is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness. In the context of our reading of the Ramayana, Lord Ram is the Supreme Being referred to here, and therefore he is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness itself.

When the macrocosmic, all-pervading and subtle form of Lord Ram reveals its self in this mortal, gross world he becomes a 'Jiva', the living being, which in effect is a microcosmic form of the same cosmic Divinity.

It is like the case of an Emperor under whom there are many Kings and Knights, and each appoints his own ministers and magistrates, so that as a whole, the vast dominion of the Emperor can run smoothly. These magistrates, ministers, knights and kings derive their power and authority from the Emperor; they all serve him. Likewise, all the deities named herein above are under the overall supervision and control of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being.

Further, the Emperor would normally remain neutral and detached from the day-to-day administration of his extended empire, but in cases of emergencies when he finds that things are going out of control, he would intervene personally to set things right. This is the case with Lord Ram too. He is the Supreme Authority of this creation, and the many deities referred herein above are appointed by him to look after the functioning of the creation, both at the macrocosmic level as well as at the microcosmic level. Should anything go awry, and should the equilibrium of peace and harmony are right working get disturbed in this world, the Lord steps out of his Heavenly Abode like an Emperor coming out of his Palace, and personally take charge of the process of restoring the equilibrium and bringing things back in order. This phenomenon is interpreted as an "Avataar" or incarnation of the Supreme Being. Once the job is done, the Emperor goes back inside his palace; likewise, once the objective of assuming a human form is achieved, Lord Ram goes back to his heavenly abode to resume his original form known as Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 186 –to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 186; (ii) Doha no. 190—to Doha no. 191.]

जगत प्रकास्य प्रकासक रामू । मायाधीस ग्यान गुन धामू ॥ ७ ॥
जासु सत्यता तें जड़ माया । भास सत्य इव मोह सहाया ॥ ८ ॥

jagata prakāśya prakāśaka rāmū. māyādhīsa gyāna guna dhāmū. 7.
jāsu satyatā tēm̄ jaṛa māyā. bhāsa satya iva mōha sahāyā. 8.

This gross, mortal, material world is illuminated (i.e. it is in existence) by the light shone by Lord Ram (in the form of consciousness)¹.

Indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, Lord Ram is the Lord of Maya (mysteries of creation; delusions), an embodiment gnosis and a personified form of knowledge, and a treasury of all virtues and wisdom. (7)

It is a truth that the material world that is primarily lifeless and inane, a world and its objects that are of no importance worth the name, assumes life and becomes valuable and important due to the Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers which is a great mystery of creation)². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram, the Supreme Being, keeps the world alive by injecting consciousness into it. This 'consciousness' is like the celestial sun whose light and energy keeps the world illuminated and alive. Just as all life on the planet earth would vanish in the absence of sun and its light, everything in creation would vanish if there was no consciousness in it. A dead body sees, hears, feels, tastes and smells nothing, nor would it have any attraction or repulsion for anything. It is the 'Consciousness' that makes the world alive and exhibit these characters. And who governs 'Consciousness'? It is Lord Ram as the Supreme Being who has exclusive authority over it.

²As seen above, the gross world has no life of its own; it is the 'Consciousness' that injects life in it. It is a strange mystery of creation that what is essentially lifeless and worthless appears to be alive and valuable, and why this strange phenomenon takes place is explained with the help of Maya of the Lord. 'Maya' is the delusion-creating powers of Lord Ram, and it is this powerful tool that gives the impression of life and value to things that in reality have just the opposite character.

It is like a puppeteer making a wooden and lifeless puppet dance and perform so many tricks that give the impression that the puppet actually has a life of its own, which in reality it doesn't.

Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 71; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 72.]

दो०. रजत सीप महँ भास जिमि जथा भानु कर बारि ।
जदपि मृषा तिहुँ काल सोइ भ्रम न सकइ कोउ टारि ॥ ११७ ॥

dōhā.

rajata sīpa mahum̐ bhāsa jimi jathā bhānu kara bāri.
jadapi mṛṣā tihum̐ kāla sō'i bhrama na saka'i kō'u ṭāri. 117.

Just like the case of sunlight creating a false impression of the inner side of an oyster shell being covered with a film of silver (because it shines with a silvery glaze), and of water being present on dry hot sand in a desert (because of an optical illusion called the mirage), both of which phenomena being mysteries of Nature and an unavoidable physical fact of creation, so is also the case with illusions created by the Lord's Maya which is an integral part of creation, and therefore can't be delineated and separated from it. [To wit, no one can avoid Maya absolutely; the trick is to be aware of its presence and powers, and be wary of it.] (Doha no. 117)

[Note—This Doha is an extension of Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, for it explains the meaning of that Chaupai with these two examples of the shell giving an impression of being coated with silver, and of water being present in a desert.

Everyone knows and understands that the two examples given in this Doha are illusions caused by some or the other principle of physics, yet no one can do away with them altogether; no one can prevent the shell from shining like silver or water appearing in a mirage formed in hot desert. Such appearances are an integral part of physical world and can't be avoided. A fool would fall in this trap and believe that the shell has silver and there is water in a distance in a hot desert; so this fool would scrape the shell to take out the silver, and run after water in a desert mirage. A wise man, on the other hand, would know that there is no such thing in reality, and so he will pay no attention to it.

Similarly, ignorant people fall in the trap laid by Maya, thinking that the world is real, and its myriad charms are real too. A wise and enlightened man would see through the trick and keep himself aloof.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 112.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि जग हरि आश्रित रहई । जदपि असत्य देत दुख अहई ॥ १ ॥

जौं सपनें सिर काटै कोई । बिनु जागें न दूरि दुख होई ॥ २ ॥

जासु कृपाँ अस भ्रम मिटि जाई । गिरिजा सोइ कृपाल रघुराई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi jaga hari āsrita rahaī. jadapi asatya dēta dukha ahaī. 1.

jauṁ sapanēṁ sira kāṭai kōī. binu jāgēṁ na dūri dukha hōī. 2.

jāsu kṛpām̐ asa bhrama miṭi jāī. girijā sō'i kṛpāla raghurāī. 3.

In this way (i.e. by being deluded and being ignorant of the reality behind existence in this gross material world) the creatures who live in this physical world of matter remain miserable and perpetually unhappy, inspite of the fact that they and the world are dependent on Lord Hari (the Supreme Being representing cosmic Consciousness) for survival¹. (1)

[This verse explains the meaning and import of verse no. 1.] If someone is asleep and dreams that his head has been cut off, he will be agitated and restless, and this grief and torment of having one's head chopped off would not cease till the person wakes up². (2)

And it is the grace of Lord Ram, the manifested form of the Supreme Being and a personified form of Consciousness, that such delusions about the gross mortal world can be eliminated³. (3)

[Note—¹The basic idea here in simple terms is this: The primary force that injects and governs life in this creation is called 'cosmic Consciousness', and it is this 'consciousness' which makes the world alive, both the inanimate as well as the animate, both at the gross level of the sense objects of the material world, and at the

subtle level of the senses of perception of a living being. If there was no 'consciousness' the body of the living being would be lifeless, and anything that is devoid of life perceives nothing, and therefore the world would lose all meaning and relevance for the creature.

This 'Consciousness' is represented by Lord Hari. To wit, the Supreme Being is an embodiment, a personified form, of cosmic Consciousness. Therefore, everything that has life depends directly or indirectly on Lord Hari.

Two previous examples of silver appearing in the shell and water in the desert mirage clearly show that both these phenomena depends on the sunlight, because without the sun's light neither would the inner surface of the shell shine to give the impression of a silver film, nor would one see water in the desert. Though everyone who has even rudimentary knowledge of science would understand that both these sights are illusions and not realities, yet they appear to be so true that everyone is misled by them.

So is the case with this world: every wise person who has studied the scriptures knows that this world is false and illusionary, it is a creation of the mind, yet everyone believes it to be true, and this erroneous belief makes a creature get affected by the characters and features of this world, making him either sorrowful or joyful according to how he interacts with the world and how he treats the objects of the senses in this world. If he remains detached and neutral, he is happy and peaceful; if he allows himself to be influenced by them, he is perpetually restless and unhappy.

²To wit, as long as the person continues to dream in his sleep that his head has been cut off by his enemy, he would remain agitated and restless. But as soon as he wakes up from his dream, this false agitation would immediately vanish. So therefore, the only way and the only remedy for overcoming the grief and torment associated with having one's head chopped off in a dream is to wake up from it.

Similarly, the only way to get rid of worldly miseries and torments is to wake up from delusions and overcome ignorance about the world.

³Sage Kaagbhusund has advised Garud an identical thing in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 79.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 41 where Lord Ram has said that Maya (delusions) creates so many problems because it produces illusions about the reality, making what is true appear to be false, and what is false appear to be true.]

आदि अंत कोउ जासु न पावा । मति अनुमानि निगम अस गावा ॥ ४ ॥

बिनु पद चलइ सुनइ बिनु काना । कर बिनु करम करइ बिधि नाना ॥ ५ ॥

आनन रहित सकल रस भोगी । बिनु बानी बकता बड़ जोगी ॥ ६ ॥

ādi anta kō'u jāsu na pāvā. mati anumāni nigama asa gāvā. 4.

binu pada cala'i suna'i binu kānā. kara binu karama kara'i bidhi nānā. 5.

ānana rahita sakala rasa bhōgī. binu bānī bakatā baṛa jōgī. 6.

[The following verses describe the cosmic form of Lord Ram, the form that is all-pervading, omnipotent, omnipresent, invisible, non-dual, and supreme.]*

He (i.e. the cosmic form of Lord Ram as the Supreme Being) whose end or beginning no one can find or understand (because he is eternal and infinite), and whose glories and virtues have been narrated by the Vedas (the scriptures; the repository of all knowledge) according to their understanding (and yet they could not fully do so because of their limitation of understanding the Lord in entirety). (4)

He walks without having physical legs, hears without having physical ears, and does so many things without having a physical hand. [This refers to the pure consciousness that has no physical form of its own, but it walks, hears and does so many deeds through the medium of the body of the creature in which it lives as the latter's Atma.] (5)

He enjoys all sorts of tastes even without having a physical mouth of his own. He has no tongue of his own, but still is the greatest of orators in the world. [The idea of verse no. 5 above is extended here too. To wit, this consciousness has no physical mouth of its own, but it eats and drinks through the mouth of the creature. Similarly, though it has no tongue of its own, yet it is the greatest speaker by default in the guise of a wise person who is a great orator.] (6)

[Note—*Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 where Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, has described the cosmic form of Lord Ram.]

तन बिनु परस नयन बिनु देखा । ग्रहइ घन बिनु बास असेषा ॥ ७ ॥
असि सब भाँति अलौकिक करनी । महिमा जासु जाइ नहिं बरनी ॥ ८ ॥

tana binu parasa nayana binu dēkhā. graha'i ghrāna binu bāsa asēṣā. 7.
asi saba bhām̐ti alaukika karanī. mahimā jāsu jā'i nahim̐ baranī. 8.

He feels and touches without having a physical body; he sees without having a physical eye; he smells everything without having a physical nose. (7)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, the mysteries of the Lord (i.e. Lord Ram in his primary form as Brahm, the personified form of cosmic Consciousness) are so strange, mystical and absolutely beyond comprehension that it is not possible to describe them. [And any attempt to do so only appears to be an exercise that would only scratch the surface of an divine entity that is infinite and defies understanding.]¹ (8)

[Note—¹The grand and mystical powers and abilities of Lord Ram mentioned in verse nos. 5-8 herein above clearly and unambiguously indicate that he is none but the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm' himself in a personified form, because only the latter has these supernatural abilities.

Brahm is a cosmic form of the supreme Consciousness that is the basis of all that exists in this creation. It is the subtlest form of life; its presence in the cosmos is

indicated by the vibrations that it produces in ether, vibrations that generate a sound form known as OM. The sound of ‘OM’ in the cosmos is the first manifestation of Consciousness, and therefore it is regarded as being synonymous with Brahm. All other forms evolve from this basic seed, which gradually expands and develops into a complex structure which took the form of this universe, both in its invisible form which is subtle, as well as its visible component that is gross.

Since the whole creation is a revelation of the cosmic Consciousness representing life in its primary and basic form, therefore all indicators of life, viz. seeing, talking, feeling, smelling, hearing etc., are actually manifestations of the same cosmic Consciousness operating at the microcosmic level of an individual creature through that individual’s gross physical body. By corollary therefore, what we know about Lord Ram doing this and that is actually a knowledge of the supreme cosmic Consciousness operating through the medium of the physical body of Lord Ram.

The difference between Lord Ram and other creatures who have a physical body is the level of self-realisation and enlightenment that they have, the depth of their understanding about the truth of their ‘self’, for whereas Lord Ram was an embodiment of the stellar virtues which made his Atma, his pure and true ‘self’, exalted and elevated and above the grossness of the surrounding world where he lived, making his ‘self’ equivalent to Brahm, for he was an embodiment of the virtues of Brahm, marking him out from the rest of the world, but other creatures are not so fortunate. This is also why Lord Ram is compared to the lotus flower—because this flower remains clean and pure inspite of the pollutions in the water of the pond where it grows.

Such are the Lord’s magical and mystical deeds that they defy comprehension and logic as they seem very strange, outlandish and superhuman to an un-initiated person who does not know the Truth of the Lord. To wit, Lord Ram’s primary form is the cosmic Consciousness that is at the core of all life in this creation, and therefore all visible activities indicative of life, such as to walk, hear, see, taste and feel anything in this world, are deemed to be done by Lord Ram in his primary form as cosmic Consciousness which is the almighty, omnipotent, all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent driving force of all forms of life in this creation, from the subtlest to the grossest, albeit in an invisible, unpretentious and quiet form. So therefore, by understanding this basic principle a wise man can arrive at the unknown and the invisible cosmic Consciousness by starting from what is known and visible in this conscious world; he can attain the supreme Brahm easily by starting with Lord Ram, the visible form of Brahm known to him, and gradually realize the Lord’s greatness, divinity and cosmic authority by understanding the Truth about him.

Refer also to one of Tulsidas’ other classic books on Lord Ram, known as ‘Vairagya Sandipani’, where in verse no. 3 magical powers of Lord Ram are mentioned, powers that are clear indications of the Lord’s primary cosmic form as the supreme Consciousness known as ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being who “hears without ears, sees without eyes, tastes without tongue, smells without nose, and feels without a skin”.]

दो०. जेहि इमि गावहिं बेद बुध जाहि धरहिं मुनि ध्यान ।

सोइ दसरथ सुत भगत हित कोसलपति भगवान ॥ ११८ ॥

dōhā.

jēhi imi gāvahim̄ bēda budha jāhi dharahim̄ muni dhyāna.
sō'i dasaratha suta bhagata hita kōsalapati bhagavāna. 118.

It is the same Lord God whose divine glories and infinite virtues have been sung endlessly and extolled by the Vedas and those who are wise and enlightened, who had taken birth as Lord Ram in the household of king Dasrath of the kingdom of Kaushal (Ayodhya). (Doha no. 118)

[Note—Lord Shiva answers Parvati's question 'who is Lord Ram'. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 108 and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 146; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 72-a.]

चौ०. कासीं मरत जंतु अवलोकी । जासु नाम बल करउँ बिसोकी ॥ १ ॥
सोइ प्रभु मोर चराचर स्वामी । रघुबर सब उर अंतरजामी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāsīm̄ marata jantu avalōkī. jāsu nāma bala kara'um̄ bisōkī. 1.
sō'i prabhu mōra carācara svāmī. raghubara saba ura antarajāmī. 2.

[Elaborating on the divinity, holiness and glory of Lord Ram, Lord Shiva further told Parvati—] 'When I behold a creature dying in Kashi (which is ancient name of the present-day holy city of Varanasi in Northern India, situated on the banks of river Ganges, and regarded as the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva), it is on the strength of his (Lord Ram's) holy name that I (Shiva) provide solace, peace and deliverance to the soul of the dying individual¹. (1)

It is the same Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) who is the supreme Lord of the entire world, both the animate as well as the inanimate world.

Verily indeed, the Lord resides in the inner-self of everyone in this creation (as his Atma, which is pure consciousness and the true identity of all individuals). The Lord knows the inner thoughts and emotions of everyone as he resides in the heart of all living beings, and is all-knowing, omniscient and omnipresent². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.

It is believed that Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Ram, i.e. "RAAM", in the ears of the dying person in Kashi, as a result of which the soul of the deceased attains deliverance, and the individual achieves emancipation and salvation.

Kashi or Varanasi is believed to be the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. According to the Ram Uttar-Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, (especially verse no. 4) it is said that Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Ram, known as the 'Tarak Mantra' (i.e. a divine formula that provides emancipation and salvation to the soul of a person so that he or she attains final liberation and deliverance from the cycle of birth and death in this world), in the ears of a dying person on the banks of river Ganges in

Kashi, thereby ensuring that the soul of this person finds its ultimate liberation and deliverance.

Gowami Tulsidas has praised the spiritual importance of Kashi as the place where Mukti (liberation and deliverance) of the creature is possible. Reference: (i) Dohawali, Doha no. 237; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119; and (iii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 22.

In the epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ of Goswami Tulsidas, Lord Shiva has himself said that he provides freedom from all sorts of sorrows, torements and miseries to those who die at ‘Kashi’ relying on the strength of the divine name of Lord Ram which empowers him to do this, and which itself is the holy formula that enables a creature attain its final liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation. Shiva asserts that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being (“Parmatma”) who is the Lord of the entire creation (“Charaachar Swami”), and is also the deity whom Shiva worships as his own Lord God. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 119.

Kashi is called ‘Avimukta Kshetra—a place which provides liberation and deliverance to the soul.

The reason why Kashi (Varanasi) is called the ‘Avimukta Kshetra’ has been elaborately explained in the Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 1 and Canto 4, verse nos. 1-16 (i.e. in the full Canto); and in Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11.

The symbolic location and the spiritual significance of Kashi (Varanasi) has been elaborately described in the Atharva Veda’s Bhasma Jabal Upanishad, Canto 2, paragraph nos. 4, 9, 11, 16-19, 22.

In the Bhasma Jabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 2, paragraph no. 11, Lord Shiva has himself told sage Jabal Bhusund that Kashi (Varanasi) is the Abhimukta Kshetra where those who reside get Mukti (liberation and deliverance). To quote—

“Canto 2, paragraph no. 11 = [This paragraph describes the glories of the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva known as Kashi.]

For those desirous of Mukti (liberation and deliverance), residing in the pilgrim city of Kashi (the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva) is equivalent to doing Tapa¹ (penances, austerities and other holy deeds requiring commitment, sufferance, hardships and steadfastness). It is known as the Avimukta Kshetra². I provide liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to all those who live there.

Hence, those desiring such spiritual benefits should not abandon Kashi. There is no better place for spiritual welfare other than Kashi known as Avimukta Kshetra.

Kashi has four important places at four corners. Inside this periphery is the central area, known as the ‘Anthaa Griha’. Inside this central area there are five important places. Amongst them, the shrine of Lord Shiva is the best and most holy.

To the east of this shrine is the symbolic abode of ‘Aishwarya’ (fame, majesty, glory, greatness, divine faculties, super-human powers, opulence, wealth, fortunes, grandeur etc.)

To the south of this shrine is the symbolic abode of ‘Vichaalan’ (factors that induce confusions, doubts, restlessness, agitation, flux, delusions, illusions, passions, attractions, attachments etc.).

To the west of this shrine is the symbolic abode of ‘Vairagya’ (renunciation, detachment, dispassion, neutrality, non-involvement etc.).

To the north of this shrine is the symbolic abode of ‘Gyan’ (truthful knowledge, enlightenment, realisation, erudition, wisdom etc.).

My (Shiva's) symbol or image known as 'Shiva Lingam' is established in this shrine. It has mystical qualities and eclectic virtues that reflect my glories, divinity and holiness. These qualities and virtues are as follows—

It is Anant (has no beginning or end, is infinite); it is Nirlipta (is not attached or attracted to anything or anyone); it is Avyaya (eternal, unchanging and imperishable; not to get diminished or degraded); it is Anaadi-Anant (has no beginning or end; is eternal and infinite); it is Ashesha (it leaves no remainder or residue; this is because it does not end, and is eternal and infinite); it worthy of knowing and researching by the medium of the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Upanishads (Vedanta); is indescribable and incomprehensible; is immune to being degraded, denigrated or demeaned; is much sought after by my devotees and fulfills their desires; and is Advitya (non-dual, unique and one of its only kind).

Besides this, it is the Aadhar or support, foundation and basis of all that exists; is self-supporting and does not need for its self any foundation to rest upon; it is esoteric and mystical in as much as what it appears on the surface is not its true form (it appears to be a stone image, but actually it represents me who am invisible and ethereal); and is always honoured and worshipped by the various Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Indra etc.

This symbol of mine is an image of illumination and light. That is why it is known as 'Jyotirlingam'—the Lingam or symbol of Shiva that resembles a male phallus, is self-illuminated and effuses a glow of divinity and holiness.

One should worship, pay obeisance to and honour me as well as my symbol known as this Jyotirlingam. [11]"

The Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, describes what the Avimukta Kshetra is. To quote—"OM salutations! Brishaspati (the moral preceptor or the Guru of Gods) asked sage Yagyawalkya—'Oh Brahmin! Which is the holy site that dwarfs Kurukshetra in its holiness, divinity and sanctity? Which is the place chosen even by the Gods to worship their seniors? Which is the place much sought after by the creatures seeking spiritual deliverance, emancipation and salvation?'

Yagyawalkya replied—'Certainly, this place—which is known as 'Kashi' (also known as the city of Varanasi in the north of India)—is called the 'Avimukta Tirtha'.

It is the holy site which is the first and foremost place for doing noble, religious and righteous deeds—i.e. it is the 'Kurukshetra' for spiritual aspirants desirous of Mukti, or spiritual liberation and deliverance. [The word 'Kurukshetra' has two parts—'Kuru' means to 'do', and 'Kshetra' means an area or realm. Hence, the Kurushetra is the area or place where one must do deeds in order to obtain one's desired objectives or fulfill one's dreams. In the spiritual field, this doing of deeds in order to realise one's objectives is to do auspicious and righteous deeds so that Mukti, or liberation and deliverance, is obtained from the endless cycle of birth and death in which the creature is trapped from time immemorial and countless generations of previous births. It is not that doing of good deeds elsewhere would not bear sweet fruits, but only that here the results are quicker and easier to beget as the spiritual soil, so to say, is more fertile at this place, and harnessing of positive energy of the super Consciousness is more easy and readily possible here.]

It is the place of worship selected even by the Gods to honour the Supreme Being. It is the location where the creature can attain oneness with the Parmatma (the supreme transcendental Soul, or the Lord God of creation) more easily and with the

least effort. Hence, one should treat this place called 'Kashi' as the real Kurukshetra as compared to other religious or pilgrim site he goes visiting in search of Mukti.

It is in this place where Lord Shiva (Rudra) preaches the dying creature about the 'Tarak Brahm'. This nectar-like advice makes the creature immortal, helps in his final liberation from all worldly fetters arising out of ignorance and delusions, and helps in his deliverance from this mundane world. It is this advice of Lord Shiva about the Tarak Brahm that gives the dying creature a once in a life-time opportunity and the final chance to obtain emancipation and salvation.

Hence, one should attempt to take up a residence in Kashi and have faith in its ability to provide Mukti. One should never abandon it. This is the truth'. Sage Yagyawalkya thus explained the importance and significance of Kashi and the Tarak Brahm to Brishaspati (1)."

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 116 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 118.]

बिबसहुँ जासु नाम नर कहहीं । जनम अनेक रचित अघ दहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
सादर सुमिरन जे नर करहीं । भव बारिधि गोपद इव तरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

bibasahum^१ jāsu nāma nara kahahīm. janama anēka racita agha dahahīm. 3.
sādara sumirana jē nara karahīm. bhava bāridhi gōpada iva tarahīm. 4.

Even if one utters the holy name of Lord Ram unwillingly, under any pretext whatsoever (i.e. even without having any intention to pray to the Lord or worship him), yet the name is so beneficial and inherently powerful that it leaves its impression on the fate of the individual in as much as it would eliminate the sins of that person which he has been accumulating for many generations¹. (3)

If one remembers the holy name of Lord Ram with due reverence and faith, one is assured of getting across this vast ocean-like world of transmigration as easily as one would step over a small puddle of water made on soft ground by the pressure of a cow's hooves². (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram's name has a mystical power to automatically purify the inner-self of a creature. The creature may utter the Lord's holy name willingly and with reverence, or he may do it unwillingly due to some reason other than showing respect to the Lord—yet in both the cases the name of Lord Ram shows its beneficial effects by purifying the inner-self of the creature and neutralizing the cumulative effects of sins committed by him over a long period of time.

It's like the case of a person dipping in a river: whether it is done voluntarily for the purpose of taking a bath, or someone pushing a person into the river against his wishes, but in both the cases the effect is the same, i.e. the person who enters the river would get wet. Similarly, Lord Ram's holy name would show its beneficial effects whether it is uttered with reverence for spiritual purposes, or just done routinely in a secular way, such as calling a person who might have 'Ram' as his own name.

²When a cow walks over soft ground, a shallow depression is formed in the soil in which water collects. It is barely a few inches in diameter, and one would easily step across it in a routine manner, without even noticing its presence. Similarly, by invoking the mystical powers of Lord Ram's holy name, a person can easily find liberation and deliverance for his soul; he can attain emancipation and salvation without the least effort.

To wit, the spiritual objective of attaining deliverance, emancipation and salvation from this world of transmigration, that would otherwise require strenuous efforts involving a variety of religious practices, is very conveniently and easily obtained by a devotee with the help of Lord Ram's holy name.

In this context, refer to Tulsidas' 'Kavitawali Ramayan', Uttar Kand, verse no. 76.

The glory of Lord Ram's holy name has been narrated elsewhere too in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194.]

राम सो परमात्मा भवानी । तहँ भ्रम अति अबिहित तव बानी ॥ ५ ॥
अस संसय आनत उर माहीं । ग्यान बिराग सकल गुन जाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

rāma sō paramātamā bhavānī. taham̐ bhrama ati abihita tava bānī. 5.
asa sansaya ānata ura māhīm̐. gyāna birāga sakala guna jāhīm̐. 6.

[Said Lord Shiva—] 'Oh Bhavani (one of the names of Parvati; meaning the consort of Lord Bhava, i.e. Shiva)! Lord Ram is indeed the Parmatma, the Supreme Being. To have doubts about that Lord, as you said you had¹, is something totally uncalled for and unwarranted, and it discredits your speech and is disgraceful for you even to think in this way. (5)

By inviting such ridiculous doubts to find a foothold in one's heart about something that is so obviously true, all good virtues that a person possesses, such as wisdom, renunciation, and many other excellent qualities of the spirit that he may have, become tainted and corrupted, bidding him good bye, and letting him feel completely muddled, bewildered, confused and deluded². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 109 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 113; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 114.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51; (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 59.

To wit, a wise person must not unnecessarily raise doubts with respect to things that are well-established, as such doubting does not help him in the least. On the contrary, such unwarranted doubts are disgraceful for him, showing him in very poor light. So therefore, only those who are blockheads and completely befuddled would doubt the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram.]

सुनि सिव के भ्रम भंजन बचना । मिटि गै सब कुतरक कै रचना ॥ ७ ॥
 भइ रघुपति पद प्रीति प्रतीती । दारुन असंभावना बीती ॥ ८ ॥

suni siva kē bhrama bhañjana bacanā. miṭi gai saba kutaraka kai racanā. 7.
 bha'i raghupati pada prīti pratīti. dārūna asambhāvanā bīti. 8.

Hearing the enlightening words of Lord Shiva that were capable of eliminating unwarranted confusions and doubts, all delusions and misgivings arising out of incredulity and misconception of the reality of Lord Ram, that had unfortunately sprung up in the mind of Parvati, vanished. (7)

With the dawn of true knowledge and enlightenment, she developed profound devotion and affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram¹, and this set aside all chances of her getting trapped by some unprecedented and unforeseen misfortune that would have been detrimental to her own welfare². (8)

[Note—¹Once Parvati was convinced about the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram, that Lord Ram was none but the Supreme Being himself in this form, profound devotion and affection for the Lord sprouted in her heart in a natural way. There is a specific verse in Ram Charit Manas which addresses this particular point, that when one becomes aware of the truth of anything, one develops true respect for it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 89.

²This refers to the tragical events of her previous life in which Parvati was known as Sati. Sati had serious doubts about the divinity and mystical powers of Lord Ram when she saw him grieving for the loss of his wife Sita, and frantically searching for in the forest, because she reasoned that if Lord Ram was the Supreme Being as her husband Lord Shiva believed him to be, then how come he does not know where Sita is, and why is he wailing and lamenting at her loss like an ordinary man who is passionately in love with his wife, for the Supreme Being is expected to be above such worldly behaviour. This caused immense uneasiness and a sense of severe skepticism in her, for besides doubting Lord Ram's authenticity, she even began to question her husband Lord Shiva's own wisdom and erudition. She thought that Shiva was deluded and under some grave misunderstanding vis-à-vis Lord Ram, which in fact was not the case.

These doubts and bewilderments caused a lot of heart-burn to her, resulting in her losing her own wisdom and sense of propriety inasmuch as her attitude towards her husband, Lord Shiva, became defiant and irreverent. She became stubborn and refused to accept any advice that Lord Shiva gave her. The consequences were disastrous; first, Lord Shiva broke off all relations with her, and second, she died by jumping into the fire of the religious sacrifice her father was doing. {This entire episode has already been narrated in our reading of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 64.}

Parvati had not forgotten those bitter memories; she herself admits it in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 107.

So, what this verse implies is that unlike on the previous occasion, this time round Parvati readily accepted Lord Shiva's advice to her regarding the divinity and

holiness of Lord Ram, which was that the Lord was none but the Supreme Being himself in this form.

Certain things stand out prominently in the episode related to Parvati. First, one must respect the wisdom and advice of those who are wise, enlightened and knowledgeable regarding something, as Lord Shiva was concerning the truth of Lord Ram, and never defy or ridicule them, as Sati had done.

Second, it is always advisable not to suppress doubts about anything in one's heart as this is like a secret disease that gnaws and nibbles at the man from within, thereby robbing his peace of mind, making him restless, which in turn makes him lose wisdom and mental bearing, forcing him to behave irrationally and inadvertently harbour misgivings about everything, left, right and center. Instead, it is always good to approach a wise teacher to clarify matters, and have faith in the teacher's advice. Sati suppressed her doubts about Lord Ram, that led her to doubt Lord Shiva himself, which led her to behave disrespectfully towards him and become defiant, which in its wake had serious consequences for her in the form of Lord Shiva divorcing her, and she committing suicide by jumping into the fire to kill herself in disgust.]

दो०. पुनि पुनि प्रभु पद कमल गहि जोरि पंकरुह पानि ।
बोलीं गिरिजा बचन बर मनहुँ प्रेम रस सानि ॥ ११९ ॥

dōhā.

puni puni prabhu pada kamala gahi jōri paṅkaruha pāni.
bōlīm girijā bacana bara manahum̐ prēma rasa sāni. 119.

Girija (literally 'the daughter of the king of mountains; here referring to Parvati) repeatedly grasped the lotus-like holy feet of the Lord (i.e. Lord Shiva) to pay her respects to him, and joining her palms as a token of humble prayer, she spoke words that were extremely sweet and polite, as if they were infused with virtues of reverence and affection for the Lord. (Doha no. 119)

[Note—¹This gesture of Parvati proves that she is full of gratitude towards Lord Shiva and feels obliged to him for, one, being ready to remove her lingering doubts about Lord Ram, and two, not getting angry at her for once again raising the same query that had led to so much problem in her previous life.

There are other instances in Ram Charit Manas where the same sort of gesture for showing reverence has been mentioned. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 2 (Hanuman); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 13-15 that precede Doha no. 7 (Sugriv); (b) Sundar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos 3-4 that precede Doha no. 49 (Vibhishan); (c) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 124-b along with Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it (where Garud has expressed his sincere gratitude to sage Kaagbhusund in the same way as Parvati is doing now).

Earlier, Parvati had herself shown respect to her mother, the queen of the mountains, by falling at her feet repeatedly before her departure with Lord Shiva after her marriage with him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 102.]

चौ०. ससि कर सम सुनि गिरा तुम्हारी । मिटा मोह सरदातप भारी ॥ १ ॥

तुम्ह कृपाल सबु संसुड हरेऊ । राम स्वरूप जानि मोहि परेऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sasi kara sama suni girā tumhārī. miṭā mōha saradātapa bhārī. 1.
tumha kṛpāla sabu sansa'u harē'ū. rāma svarūpa jāni mōhi parē'ū. 2.

[Expressing her profound thanks to Lord Shiva, Parvati said—] ‘By hearing your soothing and pleasant words which were as comforting as the rays of moonlight, my ignorance and delusions (mōha), which were tormenting me like the unbearable heat of the autumnal sun¹, have been eliminated. (1)

Oh merciful Lord (kṛpāla)! You have dispelled all my doubts and confusions². Verily, I have now realised the truthful nature of Lord Ram³. (2)

[Note—¹The sun’s heat during autumn is scorching. This is used here to indicate the level of unease Parvati’s delusions had been causing her. What the sun’s heat does to the physical body on the outside, the inner-self of a person is afflicted in a similar way when the person’s mind and heart are made to suffer due to some grave issue that bothers the person day and night, constantly nagging at him, and robbing him of his peace and happiness.

Parvati has herself admitted that she is highly upset by the issue which she wants resolved, so that all her confusions and doubts about Lord Ram are removed and she can find internal peace: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 119 herein above; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 herein below; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 52 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede it; and (iv) Doha no. 129 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.

³And what is that ‘truthful form of Lord Ram’ which Parvati wished to know and has now become aware of? She had herself asked Lord Shiva to remove her doubts and confusions about Lord Ram’s truthful form that have bewildered her so much as specifically mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 107.

Then, to help her out of her mental torment, Lord Shiva had outlined the divine form and holiness of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 119.

This advice of Lord Shiva helped Parvati to calm down and get internal peace, especially because the Lord had agreed to her request to tell her in detail all things related to Lord Ram’s worldly deeds, and simultaneously explain to her the reasons behind why the Lord acted in the way he did, thereby bridging the gap between what was visible and what was invisible, because the knowledge of factors playing behind the curtain were very crucial to understanding why Lord Ram’s story appeared to be like the story of an ordinary human being. Lord Ram’s worldly behaviour was the primary reason for Parvati’s perplexities because she could not reconcile between the two extreme forms of the Lord—one as the Supreme Being who was almighty and all-knowing, and the other as a human being grieving for his lost wife (Sita) and

frantically searching for her in the wilds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 109.]

नाथ कृपाँ अब गयउ बिषादा । सुखी भयउँ प्रभु चरन प्रसादा ॥ ३ ॥
 अब मोहि आपनि किंकरि जानी । जदपि सहज जड़ नारि अयानी ॥ ४ ॥
 प्रथम जो मैं पूछा सोइ कहहू । जौं मो पर प्रसन्न प्रभु अहहू ॥ ५ ॥

nātha kṛpām̐ aba gaya'u biṣādā. sukhī bhaya'um̐ prabhu carana prasādā. 3.
 aba mōhi āpani kiṅkari jānī. jadapi sahaja jaṛa nāri ayānī. 4.
 prathama jō mair̐m̐ pūchā sō'i kahahū. jaur̐m̐ mō para prasanna prabhu ahahū.
 5.

Oh Lord! By your kindness and grace, all my delusions and its attendant gloom, that had been the cause of so much internal agitation in me, have vanished, as a result of which, and by the blessings of your holy feet, I have attained peace and happiness. (3)

Although I admit that I am dull and ignorant lady by nature, one who is not too knowledgeable about profound spiritual matters and principles of metaphysics and theology, yet treating me as your devoted and loyal servant (āpani kiṅkari jānī) --- (4),

--- And if thou art pleased with me and my sincerity, I earnestly request you to please tell me (or answer the question) what I had wanted to know in the very beginning (of our meeting)¹. (5)

[Note—¹And, what was it that Parvati wished to know when she first approached Lord Shiva, to which she now refers? She repeats the query once again in verse nos. 6-7 herein below. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that precede Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 109; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 111.

An important point to note here is this: Parvati had wished to hear the entire story of Lord Ram, and not just the truth of who he was. The answer which Lord Shiva had given to her heretofore was limited to expounding upon the divinity and holiness of Lord Ram as a personified form of the Supreme Being, but this summary of Lord Ram's greatness did not address the primary wish of Parvati, which was to hear the entire story of Lord Ram. As a consequence, she was not fully satisfied.

If this is the case, that she wasn't fully contented, then why did she say she was satisfied with what Lord Shiva had told her regarding Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 119 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it?

Well, the obvious answer is that she did not want to annoy Shiva further by appearing to be stubborn and impertinent; she did not wish to give the wrong signal that she was inattentive to what he was saying, that she did not believe him—because that would have invited Lord Shiva's wrath, and she had already tasted the bitter fruit

of this mischance happening as it actually did in her previous birth as Sati when her defiance led to the Lord abandoning or divorcing her, and her dying by jumping in the fire of a fire sacrifice to end her life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.]

राम ब्रह्म चिनमय अबिनासी । सर्व रहित सब उर पुर बासी ॥ ६ ॥
 नाथ धरेउ नरतनु केहि हेतू । मोहि समुझाइ कहहु बृषकेतू ॥ ७ ॥
 उमा बचन सुनि परम बिनीता । रामकथा पर प्रीति पुनीता ॥ ८ ॥

rāma brahma cinamaya abināsī. sarba rahita saba ura pura bāsī. 6.
 nātha dharē'u naratanu kēhi hētū. mōhi samujhā'i kahahu bṛṣakētū. 7.
 umā bacana suni parama binītā. rāmakathā para prīti punītā. 8.

[And what was that which Parvati specifically wished to know about Lord Ram? She says herself—] ‘Lord Ram (as you have affirmed, and I am convinced too) is none else but Brahm (the Supreme Being; the cosmic Lord of the whole creation) himself personified; he is indeed a personified form of cosmic Consciousness that is eternal, infinite and universal, as well as enlightenment itself; he is free from all attributes pertaining to this world, and he remains detached from everything in this creation (although he is all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent and ubiquitous); and he lives in every thing and every being as their integral part (because the entire creation, both its animate form as well as inanimate form are a revelation of Brahm)¹. (6)

This being the case, then what is the reason the Lord had to assume the form of a human being (which is the primary reason of my being confounded about him)². Oh Lord Brishketu (the Lord who has an emblem of a bull on his flag; Lord Shiva)! Please explain this thing to me so that I can understand it (i.e. tell this secret reason to me in a simple language so that I can follow it, for I have already told you I am dumb and not too well versed in matters related to scriptures³).’ (7)

Lord Shiva was very pleased when he heard such polite words of Uma (i.e. Parvati), and observed that she had a purity of devotion when she requested him to tell her the divine story of Lord Ram⁴. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Doha no. 108 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that follows Doha no. 119 herein above.

⁴Lord Shiva concluded that Parvati had no deceit or skepticism in her request; she did not want to ridicule either Lord Shiva or Lord Ram. She was not stubborn as on the previous occasion. Her desire to hear the story of Lord Ram was entirely of a pure

nature as she wanted to hear it in detail to remove any traces of doubts that might still linger secretly in her heart somewhere. Lord Shiva was glad that she has come out clean this time, instead of concealing things from him and telling lies to hide her impertinence as she did the last time. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 51 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 56; and (iii) Doha no. 62 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

दो०. हियँ हरषे कामारि तब संकर सहज सुजान ।

बहु बिधि उमहि प्रसंसि पुनि बोले कृपानिधान ॥ १२० (क) ॥

dōhā.

hiyam̐ haraṣē kāmāri taba saṅkara sahaja sujāna.

bahu bidhi umahi prasansi puni bōlē kṛpānidhāna. 120 (a).

The Lord who had vanquished Kamdeo (cupid; the patron god of passion and lust)¹, and who was pious, noble and obliging by his inherent nature, felt exhilarated in his heart.

He praised Uma in various ways, and then the merciful Lord Shiva said --- (Doha no. 120-a)

[Note—¹The story of why and how Lord Shiva burnt Kamdeo has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 87.]

[PAUSE 1 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

[PAUSE 4 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

सो०. सुनु सुभ कथा भवानि रामचरितमानस बिमल ।

कहा भुसुंङि बखानि सुना बिहग नायक गरुड़ ॥ १२० (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

sunu subha kathā bhavāni rāmacaritamānasa bimala.

kahā bhusuṅḍi bakhāni sunā bihaga nāyaka garuṛa. 120 (b).

Lord Shiva said to Parvati: ‘Oh Bhavani! Listen to the auspicious and holy story of Lord Ram that is known as ‘Ram Charit Manas’. It was narrated by the saintly crow Kaagbhusund and heard by Garud, the lord of the birds. (Sortha no. 120-b)

सो संबाद उदार जेहि बिधि भा आगें कहब ।

सुनहु राम अवतार चरित परम सुंदर अनघ ॥ १२० (ग) ॥

sō sambāda udāra jēhi bidhi bhā āgēm kahaba.
sunahu rāma avatāra carita parama sundara anagha. 120 (c).

I shall narrate to you this auspicious episode (of the conversation between Kaagbhusund and Garud) by-and-by¹, but in the meanwhile listen to the story related to Lord Ram's incarnation and the many pleasing deeds associated with the Lord's manifestation, as all of them are charming and eliminator of sins². (Sortha no. 120-c)

[Note—¹This entire episode is called 'Kaagbhusund Ramayan', and is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125-a.

²The infinite glories of Lord Ram's holy name and his divine story has been elaborately narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1, 10, and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 10; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 22; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 33; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 43-a.]

हरि गुन नाम अपार कथा रूप अगनित अमित ।
मैं निज मति अनुसार कहउँ उमा सादर सुनहु ॥ १२० (घ) ॥

hari guna nāma apāra kathā rūpa aganita amita.
maiṁ nija mati anusāra kaha'um' umā sādara sunahu. 120 (d).

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, I reaffirm once again that Lord Ram's glories, his holy name, his divine stories and his many manifestations are countless, endless, and beyond description¹.

Yet, oh Uma, I shall narrate them to you according to my understanding and the limited reach of my intellect. Listen to it attentively and with due reverence. (Sortha no. 120-d)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it which also reiterate this view.]

चौ०. सुनु गिरिजा हरिचरित सुहाए । बिपुल बिसद निगमागम गाए ॥ १ ॥
हरि अवतार हेतु जेहि होई । इदमित्थं कहि जाइ न सोई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sunu girijā haricarita suhā'ē. bipula bisada nigamāgama gā'ē. 1.
hari avatāra hētu jēhi hō'ī. idamit'tham kahi jā'i na sō'ī. 2.

[Lord Shiva now would start the actual narration of the divine story of Lord Ram. To begin with, in the following verses that follow, he would first outline the reasons why the Supreme Being had to come down to this mortal world as a human being who was

named 'Lord Ram'. So, answering Parvati's question asked in the previous verses, Lord Shiva told her—]

'Oh Girija, listen! The mystical deeds of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of Brahm, the Supreme Being) and narratives related to them are very charming and pleasing to hear. They are numerous, vast in the sense that one can neither find when they commenced and when they ended as one seamlessly coalesces into another, and they have been sung (or narrated) in ancient scriptures too. (1)

It is not possible to specify one reason or the other for the Lord's manifestation; it is not feasible to say that there was one particular reason, or one reason which was more important than the other, why the Supreme Lord, who has a cosmic all-pervading presence, and is invisible as he has no physical form, would assume a physical form and reveal himself in this mortal world. (2)

[Note—In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 33 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 105; (iii) Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (iv) Sortha no. 120-d herein above.]

राम अतर्क्य बुद्धि मन बानी । मत हमार अस सुनहि सयानी ॥ ३ ॥
तदपि संत मुनि बेद पुराना । जस कछु कहहिं स्वमति अनुमाना ॥ ४ ॥
तस मैं सुमुखि सुनावउँ तोही । समुझि परइ जस कारन मोही ॥ ५ ॥

rāma atarkya bud'dhi mana bānī. mata hamāra asa sunahi sayānī. 3.
tadapi santa muni bēda purānā. jasa kachu kahahim svamati anumānā. 4.
tasa maim sumukhi sunāva'um' tōhī. samujhi para'i jasa kārana mōhī. 5.

Oh wise lady, listen (sunahi sayānī)! It is my considered opinion that Lord Ram is beyond the grasp of the intellect, mind and speech; he is beyond the purview of any of the faculties of the mind and its ability to express what it understands about anything. (3)

Inspite of this, I shall tell you what great and enlightened saints, sages and seers as well as the many scriptures have said about the Lord in accordance with their own understanding, though such understanding is limited and varies from one individual or scripture to another¹. (4)

Besides drawing on the narratives of these illustrious individuals and scriptures (as mentioned herein above), I shall also rely on my own understanding and experiences about Lord Ram in order to narrate to you the few reasons why the Supreme Being revealed himself as Lord Ram². (5)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it; (ii) Doha no. 139 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 140.

This explains why there is so much variation in the different versions of the story of the Ramayana. Though the outline remains primarily the same, yet the details vary from one narrative to another, leading to confusions and doubts about its authenticity and reliability. It is like the case of different teachers of any subject explaining it to their students in their own unique style, which would invariably vary from teacher to teacher.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha no. 120-d.

Let us not forget that the story which we are presently reading, the story of Lord Ram called 'Ram Charit Manas', was first conceived in the Mana (mind and heart) of Lord Shiva—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.

Lord Shiva had revealed this story to (i) Parvati; and (ii) Kaagbhusund's guru*. {Refer: *Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 113.}

To wit, our narrative comes directly from Lord Shiva, and it is more reliable because Lord Shiva was the one who had first conceived it and narrated it.]

जब जब होइ धरम कै हानी । बाढ़हिं असुर अधम अभिमानी ॥ ६ ॥
 करहिं अनीति जाइ नहिं बरनी । सीदहिं बिप्र धेनु सुर धरनी ॥ ७ ॥
 तब तब प्रभु धरि बिबिध सरीरा । हरहिं कृपानिधि सज्जन पीरा ॥ ८ ॥

jaba jaba hō'i dharama kai hānī. bārḥahim asura adhama abhimānī. 6.
 karahim anīti jā'i nahim baranī. sīdahim bipra dhēnu sura dharanī. 7.
 taba taba prabhu dhari bibidha sarīrā. harahim kṛpānidhi sajjana pīrā. 8.

[In these set of verses, Lord Shiva outlines the main reason why the Supreme Being was obliged to reveal himself in various forms, called incarnations, manifestations or revelations of the Lord. Presently, one such incarnation was that of Lord Ram.]

Whenever Dharma (i.e. the glorious, positive virtues of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics, and nobility of conduct and thought, and the high moral values they stand for in order to maintain law-and-order in creation) suffers in this creation due to the dominance of unscrupulous evil elements symbolized by the haughty and arrogant Demons, who do everything that is diametrically opposite to what Dharma stands for, and begin to tyrannize the world intolerably, as a result of which everyone suffers, from the humblest of creatures such as the cows as well as the followers of Dharma such as the Brahmins, to the most powerful ones such as the Gods as well as Mother Earth who can't stand against the ruthless onslaught and the might of the cruel Demons—on all such occasions the most merciful, compassionate and gracious Supreme Lord of this creation assumes different forms to manifest himself in this mortal world to remove the cause of sufferings of those who are on the right path, and to provide them with succour, solace and deliverance from the horrors created by their tormentors, the Demons, by eliminating the latter, thereby restoring peace and order in the world.

To wit, whenever goodness and positive forces in the world that are collectively represented by Dharma were in the decline due to the dominance of

negative and evil forces symbolized by the Demons, whenever Dharma was being trounced and trampled underfoot the domineering Demons—on all such occasions the Supreme Lord of the world was obliged to intervene to restore balance and bring about peace and harmony in his creation by eliminating those elements that were disturbing peace and playing havoc with law and order in the world¹. (6-8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 13 where the Vedas have themselves reiterated this fact.

And how terrible were the demons? We shall read about them and their reign of terror in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 179—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

दो०. असुर मारि थापहिं सुरन्ह राखहिं निज श्रुति सेतु ।
जग बिस्तारहिं बिसद जस राम जन्म कर हेतु ॥ १२१ ॥

dōhā.

asura māri thāpahim suranha rākhahim nija śruti sētu.
jaga bistārahim bisada jasa rāma janma kara hētu. 121.

The Supreme Being intervenes personally on all such occasions (as outlined in the forgoing verses) to eliminate the demons who represent repressive, regressive and negative forces in creation, and restore the authority of the gods, who represent good virtues and righteousness, as well as the sanctity of the Vedas (scriptures) that had taken a severe beating during the ascendancy of the evil forces.

The above is the primary reason for Lord Ram's birth; it helps to establish the glories of the Lord in this world, and spread it far and wide. (Doha no. 121)

[Note—In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 139 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that follow it.]

चौ०. सोइ जस गाइ भगत भव तरहीं । कृपासिंधु जन हित तनु धरहीं ॥ १ ॥
राम जनम के हेतु अनेका । परम बिचित्र एक तें एका ॥ २ ॥
जनम एक दुइ कहउँ बखानी । सावधान सुनु सुमति भवानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sō'i jasa gā'i bhagata bhava tarahīm. kṛpāsindhu jana hita tanu dharahīm. 1.
rāma janama kē hētu anēkā. parama bicitra ēka tēm ēkā. 2.
janama ēka du'i kaha'um' bakhānī. sāvadhāna sunu sumati bhavānī. 3.

The other reason why the merciful Supreme Lord assumes a form is to give an occasion to his devotees to remember his divine manifestations, and sing or narrate stories associated with them, so that they can derive bliss and joy while alive, and at the end of their lives they can cross this vast ocean-like world of transmigration to attain deliverance for themselves, and emancipation and salvation to their souls¹. (1)

Verily indeed, the occasions when the Supreme Lord was obliged to come down personally in the form of Lord Ram to take charge of restoring peace and order in this mortal world by eliminating the trouble makers known as the Demons, were many; in each one full cycle of creation and destruction of this world there happened to be some event which compelled the Lord to manifest himself as Lord Ram. And since the cycle of creation and destruction goes on moving endlessly, the causes and reasons and the processes whereby Lord Ram had manifested himself in this mortal gross world varied from one age to another, and each is more wondrous and strange than the others preceding or following it. (2)

Oh Bhavani! You are wise, so listen attentively to one or two instances of the Lord's birth in this world that I am going to narrate to you now². (3)

[Note—¹Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 152; (b) Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 106.

²The five reasons cited by Lord Shiva are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 and that precedes Doha no. 122—to Chaupai line no. 4 and that precedes Doha no. 123 (story of Jai and Vijai); (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 123—to Chaupai line no. 3 and that precedes Doha no. 124 (demon Jalandhar); (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 and that precedes Doha no. 124, and Doha no. 139 (sage Narad's delusions); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 and that precede Doha no. 141 (king Manu and queen Satrupa's penance); (v) Doha no. 152 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follows it (king Pratapbhanu's curse).]

द्वारपाल हरि के प्रिय दोऊ । जय अरु बिजय जान सब कोऊ ॥ ४ ॥
बिप्र श्राप तें दूनउ भाई । तामस असुर देह तिन्ह पाई ॥ ५ ॥
कनककसिपु अरु हाटक लोचन । जगत बिदित सुरपति मद मोचन ॥ ६ ॥

dvārapāla hari kē priya dō'ū. jaya aru bijaya jāna saba kō'ū. 4.
bipra śrāpa tēm dūna'u bhā'ī. tāmasa asura dēha tinha pā'ī. 5.
kanakakasipu aru hāṭaka lōcana. jagata bidita surapati mada mōcana. 6.

There were two favourite door-keepers who acted as guards of Lord Hari's (i.e. Lord Vishnu's) palace (abode) in the heaven (which is known as Vaikuntha), and everyone knows that their names were Jai and Vijai. (4)

These two brothers had to become evil demons due to a curse by a Brahmin (i.e. sages Sankaadi)¹. (5)

They became famous as the two demons known as Hiranyakashipu (kanakakasipu)² and Hiranyaaksha (hāṭaka lōcana)³ who had successfully vanquished the pride and haughtiness of Indra, the king of gods⁴. (6)

Note—¹Jai and Vijai were the two sentries guarding the gates of Vaikuntha where Lord Vishnu lives. Once it so happened that the four mind-born sons of Brahma, the creator, i.e. Sanak, Sanaatan, Sanandan and Sanatkumar, collectively known as ‘Sankaadi’, had gone to Vaikuntha to have a divine viewing of Lord Vishnu. They had crossed six gates, but when they were about to cross the seventh and the last door their path was obstructed by the two gate-keepers of Lord Vishnu named Jai and Vijai who blocked the way by keeping their sticks across it. It was then these sages had cursed them that they would turn into demons for the next three births, and in each birth they would become enemies of the Lord, and each time get killed at his hands. Finally they will get deliverance from the curse upon being killed the third time. It is out of this curse that the two sentries Jai and Vijai became Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaaksha in the first birth, Ravana and Kumbhakaran in the second birth, and finally Shishupaal and Dantavakra in the third birth. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapuran, Skandha 3, Chapter nos. 15-16.

Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaaksha were slayed by Lord Vishnu in his incarnations as Narsingh (half man and half lion) and Varaaha (Boar) respectively. Ravana and Kumbhakaran were slayed in the Lord’s incarnation as Sri Ram. And Shishupaal and Dantavakra were killed by Lord Krishna who was also an incarnation of Vishnu. This story is narrated in brief in Surdas’ Ram-Charitawali, verse no. 1.

Let us now read what Surdas’ Ram Charitawali, verse no. 1 has to say on this subject:-

hari-hari, hari-hari sumirana karau. hari-caranārabinda ura dharau..
 jaya aru bijaya pāraṣada dō'i. bipra-sarāpa asura bha'e sō'i..
 ēka barāha-rūpa dhari māryau. ika narasimha-rūpa samhāryō..
 rāvana-kumbhakarana sō'i bha'e. rāma janama tina kair hita la'ē..
 dasaratha nrpati ajōdhyā-rāva. tākē gr̥ha kiyau ābirabhāva..
 nrpa saum̐ jyaum̐ sukadēva sunāyau. `sūradāsa' tyaur̐ hī kahi gāyau..

“Verse 1. One should constantly, consistently and persistently remember Sri Hari (Vishnu), and enshrine Sri Hari’s divine and holy feet in one’s heart.

The Lord had two gatekeepers named Jai and Vijai. They became demons due to the curse of Brahmins (sages Sankadi etc.). Out of them, one (Jai in the form of the demon Hiranyaksha) was killed by the Lord in his manifestations as the legendary Boar, and the second one (Vijai in the form of the demon Hiranyakashipu) was killed when the Lord assumed the form of the half-lion half-man called Narsingh. Both these demons once again took birth as Ravana and Kumbhakarna respectively. The Lord incarnated himself as Sri Ram in the household of king Dashrath of Ayodhya for their deliverance.

Surdas says he repeats the (divine, glorious, holy) story of Lord Sri Ram’s incarnation (i.e. manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation, as a human being in the form of Sri Ram) which sage Shukdeo had narrated to king Parikshit in Srimad Bhagwat (1).”

²Demon Hiranyakashipu: He was the father of Prahalad, a child who was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu. It was save Prahalad from the torments of his demon father who was bent on killing him that Lord Vishnu had revealed himself as ‘half-lion and half-man’, known as Lord Nrisingh or Narsingh.

The story in brief is as follows:-

Lord Nrisingh or Narsingh is the half lion and half man incarnation of Lord Vishnu to slay the demon Hiranyakashipu who had been tormenting Prahalad, his son, because the latter worshipped and had devotion for Lord Vishnu whom the demon loathed. After having killed the demon, Nrisingh started roaming in the forests, striking terror in the hearts of all the creatures. It was then that Shiva, the universal Lord who has been honoured with the epithet of 'Mahadev' as he is the greatest and supreme God, had assumed the form of Sharav, the killer, and liberated Vishnu from the body of Nrisingh. [Refer Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 8.] Thus liberated, Vishnu had thanked him a lot (refer Sharav Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 19) and went to his divine abode called Vaikunth. So this ferocious form of Shiva known as Sharav was also called 'Rudra', the angry and ferocious form of the Lord. One can imagine the fight that might have raged between Nrisingh and Rudra, and obviously Rudra must have been more ferocious than Nrisingh in order to subdue the latter.

This 'half lion and half man' form of the Lord is a visible image that has a cosmic counterpart as the 'half man and half female' manifestation of the Lord that is known as 'Ardha-Narishwar'. This cosmic form of Brahm as Ardha-Narishwar has two components—the right half is depicted in iconography as being a male representing Shiva, the great God, the other half is female representing his divine Shakti known as Parvati or Uma. This Shakti represents the dynamic energy of Shiva. When this applies to Brahm, the male aspect refers to the Supreme Being himself while the female aspect applies to Maya which is the dynamic power that Brahm employed to initiate this magical creation. This depiction is basically envisioned to drive home the point that Brahm and Shakti are inseparable in the context of the creation of the world. This elementary method of reproduction is known as 'asexual reproduction' and is depicted by many asexual plants and animals even today. For instance, the one-celled amoeba reproduces itself by cleavage. On the other hand, if we were to regard Brahm in its purest form as the cosmic Consciousness, then Brahm would not need the other half of the Maya, and would only be one and universal entity which has no definite and describable form and shape, it has no characteristic features, attributes and qualities. This form of the sublime and most subtle Brahm is known as either the Hiranyagarbha or the Viraat Purush depending upon the level of subtlety and grossness which is assigned to it, the former being more subtle than the latter.

The 'lion' part is a metaphor for the grand qualities of unmatched authority, stupendous strength, physical prowess and complete and unchallenged sway over the entire domain of creation just like a lion has over the forest and its inhabitant wild animals. This term is symbolic of the inherent stupendous might of the supreme Brahm as the unquestioned and powerful Lord of this forest-like world inhabited by myriad varieties of living beings, called the Jivas, just like a dense forest infested by wild animals. Similarly, the 'man' part symbolizes the fact that Brahm is the most highly placed Lord much like a human being who represents the highest level in the ladder of evolution.

In other words, even as the lion is the unquestioned lord of the wilds and the man is of all the living beings, the supreme transcendental Brahm is the unquestioned Lord of all that exists with all its variations in this creation, whether in its primary form represented by the wild and primitive animals of the jungle or in its more evolved and developed form represented by the man, with all the other stages of creation included in between these two.

Lord Nrisingh is the fourth incarnation of the Supreme Being who had taken various forms to ward off and overcome evil forces in creation when they become ascendant and overcame the good and the righteous. The Lord did this to maintain order in the creation which is like his offspring.

So when one of his great devotees known as Prahalaad was being extremely tormented by his own father, the demon Hiranyakashipu, the Lord appeared as Nrisingh—or as a half lion and half man form—from the pillar to which the innocent lad was tied by the demon to prove to him the omnipresence and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being. Nrisingh is a personification of the grand virtues of dynamism, power, energy, valour and strength, and hence is worshipped by warriors and rulers in general. The Mantra of this Lord is believed to be very powerful and effective against enemies and opponents.

Tulsidas has narrated this incident in his book “Kavitawali”, Uttar Kand, verse no. 128 which says—

“The demon Hiranyakashipu drew his sword to kill Prahalad (his son), but though the former had no mercy in his heart, the latter did not run away seeing his father who resembled the terrible God of death in a personified form. And when he challenged Prahalad saying, ‘Tell me where your Ram is?’ The son replied, ‘Everywhere!’ At this, the father asked him, ‘Is he present in this stone pillar as well?’ Prahalad replied, ‘Yes, sure!’

Hearing his earnest conviction and urgent call, Lord Narsingh manifested immediately, destroyed Prahalad’s enemy (his father), and became ferociously angry. Then, it was only after Prahalad prayed to him that he calmed down.

Tulsidas says—‘This resulted in increased devotion and love of the people towards the Lord, and it is since then that the people started worshipping stones (idols).’ ”

Iconographically, there are many forms of Nrisingh. Some of them are as follows—as seated (Aasin), as standing (Sthaanak), as boon-giver (Vardaayak), as ferocious and angry (Ugra), as striding (Yaanak), in the company of Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth and the divine consort of Vishnu (Laxmi-Nrisingh), as seated in Yoga or doing meditation like Shiva (Yoga-Nrisingh), as a resident of a mountain (Girija), etc.

His images depict him in either the two-hand form or in a four-hand form. In the latter case, the two back hands hold a conch and discus like the case of Vishnu. The two front hands are shown as killing the demon Hiranyakashipu by forcing the latter on his lap, tearing his abdomen, and yanking his entrails out by his sharp nails.

An entire Puran called Narsingh Puran is likewise dedicated to this Godhead. This Puran glorifies Nrisingh as an incarnation of Vishnu, and is regarded as being synonymous with Narayan, one of the names of Lord Vishnu who is none but the Supreme Being called Brahm. Since Lord Vishnu himself is a macrocosmic, all-inclusive and invisible form of the supreme transcendental Brahm, therefore Nrisingh is a de-facto visible form of the otherwise invisible Brahm.

Similarly, an entire Upanishad known as the Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition is dedicated to this deity. It also lists the various divine Mantras dedicated to Lord Nrisingh. It is the 7th Upanishad of this Veda.

The Shuk Rahasya Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 27, while describing the process of invoking one of the components ‘Asi’ (‘is’) of the Maha Vakya (the great saying of the Vedas) ‘Tattwamasi’ (‘that essence is you’) says that the Shakti (dynamic energy) of this individual component ‘Asi’ is Nrisingh.

The Skanda Upanishad of Krishna Yajur Veda, verse no. 13 praises Lord Nrisingh as an incarnation of the Trinity Gods consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, nourisher and protector, and Shiva the concluder of creation. His divine and glorious virtues are similar to Brahm. Earlier in this Upanishad it has already been established that these three Gods of the Trinity are Brahm personified, as well as the fact that the creature's Atma or pure 'self' which is Consciousness personified, are also Brahm personified. Hence, by worshipping Nrisingh one is offering prayers to Brahm and honouring the grand virtues of creation exemplified by the latter. He is also offering worship to the 'consciousness' that represents Brahm in the physical body of Lord Nrisingh.

³Demon Hiranyaaksha: He was slayed by Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as the Boar. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

⁴Indra, the king of gods, was very proud of his strength and invincibility. These two demons had defeated the gods, and consequentially vanquished this pride of Indra. Even Indra had himself acknowledged to Lord Ram that 'he had a false sense of pride that there is no one like him in strength'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 113.]

बिजई समर बीर बिख्याता । धरि बराह बपु एक निपाता ॥ ७ ॥

होइ नरहरि दूसर पुनि मारा । जन प्रहलाद सुजस बिस्तारा ॥ ८ ॥

bija'ī samara bīra bikhyātā. dhari barāha bapu ēka nipātā. 7.
hō'i narahari dūsara puni mārā. jana prahalāda sujasa bistārā. 8.

These two demons were invincible in battle and famed for their strength and valour. The Lord (i.e. Lord Hari or Lord Vishnu) had slayed one of them (i.e. the demon Hiranyaaksha) by assuming the form of a Great Boar (barāha bapu)¹. (7)

In his form as Lord Narsingh (narahari), he had slayed the other demon (i.e. demon Hiranyakashipu) and freed Prahalad from his torments. This good deed and glory of the Lord spread all over the world and is widely known². (8)

[Note—¹See note no. 3 appended to verse no. 6 herein above.

²See note no. 2 appended to verse no. 6 herein above.]

दो०. भए निसाचर जाइ तेइ महाबीर बलवान ।

कुंभकरन रावन सुभट सुर बिजई जग जान ॥ १२२ ॥

dōhā.

bha'ē nisācara jā'i tē'i mahābīra balavāna.
kumbhakarana rāvana subhaṭa sura bija'ī jaga jāna. 122.

These two demons (i.e. Hiranyaaksha and Hiranyakashipu) became the famed demons Ravana and Kumbhakaran respectively. They were exceptionally strong, brave, courageous and valiant, and the whole world knows that they had vanquished even the supposedly almighty gods. (Doha no. 122)

चौ०. मुकुत न भए हते भगवाना । तीनि जनम द्विज बचन प्रवाना ॥ १ ॥
एक बार तिन्ह के हित लागी । धरेउ सरीर भगत अनुरागी ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

mukuta na bha'ē hatē bhagavānā. tīni janama dvija bacana pravānā. 1.
ēka bāra tinha kē hita lāgī. dharē'u sarīra bhagata anurāgī. 2.

The two brothers (Jai and Vijai) could not find deliverance even after being slayed by Lord Hari himself because of the Brahmin's curse which said that they will be born as demons for three consecutive births¹. (1)

It was for their sake and welfare, i.e. to give them deliverance and overcome the curse of the Brahmin, that the Lord had to manifest himself as a human being (i.e. as Lord Ram). This is because the Lord loves his devotees very much and goes out of his way to help them². (2)

[Note—¹The three incarnations of Lord Vishnu to help Jai and Vijai overcome the Brahmin's curse that mandated them to become demons three times were as Lord Varaaha, Lord Narsingh, and Lord Ram.

There is a little bit of confusion here—because Jai and Vijai had become demons Hiranyaaksha and Hiranyakashipu in their first births, and Lord Vishnu assumed the form of a Boar and Narsingh to slay them. In their next birth, i.e. the second, they became Ravana and Kumbhakaran who were slayed by Lord Ram. Then, what about the 'third birth' which they were bound to take as mandated by Sankaadi's curse?

Well, the answer is that their third birth was during Lord Krishna's time, as Shishupaal and Dantavakra; they were killed by Lord Krishna. This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapurān, Skandha 3, Chapter nos. 15-16.

Since Parvati wished to know about Lord Ram, Lord Shiva focused his narration accordingly.

²Lord Hari, i.e. the Supreme Being, loves his devotees, in this case Jai and Vijai as well as Prahalad, so much that he does not mind his own conveniences and reputation if it helped them. Becoming a Boar and a Half-Man and Half-Lion is not something praiseworthy and willingly desired by anyone, let alone the Supreme Being who could have killed the demons by his mere wish. The Lord could have even nullified the curse of sages Sankaadi in order to protect his favourite door-keepers Jai and Vijai,

because the Lord was almighty and possessed overriding authority in this creation, but he didn't do it because he had to keep in mind the respect due to sages Sankaadi, who were Brahmins, and let their curse become true.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 13 which reiterate the same idea—that the Lord assumes a form for the sake of his devotees.]

कस्यप अदिति तहाँ पितु माता । दसरथ कौसल्या बिख्याता ॥ ३ ॥
एक कलप एहि बिधि अवतारा । चरित पवित्र किए संसारा ॥ ४ ॥

kasyapa aditi tahām'pitu mātā. dasaratha kausalyā bikhyātā. 3.
ēka kalapa ēhi bidhi avatārā. carita pavitra ki'ē sansārā. 4.

In this manifestation of Lord Ram (which refers to Jai and Vijai becoming Ravana and Kumbhakaran), it was sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi (the mother of gods)¹ who had become king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya respectively, the famous parents of Lord Ram.

[To wit, in the era when Lord Vishnu became Lord Ram to deliver Jai and Vijai who had become Ravana and Kumbhakaran respectively, sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi became king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya respectively, the Lord's parents. It is because Kashyap and Aditi had done severe Tapa (penance) with a desire to have Lord Vishnu as their son, and the Lord obliged them in the form of Lord Ram.] (3)

In this way, Lord Hari (or Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being) had revealed himself in one of the Kalps (one cycle of creation)² to do many deeds in this mortal world that were glorious and auspicious. (4)

[Note—¹Sage Kashyap has been mentioned in the Rig Veda (9/114/2) as well as in Valmiki Ramayan (Baal Kand, cantos 70 and 75), Mahabharat (Adiparva, 63), Vishnu Puran (1/15 and 1/21), and Bhaagvata (4/1).

Kashyap was the grandson of the creator Brahma, and the son of sage Marichi, one of the mental-born sons of the creator Brahma. His mother was Kalaa who was the daughter of sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti.

Kashyap had married the thirteen daughters of Prajapati Daksha. Their names and progenies are listed in Vishnu Puran, Chapter 1, Canto 15, verse nos. 124-142, and Canto 21, verse nos. 4-28.

The names of his wives are Aditi, Diti, Danu, Arishtaa, Sursaa, Khasaa, Surbhi, Vintaa, Taamraa, Krodhvashaa, Eeraa, Kadru and Muni.

Hence, Kashyap became the father of the entire living world that eventually populated the earth, the heavens and the subterranean worlds. He was the father of the Gods (Devas) through his wife Aditi, the Asuras (demons) through his wife Diti, the Daityas and Daanavas (cruel ogres, giants) from his wife Danu, the Birds from his wife Tamraa's six daughters, Siddhas (mystics and demi-gods having magical powers), Gandharvas (celestial musicians) through his wife Arishtaa, Yakshas (a semi-god who guards the treasury of Kuber, the treasurer of Gods) through his wife Khashaa, the Nagas (literally the serpents representing the reptiles, but meaning all the animals or those humans who worshipped such creatures) from his wife Kadru,

the Dragons who could fly from his wife Sursaa, the Pishaachs (blood drinking vampires; evil spirits which eat excreta; the devil, the fiend, the Satan) from his wife Krodhvashaa, the Apsaras (celestial damsels) from his wife Muni—in short, the whole living world. In other words, the entire living species on earth can trace its lineage to sage Kashyap.

He is one of the four sages (the others being Marichi, Atri and Bhrigu) who had elaborately described the Vakhaanas Aagam followed by some Vaishnav sects (followers of Vishnu worship).

Vaalkhilyas once helped sage Kashyap perform his fire sacrifice successfully, but became tired. When Indra, the king of Gods, saw them weary, he laughed at them, thereby incurring their wrath who cursed him that he would be punished for his impertinence and arrogance by Garud, the legendary vehicle of Lord Vishnu.

Sage Kashyap and his eldest and senior wife Aditi did severe penance to have Lord Vishnu as their son, and this resulted in their being re-born as king Dasrath and his queen Kaushlaya in the Treta Yug when Lord Vishnu incarnated as Lord Ram to become their son.

The same couple became Vasudev and Devaki to whom Lord Vishnu was born as Lord Krishna in the Dwapar Yug.

Sage Kashyap wrote the 'Kashyap Sanhita', a treatise on the usual topics of Dharma—such as daily duties, offering of oblations and rituals to Spirits, ceremonial impurities, repentance for sins etc.

Another book titled 'Kashyap Smriti' is the law book on Dharma, and lists the duties of a householder, expiation for polluting public places like temples, wells and ponds, rules for mourning for dead ones, purification rites etc.

²A very interesting point is to be noted here with reference to Kashyap and Aditi. We shall read in due course that Lord Vishnu refers to them and the Tapa they did while assuring the Gods that he will come down to earth as Lord Ram in order to eliminate the demons led by Ravana. The Lord says that he had already promised Kashyap and Aditi that he would become their sons in due course of time, and this holy couple would soon become King Dasrath and queen Kaushalya of Ayodhya, so that the Lord would then reveal himself as their son known as Lord Ram. This fact is explicitly narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it.

The rest of the story which unfolds by-and-by is based on this promise of Lord Vishnu to the gods and mother earth. So we can conclude that the story which Lord Shiva narrates to Parvati, and which we shall be reading in our book called 'Ram Charit Manas' presently, pertains to the birth of Lord Ram in the era when Kashyap and Aditi became Dasrath and Kaushalya respectively.]

एक कलप सुर देखि दुखारे । समर जलंधर सन सब हारे ॥ ५ ॥

संभु कीन्ह संग्राम अपारा । दनुज महाबल मरइ न मारा ॥ ६ ॥

परम सती असुराधिप नारी । तेहिं बल ताहि न जितहिं पुरारी ॥ ७ ॥

ēka kalapa sura dēkhi dukhārē. samara jalandhara sana saba hārē. 5.

sambhu kīnha saṅgrāma apārā. danuja mahābala mara'i na mārā. 6.

parama satī asurādhipa nārī. tēhiṁ bala tāhi na jitahiṁ purārī. 4.

In one other Kalpa (era; one cycle of creation and destruction) it so happened that the Lord observed that the gods were made miserable as all of them lost battles with the ferocious demon named Jalandhar¹. (5)

Lord Shiva himself waged a fierce battle with this demon, and in spite of his best efforts he could not slay the mighty and powerful demon. (6)

The reason for the demon's invincibility was the chastity and loyalty of his wife, and it was this reason why Lord Tripurari (i.e. Lord Shiva) could not vanquish him. (7)

[Note—¹The story of the demon Jalandhar is briefly as follows:-

According to a legend, there was a cruel demon named Jalandhar who had a chaste wife named Brinda (pronounced as 'Brindaa'), who was a daughter of the demon Kaalnemi. Lord Shiva had tried his best to kill the demon but failed due to the spiritual powers gained by his wife Brinda by the virtue of vows of exemplary chastity and loyalty that she had towards her husband, the demon Jalandhar. To wit, it was Brinda's spiritual powers that protected the demon Jalandhar from death, because if he died then Brinda would have become a widow, which was not possible due to her stringent adherence to her religious vows that acted as an umbrella against her being a widow.

Since there was no other way to kill this cruel demon except to violate the vows of chastity and loyalty of Brinda towards her husband, the demon Jalandhar, and since it was obligatory for Lord Vishnu to take care of peace and welfare of the rest of the world, and to maintain law and order in creation for which he was duty-bound as its protector and sustainer, the Lord had no choice but to devise a device to somehow deflect Brinda from her vows so that the cruel demon Jalandhar could be slayed. Therefore, Lord Vishnu had disguised himself as the demon to violate the honourable lady's chastity, and she was inadvertently made to commit a sin which resulted in the withdrawal of the protective shield against widowhood that she had hitherto enjoyed. This enabled Lord Shiva to kill the demon Jalandhar.

But when Brinda realized that she had been deceived by Vishnu, she vehemently cursed the Lord to become a stone. Vishnu accepted the curse with respect because he knew that Brinda was immaculate and was not at fault, but it was necessary to violate her vows so that her cruel demon husband could be killed for the larger good of this creation. So instead of counter-cursing or showing his wrath, Vishnu blessed her and said that even in his form as a stone he would still have the greatest of respect for her and keep her over his head as a token of her good intentions and strictness with which she had followed her vows. Vishnu thus became a stone known as 'Shaligraam', and Brinda became the 'Tulsi plant' (the holy Basil plant) whose leaves are always placed on the top of the Shaligraam to worship Lord Vishnu in this form. Lord Vishnu had blessed her with the boon that in the form of 'Tulsi' she would be absolutely necessary to sanctify all food offered to the Lord, that no worship of Lord Vishnu would be complete without the inclusion of Tulsi leaves, and he would wear her on top of his Shaligram-form.

This episode is briefly mentioned in Tulsidas' Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 123 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede it.

The story related to the birth of Jalandhar briefly is as follows: It is believed that he was born in the ocean as a result of the spout of fire that was caused by Lord Shiva's anger falling into the ocean and immediately transforming itself into a fierce demon called Jalandhar. So, as soon as he was born, he started crying exceptionally

loudly, which terrified the gods. When Brahma, the creator, asked the Ocean (i.e. the deity of the ocean, the Varun God) who this child was, the latter said that it was his child, and gave it to Brahma to take care. As soon as Brahma took the child Jalandhar in his arms, the latter pulled so hard at the former's chin that the old Brahma's beard almost got torn off and tears of pain welled up in his eyes. So Brahma named the child as 'Jalandhar'—i.e. one who was born in the water and crying loudly, and also one who caused tears (water) to come out (of the eye).

When he grew up, Jalandhar got hold over Amravati, the capital of Indra, the king of gods. All the gods were unable to defeat him in battle, but later on Lord Shiva managed to kill the demon with the help of Lord Vishnu who employed a stratagem to get him killed as described herein above.]

दो०. छल करि टारेउ तासु ब्रत प्रभु सुर कारज कीन्ह ।
जब तेहिं जानेउ मरम तब श्राप कोप करि दीन्ह ॥ १२३ ॥

dōhā.

chala kari ṭārē'u tāsu brata prabhu sura kāraja kīnha.
jaba tēhim jānē'u marama taba śrāpa kōpa kari dīnha. 123.

The Lord (Vishnu) employed a stratagem to deflect her (Brinda, the wife of demon Jalandhar) from her vows (which had protected Jalandhar from death as Brinda could not become a widow because of the protective shield her vows granted her), thereby managing to carry out his duty towards the gods by helping them to accomplish their objective (which was to get rid of the demon).

When she (Brinda) came to know the truth, she had become very angry and had cursed Lord Vishnu¹. (Doha no. 123)

[Note—¹The details of this story have been narrated as a note appended to verse no. 5 herein above.]

चौ०. तासु श्राप हरि दीन्ह प्रमाना । कौतुकनिधि कृपाल भगवाना ॥ १ ॥
तहाँ जलंधर रावन भयऊ । रन हति राम परम पद दयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāsu śrāpa hari dīnha pramānā. kautukanidhi kṛpāla bhagavānā. 1.
tahām̐ jalandhara rāvana bhaya'ū. rana hati rāma parama pada daya'ū. 2.

The merciful Lord who does strange things and plays maverick tricks proved her (Brinda's) curse true (by becoming a stone known as Shaaligram)¹. (1)

Meanwhile, the demon Jalandhar became Ravana in his next birth, and Lord Ram slayed his physical body to grant his soul deliverance, thereby helping the demon attain emancipation and salvation in the form of eternal peace and beatitude for himself, which is the highest attainment for any living being². (2)

[Note—¹This episode has already been narrated in detail as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 123 herein above.]

²This is the second reason cited by Lord Shiva for incarnation of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 103; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede Doha no. 114.}}

एक जनम कर कारन एहा । जेहि लगि राम धरी नरदेहा ॥ ३ ॥
प्रति अवतार कथा प्रभु केरी । सुनु मुनि बरनी कबिन्ह घनेरी ॥ ४ ॥

ēka janama kara kārana ēhā. jēhi lagi rāma dharī naradēhā. 3.
prati avatāra kathā prabhu kērī. sunu muni baranī kabinha ghanērī. 4.

This is one other reason why Lord Ram had to assume a human form.’ (3)

[Sage Yagyawalkya said to sage Bharadwaj¹—] ‘Oh Sage, listen (sunu muni)! Poets, bards and minstrels have narrated many episodes related to each such manifestation of the Lord².’ (4)

[Note—¹Let us not forget that it was sage Yagyawalkya who was narrating the story to sage Bharadwaj when the latter wished to hear it, and Yagyawalkya relied on the conversation of Lord Shiva and Parvati for his own narration. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 47.

²To wit, each manifestation of Lord Ram had some or the other unique feature typical to it, and though the outline remained similar yet details varied from one manifestation in one given era to another manifestation in another given era.

So therefore, learned poets, bards and minstrels narrated the divine story of Lord Ram in different ways, laying emphasis on different episodes while relating the story of the Lord’s life and deeds in accordance with their liking and preferences. This is why variations occur in the different versions of the story of the Ramayana.

In this context, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 140.]

नारद श्राप दीन्ह एक बारा । कल्प एक तेहि लगि अवतारा ॥ ५ ॥
गिरिजा चकित भई सुनि बानी । नारद बिष्णुभगत पुनि ग्यानी ॥ ६ ॥
कारन कवन श्राप मुनि दीन्हा । का अपराध रमापति कीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥
यह प्रसंग मोहि कहहु पुरारी । मुनि मन मोह आचरज भारी ॥ ८ ॥

nārada śrāpa dīnha ēka bārā. kalapa ēka tēhi lagi avatārā. 5.
giriḡā cakita bha’īm suni bānī. nārada biṣṇubhagata puni gyānī. 6.
kārana kavana śrāpa muni dīnhā. kā aparādha ramāpati kīnhā. 7.
yaha prasaṅga mōhi kahahu purārī. muni mana mōha ācaraja bhārī. 8.

[Continuing his narration, Lord Shiva tells Parvati—] ‘In one other Kalpa, it was the curse of sage Narad¹ that led to Lord Ram’s manifestation.’ (5)

Parvati (Girija, the daughter of the king of mountains) was astonished when she heard this. She expressed surprise when she said: ‘Oh Lord, sage Narad is a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, and is also very wise and enlightened.’ (6)

So it confounds me to learn that the sage would curse his Lord. Pray tell me, what was the reason why Narad cursed Lord Vishnu; what mistake or misdeed had the Lord done to invite the sage’s wrath? (7)

Oh Lord Purari (Shiva)! Please tell me in detail this particular episode, for I am greatly astonished that a sage of Narad’s stature would be overcome with delusions so much that he would curse his own Lord whom he adored so much!’ (8)

[Note—¹Sage Narad: The celestial sage Narad is said to be a manifestation of the Supreme Being’s Mana (mind and its thoughts, intentions, hopes, desires and wishes, as well as the heart and its emotions and sentiments). The Supreme Being implements his wishes and expresses his intentions and wishes by making Narad his spokesperson. Purans list uncountable instances when Narad has approached people—both the good and righteous as well as the demonic and unrighteous ones—to tell them the path best suited to them, and the wise ones treated this advice as the Lord’s wish while the unwise ones still benefited from it because Narad’s intention was always to turn a living being away from his sinful ways and lead him towards the good.

Since he is a personified Mana, he is as fickle, unstable and transient as the Mana—never staying at one place for more than a fleeting moment, always roaming here and there in the entire creation, having nothing to stop his path as he could go anywhere he wished. And the remarkable thing is that he was never unwelcome anywhere—even the demons welcomed him with the same respect as did the Gods.

It is believed that he is born in each Kalpa to carry out the wishes of the Supreme Being. [1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion human years.] He was a Gandharva (a semi-God who is a celestial musician) named Upbarhan in the previous Kalpa. He was physically very charming and an expert musician. Once he showed his amorous intentions towards Urvashi, a celestial dancer, in the presence of Brahma the creator where he was supposed to show exemplary restraint, and this overt show of lust resulted in his being cursed by Brahma that he would become fallen and take birth in the mortal world as a Shudra (a low caste). So, he was born from a maid servant of low caste working as a devoted servant of a learned Brahmin. Under the constant companion of this great Brahmin, Narad developed noble and auspicious virtues in him even though he was a mere child of five years. He was very modest, devoted, pious, noble hearted and diligent.

Since he had the Lord’s genes in him, his inclinations were more inclined towards the Spirit than the worldly charms of material sense objects which he detested from childhood. As luck would have it, once some wondering mendicants came to spend the four-month period of the rainy season in the hermitage of this Brahmin. Narad served them with great devotion. Impressed by his service and having some inner vision of his high spiritual stature and the spark of divinity that was lying hidden in him waiting for an opportune moment to leap up and shine through, they blessed

him, taught him meditation and contemplation, besides initiating the child into the path of the Lord.

Thus, the dormant fire of renunciation and spiritual awareness was immediately ignited in Narad's little heart and he wished to take to Sanyas (a renunciate's life marked by constant wandering as a mendicant in search of the supreme bliss and Truth), but he did not wish to hurt his mother's emotions. But the Lord had other plans for him, and soon his wish was fulfilled when his loving mother died of snake bite while milking a cow. Instead of grieving at such a loss in human terms, the child Narad felt happy as if the last fetter was broken and he was liberated from worldly obligations.

He immediately headed north towards the mighty Himalaya Mountains to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to attain access to the Supreme Being. The little one walked on and on, and finally he was so tired and exhausted that when he saw a cool lake he drank water, ate fruits that he found there, and sat under the shadow of a tree and became lost in meditation. Lord Vishnu revealed himself in his four-arm form in his heart, but Narad was so thrilled and excited with this divine vision that he wished to see the Lord in practical terms with his physical eyes rather than the subtle eyes while he was in deep meditation. But as soon as he opened the eyes, the Lord vanished. Most sorry and overwhelmed with this loss, the child began to cry bitterly. Then a cosmic formless reverberating voice said—'Oh son! Your penance is accepted, and I do love you. Though I bless you with an eternal life and that your memory of me would never be erased, but you would not be able to see me with physical eyes in this world. So go back to the world and carry out my divine mandate for me. Become my messenger and go preach the path of my devotion and holy name to this world so that other unfortunate creatures also can get liberation and deliverance from the fetters in which they have bound themselves with no one to show them an easy and practical way out of their predicaments. Go and preach my message to such people in every corner of the earth; go and preach my devotion and let them have faith in my holy name. Your salvation would come naturally and automatically to you as an unasked reward.'

Narad turned back with this divine mandate of the Lord to be carried out just like the great Apostles of Lord Jesus Christ had went, on the Lord's instructions, to spread his message to the people on this earth. Henceforth, he wandered in the entire creation like a mendicant, with an Indian lute upon which he sang the Lord's glories and his divine name, spreading the divine message of the Lord's mercy, compassion, benevolence and love everywhere, attempting to turn everyone towards the Lord and away from this sinful and mortal world so that each individual creature could get his spiritual liberation and deliverance. Such are the ways of great and holy saints that instead of being selfish to seek his own liberation and deliverance from the Lord as the grant of a boon and letting the rest of the world go to hell, Narad chose to sacrifice his own life, liberation and deliverance at the altar of larger good of creation and to fulfill the wish of the Lord. Of course there is another twist to this tale—the Lord does not select everyone to carry on his own divine agenda, and a soul who the Lord designates for this purpose is indeed the most favoured and lucky one—because the Emperor chooses only those upon whom he has utmost confidence to carry out his personal task. It is just like Jesus choosing his disciples and ordaining them the task of spreading his glorious Gospel of love and salvation.

Therefore, Narad, the apostle of the Supreme Being, is the most loved disciple of the Lord, and it is evidenced by the fact that he is the only saint who has unrestricted access to the abode of the Trinity Gods (Lord Vishnu the sustainer and

protector of creation, Brahma the creator and Shiva the concluder of this creation) besides every nook and corner of creation without hindrance and even without seeking any previous permission and appointment from anyone, be it a God or a Demon or anybody else. Narad's visit was always for the host's long term good, so he was always welcome and revered.

When the time came and the age of the physical body ended, he left the mortal coil like a serpent leaves its cuticle and went to heaven to sing the Lord's holy and divine name in the presence of Brahma, the old patriarch of creation. At the end of the Kalpa, at the time of Doomsday, he merged and became one with Brahma, the creator.

When the new cycle of creation came into being, he was born again from the Mana (mind) of Brahma the creator after the Sankadi sages were born. That is why, in the present Kalpa, Narad is called the 'Manas Putra' of Brahma, i.e. the son born out of Brahma's mental powers or his wishes. With this heritage and gene running in his blood, it is natural that he is highly respected and regarded as one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu who is the Supreme Being personified. It is from the navel of Lord Vishnu that Brahma, the creator of the visible world, was born atop a divine Lotus that emerged from it while he was reclining on the bed made of the coiled body of the legendary serpent named Seshnath who floated on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk called Kshirsagar.

Narad preached renunciation of this material world and an extreme sense of faith in and complete devotion for Lord Hari (Narayan, Vishnu, the Supreme Being). But this was against the process of creation, because if everyone followed the path preached by Narad and renounced the material world then the process of propagation of the world and its inhabitant creatures along with its development would come to a naught. So, when Narad preached renunciation and detachment from this material world of sense objects that was mortal, transient and never a giver of peace and happiness to the ten thousand mental sons who were created by Daksha Prajapti (the first male from whom the rest of the human race was born and who was assigned the task by Brahma to propagate creation) in order to propagate this human race, Narad obviously annoyed him. These sons were preached by Narad and they all became mendicants, renouncing their attachment with this life and all charms of the material world along with the desire to enjoy it, gratify their sense organs and remain entangled in affairs of this world. Daksha Prajapti was exasperated and he created another set of ten thousand sons. But when Narad again played spoil-sport, Daksha cursed him that Narad would have to remain on the move always and he would not be able to stay at one place for more than two 'Gharis'. [1 Ghari = 24 minutes. In practice the term means a very short period of time; a fleeting moment as small as batting an eyelid.] As a result of this curse, Narad became an ever-wandering mendicant. But this suited the divine mandate of the Lord—for now Narad was forced to keep on the move and reach newer corners of the worldly and celestial realm to preach the Lord's message amongst the mortal creatures on earth and the Gods and Spirits in the heaven.

It is believed that Narad is immortal and is symbolic of the stupendous powers of a man's mind. The mind is ever-wandering like Narad, and the subtle message in the entire lore is that one should tame this restless mind and train it to turn away from this mortal engrossing material world and instead turn towards the Lord for finding permanent liberation and deliverance from this world. A wise mind would teach (preach) the aspirant about the futility of pursuing this artificial world, and instead seek ways of finding the Truth that gives eternity and brings to an end the endless

litany of miseries and horrors, perplexities and confusions, restlessness and agitations that are invariably associated with un-truth, delusions and ignorance.

Narad was the most erudite and scholarly devotee of the Lord. No other sage or saint could match him in his scholarly acumen and profundity of wisdom (ref. Chandogya Upanishad, Canto 7, section 1, verse no. 2). Narad is also credited with the composition of the great Sutra (formula or key) called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra' which defines the eclectic principles and characteristics of the spiritual practice called Bhakti which is to have a profound and exemplary degree of devotion for and surrender to the Supreme Being. Narad himself epitomizes Bhakti at its most refined and developed form.

In Atharva Veda's *Narad Parivrajak Upanishad*, sage Narad has taught an assembly of sages the grand philosophy as well as the eclectic tenets of Sanyas, the life of total renunciation, detachment and dispassion, leading to one's spiritual liberation and deliverance.

The Atharva Veda's *Hayagriva Upanishad* has been revealed to sage Narad by Brahma the creator when the sage approached the latter with his quest for Brahm-Vidya, the knowledge of Brahm.

In *Garud Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, the creator Brahma has taught Narad the esoteric knowledge known as the 'Garud Vidya' which describes the secret Mantras pertaining to Garud, the divine mount of Lord Vishnu, as well as the Mantras which can help to counter the evil effects of all types of poisons arising from snake bites.

It was sage Narad who had told Valmiki the story of the Lord Ram which the latter penned down in the form of the epic *Ramayan* by sage Valmiki.

In Tulsidas' epic *Ram Charit Manas*, Lord Ram had explained to Narad why the Lord had not allowed him to marry in great detail. In essence the Lord told him that once he had taken the vows of renunciation and detachment to lead a life of a wandering hermit or friar, it would have been very wrong to marry. At the same time, the Lord has outlined the characteristic virtues of saints in the same discourse. Refer: *Ram Charit Manas*, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

Sage Narad was the greatest exponent of the spiritual practice of "Bhakti", the path of devotion and love that leads to God-realisation. He is famous as the sage who had expounded on the eclectic spiritual philosophy of Bhakti in his book of aphorisms on this theme, called "*Narad Bhakti Sutra*". It is believed that the principles of devotion and love for the Lord God that he has enunciated in this book were originally conceived by Lord Shiva, and Narad had been ordained by the Lord to spread this good message far and wide as the sage used to roam around in every corner of this creation.

Narad was a selfless saint, and therefore he was respected by all wherever he went. Even the demons praised him and welcomed him because they knew that he would always give them such advice as would be good for them. Everyone knew that Narad always taught of ways that would provide liberation and deliverance to the soul of all the creatures, and that his company will always do some good for even the greatest of sinners.

Although sage Narad was a great renunciate, an ascetic, a self-realised soul, and an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu, yet he was not immune to the overpowering effects of the Lord's mighty Maya (delusion creating powers) which spares none. Once it so happened that he did severe Tapa (penances and austerities) and even Kaamdeo, the god of passion and worldly attachments, could not sway him. This

unfortunately made Narad proud of his spiritual prowess, but it did not go well with Lord Vishnu as the Lord does not want his devotee to be proud of anything. So therefore, Lord Vishnu decided to teach Narad a lesson. It so happened that once Narad went visiting a great kingdom whose king asked him to see his daughter and tell something about her fate and future. She was none but Maya personified, sent by Lord Vishnu to test Narad's self-control over his senses. However, at first glance at this pretty damsel, Narad was so enchanted by her stunning beauty that he decided to 'marry her', something un-imaginable for a sage of Narad's stature to even think of. Thinking that his dear Lord Vishnu would help him in fulfillment of his wishes, Narad prayed to the Lord on this account. The Lord simply said: 'Oh Narad, I will do what it good for you.'

When, in due course of time, and as designed by Lord Vishnu to prevent sage Narad from falling into the trap of Maya and going astray from his chosen spiritual path of renunciation, it so happened that the girl's father organized a grand ceremony to select a husband for her, where Narad went and sat down haughtily in the front seat, confident that by Lord Vishnu's blessings the young lady would chose him and put the victory garland around his neck. But Lord Vishnu had made him look like a 'monkey', making Narad a clown and a butt of ridicule in the assembly. Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu had too gone to attend the ceremony, and the girl put the garland around the Lord's neck. Narad was absolutely furious, and he left in a huff. On the way to the abode of Vishnu to take him to task, he found that Lord Vishnu and that desired damsel were too going to heaven by the same path. This sight added oil to Narad's anger, and he cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being and suffer the agony of separation from a lady he would love as a human, just like the Lord had prevented Narad from having the company of the lady he loved and wished to marry. To honour Narad's words, Lord Vishnu came down to the mortal world as a human prince known as Lord Ram, and he had to suffer the profound grief of separation from his beloved wife Sita when she was kidnapped by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, and later on when she was sent in exile by Lord Ram himself due to some false scandal doing the rounds in Ayodhya, his kingdom.

Meanwhile, Narad realized his folly and asked the merciful and compassionate Lord Vishnu to forgive him. The Lord obviously obliged him. Then Narad went to remote mountains to do Tapa to repent for his mistake. This story is narrated in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 140.

Later on, when sage Narad met Lord Ram when he was alone in the forest and asked the Lord why he had not allowed him to marry, the Lord explained to him the reasons, which briefly meant that he loves his devotees and does not want them to harbour any kind of negative traits, such as pride and ego, as well as worldly desires and passions, which had cast their dark shadow on Narad during the time of the incident; so it was obligatory for the Lord to protect Narad's integrity and vows of Sanyas, which compelled the Lord to intervene and prevent Narad from falling in the trap of Maya by first becoming proud of his spiritual prowess, and then have a desire to get married. This is explicitly narrated in 'Ram Charit Manas', Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Doha no. 46.]

दो०. बोले बिहसि महेस तब ग्यानी मूढ़ न कोइ ।

जेहि जस रघुपति करहिं जब सो तस तेहि छन होइ ॥ १२४ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bōlē bihasi mahēsa taba gyānī mūrha na kō'i.
jēhi jasa raghupati karahim̄ jaba sō tasa tēhi chana hō'i. 124 (a).

Lord Shiva smiled and said: 'No one is either too wise or too dumb to do anything on his own. The irrefutable fact is whatever Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram) wishes happens at that moment.¹' (Doha no. 124-a)

[Note—¹This is one of the greatest tenets of Lord Shiva, and he had affirmed it earlier too as is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 56.

In this context of the tenet of Lord Ram's wish being supreme, refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 122 (sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud); (b) Aranya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 15 (Lord Ram tells Laxman).]

सो०. कहउँ राम गुन गाथ भरद्वाज सादर सुनुहु ।
भव भंजन रघुनाथ भजु तुलसी तजि मान मद ॥ १२४ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

kaha'um̄ rāma guna gātha bharadvāja sādara sunahu.
bhava bhan̄jana raghunātha bhaju tulasī taji māna mada. 124 (b).

[Sage Yagyawalkya said to sage Bharadwaj—] 'Oh Bharadwaj! I shall now narrate the divine, sacred and holy story of Lord Ram. Listen to it attentively and a lot of reverence and faith.'

Tulsidas (who penned the Book "Ram Charit Manas" which contains this conversation between Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj) makes this observation: One should abandon pride and all kinds of arrogance and ego¹ to listen this story of Lord Ram which has the mystical potential to rupture all delusions and torments associated with this gross mortal world of transmigration (birth and death). (Sortha no. 124-b)

[Note—¹When one is proud and egoist, he would feel ashamed to acknowledge that his knowledge is limited, that there is much more to hear and learn. A proud person would boast not only of his superior wisdom and knowledge but would also think that no one has more devotion for the Lord God than he has, or that no one is more diligent in leading an auspicious and holy way of life than he does. This will lead to his downfall and spiritual degradation. Tulsidas asserts that one should never have a false sense of pride and ego if one really wants to attain spiritual elevation leading to bliss and attaining the goal of receiving blessings from Lord Ram.

There are sterling instances in the story of Ram Charit Manas where we learn what happens if one listens to the divine story of Lord Ram with due attention, faith and reverence, and what happens if it is the opposite.

Garud had listened to the story fulfilling all the requirements—i.e. he listened to it attentively, with due devotion and belief, and the reward was that all his delusions that produced mental agitations and confusions were dispelled. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69.

On the other hand, we have the instance of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, who listened to the same story alongside her husband at the hermitage of sage

Agastya but unfortunately her mind was occupied somewhere else, and the result was that whatever mental peace she had was also lost, and she became overwhelmed with delusions that caused immense mental restlessness to her. The consequences were so grave that she lost faith even in her own husband's words of advice for her which ultimately forced Lord Shiva to abandon her for her impertinence and irreverence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

Lord Shiva has clearly hinted to Parvati about this fact—that the story which he had told her earlier but which could not remove her spiritual delusions was the same story which filled Garud with immense spiritual joy and a feeling of blessedness when all his doubts and confusions were removed. This will be evident when we read Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 68 in conjunction with Shiva's next observation in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 69.]

चौ०. हिमगिरि गुहा एक अति पावनि । बह समीप सुरसरी सुहावनि ॥ १ ॥
आश्रम परम पुनीत सुहावा । देखि देवरिषि मन अति भावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

himagiri guhā ēka ati pāvani. baha samīpa surasarī suhāvani. 1.
āśrama parama punīta suhāvā. dēkhi dēvariṣi mana ati bhāvā. 2.

There was a beautiful cave somewhere in the snow-covered mountains of the Himalayas, and near it flowed the river Ganges. (1)

It was a very pleasant place for pursuing spiritual practices, and it appealed to the Mana (mind and heart) of sage Narad. [To wit, Narad decided that it was the right place to meditate and pursue spiritual practices because of its serene and peaceful environment, its natural beauty, and also because the holy river Ganges flowed nearby.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹The story of Narad's delusions as will be narrated now is almost similar to the one narrated in Shiva Puran, Rudra Sanhita 2, Chapters 2-20.

It was usual that great sages, seers, hermits and ascetics chose a place that was charming and endowed with natural beauty, with a great river flowing in the vicinity, and having an environment of peace, solitude and serenity that was conducive for pursuing spiritual practices. They established their hermitages in such places, or simply lived alone to meditate and do Tapa (austerity and penances).

We have several examples in this connection. For instance, one is that of sage Bharadwaj—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 44.

The next is the hermitage of sage Valmiki—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 124 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram himself chose to abide for some time in Chitrakoot during his sojourn in the forest because of its natural beauty—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 133.

When Lord Ram stayed in Panchavati, he chose the place because it was on the banks of river Godavari, and was surrounded by mountains, lakes and forests that were the natural habitat of wild life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 14.]

निरखि सैल सरि बिपिन बिभागा । भयउ रमापति पद अनुरागा ॥ ३ ॥
सुमिरत हरिहि श्राप गति बाधी । सहज बिमल मन लागि समाधी ॥ ४ ॥

nirakhi saila sari bipina bibhāgā. bhaya'u ramāpati pada anurāgā. 3.
sumirata harihi śrāpa gati bādhi. sahaja bimala mana lāgi samādhi. 4.

Sage Narad wondered around the area for sometime and was mightily fascinated with the charm of its environs consisting of mountains, rivers and verdant forests. This charming environment ignited a renewed sense of affection for the holy feet of Lord Ramapati (i.e. Lord Vishnu) in the heart of the sage.

[To wit, the charming sight titillated the emotions of sage Narad so much that as a devotee of Lord Vishnu he remembered his dear Lord, and developed a renewed surge of affection for the holy feet of the Lord.] (3)

No sooner did Narad remembered Lord Vishnu with affection and devotion, than all remnants of whatever sins and their attendant curses¹ that may have dogged the sage and had robbed his peace of mind were neutralized, and he was calmed down to such an extent that he sat in a state of blissful trance called Samadhi. (4)

[Note—¹What was the curse from which Narad suffered? According to Bhagwat Mahapurān, Canto 6, Chapter 5, sage Narad had advised Daksha Prajapati's sons to pursue the path of renunciation and detachment to become a monk, instead of remaining involved in worldly affairs if they wished eternal peace and emancipation. This angered Daksha Prajapati who cursed Narad that he would never be able to stay at one place for long, and will always be on the move like a wondering monk.

According to another story, one of the daughters of Kaal (the god of death) was called Durbhagaa. She was not accepted by anyone as his wife for the simple reason that her father was the god of death. Once, during her wonderings, she saw Narad, and though she knew that he was a sage who had taken a vow to remain unmarried, she approached him with the proposal of wedlock, which obviously Narad declined. This angered her and she cursed him that he will always be on the move like a wondering friar.

So, this was the first occasion when Narad could find peace and stay calmly at one place for sometime to concentrate and meditate, because for the rest of his life he could not find any place to rest as he was always moving from one place to another.]

मुनि गति देखि सुरेस डेराना । कामहि बोलि कीन्ह सनमाना ॥ ५ ॥
सहित सहाय जाहु मम हेतू । चलेउ हरषि हियँ जलचरकेतू ॥ ६ ॥

muni gati dēkhi surēsa dērānā. kāmahi bōli kīnha sanamānā. 5.
sahita sahāya jāhu mama hētū. calē'u haraṣi hiyam jalacarakētū. 6.

Observing this state of sage Narad where he was immersed in transcendental meditation, the king of gods called Indra (who was extremely selfish and always jealous of sages who were meditating because he feared they would acquire some sort of greater powers than he possessed himself) got alarmed¹.

He summoned Kamdeo (cupid; the god of passion and lust) and asked him to go and face Narad (in order to distract him from his Samadhi, which is a transcendental state of meditation). (5)

Indra requested Kamdeo: 'For my sake, please take along all your helpers and go to prevent Narad from completing his spiritual practice²'.

Receiving these instructions, Kamdeo, who has a fish as an emblem on his flag or standard (jalacarakētū), cheerfully departed on his mission. (6)

[Note—¹Indra has been depicted in the Purans as a very selfish and greedy king of gods. Whenever any great sage did Tapa (penances and austerities) in order to gain some spiritual powers, Indra got alarmed as he feared that may be the sage was eyeing his throne as the king of gods. This proves how stupid Indra was, because a great sage would not stoop so low as to yearn for some great kingdom and enjoyment of the senses that accompany such acquisitions. But greed for power and pleasures is such an evil force that every time Indra would do something to throw a spanner and disrupt the spiritual practices of such sages. He would either depute Kamdeo or one of the courtesans, known as Apsaras, of his court to disturb the sage.

The next two Chaupai nos. 7-8 and Doha no. 125 that follow herein below would endorse this view about Indra.

²We have already read about another episode where Kamdeo was sent by Indra and other gods to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva. This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Doha no. 87. In this incident Lord Shiva had burnt Kamdeo to ashes. Hence it is logical to conclude that the present episode of Kamdeo being sent to disturb Narad occurred sometimes prior to Lord Shiva's episode.]

सुनासीर मन महुँ असि त्रासा । चहत देवरिषि मम पुर बासा ॥ ७ ॥

जे कामी लोलुप जग माहीं । कुटिल काक इव सबहि डेराहीं ॥ ८ ॥

sunāsīra mana mahum'asi trāsā. cahata dēvariṣi mama pura bāsā. 7.
jē kāmī lōlupa jaga māhīm. kuṭila kāka iva sabahi dērāhīm. 8.

Indra (whose other name was "sunāsīra") was greatly tormented in his Mana (mind and heart) that the celestial sage Narad wished to live in his kingdom¹. (7)

Verily indeed and forsooth, those who are lustful, rapacious, greedy and selfish are always suspicious and afraid of other people like an evil crow², thinking that others would somehow usurp their possessions, depriving them of their privileges and pleasures. (8)

[Note—¹Indra was alarmed that if Narad got an opportunity to stay in his capital city of Amravati, he would go around preaching spiritualism and its virtues of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from all sorts of sensual pleasures and enjoyment of sense objects of the world, which would be gravely detrimental to Indra's interests as he was accustomed to wallowing in them. So inspite of sending Kamdeo to disturb sage Narad's Samadhi, Indra was on his tenterhooks, as he was not certain if Kamdeo would succeed.

²A crow is used as an example of a wicked creature that is accustomed to stealing food, and is always afraid that it will be caught in the act and beaten severely. To wit, those who are greedy for power and worldly things are always scared that someone would deprive them of their possessions, without realizing that perhaps no one is bothered either about them or their belongings. This attitude robs them of peace of mind, and it makes them suspicious of one and all around them.]

दो०. सूख हाड़ लै भाग सठ स्वान निरखि मृगराज ।
छीनि लेइ जनि जान जड़ तिमि सुरपतिहि न लाज ॥ १२५ ॥

dōhā.

sūkha hāra lai bhāga saṭha svāna nirakhi mrgarāja.
chīni lē'i jani jāna jaṛa timi surapatihi na lāja. 125.

Just like the case of a stupid dog who has snatched a dry bone left over by a lion after feeding on its prey is always scared that the lion would detect it and kill the dog, so was Indra shameless in his fear that Narad would snatch his kingdom¹. (Doha no. 125)

[Note—¹The lion is not bothered about the dry piece of bone, but the dog thinks that the lion would catch hold of him and kill him. Likewise, sage Narad had such an exalted stature and was so highly evolved in spiritualism that the charm of worldly pleasures would never attract him in the least, but the lustful Indra thought otherwise as he was shameless and pervert to the extreme. In his eagerness to prevent Narad from completing his spiritual practice, Indra had become so upset that he did not even think that if Narad actually got angry at him he would curse Indra to doom.

This example of Indra shows that when a person becomes too jealous and rapacious, he forgets what is good and what is not good for him and others, and would often commit grave mistakes in his zeal to meet his selfish ends that he invites eternal ignominy and profound scorn for himself.

There is another instance in Ram Charit Manas where Indra has been deprecated in severe terms—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 302.

Indeed it is such an irony that Indra, who is not an ordinary god but a 'king' of gods, is treated with such disdain as to be compared with a 'crow' and a 'dog'. Why? The answer is found here in these verses themselves, where the character of Indra have been cited as one who is exceptionally greedy, passionate, lustful and rapacious, and who is ever fearful that someone was eyeing his throne and wishes to usurp his kingdom and authority (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 herein above).

This is a warning for all of us—that no matter how high a position we may occupy in this world and how mighty and resourceful we may be, but if our character is despicable and contemptible, than we are are condemned to be no better than a ‘crow’ and a ‘dog’.]

चौ०. तेहि आश्रमहिं मदन जब गयऊ । निज मायाँ बसंत निरमयऊ ॥ १ ॥
कुसुमित बिबिध बिटप बहुरंगा । कूजहिं कोकिल गुंजहिं भृंगा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

tēhi āśramahim madana jaba gaya'ū. nija māyām̃ basanta niramaya'ū. 1.
kusumita bibidha biṭapa bahuraṅgā. kūjahim kōkila guṅjahim bhṛṅgā. 2.

When Madan (Kamdeo cupid) went to that place where Narad was meditating and had achieved a transcendental state of stillness of the senses, a trance-like state called Samadhi, he (Kamdeo) used his magical powers to create an artificial environment reminiscent of the spring season¹. (1)

[So, what happened?] A most fascinating scenario unfolded as if by magic: the whole area was covered by green trees in their prime, laden with vibrant flowers of different colours, and fruits that were fully ripened. Cuckoos sang in merry abundance in their sweet tones, and bees hummed a sweet melody that captivated the senses. (2)

[Note—¹Kamdeo was adept in this trick. He had pulled out all plugs of restraint, and had employed all the tricks up his sleeve while trying to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva too, for he had created an artificial environment reminiscent of the spring and the rainy seasons in full bloom, when the earth is covered with greenery, and trees, flowers, fruits, birds and wildlife are a plenty, an atmosphere that would be conducive to sensual arousal even in the most dispassionate creature. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 85.

The enticement powers of the beauty of Nature, as well as that of Kamdeo who stokes passions, have been described in Ram Charit Manas elsewhere also. For instance, refer to: (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 39—to Doha no. 40; and (b) Kishkindha Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17; (c) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 23 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede it.

Refer specifically to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 38; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 7-9 that precede Doha no. 40; and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23.]

चली सुहावनि त्रिबिध बयारी । काम कृसानु बढावनिहारी ॥ ३ ॥
रंभादिक सुरनारि नबीना । सकल असमसर कला प्रबीना ॥ ४ ॥
करहिं गान बहु तान तरंगा । बहुबिधि क्रीड़हिं पानि पतंगा ॥ ५ ॥

calī suhāvani tribidha bayārī. kāma kṛṣānu baṛhāvanihārī. 3.
 rambhādika suranāri nabīnā. sakala asamasara kalā prabīnā. 4.
 karahiṁ gāna bahu tāna taraṅgā. bahubidhi krīrahiṁ pāni pataṅgā. 5.

A pleasant breeze that had the three characters¹ which incite the fire of passions and stoke longings began to blow. (3)

Celestial damsels (known as Apsaras) such as Rambha², who were in the prime of their youth and skilled in the art of inducement and stoking passions --- (4),

--- Were singing enticingly with melodious tunes, and dancing in merry abandon employing provocative gestures while playing with balls which they tossed around with their hands, and jumped and skipped energetically (in an attempt to draw attention of Narad towards their youthful form and frolicking around temptingly). (5)

[Note—¹The three types of breeze referred to here are the following: a breeze with a sweet fragrance, and a breeze which is soft and cool.

²These Apsaras were the attendants whom Kamdeo took along with him anywhere he went in order to disturb the meditation and contemplation of sages and hermits. These ladies would act most lustfully and promiscuously like prostitutes in order to arouse sensual longing and passions in those who they intended to distract and become fallen. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 61.]

देखि सहाय मदन हरषाना । कीन्हेसि पुनि प्रपंच बिधि नाना ॥ ६ ॥
 काम कला कछु मुनिहि न व्यापी । निज भयँ डरेउ मनोभव पापी ॥ ७ ॥
 सीम कि चाँपि सकइ कोउ तासू । बड़ रखवार रमापति जासू ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi sahāya madana haraṣānā. kīnhēsi puni prapañca bidhi nānā. 6.
 kāma kalā kachu munihi na byāpī. nija bhayam̐ ḍarē'u manōbhava pāpī. 7.
 sīma ki cāṁpi saka'i kō'u tāsū. baṛa rakhavāra ramāpati jāśū. 8.

When Kamdeo watched his attendants (i.e. the Apsaras) carrying out their assigned duties skillfully, he felt very glad (that he would succeed in his designs). Besides them, he himself devised a series of devices to accomplish his goal (to distract Narad and prevent him from successfully completing his meditation)¹. (6)

Meanwhile, all the tricks and stratagems of Kamdeo failed to have any effect on sage Narad, which resulted in Kamdeo getting terrified of the consequences of his mischief boomeranging on himself². (7)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, he who has Lord Vishnu (known as 'Ramapati') as his protector and benefactor, say who in this creation can ever violate his vows and defame him by causing any sort of harm to his reputation?

[To wit, since sage Narad was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, and presently was meditating on the Lord's divine form, how was it ever possible for the stupid

Kamdeo to disturb Narad in his spiritual practice? Though it was unthinkable, yet the dumb-witted Kamdeo played fool with Narad, but as was expected he could not disturb the Samadhi of Narad.]³ (8)

[Note—¹What role did Kamdeo himself played here? Well, he conjured up the fascinating scene resembling spring all around Narad in order to aid the provocative dances and singing of his lady attendants who were leaving no stones unturned to move Narad and fall in their trap.

²Why was Kamdeo terrified? Well he was sore affright that as soon as Narad realized that Kamdeo was trying to defile his meditation, there were fair chances that the sage would become furious at him and curse him, and Kamdeo was no stranger to Narad's spiritual powers, which, if invoked, would prove devastating for him. This fear of Kamdeo came true in an episode at a later day when Lord Shiva became exceptionally annoyed at him and burnt him to ashes when Kamdeo tried to disturb the meditation of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 87.}

³There is a universal message here: All devotees of Lord God are sure of the Lord's protective umbrella over their heads. No harm can ever come to them; and anyone thinking of harming them and playing fool with them is doing so at his own peril.

Lord Ram has himself promised this protection to his devotees in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 46 (to sage Narad); (b) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43 (in connection with Vibhishan); and (c) Uttar Kand, Doha and Sortha nos. 87 a and b, along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede them (to sage Kaagbhusund).]

दो०. सहित सहाय सभित अति मानि हारि मन मैन ।
गहेसि जाइ मुनि चरन तब कहि सुठि आरत बैन ॥ १२६ ॥

dōhā.

sahita sahāya sabhīta ati māni hāri mana maina.
gahēsi jā'i muni carana taba kahi suṭhi ārata baina. 126.

When Kamdeo failed in his attempts to disrupt sage Narad's meditation, and fearing a backlash from the sage, he thought it wise to take the initiative and beg forgiveness by going to Narad and clasping his feet as a gesture of submission with a plea for mercy.

So, he went and fell at the sage's feet and clasped them while saying words of humility, and pleading for forgiveness. (Doha no. 126)

चौ०. भयउ न नारद मन कछु रोषा । कहि प्रिय बचन काम परितोषा ॥ १ ॥
नाइ चरन सिरु आयसु पाई । गयउ मदन तब सहित सहाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

bhayaū na nārda mana kachū roṣā. kahi priya bacana kāma paritoṣā. 1.
nāi charana sirū āyasu pāī. gayau madana taba sahita shāī. 2.

There was no anger or scorn in the Mana (heart and mind) of sage Narad (as he was renowned for his compassionate and calm nature). Hence, the sage assuaged Kamdeo and made him feel comfortable by speaking politely to him¹. (1)

Thence, Kamdeo gratefully bowed his head at the feet of the sage, and took leave of him and went his way along with all his attendants. (2)

[Note—¹An important observation can be made here: The main objective of Kamdeo was to break the Samadhi, or the trance-like state, that Narad had attained while meditating on Lord Vishnu, and apparently he succeeded in it because we read that Narad and Kamdeo had a pleasant exchange of words. But this breaking of the Samadhi was a natural culmination of it when Narad realized that Kamdeo had come to offer his obeisance to him and was clasping his feet in reverence, and it is surely different from what Kamdeo had intended to actually do—which was to forcibly entice Narad to become lustful and get attracted to one of the Apsaras by breaking his religious vows of chastity and abstinence, known as Brahmcharaya, which Narad always followed. If that had happened, Narad would have fallen, but as it turned out Narad succeeded in upholding his stature as a great sage.]

मुनि सुसीलता आपनि करनी । सुरपति सभाँ जाइ सब बरनी ॥ ३ ॥

सुनि सब केँ मन अचरजु आवा । मुनिहि प्रसंसि हरिहि सिरु नावा ॥ ४ ॥

muni susīlatā āpani karanī. surapati sabhām̃ jā'i saba baranī. 3.

sunī saba kēṁ mana acaraju āvā. munihi prasansi harihi siru nāvā. 4.

Meanwhile, Kamdeo went to the court of Indra, the king of gods, and narrated the entire episode, highlighting the sage's resilience and courteous nature, as well as all that he had himself done. (3)

Everyone present there were astonished (at Narad's virtue of immense self-restraint and devotion for Lord Vishnu that had stood him in good stead in the face of passionate onslaught by Kamdeo), and all of them profoundly praised the sage and bowed at the holy feet of Lord Hari (to honour the Lord for granting protection to his devotees such as Narad)¹. (4)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 126 herein above.

Why was it surprising to resist Kamdeo? Well, Kamdeo represented the mighty forces of passion, lust and sensual pleasures in this creation, forces which are formidable and irresistible. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Sortha no. 85 which explicitly endorse this view.

The courtiers of Indra, i.e. the gods, were therefore in immense awe of Narad as they felt it was an exceptional achievement for the sage to withstand the enticements proffered by Kamdeo, and hold his ground and vows without falling prey to them. And then the gods also realized that this singular achievement of Narad was due to Lord Hari's grace upon him, and not due to any personal abilities of the sage.

This latter fact would be proved true too soon, as we shall presently read how the same Narad, who had stoutly resisted Kamdeo's provocations, would fell prey to passions and wish to marry a beautiful damsel.

But, why would that happen? The reason is that Narad became proud when he heard himself being praised by the gods, especially Lord Shiva, forgetting that he could maintain his vows solely because of the grace of his Lord Vishnu, and not because of his own abilities. So, the Lord wished to teach Narad a lesson, and made him fall in a trap similar to one from which Narad managed to escape and which made him so proud of his abilities. For let us remember: The Lord never wishes that any taint should tarnish the character of his true devotee. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 129 herein below.

Later on we shall learn that when Narad came to know why Lord Vishnu had done what the Lord did in order to bring Narad back on track and prevent him from committing the same error again, the sage had expressed his joy and thankfulness to the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45.]

तब नारद गवने सिव पाहीं । जिता काम अहमिति मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 मार चरित संकरहि सुनाए । अतिप्रिय जानि महेस सिखाए ॥ ६ ॥
 बार बार बिनवउं मुनि तोही । जिमि यह कथा सुनायहु मोही ॥ ७ ॥
 तिमि जनि हरिहि सुनावहु कबहूँ । चलेहुँ प्रसंग दुराएहु तबहूँ ॥ ८ ॥

taba nārada gavanē siva pāhīm. jitā kāma ahamiti mana māhīm. 5.
 māra carita saṅkarahi sunā'ē. atipriya jāni mahēsa sikhā'ē. 6.
 bāra bāra binava'um̐ muni tōhī. jimi yaha kathā sunāyahu mōhī. 7.
 timi jani harihi sunāvahu kabahūm̐. calēhum̐ prasaṅga durā'ēhu tabahūm̐. 8.

Meanwhile, sage Narad went to meet Lord Shiva¹; he was very proud that he had successfully vanquished Kamdeo. (5)

Narad boasted to Lord Shiva how he had managed to resist the attack of Kamdeo (māra carita), at which Lord Shiva, who considered Narad as very dear to him and was therefore worried for his welfare, advised him as follows: --- (6)

[Lord Shiva told Narad—] 'Oh Sage! I repeatedly pray to you as a request from me that the way you have narrated this episode to me, --- (7)

--- You will not do the same thing before Lord Hari ever, mind you. Even if the topic crops up during any conversation, try to deflect it and desist from elaborating it in any way whatsoever.² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is a senior God of the Trinity, and he does not attend the court of Indra where other gods are in attendance. Narad felt that since all other gods were already aware of his stupendous achievement as is clear from verse no. 4 herein above, so he thought that it will be better to skip them and instead go and visit Lord Shiva, for the latter might not be aware of Narad's success in defeating Kamdeo.

²Lord Shiva knew Lord Vishnu's nature, that the latter would never like his devotee to become boastful and proud. The way Narad behaved before Lord Shiva, it was clear to him that Narad has been overcome with pride and haughtiness, something that Lord Vishnu would certainly not tolerate. That is why Lord Shiva warned Narad to desist from raising this topic or be tempted to discuss it before Lord Vishnu.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 62 where Lord Shiva makes a similar observation regarding Garuda, and says that perhaps the latter had been proud sometimes in the past, and therefore Lord Ram wishes to rectify this error in him.]

दो०. संभु दीन्ह उपदेस हित नहिं नारदहि सोहान ।
भरद्वाज कौतुक सुनहु हरि इच्छा बलवान ॥ १२७ ॥

dōhā.

sambhu dīnha upadēsa hita nahim nāradahi sōhāna.
bharadvāja kautuka sunahu hari icchā balavāna. 127.

Though Lord Shiva had given a sincere advice to Narad, keeping in mind the latter's good, yet, due to the fiat of fate, Narad did not like it.

[Sage Yagyawalkya told Bharadwaj—] 'Oh Bharadwaj! Listen to this strange development that shows how the wish of Lord Hari is so powerful that it prevails over everything else.'¹ (Doha no. 127)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva had earlier made a similar observation when Sati would not listen to his advice not to question the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 56.

Once again, Lord Shiva reiterates the same view when Parvati expressed astonishment when the Lord told her that Narad had once cursed Lord Vishnu. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 124-a herein above.

The next verse no. 1 that follows herein below too says the same thing.]

चौ०. राम कीन्ह चाहिं सोइ होई । करै अन्यथा अस नहिं कोई ॥ १ ॥
संभु बचन मुनि मन नहिं भाए । तब बिरंचि के लोक सिधाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāma kīnha cāhahim sō'i hō'ī. karai an'yathā asa nahim kō'ī. 1.
sambhu bacana muni mana nahim bhā'ē. taba biranīci kē lōka sidhā'ē. 2.

[Sage Yagyawalkya told sage Bharadwaj—] 'Verily indeed and in all sooth, whatever happens in this world is in accordance with the wish of Lord Ram (the Supreme Being and the Lord of the world), and it is not feasible for anyone to do otherwise. [To wit, whatever happens in this creation is what the Lord wants, and it is not possible for anyone to do anything otherwise.]'¹ (1)

Lord Shiva's advice, though good intentioned and meant for the welfare of Narad², was not welcomed by the sage; on the contrary, he grumbled internally and developed a sore and grumpy mood³.

Taking leave of Lord Shiva, sage Narad went to the abode of Brahma, the creator⁴. (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in a number of verses in Ram Charit Manas—apropos; (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 52; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 56; (iii) Doha no. 124-b; (iv) Doha no. 174; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (v) Doha no. 171.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 127 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and the note that is appended to these verses herein above.

³Why was Narad sore and grumpy at Lord Shiva's advice? Well, first of all it should be noted that Lord Vishnu hadn't liked Narad developing a sense of pride at having vanquished Kamdeo. Narad had forgotten that it was the Lord's blessings and grace upon him that had enabled him to defeat Kamdeo, but instead he thought that he possessed great spiritual powers, and could command exemplary self-restraint on his senses and their inherent tendency for self-gratification that had enabled him to overcome the onslaught of passions unleashed by Kamdeo.

That Narad had become proud of his achievement is proved when he went to Lord Shiva and narrated the episode to him with a glint in his eyes, a proud smile on his face, and a voice that clearly betrayed his sense of haughtiness and self-importance that overcomes someone when he accomplishes an impossible task. It was when Lord Shiva observed this behaviour of Narad that did not behoove of a great sage, that he had warned the latter to refrain repeating the same mistake before Lord Vishnu, for Shiva was sure that this impertinent and haughty behaviour of the sage would certainly motivate Lord Vishnu to punish him in order to teach him a lesson, because Shiva knew that Lord Vishnu does not like any of his devotees to have even a spot of taint on his or her character.

So therefore, Lord Shiva advised sage Narad to observe restraint in this matter and not to advertise it before Lord Vishnu. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 127 herein above.

But instead of thanking Lord Shiva for preventing him from committing a grave mistake, Narad felt annoyed. Why so? It was because Narad thought that Shiva did not want him to get fame as a 'vanquisher of Kamdeo', and that he (Shiva) himself wished to be exclusively known as 'Kāmāri', i.e. 'a vanquisher of Kamdeo'—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 120-a.

So therefore, Narad became jealous of Shiva and disobeyed him, one other mistake he made, like what Sati had done by disobeying the Lord earlier. In both the cases, of Sati and Narad, the consequences of defying Lord Shiva were grave. Sati had to die by burning herself in the sacrificial fire pit*, and Narad would be turned into a monkey-faced clown to be ridiculed in a large assembly of suitors for a damsel#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64 (Sati); # Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 133—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 135 (Narad).}

⁴Narad was the son of Brahma. So here it means that after leaving Shiva, Narad headed home to the abode of his father Brahma, with a sour mood and sullen face. It is not clearly mentioned here whether or not he told Brahma anything about his adventure with Kamdeo. Perhaps he thought that it would be wrong and embarrassing to narrate such shameful incidents to his father, or because he was in such a bad mood that he clamped up and remained incommunicado for some times thereafter.

Probably his silence was because Lord Shiva's warning was fresh in his mind, and though he did not like it, yet he felt it would not be proper to completely neglect it. So he kept quiet before Brahma.]

एक बार करतल बर बीना । गावत हरि गुन गान प्रबीना ॥ ३ ॥
छीरसिंधु गवने मुनिनाथा । जहँ बस श्रीनिवास श्रुतिमाथा ॥ ४ ॥

ēka bāra karatala bara bīnā. gāvata hari guna gāna prabīnā. 3.
chīrasindhu gavanē munināthā. jaham' basa śrīnivāsa śrutimāthā. 4.

Once upon a time it so happened that Narad held his Indian lute in his hands, and while stringing it and singing Lord Vishnu's glories as was his wont, he went to the Kshir Sagar (the celestial ocean) where Lord Vishnu (Sri-Niwas)¹, the Lord who is worshipped and revered by the Vedas, had his abode². (3-4)

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is known as 'Sri-Niwas' because he lives with 'Sri', the goddess Laxmi who is the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity.

²Lord Vishnu reclines on the back of the coiled body of Seshnath, the celestial Serpent, as the latter floats on the surface of Kshir Sagar.

Why did Narad go to Lord Vishnu? Well, apparently it was quite natural for him to do so, for being a great devotee of Lord Vishnu, it was a practice of Narad to often pay a visit to the Lord.]

हरषि मिले उठि रमानिकेता । बैठे आसन रिषिहि समेता ॥ ५ ॥
बोले बिहसि चराचर राया । बहुते दिनन कीन्हि मुनि दाया ॥ ६ ॥

haraṣi milē uṭhi ramānikētā. baiṭhē āsana riṣihi samētā. 5.
bōlē bihasi carācara rāyā. bahutē dinana kīnhi muni dāyā. 6.

As soon as Lord Vishnu (known also as Rama-Niketa, the Lord near whom Rama, goddess Laxmi, resides) saw Narad arrive, he got up cheerfully to welcome the sage. Receiving him with due respect, Lord Vishnu sat down alongside the sage. (5)

The Lord of the whole world, both the animate and the inanimate world (carācara rāyā), smiled sweetly, and most courteously enquired from the sage: 'Oh Sage! It has been after a long time now that you have been kind enough to show grace on me by visiting me. [To wit, what is the reason you didn't come for so long a time?]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Remember: Lord Vishnu has great respect for his devotees, and he loves them more than anybody else. Besides this, Narad was a great sage, and his visit was always welcome by everyone in this world. This verse shows the great respect with which Lord Vishnu received sage Narad, though the Lord was no ordinary God, but the ‘Lord of the entire world, both the animate as well as the inanimate divisions of it’.

Well, Narad fell in this trap: when Lord Vishnu asked him why he was absent for a long time, the poor sage narrated his adventure with Kamdeo by way of explanation for his long absence, little realizing the trap he is falling into, as we shall presently read in the verses that follow herein below.]

काम चरित नारद सब भाषे । जद्यपि प्रथम बरजि सिवँ राखे ॥ ७ ॥
अति प्रचंड रघुपति कै माया । जेहि न मोह अस को जग जाया ॥ ८ ॥

kāma carita nārada saba bhāṣē. jadyapi prathama baraji sivam̐ rākhē. 7.
ati pracaṇḍa raghupati kai māyā. jēhi na mōha asa kō jaga jāyā. 8.

Narad narrated the entire episode related to Kamdeo by way of explaining his long absence, though Lord Shiva had expressly advised him not to do so before Lord Vishnu (even if the subject is raised indirectly during the course of some casual conversation related to any other matter)¹. (7)

[Sage Yagyawalkya observed—] ‘Indeed, the formidable powers of Lord Ram’s (also known as Lord Raghupati) Maya (delusions) are astounding and stupendously powerful. Verily, who is born in this mortal world that he is immune to the influence of this Maya? [To wit, none can escape the overriding influence of Maha of the Lord.]²’ (8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva had been explicit in this; refer specifically to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 127.

²Regarding the great powers of Maya, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 56 (where Lord Shiva expresses awe at the powers of Maya that provoked Sati to tell a lie); (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 60 (Brahma, the creator, observes that the Maya of Lord Ram is so great that there is no wonder that it caused delusions in the mind of Garuda, the king of birds).

‘Maya’ has many formats, and they are enumerated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72. It ought to be noted here that sage Narad has been specifically cited in these verses as an example of a great sage who was trapped by Maya (apropos: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70).

What is the first thing that Maya does to trap the creature? It makes him doubtful and uncertain—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 51 (with relation to Sati).

In the context of Narad, the ‘power of Maya’ made him doubt Lord Shiva’s wisdom in prohibiting him from telling Lord Vishnu anything related to his conquest of Kamdeo.

The formidable powers of Maya have been enumerated in Tulsidas' book 'Kavitawali Ramayan', Uttar Kand, verse no. 117 too.]

दो०. रूख बदन करि बचन मृदु बोले श्रीभगवान ।
तुम्हरे सुमिरन तें मिटहिं मोह मार मद मान ॥ १२८ ॥

dōhā.

rūkha badana kari bacana mṛdu bōlē śrībhagavāna.
tumharē sumirana tēm miṭahiṁ mōha māra mada māna. 128.

Sage Narad's narrative about Kamdeo was heard with a dry and impassive mood by Lord Vishnu, who replied, 'Oh Sage! All delusions, arrogance, pride and haughtiness are overcome by merely remembering you. [And therefore, I am so amused and astonished that a great sage of thine stature, who can bestow these boons on others who invoke his grace, wouldst himself fall in the same trap!]' (Doha no. 128)

[Note—¹This praise by Lord Vishnu further stoked self-pride and a sense of superiority in Narad. He could not read signs of annoyance on Lord Vishnu's face, and failed to understand that the Lord has not liked the way he has boasted of his success in the adventure with Kamdeo.

So instead of treating these words of Lord Vishnu as being said in sarcasm, the poor fellow Narad thought that the Lord was praising him. This pumped him further, and his bodily gestures betrayed his pride before Lord Vishnu, who surely did not like anything at all.]

चौ०. सुनु मुनि मोह होइ मन ताकें । ग्यान बिराग हृदय नहिं जाकें ॥ १ ॥
ब्रह्मचरज ब्रत रत मतिधीरा । तुम्हहि कि करइ मनोभव पीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu muni mōha hō'i mana tākēm. gyāna birāga hrdaya nahim jākēm. 1.
brahmacaraja brata rata matidhīrā. tumhahi ki kara'i manōbhava pīrā. 2.

[In these two verses, Lord Vishnu continues to tease Narad by superficially praising him in order to test whether any trace of negative virtues of pride, ego, haughtiness and superiority complex of being self-righteous has found a foothold in him, thereby corrupting the sage's inherent purity and holiness of his soul, which, if true, would be detrimental for the spiritual welfare of Narad, and would compel the Lord to intervene and take remedial actions to protect the future of his beloved devotee. With this noble view in mind, Lord Vishnu said to Narad—]

'Sage, listen. Delusions and attachments have their negative effect on the Mana (mind) of those who do not have 'Gyan' (awareness of the truth; gnosis; wisdom and enlightenment) and 'Vairagya' (sense of dispassion, detachment and renunciation) in their hearts. (1)

You, on the contrary, are steadfast in your vows of Brahmacharya (practicing abstinence and self-control over the senses) and have a stable mind. Say then, how can Kamdeo ever disturb your inner peace and stability; no, it's not possible for him!

[To wit, since you have such exemplary self-control over your mind and heart, since none of the worldly temptations are strong enough to ever distract you from following the spiritual path of renunciation and dispassion you have chosen for yourself, since you are stringent in following and upholding the path of devotion for me, and since you rely on me for protection and help, so obviously Kamdeo would never succeed in his evil designs against you.]¹ (2)

[Note—¹As has been noted in the beginning of these verses, Lord Vishnu wished to ascertain if Narad's inner-self had retained its pious and holy nature, if Narad still had total reliance on the Lord for success in any endeavour; if he believed that his success in overcoming the provocative attack of Kamdeo was due to Lord Vishnu's grace and the protective shield the Lord throws around his devotees, or whether he thought that he had defeated Kamdeo out of his own personal abilities.

The fact is that Lord Vishnu loves his devotees so much that if the latter makes an error, then the Lord intervenes immediately to rectify it, lest it may become a big issue later on and prove detrimental for the spiritual welfare of the devotee. This has been made abundantly clear in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43; and (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

Lord Vishnu himself makes this declaration in verse nos. 5-6 herein below.

Now in the case of Narad, Lord Vishnu had guessed correctly that Narad was proud of his success over Kamdeo as would be clear in the next set of verses that follow herein below. Lord Vishnu did not like this to happen to Narad, because a true sage who is a devotee of the Lord, as well as enlightened and self-realised, oughtn't have the negative traits of pride, ego and haughtiness in him.]

नारद कहेउ सहित अभिमाना । कृपा तुम्हारि सकल भगवाना ॥ ३ ॥
 करुनानिधि मन दीख बिचारी । उर अंकुरेउ गरब तरु भारी ॥ ४ ॥
 बेगि सो मैं डारिहउँ उखारी । पन हमार सेवक हितकारी ॥ ५ ॥
 मुनि कर हित मम कौतुक होई । अवसि उपाय करबि मैं सोई ॥ ६ ॥

nārada kahē'u sahita abhimānā. kṛpā tumhāri sakala bhagavānā. 3.
 karunānidhi mana dīkha bicārī. ura aṅkurē'u garaba taru bhārī. 4.
 bēgi sō maim ḍāriha'um' ukhārī. pana hamāra sēvaka hitakārī. 5.
 muni kara hita mama kautuka hōī. avasi upāya karabi maim sōī. 6.

Narad became proud at this pretension of praise by Lord Vishnu. So he said haughtily, 'Oh Lord! Everything is your grace.'¹ (3)

The merciful Lord thought to himself: 'A great tree of pride and haughtiness has sprouted in the heart of the sage. (4)

I shall soon uproot and throw it away, for it is my vow that I shall do whatever is needed for the good and welfare of my devotees². (5)

Surely I shall do something wondrous and playful that would be a source of amusement for me, and at the same time it would be for the good of the sage.³ (6)

[Note—¹Narad's words were apparently what one would normally expect as an answer; outwardly they were courteous and civil. But the tenor of his voice, the manner of his utterance, the gestures of his body, the expression on his face, the flicker in his eyes, the curving of his lips, straightening of his head over his shoulders, and his general demeanours betrayed that pride, ego and haughtiness had overcome Narad. Instead of blushing at the praise by Lord Vishnu, and feeling bashful and humbled, Narad displayed signs of pride and haughtiness, which Lord Vishnu who was closely watching him and every single movement of his body, could not miss. Refer also to verse no. 7 herein below.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-10 that precede Doha no. 43; (b) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 74 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.

³What game Lord Vishnu played with Narad in order to teach the latter a lesson would be narrated in the following verses that follow herein below. But the narrative does not explain what good Lord Vishnu meant for Narad, which the Lord would by-and-by explain later on in his form as Lord Ram when Narad expressly asked the Lord for an explanation—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.]

तब नारद हरि पद सिर नाई । चले हृदयँ अहमिति अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥
श्रीपति निज माया तब प्रेरी । सुनहु कठिन करनी तेहि केरी ॥ ८ ॥

taba nārada hari pada sira nāī. calē hṛdayam̐ ahamiti adhikāī. 7.
śrīpati nija māyā taba prēri. sunahu kaṭhina karanī tēhi kēri. 8.

Then sage Narad bowed at the feet of Lord Hari and departed from there, with his heart puffed up more with an excess of pride and haughtiness¹. (7)

[Sage Yagyawalkya told Bharadwaj as he continued with his narration—] ‘Listen sage about how Lord Vishnu (Sripati) motivated his Maya (powers to create delusions) to cast its veil, which in turn played a trick by doing a formidable act worthy of paying attention.² (8)

[Note—¹Narad was already proud that he had defeated Kamdeo and was praised in the full court of Indra, the king of gods—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 127.

Meanwhile, Lord Shiva's warning acted as a dampener for his self-pride, as he had not liked it, and so he had become sullen and grumpy—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 127 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

So when Lord Vishnu himself praised him, Narad, being unaware of the Lord's real intentions, was pumped up with a renewed air of pride, ego and haughtiness.

²What did Maya do to trap Narad? This is narrated herein below in Doha no. 129—to Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 130.

What was the intention of this act? It was to show Narad how powerful a force Kamdeo, who represented passion and lust, was, and how easily he would trap the sage just a few hours after the latter thought he was so great and honourable as to have vanquished Kamdeo's might, and for which he got so much praise from Lord Vishnu.

The events that unfolded now onwards would prove to Narad that his boast of a successful feat of defeating the temptations of Kamdeo was not due to his own abilities of self-restraint, but it was due to the grace of Lord Vishnu, whose devotee he was, that had enabled the sage to successfully overcome the onslaught of Kamdeo.]

दो०. बिरचेउ मग महुँ नगर तेहिं सत जोजन बिस्तार ।
श्रीनिवासपुर तें अधिक रचना बिबिध प्रकार ॥ १२९ ॥

dōhā.

biracē'u maga mahum' nagara tēhim sata jōjana bistāra.
śrīnivāsapura tēm adhika racanā bibidha prakāra. 129.

[Now we shall read what trick Maya played on Narad.] Somewhere on the path taken by Narad, Maya created an illusionary city of wonderful beauty that spread for an area of eight hundred square miles (nagara --- sata jōjana bistāra).

It was exceptionally fascinating, and surpassed the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu in its beauty and charm. It was well planned and endowed with a wide array of wonderful architectural marvels. (Doha no. 129)

चौ०. बसहिं नगर सुंदर नर नारी । जनु बहु मनसिज रति तनुधारी ॥ १ ॥
तेहिं पुर बसइ सीलनिधि राजा । अगनित हय गय सेन समाजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

basahim nagara sundara nara nārī. janu bahu manasija rati tanudhārī. 1.
tēhim pura basa'i sīlanidhi rājā. aganita haya gaya sēna samājā. 2.

In this marvelous city of exceptional beauty there lived handsome citizens, the males resembled Kamdeo himself, and the females were like so many Ratis (wife of Kamdeo) in disguise. (1)

In that city dwelt a king named Seelnidhi. He was a rich and prosperous king with countless horses and elephants at his disposal along with large army. (2)

सत सुरेस सम बिभव बिलासा । रूप तेज बल नीति निवासा ॥ ३ ॥
बिस्वमोहनी तासु कुमारी । श्री बिमोह जिसु रूपु निहारी ॥ ४ ॥

sata surēsa sama bibhava bilāsā. rūpa tēja bala nīti nivāsā. 3.
bisvamōhanī tāsu kumārī. śrī bimōha jisu rūpu nihārī. 4.

His majesty and grandeur were like those of seven kings of gods combined. He was a virtual embodiment of the virtues of physical fitness, energy and dynamism, strength and valour, as well as wisdom and skills pertaining to kingship (i.e. he was well versed in the art of politics, administration, law and justice, diplomacy, and warfare). (3)

He had a daughter whose beauty and charm were so extraordinary that she would not only attract the attention of the whole world but could even fascinate goddess Laxmi who was in awe of her charismatic personality. (4)

सोइ हरिमाया सब गुन खानी । सोभा तासु कि जाइ बखानी ॥ ५ ॥
करइ स्वयंवर सो नृपबाला । आए तहँ अगनित महिपाला ॥ ६ ॥

sō'i harimāyā saba guna khānī. sōbhā tāsu ki jā'i bakhānī. 5.
kara'i svayambara sō nṛpabālā. ā'ē taham'aganita mahipālā. 6.

This damsel was in reality Lord Hari's Maya herself personified. The Maya is a treasury of all qualities that can fascinate the world beyond measure, and it could hold the entire world in its awe. This being the case, it is not possible to describe the beauty of this damsel in entirety. (5)

Meanwhile, the king, her father, wished to marry her, and for this purpose he had organized a grant marriage ceremony called 'Swayambar'¹ in which countless kings and princes of the realm had come to try their luck². (6)

[Note—¹A Swayambar is a marriage ceremony wherein the bride is free to choose her groom. This method was adopted by the king to enable his daughter to pick her future husband.

Another variant of this ceremony is when the father declares a certain condition for her marriage, and anyone who fulfils this condition would marry the princess. Sita's marriage with Lord Ram was formalized by this latter method. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240; (iii) Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.}

²The princess was singularly beautiful, and this attracted all great suitors to the venue in the hope that one of them would be the lucky fellow.

A similar thing had happened in the case of Sita too, who too was renowned for her charm and beauty. Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it.]

मुनि कौतुकी नगर तेहिं गयऊ । पुरबासिन्ह सब पूछत भयऊ ॥ ७ ॥

सुनि सब चरित भूपगृहँ आए । करि पूजा नृप मुनि बैठाए ॥ ८ ॥

muni kautukī nagara tēhim गया'ū. purabāsinha saba pūchata bhaya'ū. 7.
suni saba carita bhūpagṛham'ā'ē. kari pūjā nrpa muni baiṭhā'ē. 8.

When sage Narad passed by and saw this wonderful city, he was highly fascinated by its charm and came to visit it. He asked the citizens whom he met on the way the cause of such festivities and decorations that adorned the city with such fanfare. (7)

Having learnt about the reason for all the festivities (that a grand marriage ceremony was being organized by the king for his daughter), the sage came to the palace of the king, who warmly welcomed Narad (as he was a renowned sage) by worshipping him and giving him a seat to sit down. (8)

दो०. आनि देखाई नारदहि भूपति राजकुमारि ।

कहहु नाथ गुन दोष सब एहि के हृदयँ बिचारि ॥ १३० ॥

dōhā.

āni dēkhā'ī nāradahi bhūpati rājakumāri.

kahahu nātha guna dōṣa saba ēhi kē hṛdayam' bicāri. 130.

The king (realizing that he was fortunate to have a great sage as his guest) called his daughter, the princess, to show her to Narad.

He said to Narad: 'Oh Lord! Consider all her virtues and faults in your heart and tell them (to me).'¹ (Doha no. 130)

[Note—¹It was customary that when a great sage visited someone who had a daughter or son, the host would welcome the visiting sage, and after seeking his blessings would ask the sage to tell about qualities and the future of the daughter or the son.

So, whenever sage Narad, who had the mystical power to read into the past and future lives of all, happened to visit some great king who had a daughter, the king would use this opportunity to learn about her personal virtues and her future. It had happened so with the case of goddess Parvati's father Himwan, the king of the mountains: When Narad visited Himwan's household, the latter summoned Parvati and made her pay respect to the sage by bowing at his feet, and then he asked Narad to tell him about her qualities as well as prophesize about her future. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 66—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68.]

चौ०. देखि रूप मुनि बिरति बिसारी । बड़ी बार लागि रहे निहारी ॥ १ ॥

लच्छन तासु बिलोकि भुलाने । हृदयँ हरष नहिं प्रगट बखाने ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

dēkhi rūpa muni birati bisārī. barī bāra lagi rahē nihārī. 1.

lacchana tāsu bilōki bhulānē. hṛdayam' haraṣa nahim pragata bakhānē. 2.

When sage Narad saw the damsel, he was taken aback (and literally swept off his feet) by her phenomenal beauty and exceptional charm so much so that for once he forgot all about his vows of renunciation, dispassion and detachment from worldly temptations as well as sensual attractions (*birati bisārī*).

He gazed transfixed at the lass for quite some time¹. (1)

Narad was so much overcome with passion that he forgot to do what the king had requested him in the first place, viz. to examine her virtues and faults, and tell about them to her father. On the contrary, he felt a thrill spreading all over him and titillating his heart, but he managed to conceal it and said nothing overtly about it². (2)

[Note—¹To wit, the power of Maya is so great that Narad did not even feel embarrassed that her father was closely watching all his actions, and this way of looking lustfully at an unmarried lady in front of her father was highly objectionable as well as contemptible for a sage of his stature.

²To wit, Narad did his best to hide the personal attraction that he had developed towards this girl. Now, it was not only the damsel's physical beauty that had bewitched Narad, for he was also struck by her other virtues about which we shall read in the verses that follow herein below. This combination, of physical beauty and excellent subtle qualities that defined her future, was so lethal, so to say, that it completely paralysed Narad's wisdom and sense of propriety, as we shall discover soon.]

जो एहि बरइ अमर सोइ होई । समरभूमि तेहि जीत न कोई ॥ ३ ॥
सेवहिं सकल चराचर ताही । बरइ सीलनिधि कन्या जाही ॥ ४ ॥

jō ēhi bara'i amara sō'i hō'ī. samarabhūmi tēhi jīta na kō'ī. 3.
sēvahim sakala carācara tāhī. bara'i sīlanidhi kan'yā jāhī. 4.

[What were the qualities that Narad espied in the princess?]

Narad thought to himself: 'Anyone who marries this damsel would become immortal; he would be invincible in any battle for no one would be able to defeat him in the battle-field. (3)

Further, any person who marries the daughter of king Seelnidhi would be served by all in this creation, both the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of it.'¹ (4)

[Note—¹A ridiculous situation has arisen here. Narad was a highly respected and learned 'sage', one who had renounced the world and its temptations. So, his first fault was to get enchanted by the girl's physical beauty as we have read in the previous verses.

His next faults, or should we say slips, that led to his downfall are outlined here: How should he be concerned with being invincible in wars for sages don't fight wars, and why should he have a desire to become immortal, for it is expected from a wise and self-realised sage that he would know that no one is immortal in this world.

And third, he saw that her husband would be a great Lord who would be

served by one and all in this creation, but did not realize that this is the sole right and authority of the Supreme Being. So, how foolish it was for Narad to not realize that her husband would be no one else but Supreme Being himself!

These things show how Maya had completely deluded and corrupted Narad's wisdom and intellect.]

लच्छन सब बिचारि उर राखे । कछुक बनाइ भूप सन भाषे ॥ ५ ॥
सुता सुलच्छन कहि नृप पाहीं । नारद चले सोच मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

lacchana saba bicāri ura rākhē. kachuka banā'i bhūpa sana bhāṣē. 5.
sutā sulacchana kahi nṛpa pāhīm. nārada calē sōca mana māhīm. 6.

He thought over the lass's virtues and kept them concealed in his heart, not saying anything about them in the open. On the contrary, he cooked up some false qualities about her and told the king about these imaginary virtues¹. (5)

He told the king in a summary manner, 'Your daughter has good virtues', and departed from there while brooding over the matter in his Mana (heart and mind)². (6)

[Note—¹This is the next fault that Narad committed—of telling a lie. It was something unpardonable for a great sage, so now he became a fit candidate to invite chastening by Lord Vishnu.

²Passion and lust are overwhelming forces in this world. Narad's boast of having vanquished Kamdeo, the god symbolizing passion and lust, fell flat right on his face. So, being overcome with desires, Narad brooded over the matter after leaving the king's palace, wondering what to do next so that he would realize his dreams of somehow marrying this pretty and well-endowed girl who had such exemplary and rare virtues to her credit.

A remarkable thing has happened here that nailed the last nail in Narad's doomed fate: For quite some time, Narad forgot about his devotion for Lord Vishnu and his wont to remember the Lord every moment of his life, for now his mind and heart were occupied by the thoughts of the enchanting princess, leaving no space for devotion and remembrance of Lord Vishnu. This left a gap for the Devil to step in and play his dirty tricks on the poor sage. We shall presently see in the verses that follow herein below what happened to Narad.]

करौं जाइ सोइ जतन बिचारी । जेहि प्रकार मोहि बरै कुमारी ॥ ७ ॥
जप तप कछु न होइ तेहि काला । हे बिधि मिलइ कवन बिधि बाला ॥ ८ ॥

karauṁ jā'i sō'i jatana bicārī. jēhi prakāra mōhi barai kumārī. 7.
japa tapa kachu na hō'i tēhi kālā. hē bidhi mila'i kavana bidhi bālā. 8.

Narad thought to himself: 'I shall go and do something to devise a means by which the virgin (kumārī) would marry me. (7)

Alas! Time is short, and it is not possible to do Japa (repetition of a holy Mantra) or Tapa (penance and austerity)¹ now at this moment. Oh Creator and Writer of destiny (bidhi)¹! I wonder how I would get the hand of this damsel (in marriage)!’ (8)

[Note—¹We learn from the scriptures that when anyone wished to fulfill his desires, he would usually do Japa and Tapa to please some great God, who would then grant the desired wish as a boon to the person.

We have the example of king Manu and queen Satrupa doing it to worship Lord Vishnu as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 145.

¹Usually the creator Brahma would be worshipped, as was done by Ravana and his brothers who offered worship to the creator Brahma, who then appeared before them to grant their wishes as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 177 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Narad remembered Brahma because the latter was his father. So Narad thought that it would be easier to approach Brahma to have his desires fulfilled because a father is more inclined to see his son happy than anyone else.]

दो०. एहि अवसर चाहिअ परम सोभा रूप बिसाल ।
जो बिलोकि रीझै कुअँरि तब मेलै जयमाल ॥ १३१ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi avasara cāhi'a parama sōbhā rūpa bisāla.
jō bilōki rījhai ku'amri taba mēlai jayamāla. 131.

[Narad contemplated thus—] ‘The need of the hour is to have rare and exceptional personal charm and a handsome body that would have no match in this world, so that when the princess is asked to choose someone as her husband she would be so much attracted and bewitched by this charming prince that she would have no hesitation in putting the victory garland around his neck¹.’ (Doha no. 121)

[Note—¹In the Swayambar form of marriage which was organized for the wedding of the princess, the would-be bride is given a garland and asked to move around in the row of suitors to select that person whom she would like to be her future husband by putting the garland around his neck.]

चौ०. हरि सन मागौं सुंदरताई । होइहि जात गहरु अति भाई ॥ १ ॥
मोरें हित हरि सम नहिं कोऊ । एहि अवसर सहाय सोइ होऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hari sana māgauṁ sundaratāī. hō'ihī jāta gaharu ati bhāī. 1.
mōrēm hita hari sama nahim kō'ū. ēhi avasara sahāya sō'i hō'ū. 2.

[Determining that the need of the hour was to have a matchless personality and physical charm that would be powerful enough to bewitch the princess and tempt her

to select that person as her would-be husband, Narad wracked his mind to find out how to go about it and acquire such a charming personality as needed so that his desire to get the hand of the damsel in marriage could be realized. Time was running out for him, so he finally decided to seek quick help from his beloved benefactor, Lord Vishnu, for he was sure that the Lord would not disappoint him.]

Sage Narad decided thus: ‘I shall request Lord Hari to give me that beauty which is needed now. But oh brother, the problem is that time is running out, and I will be late if I go to the Lord’s abode in the heaven (and I am not even certain if the Lord is there at present)¹. (1)

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, there is no one who is a better well-wisher and benefactor of mine than Lord Hari (Vishnu). I am absolutely sure that he would come to my help and provide succour to me now.², (2)

[Note—¹Almost a similar sort of predicament was faced by mother earth and the gods when they decided to approach Lord Vishnu to request him to protect them from the tyranny of the demons—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 185.

²Well, this is one single point that goes to the credit of sage Narad: that at least and at last he did remember and realize that Lord Vishnu was his best friend, well-wisher and benefactor. It was good for Narad that he did so, for now it became obligatory for the Lord to take remedial steps and ensure that Narad does not fall in the trap of worldly temptations and passions symbolized by the desire for matrimony, for let us not forget that Narad was a sage who was committed to uphold the vows of celibacy, abstinence, renunciation, dispassion and detachment—all of which would have been tossed out of the window had he been allowed to marry.

And true to his famed reputation that he would go out of his way to protect the interest of his devotees, Lord Vishnu did just that: the Lord prevented Narad from marrying that princess. How? We shall now be reading this fascinating act in the verses that follow herein below.

Lord Vishnu himself promised to Narad that he would do what is in the best interest of the sage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 132 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it.

But Narad was so obsessed by passion and lust at the time, and his wisdom so much clouded by delusions, that he could not decipher what Lord Vishnu hinted at. When it finally so happened that Narad could not fulfill his desire to marry, he became so peeved and exasperated that he stooped so low as to curse his only benefactor, Lord Vishnu, as we shall see soon in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 136—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137 herein below.

What intrigued Narad and gnawed constantly at his mind was the question as to why Lord Vishnu prevented him from marrying. Later on, Lord Vishnu tells Narad the reason for doing so in the Lord’s manifestation as Lord Ram, when the sage went to the Lord to pay his obeisance to him and broached the subject. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.]

बहुबिधि बिनय कीन्हि तेहि काला । प्रगटेउ प्रभु कौतुकी कृपाला ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु बिलोकि मुनि नयन जुड़ाने । होइहि काजु हिँ हारषाने ॥ ४ ॥

bahubidhi binaya kīnhi tēhi kālā. pragaṭē'u prabhu kautukī kṛpālā. 3.
prabhu bilōki muni nayana juṛānē. hō'ihi kāju hi'ēm̃ haraṣānē. 4.

Narad prayed to Lord Vishnu in various ways in an urgent manner, and the merciful Lord who does mysterious things revealed himself before the sage¹. (3)

The sage felt that his eyes were blessed to have a divine view of the Lord when the latter appeared before him. At the same time, the sage was exhilarated in his heart because he felt that now his wishes would be fulfilled.² (4)

[Note—¹A similar thing had happened at the time mother earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu in order to request the Lord to protect them from the demons. At that time, Lord Shiva had advised them to pray to Lord Vishnu with devotion and sincerity, and the Lord would appear immediately before them, then and there. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 185 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

²Narad had pinned his hopes on Lord Vishnu. So when the Lord actually revealed himself before the sage, he thought it to be good sign, for he was sure that the Lord would not deny him his one single wish. This feeling of success excited him.]

अति आरति कहि कथा सुनाई । करहु कृपा करि होहु सहाई ॥ ५ ॥
आपन रूप देहु प्रभु मोही । आन भाँति नहिँ पावौँ ओही ॥ ६ ॥
जेहि बिधि नाथ होइ हित मोरा । करहु सो बेगि दास मैं तोरा ॥ ७ ॥
निज माया बल देखि बिसाला । हिँ हँसि बोले दीनदयाला ॥ ८ ॥

ati ārati kahi kathā sunāī. karahu kṛpā kari hōhu sahāī. 5.
āpana rūpa dēhu prabhu mōhī. āna bhām̃ti nahim̃ pāvauṃ ōhī. 6.
jēhi bidhi nātha hō'i hita mōrā. karahu sō bēgi dāsa maim̃ tōrā. 7.
nija māyā bala dēkhi bisālā. hiyam̃ ham̃si bōlē dīnadayālā. 8.

Narad could not contain his excitement and sense of urgency when he eagerly narrated to Lord Vishnu the whole episode, and pleaded with the Lord for his help in this matter.

Narad said: 'Oh Lord, please be kind and help me. (5)

Bestow upon me a charm and beauty that is like your own, for otherwise I will not be able to acquire her (i.e. the princess). (6)

Oh Lord! In whatever way my good and well-being is possible, please be gracious enough to do it urgently—because Lord, I am your servant!¹ (7)

Smiling himself in amusement² when he observed the overriding power and might of his Maya (i.e. the Lord's ability to create delusions in order to keep control over this creation), and the maverick tricks it can play, Lord Vishnu said to Narad --- (8)

[Note—¹Refer to Chaupai no. 2 earlier where Narad has said the same thing, and as we have noted in a note appended to that verse, at last this belief of Narad came to his rescue, for now it was left upon Lord Vishnu to decide what was and what was not good for the sage.

There is a message of immense importance for all of us here: that we must leave the final decision about our life and its fate, and whether something we desire is good or not for us, in the hands of our beloved Lord God, and give the Lord a free hand in this matter by not forcing our own wills upon him on the pretext that he ought to honour his commitment to fulfill our wishes. Remember: Our vision is short and we think of immediate goals, but our Lord God thinks of our long-term good, and is more concerned about our destiny than we can ever realize. This way, we will be the happiest person in this world—free from worries and at peace with ourselves.

²Lord Vishnu 'smiled in amusement' because it was the same Narad who had, just a while ago, seemed to be the most upright and perfect sage of an immaculate character, whom not even the might of Kamdeo could distract, and it was such an irony that now Narad seemed hell-bent to get married because passion and lust had overcome him!]

दो०. जेहि बिधि होइहि परम हित नारद सुनहु तुम्हार ।
सोइ हम करब न आन कछु बचन न मृषा हमार ॥ १३२ ॥

dōhā.

jēhi bidhi hō'ihi parama hita nārada sunahu tumhāra.
sō'i hama karaba na āna kachu bacana na mṛṣā hamāra. 132.

[Lord Vishnu assured Narad—] 'Listen Narad; whatever is best for you, I shall do it, and nothing other than that. Be rest assured, I don't speak a lie (and my words are not futile).¹' (Doha no. 132)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 129.]

चौ०. कुपथ माग रुज व्याकुल रोगी । बैद न देइ सुनहु मुनि जोगी ॥ १ ॥
एहि बिधि हित तुम्हार मैं ठयऊ । कहि अस अंतरहित प्रभु भयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kupatha māga ruja byākula rōgī. baida na dē'i sunahu muni jōgī. 1.
ēhi bidhi hita tumhāra maim ṭhaya'ū. kahi asa antarahita prabhu bhaya'ū. 2.

[Lord Vishnu explained further—] 'Oh sage, listen; you are a great ascetic too (sunahu muni jōgī)¹. Even as a doctor would not give his patient, who is suffering from some serious illness, anything to eat or drink that is bad for his health², ---(1)

I too am determined to do what is good for you.’

Saying this, Lord Vishnu disappeared from view³. (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted how Lord Vishnu addresses Narad: as a ‘sage’ as well as an ‘ascetic’. Say, how can it be expected that such a person would marry? Narad should have been alert enough to take this hint through the veil that had clouded his wisdom, but he failed. Lord Vishnu has clearly signaled that it is not possible to let Narad fall in the trap of matrimony, especially when passions and lust has overtaken him. It will set a very bad precedent for other exalted sages, hermits and ascetics if Lord Vishnu allows Narad to have his way.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 122 in this context.

³Lord Vishnu vanished from sight immediately to forestall any chance of Narad seeking something else ridiculous, and embarrassing the Lord further.]

माया बिबस भए मुनि मूढा । समुझी नहिं हरि गिरा निगूढा ॥ ३ ॥
गवने तुरत तहाँ रिषिराई । जहाँ स्वयंबर भूमि बनाई ॥ ४ ॥

māyā bibasa bha'e muni mūrḥā. samujhī nahim hari girā nigūrḥā. 3.
gavanē turata tahām' riṣirā'ī. jahām' svayambara bhūmi banā'ī. 4.

The sage behaved as if he was utterly stupid and dumb because he was under the influence of Maya, for he could not decipher the subtle hint that Lord Vishnu gave him, nor could he understand the gravity of the Lord's words¹. (3)

Meanwhile, Narad thought that his wish would be fulfilled, and so he rushed immediately to the venue where the Swayambar was being organized². (4)

[Note—¹Narad could not understand the gravity of the words of Lord Vishnu and what he hinted at by first addressing him as a sage and ascetic, and then citing the example of a patient whose doctor refuses to oblige him if the former wishes to eat or drink anything that is not good for his health. Refer: Doha no. 132 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it herein above.

The reason for Narad's failure at realizing what the Lord meant is that he was under the influence of Maya himself.

²Elaborate arrangements are made for such functions. They have been described in fair detail with reference to the marriage ceremony of Sita, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 224.]

निज निज आसन बैठे राजा । बहु बनाव करि सहित समाजा ॥ ५ ॥
मुनि मन हरष रूप अति मोरें । मोहि तजि आनहि बरिहि न भोरें ॥ ६ ॥

nija nija āsana baiṭhē rājā. bahu banāva kari sahita samājā. 5.
muni mana haraṣa rūpa ati mōrēm. mōhi taji ānahi barihi na bhōrēm. 6.

All the attending kings and princes had taken their allotted seats; all of them were accompanied by their respective royal paraphernalia, with their retinue of servants and courtiers, and other signs of majesty and grandeur. (5)

The sage, meanwhile, was very excited in his Mana (heart and mind) that he possesses exceptional beauty of form and a charming personality, so much so that he was sure that the princess would not marry anyone else except him. (6)

मुनि हित कारन कृपानिधाना । दीन्ह कुरूप न जाइ बखाना ॥ ७ ॥
सो चरित्र लखि काहुँ न पावा । नारद जानि सबहिं सिर नावा ॥ ८ ॥

muni hita kārana kṛpānidhānā. dīnha kurūpa na jā'i bakhānā. 7.
sō caritra lakhi kāhum'na pāvā. nārada jāni sabahiṃ sira nāvā. 8.

The sage unfortunately did not realize that the merciful Lord (Vishnu) had made him look deformed and ugly beyond description in order to ensure the sage's welfare¹. (7)

But all those who were present in the venue were not aware of what had transpired behind the curtain, and why Narad had got this deformed figure. So, when they saw him they recognized him as being the great sage known as Narad, and hence all of them bowed their heads before him in reverence. (8)

[Note—¹What was the sage's welfare that motivated Lord Vishnu to make a clown of him? There were two objectives of Lord Vishnu—one was obviously to prevent him from being selected by the damsel to become her husband and fall in the trap of matrimony that does not behoove of a enlightened sage and ascetic, and the other objective was to teach him a lesson for being proud and haughty of his abilities to vanquish Kamdeo. If Narad was allowed to marry and have his way, then he would be falling in a trap of worldly attachments and its attendant problems that would undermine his exalted stature and pull him down from the high moral pedestal on which he presently stood.

By making Narad look like a clown in full house teeming with great kings and princes of the realm, Lord Vishnu wished to send another important message for others—that any of them who would violate norms set by the Supreme Being for maintenance of law and order in the society, if they transgressed decorum and did incongruous things in the mistaken belief that they can have their way, then let them be pre-warned that sooner or later they will make a clown of themselves before others!]

दो०. रहे तहाँ दुइ रुद्र गन ते जानहिं सब भेउ ।
बिप्रबेष देखत फिरहिं परम कौतुकी तेउ ॥ १३३ ॥

dōhā.

rahē tahām' du'i rudra gana tē jānahim saba bhē'u.
biprabēṣa dēkhata phirahim parama kautukī tē'u. 133.

Yet, there were two attendants of Lord Rudra (one of the forms of Lord Shiva) who were privy to the whole affair, and were aware of the secret behind Narad's ugly and deformed visage¹.

These two attendants had assumed the form of Brahmins and were moving around in close proximity of Narad to enjoy the fun of it all. (Doha no. 133)

[Note—¹The attendants of Rudra are a sort of semi-gods, and being in a spirit form they could see things which human eyes missed. Hence, they were aware of why Narad had been transmewed into a clown. They assumed forms of Brahmins to avoid detection, and roamed around to watch the spectacle of Narad's humiliation, and how he would react to it.]

चौ०. जेहिं समाज बैठे मुनि जाई । हृदयँ रूप अहमिति अधिकाई ॥ १ ॥
तहँ बैठे महेस गन दोऊ । बिप्रबेष गति लखइ न कोऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

jēhim samāja baiṭhē muni jā'ī. hṛdayam' rūpa ahamiti adhikā'ī. 1.
taham' baiṭhē mahēsa gana dō'ū. biprabēṣa gati lakha'i na kō'ū. 2.

At the place where sage Narad haughtily went and took his seat at the venue of the Swayambar, exceedingly proud in the false belief that he has an exceptional charm and an astounding personality (which he erroneously believed would sweep the princess off her feet, and make her put the garland around his neck to make him her choice for marriage), --- (1)

--- The two attendants of Rudra too went and took their seats very close to him. No one in the assembly could recognize them because they were disguised as Brahmins. (2)

करहिं कूटि नारदहि सुनाई । नीकि दीन्हि हरि सुंदरताई ॥ ३ ॥
रीझिहि राजकुअँरि छबि देखी । इन्हि बरिहि हरि जानि बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥
मुनिहि मोह मन हाथ पराएँ । हँसहिं संभु गन अति सचु पाएँ ॥ ५ ॥

karahim kūṭi nāradahi sunā'ī. nīki dīnhi hari sundaratā'ī. 3.
rījhihi rājaku'am'ri chabi dēkhī. inhahi barihi hari jāni bisēṣī. 4.
munihī mōha mana hātha parā'ēm'. ham'sahim sambhu gana ati sacu pā'ēm'. 5.

These two fellows taunted Narad using sarcastic words: 'Indeed, Lord Hari has granted him (Narad) such charm and made him so handsome that --- (3)

--- As soon as the princess sees him, no doubt that she would marry him in the belief that he is none but Lord Hari in his form!¹ (4)

Verily indeed, it was so unfortunate that the great sage's hands were clasped by Moha (delusions, ignorance and infatuations) so much so that inspite of being ridiculed and openly taunted at, he could not realize that there was something amiss in the whole thing².

Meanwhile, the two attendants of Rudra were having a good time of their lives, laughing, winking and sneering at the unfortunate sage. (5)

[Note—¹As we would recall, Narad had asked Lord Hari to bestow on him a beauty that was like his own—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 132 herein above.

We would also recall that these two attendants of Rudra had witnessed the meeting betwixt Lord Hari and Narad—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 133.

The two attendants clearly hint at it when they say that the damsel would choose Narad thinking him to be Lord Hari, and not because she liked him in his own right, in his original form as a sage known by the name of Narad, because it is a great scandal and out-rightly outrageous to ever think of marrying a sage committed to the vows of celibacy and renunciation. It would be absolutely ridiculous and scandalous.

Narad meanwhile was so obsessed by his thoughts of marrying the girl that he could not decipher the clear hint which the two Brahmins were giving him: that the damsel would not marry 'Narad', but she would marry 'Lord Hari'. Had Narad retained even his rudimentary wisdom and senses, he would have understood the joke and seen the hidden hint behind it. But as it happened, he was overcome with passions which blinded his wisdom and corrupted his thinking abilities.

²And we would also recall that Lord Hari had made Narad look very ugly, instead of making him appear handsome (apropos: in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 133), so we can easily see the background and the reason of the taunts by the two attendants. As to why Narad could not realize that something was seriously wrong, we have already explained it in the preceding note herein above.]

जदपि सुनहिं मुनि अटपटि बानी । समुझि न परइ बुद्धि भ्रम सानी ॥ ६ ॥

काहुँ न लखा सो चरित बिसेषा । सो सरूप नृपकन्याँ देखा ॥ ७ ॥

मर्कट बदन भयंकर देही । देखत हृदयँ क्रोध भा तेही ॥ ८ ॥

jadapi sunahim muni aṭapaṭi bānī. samujhi na para'i bud'dhi bhrama sānī. 6.
kāhum' na lakhā sō carita bisēṣā. sō sarūpa nṛpakan'yām' dēkhā. 7.
markaṭa badana bhayaṅkara dēhī. dēkhata hṛdayam' krōdha bhā tēhī. 8.

Although the sage heard all sorts of odd words laced with taunts, he could not understand their true meaning and intent, because his wisdom and intellect were shadowed by the dark cloud of delusions which prevented clarity of thought and judicious thinking, forestalling good judgment and initiation of remedial actions¹. (6)

Meanwhile, no one present there paid much heed to these developments (for their attention was focused on other important issues).

By-and-by, when the princess eventually made her appearance at the site, she glanced around and saw that (outrageously ugly) form of Narad². (7)

[What did she see?] She saw a body that resembled that of a huge monkey, most ugly and hideous, with an unseemly and fierce countenance².

This sight instantly filled her with anger and contempt³. (8)

[Note—¹Sage Narad sat nervously and in great anxiety, with his mind focused on one single objective of somehow impressing the princess so that she chooses him as her groom. The constant taunts and sarcastic remarks of the two attendants of Rudra, who were disguised as Brahmins, did make him highly irritated, but he managed to suppress his annoyance against these two insolent jokers for fear of creating a ruckus scene that may show him in poor light before the princess who may think that he is short-tempered and wrathful, and hence unfit to be her husband. So, the sage squirmed and shifted nervously in his seat, feeling fidgety and uneasy, but maintained his outwardly cool.

We shall eventually see that this suppressed anger of the sage, for being jeered at and treated so insolently by the two attendants of Rudra, would erupt violently a little later when the sage would curse them vehemently to become a demon. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 135 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

²It was a ‘Swayambar’ where the bride was free to move around the assembled candidates to choose her future groom. It means that she is expected to be bold and avoid shyness. In this system, perhaps it was designed that the concerned lady was given some time to privately view the contestants from a safe distant to help her make up her mind to quite some extent. She could also consult her friends and close confidantes in a private setup. Once she had an overall picture in her mind, she would then be more certain about what to do and make her choice when she was finally given a chance to approach the suitors and view them from close quarters.

She was usually given two chances to move around amongst the candidates; she would put the garland around the neck of the winner in the final round.

So therefore, when the princess stood up and viewed the assembled candidates intently, obviously she also looked at Narad, and his ugly form infuriated her—how dare did this monkey-like person ever think of even coming to the venue of her marriage; was he trying to insult her, saying “look lady, how about marrying a monkey?” Woe to this impertinent and rude fellow for making such a crude joke on her!

²This is the form which Lord Hari (Vishnu) gave Narad in order to ensure that he is never chosen by the princess. We shall be reading soon that when Narad discovered the truth, he lost his patience and temper, and cursed Lord Vishnu that the form the Lord had given him to ridicule him in the world, this very form would come to the Lord’s help when he needs it most, and not those who have a charming personality.

In due course of time, Lord Vishnu honoured this curse of Narad in his manifestation as Lord Ram when monkeys and bears would help the Lord to recover Sita, his wife, and defeat the demons led by Ravana, who had abducted her, in the

fierce war of Lanka. No handsome knight or prince had helped Lord Ram, and the Lord had to rely on those with ugly forms like that of Narad at present in his time of distress and need.

To wit, just like Lord Vishnu made a ridiculous figure of Narad now and made him suffer the agony of losing the lady of his choice, the curse of Narad would make a similar ridicule of Lord Ram, a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, when he had to suffer the humiliation of first having his wife abducted, and then taking the help of monkeys and bears to get her freed, besides having to face the ignominy of his wife Sita being caught and abducted by a demon king and remaining in his custody in his personal garden for quite sometime, and then accepting her back.

³The princess was angry because it was outrageous for a person who was as ugly and hideous as Narad appeared to be, to ever think of coming to the site of her marriage and sit amongst the candidates, in the hope that she would marry him! Woe to such a clown; out with him! She would have asked her father to throw this joker, and an impertinent imposter, into the prison, but it would create a nasty scene, and it was prudent to avoid it at present as it might cause a turmoil, for the ridiculousness of the situation would directly or indirectly make a joke of no one else but her.

She thought that perhaps it was also likely that one of her father's enemies had come to take advantage of her marriage ceremony to ridicule him, and if that is the case, then the best way out is to just neglect the clown and move on.]

दो०. सखीं संग लै कुअँरि तब चलि जनु राजमराल ।
देखत फिरइ महीप सब कर सरोज जयमाल ॥ १३४ ॥

dōhā.

sakhīm saṅga lai ku'amāri taba cali janu rājamarāla.
dēkhata phira'i mahīpa saba kara sarōja jayamāla. 134.

At the appointed time, the princess held a garland in her hands (which she would place around the neck of the victor), and accompanied by her friends and maids, she went to take a round of all the assembled suitors sitting in rows. (Doha no. 134)

चौ०. जेहि दिसि बैठे नारद फूली । सो दिसि तेहिं न बिलोकी भूली ॥ १ ॥
पुनि पुनि मुनि उकसहिं अकुलाहीं । देखि दसा हर गन मुसुकाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jēhi disī baiṭhē nārada phūlī. sō disī tēhim na bilōkī bhūlī. 1.
puni puni muni ukasahim akulāhīm. dēkhi dasā hara gana musukāhīm. 2.

The princess did not even glance for a moment in the direction where Narad was sitting haughtily, pent up with pride and puffed up with a false sense of confidence (for he was sure that the damsel would certainly put the garland around his neck). (1)

When he discovered that the princess was not paying any attention to him, he became fidgety and was on his edge, craning his neck as high as he could, and repeatedly making futile gestures to draw her attention towards himself.

Observing this ridiculous condition of Narad, the two attendants of Lord Har (i.e. Lord Shiva, whose one of the forms is known as Rudra) were greatly amused; they smiled in derision and wondered at the strange spectacle¹. (2)

[Note—¹Indeed it was a highly absurd situation. Narad made a clown of himself as he kept on rising half-way up his seat, and making all sorts of gestures to draw the girl's attention. It was more hilarious because of his ugly countenance, which made him look like a monkey. To wit, Narad was actually 'making a monkey out of himself', and this scene was so funny that the two attendants of Rudra could not help but smile in derision. For them, it was a joke of their lifetime which they were thoroughly enjoying.]

धरि नृपतनु तहँ गयउ कृपाला । कुअँरि हरषि मेलेउ जयमाला ॥ ३ ॥
दुलहिनि लै गे लच्छिनिवासा । नृपसमाज सब भयउ निरासा ॥ ४ ॥

dhari nṛpatanu taham̃ gaya'u kṛpālā. ku'am̃ri haraṣi mēlē'u jayamālā. 3.
dulahini lai gē lacchinivāsā. nṛpasamāja saba bhaya'u nirāsā. 4.

In the meantime, the merciful Lord Vishnu¹ assumed a form of a king and went to the venue. The princess (recognized him) and cheerfully put the victory garland around the Lord's neck immediately². (3)

The Lord of Laxmi ("lacchinivāsā"; i.e. Lord Vishnu) married the princess and took her home, leaving the rest of the assembled kings and princes doleful as they gave up all hopes of marrying her³. (4)

[Note—¹Why is Lord Vishnu called 'merciful' when he was actually instrumental in the clowning of Narad, and should be addressed as rude, selfish and stone-hearted for while he disallowed Narad from marrying the lady, he himself went and married her as is clear in these twin verses?

The answer is that the Lord wished for the long-term good of Narad, and even Narad had wished it to be so when he met the Lord*, even though it could mean that at some point of time the sage would become angry and cast some curse on the Lord, which, as it turned out, did happen#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 132—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 133 herein before; and #Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 136—to Doha no. 137 herein below.}

²The princess was actually Lord Vishnu's Maya herself in disguise, a form she had assumed on the instructions of the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 130.

Since this was the case, and since the Lord had staged this magical show to teach Narad a lesson as well as to trounce his pride and haughtiness, which, if left unattended, would have permanently tarnished the reputation of the otherwise

excellent sage, so therefore it was pre-determined that the damsel would marry no one else but Lord Vishnu, her eternal Lord.

³A similar situation prevailed during the marriage ceremony of Sita. When all the kings and princes failed to move the great Bow, which was a condition set by her father, king of Janakpur, for her marriage, all of them were crest-fallen and became sullen; they sat down in defeat like so many deflated balloons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 250 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it.]

मुनि अति बिकल मोहँ मति नाठी । मनि गिरि गई छूटि जनु गाँठी ॥ ५ ॥
 तब हर गन बोले मुसुकाई । निज मुख मुकुर बिलोकहु जाई ॥ ६ ॥
 अस कहि दोउ भागे भयँ भारी । बदन दीख मुनि बारि निहारी ॥ ७ ॥
 बेषु बिलोकि क्रोध अति बाढ़ा । तिन्हहि सराप दीन्ह अति गाढ़ा ॥ ८ ॥

muni ati bikala mōham' mati nāṭhī. mani giri ga'ī chūṭi janu gāmṭhī. 5.
 taba hara gana bōlē musukā'ī. nija mukha mukura bilōkahu jā'ī. 6.
 asa kahi dō'u bhāgē bhayam' bhārī. badana dīkha muni bāri nihārī. 7.
 bēṣu bilōki krōdha ati bārḥā. tinhahi sarāpa dīnha ati gārḥā. 8.

The sage (Narad) meanwhile was most confounded and bewildered, not knowing how to console himself. His mind was utterly baffled as it was under the grip of Moha (delusions and infatuations).¹

For him, losing this chance of marrying the princess was like a miser losing a precious piece of gem that fell somewhere when the knot tying it to a bundle became loose, letting the gem get lost. (5)

Then, the two attendants of Lord Har, who were watching every development closely with amusement, said with a sarcastic smile to Narad: 'Go and see your face in a mirror.' (6)

Saying this, the two fled in terror (because they were sore affright of Narad losing his temper and venting his ire on them as soon as he discovers how ugly he looked).

Meanwhile, the sage went to a water-body (such as a lake or pond) and looked at his reflection in the water to see what was wrong with his appearance. (7)

When he found out how terrible he looks, he became intensely furious, and his anger leapt up (like an injured tiger). He immediately cursed the two attendants, who had been taunting him all the while, most vehemently with a grave curse². (8)

[Note—¹As we have read earlier, Narad was under the impression that he has a handsome personality that was a reflection of the one possessed by Lord Vishnu, and hence there was no chance that he would be rejected by the princess. In the event when he failed to woo the lady, he was filled with utter dismay, not understanding how it came to be so. His mind and intellect were so overworked with the thought of marrying the princess, because Moha and Maya (delusions, infatuations, passions and lust) had the better of him and had clasped his wisdom and intellect in their vice-like grip, that all hints thrown at him by the two attendants of Lord Har, who were

disguised as Brahmins, could not alert him that there was something amiss in the whole drama.

²Narad was amazed that inspite of his having a charming countenance and a handsome personality, the princess paid no heed to him. He was perplexed and flabbergasted in the first place, and during such sensitive time when he was emotionally so upset, the taunts and smiles of the two attendants added fuel to the fire that raged within the frustrated sage. So when he saw his reflection in the water and discovered he had a monkey-like face, the lid blew off his self-control, and like a pent up volcano erupting with full vigour, Narad's suppressed anger and frustration spouted out in the form of a severe curse on his tormentors, the two poor and unfortunate attendants of Rudra who bore the brunt of his ire.]

दो०. होहु निसाचर जाइ तुम्ह कपटी पापी दोउ ।
हँसेहु हमहि सो लेहु फल बहुरि हँसेहु मुनि कोउ ॥ १३५ ॥

dōhā.

hōhu nisācara jā'i tumha kapaṭī pāpī dō'u.
hamśēhu hamahi sō lēhu phala bahuri hamśēhu muni kō'u. 135.

Narad cursed the two: 'You two sinful fellows, who are pretentious and full of deceit¹, go and become a demon, both of you.

Have the fruit of laughing at me², and be warned of laughing at any other sage in the future³. (Doha no. 135)

[Note—¹Narad accuses them of pretension and deceit because they had concealed their true identity as attendants of Rudra, and instead assumed the guise of Brahmins to have fun at the cost of the sage's dignity and honour—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 133.

²Secondly, instead of coming out straight and warning Narad that he has been deceived by Lord Vishnu, for instead of giving him a charming countenance the Lord has made him look ugly, they had laughed, taunted and smirked at him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 134; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 135.

Obviously this impertinent and irreverent behaviour would anger anyone, let alone a revered sage of Narad's stature who was accustomed of getting respect by all. So he was all the more furious at them.

³A very interesting observation can be made here in the passing. In due course of time, when the two attendants became the demons Ravana and Kumbhakaran, they turned the table on the same class of people who were the cause of their becoming demons, i.e. the sages and ascetics who had the habit of cursing at will, by subjecting them to ruthless cruelty as a means to teach these sages a bitter lesson of sorts—that they ought not to misuse their mystical powers by furiously cursing everyone at trifle matters, for then the cursed would one day turn against those who had created a hellish life for them, and make them regret for their unbridled anger and misuse of mystical powers that they possessed. In this connection, see: Ram Charit Manas, Baal

Kand, (i) Doha no. 181 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 183.

It is like the case of every action having its counter reaction, and the wheel turning full circle, both for the sages as well as for the demons. The sages were responsible for the creation of demons in the first place, because they cursed someone to become a demon to vent their ire at the offender, and then the demons repaid the sages in the same coin by tormenting them ruthlessly to settle scores with those who had cursed them even for minor mistakes.

Why, can't anyone ask these sages that if they had so great a power that they could make humble beings into giant demons, then where was the same power when they could not stop the demons from tormenting them, and instead curse them to perish? Does it mean that these sages could employ their powers only against humble creatures, and not against the mighty monsters that they created?]

चौ०. पुनि जल दीख रूप निज पावा । तदपि हृदयँ संतोष न आवा ॥ १ ॥

फरकत अधर कोप मन माहीं । सपदि चले कमलापति पाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

puni jala dīkha rūpa nija pāvā. tadapi hr̥dayam̃ santōṣa na āvā. 1.
pharakata adhara kōpa mana māhīm̃. sapadi calē kamalāpati pāhīm̃. 2.

Though sage Narad had seen that he had an ugly countenance when he looked at his image in the water for the first time a little while ago, but since he could not believe it to be true and come to terms with the reality, so he looked at his image in the water once again to determine if he was not hallucinating, and that what he had seen was a matter of fact. (1)

Peeved, embarrassed and exasperated beyond measure for this misfortune that befell him, his lips quivered, as vehement anger filled his heart. He immediately dashed to the place where he could meet Lord Vishnu (who is also known as Kamlapati)¹. (2)

[Note—¹Though the sage had vented his initial burst of anger at the two attendants of Rudra who had been teasing him, but that did not satisfy him as he knew that the main culprit, who had made a joker out of him and subjected him to such ridicule before the world, was Lord Vishnu, and not those two poor fellows.

What added fuel to the fire of anger in sage Narad was that Lord Vishnu had himself gone to the venue and married the princess, though he knew fully well that Narad would be there with the same intention. This clearly means that the Lord made Narad look ugly on purpose so that the princess would not marry him, and instead would wed the Lord.

This deceit was absolutely unacceptable to Narad, especially when he was so devoted to Lord Vishnu and loyal to him, and also because he had frankly told the Lord his wish, hiding nothing from him, and had sought the Lord's blessings so that he could marry this damsel. This was betrayal and open insult of the great sage, something that stoked his sense of self-respect and the instinct to preserve his honour.

‘Enough is enough’, fumed and fretted the exasperated sage, ‘this fellow Vishnu thinks too much of himself. So now I wilt teach him a mighty good lesson which he wouldst remember for ever.’]

देहउँ श्राप कि मरिहउँ जाई । जगत मोरि उपहास कराई ॥ ३ ॥
बीचहिं पंथ मिले दनुजारी । संग रमा सोइ राजकुमारी ॥ ४ ॥

dēha'um̃ śrāpa ki mariha'um̃ jā'ī. jagata mōri upahāsa karā'ī. 3.
bīcahiṃ pantha milē danujārī. saṅga ramā sō'i rājakumārī. 4.

Narad fretted and fumed on his way to meet Lord Vishnu: 'Either I would curse him vehemently (to punish him for treating me so insolently and humiliating me in such a wild manner), or else (if I can't do it) I shall die myself out of shame for the humiliation and abject ridicule and dishonour that I have been subjected to in this world.' (3)

Meanwhile, sage Narad met Lord Vishnu, who is an enemy and vanquisher of demons and evil forces in the world (danujārī), on the way, and the Lord was accompanied by goddess Rama (Laxmi) and that princess. (4)

बोले मधुर बचन सुरसाई । मुनि कहँ चले बिकल की नाई ॥ ५ ॥
सुनत बचन उपजा अति क्रोधा । माया बस न रहा मन बोधा ॥ ६ ॥

bōlē madhura bacana surasā'īṃ. muni kaham̃ calē bikala kī nā'īṃ. 5.
sunata bacana upajā ati krōdhā. māyā basa na rahā mana bōdhā. 6.

The Lord of the Gods (i.e. Lord Vishnu) spoke sweetly and asked sage Narad, 'Oh Sage! Where art thou going so agitatedly, and why art thou feeling so miserable?' (5)

No sooner did Narad heard these soft-spoken words of the Lord, than he lost his temper, as the fire of anger that was yet smouldering inside his heart now suddenly leapt up into wild flames¹. As he was under the influence of Maya which had already eclipsed his wisdom, Narad lost all sense of propriety and probity. (6)

[Note—¹The sight of Lord Vishnu with the princess fanned the fire of Narad's anger that leapt up in wild flames. Had Vishnu kept quiet, perhaps things would not have precipitated so quickly, and perhaps, as time passed, Narad could have calmed down a wee whit. But the fiat of fate dictated otherwise, and spurred Narad to fall over the edge and blurt out a curse on Lord Vishnu, as we shall read in the following verses herein below.]

पर संपदा सकहु नहिं देखी । तुम्हरेँ इरिषा कपट बिसेषी ॥ ७ ॥
मथत सिंधु रुद्रहि बौरायहु । सुरन्ह प्रेरि बिष पान करायहु ॥ ८ ॥

para sampadā sakahu nahim̃ dēkhī. tumharēm̃ iriṣā kapaṭa bisēṣī. 7.
mathata sindhu rudrahi baurāyahu. suranha prēri biṣa pāna karāyahu. 8.

[Without waiting for any formalities and showing basic courtesy to the Lord, and asking the Lord to explain his conduct, sage Narad instead blurted out vengefully—]

‘You can’t see others prosper and fulfill their dreams, because you are very selfish, jealous and pretentious, and full of deceitfulness. (7)

[Now Narad gives some instances to prove his accusations against Lord Vishnu.] At the time of the churning of the celestial ocean in some ancient time, you had motivated the gods who prevailed upon Lord Shiva to drink the poison (known as Halahal) that was produced as a result of this churning, which poison had the effect of making Lord Shiva behave as if intoxicated and stupefied (rudrahi baurāyahu)¹. (8)

[Note—¹When Lord Shiva drank this poison he stored it in his throat which became purple due to the effect of the fierce poison. This lent Lord Shiva the name of ‘Neel-Kantha’, the Lord with a purple or bluish throat.

The story briefly is as follows: A vicious poison called Halaahal emerged as a scorching froth or scum at the time of churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternal life. The legend goes that Lord Shiva had drunk the fierce poison that emerged at the time of churning of the celestial ocean in the beginning of creation by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternity and bliss. As soon as this boiling poison came out, there was the fear of the entire creation being scalded by its heat and ferocity. So Lord Shiva took the name of Lord Ram and gulped it in one mouthful. But the Lord knew that if this poison entered his abdomen the whole creation will be annihilated nevertheless as it resided in his abdomen. This shows that Lord Shiva is none but the supreme Brahm in whose body the entire creation resides like the embryo lives in its mother’s womb. Hence, the merciful Lord kept the poison in his throat, giving it a purple colour. {Refer: (i) Sharav Upanishad, verse nos. 11, 16. (ii) Mahabharat, Adi Parva, Canto 18. In its verse no. 18 it is stated that—(a) Lord Shiva had drunk the poison while invoking and repeating the holy Mantra, and of course that Mantra was the holy name of Lord Ram because the Lord is Shiva’s patron deity, and (b) this is the reason why his throat became dark blue or purple, because he had retained the poison in his throat instead of gulping it down in his stomach. (iii) The same fact is endorsed in Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 19. (iv) Tulsidas’ Kavitaawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 157-158 allude to Lord Shiva drinking the Halaahal poison.}

Narad means that while Vishnu prevailed upon Lord Shiva and made the latter drink the harsh poison, but when goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity, emerged from the ocean, Lord Vishnu is so highly selfish that he kept her with him.]

दो०. असुर सुरा बिष संकरहि आपु रमा मनि चारु ।

स्वारथ साधक कुटिल तुम्ह सदा कपट व्यवहारु ॥ १३६ ॥

dōhā.

asura surā biṣa saṅkaraḥi āpu ramā mani cāru.

svāratha sādḥaka kuṭila tumha sadā kapaṭa byavahāru. 136.

How selfish are you that you made the gods drink Amrit (the sweet ambrosia of eternal life), prevailed upon Lord Shiva to drink the terrible poison¹, while keeping for yourself the best of the products of this churning in the form of goddess Rama (Laxmi, the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity) and the wonderful, glittering gem known as Kaustav Mani².

Verily, you always serve your own selfish goals, are crooked and mischievous, and you always act with cunning and pretension in whatever you do. (Doha no. 136)

[Note—¹Refer to the note appended to verse no. 8 herein above.

²Laxmi is Lord Vishnu's consort, and the Kaustav Mani is worn by the Lord on his chest as a pendant.]

चौ०. परम स्वतंत्र न सिर पर कोई । भावइ मनहि करहु तुम्ह सोई ॥ १ ॥
भलेहि मंद मंदेहि भल करहू । बिसमय हरष न हियँ कछु धरहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

parama svatantra na sira para kōī. bhāva'i manahi karahu tumha sōī. 1.
bhalēhi manda mandēhi bhala karahū. bisamaya haraṣa na hiyaṁ kachu
dharahū. 2.

[Continuing to vent his ire on Lord Vishnu, sage Narad said—] 'You have become too independent an Authority with no one over your head to keep a check on you, as a result of which you do whatever pleases you, with no checks and balances that would make you accountable for your deeds. (1)

You decide what is good and what is bad according to your own fancy, and turn things around in a free-wheeling manner in accordance to your whims, transforming that which is good into bad, and vice versa, without having any compunctions, and neither regretting for what you have done nor having to justify it¹. (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 119; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 112.]

डहकि डहकि परिचेहु सब काहू । अति असंक मन सदा उछाहू ॥ ३ ॥
करम सुभासुभ तुम्हहि न बाधा । अब लागि तुम्हहि न काहूँ साधा ॥ ४ ॥

ḍahaki ḍahaki paricēhu saba kāhū. ati asaṅka mana sadā uchāhū. 3.
karama subhāsubha tumhahi na bādhā. aba lagi tumhahi na kāhūṁ sādha. 4.

Indeed, you have become bold and stubborn and over-confident of your abilities in an unbridled and unchallenged way by successfully deluding others and getting away with your exploits. You have no fear of anyone, and seem to live happily in an ivory castle of invincibility. (3)

Good or bad deeds done by you have no effects upon you, as you seem to be immune to their consequences.

Well, no one has brought you to notice or booked you till now for the endless mischief you are in the habit of doing. (4)

भले भवन अब बायन दीन्हा । पावहुगे फल आपन कीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥
बंचेहु मोहि जवनि धरि देहा । सोइ तनु धरहु श्राप मम एहा ॥ ६ ॥

bhalē bhavana aba bāyana dīnhā. pāvahugē phala āpana kīnhā. 5.
bañcēhu mōhi javani dhari dēhā. sō'i tanu dharahu śrāpa mama ēhā. 6.

So far so good; but at last you have made the right call at the right place. Now you will get the fruit of what you did, and reap what you have sown. (5)

So listen now: My curse upon you is that you will have to take a form similar to the one you prevented me from having¹. (6)

[Note—¹After all the accusations, here comes the final call. What form did Narad want? He wanted to look like Lord Vishnu himself—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 132.

This is Narad's first curse: he cursed Lord Vishnu to assume another form that was an exact image of himself. So it follows that when Lord Vishnu would become Lord Ram in due course of time to uphold the sage's curse, it is plain that Lord Ram would be an image of Lord Vishnu. How remarkable a thing is this! This is the reason that whoever saw Lord Ram, whether ordinary folks of cities of Ayodhya or Janakpur, or of villages and hamlets where the Lord visited on his way to the forest, or the great sages and ascetics and hermits who lived in hermitages or forests, doing penances and observing austerities, whosoever met Lord Ram was captivated by the Lord's stunning charm; the Lord left an abiding impression on them which they cherished and revered as they would do for their worshipped deity.

Verily indeed and in all sooth, as prophesised by Narad, Lord Ram would be a living form, a personification, of Lord Vishnu in this world.]

कपि आकृति तुम्ह कीन्हि हमारी । करिहहिं कीस सहाय तुम्हारी ॥ ७ ॥
मम अपकार कीन्ह तुम्ह भारी । नारि बिरहँ तुम्ह होब दुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

kapi ākr̥ti tumha kīnhi hamārī. karihahim̐ kīsa sahāya tumhārī. 7.
mama apakāra kīnha tumha bhārī. nāri biraham̐ tumha hōba dukhārī. 8.

[This is the second part of Narad's curse—] You have made me look like a monkey. So therefore, monkeys and their kin, the bears, would help you in case you need it¹. (7)

[And the third curse is this—] Further, you have really done something very good for me (by making me feel miserable and suffer grief for not being able to marry the

princess I fell in love with), so therefore, you too would suffer from similar kind of grief arising out of being separated from a woman you love². (8)

[Note—¹This second curse of Narad was honoured by Lord Vishnu in his form as Lord Ram when monkeys and bears of Kishkindha came to his help after Sita, the Lord's wife, was abducted by the demon king Ravana. An army of monkeys and bears accompanied Lord Ram and fought the war of Lanka to have Sita freed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 21—to Doha no. 23; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 8.

²The third curse was honoured when Lord Ram lost his wife Sita and wailed and grieved for her in the forest—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-16 that precede Doha no. 30.]

दो०. श्राप सीस धरि हरषि हियँ प्रभु बहु बिनती कीन्हि ।
निज माया कै प्रबलता करषि कृपानिधि लीन्हि ॥ १३७ ॥

dōhā.

śrāpa sīsa dhari haraṣi hiyaṃ prabhu bahu binatī kīnhi.
nija māyā kai prabalatā karaṣi kṛpānidhi līnhi. 137.

The Lord (Vishnu) cheerfully accepted the curse by bowing his head before the sage, and felt glad in his heart as he (Lord Vishnu) politely prayed to sage Narad in various ways to calm him down¹.

Then, the merciful Lord withdrew the mighty force of his Maya (thereby freeing Narad from its influences, and enabling the sage to come to his immediate senses). (Doha no. 137)

[Note—¹The exact wording of the verse says that “Lord Vishnu accepted the curse by placing them on his head”; but in practical terms it means that the Lord bowed his head while Narad was cursing him, and when the sage fell silent, the Lord smiled, said he accepts what the sage has said and would fulfill it, and then the Lord folded his hands to politely request the sage to calm down and forgive him for the mischief he had done which had caused so much agitation in the sage.

At the same time, Lord Vishnu withdrew the Maya's cloud that had cast its shadow over Narad, which instantly shown the light of wisdom for which the sage was famed. As soon as this light showed, Narad woke up as someone from a bad nightmare. He was overcome with intense regret and great remorse, fell down at the Lord's feet asking for forgiveness and cancellation of his curses, and lamenting gravely that he had committed a grave mistake, asking the Lord to advise him some way to repent for it, as we shall read soon in Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that follow herein below.]

चौ०. जब हरि माया दूरि निवारी । नहिं तहँ रमा न राजकुमारी ॥ १ ॥
तब मुनि अति सभित हरि चरना । गहे पाहि प्रनतारति हरना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaba hari māyā dūri nivārī. nahim taham^o ramā na rājakumārī. 1.
taba muni ati sabhīta hari caranā. gahē pāhi pranatārati haranā. 2.

As soon as Lord Hari lifted the veil of his Maya, neither was there Rama (goddess Laxmi) nor the princess in sight. (1)

It was then that the sage realized that there was something grave and mysterious about the whole affair, something that he had missed to take into account all the while. This realization made him sore affright and shaken to the core of his being so much that he immediately fell down at the feet of Lord Hari, clasping them with his (trembling) hands while pleading for mercy and forgiveness, and expressing his sincere regrets and repentance¹. (2)

[Note—¹When sage Narad saw Lord Vishnu on the way, with Laxmi on one side and the princess on the other side, the sight had made Narad furious with anger, provoking him so much that he vented out his wrath by cursing the Lord vehemently, for he thought that the Lord was purposely teasing him by showing off the princess who stood by the Lord's side as if to tell Narad that he was not suitable for her, that she thought him to be inept and inapt for her.

What added fuel to Narad's fire of jealousy, repugnance and hate was that it was Lord Vishnu, of all others, who would pull the rug from under his feet, especially when the sage was so devoted and loyal to the Lord, and had always considered the latter as his best well-wisher? He had even confided with the Lord his wish to marry the princess, and had requested the Lord to grant him pleasing personality resembling his own so that his wish to marry the princess could be realized.

In this background, when Narad saw Lord Vishnu with the princess by his side, he obviously treated it as a case of betrayal.

But suddenly the situation changed, as if by magic. The curtain of delusions that had fallen before Narad's eyes was suddenly pulled aside, and he could see what the reality was: that Lord Vishnu was standing alone, and there was neither Laxmi nor the princess to be seen anywhere.

Stunned and dumbfounded, it suddenly struck the benumbed sage that there was something very mysterious and strange in all that had happened with him. He was not a fool; he was a wise celestial sage, a son of the creator Brahma, and someone who has had experience of the strange, mystical and mysterious ways of how Lord Vishnu works. This sudden realization punctured the balloon of Narad's puffed up ego provoked by his anger, as a result of which he virtually collapsed at the Lord's feet like a crumpled balloon.]

मृषा होउ मम श्राप कृपाला । मम इच्छा कह दीनदयाला ॥ ३ ॥
मैं दुर्बचन कहे बहुतेरे । कह मुनि पाप मिटिहिं किमि मेरे ॥ ४ ॥

mṛṣā hō'u mama śrāpa kṛpālā. mama icchā kaha dīnadayālā. 3.
mair̥m durbacana kahē bahutērē. kaha muni pāpa miṭihim kimi mērē. 4.

[Filled with extreme remorse and a sense of overwhelming guilt, sage Narad pleaded with Lord Vishnu—] ‘Oh merciful Lord (kṛpālā)! I plead with you (with all the sincerity I can muster) that let my curse be in vain; let it be false and without effect.’

The Lord who is always gracious and compassionate towards those who are miserable and humble (*dīnadayālā*), said politely: ‘It was my wish. [To wit, everything that happened was as I had wished it to happen. So my dear Narad, don’t regret or feel ashamed and so low-down. Get up and take the whole episode as a lesson for you. Be reassured I am not angry at all with you. I just wished to protect you from falling into the trap of passions and its attendant attachments and infatuations that would have ruined you; I was worried about maintaining the sanctity of your vows of celibacy, renunciation and sage-hood. So let there be no hard feelings betwixt the two of us, for I love you as you love me.]’ (3)

[Sage Narad, meanwhile, could not overcome his sense of guilt and wrong-doing inspite of Lord Vishnu’s assurance to him that everything was in accordance with the Lord’s wish, and Narad should not feel personally responsible for the unfortunate way the things went. So he pleaded with the Lord for forgiveness as he had used uncouth words for the Lord that were unthinkable for him if he had been in his right senses, and this transgression was a sinful act that he cannot so easily forget. Hence, the sage requested the Lord to advise him a way to repent for his impertinent behaviour, and the unintentional sin that he had committed.]

Sage Narad said with immense remorse and regret in his voice: ‘Lord, I have spoken many wrong things, and have used uncivil and uncouth words (for you)¹. Tell me how this grave sin of mine can be erased; tell me please some way for repentance so that the guilt that is lying heavily on my conscience can be shaken off.’ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 136—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 137.]

जपहु जाइ संकर सत नामा । होइहि हृदयँ तुरत बिश्रामा ॥ ५ ॥
कोउ नहिं सिव समान प्रिय मोरें । असि परतीति तजहु जनि भोरें ॥ ६ ॥

japahu jā'i saṅkara sata nāmā. hō'ihī hṛdayam̐ turata biśrāmā. 5.
kō'u nahim̐ siva samāna priya mōrēm̐. asi paratīti tajahu jani bhōrēm̐. 6.

Lord Vishnu advised sage Narad: ‘Go and do Japa (meditation involving repetition) of the holy name of Lord Shiva one hundred times (*saṅkara sata nāmā*). This will immediately give your heart the desired peace. (5)

Verily indeed, for sooth and without gainsay, no one is as dear to me as is Lord Shiva¹. Never forget this cardinal principle. (6)

[Note—¹When Lord Vishnu appeared in this world as Lord Ram, he had reiterated this principle once again. The first occasion was at the time of crossing the ocean by constructing a bridge across it—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3.

The second occasion was in Ayodhya where the Lord used to give discourses on matters of spiritual importance for the citizens. He had emphasized the importance of having devotion for Lord Shiva on one such occasion. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

Sage Yagyawalkya too has said the same thing to sage Bharadwaj in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 104.]

जेहि पर कृपा न करहिं पुरारी । सो न पाव मुनि भगति हमारी ॥ ७ ॥
अस उर धरि महि बिचरहु जाई । अब न तुम्हहि माया निअराई ॥ ८ ॥

jēhi para kṛpā na karahim purārī. sō na pāva muni bhagati hamārī. 7.
asa ura dhari mahi bicarahu jāī. aba na tumhahi māyā ni'arāī. 8.

Oh Sage! Remember that a person on whom Lord Shiva (also known as 'Purari') is not pleased, shall not be able to have devotion (Bhakti) for me¹. (7)

Keeping this principle in your heart (i.e. remembering it always), go and roam freely on earth². Be assured that my stupendous Maya would not come near you henceforth³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer specifically to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

²A very interesting thing is to be observed here. Sage Narad was a celestial sage who used to roam around in the heavens. But now Lord Vishnu tells him to “go and roam on the earth”. What does it imply? For one, it is to tell Narad to personally experience how the life is in the mortal world where the sage has cursed the Lord to go. Let the sage witness the pains and torments of life on earth like the way the Lord would experience himself when he comes down to earth as Lord Ram.

The second intention of the Lord was to spread his message which he has given to Narad in the heaven: that if one wishes to worship Lord Vishnu or any of his forms, then it is imperative for the devotee to pay respects to Lord Shiva too.

This mandate was also aimed at giving a message of wisdom for those who were so stupid as to make distinction between the two aspects of the same Supreme Being, one as Lord Vishnu who carries out the function of sustenance and protection of this creation, and the other as Lord Shiva who maintains balance by bringing to an end an older thing in order to make space for a new thing that is young, so that the cycle of creation and conclusion can continue smoothly, and the wheel can roll on and on. Truly, if there is no death on one end of the scale, and there is continuous birth on the other end of the same scale, one can easily imagine the consequences it would have on the limited space on the surface of the earth and its resources. There would be overcrowding and fights for even basics of life that would soon get exhausted, bringing about mass annihilation as the scale itself will topple over. Is it not better to maintain an ecological balance instead of this scenario of mass extinction?

This advise given to sage Narad by Lord Vishnu that no one is as dear to him as is Lord Shiva, and that if anyone wishes to worship Lord Vishnu should also worship Lord Shiva, was also aimed at bridging the wide gulf that existed between two types of sects, one which called itself 'Vaishnavas' and the other 'Shivaites' who worshipped the two deities independently, and who were usually at loggerheads with each other, creating rift in the society, and splitting the people unnecessarily on fictitious beliefs.

The third reason: Lord Vishnu wished that Narad should be a first-hand witness when the Lord would manifest himself as Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 187.

Narad would then follow the Lord all through his life in this world, so that, first, Narad would have no doubt that his curse had been fully honoured by Lord Vishnu without cutting corners and trying to play tricks on the sage, and second, to chronicle the whole story which Narad would then go and narrate to the gods in the heaven. In this journey, often times sage Narad would be accompanied by other great sages of heaven, such as Sankaadi etc.—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27.

It is also quite possible that sage Narad would have told Lord Shiva, during his frequent meetings with him, about the events of Lord Ram's life on earth. Probably all these briefings by sage Narad were later on collated by Lord Shiva into a seamless story while he was meditating on Lord Ram, producing what has come down to us as "Ram Charit Manas"—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 35.

³Lord Vishnu assured Narad that he should not fear from falling prey to worldly temptations that he would encounter routinely while he moved around in the mortal world which is so full of sensual attractions and material charms that are too strong to be easily resisted. Lord Vishnu blessed Narad that henceforth, nothing would disturb his inner peace.]

दो०. बहुबिधि मुनिहि प्रबोधि प्रभु तब भए अंतरधान ।
सत्यलोक नारद चले करत राम गुन गान ॥ १३८ ॥

dōhā.

bahubidhi munihi prabōdhi prabhu taba bha'e antaradhāna.
satyalōka nārada calē karata rāma guna gāna. 138.

Lord Vishnu reassured the sage in various ways, and then disappeared from sight.

Then, Narad proceeded towards Satya Loka (the upper heaven where the creator Brahma resides), while singing the glories of Lord Ram all along the way¹. (Doha no. 138)

[Note—¹This verse is an instance that clearly shows that Lord Vishnu and Lord Ram are the same Divinity.

Another such instance is when sage Narad approached Lord Ram and asked the Lord to explain why he hadn't let the sage marry the princess of his choice, an obvious reference to the present episode concerned with Lord Vishnu. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.}

It ought to be noted here that when Narad approached Lord Ram to ask the latter why the Lord did not allow him to marry the princess, both used personal pronouns to address each other, such as 'you' and 'I'. Had Lord Ram been a different person and not Lord Vishnu himself, Narad would not have used 'you' to ask the Lord why he didn't allow him to marry—viz. 'Oh Lord, why did "you" not allow me to marry that

girl?' And Lord Ram would not have answered him using the pronouns 'I' and 'You' by saying—'Narad, "I" didn't allow "you" --- '.]

चौ०. हर गन मुनिहि जात पथ देखी । बिगतमोह मन हरष बिसेषी ॥ १ ॥

अति सभित नारद पहिं आए । गहि पद आरत बचन सुनाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hara gana munihi jāta patha dēkhī. bigatamōha mana haraṣa bisēṣī. 1.
ati sabhīta nārada pahim ā'ē. gahi pada ārata bacana sunā'ē. 2.

Meanwhile, the two attendants of Lord Har (Rudra, or Shiva), who had hidden themselves somewhere out of fear of Narad, saw that the sage was moving along the road headed to some place, and from his calm countenance they deduced that he was presently free from delusions and anger, and instead, appeared to be happy and contented in his Mana (mind), --- (1)

--- They mustered courage to come out of hiding and approach the sage, though they still were greatly alarmed and affright of provoking him. However, they came to the sage and fell down before him, pitifully clasping his feet as they spoke with great humility in their voice.¹ (2)

[Note—¹After Narad cursed the two poor fellows, they were so scared stiff and numbed by this sudden unfortunate turn of events, which they had never expected would boomerang on themselves so harshly, that they hid somewhere to observe what would happen now, and were exploring options to somehow seek forgiveness from the sage and ask him to mitigate the horrifying effects of his curse on them as far as was possible. So they were closely following Narad, and saw how the sage had cursed Lord Vishnu also, which was a little bit reassuring for them because they realized that they were not alone to be at the receiving end of the sage's wrath. Then they saw how subsequently Narad was freed from his delusions as he fell down at the Lord's feet to ask for forgiveness for himself.

All these developments were encouraging for the two terrified attendants of Lord Har, for now they thought that they could safely approach the sage and beg him to forgive them in the same way as the sage had asked Lord Vishnu for forgiveness himself. Further, they observed that after the volcano of anger subsided and the lava of ire of the enraged sage had dissipated and cooled down, he was as peaceful and tranquil as he always had famously been. Narad, they concluded, was himself very sorry, regretful and remorseful for what had happened, and therefore there was a very remote chance of him becoming angry again. Hence, the two attendants thought it to be the right moment to go and ask for forgiveness from the sage, and see how much their future suffering can be mitigated and taken care of.

They knew about the mystical powers of sage Narad, and that he was a favourite sage of Lord Vishnu and a son of the creator Brahma. So, if Narad felt pity on them then they were sure that he would bless them and devise a means to reduce their sufferings.]

हर गन हम न बिप्र मुनिराया । बड़ अपराध कीन्ह फल पाया ॥ ३ ॥

श्राप अनुग्रह करहु कृपाला । बोले नारद दीनदयाला ॥ ४ ॥

hara gana hama na bipra munirāyā. baṛa aparādha kīnha phala pāyā. 3.
śrāpa anugraha karahu kṛpālā. bōlē nārada dīnadayālā. 4.

[Pleading for mercy, the two attendants of Lord Har said to sage Narad—] ‘Oh exalted sage (munirāyā)! We are not Brahmins, but attendants of Lord Har¹. We are extremely sorry for the great mistake we had made (by insulting you), and for which we have already been punished (by way of your curse upon us)². (3)

Oh merciful sage, please be kind upon us now to bless us with your grace and mitigate our sufferings that would befall upon us as a result of your curse.’

Sage Narad, who was always merciful and gracious on those who were humble and distressed (dīnadayālā)³, took pity on the two attendants and blessed them as follows— (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 133.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 134; (ii) Doha no. 135.

³From the recent developments it would seem that Narad was very harsh and ill-tempered sage for he had cursed the two poor fellows as well as Lord Vishnu. But that was not Narad’s true nature, as this verse clearly implies by using the term “dīnadayālā” for him. All the rancour and heartburn that had been caused recently were not his own fault, but it was caused by the effects of ‘Maya’ of Lord Vishnu. And as soon as Maya lifted its gloomy veil that it had cast on him for so long, Narad was back to his normal self, a sage who was peaceful and merciful to the core.]

निसिचर जाइ होहु तुम्ह दोऊ । बैभव बिपुल तेज बल होऊ ॥ ५ ॥
भुजबल बिस्व जितब तुम्ह जहिआ । धरिहहिं बिष्णु मनुज तनु तहिआ ॥ ६ ॥
समर मरन हरि हाथ तुम्हारा । होइहहु मुकुत न पुनि संसारा ॥ ७ ॥
चले जुगल मुनि पद सिर नाई । भए निसाचर कालहि पाई ॥ ८ ॥

nisicara jā'i hōhu tumha dō'ū. baibhava bipula tēja bala hō'ū. 5.
bhujabala bisva jitaba tumha jahi'ā. dharihahiṁ biṣṇu manuja tanu tahi'ā. 6.
samara marana hari hātha tumhārā. hō'ihahu mukuta na puni sansārā. 7.
calē jugala muni pada sira nā'ī. bha'ē nisācara kālahi pā'ī. 8.

‘You two will certainly go to become demons¹, but (I bless you that you won’t be ordinary demons but) ones who would be famed for exceptional qualities and valour, possessing immense strength, powers, authority and sway over the world². (5)

By the strength of your arms, you two would conquer the whole world in an era when Lord Vishnu would reveal himself as a human being³. (6)

You two will die at the hands of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu) in a battle, and this would ensure that the two of you will get final liberation and deliverance from the world of transmigration (where you would be born as demons due to my curse), and at the same time attain emancipation and salvation for yourselves, and eternal bliss and beatitude for your souls so much so that you won't have to return to the cycle of birth and death any time again.⁴ (7)

The two attendants felt assuaged and comforted by the sage's reassuring words. So they bowed reverentially at the feet of the sage and went their way⁵.

By-and-by, the two became great demons in due course of time. (8)

Note—¹The words of sage Narad could not go in vain—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 4 that precede Doha no. 68; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73.

Besides, whatever is written in one's destiny, it cannot be erased. In this connection, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 97; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (ii) Doha no. 171.

²These two attendants became Ravana, the king of the demon race, and his brother Kumbhakaran. Their glory and fame have been briefly outlined in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 178—to Doha no. 182; (b) Lanka Kand, (ii) Doha no. 25 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; and (iii) Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

³By this blessing, sage Narad ensured that both his curses, on these two attendants and on Lord Vishnu, would be effective simultaneously, which would not only be good for these two poor fellows but would also prevent Lord Vishnu from taking the trouble to become a human being again in a separate era to grant deliverance to their souls.

⁴Both Ravana and Kumbhakaran were slayed by Lord Ram personally, and both of them attained final deliverance, emancipation, salvation and beatitude for their souls. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 71 (Kumbhakaran); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 9 that precede Doha no. 103 (Ravana).}

⁵Feeling reassured and contented that though they would have to bear the effects of the curse by becoming demons, yet it would be a blessing in disguise for them as they would not only occupy a powerful and famed position in that race, but would also be lucky to meet Lord Hari personally in the form of Lord Ram, and that the Lord would himself help them attain their final deliverance, salvation and emancipation by killing their demon-body and liberating their souls from its bondage.

Assured of salvation and deliverance, the two attendants thanked sage Narad and went their way.]

दो०. एक कलप एहि हेतु प्रभु लीन्ह मनुज अवतार ।

सुर रंजन सज्जन सुखद हरि भंजन भुबि भार ॥ १३९ ॥

dōhā.

ēka kalapa ēhi hētu prabhu līnha manuja avatāra.
sura ranjana sajjana sukhada hari bharjana bhubi bhāra. 139.

So it was that Lord Vishnu, who gives joy to the gods and is a provider of happiness to noble human beings, revealed himself as a human being to remove the burden of the earth (symbolized by cruel forces known as the demons) in one of the eras¹. (Doha no. 139)

[Note—¹This episode was narrated by Lord Shiva when goddess Parvati expressed her astonishment when told that sage Narad had once cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being, and she wished to know what had happened.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 124.

If we examine this episode closely we would discover that the word “dīnadayālā”, meaning one who is very kind, compassionate, merciful and gracious towards those who are miserable, distressed and lowly, those who are overcome with grief and need solace and succour, has been used for both Lord Vishnu* and sage Narad#. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 138 (Vishnu), and #Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 139 (Narad).}

What does this imply? Well, Lord Vishnu is called “dīnadayālā” because though Narad had cursed the Lord so vehemently, the latter did not become angry with the sage, but rather welcomed him with due respect and accepted the sage’s words with humility. Remember: Vishnu is no ordinary god, but the almighty Lord of this creation who could have severely punished Narad for his rude and irreverent behaviour that crossed all limits of civility and proper conduct, for the sage had transgressed all boundaries of courteousness and self-restraint that is expected from a great sage of his stature and reputation. Further, Vishnu was the best well-wisher and guardian of Narad as the latter himself has acknowledged. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2 and 7 that precede Doha no. 132.} So therefore it was incredulous for Narad to even think of using foul words for his patron deity, much less of cursing him. Yet, Lord Vishnu pardoned him without showing any trace of anger or revulsion as the sage’s behaviour.

A similar situation prevails in sage Narad’s response to the plea of the two attendants who fell down at his feet and asked for forgiveness. Though the two had been very insulting in their behaviour towards the great sage, laughing at him and teasing him in sight of the full assembly at the venue of the marriage of the princess, and then continued with their insolent behaviour by pursuing the sage and taunting him even after he left the assembly in a huff when he failed to draw the princess’ attention toward himself, which infuriated Narad so much that he cursed them to become demons*, yet when they asked for forgiveness, the sage did not think twice to bless them with an auspicious fate#. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 134; (ii) Doha no. 135 along with Chaupai line nos. 2 and 6 that precede it; and #(iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 139.}]

चौ०. एहि बिधि जनम करम हरि केरे । सुंदर सुखद बिचित्र घनेरे ॥ १ ॥
कलप कलप प्रति प्रभु अवतरहीं । चारु चरित नानाबिधि करहीं ॥ २ ॥
तब तब कथा मुनीसन्ह गाई । परम पुनीत प्रबंध बनाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi janama karama hari kērē. sundara sukhada bicitra ghanērē. 1.
kalapa kalapa prati prabhu avatarahīm. cāru carita nānābidhi karahīm. 2.
taba taba kathā munīsanha gāī. parama punīta prabandha banāī. 3.

[Lord Shiva continued with his narration, telling Parvati—] ‘In this way, strange and mysterious are the many stories associated with the different manifestations of Lord Hari and the deeds he did over many different eras and times. (10

In all the Kalpas (an era consisting of one cycle of creation and its conclusion) the Lord manifests himself for one reason or another, doing countless deeds that are fascinating and perplexing at the same time, --- (2)

--- And every time and in every age, great sages, minstrels and bards compose verses to sing the glories of the Lord and honour his divine manifestations, as well as to chronologically record the mystical deeds that he does during such times. (3)

[Note—Lord Shiva has already told Parvati that stories and narratives related to the Supreme Being are endless; no line can be drawn to mark a beginning or end of them. They are as diverse as the era in which the Lord manifests himself, and as varied as the circumstances of his manifestation and its objectives. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that follow herein below; and (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 91—to Doha no. 92.

These stories and narratives of the Lord are so unique and strange that they defy logic and arguments. They are both fascinating as well as bewildering because on the one hand they are extremely interesting and captivating for the mind and its power to imagine, while on the other hand they are so mystical and strange that common logics and arguments used to prove the authenticity of anything or happening in this world do not apply to them.]

बिबिध प्रसंग अनूप बखाने । करहिं न सुनि आचरजु सयाने ॥ ४ ॥
हरि अनंत हरिकथा अनंता । कहहिं सुनिहिं बहुबिधि सब संता ॥ ५ ॥
रामचंद्र के चरित सुहाए । कल्प कोटि लागि जाहिं न गाए ॥ ६ ॥

bibidha prasaṅga anūpa bakhānē. karahīm na suni ācaraju sayānē. 4.
hari ananta harikathā anantā. kahahīm sunahīm bahubidhi saba santā. 5.
rāmacandra kē carita suhā'ē. kalapa kōṭi lagi jāhīm na gā'ē. 6.

There are a variety of incidents and episodes associated with each of such manifestations of the Lord, and the sages, minstrels and bards have sung and glorified them in their own ways¹.

Hence, those who are learned, wise and intelligent do not express surprise or incredulity when they hear or read such stories and narratives related to the Supreme Lord of the world. (4)

Verily indeed and in all sooth, Lord Hari and stories associated with him are endless and without limits. These are narrated and heard by all the sages, saints and pious persons over time. (5)

Truly, Lord Ram's divine stories are so endless and mystical that even if one were to spend an entire era narrating and singing them, one would not be able to finish them. Nay, one would neither find an end to them nor know from where to begin. (6)

[Note—¹This gives rise to countless variations in the details of the stories associated with the Lord and his manifestations in different eras, caused by different circumstances, having different objectives, and then narrated by different persons who not only have their unique signature style of narration but also lay emphasize on a particular event that appeals to them more, and which they view from their own prism of thinking, that would naturally differ from the perspective and viewpoint held by others.]

यह प्रसंग मैं कहा भवानी । हरिमायाँ मोहहिं मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ७ ॥
प्रभु कौतुकी प्रनत हितकारी । सेवत सुलभ सकल दुख हारी ॥ ८ ॥

yaha prasaṅga mair̥m kahā bhavānī. harimāyāṁ' mōhahir̥m muni gyānī. 7.
prabhu kautukī pranata hitakārī. sēvata sulabha sakala dukha hārī. 8.

Oh Bhavani (i.e. Parvati), I have narrated this episode that describes how the Maya of Lord Hari had successfully deluded sage Narad, though the sage was so highly enlightened, erudite and wise. (7)

Indeed, the Lord enjoys playing strange tricks by employing his Maya, yet at the same time he is very considerate towards those who submit themselves to him, for then the tricks of Maya of the Lord do not have influence on such persons¹.

By serving the Lord (and having devotion for him) everything is accessible; to submit to the Lord in humble service eliminates all sorrows and miseries (associate with life in this gross mortal world). (8)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva meant that Maya is so powerful that no matter how learned, illustrious, wise and enlightened a person may be, yet it makes a dumb-head of him if it casts its veil of delusions on that person. So what is the way out; how can one be safe from this net of Maya?

The answer is found in Sortha no. 140 herein below, as well as in Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (ii) Doha no. 85 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 89; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Doha no. 119-a.

In essence, these verses say that Maya can be easily overcome by having Bhakti (devotion) for Lord God (read: Lord Ram, for he is the deity to whom this holy book is dedicated), by worshipping the Lord and serving him in the best way one can, for it is the grace of the Lord that alone can act as the shield against the onslaught of Maya.]

सो०. सुर नर मुनि कोउ नाहिं जेहि न मोह माया प्रबल ।
अस बिचारि मन माहिं भजिअ महामाया पतिहि ॥ १४० ॥

sōraṭhā.

sura nara muni kō'u nāhirṁ jēhi na mōha māyā prabala.
asa bicāri mana māhirṁ bhaji'a mahāmāyā patihi. 140.

There is no one, including the gods, humans, great sages et al, who cannot be influenced by Maya, who can claim that he is immune to the tricks played by Maya.

Keeping this in view, those who are wise and erudite worship the Lord who is the Sovereign of Maya itself, for Maya cannot defy the Lord's wishes¹. (Sortha no. 140)

[Note—¹Maya will not shy away from exerting its nasty influences on anyone, no matter how powerful or exalted he may be. Maya does not spare even the gods, or powerful human beings such as great sages and ascetics. Yet, it would not disturb or distract those who are blessed by Lord Hari or Lord Vishnu and his manifested form as Lord Ram. Now, Lord Ram has himself asserted later on that those who have Bhakti (devotion) for him are immune to the influences of Maya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 44—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 85—to Doha no. 87.

Sage Kaagbhusund endorses this view when he told Garud that ever since he had been accepted by Lord Ram by the virtue of devotion that the sage had for the Lord, Maya has had no influence on him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 89.]

चौ०. अपर हेतु सुनु सैलकुमारी । कहउँ बिचित्र कथा बिस्तारी ॥ १ ॥
जेहि कारन अज अगुन अरूपा । ब्रह्म भयउ कोसलपुर भूपा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

apara hētu sunu sailakumārī. kaha'um' bicitra kathā bistārī. 1.
jēhi kārana aja aguna arūpā. brahma bhaya'u kōsalapura bhūpā. 2.

[Lord Shiva continued with his narration, and told Parvati—] ‘Now Girija (i.e. Parvati, the daughter of the king of mountains), listen. I shall tell you another strange story in detail¹ --- (1)

--- As to why the Supreme Brahm, the Lord who is eternal, without a birth and attributes, as well as formless and invisible, would take a birth as a human being to become a King of Kosalpur (Ayodhya)². (2)

[Note—¹Earlier, Lord Shiva had told Parvati that there are many reasons why the Supreme Being would come down to earth and assume the form of Lord Ram. Shiva had also told her that he would narrate a few of such reasons for her. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 122.}

Till now he had narrated the episode of Narad, and so now he begins the narration of another such wonderful incident that led Lord Vishnu to come down to earth as Lord Ram.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precedes Doha no. 150; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48; (iii) Doha no. 85-a; (iv) Chanda line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 13; (v) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51.]

जो प्रभु बिपिन फिरत तुम्ह देखा । बंधु समेत धरें मुनिबेषा ॥ ३ ॥
जासु चरित अवलोकि भवानी । सती सरीर रहिहु बौरानी ॥ ४ ॥
अजहुँ न छाया मिटति तुम्हारी । तासु चरित सुनु भ्रम रुज हारी ॥ ५ ॥
लीला कीन्हि जो तेहिँ अवतारा । सो सब कहिहउँ मति अनुसार ॥ ६ ॥

jō prabhu bipina phirata tumha dēkhā. bandhu samēta dharēm munibēṣā. 3.
jāsu carita avalōki bhavānī. satī sarīra rahihu baurānī. 4.
ajahum̃ na chāyā miṭati tumhārī. tāsu carita sunu bhrama ruja hārī. 5.
līlā kīnhi jō tēhim̃ avatārā. sō saba kahiha'um̃ mati anusārā. 6.

It is the story of the same Lord Ram who had assumed the form of a hermit and was wondering in the forest when you saw him¹. (3)

Do you remember that in your previous life, when you were known as Sati, you had watched that event (of Lord Ram wondering in the forest like an ordinary man searching for his lost wife) and were completely baffled and utterly confused about the authenticity of Lord Ram (inspite of my best efforts to make you see the truth)². (4)

Even till this day that shadow of doubt that had clouded your wisdom at that time persists and continues to dog you (because you have yourself expressed the wish to remove certain doubts about Lord Ram that still distract you)³.

So listen to this narrative (that explains why the Supreme Being became a human being in the form of Lord Ram) as listening to it would remove your doubts and eliminate all lingering confusions about the Lord that you might have. (5)

I shall narrate, according to my understanding and intellect⁴, all the events and mysterious deeds done by Lord Ram during that manifestation.' (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 51; and (ii) Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

Lord Shiva draws Parvati's attention to the incident which was the primary cause of all her miseries in her previous life when she was known as Sati; an incident that led Lord Shiva abandon her, she dying by burning herself in the fire sacrifice organized by her father, Daksha Prajapati, and then taking a new birth as Parvati.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Sortha no. 51.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2, and 5-8 that precede Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Lord Shiva had expressed his displeasure to Parvati in the beginning too—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 114 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 119.

⁴Lord Shiva has already asserted that the stories associated with Lord Ram are countless and varied, and different sages, minstrels and bards sing them according to their understanding and abilities. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 114; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 140 herein above.

Hence, he reiterates here that he would endeavour to narrate Lord Ram's divine story as faithfully in accordance to his own understanding as he can, but that does not mean that it is exhaustive and the only way it can be narrated; it is one of the many ways it is narrated.]

भरद्वाज सुनि संकर बानी । सकुचि सप्रेम उमा मुसुकानी ॥ ७ ॥
लगे बहुरि बरनै बृषकेतू । सो अवतार भयउ जेहि हेतू ॥ ८ ॥

bharadvāja suni saṅkara bānī. sakuci saprēma umā musukānī. 7.
lagē bahuri baranai bṛṣakētū. sō avatāra bhaya'u jēhi hētū. 8.

Sage Yagyawalkya said¹: ‘Oh Bharadwaj! When Uma (Parvati) heard these words of Lord Shiva (that referred to her previous life and how those doubts still linger in her mind), she felt a bit shy and embarrassed, but at the same time she smiled at the fun that Lord Shiva intended². (7)

[Now, that said, Yagyawalkya resumes his narrative by quoting Lord Shiva's discourse with Parvati which went as follows:-]

So now, Lord Shiva (known also as ‘Brishketu’) began to narrate the story of why Lord Ram had manifested on that occasion (when Sati met him in the forest as cited above in verse nos. 3-4). (8)

[Note—¹Let us not forget that the entire discourse between Lord Shiva and Parvati was narrated by sage Yagyawalkya to sage Bharadwaj when the latter wished to hear the divine story of Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

²As we would recall, a pleasant exchange of this kind had already taken place between Lord Shiva and Parvati at the beginning of the current discourse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 112—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 113; (ii) Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 121.]

दो०. सो मैं तुम्ह सन कहउँ सबु सुनु मुनीस मन लाइ ।
राम कथा कलि मल हरनि मंगल करनि सुहाइ ॥ १४१ ॥

dōhā.

sō mair̥m tumha sana kaha'um̃ sabu sunu munīsa mana lā'i.
rāma kathā kali mala harani maṅgala karani suhā'i. 141.

[Sage Yagyawalkya said to sage Bharadwaj—] ‘Oh wise sage (munīsa)! I shall now tell you that story (which Lord Shiva narrated to Parvati)¹, which please listen with full attention, because the divine story of Lord Ram has the mystical ability, and the power that is inherent in it, to remove the consequences of sins committed in Kaliyug, for this story is auspicious itself and spreads auspiciousness around it, and it is a very pleasant story that is charming to hear². (Doha no. 141)

[Note—¹Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 47. If we read the current Doha no. 141 in conjunction with this previous Doha no. 47, it would be abundantly clear that sage Yagyawalkya paused for a while after narrating the episode of Narad, and then resumed the story by reminding sage Bharadwaj that he is continuing with the same narrative of the discourse between Lord Shiva and Parvati with which he had begun his own discourse on a specific request of Bharadwaj, and therefore the latter must pay full attention to it and listen to it with due reverence.

²The glories, holiness and auspicious character of Lord Ram’s divine story, known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’, has been extolled elsewhere too. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 30; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 33; and (iii) Doha no. 35 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-13 that precede it; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38; (b) Uttar Kand, (v) Doha nos. 126 and 128.]

चौ०. स्वायंभू मनु अरु सतरूपा । जिन्ह तें भै नरसृष्टि अनूपा ॥ १ ॥
दंपति धरम आचरन नीका । अजहुँ गाव श्रुति जिन्ह कै लीका ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

svāyambhū manu aru satarūpā. jinha tēm̃ bhai narasṛṣṭi anūpā. 1.
dampati dharama ācarana nīkā. ajahum̃ gāva śruti jinha kai līkā. 2.

*In an ancient time, there was a noble and pious couple. The man was called ‘Swayambhu Manu’, and his wife was called ‘Satrupa’. They were the ancestors of the human race, for it was from them that the wonderful human race descended¹. (1)

The couple was diligent in following the principles of Dharma—i.e. they followed the rules of good conduct, propriety, probity and ethics, and led a life in accordance to the principles of righteousness and auspiciousness. Their deeds and conducts have been legendary, and even in later ages the Vedas (scriptures) sang their glories and praised them in laudatory terms. (2)

[Note—*Till now, sage Yagyawalkya narrated the story of Narad. This story explained why Lord Vishnu would become a human being in the form of Lord Ram.

Now in this current episode of Manu and Satrupa, the sage narrates one of the reasons why Lord Vishnu became the son of king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya of the kingdom of Ayodhya.

¹The story of the creation has been narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapurān, Skandha 3, Chapter 12. Manu and Satrupa were the first male and female in this world, and the rest of this creation, that depends on the process of intercourse between a male and a female, is an off-spring or a descendent of this first couple.

Though they lived a conjugal life as a couple who enjoyed pleasures of the sense organs, as this was imperative to start the process of creation as mandated by the creator Brahma, yet they maintained internal discretion and dispassion, remaining aloof from the charms of the material world. They practiced renunciation and self-control in all matters, and were wise, self-realised and enlightened so much so that in spite of appearing to be involved in the affairs of the world and engaged in procreation, they still lived in a state of consciousness that is known as ‘Turiya’, the transcendental state of existence attained in higher stages of Yoga (meditation) where the pure ‘self’ of a person is detached from his physical body so much so that it remains aloof from and disinterested in whatever the bodies does.

The couple lived a long and honourable life that is said to extend for a long period of 72 four-Yuga cycles, each cycle consisting of Sata, Treta, Dwapar and Kali Yugas.

Manu and Satrupa had two sons named Priyavrata and Uttaanpaad, and three daughters named Aakuti, Devahuti and Prasuti. Aakuti was married to Ruchi Prajaapati, Devahuti to sage Kardam, and Prasuti to Daksha Prajaapati. Later on in history, some of the famed wives of great sages were daughters of Devahuti. Some examples are Anusuiya who was the wife of sage Atri, and Arundhati who was the wife of sage Vasistha.]

नृप उत्तानपाद सुत ताम् । ध्रुव हरि भगत भयउ सुत जासू ॥ ३ ॥

लघु सुत नाम प्रियव्रत ताही । बेद पुरान प्रसंसहिं जाही ॥ ४ ॥

nṛpa uttānapāda suta tāsū. dhruva hari bhagata bhaya'u suta jāsū. 3.
laghu suta nāma priyabrata tāhī. bēda purāna prasansahim jāhī. 4.

King Uttaanpaad was the couple’s (Manu and Satrupa) son, and the famed devotee of Lord Vishnu, the child named Dhurva¹, was his (Uttaanpaad’s) son. (3)

The couple’s younger son was named Priyavrat², who has been praised by the Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures and histories). (4)

[Note—¹The story of Dhruva is briefly as follows: He was the elder son of king Uttaanpaad from his first wife Suniti. The king was so charmed by his second wife named Suruchi that he completely neglected Suniti and Dhruv. Once it so happened that the child Dhruv was snubbed by his step-mother for attempting to draw affection of his father. The child was very upset and despondent. He approached his mother for solace. She advised him to accept Lord Vishnu as his eternal and loving Father and

protector. For this, Dhruv had to do severe Tapa (austerity and penance). The overwhelmed child was so determined that he immediately proceeded to the forest to do Tapa. He met the celestial sage Narad on the way who instructed him on ways to meditate upon the Lord. The Lord was extremely pleased by Dhruv's sincerity and devotion and appeared before him. He blessed the child and gave him two boons—one was the restoration of his honour and kingdom of the kingdom, and the other was a permanent place in the heavens, a position so exalted, steady and unwavering that even the God could not match it. So, in due course of time, Dhruv assumed a personified form of a divine God and took up his heavenly abode in the Dhruv Loka. The story related to him is narrated in detail in the Vishnu Puran, section 1, cantos 11-12.

The Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 5, paragraph no. 15 mentions this Dhruv Loka and Dhruv, the God, when it describes the path taken by a devotee of Lord Vishnu to the latter's abode in heaven when the former leaves his mortal body. The devotee has taken a ride on the back of the Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu who is represented by the divine ethereal Mantra known as OM in this Upanishad, and has already passed through the Satya Loka where Brahma the creator lives, the Ishan Loka where Lord Shiva lives, the Graha Loka where the different Grahas live, the Saptarishi Mandal where the seven celestial sages live (and which is represented by the Great Bear constellation of stars in the sky), the Surya Mandal which is the realm of the Sun God, and the Chandra Mandal which is the realm of the Moon God. Then he reaches this Dhruv Mandal.

The Dhruv Loka or Dhruv Mandal is represented by the North Star and its immediate environs in the celestial map. The North Star is a personified form of Dhruv. The North Star has a great symbolic importance and value here. This star remains static and unchanging in its position in the sky—it is a metaphor for stability, uniformity, unchanging nature, steadfastness and durability. It is a vital guide for navigation purposes in the night. Hence, if a person is steady in his thoughts and single-mindedly pursues his chosen path, always keeping the aim in sight, he is sure to achieve success and obtain his objective in life. The objective of the spiritual aspirant is to attain his Lord Vishnu and find Mukti. So when he has crossed all hurdles and overcome formidable obstacles in the symbolic form of praises and honours lavished on him en-route to heaven as described above in this narration, it is only then that he can rupture through this world and reach the exalted abode where Vishnu lives. Now, if the celestial sky is imagined as a huge sphere, then this is the point from where the cosmic traveler has ruptured the solar system and entered the upper reaches of the cosmos where the upper heaven is situated. Since Lord Vishnu's abode is supposed to be unchanging and steady in its glory unlike other worlds, the metaphor of the North Star as a gateway to Vaikunth, the abode of Vishnu, appears to be very appropriate here.

In Ram Charit Manas there is a reference to Dhruva in the context of praising the holy Name of Lord Ram. It says that Dhruva had attained an eternal place amongst the stars by the virtue of his repeating the holy Name of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26.

The story of Dhruva has been narrated in detail in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapurana, Skandha 4, Chapter nos. 8-12.

²The great Jain Trithankar named sage 'Rishav' was born in the family of prince Priyavrata.

He was very wise, self-realised and enlightened, practiced renunciation and detachment, and was a great devotee of Lord God. On the request of the creator Brahma and his father Manu, Priyavrata had to leave the path of complete renunciation of the world and instead follow the path of a householder. He had married Bahishmati, the daughter of Vishwakarma, the architect and engineer of the gods. From his wife he begot ten sons, one of them named Aagnirdha, and a daughter named Urjwasi who later on became the wife of sage Sukracharya, the Guru (preceptor and advisor) of the demon race.

Out of his ten sons, three became Param Hansa (those who renounced the world and became perfect Sanyasis), and the rest seven became rulers of the seven continents. He is credited to have divided the earth into seven continents, assigning his seven sons to rule over them, one son to look after one continent. These continents were marked and separated from one another by creation of seven oceans, as well as mountain ranges, forests and great rivers that formed their natural boundaries.

By his mystical powers, Priyavrata created seven great chariots that were as radiant as the sun. Riding on them, he circled the earth seven times in such a way that even during the night the earth remained illuminated. He ruled for 11×10^8 human years. {Refer: Srimad Bhagwad Mahapuran, Skandha 5, Chapter 1.}

देवहूति पुनि तासु कुमारी । जो मुनि कर्दम कै प्रिय नारी ॥ ५ ॥
आदिदेव प्रभु दीनदयाला । जठर धरेउ जेहिं कपिल कृपाला ॥ ६ ॥

dēvahūti puni tāsu kumārī. jō muni kardama kai priya nārī. 5.
ādidēva prabhu dīnadayālā. jaṭhara dharē'u jēhim kapila kṛpālā. 6.

Devahuti was his (Manu's) daughter, who in due course of time became the dear wife of sage Kardam. (5)

It was she who bore the ancient sage Kapil, famed for his compassionate and merciful nature, in her womb. [To wit, Devahuti was the mother of sage Kapil.] (6)

[Note—¹Who was sage Kapil? The answer is given in the next verse that follows below.]

सांख्य साङ्ग जिन्ह प्रगट बखाना । तत्व बिचार निपुन भगवाना ॥ ७ ॥
तेहिं मनु राज कीन्ह बहु काला । प्रभु आयसु सब बिधि प्रतिपाला ॥ ८ ॥

sāṅkhyā sāstra jinha pragaṭa bakhānā. tattva bicāra nipuna bhagavānā. 7.
tēhim manu rāja kīnha bahu kālā. prabhu āyasu saba bidhi pratipālā. 8.

He (sage Kapil) was an exponent and preacher of the school of philosophy known as 'Sankhya Sastra'¹. He was exceptionally wise, self-realised and enlightened, being well-versed in the principles governing metaphysical Truths pertaining to the Supreme Being, the Lord God. (7)

It was that king Manu we are talking about. He ruled for a long period of time, and always obeyed the rules and instructions given to him by the Lord God.

[To wit, Manu lived an exemplary life in accordance with the principles of Dharma—apropos: verse no. 2 herein above.] (8)

[Note—¹Sankhya Sastra: We find references to this philosophy in the following Upanishads—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda's Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 55, and Canto 4, verse no. 35; Shwetashwatar Upanishad, Canto 5-6; Pran Agnihotra, verse no. 1. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 14; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 14. (iii) Atharva Veda—Sita Upanishad, verse no. 33; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 49-50.

This is one of the six great schools of Indian philosophy. It was first propounded by sage Kapil as 'Sankhya Sutras'. [Refer Bhagwata 3/25-33, and Canto 5-6 of Shwetashwatar Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

Sage Kapil was the celebrated sage who is regarded as the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu (Bhagavata, 1/3; 3/24). He is compared to Lord Krishna in Bhagavata (10/26). He was the brother-in-law of sage Vasistha, being the brother of his wife Arundhati, and the only son of sage Kardama and his wife Devahuti. He taught even his mother spiritual wisdom in Bhagavata, and hence this part of this scripture is called 'Kapil Gita' in which the sage has expounded upon the philosophies of Sankhya Shastra, Ashtanga Yoga (the eight-fold path of Yoga) and Bhakti-yoga (the path of devotion for and submission to the Lord) (3/25-33).

Sage Kapil is however renowned for one of the six schools of Indian philosophies known as Sankhya Shastra.

The word *Shastra* means any body of knowledge which has been deeply researched and then systematically codified and made useful in a meaningful way.

The word *Sankhya*, according to some scholars, refers to the 'number' or 'numeral' that it refers to, because it says that there are twenty five elements or 'Tattwas' in creation. However, there are some others who assert that it refers to 'Gyan' or acquisition of truthful knowledge of the reality behind the façade of illusions. It stresses on Gyan or truthful knowledge as the only path leading to liberation and deliverance of the soul from this world, and its attaining final emancipation and salvation riding on the boat of knowledge.

Therefore, the combined word *Sankhya Shastra* refers to the philosophy that endeavours to unravel the great secrets of creation based on sound knowledge and rational logic. It has six chapters and contains five hundred twenty six Sutras or keys or codes that unlock the profound treasure of knowledge pertaining to who the creature actually is, how has he come to be what he is at present, and how he can be freed from this vicious cycle of birth and death. Only when one understands the beginning can he understand the end, because this so-called 'beginning' has its origin in the previous 'end'. That is, only after something ends and carries forward certain baggage with it does a new beginning can start. After all, this is based on the fundamental tenet of Nature that 'nothing can start from nothing; there must be something from which anything starts'. That is why we say that there cannot be smoke without a fire.

Now, if one goes back to the 'very beginning of creation' when there wasn't any prior life from which any new life could be born on the principles of 'deeds and their consequences', i.e. the theory that when a creature does any deed in this life then he would have to take a new birth to suffer the consequences of these deeds because

they cannot be wished away, the question arises ‘what started this creation then?’ The Sankhya Shastra endeavours to answer precisely this question in a very logical and systematic manner.

This secret was revealed, according to the of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition’s Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/2, to sage and seer Kapil who was the first person to whom the esoteric secrets of creation were unraveled by the Supreme Being (Brahm) himself. In fact, the whole of Cantos 5 and 6 of this Upanishad are dedicated to this philosophy of Sankhya Shastra.

Other Upanishads where it is explicitly referred are the following—(i) Krishna Yajur Veda’s Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 55, and Canto 4, verse no. 35; Pran Agnihotra, verse no. 1. (ii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, Canto 2, Brahmin 5, verse no. 14; Mantriko-panishad, verse no. 14. (iii) Atharva Veda—Sita Upanishad, verse no. 33; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 49-50.

It was propagated by Kapil’s disciple Aasuri, and then by the latter’s disciple Pancha-shikaa.

This philosophy accepts only three basic yardsticks or valid sources of knowledge—viz. ‘Pratakshya’ or direct perception or cognition of anything such as directly seeing a thing for one’s self, ‘Anumaan’ or implied knowledge or deduction of anything entails inference of something based on some other first hand knowledge, and ‘Shabda’ or the word affirming this knowledge which is like a testimony of some witness or any dependable source.

So this philosophy adopts the approach of reaching the unknown from what is known. It has reduced all that can be experienced in this world to two fundamental units of creation—the Purush (the Supreme Being; Brahm; cosmic Self) and Prakriti (Nature; the invisible matrix of all forms of natures and temperaments that characterize this creation). The basic argument of this philosophy is that ‘nothing can be produced from nothing’. In other words, if the creation has come into being, then there must be something that pre-dates this present creation. If this creation is the effect of some past deed, then obviously there must have some occasion when certain deed was done which resulted in the present. It states that ‘Karya (the result) pre-existed (had a truthful existence) in the Kaaran (the cause of the result)’. Suppose we have an earthen lamp. This lamp, made of clay or mud, was inherently present in the un-moulded lump of clay or mud before it was shaped. Had it not been so, the clay or mud could not have been moulded into the shape of the lamp.

When this argument is applied to the experience of the world, one observes that there are three basic qualities exhibited by all things—one that gives pleasure and happiness, the other which is just the opposite, and the third which does not effect us at all, i.e. we remain neutral to it. Sankhya philosophy states that there are three ‘Gunas’ or basic virtues and qualities in creation which determine these three responses as well as the characters of things which evince these responses. These three Gunas are Sata which produce positive responses of happiness and bliss, Raja which create negative response of pain and sufferings, and Tama which generates neither.

In more physical terms, Sata Guna means pure and holy, and it is conducive to knowledge marked by these characteristics. The Raja Guna produces desires and ambitions which create restlessness in their wake. Tama Guna is meanest of them all, for it creates a tendency for resistance and inactivity. A man having the Tama Guna in excess would not do anything himself and neither would he allow others to do their duties.

It should be noted here that there is a situation when all these three Gunas can theatrically exist in perfect balance—this situation is the ideal situation and is synonymous with Prakriti at the cosmic level. This Prakriti, therefore, becomes perfectly ‘neutral’ and self centered; it is the perfect example of grossness because it remains in a state of perpetual coma or paralysis because of this balance. It is when this perfect balance is disturbed that it starts stretching and yawning like a man waking up from a deep slumber.

An example would illustrate. An electrolyte works when there is a difference of potential between the two electrodes—i.e. the cathode and the anode. A neutral solution having the same electrodes dipped in it would not perform the function of electrolysis.

On the other hand, the Purush is the cosmic Consciousness or the Atma or cosmic Soul.

The ‘evolution of the creation’ starts when a union is established between this Purush known as ‘Brahm’ who is pure cosmic Consciousness and the most sublime aspect of creation, and ‘Prakriti’ or cosmic Nature which is Brahm’s grosser aspect.

There arises a question here. Brahm or the Purush is neutral and absolutely unattached to anything, while Prakriti is gross and lifeless. How is their cooperation possible? Well this is illustrated by the example of a physically handicapped but intelligent man who has lost the leg and cannot walk, and a blind man who cannot see but can walk. The blind can carry the lame on his back, and under the latter’s guidance, can reach the destination. In this mutual cooperative way they both fulfil their desires and obligations.

It is a spontaneous cooperation and flows naturally. It is like the case of milk flowing from the udder of a cow when she sees its calf.

Now let us move to the next step and see how the creation evolved from the Purush or Brahm.

From Brahm (or Purush), the first entity that was created is Prakriti (the cosmic or primary Nature). It ought to be noted here that there are two levels in creation, viz. the ‘macrocosmic level’ that is all encompassing but invisible and subtle, and the ‘microcosmic level’ at the level of the visible aspect of creation, such as the individual creature, that is gross. At the cosmic level we have Brahm also known as the ‘Purush’ or the cosmic Male, and Prakriti, which is its other half, the Mother Nature.

The word ‘Prakriti’ at the cosmic level means Mother Nature, and it includes all that exists in this physical world, such as the entire animal and plant kingdom as well as the numerous variations in the landscape that forms a part of the physical world. On the other hand, at the microcosmic level it means individual’s primary ‘nature’ or his fundamental inclinations, basic or inherent features, qualities, characters etc. that distinguish one person from another. But the underlying principles remain the same and are applicable at both the subtle level as well as the gross level.

Now, since Sankhya Shastra deals with evolution of the ‘living world’, it postulates that the ‘nature’ of the entire living world, i.e. its ‘Prakriti’, is governed by the mixing of the three basic ‘Gunas’ or fundamental qualities in creation, viz. Sata Guna, Raja Guna and Tama Guna, in various permutation and combination.

It ought to be noted here that ‘Sata Guna’ stands for all that is pure and good; ‘Raja Guna’ stands for activity that expresses dynamic energy to do something; and ‘Tama Guna’ indicates inactivity and everything that opposes the Sata and Raja Gunas.

The first product of this mixing of the Gunas at the macrocosmic level of Prakriti (Mother Nature) is the 'Buddhi' (the cosmic intellect). From that comes into being 'Ahankar' (cosmic ego; the individualism marked by the word "I" or "Me").

From the 'Satvic Guna' part of Ahankar emerged the 'Mana' (the cosmic mind) + the five 'Gyan Indris' (the five organs of knowledge or perception—viz. eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) + the five 'Karma Indris' (the five organs of action—viz. hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital).

From the 'Tama Guna' part of Ahankar emerged the five 'Tanmatras' (the five subtle perceptions of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling), and from these further developed the five 'Bhuts' or grosser elements (such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth).

Therefore, we have the following cosmic Primary Elements of creation—

1 Prakriti (Nature) + 1 Buddhi (mind with its intellect quotient) + 1 Ahankar (ego and pride of individualism) + 1 Mana (mind with its emotional quotient) + 5 Gyan Indris (5 organs of perception—eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin) + 5 Karma Indris (5 organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genital) + 5 Tanmatras (5 subtle perceptions of sight, hearing, smell, taste and feeling) + 5 Bhuts (such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth) = Total 24 'primary elements of creation', or 'primary units of creation' or 'principles of creation'.

However, if we add the very first manifestation of Brahm (which is the cosmic all-pervading Consciousness and the primary basis of all that exists) in the form of 'Purush', the cosmic Male aspect of Brahm, then the total comes to $24 + 1 = 25$.

Here it is to be noted that the difference between Brahm and Purush is only in the matter of degree of subtlety—for 'Brahm', being without any attributes and the pure cosmic Consciousness that prevails in this creation, is the subtlest entity of creation, while the 'Purush' is a slight more grosser form of Brahm because it has the character of being a 'Male' as opposed to Brahm which is 'neutral'.

This inclusion of 'Brahm' or the 'cosmic Absolute Truth' or the 'cosmic pure Consciousness', albeit as 'Purush' as one of the 'first and primary of the elements' of creation, without which the rest of the elements won't exist or become redundant to begin with, fits in very well with the primary definition of Sankhya Shastra. The word 'Sankhya' means 'number' as well as a 'comprehensive knowledge', which incidentally is also the purpose of the 'Shastra' or a body of knowledge. Therefore, that knowledge that teaches the ultimate "Truth" of creation is known as 'Sankhy Shastra'.

There is another version as to what constitutes the twenty-five Tattvas. They are the following—1 Purush (the primal cosmic Male; the Viraat Purush), 1 Prakriti (primal Nature), 1 Mahtattva (the powerful Buddhi or intellect), 1 Ahankar (ego, pride), 1 Mana (mind), 5 organs of perception (i.e. the eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin), 5 organs of action (i.e. the hand, leg, mouth, excretory and genitals), 5 perceptions (such as the spoken word or speech, sight, smell, touch and taste), 5 Bhuts (i.e. the five primary elements, the earth, water, fire, air and space or sky) = 25.

The above unfolding of the creation and its fundamental elements is at the 'macrocosmic level'. The same process is followed to interpret the evolution at the microcosmic level—the level of the individual creature.

So we have the origin of the cosmos from Brahm, the 'Supreme Being' who created the macrocosmic first Male called 'Purush' who was Brahm's image, and his female counterpart, the 'Prakriti' (Mother Nature). Their union—or the bringing together of Brahm and Prakriti, the cooperation between them—became the basic

cause of this vast and myriad creation coming into being. The individual male and female creatures, or all living beings for that matter, had evolved from this union.

In other words, the individual creatures therefore were the ‘microcosmic forms’ of the Purush and the Prakriti that existed at the ‘macrocosmic level of creation’.

The result of the union of Purush and Prakriti were the following entities in this sequence—‘Buddhi’ (intelligence, wisdom, mind), ‘Ahankar’ (pride, ego), the mind-heart complex called the ‘Mana’, the five perceptions (of smell, hearing, touch, taste and sight) together forming the “subtle body” of the creature, the five Bhuts or elements (space, wind, fire, water, earth from which the gross body was moulded), the ten sense organs (five organs of perception—ear, nose, tongue, eye and skin, and five organs of action—hand, leg, mouth, anus and genitals), which together formed the “gross body” of the creature, the individual creature’s Atma (pure consciousness that represents Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness) and its Prakriti (the ‘nature’ of the individual creature that corresponds to the cosmic Prakriti with the three Gunas affecting its primary character) both of which are invisible and subtle.

Therefore, according to this interpretation, we have 1 Purush + 1 Prakriti + 1 Buddhi + 1 Ahankar + 1 Mana + 5 Perceptions + 5 Bhuts + 10 Indris (5 sense organs of perception and 5 of action) = 25 Principal Elements at the macrocosmic level of creation. All these elements are invisible and subtle by nature.

At the level of the individual creature who has a visible gross body, the same elements exist in their grosser form and with a slight variation as follows—

1 Atma (or soul of the individual creature representing Brahm or Purush) + 1 Nature (or the individual’s unique character representing Prakriti) + 1 Buddhi + 1 Ahankar + 1 Mana + 5 Perceptions + 5 Bhuts (that moulds the creature’s gross body) + 10 Indris (5 sense organs of perception and 5 of action) = 25 Principal Elements at the microcosmic level of creation.

It further postulates that Brahm created Nature (cosmos) because it allowed itself to be covered or mired by the three Gunas—‘Sata’ meaning righteousness and virtuousness which are the best and noblest of qualities, ‘Raja’ meaning worldly passions and desires which are the medium or mediocre qualities leading to worldly desires, and ‘Tama’ meaning evils, sins and other mean mentalities leading to perversions and vices. The Purush, though he remains aloof, still gets shackled or attached to Prakriti, the creation, because of these three Gunas which act as ropes or strings that tie him down. This fact has been very stated in Shwetashwatar Upanishad, 5/10-12 and 6/10.

Breaking one’s habits is tantamount to liberation and deliverance from this bondage, and it is called Mukti. The three Gunas are the causes of the myriad temperaments, natures, thought patterns and behaviours of all the creatures, because they have all these three qualities or virtues in them, though they vary in ratio or proportion. These three Gunas are also present in Mother Nature, giving rise to a populace which is so varied and diametrically opposite to each other, even virtually getting at each other’s throat, because of the infinite possibilities created by their mixing in different proportions to mould the innate nature, inclinations and temperaments of a creature.

This school of philosophy says that there are five elementary ‘Bhuts’ in this creation—they are the earth, water, fire, wind and space which, in different permutations and combinations, form all the creatures who have a gross body. A creature, it says, has eleven organs— five organs of perception (ears, nose, eyes,

tongue and skin), five organs of action (hands, legs, mouth, anus and genitals) and one organ called the Mana (mind and heart).

According to Mahopanishad, 1/4 – 6 of Sam Veda tradition, these twenty-five elements or Tattwas are the following—five organs of perception (ear, nose, tongue, eye, skin) + five organs of action (hand, leg, mouth, genitals, excretory) + one Mana (mind) + one Ahankar (ego, pride, arrogance) + one Pran (the vital life-giving breath; the essential vibrations of life; the rhythm and essential functions pertaining to life) + one Atma (soul) + one Buddhi (intelligence, wisdom, discrimination) + five Perceptions (sight, smell, hearing, taste, touch) + five Bhuts (earth, water, fire, air, space) = twenty-five elements.

The Annapurna Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 5, verse nos. 49-50 assert that those ascetics who see only one non-dual entity known as the supreme transcendental Brahm or cosmic Consciousness in this ever-changing and multifarious creation are the ones who are truly knowledgeable of the essence of the Sankhya Shastra. Now let us what these verses say—

“Verse no. 49 = An ascetic who regularly practices only one type of spiritual philosophy symbolized by practicing only one type of Samadhi, and is steady and diligent in it—only such a wise and enlightened ascetic is able to expunge all other philosophies from his mental horizon, only he can prevent his mind from being confused and confounded about what to do and what to avoid. He can focus his efforts and attention on his chosen path more effectively, and walk this path more stridently and confidently, overcoming all hurdles that may occur.

[The term ‘Samadhi’ broadly means to remain focused on the pure consciousness and to live in a plane of existence that is known as transcendental. When in this state, the person is unaware of the world and the body, along with any of their activities. Here it implies that a man who does not waver or remain wobbly by being uncertain of the veracity, the truthfulness and the effectiveness of the philosophy he is practicing, who does not keep oscillating between this and that as he is unable to decide what to do and what not to, who is certain as to what is true and what is false, and what his goal in life is, and who is certain and convinced of himself and the philosophy he practices—it is only such a man who can ever expect to succeed in his endeavour in any field in this world, whether mundane, secular or spiritual.

In other words, a spiritual aspirant must be of a firm and stabilized mind in order to realise his spiritual goals. An undecided, fluctuating and vicissitudinous mind which is a victim of confusion and perplexities can never ever lead the aspirant steadily to his spiritual goal. And what is this goal? It is to realise the truth of the Atma, the truth that comes with self-realisation that requires a focused mind and great diligence, the truth that, in its finer and higher forms, is equivalent to Brahm-realisation, and which translates into his final spiritual Mukti or Moksha (i.e. his spiritual liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation). He obtains freedom from all fetters representing delusions and ignorance that tie his soul down and shackle it to this world and the body. A freed creature enjoys bliss, beatitude and felicity; he enjoys happiness, ecstasy and contentedness that come when one has finally reached his desired goal or destination which had eluded him for generations. This is the fruition of Samadhi.]

Such a wise and enlightened man realises the essence to which the Sankhya philosophy of Hinduism refers to is only ‘one’ and ‘non-dual’, and not many and varied. [He realises that the spiritual Truth known as ‘consciousness’ is only one and

not two or more though the Sankhya philosophy refers to Tattwas or essential elements as being twenty-five in number.]

An ascetic who has known this secret is indeed not an ordinary man, but a highly attained and enlightened soul. He is 'living being' who has understood the truth of 'life' in a truthful manner. [In other words, he is not to be identified with a gross body now, but with the 'living Atma' that resides inside this body. Realisation or awareness of this 'truth' of life is a true form of wisdom and enlightenment.] (49).

“verse no. 50 = Those great ascetics who have successfully controlled their various vital winds by diligently following the principles of Yoga (meditation), and have consequentially attained the high stature of self-realisation when they have experienced the glory and radiance of the consciousness residing inside their own self as their Atma—such ascetics become free from all diseases (both physical as well as spiritual), and attain a divine state of being (existence) which has no beginning or end (because they would have activated their dormant cosmic energy and shifted the focus of their identity from being that of the gross and perishable body that has a limit scope, to that of the Atma which is subtle, sublime, eternal, infinite and imperishable).

Such realised and acclaimed ascetics are renowned as being those who are truly expert in the knowledge of the Sankhya Shastra, as those who have truthfully understood the meaning of this school of Indian philosophy (50).

A related philosophy is known as Sankhya Yoga. This philosophy is a combination of Sankhya philosophy and Yoga philosophy. In Shwetashwatar Upanishad 6/13 it is stated that the Supreme Being can be known by the means of 'Sankhya Yoga', i.e. by an intelligent fusion of 'Sankhya' and 'Yoga'.

This philosophy is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Maha-puran, Skandha (Chapter) 11, Sarga (Canto) 24.

The second chapter of Bhagvata Gita is also called Sankhya Yoga. Now, let us analyse this word. It has two parts—viz. 'Sankhya' meaning learning and knowledge, and 'Yoga' meaning a union, a conjunction, a fusion. Elsewhere, e.g. 5/5, this word has been used to signify 'Gyan' and 'Karma' or a conjunction of knowledge and the philosophy of doing deed. The 'Praanaagni-hotra Upanishad', 1, uses this word to mean 'intense thinking, deep contemplation or deep insight'. It is also, therefore, synonymous with 'Gyan Yoga' or the great concentration and diligent divergence of all energies of the creature to acquire truthful knowledge of the Truth and Reality behind what is apparent but not the whole truth, and what is not apparent at all.

These two paths are not separate, independent and distinct from one another. They are like the two legs by which one walks. The word Yoga also means to bring about a union between two entities, to create a synergy between the mundane and the spiritual. Here it refers to the union between the Atma and the Brahm, or the coordination of various elements of the creature's body so that congenial atmosphere conducive to spiritual upliftment and enlightenment is created for the realisation of the true nature of the 'self', which would mean realisation of the presence of Brahm inside the very own self of the seeker. To bring this about, deep concentration of mind is needed along with the focusing of all the energies of the body in one single pursuit; this is meditation and contemplation.

The word *Sankhya Yoga* therefore means a combination of both the eclectic values of Sankhya philosophy and that of Yoga. Hence, that which brings about a fusion or union between the known and the unknown, that which establishes a coordination between the creature's individual world and the cosmic world of the pure

consciousness, that which brings the Atma, the pure 'self' of the creature close to the supreme 'Self' of the cosmos, that which links and ultimately brings about a merger of the single unit with its parent body, and that which helps in the creature's final liberation from the vicious cycle of birth and death, is called Sankhya Yoga.

Now the question arise how is this brought about? The answer is in the following the manifold path of Yoga besides acquisition of knowledge as expounded and espoused in the Upanishads. Yoga has basically two connotations—viz. (1) meditation and contemplation which aim in harnessing all the energy and potentials at the disposal of the creature and diverting them and concentrating them on one single goal chosen by the practitioner of Yoga; and (b) following other methods of achieving this aim as laid down in the scriptures dealing with Yoga.

There are *four paths of Yoga*--(i) Gyan Yoga, (ii) Bhakti Yoga, (iii) Karma Yoga and (iv) Raj Yoga.

(i) Gyan Yoga involves the intellect and mind to determine and delineate the true and the false; it helps to access and understand the reality and falsehood behind the manifested visible world which appears to be 'real' but is actually like a 'shadow of the truth'. This Gyan Yoga helps to establish the mind firmly into seeing unity in diversity. Those following Gyan Yoga are called 'seers' because they can 'see' beyond the visible, multifarious and bewildering variety of this false world. Gyan Yoga is in the realm of the intellect and discriminating mind of a creature.

(ii) Bhakti Yoga refers to having devotion for a chosen Godhead who is a person's ideal, on whom he showers all his adoration, and on whom he focuses his attention. He is emotionally and sentimentally involved with his deity. Hence, the heart is the realm of Bhakti Yoga; it helps to commune with the divine.

(iii) Karma Yoga expounds on the importance of doing deeds and taking actions, but with a different attitude. It stresses that we must not get 'involved or attached' to those deeds or action in as much as we shouldn't be bothered about the rewards or punishments incumbent on such deeds or actions. We must do them dispassionately and with detachment. The action or deed should be treated as one's offering to the God as well as an offering to the sacred fire sacrifice. This will ensure that the actions or deeds are not unrighteousness, corrupt or evil. On the contrary, whatever is done in which a person's subtle sub-conscious says is not the correct thing to do will be deemed to be unrighteous, unethical and unlawful, and therefore cannot be an offering to either the God or the sacred fire sacrifice.

(iv) Raj Yoga is the psycho-spiritual practice of exercise and breath control; it involves the various steps involved in meditation and contemplation, as is generally understood by the term Yoga. This Yoga lays emphasis on physical training of the body and the mind, and is the subject matter of numerous Upanishads dealing with such exercises (e.g. Yog Chudamani of Sam Veda). It deals with such subjects as Pranayam, purification and activation of Naadis, kindling of Chakras (subtle energy centers in the body) etc.

These four types of Yogas are not mutually exclusive; they coalesce and overlap with each other and their main aim is to help the aspirant seeker in his pursuit of 'self-realisation'.

There is another platform of Yoga as propounded by the greatest exponent of this philosophy, i.e. sage Patanjali. According to him, *Yoga consists of eight-fold path*. These are briefly the following—(1) 'Yam' or self restraint; (2) 'Niyam' or observance of certain sacrosanct rules; (3) 'Aasan' or postures for meditation; (4) 'Pranyam' or breath control exercises for purification of the body and mind; (5) 'Pratyahar' or withdrawal of the mind and its control; (6) 'Dhaarna' or having a firm

conviction, faith and belief on the sanctity and truthfulness of the chosen path; (7) ‘Dhyan’ or contemplation and concentration of the faculties of the mind and intellect; and (8) ‘Samadhi’ or a perpetual trance-like state in which the aspirant loses all awareness of the external world and even himself, and remains perpetually in meditation. These eight-fold path of Yoga have been listed in Varaaha Upanishad, canto 5, verse no. 11—11 ½ of the Krishana Yajur Veda tradition.

The Mandal Brahmin Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition describes these terms in detail in its Brahman (canto) 1, section 1, verse nos. 3-10.]

सो०. होइ न बिषय बिराग भवन बसत भा चौथपन ।

हृदयँ बहुत दुख लाग जनम गयउ हरिभगति बिनु ॥ १४२ ॥

sōraṭhā.

hō'i na biṣaya birāga bhavana basata bhā cauthapana.

hṛdayam' bahuta dukha lāga janama gaya'u haribhagati binu. 142.

In spite of living a householder's life and getting involved in the process of procreation and expansion of the resultant creation, and then taking care of it and making proper arrangements for its smooth functioning, the couple remained internally detached from all external things. They were not tempted by the countless attractions and charms of sensual objects, or the pleasures and comforts of this material world.

By-and-by, as time passed and days advanced, they approached their old age which corresponded to the fourth quarter of any person's life-span, when they realized and regretted that their whole life had been spent without devoting it to Lord Hari's Bhakti (exclusively devoting one's time in worshipping the Lord, offering prayers to him, leading a pious life of renunciation and detachment, and having devotion for the Lord as the only aim of life—"janama gaya'u haribhagati binu")¹. This filled the couple with great remorse, and they now decided to find an immediate remedy for it. (Sortha no. 142)

[Note—¹What is the importance of Bhakti which made Manu and Satrupa so regretful and full of remorse that they could not practice it while remaining engaged in the affairs of the world?

The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84; (iv) Doha no. 114-b; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 115; (vi) Doha no. 119 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it; (vii) Doha no. 122 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Lord Ram has asserted that the best fruit that a tree symbolized by a human body is to have the virtue of devotion for Lord God—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.]

चौ०. बरबस राज सुतहि तब दीन्हा । नारि समेत गवन बन कीन्हा ॥ १ ॥

तीरथ बर नैमिष बिख्याता । अति पुनीत साधक सिधि दाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭī.

barabasa rāja sutahi taba dīnhā. nāri samēta gavana bana kīnhā. 1.
tīratha bara naimiṣa bikhyātā. ati punīta sādhaaka sidhi dātā. 2.

Having decided that enough was enough, and that they would spend the remaining part of their lives in spiritual pursuit and devotion for Lord Hari, the pious king (Manu) abdicated the throne and transferred all royal powers and duties to his son (Uttaanpaad, the elder son) much against the latter's wishes.

Thence, he went to the forest along with his wife (Satrupa) (to lead an austere life of a hermit, doing penances and spending time on spiritual matters)¹. (1)

They went on a pilgrimage and headed to a famous holy place called Naimisharanya². This pilgrim site is considered as the holiest and is conducive to spiritual practices, for it bestows success to an individual in his or her spiritual pursuit. (2)

[Note—¹According to Hindu scriptures, a person's life is divided into four quarters.

The first quarter is called 'Brahmacharya Ashram' when he leads a celibate life studying and acquiring knowledge to prepare himself for the world.

The second quarter is called 'Grihastha Ashram' when he marries, raises a family, involves himself in household affairs such as looking after business and other financial matters, and in general expands his family's prosperity and good name.

The third quarter is called 'Vanprastha Ashram' when he is expected to hand over the affairs of his household and world to his heir(s), and move out of his home to go to the forest ('Vana') to do penance and austerity. But in practical terms, during this quarter the person would first prefer to go on a pilgrimage which he had deferred all his life due to household responsibilities, after completing which he would enter the fourth stage.

The last and the fourth quarter of life is called 'Sanyas Ashram', which means a phase of life when a person completely renounces all his relationships with the world and spends his time in meditation, contemplation, doing penances, and in general thinking of nothing else but Lord God in preparation for the final exit from this mortal world.

It is in this 'fourth quarter' that king Manu and Satrupa decided to completely detached themselves from the world and go to the forest to do Tapa (penances and austerity).

So therefore, the pious king abdicated the throne and handed over the royal duties to his eldest son Uttaanpaad.

²Naimisharanya: It is situated in the district of Sitapur in the present-day state of Uttar Pradesh in India, and lies geographically on the right bank of the river Gomti. There are three legends associated with this holy place as follows:

(a) According to Varaaha Puran, a sage named Gaurmukha had burnt to death a giant army of demons in a very short period of time called a 'Nimish', i.e. a matter of minutes. Hence, the place came to be known as 'Naimisharanya'.

(b) According to Devi Bhagwat Mahapuran, when the great sages were very scared by the ferocity of Kaliyug and asked the creator Brahma for advice, the latter gave them a mystical wheel, telling them that they should follow the wheel from behind, and when the rim of the wheel falls on the ground, they must deem that place to be auspicious, for Kaliyug won't have its negative influences thereabouts, and it is

there that they can continue with their spiritual practices, such as doing sacrifices and penances, unhindered. It is at this place that the great sage Suta (the parrot sage who was the son of the legendary sage Veda Vyas who had classified the Vedas and codified their philosophy in the form of the Upanishads, and had also written the 18 Mahapurans, as well as Srimad Bhagvad) had collected all the sages and saints to narrate the story of the Mahabharat.

(c) According to Vishnu Puran, one can wash off his sins by bathing in river Gomti at this place.

Now, why did king Manu and his queen choose Naimisharanya over other pilgrim places? The answer is that in Sata-Yuga (the first era of the 4-era cycle of one cycle of creation and destruction), Naimsharanya was considered as the best place for doing Tapa; in the second era called Treta-Yuga, it was a place called Pushkar (located in the present-day state of Rajasthan); in Dwapar-Yuga, it was a place called Kurushetra (where the great Mahabharat war was fought); and in Kali-Yuga, the bank of the holy river Ganges is regarded as the purest and the best place to do spiritual practices.]

बसहिं तहाँ मुनि सिद्ध समाजा । तहँ हियँ हरषि चलेउ मनु राजा ॥ ३ ॥
 पंथ जात सोहहिं मतिधीरा । ग्यान भगति जनु धरें सरीरा ॥ ४ ॥
 पहुँचे जाइ धेनुमति तीरा । हरषि नहाने निरमल नीरा ॥ ५ ॥

basahim tahām' muni sid'dha samājā. taham'hiyam' haraṣi calē'u manu rājā. 3.
 pantha jāta sōhahim matidhīrā. gyāna bhagati janu dharēm sarīrā. 4.
 pahumčē jā'i dhēnumati tīrā. haraṣi nahānē niramala nīrā. 5.

At this holy place (i.e. Naimisharanya) abided a large community of great sages and saints who were successful in their spiritual fields. It is there that king Manu headed with joy in his heart. (3)

While he moved ahead steadily on his path with a confident gait, he displayed stability of mind and determination of heart, which lent him a halo that was most admirable, giving an impression that he personified the twin virtues of Gyan (gnosis, enlightenment, self-realisation and truthful knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion for Lord God) in his form¹. (4)

In due course of time, he reached the banks of river Gomti (dhēnumati tīrā). Then, he cheerfully took a bath in the river². (5)

[Note—¹King Manu, as we have already read, was a very righteous king, who lived life in accordance with the laws of Dharma, upholding all its tenets, carrying on his duties diligently while remaining free from worldly temptations. At the same time, he never forgot his aim of life, which was to pursue devotion for Lord Hari. This means the king was a wise, enlightened and self-realised soul, as well as one who was pious and devoted to Lord God. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 142 along with Chaupai line nos. 2 and 8 that precede it.

²This was done by the couple, king Manu and queen Satrupa, to refresh themselves after a long journey, and also to observe the custom that when one visits a holy place situated near a river, one ought to first take a purifying bath in it before doing any other thing. We shall read in due course of time that when Lord Ram was on his way to the forest with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, and came to the bank of a river, the Lord took a bath in it and offered prayers—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 103 (river Ganges); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 106 (at Prayag, the confluence of three rivers, Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati).]

आए मिलन सिद्ध मुनि ग्यानी । धरम धुरंधर नृपरिषि जानी ॥ ६ ॥
जहँ जहँ तीरथ रहे सुहाए । मुनिन्ह सकल सादर करवाए ॥ ७ ॥
कृस सरिर मुनिपट परिधाना । सत समाज नित सुनहिं पुराना ॥ ८ ॥

ā'ē milana sid'dha muni gyānī. dharama dhurandhara nṛpariṣi jānī. 6.
jaham̃ jaham̃ tīratha rahē suhā'ē. muninha sakala sādara karavā'ē. 7.
kṛsa sarīra munipaṭa paridhānā. sata samāja nita sunahim̃ purānā. 8.

No sooner did the news spread of the arrival of the sage-king (nṛpariṣi) who was famed for his noble life and adherence to the laws of Dharma in all its respects, than all the sages and mystics who lived there (at Naimisharanya) came to meet him and pay their regards to the pious couple (Manu and Satrupa)¹. (6)

The sages accompanied the king and took him around to all the holy places in the vicinity, advising him to pay his respects at each of them. (7)

Meanwhile, the king became thin in his body as he began observing strict austerities. He wore clothes like that of a hermit, and spent his time listening to religious discourses in the company of sages and saints². (8)

[Note—¹Manu was not an ordinary visitor; he was a renowned king of his time. So, as soon as the news spread of his arrival, all the sages, saints, mystics and hermits who lived in Naimisharanya came to call on him. After formalities were over, some of them took him around all the holy places in the vicinity and guided him through the rituals offered at each of these places.

We would read in our story of Ram Charit Manas that when Lord Ram arrived at Chitrakoot, his temporary residence in the forest, all great sages as well as the forest-dwelling tribal people had come to meet the Lord and pay their respects to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 133—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 137.

²When Lord Ram lived for some time at Chitrakoot, a similar routine of life was followed by him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 237 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

दो०. द्वादस अच्छर मंत्र पुनि जपहिं सहित अनुराग ।

बासुदेव पद पंकरुह दंपति मन अति लाग ॥ १४३ ॥

dōhā.

dvādasa acchara mantra puni japahim sahita anurāga.
bāsudēva pada pañkaruha dampati mana ati lāga. 143.

Meanwhile, the pious couple (king Manu and his wife Satrupa) did Japa (silent repetition of Mantras) using the ‘dwadash Mantra’ (a twelve-lettered formula) of Lord Vasudeo (which is one of the many names of Lord Vishnu)¹.

They developed great devotion and affection for the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Vasudeo in their Mana (mind and heart)². (Doha no. 143.)

[Note—¹The twelve-letter Mantra is the following: “OM Namō Bhagwate Vasudevaaye”.

Sage Narad had advised Dhruv to use this Mantra to please Lord Vishnu when Dhruv did Tapa (penance). Refer: Vishnu Puran, Part 1, Canto 11, verse nos. 55-56.

²To wit, as time passed, the two enjoyed worshipping Lord Vishnu and offering their obeisance at the holy feet of the Lord. Their devotion and affection for the Lord increased day-by-day, and they employed the twelve-letter Mantra to meditate and focus their attention on the Lord.]

चौ०. करहिं अहार साक फल कंदा । सुमिरहिं ब्रह्म सच्चिदानंदा ॥ १ ॥
पुनि हरि हेतु करन तप लागे । बारि अधार मूल फल त्यागे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

karahim ahāra sāka phala kandā. sumirahim brahma saccidānandā. 1.
puni hari hētu karana tapa lāgē. bāri adhāra mūla phala tyāgē. 2.

[The following verses describe the severity of the Tapa that Manu and Satrupa did.]

Surviving by eating leafy vegetables, fruits and edible roots, they (Manu and Satrupa) did meditation and constantly remembered Brahm (the Supreme Being) who is a personified form of eternal consciousness, truth and bliss (brahma saccidānandā). (1)

After practicing the above austerity as a first step in their spiritual pursuit, they moved on to the next phase of doing Tapa by increasing its severity, with the objective of pleasing Lord Hari. During the second phase, they abandoned eating roots and fruits, and survived solely by drinking water.¹ (2)

[Note—¹In this context, we ought to recall how Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, had done her Tapa as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 74.

When we compare the Tapa done by Parvati with that being done by Manu and Satrupa as described in these verses as well as the verses that will follow herein below, we will find quite a similarity between the two.]

उर अभिलाष निरंतर होई । देखिअ नयन परम प्रभु सोई ॥ ३ ॥
 अगुन अखंड अनंत अनादी । जेहि चितहिं परमारथबादी ॥ ४ ॥
 नेति नेति जेहि बेद निरूपा । निजानंद निरूपाधि अनूपा ॥ ५ ॥
 संभु बिरंचि बिष्नु भगवाना । उपजहिं जासु अंस तें नाना ॥ ६ ॥

ura abhilāṣa nirantara hō'ī. dēkhi'a nayana parama prabhu sō'ī. 3.
 aguna akhaṇḍa ananta anādī. jēhi cintahiṃ paramārathabādī. 4.
 nēti nēti jēhi bēda nirūpā. nijānanda nirupādhi anūpā. 5.
 sambhu biranči biṣnu bhagavānā. upajahiṃ jāsu ansa tēm nānā. 6.

Deep in their hearts they had a strong desire to have a divine view of that Supreme Lord who is --- (3)

--- Without any attributes, who cannot be subjected to divisions, who is eternal and infinite, who has no beginning nor an end. He is the Lord who is mediated upon by those who are enlightened, self-realised, learned in the principles of metaphysics, and are well-versed in spiritual matters. (4)

Verily, even the Vedas can't define or describe him in entirety, and so they suffice by saying "Neti-Neti", i.e. not this not that¹. The Lord remains ever blissful as he is the supreme cosmic Consciousness itself personified. He has no comparisons, and is beyond application of any epithets that can be aptly applied to him. (5)

He (i.e. Brahm) is the supreme Creator of this creation, and even the Trinity Gods consisting of Lord Shiva (the concluder), Brahma (the creator) and Vishnu (the sustainer of this physical world), as all other entities in this creation, are born from a fraction of that supreme Creator². (6)

[Note—¹The Vedas tried their best to describe Brahm and his glories and attributes, but there was still much left to be said. They failed to present an exhaustive picture of Brahm who is an embodiment of cosmic Consciousness. So finally the Vedas surrendered, saying: 'If we say that Brahm has such and such attributes or qualities, or if we try to define Brahm by use of words we know, then it is certain that we would only scratch the tip of the iceberg, so to say, for much would be left untouched, and much more is not even known to us. So we cannot say conclusively that what we define as Brahm by using any given set of attributes is an exhaustive view of Brahm, and yet what we say is Brahm with those particular attributes is not wrong either. To wit, no one can define Brahm exclusively and exhaustively.'²

²According to the philosophy of the Upanishads, everything in existence is a manifestation of Brahm. Nothing exists in this creation which is not one or the other form of Brahm.

The three Gods of the Trinity are the same Brahm playing different roles. As Brahma he carries out the role of creation; as Vishnu he takes care of the world; and as Shiva he brings an end to everything, to start afresh.]

ऐसेउ प्रभु सेवक बस अहई । भगत हेतु लीलातनु गहई ॥ ७ ॥
जौं यह बचन सत्य श्रुति भाषा । तौ हमार पूजिहि अभिलाषा ॥ ८ ॥

aisē'u prabhu sēvaka basa aha'ī. bhagata hētu līlātanu gaha'ī. 7.
jauṁ yaha bacana satya śruti bhāṣā. tau hamāra pūjīhi abhilāṣā. 8.

This Lord is the one who is very kind towards his devotees so much so that it is for the devotee's sake he would have no second thoughts to assume any form the devotee wishes him to take, and then do many charming deeds that would fascinate the devotee¹. (7)

If this assertion of the Vedas is really true, then we (Manu and Satrupa) are sure that the Lord would also honour our wishes. (8)

[Note—¹Refer in this connection also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 116; (iv) Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 152; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 341; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (vii) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 93; (c) Sundar Kand, (viii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 39; (d) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 72.]

दो०. एहि बिधि बीते बरष षट सहस बारि आहार ।
संबत सप्त सहस्र पुनि रहे समीर अधार ॥ १४४ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi bītē baraṣa ṣaṭa sahasa bāri āhāra.
sambata sapta sahasra puni rahē samīra adhāra. 144.

In this way, by drinking only water to survive, the couple continued to do Tapa for six thousand years. After that, during the next phase of Tapa (which was the third) they survived only on air (i.e. they survived by just breathing in fresh air as they discarded even drinking water for survival). (Doha no. 144)

चौ०. बरष सहस दस त्यागेउ सोऊ । ठाढ़े रहे एक पद दोऊ ॥ १ ॥
बिधि हरि हर तप देखि अपारा । मनु समीप आए बहु बारा ॥ २ ॥
मागहु बर बहु भाँति लोभाए । परम धीर नहिं चलहिं चलाए ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'ī.

baraṣa sahasa dasa tyāgē'u sō'ū. ṭhāṛhē rahē ēka pada dō'ū. 1.
bidhi hari hara tapa dēkhi apārā. manu samīpa ā'ē bahu bārā. 2.
māgahu bara bahu bhāṁṭi lōbhā'ē. parama dhīra nahīṁ calahīṁ calā'ē. 3.

Then, stepping up their penances, they (Manu and Satrupa) stopped taking in air as well for the next ten thousand years, and all the while stood on one leg¹. (1)

The Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Hari (Vishnu) the sustainer and protector, and Har (Shiva) the concluder of this creation, were highly impressed by their Tapa, and they appeared before the pious couple many times (to request them to seek what they wished to have as boons, and stop such severe penances). (2)

These three Gods repeatedly asked them (Manu and Satrupa) to seek boons of their choice, but the couple was unmoved with such temptations, for they remained steady in their Tapa and focused to achieve the higher aim for which they had started their penances in the first place². (3)

[Note—¹It will be observed that this marks the fourth of their Tapa. Previously they had first relied on fruits, edible roots and leafy vegetables for survival, then discarded them and started drinking water only, then relied only by breathing air—i.e. they stopped eating or drinking anything at all.

This way, they gradually increased the severity of their Tapa in a step-by-step manner, which also helped them to sufficiently acclimatize their bodies to withstand the severity of the last phase when they stopped even breathing in air to survive. It was possible because by this time their bodies had become so thin and reduced to a skeleton (refer verse no. 4 herein below) that they needed no support to remain standing in a single posture like statues. This was the height of Tapa. Imagine: can we modern humans ever even think of doing it even in our wildest of dreams? But yes, it was possible in that era because we must keep in mind also that we are talking about Sata-Yuga, an era when it was common, and possible as well, to practice such severe Tapa without much difficulty—because people of that era practiced great austerities and exemplary self-control over their sense organs that empowered them with stupendous energy and dynamism that is inherent to the ‘consciousness’ that lived inside their bodies. This inherent power of the ‘consciousness’ is there today too, but unfortunately it is dissipated by us due to our indulgences and reckless waste of this energy in pursuit of the world and the temptations of its material charms which drains away and exhausts the dynamism of the Spirit.

²And what was their aim? The answer is that they wished to have a direct communion with Brahm, the Supreme Being who is the supreme Lord of the creation including these Gods of the Trinity—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 144.

As we shall read shortly, Manu and Satrupa were successful in their endeavour, as Brahm would reveal himself before them. What lesson do we learn from this episode? It is that when we finally fix a target in life, we must remain steadily focused on it and move forward to realize it, but we must, at the same time, be on guard not to get distracted by so many diversions and temptations that may come in our way. Success will not be easy; it may require great personal sacrifices. But resilience and faith and belief in ourselves pay at the end of the day. We must not lose courage and hope.]

अस्थिमात्र होइ रहे सरीरा । तदपि मनाग मनहिं नहिं पीरा ॥ ४ ॥

प्रभु सर्बग्य दास निज जानी । गति अनन्य तापस नृप रानी ॥ ५ ॥
मागु मागु बरु भै नभ बानी । परम गभीर कृपामृत सानी ॥ ६ ॥

asthimātra hō'i rahē sarīrā. tadapi manāga manahim nahirim pīrā. 4.
prabhu sarbagya dāsa nija jānī. gati anan'ya tāpasa nrpa rānī. 5.
māgu māgu baru bhai nabha bānī. parama gabhīra kṛpāmṛta sānī. 6.

Their bodies were reduced to being mere skeleton of bones, yet they had no regret or remorse. [To wit, they did not lose courage and hope.] (4)

The Supreme Lord (Brahm) is all-knowing, so he could see the sincerity and faith of the pious couple and understand what was in their heart. The Lord realized that the king (Manu) and his queen (Satrupa) were truly his devotees, and were matchless in their commitment to him. (5)

So finally, being moved by their faith, devotion, sincerity and commitment, the Lord spoke in the form of an invisible voice that was heard in the sky. This voice was deep and grave, and it resounded in the sky (like a rumble of an approaching cloud). It said: 'Ask, ask for any boon you two wish to have'¹. (6)

[Note—¹When Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva appeared before Manu and Satrupa and asked them to seek boons as said in verse nos. 2-3 herein above, they appeared in person, so they could be seen by the couple. Since the couple had wished to make a direct connect with Brahm, the Supreme Being, so they simply neglected these three gods.

But now the situation changed. Since Brahm is invisible, all-pervading and consciousness itself personified, and since the sky element is one of the myriad forms of Brahm, so when the couple heard the sky itself virtually speaking to them, for the sound seemed to come from the whole dome of the firmament above them, as if coming from all directions at once, they could easily understand that it was Brahm speaking at last.

In the earlier case of the Trinity Gods, the voice came from a particular direction where these Gods stood, but now when Brahm spoke the whole sky seemed to be speaking. It indeed would have been a fantastic experience! Here we ought to note that whenever Brahm, the Supreme Being and the supreme Father of this creation who is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, the Lord who had created even the Trinity of Gods*, speaks, his voice resonates throughout the sky as if the whole dome of the firmament above the earth is filled with sound waves#. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150; #(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 74; (ii) Doha no. 186.}

This is the difference between how Brahm is heard and how Lord Vishnu, who is a close resemblance of Brahm, is heard; because while the voice of Brahm fills the whole sky, the voice of Vishnu comes from a particular direction where he stands.]

मृतक जिआवनि गिरा सुहाई । श्रवन रंध्र होइ उर जब आई ॥ ७ ॥
हृष्टपुष्ट तन भए सुहाए । मानहुँ अबहिं भवन ते आए ॥ ८ ॥

mṛṭaka jī'āvani girā suhā'ī. śravana randhra hō'i ura jaba ā'ī. 7.
hraṣṭapuṣṭa tana bha'ē suhā'ē. mānahum' abahim bhavana tē ā'ē. 8.

When (the waves of) that sound, which was rejuvenating for the soul and could infuse a new life into someone who is dead, entered the ears of the couple and traveled down to their hearts --- (7),

--- It had such a miraculous effect on their bodies¹ that they became healthy once again as they were in the beginning of the whole exercise, making it appear that they had just arrived from home. (8)

[Note—¹A fine instance of spiritualism and science going hand-in-hand. Everyone knows that sound travels in waves, and that sound waves have energy in them. It can have different names and different usage, but the basic idea that any kind of sound wave will have energy remains a universal truth. When radio or electronic signals are sent to remotely control and operate robots of any kind, whether on earth or at far away destinations such as the moon or mars, it is this energy that is primarily at play.

So, when the sound energy of the voice in the sky hit the eardrums of Manu and Satrupa, it made them vibrate. This vibration was transmitted to their head, energizing it and reactivating its sensory neurons that may have become paralysed by so long of un-use. This in turn stirred the body into activity, reviving the beating of the heart and circulation of blood in it.

The resultant effect was that the couple woke up as someone would after a period of sound sleep—fresh and rejuvenated.]

दो०. श्रवन सुधा सम बचन सुनि पुलक प्रफुल्लित गात ।
बोले मनु करि दंडवत प्रेम न हृदयँ समात ॥ १४५ ॥

dōhā.

śravana sudhā sama bacana suni pulaka praphullita gāta.
bōlē manu kari daṇḍavata prēma na hṛdayam' samāta. 145.

When that voice, which was like ambrosia being given to a dying person, was heard by Manu, his body was thrilled, and he felt extremely exhilarated.

He was so happy that joy could not be contained in his heart as he prostrated himself on the ground (to pay his respects to the 'speaker', i.e. Brahm). (Doha no. 145)

चौ०. सुनु सेवक सुरतरु सुरधेनू । बिधि हरि हर बंदित पद रेनू ॥ १ ॥
सेवत सुलभ सकल सुख दायक । प्रनतपाल सचराचर नायक ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sunu sēvaka surataru suradhēnū. bidhi hari hara bandita pada rēnū. 1.
sēvata sulabha sakala sukha dāyaka. pranatapāla sacarācara nāyaka. 2.

Manu said: 'Listen oh exalted Lord! You are like the Tree and the Cow of the gods (surataru suradhēnū) (because you fulfill all the wishes of your devotees).

All the three Gods of the Trinity, viz. Vidhi (Brahma), Hari (Vishnu) and Har (Shiva), worship the dust of your holy feet¹. (1)

Everything is possible and accessible by serving you and your holy feet. You protect and take care of all those who surrender themselves before you and seek your refuge (pranatapāla)².

Oh Lord, you are the Supreme Lord of all, whether inanimate or animate, in this creation (sacarācara nāyaka). (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 124.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 111 where Brahma, the creator, has affirmed about this virtue of Lord Ram while offering his prayers to the Lord.]

जौं अनाथ हित हम पर नेहू । तौ प्रसन्न होइ यह बर देहू ॥ ३ ॥
 जो सरूप बस सिव मन माहीं । जेहि कारन मुनि जतन कराहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 जो भुसुंड़ि मन मानस हंसा । सगुन अगुन जेहि निगम प्रसंसा ॥ ५ ॥
 देखहिं हम सो रूप भरि लोचन । कृपा करहु प्रनतारति मोचन ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ anātha hita hama para nēhū. tau prasanna hō'i yaha bara dēhū. 3.
 jō sarūpa basa siva mana māhīm. jēhi kārana muni jatana karāhīm. 4.
 jō bhusuṅḍi mana mānasa hansā. saguna aguna jēhi nigama prasansā. 5.
 dēkhahim hama sō rūpa bhari lōcana. kṛpā karahu pranatāratī mōcana. 6.

If you are indeed pleased with us and have affection towards us (jauṁ --- hama para nēhū), then oh Lord who is very merciful, kind, compassionate and gracious towards those who are humble, distressed and lowly (anātha hita)¹, then be pleased to grant us this boon (which is as follows—). (3)

That divine and holy form of yours that is enshrined in the heart of Lord Shiva², the form for which great sages and ascetics do so many sacrifices and penances to be able to realize it³ ---, (4)

--- The form of the Lord that resides in the lake-like heart of sage Kaagbhusund⁴, and the Lord who has both a Saguna (visible) form as well as a Nirguna (invisible) form as affirmed and praised by the Vedas⁵. (5)

Oh gracious Lord who eliminates the distress and wants of those who surrender before you and seek your refuge and blessings (pranatāratī mōcana)! Be kind upon us so that we can see that form which I have outlined above.⁶ (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 48.

²This is a clear hint that the couple wished to see the divine and holy form of Lord Ram—because Lord Shiva has this form eternally enshrined in his heart\$, being the greatest devotee of Lord Ram who constantly repeats the holy name of Lord Ram as his preferred Mantra (spiritual formula)*, and is also the one who had first conceived the story of Lord Ram, known as the Ram Charit Manas, in his heart#.

{Refer: Ram Charit Manas, \$Aranya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 11; Baal Kand—(ii) Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (iii) Doha no. 116; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 341.

*Baal Kand—Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108; Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13.

#Baal Kand—Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 17-21 that precede Doha no. 11; (ii) Chanda line nos. 7-16 that precede Doha no. 32.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 196; (b) Sundar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; (c) Uttar Kand, (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 113; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 124.

⁵Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 23; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 116; (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 11.

The Vedas have offered their prayer to Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-24 that precede Doha no. 13.

⁶And what is the form of Lord Ram which Manu wishes to see? We can have an idea of that form from what sage Sutikshan wished to have enshrined in his heart as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-20 that precede Doha no. 11. We shall come to read about it in due course of our reading when we come to that particular set of verses.]

दंपति बचन परम प्रिय लागे । मृदुल बिनीत प्रेम रस पागे ॥ ७ ॥

भगत बछल प्रभु कृपानिधाना । बिस्वबास प्रगटे भगवाना ॥ ८ ॥

dampati bacana parama priya lāgē. mṛdula binīta prēma rasa pāgē. 7.

bhagata bachala prabhu kṛpānidhānā. bisvabāsa pragaṭē bhagavānā. 8.

The words of the pious couple were liked by the Lord very much as they were soaked in affection for the Lord, were very sweet and politely spoken, and pleasant to hear. (7)

However, the merciful and gracious Lord who is ever-obliging and goes out of his way to please his devotees as he invariably loves them, and who is invisibly present throughout this creation because he is all pervading and omnipresent¹, finally revealed himself before the couple. (8)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 185 where Lord Shiva has reiterated this fact to the gods and mother earth when they were searching for Lord Vishnu.

To wit, the Lord is present everywhere and every moment of existence, and the only requirement to make his presence felt is to have sincere love and devotion for him. In the present case, Brahm in the form of Lord Ram revealed himself before Manu and Satrupa because this condition was fulfilled.]

दो०. नील सरोरुह नील मनि नील नीरधर स्याम ।
लाजहिं तन सोभा निरखि कोटि कोटि सत काम ॥ १४६ ॥

dōhā.

nīla sarōruha nīla mani nīla nīradhara syāma.
lājahiṁ tana sōbhā nirakhi kōṭi kōṭi sata kāma. 146.

[And what was that revealed form of the Lord looked like? This has been described in this Doha and the verse nos. 1-5 that follow it.]

The divine form of the Lord as he presented himself before the pious couple had a hue like that of a blue lotus flower, a blue gem (sapphire), and dark rain-bearing clouds¹.

This form was so bewitchingly beautiful to behold that it put millions of Kamdeos (patron god of beauty) to shame. (Doha no. 146)

[Note—¹The Lord's body is compared to the lotus for its softness and suppleness; to the gem for its radiance and splendour; and to the dark cloud for the depth, density and gravity of his form.

The beauty of Lord Ram's form is narrated elsewhere too in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 233 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (in the garden of Janakpur); (ii) Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 (at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327 (Lord Ram's as a groom); (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116 (Lord Ram on his way to the forest); (c) Aranya Kand, (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 11 (sage Sutikshan).]

चौ०. सरद मयंक बदन छबि सींवा । चारु कपोल चिबुक दर ग्रीवा ॥ १ ॥
अधर अरुन रद सुंदर नासा । बिधु कर निकर बिनिंदक हासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sarada mayaṅka badana chabi sīnvā. cāru kapōla cibuka dara grīvā. 1.
adhara aruna rada sundara nāsā. bidhu kara nikara binindaka hāsā. 2.

The extreme beauty of the Lord's countenance surpassed even the charm of the full moon during an autumn night¹. No less was the perfection of beauty of his cheeks and chin. His neck was muscular, smooth and well rounded like a conch shell². (1)

His lips were robust pink in colour, while his teeth and nose were well formed and proportionate³. The Lord's bewitching smile was so captivating that it put to shame the allurements of the soothing rays of the moonlight (i.e. the Lord's smile was many times more alluring and charming than the soothing rays of a full moon's light)⁴. (2)

[Note—¹Refer to similar comparisons elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas: e.g. (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 233; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 243; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 115; (v) Doha no. 116.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 199; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 243.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 199.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 198.]

नव अंबुज अंबक छबि नीकी । चितवनि ललित भावँती जी की ॥ ३ ॥
भृकुटि मनोज चाप छबि हारी । तिलक ललाट पटल दुतिकारी ॥ ४ ॥

nava ambuja ambaka chabi nīkī. citavani lalita bhāvamṭī jī kī. 3.
bhṛkuṭi manōja cāpa chabi hārī. tilaka lalāṭa paṭala dutikārī. 4.

The Lord's eyes were more exquisitely beautiful than a lotus flower in full bloom. His glances were captivating for the mind and heart of those on whom they fell.

[To wit, whoever saw Lord Ram was mesmerized by the Lord's charming glances that accompanied his equally charming smile.]¹ (3)

The curve of the Lord's eyebrows was so fascinating that it stole the beauty of Kamdeo's bow, while the Tilak Mark on his forehead (a sign marked on the forehead, just above the nose) appeared to radiate splendour (like a shining arrow mounted on a bow)². (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 243.

²In this imagery, the curved eyebrows of Lord Ram are like the bow of Cupid (Kamdeo), and the vertical Tilak Mark in the middle of his forehead resembles an arrow that is mounted on this bow, ready to be shot and symbolically subdue, captivate or mesmerize all those whom the Lord wishes to enchant.

Refer also to: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 233; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 243; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 327..]

कुंडल मकर मुकुट सिर भ्राजा । कुटिल केस जनु मधुप समाजा ॥ ५ ॥
 उर श्रीबत्स रुचिर बनमाला । पदिक हार भूषन मनिजाला ॥ ६ ॥

kuṇḍala makara mukuṭa sira bhrājā. kuṭila kēsa janu madhupa samājā. 5.
 ura śrībatsa rucira banamālā. padika hāra bhūṣana manijālā. 6.

The Lord wore an ear-ring shaped like an alligator (or a large fish)¹, and his head was adorned by a majestic crown².

The curl of hairs of the Lord (that swayed softly as he shook his head) resembled a swarm of bees (humming around and hovering over a lotus flower symbolized by the Lord's enchanting face)³. (5)

On his chest there was a mark of sage Bhrigu's footprint⁴, and on his bosom dangled a wonderful garland of marigold flowers as well as other garlands made of an assortment of glittering gems⁵. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 327.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 219 along with Chaupai line no. 7 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 233.

⁴Once sage Bhrigu got angry at Lord Vishnu and kicked the Lord on his chest. Rather than becoming angry at the sage, the always forgiving and merciful Lord accepted it with humility, and promised that he will always sport the mark left by the sage's foot on the Lord's chest in a dignified way as a reminder that he always accepts whatever his devotees give him, whether it is their love or their wrath, the Lord accepts them both with equal warmth!

Remember: We have, just a little while ago, read how sage Narad had vehemently cursed Lord Vishnu, but instead of feeling disgusted and angry, the Lord forgave Narad and cheerfully accepted the curse to calm down the angry sage. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 137.}

⁵Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 233.]

केहरि कंधर चारु जनेऊ । बाहु बिभूषन सुंदर तेऊ ॥ ७ ॥
 करि कर सरिस सुभग भुजदंडा । कटि निषंग कर सर कोदंडा ॥ ८ ॥

kēhari kandhara cāru janē'ū. bāhu bibhūṣana sundara tē'ū. 7.
 kari kara sarisa subhaga bhujadaṇḍā. kaṭi niṣaṅga kara sara kōdaṇḍā. 8.

The Lord's shoulders and neck were muscular and well-formed like that of a lion. Across his chest he wore a sacred thread, and his muscular and well-built arms were adorned by ornaments (armlets, bracelets, finger rings etc.)¹. (7)

The Lord had long and muscular arms resembling an elephant's trunk²; he wore a quiver tied to his hip, and held a bow and an arrow in his hands³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Doha no. 243; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 327.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 243; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 233; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 244.]

दो०. तड़ित बिनिंदक पीत पट उदर रेख बर तीनि ।
नाभि मनोहर लेति जनु जमुन भवँर छबि छीनि ॥ १४७ ॥

dōhā.

taḍita binindaka pīta paṭa udara rēkha bara tīni.
nābhi manōhara lēti janu jamuna bhavam̐ra chabi chīni. 147.

The Lord was attired in a glorious robe known as 'Pitambar' that was yellow in colour and shining brilliantly¹. On his abdomen there were three folds on the skin².

His navel was so captivating for the mind and heart of the beholder as if it was a whirlpool or eddy currents in river Yamuna that would trap anyone who falls in it³. (Doha no. 147)

[Note—¹Lord Vishnu is attired in a body-wrapping piece of garment made of fine yellow silk that shines in light. This cloth is called 'Pitambar'. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 199; (ii) Doha no. 233; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²The three folds of skin on the abdomen imply that the Lord's body was muscular and well proportioned, and not flabby with excess of belly fat; the Lord was not pot-bellied but had a well-built muscular body. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 199.

³Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 199.

The navel present in the middle of such a muscular abdomen is compared to the whirlpool or eddy currents of river Yamuna as it attracted the attention of all those who beheld the Lord.

It ought to be noted here that such physical features and their beauty and charm as are described presently were a norm in ancient classics that narrated the

Saguna or the visible form of the Supreme Lord. We must keep in mind that poets were, and are still, accustomed to describing physical beauty of their subjects, whether it is Nature or a person, as a means of putting into practice their art of writing creatively, to express their emotions through their chosen subjects, as well as to impress upon their audience the singular charm of the subject they have chosen to focus their attention on.

In our present case, the poet is Goswami Tulsidas, and the subject he has chosen to write about is Lord Ram. Hence, Tulsidas uses all his poetic skills and puts them to good use while describing beauty in all its forms. Later on we shall come across extensive verses where the poet has been very liberal with his pen in describing the beauty of Mother Nature too. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; and (b) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17.}

चौ०. पद राजीव बरनि नहिं जाहीं । मुनि मन मधुप बसहिं जेन्ह माहीं ॥ १ ॥

बाम भाग सोभति अनुकूला । आदिसक्ति छबिनिधि जगमूला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pada rājīva barani nahim jāhīm. muni mana madhupa basahim jēnha māhīm.

1.

bāma bhāga sōbhati anukūlā. ādisakti chabinidhi jagamūlā. 2.

The glory of the lotus-like feet of the Lord cannot be described, for they were so enchanting as to attract even the minds of dispassionate sages, who had otherwise renounced all attractions of the world, like swarms of so many bees¹. (1)

To the left of the Lord was present the Adi-Shakti, the Primary Goddess whose presence was most adorable and auspicious, who was always obedient to the Lord, who represented the cosmic authority, the dynamism and the powers of Lord Vishnu, and who was responsible for creation of this universe on the instructions of the Lord². (2)

[Note—¹In this imagery, the sages are compared to bees who flock to a lotus flower and hover over it in search of nectar, because these sages always think of the holy feet of the Lord, compared to a lotus flower here, and derive bliss by meditating upon them. These sages have renounced all attractions of the world, nothing charms their minds, but they find the Lord's holy feet so enchanting and elevating for their spirits, enhancing their spiritual experiences and aiding in their spiritual pursuits so much that they simply can't resist being attracted to them.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 152. Brahm is like an Emperor, and the Adi-Shakti is like the authority and powers of the Emperor. Like an Emperor uses his sovereign authority and royal powers inherently vested in him to carry out his wishes in this world, so likewise Brahm too employs the Adi-Shakti to carry out his wishes at the cosmic level of existence.

At the highest level of existence, which is the subtlest level of existence, Brahm represents the cosmic Consciousness that has the Adi-Shakti by its side to represent its supreme authority and powers in this creation. This Adi-Shakti is also known as Maha-Maya. At the next level of existence, a little lower level than Brahm but still higher than the gross physical world, the Adi-Shakti is called Goddess Laxmi while Brahm is known as Vishnu. And finally, at the lowest level of existence represented by the gross world, the Adi-Shakti exists in the form of Sita, and Brahm in the form of Lord Ram. Refer the next two verses which are explicit in this matter.]

जासु अंस उपजहिं गुनखानी । अगनित लच्छि उमा ब्रह्मानी ॥ ३ ॥
भृकुटि बिलास जासु जग होई । राम बाम दिसि सीता सोई ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu ansa upajahim̐ gunakhānī. aganita lacchi umā brahmānī. 3.
bhr̥kuṭi bilāsa jāsu jaga hō'ī. rāma bāma disī sītā sō'ī. 4.

It is from a fractional part of this Adi-Shakti that all other goddesses such as Laxmi, Uma and Brahmani (the consorts of Lord Vishnu, Brahma the creator, and Shiva the concluder respectively) have come into being. (3)

The Supreme Lord and his all-powerful Adi-Shakti who can create and wind up this creation when they so please, have manifested themselves respectively as Lord Ram with his consort Sita present to his left¹. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 152; (b) Aranya Kand, (iii) Chanda line nos. 9-16 that precede Doha no. 32; (c) Uttar Kand, (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48.]

छबिसमुद्र हरि रूप बिलोकी । एकटक रहे नयन पट रोकी ॥ ५ ॥
चितवहिं सादर रूप अनूपा । तृप्ति न मानहिं मनु सतरूपा ॥ ६ ॥

chabisamudra hari rūpa bilōkī. ēkaṭaka rahē nayana paṭa rōkī. 5.
citavahim̐ sādara rūpa anūpā. tr̥pti na mānahim̐ manu satarūpā. 6.

When the pious couple (Manu and Satrupa) had the divine vision of Lord Hari (as described in the forgoing verses), a vision that was so exceptionally beautiful that it resembled an ocean of beauty that had revealed itself at that moment, they were spell-bound and so dazed that they continued to gaze it intently without blinking even for a fleeting moment. (5)

Manu and Satrupa were transfixed by the sight, and even though they reverentially gazed at the enchanting form of the Lord for what seemed to be an interminable length of time, yet they could not have enough of it, and their hearts weren't contented¹. (6)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 50; (ii) Doha no. 260; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Doha no. 260—where we read that the eyes of the beholder were never satisfied by looking at the charming image of Lord Ram.]

हरष बिबस तन दसा भुलानी । परे दंड इव गहि पद पानी ॥ ७ ॥
सिर परसे प्रभु निज कर कंजा । तुरत उठाए करुनापुंजा ॥ ८ ॥

haraṣa bibasa tana dasā bhulānī. parē daṇḍa iva gahi pada pānī. 7.
sira parasē prabhu nija kara kaṅjā. turata uṭhā'ē karunāpunjā. 8.

The mesmerizing sight of Lord Hari made them overjoyed so much so that they lost awareness of themselves and fell down unconscious on the ground, prostrating themselves before the Lord as they grasped his holy feet with their hands. (7)

The Lord, who is a fount of compassion, mercy and kindness, affectionately moved his lotus-like palms on their heads (as if caressing them lovingly), and lifted them up. (8)

दो०. बोले कृपानिधान पुनि अति प्रसन्न मोहि जानि ।
मागहु बर जोड़ भाव मन महादानि अनुमानि ॥ १४८ ॥
dōhā.

bōlē kṛpānidhāna puni ati prasanna mōhi jāni.
māgahu bara jō'i bhāva mana mahādāni anumāni. 148.

The Lord, who is a treasury of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace, then told the pious couple (Manu and Satrupa): ‘Taking into account that I am very pleased with you and that I am a great and generous donor who grants whatever is wished for, I request you to freely express your desires regarding the boon that you wish me to grant you.’¹ (Doha no. 148)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 49 where we shall read that Lord Ram had asked Vibhishan to seek any boon that he wished to have from the Lord because the Lord can't let anyone coming to meet him go back without any blessing in the form of a gift symbolizing courtesy.]

चौ०. सुनि प्रभु बचन जोरि जुग पानी । धरि धीरजु बोली मृदु बानी ॥ १ ॥
नाथ देखि पद कमल तुम्हारे । अब पूरे सब काम हमारे ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

suni prabhu bacana jōri juga pānī. dhari dhīraju bōlī mṛdu bānī. 1.
nātha dēkhi pada kamala tumhārē. aba pūrē saba kāma hamārē. 2.

Hearing the words of the Lord (i.e. Lord Hari), the couple joined the palms of their respective hands reverentially as a mark of respect for the Lord, and gathering courage (to speak before the Lord) they replied in a sweet voice --- (1)

‘Oh Lord! By seeing your holy lotus-like feet, all our desires have been fulfilled (and nothing more do we want). (2)

एक लालसा बड़ि उर माहीं । सुगम अगम कहि जाति सो नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
तुम्हहि देत अति सुगम गोसाईं । अगम लाग मोहि निज कृपनाईं ॥ ४ ॥

ēka lālasā baḍi ura māhīm. sugama agama kahi jāti sō nāhīm. 3.
tumhahi dēta ati sugama gōsā'īm. agama lāga mōhi nija kṛpanā'īm. 4.

However, we have a profound wish lingering in our hearts, which is so singularly unique that on the one hand it appears that it is possible to accomplish it, and on the other hand it seems to be incredulous to ever think of it being fulfilled. (3)

While it is surely within your powers to fulfill that wish¹, yet it seems to be so out of reach for me (mōhi)² who am so humble that I tend to shy from even expressing it in words³. (4)

[Note—¹Just a moment ago, Lord Hari had assured the couple that they are free to seek any boon they wish to have and feel reassured that it would be fulfilled as the Lord is a great donor, and he would not shy away from fulfilling the desires of anyone who seek anything from him—apropos: Doha no. 148 herein above.

So the couple was sure that whatever wish they had in their hearts would be sure to be fulfilled by the Lord.

²It is to be marked here, as in verses that follow herein below, that Manu is speaking on behalf of his wife Satrupa too. It is quite in order because it is impractical that both Manu and Satrupa would speak at the same time. Usually, the husband becomes a spokesperson who speaks on behalf of his wife who is standing by his side.

³But at the same time they doubted if they themselves were capable of honouring their obligations towards the Lord should the latter agree to fulfill their desire; would they be able to live upto the Lord's expectations from them if the Lord obliges them by honouring their wish?

To wit, they were sure of the Lord's ability of granting their wish, but were unsure of their own abilities to honour the Lord's expectations from them.]

जथा दरिद्र बिबुधतरु पाई । बहु संपति मागत सकुचाई ॥ ५ ॥
तासु प्रभाउ जान नहिं सोई । तथा हृदयँ मम संसय होई ॥ ६ ॥

jathā daridra bibudhataru pāī. bahu sampati māgata sakucāī. 5.
tāsu prabhā'u jāna nahim sōī. tathā hr̥dayam̐ mama sansaya hōī. 6.

It is like the case of someone having access to the all wish-fulfilling Tree, for then that person who has so many desires in his heart would hesitate from asking the Tree to fulfill some particular wish, because he won't be able to decide what to ask and what not to. (5)

That person would not know the mystical powers of Tree (that it would grant fulfillment of all wishes, whatever they may be, and whether such wishes are expressly sought to be fulfilled or kept a secret)¹.

In the same way, I (Manu) have hesitation in my heart (because we, both my wife Satrupa and myself, are unable to decide whether to expressly request you to fulfill that single wish of ours, or just leave it to you to decide what you want to give us at your own discretion). (6)

[Note—¹The mystical all wish-fulfilling Tree can make everything a reality; nothing is impossible for it to grant to the seeker. So when a person comes to this Tree, he becomes uncertain what to do: should he ask for a particular boon, or leave it to the discretion of the Tree to grant whatever it deems fit.

In the former case, asking for a specific boon, the Tree would be happy to dispose of the application by giving what was asked for, and get done with it. But in case the seeker leaves it on the Tree to give whatever it wishes to give out of its own free will, the Tree would be in a quandary, for it would not be able to decide what to gift the seeker, and being mindful of its reputation of giving the greatest of gifts, it would go on giving and gifting one thing after another to protect its own honour and reputation as a great Giver.

In this situation obviously, the seeker would be the gainer, for if he had asked for one particular thing the Tree would have gladly given it to him and get over with its obligation, but when the seeker leaves it on the Tree to give what it pleases, the Tree would go on giving and gifting abundantly, more and more, out of shame to appear to be miserly, thrifty or stingy in giving gifts as it would bring great dishonour to its reputation of being a generous giver.

²So Manu and Satrupa say that they are unable to decide whether to ask the Lord to grant them the wish they have in their hearts, or leave it at the discretion of the Lord to give them whatever the Lord pleases. They say that they think it would be better for them to keep quiet and take recourse to the second option—which was to leave it to the Lord to grant whatever he wishes, because the Lord, being all-knowing, would certainly know what wish they have in their hearts even if they do not express it clearly in words, and then having fulfilled that wish the Lord would feel shy if he does not give anything to them as bonus from his own side in addition to that secret wish. Hence, the couple would be the gainer. As we shall presently see, this is what exactly happened.]

सो तुह् जानहु अंतरजामी । पुरवहु मोर मनोरथ स्वामी ॥ ७ ॥
सकुच बिहाइ मागु नृप मोही । मोरें नहिं अदेय कछु तोही ॥ ८ ॥

sō tumha jānahu antarajāmī. puravahu mōra manōratha svāmī. 7.
sakuca bihā'i māgu nrpa mōhī. mōrēm nahim adēya kachu tōhī. 8.

Oh Lord, being all-knowing, you are well aware of the wish that I have in my heart (even though we, myself and my wife Satrupa, desist from expressing it), and so oh Lord, we are sure you will fulfill it.' (7)

[Lord Hari replied—] 'Oh king ("nrpa"; Manu)! Leave aside all hesitation and ask whatever you want. There is nothing that I cannot grant you¹.' (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 herein above.]

दो०. दानि सिरोमनि कृपानिधि नाथ कहउँ सतिभाउ ।
चाहउँ तुम्हहि समान सुत प्रभु सन कवन दुराउ ॥ १४९ ॥

dōhā.

dāni sirōmani kṛpānidhi nātha kaha'um̃ satibhā'u.
cāha'um̃ tumhahi samāna suta prabhu sana kavana durā'u. 149.

[Manu then said—] 'Oh Lord who is the greatest Donor (dāni sirōmani) and an ocean of mercy, compassion, grace and kindness (kṛpānidhi)!

I speak truthfully, for nothing is hidden from you (and therefore I can't speak falsehood to you)¹, that I wish to have a son in your likeness. (Doha no. 149)

[Note—¹In verse no. 7 that precedes this Doha, Manu has just said that the Lord is all-knowing, and so he aware of what wish the couple has in their hearts. Hence, speaking false is out of the question.

In the context of what Manu has said earlier in verse nos. 3-4 that precede this Doha, it is easy for Lord Hari to manifest himself as a human being by taking a birth as the couple's son, but the responsibility that would fall on the shoulders of Manu and Satrupa if they became parents of the Lord in his human manifestation was not going to be joke. This responsibility and its accompanying expectations were so great that Manu and Satrupa were doubtful whether they would be successful in living upto it.]

चौ०. देखि प्रीति सुनि बचन अमोले । एवमस्तु करुनानिधि बोले ॥ १ ॥
आपु सरिस खोजौं कहँ जाई । नृप तव तनय होब मैं आई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi prīti suni bacana amōlē. ēvamastu karunānidhi bōlē. 1.
āpu sarisa khōjauṃ kham̃ jāī. nrpa tava tanaya hōba mair̃ āī. 2.

The Lord observed that the couple had profound affection for him, and when he heard the king's words that though were brief yet were matchless and had immense depth in them, the merciful, compassionate and gracious Lord blessed them by saying: 'It will be as you have wished¹. (1)

Where can I find anyone who is like me? So therefore, oh king (nr̥pa), I shall come and manifest myself as your son². (2)

[Note—¹What did the couple wish? They wanted to have the rarest of rare privilege, and its accompanying joy, to have a son who will be in the likeness of the Supreme Being—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 149. So the Lord blessed them that he will certainly honour their wish.

Why are the words spoken by Manu on behalf of the couple so rare that the Lord had to acknowledge them as being matchless and with a deep meaning? Well, rarely a great sage would do severe Tapa only to wish for the Lord to be his ‘son’, of all things! It was common for pious people to do Tapa to attain emancipation and salvation, while those who were evil and of a demonic nature would do Tapa to get powers that would make them invincible and grant them authority which would enable them to conquer the world and rule over it unopposed. But rarely anyone would wish to have the Supreme Being as his or her son.

Wishing to have a son in the likeness of the Supreme Being was a very clever design by Manu because he knew well enough that it would mean that the Lord would have to come down to this world himself to become his son, as there was no one in existence who is exactly like the Lord. Yet by saying he wanted a son in the likeness of the Lord, instead of saying he wanted the Lord himself to be his son, the king maintained decorum and showed his respect to the exalted office of the ‘Lord Emperor of the world’ which the Supreme Being, Lord Hari, occupied. To wit, for an ordinary person to dare to ask the supreme Emperor of the realm to assume the humble role of becoming his son and come to stay in his household will be nothing short of an insult to the high office that the Emperor occupies; it will be really unthinkable for anyone to make such a ridiculous and absurd wish.

But in the case of Lord Hari, Manu and Satrupa the case was different: the pious king and his wife had the greatest of respect and affection for the Lord, and did not have the slightest and the remotest intention to insult and undermine the august institution of the Supreme Being by asking him to come to this mortal world and assume a gross form of a human being. But at the same time, the love and affection they had for the Lord was so profound that it got the better of them, for they could not resist the urge to explore if it was possible for them to shower their love and affection on the Lord personally, at a more personal level and from much closer quarters that is free from the necessity of observing formalities and protocols while interacting with the Supreme Being in a formal surrounding as was the case at present. Interactions with the Lord in more formal setups would last for a limited period of time, but when the same Lord would come down in their home as their son, all barriers and formalities would be erased, and then they would have a free hand to be able to show the intensity of their love and affection for the Lord as abundantly and in as many ways as they wished.

²Lord Hari saw through the trick; he understood the couple’s real intentions. So the Lord smiled in amusement, and then the obliging Lord decided to fulfill the couple’s secret wish as outlined herein above by saying that “he did not know where to find a son in his own likeness, so it will be better and easier and convenient for him to come down himself as their son to honour their wish”.

Here we are witness to the remarkable play of mutual affection between the Supreme Being and his devotees! Indeed it is truly said that the Lord goes out of his way to please his devotees, even if it means a lot of problem for himself.]

सतरूपहि बिलोकि कर जोरें । देबि मागु बरु जो रुचि तोरें ॥ ३ ॥
जो बरु नाथ चतुर नृप मागा । सोइ कृपाल मोहि अति प्रिय लागा ॥ ४ ॥

satarūpahi bilōki kara jōrēm. dēbi māgu baru jō ruci tōrēm. 3.
jō baru nātha catura nṛpa māgā. sō'i kṛpāla mōhi ati priya lāgā. 4.

Then turning to Satrupa the Lord respectfully joined the palms of his hands¹ and said: ‘Oh Devi (meaning literally a ‘goddess’; “dēbi”; the word is used to show respect while addressing an honourable lady)! You too can ask for any boon that you wish to have.’² (3)

Satrupa replied: ‘Oh Lord! What the clever king has asked, I too agree with it, and it pleases me too to seek the same boon’³. (4)

[Note—¹Lord Hari had just a while ago promised to become a son of king Manu. The Lord, being the keeper and upholder of the laws of Dharma, would surely expect that as righteous couples king Manu and his wife Satrupa would be inseparable as husband and wife because they were strict followers of the laws of Dharma, which obliged them to be loyal, honest and committed to each other as couples for all times to come, which also means that both of them would share a common destiny. So if the Lord would become a son of Manu, obviously Satrupa would be his mother.

This is why Lord Hari joined his palms to pay his respects to his future mother which Satrupa would surely be when the Lord manifests as the son of Manu.

²But then, why did the Lord ask Satrupa separately if she wished anything for herself? Well, the Lord wanted to judge her as an independent individual. It is like the case of a wise and judicious Emperor who would question all those who come to him with petitions, giving every individual a fair opportunity to present his or her case, before making a final decision.

So, Lord Hari wanted to make sure if the king and his wife were really honest couple, fully committed to each other and determined to share their destiny as one common goal, for then their case would be all the more stronger in their favour, and the Lord would be assured that he would be obliging a couple who is extremely auspicious, righteous and a follower of the principles of Dharma, that they were of a steady mind and pious nature, and not someone who are so selfish that when the opportunity comes to grab something exceptionally valuable and rare, they would break all vows and fight with each other to have the bigger pie and the better half of the cake. Surely, the Lord would desist from taking birth in the household of such people.

³Satrupa’s answer pleased the Lord. Now the Lord was sure that Manu and Satrupa were eternally inseparable from one another, and would share the destiny of being the Lord’s worldly parents in due course of time when he came down to earth as a human being. Hence, the Lord joined his palms to pay his respects to Satrupa who would be his future mother.]

प्रभु परंतु सुठि होति ढिठाई । जदपि भगत हित तुम्हहि सोहाई ॥ ५ ॥
 तुम्ह ब्रह्मादि जनक जग स्वामी । ब्रह्म सकल उर अंतरजामी ॥ ६ ॥
 अस समुझत मन संसय होई । कहा जो प्रभु प्रवान पुनि सोई ॥ ७ ॥
 जे निज भगत नाथ तव अहहीं । जो सुख पावहिं जो गति लहहीं ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu parantu suṭhi hōti ḍhiṭhā'ī. jadapi bhagata hita tumhahi sōhā'ī. 5.
 tumha brahmādi janaka jaga svāmī. brahma sakala ura antarajāmī. 6.
 asa samujhata mana sansaya hō'ī. kahā jō prabhu pravāna puni sō'ī. 7.
 jē nija bhagata nātha tava ahahīm. jō sukha pāvahim jō gati lahahīm. 8.

[Satrupa continued—] But oh Lord, it seems to be too incredulous and good to be true, although it pleases you because you are always obliging towards your devotees (that you would become our son because¹) --- (5)

--- You are the Supreme Father and the Ultimate Creator who has created even Brahma, the creator of the visible world, you are the Supreme Lord of the entire existence, you are Brahm (a personified form of cosmic Consciousness), and are the Lord who knows the inner thoughts and feelings of all living beings². (6)

Taking into considering your cosmic form as briefly outlined above to be true, I become doubtful if our wishes will ever bear fruit, but at the same time what you speak (that you would be our son) is surely the truth, for it cannot be false at all. (7)

It is because you (Lord Hari) would do everything possible that pleases your devotees and makes them happy, for your devotees have no other destination but your own self³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 202 where this idea is expressly stated.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 144; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 146; (iii) Chanda line nos. 1-14 that precede Doha no. 186; (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 126 (as reiterated by the great sage Valmiki).

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 130 along with Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes it; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 46.]

दो०. सोइ सुख सोइ गति सोइ भगति सोइ निज चरन सनेहु ।
 सोइ बिबेक सोइ रहनि प्रभु हमहि कृपा करि देहु ॥ १५० ॥
 dōhā.

sō'i sukha sō'i gati sō'i bhagati sō'i nija carana sanēhu.
 sō'i bibēka sō'i rahani prabhu hamahi kṛpā kari dēhu. 150.

Oh Lord! Please grant us the same joy, the same happiness, the same destination, the same devotion, the same affection for your holy lotus like feet, the same spiritual wisdom and the same sort of life as that of your greatest of devotees would have.¹
(Doha no. 150)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17; (ii) Doha no. 198; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 200; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 203; (v) Doha no. 350-a; (b) Uttar Kand, (vi) Doha no. 84.

Satrupa wished to ensure that the Lord would give her and Manu the privilege of enjoying the same sort and level of joy, happiness, bliss and beatitude that are enjoyed by the greatest of devotees of the Lord. Let this joy and happiness be of a higher level, of a transcendental nature pertaining to the plane of supreme Consciousness, and not limited to the gross level of the physical world. Let the Lord bless the couple that at the end they would find deliverance for their souls; let them be blessed with the reward of having spiritual bliss and beatitude; let them attain emancipation and salvation at the end of their lives.]

चौ०. सुनि मृदु गूढ रुचिर बर रचना । कृपासिंधु बोले मृदु बचना ॥ १ ॥
जो कछु रुचि तुम्हरे मन माहीं । मैं सो दीन्ह सब संसय नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
मातु बिबेक अलौकिक तोरें । कबहुँ न मिटिहि अनुग्रह मोरें ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

suni mṛdu gūṛha rucira bara racanā. kṛpāsindhu bōlē mṛdu bacanā. 1.
jō kachu ruci tumharē mana māhīm. mair̥m sō dīnha saba sansaya nāhīm. 2.
mātu bibēka alaukika tōrēm. kabahum̃ na miṭihi anugraha mōrēm. 3.

Hearing the polite words of Satrupa, words that had a deep meaning, were pleasant to hear and were spoken sweetly¹, the Lord who is like an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness (kṛpāsindhu), replied to her sweetly and politely (as she had done herself)²--- (1)

[The Lord replied—] ‘I have granted you whatever was there in your heart, and let there be no doubt about it. (2)

Oh mother (mātu)! I further bless you that wisdom and sagacity of the highest order will never desert you, and your sense of right judgment and a judicious nature would stand you in good stead in the most trying of times as a result of my special grace upon you³.’ (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 150 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it herein above.

Satrupa has told the Lord that “she agrees with what her husband Manu has sought, which was to have a son in the likeness of the Lord”, thereby making it clear that she wishes, one, to be eternally united with her husband, and two, to become the Lord’s mother so that she would be able to shower all her motherly affection and love upon the Lord at a personal level like her husband had wanted to do himself.

The other thing that Satrupa has said was that “though she understood that the Lord had promised to fulfill her wish and he would surely do so as he was always obliging towards his devotees, yet it seem so strange and beyond credulity to imagine that the Lord would actually do it, and how will he manage it, for the Lord was a personified form of cosmic Consciousness, making him all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent, immanent, invisible and almighty Lord of the world, and the one who had created even the Trinity Gods, so she is not able to comprehend how he would manage to honour a wish that would be so such humbling and completely unfit for his exalted stature as the Lord of the world and its supreme Father, because it would compel him to come down to the earth to live a mundane humdrum life like an ordinary human being?” To wit, since Brahm was the Supreme Father of creation who had created the Trinity Gods along with the rest of the creation, it seems quite odd and beyond comprehension that she, Satrupa, and her husband, Manu, would have the honour of being the ‘mother and father’ respectively of the same Lord.

Earlier, when the Lord had appeared before Manu and Satrupa, they were extremely exhilarated; they were thrilled and overcome with emotions so much that they lost awareness of themselves, had prostrated before the Lord, and had clasped the Lord’s holy feet, whereat the Lord had caressed their heads and affectionately lifted them from the ground—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 148 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

²Therefore, it was a very courteous and most affectionate interaction between the Supreme Lord and his devotees who would eventually be the Lord’s worldly parents. This being the case, little formality was needed between the Lord and the couple because now a personal bond was created between them. They talked with each other as parents would do with their son.

³We shall read eventually that at the time when Lord Vishnu appeared before mother Kaushalya, who was Satrupa in that life, in a Holy Spirit form just before the Lord took the physical form of her son, she had prayed to the Lord and showed that she recognized who he was, and that prayer of hers resonates perfectly with what the Lord tells her now—that even in that birth, wisdom and erudition won’t desert her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 192.

As the story unfolds we would read that during the entire episode related to Lord Ram being sent to the forest, Kaushalya had shown exemplary courage, for she maintained a sense of maturity, calmness, resilience and fortitude. Even Dasrath had lost his mental bearing, for he wailed and lamented and regretted gravely for being instrumental in the Lord going to the forest, so much so that he had later died due to grief. But Kaushalya maintained her mental poise and balance throughout.

When Kaushalya came to learn that her son Lord Ram was banished to the forest by Kaikeyi, the other queen of king Dasrath, who wanted her own son Bharat to ascend the throne of Ayodhya, she took the news calmly as privately she knew that Lord Ram was none but Lord Vishnu himself who had come down to this world with a lot of work to do, one being to fulfill his promise to the gods and mother earth that he would eliminate the scourge of the demon race in his form as Lord Ram, and therefore the Lord could not stay put in Ayodhya in order to rule the kingdom as its king, and he had to venture out. So therefore, whatever was happening was a part of a wider plan of the Supreme Being, and hence it made no sense in fretting and fuming uselessly.

This wisdom and erudition of Kaushalya was evident when she uttered no harsh words against anyone, and showed no rancour or ill-will either against Kaikeyi or her son Bharat who was made the reason for Lord Ram's being sent to the forest, or even against her husband king Dasrath for sending her beloved son Lord Ram to the forest even though he had the right to ascend the throne as he was the eldest of the four brothers. She also showed personal sympathy for Bharat because he was made a scapegoat in the whole sordid affair. When Lord Ram went to seek her permission to proceed to the forest, Kaushalya's reaction was singularly remarkable and an outstanding example of Dharma being put into practice. Instead of raising a hue and cry, and crying foul, she advised her son what a noble mother was expected to tell her son in such an unprecedented adverse situation. Even when Sita went to seek her permission to join her husband Lord Ram while he prepared to leave for the forest, Kaushalya's advice for her was full of wisdom and righteousness. During the Lord's long absence from the forest, she acted her part as the senior-most member of the household with perfection, never letting anyone feel that she harbours any trace of ill-feeling against a single person. Kaushalya treated Kaikeyi as her sister, and Kaikeyi's sons Bharat and Shatughan as her own sons. Kaushalya made no distinction between Kaikeyi and Sumitra, the third queen of Dasrath, and showed no special favour for Sumitra though her son Laxman had made the supreme sacrifice by accompanying Lord Ram and Sita to the forest.

All these events are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, in the first half of Ayodhya Kand, and we shall be reading them by-and-by. But one thing is undeniable throughout these events—and it is that: all this was possible because of Brahm's blessings given to Satrupa presently as narrated in this verse, that wisdom and erudition would never desert her.]

बंदि चरन मनु कहेउ बहोरी । अवर एक बिनती प्रभु मोरी ॥ ४ ॥
 सुत बिषइक तव पद रति होऊ । मोहि बड़ मूढ़ कहै किन कोऊ ॥ ५ ॥
 मनि बिनु फनि जिमि जल बिनु मीना । मम जीवन तिमि तुम्हहि अधीना ॥ ६ ॥

bandi carana manu kahē'u bahōrī. avara ēka binatī prabhu mōrī. 4.
 suta biṣa'ika tava pada rati hō'ū. mōhi baṛa mūrha kahai kina kō'ū. 5.
 mani binu phani jimi jala binu mīnā. mama jīvana timi tumhahi adhīnā. 6.

[After the conversation between Lord Brahm (the Supreme Being) and Satrupa, Manu, who had remained silent till now, thought for a moment that if he remained quiet any longer then perhaps he would lose a golden chance of a life-time which he will regret forever. So he politely submitted before the Lord as follows—]

Manu offered his obeisance at the holy feet of the Lord and said: 'Oh Lord, I have one more prayer to make (in addition to the one I have already made before you)¹. (4)

Let my affection for your feet be in accordance to my wish to have you as my son, even though that would be stupid for me to think in this way₂, and people would jest that there is no one bigger fool than I am (to think in this term)². (5)

Even as a serpent cannot survive without its luminescent Mani on its head (which is a small sac of effervescent exude from the serpent's head that shows light to the reptile during its nocturnal foraging for food), and a fish cannot survive without water—let my life be similarly dependent upon you. [To wit, just as the serpent would die without its Mani, and the fish without water, let me not survive in case I am separated from you.]³.’ (6)

[Note—¹And what was Manu's first request to the Lord? Answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 129: to have a son in the likeness of the Supreme Being.

²One can see the difference between the approach of Satrupa and Manu, and later on in the story it did exactly happen as they had wished. We have already noted how Satrupa had reacted to Lord Ram's going to the forest in a note appended to verse no. 3 herein above, which shows how wisely and with maturity she had behaved throughout the event.

Contrasted with her was the behaviour of king Dasrath who was Manu in his previous life. While Kaushalya was privy to the reality of Lord Ram as the Supreme Being even before the Lord's physical appearance as her son*, and therefore her attitude towards the Lord and all the events associated with him were conditioned with this wisdom, king Dasrath had no such advantage. {*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 192.} So what was the result?

³The result was that Dasrath behaved like an ordinary man who would be forced to take certain actions due to his falling prey to the cunning designs of a woman whom he favoured much (in this case she was Kaikeyi), and once forced to take such actions that would be against his wish, he would be powerless to make amends, and in the wake of the disastrous consequences that it would produce he would be reduced to a being a spineless wreck, grieving, lamenting, weeping, pleading, frothing in the mouth, losing consciousness and generally acting as a weakling inspite of the fact that he was one of the most powerful kings of the time. The utterly miserable and pitiable condition of Dasrath has been vividly described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 37; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 82.

What more, he would eventually die distraught and a broken man, wailing and lamenting for his dear son Lord Ram whom he had himself sent to the forest. In this context, we can refer to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 155.

While Dasrath presents a picture of utter misery, by contrast we find Kaushalya wisely calm, poised, steady in mind and resilient.

All this was because we find that while Satrupa was blessed by the Lord to have wisdom and erudition and judicious thinking, Dasrath did not want it; he wanted to treat Brahm, the Supreme Being, as his worldly 'son' when the Lord manifests as Lord Ram.]

अस बरु मागि चरन गहि रहेऊ । एवमस्तु करुनानिधि कहेऊ ॥ ७ ॥

अब तुम्ह मम अनुसासन मानी । बसहु जाइ सुरपति रजधानी ॥ ८ ॥

asa baru māgi carana gahi rahē'ū. ēvamastu karunānidhi kahē'ū. 7.
aba tumha mama anusāsana mānī. basahu jā'i surapati rajadhānī. 8.

Seeking this blessing from the Lord, Manu fell down before the latter and clasped his holy feet till the time the Lord, who is an ocean of mercy, grace and compassion, finally granted his wish by saying, 'So shall it be!' (7)

The Lord continued: 'Now, you two obey my instructions and go to live in the heavenly abode of the king of gods (i.e. Indra)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Why did the Lord have to say "obey my instructions" when he asked Manu and Satrupa to go and spend some time in the heaven. It is because they were not interested in any heavenly comfort, for had they been they would not have neglected Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva when these three Gods of the Trinity appeared before them and asked them to seek any wish they wanted fulfilled—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 145.

It was then Brahm had appeared before the pious couple. Who is 'Brahm'? He is the Supreme Father of creation; he is a personified form of cosmic Consciousness. Brahm has no form, for he is formless and without attributes—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150.

His voice was heard as if the whole sky, the entire firmament was speaking, as the Lord is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent in every single element in creation, with the sky representing the Lord's vast, fathomless, cosmic, invisible and endless form. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 145.

So, being aware of this, the Lord knew that if he did not tell them to obey him, there were fair chances that they would not go to live in heaven.]

सो०. तहँ करि भोग बिसाल तात गएँ कछु काल पुनि ।
होइहहु अवध भुआल तब मैं होब तुम्हार सुत ॥ १५१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

taham̃ kari bhōga bisāla tāta ga'em̃ kachu kāla puni.
hō'ihahu avadha bhu'āla taba mair̃ hōba tumhāra suta. 151.

[Lord Brahm continued—] 'There in the heaven spend some time enjoying quality comforts befitting gods¹, and in due course of time you (Manu) would become a king of Ayodhya whence I would become your son (to fulfill your wish)². (Doha no. 151)

[Note—¹Why did the Lord want Manu and his wife Satrupa to go to heaven and enjoy some heavenly comfort before being born as a king and queen of Ayodhya? It was to reward them for the severity of Tapa they had done, as well as to set an example for others that if a person sets his sight at a higher goal as his aim in life, and if he succeeds in attaining the summit, then all the other junior goals that are lower down and form different milestones on the way to the summit would automatically be his even without asking specifically for them. For instance, if one wishes to become a

king, and succeeds in it, then all powers and authorities and positions in the hierarchy of the kingdom that come under the jurisdiction of the king would automatically come under the command of that person by the virtue of his becoming a king, without his asking for them separately. Likewise, when one seeks the highest goal of spiritual bliss and beatitude, then heavenly comforts and pleasures are a part and parcel of this experience.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 149 (Manu); and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 150 (Satrupa).

The Lord was addressing Manu when he asked the couple to go to heaven as is clear when he says that eventually he would become their son when Manu becomes a King of Ayodhya. The Lord did not specifically refer to Satrupa because she would always go where Manu went.]

चौ०. इच्छामय नरबेष सँवारें । होइहउँ प्रगट निकेत तुम्हारें ॥ १ ॥
 अंसन्ह सहित देह धरि ताता । करिहउँ चरित भगत सुखदाता ॥ २ ॥
 जे सुनि सादर नर बड़भागी । भव तरिहहिं ममता मद त्यागी ॥ ३ ॥
 आदिसक्ति जेहिं जग उपजाया । सोउ अवतरिहि मोरि यह माया ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

icchāmaya narabēṣa samvārēm. hō'iha'um' pragata nikēta tumhārēm. 1.
 ansanha sahita dēha dhari tātā. kariha'um' carita bhagata sukhadātā. 2.
 jē suni sādara nara barabhāgī. bhava tarihahim mamatā mada tyāgī. 3.
 ādisakti jēhim jaga upajāyā. sō'u avatarihi mōri yaha māyā. 4.

[Brahm, the Supreme Being, said—] ‘I shall assume a human form out of my own free will, and then manifest in your household (as your son). [This would fulfill your wish to have me as your son.] (1)

My dear (tātā), I shall manifest myself along with all of the accoutrements and accessories that form a part of me (ansanha sahita dēha dhari)¹, and then do deeds that would give a lot of joy to my devotees (when they recount them again). (2)

When people would reverentially listen to these stories related to my life and the deeds I do during my incarnation later on, then such fortunate ones would be able to gradually develop a sense of renunciation and dispassion for material world, and as a result of it they would be able to cross over this ocean-like world of transmigration to attain emancipation and salvation for themselves². (3)

My Adi Shakti³, i.e. the primary form of cosmic energy and dynamism possessed by Consciousness that has created this world, would also manifest itself with me in the form of Maya, the stupendous power that I employ to create a veil of delusions (that would help me to stage manage things in such a way that I will be able to conceal my true identity, and the world will think that I am an ordinary human being like the rest of them). (4)

[Note—¹Later on in the story we shall read that a similar prophesy was made by Brahm when he had told the gods and mother earth that he would come down to earth to eliminate the scourge of the demons who had been tormenting them—apropos: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 187.

²Lord Shiva has also asserted the same thing earlier. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 13 that speak the same thing.

³To wit, the Adi-Shakti that had created this world is the same that has also given rise to Maya in this world. The word Adi-Shakti refers to the primary form of the Lord's dynamic powers that he had employed to create the world. Further, it is the same primary force of Nature that is also the source of all delusions created in this world. These delusions are the effects of Maya, and Maya is powered by Adi-Shakti.

There are many references to 'Maya' in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: Uttar Kand—(i) Doha no. 41; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 44; (iii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iv) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 116—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 117.

The stupendous powers of Maya are evident when we recall how it had led the wise sage Narad astray so much so that first he wanted to marry, and unable to do so he cursed Lord Vishnu for playing a spoil-sport in his wish and preventing him from marrying the girl of his choice, even going to the extent of cursing the Lord vehemently. But when Lord Vishnu withdrew his Maya, all illusions vanished, and Narad could once again see things in the right perspective. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 132; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 138.]

पुरउब मैं अभिलाष तुम्हारा । सत्य सत्य पन सत्य हमारा ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि पुनि अस कहि कृपानिधाना । अंतरधान भए भगवाना ॥ ६ ॥

pura'uba maim abhilāṣa tumhārā. satya satya pana satya hamārā. 5.

puni puni asa kahi kṛpānidhānā. antaradhāna bha'ē bhagavānā. 6.

I shall certainly fulfill your wish (to have me as your son). It is my truthful promise to you, and it cannot go in vain.' (5)

The Lord (i.e. the Supreme Being) repeatedly said so (to assure the pious couple that they need not doubt it), and then the Lord vanished from sight¹. (6)

[Note—¹At the time sage Narad had met Lord Vishnu and regretted having cursed him, the Lord had vanished from sight after assuring the sage that he ought not to feel sad as everything had happened according to the Lord's own wish, and that the Lord harbours no ill-will against the sage—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 138.

When the Supreme Being first came to Manu and Satrupa, the Lord had no form; he had an invisible presence, and his voice seemed to come from the whole dome of the sky overhead. But when the pious couple wanted to see the Lord present himself in a visible form, it was then that he revealed himself physically in a form narrated in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 the precedes Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 5 the precedes Doha no. 148 herein above.

It is this visible form of the Lord that vanished from sight.]

दंपति उर धरि भगत कृपाला । तेहिं आश्रम निवसे कछु काला ॥ ७ ॥

समय पाइ तनु तजि अनयासा । जाइ कीन्ह अमरावति बासा ॥ ८ ॥

dampati ura dhari bhagata kṛpālā. tēhiṁ āśrama nivasē kachu kālā. 7.
samaya pā'i tanu taji anayāsā. jā'i kīnha amarāvati bāsā. 8.

After this, the pious couple enshrined the magnificent and divine view of the merciful Lord (that they had just seen) in their hearts and lived in that hermitage for some time. (7)

When the right time came, they left their mortal bodies and went to heaven to live in the city of Amravti, the heavenly capital of the gods (as ordered by the Supreme Lord)¹. (8)**

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha no. 151 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.

**It is very important to note a crucial point here at this juncture, for if it is not clarified here it may cause a lot of confusion later on as we progress in our narration.

In Ram Charit Manas there are two instances where the Supreme Being has revealed himself to bless a devotee couple, who was doing severe Tapa (penance and austerity) to have a divine glimpse of the Lord, that he would become their son to honour the couple's wish to have a son in the likeness of the Lord. One instance is that of sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi, and the other is of king Manu and his wife Satrupa.

The instance of Kashyap-Aditi has been mentioned but only briefly in Ram Charit Manas, in its Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 187.

But the story of Manu-Satrupa has been narrated in detail, as we are presently reading it, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 152.

Earlier, Lord Shiva has told Parvati that there are many reasons why the Supreme Being would manifest himself as a human being in the form of Lord Ram in different eras of time, known as Kalpas, but the divine story of Lord Ram follows the same pattern despite the diversity of the origin of the story, and the fundamental cause of the Lord's manifestation also remains the same, because it fulfills two basic criterions: (i) the Lord manifests to oblige his devotees, and (ii) to eliminate the scourge of evil and negative forces in Nature that are represented by the demons, when they become dominant in creation and disturb the balance of the rule of law and

probity symbolized by Dharma. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 122.}

Then Lord Shiva proceeds to narrate some instances of the countless such instances when the Supreme Being became a human in the form of Lord Ram. The first instance he cites is that of Jai and Vijai. In the era when these two became the demons Ravana and Kumbhakran, sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi had prayed to the Lord that they want to have him as their son. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 122—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 123.}

The second instance Lord Shiva cites is the event associated with Jalandhar who became the demon Ravana, and the Lord had to come down as Lord Ram to get rid of him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 123—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 124.}

The third instance is of the era when sage Narad cursed Lord Vishnu. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124.}. Then Shiva goes on to describe this event in detail when Parvati asks him to do so.

The fourth instance is of the era when Manu and Satrupa did their Tapa, which we have just finished reading. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 6 that precede Doha no. 141; and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 152.}

This event will be followed immediately herein below with the narration of the story of how king Prapabhanu became the demon Ravana due to curse of Brahmins. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Sortha no. 183.}

Then we read in the verses that follow immediately after Pratapbhanu's story that gods and mother earth prayed to the Supreme Being to rescue them from Ravana's horrors, upon which the Lord promised them that he will come down personally to the world in the form of Lord Ram to take care of this issue. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Doha no. 185; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.}

Having made all the above observations, now we shall come to the important point which has confounded great scholars of the story of Ram Charit Manas for centuries. This question, which has been subject of great discussion and debate, is this: Out of the two instances of the Supreme Being promising his devotee couple that he would become the couple's son known as Lord Ram, one is related to Kashyap and Aditi, and the other to Manu and Satrupa—then, which out of these two is the main story of Lord Ram as narrated in this book Ram Charit Manas that we would be reading? Is the story of Lord Ram the one pertaining to the Supreme Being blessing Kashyap and Aditi, or is it the one when the Lord blessed Manu and Satrupa?

One school of thought avers that the main text of the story of Lord Ram as narrated in the present book 'Ram Charit Manas' pertains to the era when the Lord blessed Kashyap and Aditi, and the other school is of the view that it belongs to the era when the Lord blessed Manu and Satrupa. Followers of these two views cite verses from the text to prove their point. Now, let us see what those verses are.

With reference to view that the main story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas belongs to the era of Kashyap and Aditi, as well as of sage Narad cursing Lord Vishnu, the following verses are cited: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123; (ii) Doha no. 137 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precedes Doha no. 187; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 188.

Now, it ought to be carefully noted that out of these four groups of verses cited herein above, the ones listed in (iii) are most pertinent and significant in the context of the view that the story pertains to the era of Kashyap-Aditi and Narad because we read that the Lord has himself said that “he will come down to earth as Lord Ram to fulfill his promise made to Kashyap and Aditi, as well as to Narad”. Close on the heels of this is the verse cited in (iv) above where the poet Tulsidas, the narrator of this story, says “now I shall resume the narration of the main story of how Lord Ram was born in the household of king Dasrath and his queen Kaushalya from where I had put it on hold earlier because I had started narrating some other incidents that were interesting and had some bearing on the reason why the Supreme Being had become Lord Ram”.

To this is added another significant verse of Ram Charit Manas where it is narrated that sage Narad had met Lord Ram during the Lord’s wondering in the forest. The sage offered his obeisance to the Lord, and then Lord Ram answered certain questions asked by the sage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 46.}

That seems pretty good and certain to settle the question in favour of the story being related to the era of Kashyap-Aditi and sage Narad, but for the argument of the other school of thought that stresses that the story belongs to the era of Manu and Satrupa, as well as king Pratapbhanu becoming the demon Ravana. They rely on the following set of verses: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 141 where Lord Shiva tells Parvati that he will tell her the story of Lord Ram which had led her to get confused in her previous life as Sati, and then Shiva proceeds with a detailed narration of the event related to Manu and Satrupa being blessed by the Supreme Being that he would become their son*1, and then of king Pratapbhanu becoming the demon king Ravana*2. {Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *1=Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 152; and *2= Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Sortha no. 183.}

Then the proponents of this theory quote Baal Kand, Doha no. 188 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it, and link it with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Sortha no. 152 (i.e. the verses we are currently reading, that pertain to the story of Manu and Satrupa) to say that after Manu and Satrupa’s event, Tulsidas had used the story of king Pratapbhanu and his becoming the demon king Ravana, and the subsequent prayers of the gods and mother earth to the Supreme Being to protect them, as an interlude, for during the intervening period of their being blessed by the Lord and their becoming king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya when they would be spending some time in the heaven as ordered by the Lord, Tulsidas would describe the story of king Pratapbhanu and how he became the demon king Ravana, and then how the gods and mother earth would pray to the Lord to protect them against the tyranny of the demons. So, after this pause, Tulsidas resumes his main narrative, of Manu and Satrupa becoming king Dasrath and queen Kaushalya respectively, and the Supreme Being manifesting himself as their son known as Lord Ram.

Now therefore, the important question is this: Which of the two versions or schools of thought regarding the actual narration of the story of the life and time of Lord Ram as narrated in the book Ram Charit Manas is the correct one? Is the main story of Ram Charit Manas related to the era of Kashyap and Aditi as well as Narad, or is it related to the era of Manu and Satrupa as well as king Pratapbhanu?

To be frank, this humble author, who is presenting the story of Ram Charit Manas to his readers in English, is not able to decide, and so he thought it wise and prudent to present the two sides of the same coin to his learned readers in a neutral way. Nevertheless, he wishes to point out that this debate has only an academic value, for the real benefit of reading the divine story of Lord Ram is its spiritual reward, its spiritual importance, and this importance is unaffected by which era this story belongs to. It is easy to understand this point of view: For instance, there are many rivers having different sources of origin, each having its own character, and they all travel through diverse terrains, to finally end in the ocean to become one with it, when they lose their unique character and independent origin to become one single body of water that recognizes no distinction between these various rivers after their merger with the great mass of water we call the 'ocean'. So in the same manner, whatever is the cause of the origin of the holy and divine story of Lord Ram, what matters to us most is its spiritual value which remains the same, and so does the main framework around which the story is built.

A concordant idea is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Sortha no. 90-b, where what sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud can be interpreted in the present context as meaning that a wise person with a steady mind is he who is focused on his target, and such an enlightened, erudite and sagacious person would not get unnecessarily involved or entangled in futile debates and harbour unwarranted doubts regarding Lord Ram as are normally caused by the many variations in the Lord's story and their sources of origin, for he would instead concentrate on having devotion and love for the Lord, and in worshipping the Lord who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, because this latter approach would give him immense internal happiness and peace, as well as spiritual bliss, rather than creating more and more vexation in his mind and robbing him of whatever peace he has if he allows himself to get unnecessarily dragged into debates and discussions that are nothing but futile mental exercises of mere academic value, because they lead to no conclusion.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121 which explicitly asserts that Lord Ram is a transcendental Being who cannot be a subject matter of debates and application of worldly logic that one applies to understand other things in this mortal creation, for the Lord is beyond comprehension and reach of the mind.

It is like the case of a thirsty person coming to a water body to quench his thirst; he would, and should, be more interested in quenching his thirst rather than standing by the side of the water and contemplating on its history, the geography and geology of the place, the astrological chart, the time of the day, the position of the sun and the moon et al, to decide whether or not he should drink the nectar-like water that beckons him to come and remove his thirst first and protect his life instead of making a clown of himself by getting involved in such senseless contemplations while dying for want of water. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 43.

The Supreme Being had manifested himself as Lord Ram in many Kalpas (eras), and though the reason varied from Kalpa to Kalpa, yet the main outline of the Lord's divine story remained the same. We get this hint in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 122. Hence, it is not of great importance to which Kalpa the story actually relates to, but the importance is to derive spiritual benefits from reading, hearing and narrating it.

Another important point that we can make here is this: Since the story of sage Kashyap and Aditi doing Tapa and their being blessed by the Supreme Being is not narrated in detail anywhere in this book Ram Charit Manas, it would therefore not be wrong to deduce that the story of Manu and Satrupa has been especially narrated to give the reader an idea of the sort of Tapa that Kashyap and Aditi did in order to have a divine vision of the Supreme Being, of their having the same wish as Manu and Satrupa to have the Lord as their son, and the same way that the Supreme Being promised them that he would fulfill their wish by becoming their son.]

दो०. यह इतिहास पुनीत अति उमहि कही बृषकेतु ।
भरद्वाज सुनु अपर पुनि राम जनम कर हेतु ॥ १५२ ॥

dōhā.

yaha itihāsa punīta ati umahi kahī br̥ṣakētu.
bharadvāja sunu apara puni rāma janama kara hētu. 152.

[Sage Yagyawalkya said to sage Bharadwaj—] ‘This sacred legend was narrated to Parvati (Uma) by Lord Shiva (br̥ṣakētu)¹.

Oh Bharadwaj! Now listen to another fascinating story related to the cause of Lord Ram’s birth.’ (Doha no. 152)

[Note—¹We must always remember that we are reading a conversation between sages Yagyawalkya and Bharadwaj while reading this story, for when the latter had asked the former to tell him the divine story of Lord Ram and describe the causes why the Supreme Being would become a human being in the form of Lord Ram, sage Yagyawalkya had preferred to quote the conversation between Lord Shiva and Parvati in order to answer sage Bharadwaj. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Doha no. 47.

So therefore, what we are reading is a conversation between these two great sages, where the narrator of the story is Yagyawalkya and the listener is Bharadwaj, while the actual text of the story is the one that Lord Shiva narrated to Parvati as mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Doha no. 109; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 121—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 122.]

[PAUSE 5 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

In the verses that follow now, we shall read how a great and noble king named Parataphanu was treacherously condemned to become a fierce demon named Ravana. This story is covered in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

The story of the previous life of Ravana, the great king of the demon race and the ruler of the kingdom which had its capital on the island of Lanka, is a very fascinating tale about a noble king of a great kingdom who was overcome with a jealous desire to

rule over the whole world un-opposed, how this desire led him to become a victim of conceit and treachery, how his yearning was exploited by a cunning enemy who took advantage of his hidden desire to settle old scores and seek revenge upon him by ensuring that the unsuspecting king was condemned for life to become a demon, to lead a life of ignominy and denunciation, a life which would have led him to slide down to even further lower levels of existence had he not been provided salvation by the Supreme Being who came down to this mortal world himself in the form of Lord Ram to liberate Ravana's soul from his evil body and grant eternal rest to him.

This wonderful story has been narrated in the great epic known as 'Ram Charit Manas' written by Goswami Tulsidas. It is described in its Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 176.

Now, let us read this interesting story from Ram Charit Manas verbatim in detail.

चौ०. सुनु मुनि कथा पुनीत पुरानी । जो गिरिजा प्रति संभु बखानी ॥ १ ॥
बिस्व बिदित एक कैकय देसू । सत्यकेतु तहँ बसइ नरेसू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunu muni kathā punīta purānī. jō girijā prati sambhu bakhānī. 1.
bisva bidita ēka kaikaya dēsū. satyakētu taham̃ basa'i narēsū. 2.

[Sage Yagyavalkya was once asked by sage Bharadwaj why the Supreme Being had to come down to this mortal world in the form of a human prince known as Lord Ram. While answering Bharadwaj, sage Yagyavalkya narrated a fascinating story that on some previous occasion had been told by Lord Shiva to his divine consort Parvati (who was known as Girija as she was the daughter of the king of mountains).

It was the story of a great king known as Pratpabhanu, who was the son of a great and righteous king called Satyaketu. He ruled over a mighty kingdom known by the name of Kaikaya¹.]

Sage Yagyavalkya (also spelled as Yagyawalkya) said to sage Bharadwaj: 'Listen oh sage. Listen to this great, ancient and legendary tale which Lord Shiva had narrated to Girija (his divine consort) in some time in the past. (1)

There was a famed kingdom (a principality) known as 'Kaikaya²'; it was famous throughout the world. A great king by the name of 'Satyaketu³' ruled there. (2)

[Note—¹It is believed that this story of Ravana's previous life when he was king Satyaketu of the kingdom of Kaikaya is narrated in three most ancient and obscure texts known as (i) Agastya Ramayan written by sage Agastya, (ii) the Maha-Ramayan, and (iii) Shiva-Samhita.

²The kingdom of 'Kaikaya' lied on the other side of two ancient rivers named Vyaas and Shaalmali. At the time of this story, its capital was known as Girivraj or Raajgriha. At present it lies in the state of Kashmir in the north of India, nestled in the mighty range of the Himalayas. Its present name is 'Kakkaa'; locally it is also called 'Gakar'. It is believed that it was established by sage Kashyap.

By the fiat of fate it so chanced that when Satyaketu, alias Pratapbhanu, was cursed by the Brahmins to be doomed, then the cunning false-hermit, who had been instrumental in arranging the feast where the Brahmins cursed the king, informed all his enemies of the development. They launched attacks from all sides to take advantage of the situation, confident that Pratapbhanu could be easily conquered now. In the ensuing wars, while all kings returned with the spoils of war and contented at being successful in defeating their erstwhile arch enemy, one of them remained behind to establish his sovereignty there. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 175.}

In due course of time, one of the princesses of this kingdom of Kaikaya was married to king Dasrath of Ayodhya; her name was 'Kaikeyi' or 'Kaikai'—meaning the daughter of the kingdom of Kaikaya. She was the step-mother of Lord Ram and the mother of Bharat. It was she who became instrumental in Lord Ram's going to the forest for a fourteen year period of exile during which the famed war of Lanka took place and Ravana was slayed by him.

³The name 'Satyaketu' of the king is significant. It means one who holds high the Flag (ketu) of Truth (satya). To wit, king Satyaketu was an upholder of truth and righteousness, and ruled over his kingdom judicially and in accordance to the laws of Dharma (probity, propriety, nobility, compassion, prudence, righteousness, ethics and morality).

It is really such a wonder and an irony of fate that such a great and righteous king who was loved by his subjects and had not a scar on his character that would go against him should become a hated 'demon' known as Ravana who was loathed by the world.]

धरम धुरंधर नीति निधाना । तेज प्रताप सील बलवाना ॥ ३ ॥

तेहि कें भए जुगल सुत बीरा । सब गुन धाम महा रनधीरा ॥ ४ ॥

dharama dhurandhara nīti nidhānā. tēja pratāpa sīla balavānā. 3.
tēhi kēm̄ bha'ē jugala suta bīrā. saba guna dhāma mahā ranadhīrā. 4.

The King (Satyaketu) was a great champion of good virtues and an upholder of Dharma (the principles of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and noble conduct). He was well-versed in the laws of politics and statesmanship, was endowed with glory, esteem and dignity that come with being meritorious and above reproach, and was famed for his valour and strength, but at the same time he was very polite and courteous. (3)

He had two sons who were like their father—i.e. they were repositories of virtues and had all the merits of their father, possessing all the fine qualities and characters that he had. They were strong, valiant, righteous and noble like their father¹. (4)

[Note—¹A son inherits his father's genes and legacy. A worthy son is one who takes forward the name of his father and his family to higher glories, instead of doing anything that would put them to shame. If a father is meritorious and good, his son would normally be like him. This natural law of inheritance of qualities is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 142

where the birth of Dhruva, the great devotee of Lord Vishnu, is mentioned. It is said here that there was a very noble and righteous king named Swayambhu, and from him was born Uttanpad, a son who was like him in all meritorious virtues, and then Dhruva was born to Uttanpad and he also inherited the glorious virtues of his grandfather and father.

Amongst the great qualities of a king is his being righteous and judicious in the affairs of the state, being compassionate and considerate when dealing with his subjects, having excellent knowledge of statecraft and principles of statesmanship, and being courageous and valiant in the battle-field. Satyaketu and his two sons had all these virtues in them.]

राज धनी जो जेठ सुत आही । नाम प्रतापभानु अस ताही ॥ ५ ॥
अपर सुतहि अरिमर्दन नामा । भुजबल अतुल अचल संग्रामा ॥ ६ ॥

rāja dhanī jō jēṭha suta āhī. nāma pratāpabhānu asa tāhī. 5.
apara sutahi arimardana nāmā. bhujabala atula acala saṅgrāmā. 6.

The elder son, who was the heir to the throne, was called ‘Pratapbhanu’¹. (5)

The second son was named ‘Arimardan’². He had immense strength and valour in his arms that was unmatched by any other warrior. During a duel or a war, he was extremely steadfast and stood his ground like a mighty mountain. [To wit, it was well-nigh impossible to defeat him in a duel. He never turned his back and fled the battle-field. During a war he made his enemies bite dust, and his mere presence sent chill down the spine of his adversaries.] (6)

[Note—¹The word ‘Pratapbhanu’ literally means ‘one whose glories and fame shone like the sun’; or ‘one who shone like the sun for his glories and fame’.

In his next birth also as Ravana, this unique quality of the king lasted because there was no one to match Ravana’s fame in the world.

²The word ‘Arimardan’ refers to ‘one who vanquishes his enemies and crushes their strength’. This surely was true even in this prince’s next birth when he was born as Kumbhakaran. No one dared to confront him in the battle-field, and when he stepped to face his enemy, the latter’s army was scattered like dry leaves in a severe storm.

Arimardan was stronger in physical strength as compared to his elder brother Pratapbhanu. This was also replicated in their next birth as Kumbhakaran and Ravana respectively.

When we shall eventually be reading about the battle at Lanka we shall read how Kumbhakaran single-handedly dispersed Lord Ram’s army helter-skelter under his vicious onslaught¹, while no such feat could be achieved by Ravana. {¹Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 65; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 67.}

We shall cite an instance from the battle of Lanka to highlight how Arimardan was stronger than Ravana. It so happened once during the course of the war that Hanuman, who was a very strong warrior in his own right and matched Ravana and Kumbhakaran in their might and valour, had been punched by Ravana forcefully which made Hanuman buckle and fall back a bit, but he managed to recover from the

blow quite easily and got up angrily to face Ravana and give him a strong blow of his fist in revenge which made Ravana fall unconscious for a moment. But when Kumbhakaran gave a mighty fistful to Hanuman, the latter swooned and fell down unconsciousness for some time, unable to recover instantly. These two events are respectively mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 84; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 65.]

भाइहि भाइहि परम समीती । सकल दोष छल बरजित प्रीती ॥ ७ ॥
जेठे सुतहि राज नृप दीन्हा । हरि हित आपु गवन बन कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

bhā'ihī bhā'ihī parama samīti. sakala dōṣa chala barajita prīti. 7.
jēṭhē sutahi rāja nṛpa dīnhā. hari hita āpu gavana bana kīnhā. 8.

The two brothers warmly loved each other, and there was perfect unity between them. Their affection for each other was genuine and selfless, without guile, deceit and blemishes of any kind. (7)

The king (Satyaketu) abdicated the throne and installed his elder son (Pratapbhanu) on it¹. After that, the king went to the forest to lead an austere life for his spiritual pursuits and devote the rest of his life in devotion of Lord Hari². (8)

[Note—¹According to ancient tradition, when a king became old he should appoint his eldest son to throne as his heir. This is also borne out when king Dasrath decided to anoint his eldest son Lord Ram to the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 2; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 4; (ii) Doha no. 31.}

²This was another tradition according to which a man was expected to spend the last quarter of his life as a Sanyasi—i.e. one who renounces all his attachment with the world and spend his remaining days in meditation and contemplation in preparation for his ultimate death and attainment of peace for his soul. Prior to that, he should hand over all his worldly responsibilities to his heirs and withdraw himself to the forest or any other serene place that would give him freedom from involvement with the world and its endless worries. This is called Vaanprastha—literally meaning 'heading to the forest'.

So in accordance to this tradition, king Satyaketu handed over the reign of the kingdom to his elder son and went to the forest to lead a life of devotion and contemplation. There he would spend his remaining days in worshipping Lord Hari, also known as Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being.

This event also shows that the family of Pratapbhanu was god-fearing and devoted to Lord Vishnu. It's such a twist of fate and an irony of providence that members of the same family would become arch enemies of Lord Vishnu in their next birth as Ravana, Kumbhakaran, and the rest of the demon race.]

दो०. जब प्रतापरबि भयउ नृप फिरी दोहाई देस ।
प्रजा पाल अति बेदबिधि कतहुँ नहीं अघ लेस ॥ १५३ ॥

dōhā.

jaba pratāparabi bhaya'u nṛpa phirī dōhā'ī dēsa.
prajā pāla ati bēdabidhi katahum' nahīm agha lēsa. 153.

When Pratapbhanu ascended the throne and was declared a king, a royal proclamation to this effect was made throughout the land.

He ruled the kingdom most righteously in accordance with the laws and rules laid down in the Vedas (scriptures). There was no trace of sin and evil throughout the realm during his reign. (Doha no. 153)

चौ०. नृप हितकारक सचिव सयाना । नाम धरमरुचि सुक्र समाना ॥ १ ॥
सचिव सयान बंधु बलबीरा । आपु प्रतापपुंज रनधीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

nṛpa hitakāraka saciva sayānā. nāma dharamaruci sukra samānā. 1.
saciva sayāna bandhu balabīrā. āpu pratāpapuñja ranadhīrā. 2.

The king had an able and wise chief minister. His name was 'Dharmaruchi'¹. This minister was clever and prudent like the legendary sage Sukracharya (who is said to be the Guru or the priest and preceptor of the demon race) in his wisdom, knowledge, prudence and abilities. (1)

All circumstances were favourable (for a great kingdom with a glorious future)—the minister (Dharmaruchi) was most competent, intelligent, skilled and wise, the king's brother (Arimardan) was counted as the first in the rank of great warriors and those who were brave and valiant, and the king (Pratapbhanu) himself was a veritable treasury of fine glorious qualities as well as one who was steady in the face of an enemy in the battle-field. (2)

[Note—¹The word 'Dharmaruchi' literally means 'one who takes great interest in Dharma—i.e. in the laws of probity, propriety, righteousness and ethics'. If a king's chief advisor and minister is good and competent, the king rises and acquires fame in the world, and the kingdom prospers.

Just like a man has two hands that help him to carry on with his duties in this world, a king has two arms that help him rule over his realm. One arm is his chief minister, and the other arm is his brother, and in the case he has none then his kin whom he can trust. In the case of king Pratapbhanu, both his minister and brother were excellent, and so he was very lucky and in a very fortunate situation.

In the next verse we read that this fortunate circumstance was complemented by the king having an excellent army at his command. This enabled him to extend his rule over vast stretches of the earth, and also to maintain good law and order situation.]

सेन संग चतुरंग अपारा । अमित सुभट सब समर जुझारा ॥ ३ ॥
सेन बिलोकि राउ हरषाना । अरु बाजे गहगहे निसाना ॥ ४ ॥

sēna saṅga caturaṅga apārā. amita subhaṭa saba samara jujhārā. 3.
sēna bilōki rā'u haraṣānā. aru bājē gahagahē nisānā. 4.

He had a vast army of countless veterans at his command. This army had four divisions or wings (sēna caturaṅga)¹. The soldiers were all brave, courageous and fearless in the battle-field as well as in their commitment and loyalty to the king and the throne. (3)

When the king observed his mighty and virtually invincible forces, he felt very elated. To celebrate the occasion, trumpets and kettledrums were sounded tumultuously. (4)

[Note—¹The ‘four wings’ of the army of those times traditionally consisted of horsemen, elephants, foot soldiers and chariots. Of course there were variants in the form of archers who used bows and arrows, soldiers who used swords, lancets and spear to fight hand-to-hand battles, the artillery brigade, the boomerangs, the battering-rams, etc. It was a formidable army no doubt.]

बिजय हेतु कटकई बनाई । सुदिन साधि नृप चलेउ बजाई ॥ ५ ॥
जहँ तहँ परीं अनेक लराई । जीते सकल भूप बरिआई ॥ ६ ॥

bijaya hētu kaṭaka'ī banā'ī. sudina sādhi nṛpa calē'u bajā'ī. 5.
jaham'taham' parīm anēka larā'īm. jītē sakala bhūpa bari'ā'īm. 6.

Being elated and confident of success, the king decided to launch a campaign to conquer the world. So he arrayed a huge army for this purpose, and determining an auspicious day when to start on his campaign, he marched forward with his army to the accompaniment of drums and other musical instruments to announce his departure. (5)

He fought many a battles with kings on the way who dared to oppose him, conquering them all by the might of his overwhelming force. (6)

[Note—All through history we come across such ambitious kings as Pratapbhanu was, those who led great military campaigns in order to extend their dominion over vast tracts of land. But the great lesson of history was lost and forgotten by them all—that for the time being they did manage to hold sway over the destiny of others, but the rules of Nature and of that of Creation always superseded their ambitious design and lust for power because the tide of time overturned everything upside down, great empires rose and fell, entire civilisations flourished and perished, and a time came when all such great conquerors and emperors whose rein once extended from one corner of the earth to the other, who prided themselves as being the owners and the rulers of the land where the ‘sun never sets’, had to die like all others, quite frequently miserably and in ignominy, probably also lost in obscurity with their memory covered in the dust of time when all their acquired riches and glory shrank and got lost, becoming merely some chapter in the pages of history which only a few interested bothered to open and read.]

सप्त दीप भुजबल बस कीन्हे । लै लै दंड छाड़ि नृप दीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥
सकल अवनि मंडल तेहि काला । एक प्रतापभानु महिपाला ॥ ८ ॥

sapta dīpa bhujabala basa kīnhē. lai lai daṇḍa chāḍi nr̥pa dīnhē. 7.
sakala avani maṇḍala tēhi kālā. ēka pratāpabhānu mahipālā. 8.

The king conquered all the seven continents by the virtue of the strength of his arms. He demanded and got tributes (spoils of war in the form of taxes, gifts and compensations) from the kings he vanquished. And then he let them off, reinstating them back on their respective thrones as titular kings who were vassals under the Crown worn by Pratapbhanu¹. (7)

Throughout the length and breadth of the land, the rein of Emperor Pratapbhanu was proclaimed and established (and there was no one to challenge him). He was the only Ruler of the earth in those times². (8)

[Note—¹Pratapbhanu declared himself a supreme Emperor. So after subjugating these kings, he extracted huge tributes from them and made a treaty whereby these kings were restored their kingdoms with the condition that they would hold their title at the pleasure of the Emperor to whom all will owe their allegiance. They would pay regular tributes and stand in attendance in his court whenever called to do so. Otherwise, the punishment would be severe and swift, mostly in the form of their heads being severed.

This had been the norm with great conquerors since times immemorial.

²When Lord Ram became the king of Ayodhya, a similar situation prevailed during his time—for there was no other king who was a match for the Lord anywhere on this earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 22.]

दो०. स्वबस बिस्व करि बाहुबल निज पुर कीन्ह प्रबेसु ।
अरथ धरम कामादि सुख सेवइ समयँ नरेसु ॥ १५४ ॥

dōhā.

svabasa bisva kari bāhubala nija pura kīnha prabēsu.
aratha dharama kāmādi sukha sēva'i samayam̐ narēsu. 154.

After having conquered the whole world and making it surrender to the might of his arms, the king returned victorious to his own capital. He revelled and rejoiced in the light of the glory of his conquests and the acclaim that went with it; he enjoyed the spoils of war in the form of its riches, comforts and pleasures.

The king chose appropriate times to indulge in the various pastimes usual for great conquerors and emperors¹, such as enjoying the comforts and pleasures of huge wealth (aratha), merit and fame that comes by following the laws of Dharma (i.e. by adhering to the principles of righteousness, probity and propriety inspite of being

great and powerful; following religious practices—“dharama”), fulfilment of sensual pleasures and worldly desires, and so on and so forth (kāmādi). (Doha no. 154)

[Note—¹In Valmiki’s Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 63, verse no. 9, Kumbhakaran has told Ravana that a person who enjoys things when the time is appropriate for them, such as enjoying meal when it is time to eat, going to sleep when it is time for it, relaxing and doing other activities at their proper and designated times, i.e. doing in the morning, in the afternoon and the evening things that are supposed to be done then, then such a person or a king is praised as being prudent, wise and intelligent; he is lauded as being a follower of Dharma.

So, king Pratapbhanu too followed this principle and did things at the proper and appropriate time.]

चौ०. भूप प्रतापभानु बल पाई । कामधेनु भै भूमि सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

सब दुख बरजित प्रजा सुखारी । धरमसील सुंदर नर नारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa pratāpabhānu bala pāī. kāmadhēnu bhāi bhūmi suhāī. 1.

saba dukha barajita prajā sukhārī. dharamasīla sundara nara nārī. 2.

The earth became invigorated (green and lush) and started giving excellent yields (such as crops, minerals, fruits, vegetables, marine products etc.) when it got the support of the mighty arms of king Pratapbhanu. In fact, the earth became a personified form of the heavenly cow called ‘Kaam-dhenu’ which gives an abundance of milk and fulfils all the desires of those who seek anything from it.¹ (1)

There was no misery and pain of any kind that would make the subjects of the kingdom suffer in any way, and all the people were happy and contented. All the men and women were virtuous and adherents of the law of Dharma (principles of righteousness, probity, good conduct and thought), and their cheerful and pleasant physical appearances and demeanours showed that there was nothing that either worried them or made them feel unhappy.² (2)

[Note—When the earth is ruled by a good and noble king, there is happiness and prosperity everywhere. The subjects are taken well care of, and the fame of the king spreads to all corners of the earth. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 21—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22 where we read the same thing about the glory of the kingdom that was ruled by Lord Ram.

The kind of prosperous and rich kingdom that was established under king Pratapbhanu and the happiness of its subjects finds an exact resonance in the kingdom of Ayodhya that was ruled by Lord Ram. This is described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23.

¹Refer specifically to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 23 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 21 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 26.]

सचिव धरमरुचि हरि पद प्रीती । नृप हित हेतु सिखव नित नीती ॥ ३ ॥
गुर सुर संत पितर महिदेवा । करइ सदा नृप सब कै सेवा ॥ ४ ॥

saciva dharamaruci hari pada prīti. nṛpa hita hētu sikhava nita nīti. 3.
gura sura santa pitara mahidēvā. kara'i sadā nṛpa saba kai sēvā. 4.

The king's chief minister named Dharmaruchi was very virtuous and judicious, and true to his name he diligently followed the laws of Dharma (proper conduct and thought; upholding the principles of prudence, auspiciousness, righteousness, ethics, probity and propriety above all other considerations). He was also god-fearing and was devoted to Lord Hari whom he worshipped with great faith.¹

He always thought for what would be good for the king, and was careful about the latter's welfare. Keeping this in mind, he always ensured that he would give wise and prudent advice to the king on day-to-day basis. (3)

The king made it a point to always serve and pay his obeisance and worship to his Guru (preceptor and moral guide), the Gods, the saints and pious men, the spirits of his ancestors, and the holy men known as Brahmins who are deemed to be representatives of Gods on earth. (4)

[Note—¹These grand virtues of the chief minister have already been pointed out in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 154 herein above.]

भूप धरम जे बेद बखाने । सकल करइ सादर सुख माने ॥ ५ ॥
दिन प्रति देइ बिबिध बिधि दाना । सुनइ साज बर बेद पुराना ॥ ६ ॥

bhūpa dharama jē bēda bakhānē. sakala kara'i sādara sukha mānē. 5.
dina prati dē'i bibidha bidhi dānā. suna'i sāstra bara bēda purānā. 6.

Whatever duties that the Vedas have prescribed for a king, he (Pratapbhanu) carried out all of them cheerfully and with due diligence with the thought that he was paying respect to the scriptures. Hence, he enjoyed doing his duties and fulfilling his obligations. (5)

He routinely gave liberal donations and made charities in various forms on a daily basis.

He also used to listen to religious discourses based on the Vedas, Purans and other scriptures¹. (6)

[Note—¹It was a normal practice with great kings to listen to religious discourses. The great king Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya and the father of Lord Ram too listened to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 359.]

Even Lord Ram used to listen to such discourses regularly though he knew all the things that were told during such sessions. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 26.

We also read here that the scriptures were read and discussed in each household of Ayodhya during the reign of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26.

There is a wonderful book titled ‘Narad Bhakti Sutra’ which is dedicated to the theme of Bhakti or devotion for Lord God. In its verse no. 17 it is said that listening to the scriptures where the glories of the Lord are narrated helps to nourish Bhakti in the heart of a devotee. An English version of this book has been written and published by this author and is available on-line.]

नाना बापीं कूप तड़ागा । सुमन बाटिका सुंदर बागा ॥ ७ ॥
बिप्रभवन सुरभवन सुहाए । सब तीरथन्ह बिचित्र बनाए ॥ ८ ॥

nānā bāpīm kūpa tarāgā. sumana bāṭikā sundara bāgā. 7.
biprabhavana surabhavana suhā'ē. saba tīrathanha bicitra banā'ē. 8.

The king got constructed excellent water-bodies such as ponds, wells and lakes, wonderful gardens and orchards, as well as beautiful homes for Brahmins and shrines for the Gods in all the holy pilgrim places on earth. (7-8)

[Note—Such activities were undertaken by all great kings as means of charity and social work.]

दो०. जहँ लगी कहे पुरान श्रुति एक एक सब जाग ।
बार सहस्र सहस्र नृप किए सहित अनुराग ॥ १५५ ॥

dōhā.

jaham̃ lagi kahē purāna śruti ēka ēka saba jāga.
bāra sahasra sahasra nr̥pa ki'ē sahita anurāga. 155.

Whatever religious sacrifices have been described in the Vedas and Purans, the king performed them faithfully and diligently countless numbers of times, one by one.¹ (Doha no. 155)

[Note—¹Usually a great king was expected to do the ‘Ashwamegh Yagya’, or the horse sacrifice. Even Lord Ram had done it. We also read that Lord Ram was very particular about following the path of religious practices and goodness as advised by the scriptures. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 24.

To wit, all great kings became ‘great’ and renowned because they had followed the path shown by the scriptures.]

चौ०. हृदयँ न कछु फल अनुसंधाना । भूप बिबेकी परम सुजाना ॥ १ ॥

करइ जे धरम करम मन बानी । बासुदेव अर्पित नृप ग्यानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hr̥dayam̃ na kachu phala anusandhānā. bhūpa bibēkī parama sujānā. 1.
kara'i jē dharama karama mana bānī. bāsudēva arpita nr̥pa gyānī. 2.

The king was very wise and intelligent. He had never desired for anything.¹ (1)

Whatever meritorious deeds that the king did, he faithfully offered them all to Lord Vasudeo (i.e. Lord Vishnu)². (2)

[Note—¹The king was well-versed in the doctrines of the scriptures, and so he knew fully well that if a person leads an honourable life in accordance to the principles laid down in the scriptures then all good things in the world come to him even without his asking for them. So therefore, why should he worry about anything; why should he allow himself to be tainted with the negativity associated with 'desires and passions'?

Verily, all his needs, of the world and of the spirit, were being taken care of by his doing meritorious deeds and strictly following the religious path prescribed in the scriptures. So what sense was there in asking for things which he has in abundance, or even if he did not have them currently they would come to him by-and-by.

'Narad Bhakti Sutra', verse nos. 5 and 7 highly praise the virtue of not having any kind of desires.

²It has been said in the scriptures that the best form of service to the Lord God is to offer everything to him; all deeds and their fruits ought to be offered selflessly to the Lord. This is one of the best forms of Bhakti or devotion.

It is said that those deeds and their fruits that are not offered to the Lord God are worthy of shame, and it would be good not doing any such deed at all no matter how meritorious they may be.

In this context, the reader should refer to verse nos. 14, 19 and 61 of a wonderful text on Bhakti, called 'Narad Bhakti Sutra'. An English version of this book has been written and published by this author.]

चढ़ि बर बाजि बार एक राजा । मृगया कर सब साजि समाजा ॥ ३ ॥

बिंध्याचल गभीर बन गयऊ । मृग पुनीत बहु मारत भयऊ ॥ ४ ॥

caḍhi bara bāji bāra ēka rājā. mṛgayā kara saba sāji samājā. 3.
bindhyācala gabhīra bana gaya'ū. mṛga punīta bahu mārata bhaya'ū. 4.

Once upon a time, the king mounted his gallant horse and went on a hunting expedition with all his courtiers, and fully equipped with all the royal paraphernalia needed for the purpose. (3)

He entered the deep recesses of the forest nestling in the lap of the lofty ranges of the Vindhyachal Mountain in pursuit of game, and by-and-by shot many a beautiful deer and other wild animals. (4)

फिरत बिपिन नृप दीख बराहू । जनु बन दुरेउ ससिहि ग्रसि राहू ॥ ५ ॥
बड़ बिधु नहिं समात मुख माहीं । मनहुँ क्रोध बस उगिलत नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

phirata bipina nrpa dikha barāhū. janu bana durē'u sasihi grasi rāhū. 5.
baṛa bidhu nahim samāta mukha māhīm. manahum'krōdha basa ugilata
nāhīm. 6.

During the course of his hunting, he saw a majestic wild boar¹ that was roaming in the forest. He was so huge and awesome that it appeared that the demon 'Rahu' had come to hide in the wilds, fearing for his own life, after having eclipsed the moon². (5)

It appeared that since the Moon was too large for the demon's mouth, the latter could not gobble it up, and this made the demon seethe with anger as he did not want to let the prey slip away³. (6)

[Note—¹This was no ordinary wild boar. It was actually a demon named 'Kalketu' who had seven sons and ten brothers. Together they had been causing great horror for the Gods and the Brahmins. So king Pratapbhanu engaged them in a battle and killed all his sons and brothers, but the demon Kalketu managed to escape. He took a vow of revenge upon the king and hid in the forest looking for an opportunity. In due course of time he met a king who had also been defeated by Pratapbhanu in battle and who had managed to escape arrest and fled to the forest. This defeated king disguised himself as a hermit and waited for his chance for revenge.

As destiny would have it, both these arch enemies of king Pratapbhanu, who were buring with the fire of hate and revenge, joined hands and became friends-in-common-cause. The story of this boar and his friendship with the erstwhile king disguised as a hermit is narrated herein below in Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 170. They planned a wicked and nasty device which would bring ruin to king Pratapbhanu and his entire family.

²According to mythological legend, the demon 'Rahu' has only a head with a mouth with which it periodically gobbles up the Moon and the Sun. This marks the occurrence of the lunar and the solar eclipses respectively. Since the demon's head is severed from his neck, the Moon and the Sun first enter the demon's mouth and then eventually emerge from the hollow of the neck below. This marks the end of the eclipse.

Now Rahu gets frightened that the Moon God and the Sun God would punish him, so he runs away and hides in a thick forest where the light of neither the Moon nor the Sun can reach. This is said to be the legend.

The wild boar which king Pratapbhanu sighted in the dark forest was so huge and fearsome and fat that it resembled the demon Rahu who had the shape of a huge rounded ball because he had only his head.

³Actually what is being said here in a dramatic way is that the king wanted to shoot this wild boar, but no matter how hard he tried to achieve success in his effort, the boar always escaped him. This angered the king beyond measure, and so he pursued his game relentlessly, without bothering to be careful and seeking assistance from the

soldiers and courtiers who were accompanying him as this would mean his personal defeat and humiliation.

We will read soon how the king's desire to hunt this boar without taking due precautions about his own security led him into the unknown depths of the forest where he got lost because all his companions were left behind while he was on hot pursuit of the game. Then as the fiat of fate had destined for him, he fell a victim of a trap laid by one of his enemies whom the king had defeated in battle some time in the past, and who was bidding for time to settle scores with him.]

कोल कराल दसन छबि गाई । तनु बिसाल पीवर अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥
घुरुघुरात हय आरौ पाएँ । चकित बिलोकत कान उठाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

kōla karāla dasana chabi gā'ī. tanu bisāla pīvara adhikā'ī.
ghurughurāta haya ārau pā'em̃. cakita bilōkata kāna uṭhā'em̃. 4.

The boar had enormous wide jaws; his body was of huge proportions; and he was very fat and bulky. (7)

When the boar heard the tramping sound of the hooves of the king's horse, he growled and grunted angrily and held his ears erect. (8)

दो०. नील महीधर सिखर सम देखि बिसाल बराहु ।
चपरि चलेउ हय सुटुकि नृप हाँकि न होइ निबाहु ॥ १५६ ॥
dōhā.

nīla mahīdhara sikhara sama dēkhi bisāla barāhu.
capari calē'u haya suṭuki nr̥pa hām̃ki na hō'i nibāhu. 156.

When the king observed the huge wild boar who resembled the mighty mountain known as Neel Giri (literally the 'blue mountain') in its girth and the height, he got tempted so much to hunt him down that he whipped his steed and spurred it to move swiftly towards the boar, challenging the latter and saying that he would not be able to escape now¹. (Doha no. 156)

[Note—¹In his enthusiasm and excitement, the king shouted at the boar. If he would have been wise and careful like a good and scrupulous hunter, he would have quietly shot an arrow to kill the boar instead of alerting it and giving it a chance to run away. But the king was so over-confident of his strength and powers that he forgot to follow rules. He forgot, for instance, that he is not in a battle-field facing a warrior whom he must challenge first before launching his attack as is the proper rule for a duel. A wild animal who is about to be shot dead won't wait for an arrow before fleeing from the spot for its dear life.]

चौ०. आवत देखि अधिक रव बाजी । चलेउ बराह मरुत गति भाजी ॥ १ ॥

तुरत कीन्ह नृप सर संधाना । महि मिलि गयउ बिलोकत बाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭī.

āvata dēkhi adhika rava bājī. calē'u barāha maruta gati bhājī. 1.

turata kīnha nṛpa sara sandhānā. mahi mili gaya'u bilōkata bānā. 2.

When the wild boar saw the king's horse approach rapidly, he fled with the swiftness of wind. (1)

The king immediately mounted an arrow and shot it at the boar, but the latter, as soon as he observed the king aiming the arrow, stopped dead on its track and crouched low on the ground to hide himself in the surrounding undergrowth, thickets and wild grass that grew in abundance in the dense forest. (2)

तकि तकि तीर महीस चलावा । करि छल सुअर सरीर बचावा ॥ ३ ॥

प्रगटत दुरत जाइ मृग भागा । रिस बस भूप चलेउ सँग लागा ॥ ४ ॥

taki taki tīra mahīsa calāvā. kari chala su'ara sarīra bacāvā. 3.

pragaṭata durata jā'i mṛga bhāgā. risa basa bhūpa calē'u saṁga lāgā. 4.

The king took repeated aims and shot many arrows, but the clever boar dodged him each time by different maneuverings¹. (3)

The boar repeatedly hid and reappeared as if to tease the king, who was so peeved and embarrassed at this apparent humiliation and virtual defeat that he kept on his hot pursuit of the boar angrily, and deciding not to give up he went very far and deep in the dense forest (without taking precautions about his own safety and calling for support from others in the royal entourage that had accompanied him)². (4)

[Note—¹Thus the boar escaped the arrow and getting killed. We have read earlier that the boar was of a gigantic size and the king was moving at a great speed on his steed. Since the target was large, the king had aimed the arrow in its general direction. Besides this, he was astride a galloping horse, and to shoot an arrow the two hands must be free—one to hold the bow and the other to aim the arrow. It obviously means that the king had to let go of the rein of the horse while it was in swift motion in order to hold the bow, take aim and shoot the arrow. He was confident that the arrow will hit the bull's eye as the target was so huge, and so he must have aimed higher than is usual for a hunter aiming his arrow at an ordinary game.

But this game outwitted the hunter, for it immediately crouched and lay low on the ground in self-defence even as the arrow whizzed past it. Since the king's horse was moving at great speed, it overshot the boar. And by the time the king gathered his wits to look around and search for his prey, the latter rose and quickly vanished in the surrounding thickets in the dense forest.

²The king was ashamed of himself at his failure to hunt down a single boar, and thinking what others would say of him if he called out for support and help, he decided to take a great risk and so continued to pursue his game alone.]

गयउ दूरि घन गहन बराहू । जहँ नाहिन गज बाजि निबाहू ॥ ५ ॥
अति अकेल बन बिपुल कलेसू । तदपि न मृग मग तजइ नरेसू ॥ ६ ॥

gaya'u dūri ghana gahana barāhū. jaham̃ nāhina gaja bāji nibāhū. 5.
ati akēla bana bipula kalēsū. tadapi na mṛga maga taja'i narēsū. 6.

By-and-by, the wild boar went deep into the thickest part of the dense forest where horses and elephants could not have any access (because this part of the forest was extremely dense and thick with wild undergrowth, thick trees, entangled creepers and tall wild grass). (5)

Though the king was all alone and frustrated, still he did not abandon his game to return back to his companions¹. (6)

[Note—¹Obviously, as has been noted earlier, he felt ashamed at his failure to hunt down a single boar, and what others would say of him when they found out that he returned empty-handed. This prospect was preposterous and intolerable for him. So he continued with his pursuit.]

कोल बिलोकि भूप बड़ धीरा । भागि पैठ गिरिगुहाँ गभीरा ॥ ७ ॥
अगम देखि नृप अति पछिताई । फिरेउ महाबन परेउ भुलाई ॥ ८ ॥

kōla bilōki bhūpa baṛa dhīrā. bhāgi paiṭha giriguhām̃ gabhīrā.
agama dēkhi nṛpa ati pachitā'ī. phirē'u mahābana parē'u bhulā'ī. 4.

When the boar discovered that the king was very resolute and would not give up his pursuit, he fled and hid himself swiftly in a dark and deep cave on the side of a great mountain. (7)

The king found to his utter dismay that he would not be able to enter that cave. Disgusted and frustrated, he at last turned back. But by this time he had gone so far deep in that foreboding forest that he lost his way in its dark and un-chartered environ. (8)

दो०. खेद खिन्न छुद्धित तृषित राजा बाजि समेत ।
खोजत ब्याकुल सरित सर जल बिनु भयउ अचेत ॥ १५७ ॥

dōhā.

khēda khinna chud'dhita tṛṣita rājā bāji samēta.
khōjata byākula sarita sara jala binu bhaya'u acēta. 157.

Overcome with dismay, frustration and humiliation, the distraught king was very thirsty and hungry. He held his tired and thirsty horse dejectedly, and roamed about in

the forest searching for some water-body such as a pond or a stream to quench his and the horse's thirst and refresh themselves somewhat.

For want of water, the two, the king and the horse, were very agitated and almost on the edge of fainting. (Doha no. 157)

चौ०. फिरत बिपिन आश्रम एक देखा । तहँ बस नृपति कपट मुनिबेष्टा ॥ १ ॥

जासु देस नृप लीन्ह छड़ाई । समर सेन तजि गयउ पराई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

phirata bipina āśrama ēka dēkhā. taham̃ basa nṛpati kapaṭa munibēṣā. 1.

jāsu dēsa nṛpa līnha chaṛāī. samara sēna taji gaya'u parāī. 2.

While so wandering in the forest, the king sighted a hermitage. In it lived a king disguised as a hermit. (1)

This king had been defeated by Pratapbhanu some time in the past, and his kingdom was conquered and subjugated by the victorious Pratapbhanu who failed to lay his hands on the defeated king as he managed to escape after abandoning his army and his subjects. But the vanquished king, who escaped from thus being captured, retreated to the forest to hide there in the form of a hermit, bidding for time to seek his revenge upon his enemy Pratapbhanu if a favourable opportunity presented itself by providence some time later on. (2)

समय प्रतापभानु कर जानी । आपन अति असमय अनुमानी ॥ ३ ॥

गयउ न गृह मन बहुत गलानी । मिला न राजहि नृप अभिमानी ॥ ४ ॥

samaya pratāpabhānu kara jānī. āpana ati asamaya anumānī. 3.

gaya'u na gṛha mana bahuta galānī. milā na rājahi nṛpa abhimānī. 4.

This defeated king was full of grief and remorse, and thought that the while the time was bad and unfavourable for him it was good and favourable for Pratapbhanu (and so it was useless to resist then). (3)

Thus overcome with shame, regret and humiliation, he did not (or refused to) return to his palace, and abandoned the kingdom. He was too proud to surrender himself before the victorious king (Pratapbhanu) and make a treaty of peace with him¹. (4)

[Note—¹As destiny would have it, it was this same king whom Pratapbhanu met in the forest, disguised as a hermit! Frankly speaking and to do justice to the vanquished king, no great self-respecting warrior would like to surrender his dignity and self-esteem by kneeling before his vanquisher, especially if he is attacked by someone without any provocation just because his opponent wishes to conquer the whole world by the might of his arm and make everyone bow before his ego as Pratapbhanu had wished.

So this king swallowed a bitter pill that was forced down his throat. Naturally he was filled with vengeance and hatred for Pratapbhanu.

We see in history that the higher one rises the more his ego becomes inflated, and the more he thinks that he is the chosen one, as the case of Pratapbhanu clearly depicts. Such a person becomes cocooned in his own world of grandiose self-belief, thinking that he is the greatest of them all. He gradually becomes a tyrant, a dictator and a hypocrite, someone who gets distanced from reality, someone who loses the virtues of humbleness and simplicity, and someone who has no friends but enemies all around him.

Pratapbhanu had risen to such great heights of unbridled power and authority that unwittingly he had surrounded himself with jealous enemies who were all bidding their times to settle scores with him but of whom he was not aware because they all wore a cloak of submission and loyalty to him while hating him from within.]

रिस उर मारि रंक जिमि राजा । बिपिन बसइ तापस कें साजा ॥ ५ ॥
तासु समीप गवन नृप कीन्हा । यह प्रतापरबि तेहिं तब चीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

risa ura māri raṅka jimi rājā. bipina basa'i tāpasa kēm sājā. 5.
tāsu samīpa gavana nrpa kīnhā. yaha pratāparabi tēhiṁ taba cīnhā. 6.

Hence, the defeated king suppressed his anger and went to the forest like a poor man who is insulted, robbed of his rightful possessions and thrown out by someone who is rich and powerful, against whom this poor fellow is powerless to seek revenge. In the forest, this king hid himself in the disguise of a hermit. (5)

It was this king that Pratapbhanu approached when he sighted the hermitage in the thick forest. As soon as the king, who was disguised as a hermit, saw Pratapbhanu, he immediately recognized him (as his arch-enemy, the person who had usurped his kingdom and thrown him to such misery and humiliation). (6)

राउ तृषित नहिं सो पहिचाना । देखि सुबेष महामुनि जाना ॥ ७ ॥
उतरि तुरग तें कीन्ह प्रनामा । परम चतुर न कहेउ निज नामा ॥ ८ ॥

rā'u tr̥ṣita nahim̄ sō pahicānā. dēkhi subēṣa mahāmuni jānā.
utari turaga tēm̄ kīnha pranāmā. parama catura na kahē'u nija nāmā. 4.

The king (Pratapbhanu) was very agitated and weary with thirst, and so he could not recognize who that hermit actually was. Hence when he saw the holy external appearance and attire of a hermit, he mistook the person living in the hermitage to be some great sage. (7)

He alighted from his horse and bowed reverentially to the (fake) hermit, but he took the precaution of not disclosing his name and who he was. (8)

[Note—The king's enemy who was disguised as a hermit immediately knew that the stranger was king Pratapbhanu, but the latter could not recognize who that hermit actually was. The reason is that Pratapbhanu was weary with thirst and emotionally

exhausted so much that his mind did not function properly. Another reason is that the defeated king had disguised himself so perfectly that it was difficult to know his true identity. And third, during the course of his career of battles and wars and conquests, he had vanquished so many kings that it was not possible for him to keep track of each and every one whom he conquered and captured, and those who escaped.

What to talk of Pratapbhanu, even Lord Ram's great messenger Hanuman was misled by a demon named Kaalnemi who was sent by Ravana to capture and kill Hanuman while he was on his way to bring the herb to revive Laxman, the brother of Lord Ram, who lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka during the epic war. We shall read about it in due course. Kaalnemi had also disguised himself as a hermit and created a nice magical hermitage with a pond of water. Hanuman too was thirsty, and when he saw that pond he went there to refresh himself. Hanuman also could not recognize the demon, and thought that he was some sage. But a demoness who was assigned the task to kill Hanuman went and hid as a crocodile in that pond. As soon as Hanuman went in the water, she caught hold of him, but was immediately slayed by the Lord's messenger. She disclosed Kaalnemi's truth and soon Hanuman slayed him.

This story is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 58.]

दो०. भूपति तृषित बिलोकि तेहिं सरबरु दीन्ह देखाइ ।
मज्जन पान समेत हय कीन्ह नृपति हरषाइ ॥ १५८ ॥

dōhā.

bhūpati ṛṣita bilōki tēhim sarabaru dīnha dēkhā'i.
majjana pāna samēta haya kīnha nṛpati haraṣā'i. 158.

This false hermit observed that the king (Partapbhanu) was overcome with thirst, so he showed him the pond of water.

The king cheerfully took a bath and drank water himself, and also refreshed his horse likewise. Then he felt rejuvenated and energized once again. (Doha no. 158)

[Note—Obviously, Pratapbhanu felt obliged and was much grateful to this hermit. And in his elation he lost his usual discretion and caution. He felt that this is a true and helpful hermit who has virtually saved his and his horse's lives as if he was god-sent. The cunning hermit's demeanours and attires were so perfect that he gave no occasion for suspicion.

The pretentious hermit saw that Pratapbhanu was armed as he come a-hunting, while he himself was completely unarmed as a hermit ought to be. Besides it, he saw that a great chance has knocked at this door to settle old scores with his arch-enemy who has landed himself at his doorstep as if he was sent by providence.

So he concluded that if he played his cards carefully and with wisdom then he could fulfil his long-cherished wish to square up with Pratapbhanu. On the other hand, if he made one wrong move and Pratapbhanu could find out who that hermit actually was, he would be killed by well-armed king instantly. So the cunning hermit played his game to perfection and with care.]

चौ०. गै श्रम सकल सुखी नृप भयऊ । निज आश्रम तापस लै गयऊ ॥ १ ॥
आसन दीन्ह अस्त रबि जानी । पुनि तापस बोलेउ मृदु बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

gai śrama sakala sukhī nr̥pa bhaya'ū. nija āśrama tāpasa lai gaya'ū. 1.
āsana dīnha asta rabi jānī. puni tāpasa bōlē'u mṛdu bānī. 2.

When the guest king (Pratapbhanu) was fully refreshed and felt rejuvenated, he became cheerful. Then the hermit took him back to his hermitage.¹ (1)

Observing that the time for the sun to set had arrived, the hermit gave the king a seat to sit down and relax. Then he addressed the king with polite words. (2)

[Note—¹This shows that the water-body was a little way off the hermitage. The false hermit accompanied Pratapbhanu to ensure that the latter did not go away after taking a bath, drinking water and refreshing himself. Because he rightly concluded that if he would be present at the site then the great king would be obliged to thank him and observe some basic courtesy by asking his leave, at which point the hermit would encourage him to come with him to his hermitage and take some rest before proceeding ahead with his journey.

Since it was almost night time, it would be easy to persuade the king to spend the night there in the safety of the hermitage because the forest was full of danger if one ventured into it during the darkness of the night. And if the things went the way the deceitful hermit planned quickly in his head, he would see to it that Pratapbhanu is ruined.

²The unsuspecting king agreed to stay overnight because he too did not wish to go forth through a forest with which he was not acquainted. And the treacherous hermit hit the dagger hard and sunk it till its hilt! He of course had to be polite if he wanted to trap the king into talking. Otherwise, the king could say he was tired and excuse himself to go and take rest.

So, as the king was already grateful to this hermit, he readily agreed to sit down and have a little chat with him when offered a seat and the hermit expressed a desire for some light talk.]

को तुम्ह कस बन फिरहु अकेलें । सुंदर जुबा जीव परहेलें ॥ ३ ॥
चक्रबर्ति के लच्छन तोरें । देखत दया लागि अति मोरें ॥ ४ ॥

kō tumha kasa bana phirahu akēlēm. sundara jubā jīva parahēlēm. 3.
cakrabarti kē lacchana tōrēm. dēkhata dayā lāgi ati mōrēm. 4.

The hermit enquired politely, 'Say, who are you and why are you wandering alone in this wild forest? You are handsome and young, so why do you risk your precious life by venturing alone in this fierce wilderness?' (3)

I feel great pity for you because I see in you signs of a great emperor who rules over all the directions of the earth like it were a great circle of his dominion (cakrabarti)'.
(4)

नाम प्रतापभानु अवनीसा । तासु सचिव मैं सुनहु मुनीसा ॥ ५ ॥
फिरत अहेरें परेउँ भुलाई । बड़ें भाग देखेउँ पद आई ॥ ६ ॥

nāma pratāpabhānu avanīsā. tāsu saciva mairṁ sunahu munīsā. 5.
phirata ahērēm̐ parē'um̐ bhulā'ī. baṛēm̐ bhāga dēkhē'um̐ pada ā'ī. 6.

The king replied with caution, saying, 'Listen oh sage! There is a great king named Pratapbhanu, and I am his minister'¹. (4)

I was hunting and pursuing a game when I lost my way. It is due to good fortune that I came here and saw your holy feet. (6)

[Note—¹The king tried to be extra careful here. He was aware that he is renowned for being truthful, but here the situation demanded that he cannot speak the truth for fear of disclosing his identity to a stranger. So he devised a device by saying half-truth, that he was a minister with king Pratapbhanu. In a way he gave a hint to the stranger that if a king's minister is so great that he has signs and an air of a great ruler who rules over all the directions of the earth, then one can imagine the glory and majesty of the king under whom this minister works.

Refer Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 158 herein above where we read that at the time the king first met the hermit he had not disclosed his name then also. The reason is that wisdom and discretion dictates that a king should keep his identity secret in an alien land for he can't be sure whether he is amongst friends or foes.]

हम कहँ दुर्लभ दरस तुम्हारा । जानत हौं कछु भल होनिहारा ॥ ७ ॥
कह मुनि तात भयउ अँधिआरा । जोजन सतरि नगरु तुम्हारा ॥ ८ ॥

hama kham̐ durlabha darasa tumhārā. jānata hauṁ kachu bhala hōnihārā. 7.
kaha muni tāta bhaya'u am̐dhi'ārā. jōjana sanāri nagaru tumhārā. 8.

It is rare for ordinary mortals like us to have a sight of sages and their holy feet. So I think that some great is in store for me and some good tidings are coming my way.'
(7)

The hermit replied, 'My dear, it is dark already now, and your capital city is at a distance of seventy yojans (roughly five hundred and sixty miles) from here'¹. (8)

[Note—¹The cunning hermit smiled on the sly at his good fortune and thought to himself—'Well, well; it seems that the king is about to fall in my net, if only I could manoeuvre things a little more to my liking.'

¹ Yojan = roughly 80 miles.]

दो०. निसा घोर गंभीर बन पंथ न सुनहु सुजान ।

बसहु आजु अस जानि तुम्ह जाएहु होत बिहान ॥ १५९ (क) ॥

dōhā.

nisā ghōra gambhīra bana pantha na sunahu sujāna.
basahu āju asa jāni tumha jā'ēhu hōta bihāna. 159 (a).

Listen oh gentleman (sujāna)! The night is pitch dark, and the fearsome forest is thick and deep. There is no proper track through it (which you can take back to your city).

So therefore, keeping this in mind, it would be wise for you to stay here overnight and go your way at dawn.' (Doha no. 159-a)

तुलसी जसि भवतव्यता तैसी मिलइ सहाइ ।

आपुनु आवइ ताहि पहिं ताहि तहाँ लै जाइ ॥ १५९ (ख) ॥

tulasī jasi bhavatabyatā taisī mila'i sahā'i.
āpunu āva'i tāhi pahim̃ tāhi tahām̃lai jā'i. 159 (b).

Tulsidas (the learned poet-saint who composed this classic tale called Ram Charit Manas) observes in a solemn way that whatever is destined by destiny and is inevitable in one's fate is invariably preceded by circumstances and developments that lead up to the main chain of events. Either such circumstances or developments come to visit at the doorstep of a person who is to face some fiat of providence, or he is himself pulled along involuntarily towards those circumstances and developments that would lead to situations that would be in sync with his destiny. (Doha no. 159-b)

[Note—Put simply it means that what is destined to happen would happen, and no one can change it. There are certain developments in everyone's life which support this conclusion, when no matter how hard one tries and devises things his way they would always go against his wishes and what he had hoped for. In the same way, some unexpected developments occur of which one has no inkling, but they pull him out of some intractable situation which seemed to him almost hopeless a moment ago.

In the present case, Pratapbhanu's destiny brought him face to face with a person whom he had vanquished himself some time ago, but unfortunately he could not recognize him. Though no power on earth could stand the might of Pratapbhanu if all such powers united against him in battle, a lone, poor and unarmed erstwhile king who has been disenfranchised from his kingdom and power by Pratapbhanu who had trounced him would prove one day to be his nemesis and vanquisher without even a fight.

A king who would have knelt before Pratapbhanu in the battle-field praying for mercy, now has the latter bowing before him in gratitude for saving his life by providing him water to drink!

A king whose ruin was caused at the hands of Pratapbhanu now became the cause of ruin of Pratapbhanu himself—and that too without a fight. And the greatest irony is that the prey (Pratapbhanu) came to be killed voluntarily by him (the defeated king now disguised as a hermit) who he had earlier wished to destroy in battle.

This Doha essentially says that “destiny, fate and providence are very powerful forces in a person’s life, and whatever is to happen will surely happen in one’s life no matter how hard one tries to change or avoid it”.]

चौ०. भलेहिं नाथ आयसु धरि सीसा । बाँधि तुरग तरु बैठ महीसा ॥ १ ॥
नृप बहु भाँति प्रसंसेउ ताही । चरन बंदि निज भाग्य सराही ॥ २ ॥ ॥

caupāī.

bhalēhiṃ nātha āyasu dhari sīsā. bāṃdhi turaga taru baiṭha mahīsā. 1.
nṛpa bahu bhāṃṭi prasansē'u tāhī. carana bandi nija bhāgya sarāhī. 2.

Accepting the offer of the hermit gladly, the king said, ‘Alright oh Lord’, and went to tie the horse to a tree. Then he came back and sat down before the hermit¹. (1)

The king praised the hermit a lot, bowed at his feet, and congratulated himself (at finding a friendly person in the midst of a hopeless situation)². (2)

[Note—¹This shows that till now the king had been standing with his horse, but now that he has to spend the night in the hermitage he tied the horse to a tree and came to sit down comfortably.

²The king was all praises for this hermit because he felt that the latter was a nice person: first the hermit had shown him water, even accompanied to the pond for the sake of courteousness, and now he has requested the king to spend the night at the hermitage because it was already dark and night had come, the path back to his city was long, and it passed through a dense and hostile forest. The king already had an experience of the sort of wild forest he would have to cross because it was in this forest that he had lost his way. So when offered the chance of staying overnight, he gladly accepted it as god-sent.

In the situation in which the king found himself currently, any other person in his place too would have felt obliged to the hermit who played the role of a perfect host who was most courteous and hospitable.]

पुनि बोलेउ मृदु गिरा सुहाई । जानि पिता प्रभु करउँ दिठाई ॥ ३ ॥
मोहि मुनीस सुत सेवक जानी । नाथ नाम निज कहहु बखानी ॥ ४ ॥

puni bōlē'u mṛdu girā suhāī. jāni pitā prabhu kara'um̃ dhiṭhāī. 3.
mōhi munīsa suta sēvaka jānī. nātha nāma nija kahahu bakhānī. 4.

After he was comfortably seated and felt thankful to the hermit for the hospitality offered by him, the king said most politely, using sweetness in his voice, ‘Oh Lord! I regard you as my father¹, and so I am venturing to speak to you out of turn. [To wit,

even though you have not asked me to say anything, nevertheless I feel sufficiently free to talk to you as a son would to his father, for there is no formality between the two of them.] (3)

Oh sage, you too should regard me as your son and follower, and so please be kind to tell me your name (so that I may become aware about who you are)². (4)

[Note—¹The king wished to show his respect to the hermit and express his thanks to him. He calls the latter his ‘father’ because a hermit and a sage are no less respectable than a father for a man. Besides this, the hermit had saved his life by showing him water and asking him no to venture into the wild forest in the night as it would be too dangerous for his security.

While addressing the king earlier in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 159, the hermit had used the affectionate word ‘tāta’ for the king, which means “oh dear”, a term that is usually used in classical texts for someone who is very dear, such as a son. So the king reciprocated this gesture by addressing the hermit as his father.

There is another point here. The king was in the company of a stranger with whom he had to pass the night. So he thought it wise to create some kind of close bond, even if it was superficial or artificial, with his host so that the latter’s conscience would stop him from doing any mischief while the king was unarmed and asleep.

²Earlier the hermit too had asked the king who he was in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 159, so the king decided that there was no harm in asking the hermit his name. This was also done to start a conversation, and to keep busy and pass time. It would also help the king to reward the hermit after he returned to his capital the next day.]

तेहि न जान नृप नृपहि सो जाना । भूप सुहृद सो कपट सयाना ॥ ५ ॥
बैरी पुनि छत्री पुनि राजा । छल बल कीन्ह चहइ निज काजा ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi na jāna nr̥pa nr̥pahi sō jānā. bhūpa suhr̥da sō kapaṭa sayānā. 5.
bairī puni chatrī puni rājā. chala bala kīnha caha'i nija kājā. 6.

The king could not recognize who the hermit was, but the latter had immediately known who his guest actually was as soon as he saw the king¹.

The king was simple-hearted and had no deceit in him, but the hermit was a cunning fraud who was skilled in conceit and pretensions. (5)

In the first instance the hermit was an enemy, and then he was a Kshatriya by race (i.e. a warrior), and to top it all he was an erstwhile king who was defeated and his kingdom usurped. So (since he was seething with anger) he wished to accomplish his task (of seeking revenge) by hook or by crook². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 6-7 that precede Doha no. 158.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 158.

There are three things mentioned here which went squarely against Pratapbhanu—viz. (i) the hermit being a king who was defeated by Pratapbhanu, and whose kingdom was conquered and subjugated by him, (ii) the hermit being a warrior by birth, and for such a person the greatest humiliation in life is defeat and being forced to run away from the battle-field, and (iii) the hermit being the guest's arch enemy. All these three factors went against Pratapbhanu.

This situation was made worse and exacerbated because the king could not recognize his enemy so that he could have been alert and taken due precautions. The cunning hermit played his cards well and expertly by being most polite and courteous so that no suspicion was raised in the mind of the king. And he mightily succeeded in his game-plan because the king actually failed to recognize his enemy and fell right into the trap laid out for him by his sworn enemy!

The hermit had been waiting for such an opportunity for a long time when he could extract his revenge upon his enemy Pratapbhanu, and now this opportunity came knocking at his door. As the hermit had been a king himself before he was defeated by Pratapbhanu and had to escape and hide in the forest, he knew the tricks of the trade well, and so he knew how to trap an enemy without harming his own interests and extract whatever he wanted from the latter.

So we see the irony of fate here and the truth of what has been said as a maxim in Doha no. 159-b herein above that “destiny, fate and providence are very powerful forces in a person's life, and whatever is to happen will surely happen in one's life no matter how hard one tries to change or avoid it”.]

समुझि राजसुख दुखित अराती । अवाँ अनल इव सुलगइ छाती ॥ ७ ॥
सरल बचन नृप के सुनि काना । बयर सँभारि हृदयँ हरषाना ॥ ८ ॥

samujhi rājasukha dukhita arātī. avāṁ' anala iva sulaga'i chātī. 7.
sarala bacana nṛpa kē suni kānā. bayara sambhāri hṛdayaṁ haraṣānā. 8.

The disenfranchised and disinherited king (i.e. the hermit) had remembered the pleasures and comforts of royalty which had been snatched away from him. So he was burning with a fire of hatred and vengeance for the person (i.e. Pratapbhanu) who had robbed him of such privileges. (7)

Hearing with his ears the king's unsuspecting and polite words, he (i.e. the cunning hermit) felt very happy and reassured in his heart (that now finally he would achieve his objective and square up with his arch enemy). (8)

दो०. कपट बोरि बानी मृदुल बोलेउ जुगुति समेत ।
नाम हमार भिखारि अब निर्धन रहित निकेत ॥ १६० ॥

dōhā.

kapaṭa bōri bānī mṛdula bōlē'u juguti samēta.
nāma hamāra bhikhāri aba nirdhana rahita nikēta. 160.

The pretentious hermit spoke artfully words that were polite on their face but ambiguous and full of deceit. He said, 'My name now is a 'beggar', because I am poor and without a home of my own.'¹ (Doha no. 160)

[Note—¹The king ought to have taken note of these words, but he failed. A true hermit would never refer to himself as a 'beggar (bhikhāri)' to hint at his hidden regret of having left the pleasures and wealth of a household. A hermit is expected to be happy and cheerful in his chosen way of life of renunciation and meditation. This should have rung alarm bells for Pratapbhanu, but as destiny had wished his fall he overlooked the obvious, so deluded his mind was.]

Perhaps the king missed the obvious because he thought that the hermit was being truthful as indeed he had no wealth at present. But at the same time, he concluded, that prior to becoming a hermit he was a rich man—as hinted by the hermit saying that 'now I am a beggar' with no home and riches. That means he had them previously.

The hermit knew how a king thinks and treats others. If the other person is of a noble and rich bearing and heritage, a king would treat him with respect; otherwise he pays little or no attention to him. For the hermit to succeed in his game-plan, it was absolutely necessary for him to gain Pratapbhanu's full attention and confidence. He decided that the chances of Pratapbhanu paying more heed to what he says and accept his advice would be high if the king thought that this hermit was of a noble upbringing but had left all his wealth due to his spiritual urges. This is why it is said here that the hermit "spoke artfully" words that had dual meaning—it was first to test how alert his victim was, and then to inspire so much confidence in him that he would not question the hermit's integrity when he actually began implementing his nefarious design to wreak revenge upon the unsuspecting king.]

चौ०. कह नृप जे बिग्यान निधाना । तुम्ह सारिखे गलित अभिमाना ॥ १ ॥
सदा रहहिं अपनपौ दुराँ । सब बिधि कुसल कुबेष बनाँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaha nṛpa jē bigyāna nidhānā. tumha sārīkhē galita abhimānā. 1.
sadā rahahim̐ apanapau durā'ēm̐. saba bidhi kusala kubēṣa banā'ēm̐. 2.

The king (Pratapbhanu) replied, 'Those who are intelligent and repositories of wisdom and prudence, as well as free from pride and ego like you [1], always keep the reality about themselves and their glory secret and hidden from others like you have done, for they feel that it is always better to remain incognito and conceal their proficiency and knowledge by remaining in tattered clothes (so that no one pays attention to them and leaves them alone in peace) [2]. (1-2)

[Note—We observe that the king was also speaking in a language that conveyed a double meaning—for what he said might be a genuine praise of a wise and enlightened sage or hermit who wish to remain anonymous so that no one comes to disturb him to seek favours, and at the same time it may mean that the king praised

the hermit in sarcasm to indicate that he has indeed recognized who this hermit actually was but was being courteous as the latter had extended warm hospitality to the former.

From what we shall be reading in a moment now, the former case is true—for the king had praised the hermit with a genuine spirit of respect for him and a belief that he was fortunate to have met a nice hermit in the wild forest who came to his rescue when he was lost and would have faced a grave situation during the night in a dangerous place full of wild beasts.

The king's overwhelming sense of gratitude and relief at having found some humble and an apparently holy man was so great that it eclipsed his own wisdom and disarmed him of his usual sense of precaution and prudence. The king fell for the holy attire of the fraudster.

A message that is conveyed by this story is that one should never let down one's guard and take anyone at face value, for more often than not appearances are very misleading.

A true hermit or ascetic would indeed like to live anonymously. Though he may have mystical powers and may be very wise and learned, yet he wishes to be left alone so that he can pursue his spiritual goals. He does not want to be disturbed and mobbed by favour seekers who would flock to him for their worldly desires to be fulfilled if the word leaked out that a particular sage or hermit or ascetic can alleviate their troubles by his spiritual powers. No one in his right senses would normally like to be associated with a beggar in tattered clothes, and so a wise hermit would dress himself accordingly in rags to avoid worldly company.

Besides this, a hermit is expected to be free from pride and ego; he is not supposed to go boasting about his past achievements or present spiritual prowess. So the king said that he respected the hermit for his humbleness and lack of pride inspite of being full of wisdom and abilities. It is not easy to live and survive alone in the middle of the wilderness, surrounded by an uninhabitable forest full of wild beasts, away from civilization and all possible human contact. So a hermit or an ascetic who manages to do so successfully obviously must have some exceptional powers that other men do not possess. Hence, when the king saw the circumstances in which this hermit lived in the middle of a wild forest he was naturally overcome with awe and determined that this was a truly holy man who deserved his praise.]

तेहि तें कहहिं संत श्रुति टेरें । परम अकिंचन प्रिय हरि केरें ॥ ३ ॥

तुम्ह सम अधन भिखारि अगेहा । होत बिरांचि सिवहि संदेहा ॥ ४ ॥

tēhi tēm kahahim santa śruti ṭērēm. parama akiñcana priya hari kērēm. 3.
tumha sama adhana bhikhāri agēhā. hōta birāñci sivahi sandēhā. 4.

Verily indeed it is asserted by the Vedas and great saints that those who are simple and unpretentious, who have no worldly assets and attachments are dear to the Lord God¹. (3)

When the Creator (birāñci) and Lord Shiva see someone who is as penniless and homeless as you are, even they begin to doubt about the actual powers and abilities of

such a person. [This being the case, how can I know who you actually are or about your spiritual powers and achievements when even the two senior Gods of the Trinity, i.e. the creator Brahma and the concluder Shiva fail to know in depth about the exalted state of persons like you.]² (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the Lord loves those who are attached and devoted to none except the Lord himself, those for whom the Lord is the only wealth, only kin and only support. The Lord does not like a hermit or an ascetic who goes around boasting about his spiritual status. He likes the humble and the meek. The same idea is expressed in the New Testament of the Holy Bible, St. Matthew, 5/3-8; and Galatians, 5/23.

It has been said in the Upanishads and other scriptures that a Sanyasi, i.e. a person who has renounced the world and taken the vows of renunciation ought not to lust for worldly name and wealth any longer. It is because worldly contact creates a disturbance for the hermit's or ascetic's mind and creates a hindrance in his spiritual pursuit. This is also the reason given by this hermit in Doha no. 161 herein below.

²The king is being clever in this instance: he wishes to hide his inability to recognize the fraudulent hermit by saying that it is necessary as well as a convention to show respect to a person who is attired in a holy garb, no matter who actually he is.

The king is being wise and cautious here also, and a bit sarcastic. He defends his inability to recognize the real identity of the hermit because of his holy garb which has such a powerful influence upon the mind of the beholder who is usually trained and accustomed to show the greatest of respect to this attire as well as the person who wears it. This is because the attire of a hermit or an ascetic is universally respected by one and all, and even the great Gods such as Brahma and Shiva pay their homage to a person who is attired like a hermit and an ascetic.

So therefore, the king says that he is paying homage to this 'attire of a hermit' without going into further details about the person himself because he who dons a holy garb is to be shown due respect, especially when he exhibits other glorious traits of humbleness, simplicity, lack of pride and desire for worldly riches as asserted by Vedas and great saints, and as exhibited by his host in the present instance.

Earlier we have read that the king calls this cunning hermit his 'father-like' in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160. And now he praises the cunning hermit by comparing him with some great sage who is attired in a holy garb and is extremely humble and wise. So once again the king takes a precaution not to arouse any suspicion in the mind of a stranger in whose company he has to spend the night in a forest. He does not want that the hermit, in case he is some scoundrel, get a hint that the king doubts his integrity because that would be very dangerous for the king's own security. But at the same time, by saying that even great Gods do not know the reality of someone who is in a holy garb such as that of a hermit or an ascetic, the king gives a subtle hint that he is not fully convinced of the truth about his host!

The next verse clearly implies that the king is not fully convinced about the authenticity of the hermit, but he still shows respect to him because of his attire of a hermit which is respectable and makes its wearer an object of respect.]

जोसि सोसि तव चरन नमामी । मो पर कृपा करिअ अब स्वामी ॥ ५ ॥

सहज प्रीति भूपति कै देखी । आपु बिषय बिस्वास बिसेषी ॥ ६ ॥

jōsi sōsi tava carana namāmī. mō para kṛpā kari'a aba svāmī. 5.
sahaja prīti bhūpati kai dēkhī. āpu biṣaya bisvāsa bisēṣī. 6.

Whoever you are, I still bow at your feet and pay my respects to you. Now, oh lord, be kind upon me and bless me by your grace¹. (5)

The hermit observed that the king had indeed been unable to recognize him, and instead has developed great faith, respect and affection for him. [To wit, instead of being suspicious of the hermit, the king developed great affection for his cunning host, and became totally submissive to him.]

So the hermit was now confident that he would be able to carry out his plans as he had wished². (6)

[Note—¹The king urges the hermit to spare him because he is bowing at his feet as a token of surrender. The king thought that in case this stranger hermit had some sense of conscience and humanity in him, then no matter who he is he will be bound by guilt if he does any harm to someone who has surrendered unconditionally before him. Well, this principle applies under normal conditions to someone who is noble in heart, naturally merciful by disposition, of high thinking and exemplary scruples, but not to someone who is burning with the fire of revenge.

Here the hermit is burning with a desire for vengeance, and so whatever scruples and morality he may have in his conscience were reduced to ashes in the raging fire of retribution.

²And what was the hermit's plan and wish? It was to settle old scores with king Pratapbhanu and ruin him. Now that he was successful in gaining the full confidence of the king, the hermit prepared for his next move. He wanted to drive the dagger home till its hilt. To wit, he decided that if he took revenge just now he would be able to easily kill the king who was alone, but it would far better if he maneuvered things in such a way that the entire family of the king is ruined for generations to come. So he did not hurry with plunging the dagger right then and there!]

सब प्रकार राजहि अपनाई । बोलेउ अधिक सनेह जनाई ॥ ७ ॥

सुनु सतिभाउ कहउँ महिपाला । इहाँ बसत बीते बहु काला ॥ ८ ॥

saba prakāra rājahi apanā'ī. bōlē'u adhika sanēha janā'ī. 7.
sunu satibhā'u kaha'um' mahipālā. ihām' basata bītē bahu kālā. 8.

Hence, the hermit played the next move of his game by showing greater affection to the (unfortunate and unaware) king with the aim of winning him over completely and acquiring his full confidence without a trace of doubt¹. (7)

So he said, 'Listen oh great king²! I am telling you all that is the truth. A lot of time has passed while I have lived here. (8)

[Note—¹The false-hermit was by this time convinced that he has succeeded in his plan to deceive the king and get his confidence. The king treated him with great respect just like a great king would treat a hermit who comes visiting his court. The

king was not only full of praise for the hermit but also bowed before him, called him a 'fatherly' figure, and now seeks his 'blessings'.

²We have read earlier that the king had never told who he actually was. In Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 159 the king had told the hermit that he was a 'chief minister' of king Pratapbhanu. So now when the hermit addressed him as 'the king', he was more convinced of the hermit's mystical powers which enabled him to know the truth of who his guest was!

This simple ploy of the hermit pulled the innocent king nearer to the trap that was being spread out for him for now he was sure that this hermit was no ordinary man but one who has transcendental powers.]

दो०. अब लगि मोहि न मिलेउ कोउ में न जनावउँ काहु ।
लोकमान्यता अनल सम कर तप कानन दाहु ॥ १६१ (क) ॥

dōhā.

aba lagi mōhi na milē'u kō'u mair̥m na janāva'um̥ kāhu.
lōkamān'yatā anala sama kara tapa kānana dāhu. 161 (a).

[The hermit continued—] 'No one has met me till now (for I live far away from populated areas, in a remote and secluded part of the forest), and neither do I (prefer to) reveal my identity to anyone. I prefer anonymity because worldly recognition and honour are like a fire that destroys the symbolic forest of Tapa (spiritual benefits gained by practicing austerity and penance).¹ [To wit, a true hermit and ascetic are expected to avoid company with others and lead a life in obscurity and serenity so that he can pursue his spiritual objectives without any interference.] (Doha no. 161-a)

[Note—¹The cunning hermit wishes to keep the king engaged in conversation and gain more access to his confidence so that he would tie the noose more tightly. He knew that king Pratapbhanu was extremely ambitious and had a hidden desire to conquer the whole world, as this was the only reason why he had attacked and conquered, without any provocation, the kingdom of which this hermit of ours was a king earlier. So if the guest king could somehow be cajoled into believing that luckily he has now met a great hermit who possesses supernatural powers, then it is quite possible that he may seek the hermit's help to fulfill his desires and complete whatever remnants of victory that still elude him, and successfully conquer those territories that are still not under his sovereignty.

The hermit therefore tried to impress the king about the magical powers that he possesses, about his great spiritual prowess and special achievements, that usually come to great hermits and ascetics by the virtue of their doing severe Tapa. With these powers the hermits and ascetics can achieve stupendous feats that ordinary mortals cannot even think of.]

सो०. तुलसी देखि सुबेषु भूलहि मूढ़ न चतुर नर ।
सुंदर केकिहि पेखु बचन सुधा सम असन अहि ॥ १६१ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

tulasī dēkhi subēṣu bhūlahirṁ mūrha na catura nara.
sundara kēkihi pēkhu bacana sudhā sama asana ahi. 161 (b).

Tulsidas observes that an honourable and pleasant-looking attire and appearance often misleads everyone, for not only the ordinary people but even those who are intelligent and sagacious are deceived by them.

See the peacock; it is so beautiful to look at (with its fantastically wonderful plumes that have an array of colours), and it also has a voice that is attractive and sweet to hear, but ironically it feeds on poisonous snakes. (Sortha no. 136-b)

[Note—The learned poet Tulsidas (who has written this book Ram Charit Manas) makes a great point here as a warning for all of us: that one should not judge someone by his looks, for appearances are more often deceiving and do not tell the truth. So one must always be on guard when dealing with strangers and unknown situations.

A peacock is so lovely to look at from the outside, but it is so horrible from inside that it devours snakes and manages to digest the reptile. The snake that would kill one and all by its poison is unable to harm the peacock because the latter is more poisonous than the snake, and hence is easily able to neutralize the weaker poison contained in the body of the snake.

Who would believe that a bird which looks so pleasant from the outside and has a sweet voice would have such strong poisonous instincts that it does not fear the poison of the snake and easily gobbles it up?

To wit, a person who by his appearances looks very friendly and helpful may actually be some dangerous scoundrel preying for a victim, who will stab one behind one's back without warning so much so that even while putting up a show of warmth with an affectionate embrace, he may gladly and without any remorse drive a knife in the back of the unsuspecting victim during this embrace.

One thing is to be noted here. The voice of a peacock is not actually 'sweet and pleasant' as it is made out to be here, for it is shrill and sharp. But the peacock usually cries out in jubilation when it sees the dark rain-bearing clouds in the sky at the onset of the rainy season. So therefore, the peacock's cry against the background of the sound of thunder of the approaching storm and rain appears very pleasant to hearer because it signals the arrival of rain that is welcomed by one and all at the end of a harsh summer.]

चौ०. तातें गुपुत रहउँ जग माहीं । हरि तजि किमपि प्रयोजन नाही ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु जानत सब बिनहिं जनाएँ । कहहु कवनि सिधि लोक रिझाएँ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tātēm guputa raha'um' jagā māhīṁ. hari taji kimapi prayōjana nāhīṁ. 1.
prabhu jānata saba binahīṁ janā'ēm'. kahahu kavani sidhi lōka rijhā'ēm'. 2.

[The pretentious hermit continued with his honey-laced talk. He said—] 'That is why¹ I prefer to remain anonymous and hidden from the world, for I don't want and need to do anything with anyone except Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being)². (1)

The Lord is all-knowing and he knows everything without saying a word or being told of anything. So therefore, say, what use is there in trying to please and appease the world³? (2)

[Note—¹The hermit has already given the reason for it in Doha no. 161-a herein above. And he further elaborates on it now onwards.

²To wit, I spend my time in meditation and contemplation and worship of Lord Hari with great devotion. Being a true hermit and an ascetic, why should I waste my time and energy by thinking of other things and worrying about them? I feel contented in my spiritual pursuits, and prefer to lead a calm and serene life in seclusion, away from all contacts and free from attachments. My basic needs are taken care of by the Lord, and so there is no occasion for me to venture outside into the world.

³The pretentious hermit is so cunning that he speaks excellent words of wisdom like a really great, sagacious and enlightened saint so as to convince the king of his noble thoughts and greatness, make him more faithful and devoted towards himself. A truly faithful devotee of the Lord God would seek from no one except his Lord. So the hermit tries to impress upon the gullible king that he is a loyal devotee of Lord Hari, and hence a holy and reliable soul, for devotees of Lord Hari are deemed to be pure in heart and pious souls.

A cheat and a scoundrel would go to any length to achieve his objectives, and he has no compunctions or reservations in employing any dirty trick he can think of as long as his nefarious design succeeds. Lying and falsehoods cause no embarrassment to such persons.]

तुम्ह सुचि सुमति परम प्रिय मोरें । प्रीति प्रतीति मोहि पर तोरें ॥ ३ ॥
अब जाँ तात दुरावउँ तोही । दारुन दोष घटइ अति मोही ॥ ४ ॥

tumha suci sumati parama priya mōrēm. prīti pratīti mōhi para tōrēm. 3.
aba jaum tāta durāva'um' tōhī. dārūna dōṣa ghaṭa'i ati mōhī. 4.

You (the guest king) have a clean conscience and purity of mind; that is why I have (developed an) affection for you and have confidence in you. (3)

My dear, this being the case, if I hide anything from you then it would be a great sin on my part¹. (4)

[Note—¹What was the thing that the hermit alluded to when he said that he did not want to hide anything from the king? Well, in the beginning this hermit has told the king that he does not want to reveal to anyone who he was, what mystical powers he possessed, or anything else about his spiritual life and achievements, and especially not to a stranger. He has always preferred to remain anonymous and hidden from publicity. This is clearly evident from Doha nos. 160 and 161, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 161.

But then now the same hermit has revealed quite a bit about himself before the king—that he worships Lord Hari and is the Lord's great devotee, that he seeks from no one except Lord Hari, that he has lived in seclusion for a long time doing Tapa,

that he has transcendental powers by which he could know that his guest was ‘a king’ and ‘not a king’s minister’ though the guest himself told him that he was king Pratapbhanu’s chief minister, and so on.

So the hermit now gives a reason why he confided in the king and told him some secrets that he has not revealed to anyone else till now—and it is that he was very impressed by the king’s simplicity and faith in him, and so he decided that when one pure heart meets another pure heart there should be openness between the two.

This was a very clever ploy as it further reinforced the king’s trust in the hermit. It helped the hermit to appeal to the natural emotions of the king to open up with a holy person; the king would now be encouraged to share some of the secrets in his own heart with the hermit just as the hermit has shared some of his own secrets with him in a voluntary way. The hermit correctly guessed that the king would overcome his initial reluctance and open up.

And what message is there in this verse? It is that those who really and truly trust each other should have an open heart and not hide anything between them. This attitude helps them bond and come to each other’s aid in times of need. It also helps both the partners to seek and give selfless advice on various matters. But at the same time it is of utmost importance that one chooses one’s partner most carefully and take due precautions and undertake diligence before reposting complete faith on anyone. For otherwise, one would be doomed as was the unfortunate case of king Pratapbhanu who fell prey to a scoundrel’s sweet words.]

जिमि जिमि तापसु कथइ उदासा । तिमि तिमि नृपहि उपज बिस्वासा ॥ ५ ॥
देखा स्वबस कर्म मन बानी । तब बोला तापस बगध्यानी ॥ ६ ॥

jimi jimi tāpasu katha'i udāsā. timi timi nr̥pahi upaja bisvāsā. 5.
dēkhā svabasa karma mana bānī. taba bōlā tāpasa bagadhyānī. 6.

The more the hermit talked of indifference to the world and his devotion to spiritual pursuits, the more the king’s faith in him increased. (5)

When the false and deceitful hermit, who was like a cunning crane preying on its victim¹, determined that the king had developed full trust and faith in him so much so that he has become fully devoted to him in his thought, word and deed, he (the hermit) said—(6)

[Note—¹The crane stands in the water on one of its legs and the neck bent inwards, appearing to be immersed in deep meditation. But its attention is fixed on the water where some fish might come to the surface. And as soon as the crane sights the fish, it immediately picks it up in its beak. This metaphor of the crane is used to imply a person who pretends to be holy on the outside but is very selfish and cruel internally; he traps his victim by pretending to be his well wisher and dear friend, but at the first opportunity he would pounce at his unsuspecting victim and extract whatever he had planned from him.]

नाम हमार एकतनु भाई । सुनि नृप बोलेउ पुनि सिरु नाई ॥ ७ ॥

कहहु नाम कर अरथ बखानी । मोहि सेवक अति आपन जानी ॥ ८ ॥

nāma hamāra ēkatanu bhā'ī. suni nṛpa bōlē'u puni siru nā'ī. 7.
kahahu nāma kara aratha bakhānī. mōhi sēvaka ati āpana jānī. 8.

‘Brother (bhā'ī), my name is Ekatanu (ēkatanu)¹.’

When the king heard this, he bowed his head (in reverence)² and said—(7)

‘Please consider me to be your devoted follower (or servant) and explain to me the meaning of your name. (8)

[Note—¹The hermit is trying to become more and more informal with the king in his effort of developing greater rapport with him. We note that the hermit is playing his trick very expertly, step-by-step, in order to judge how much the king is willing to yield himself to the former.

So therefore now the hermit uses a dearer and more informal term of address for someone, such as the word ‘brother’. He goes a step further in his effort to draw the unsuspecting king, who was slowly slipping into the trap being laid out by the villainous hermit, closer to him with greater trust and faith when he would address the king as his ‘son’ in the Chaupai that follows Doha no. 162 herein below.

The word ‘Ekatanu’ is explained by him in the next Doha no. 162 herein below.

²The king ‘bowed his head’: this shows that the king has begun to treat the hermit with greater respect with each passing moment.]

दो०. आदिसृष्टि उपजी जबहिं तब उतपति भै मोरि ।
नाम एकतनु हेतु तेहि देह न धरी बहोरि ॥ १६२ ॥

dōhā.

ādisṛṣṭi upajī jabahim taba utapati bhai mōri.
nāma ēkatanu hētu tēhi dēha na dharī bahōri. 162.

[The hermit replied—] ‘I was born when the creation came into being. My name is ‘Elatanu’ which means ‘one who has had only a single body’, for I never died and therefore I hadn’t taken a birth again. [To wit, I have been in this body of a hermit which you see now ever since the dawn of creation, for I never died, and so there was no need for me to take a new birth again.]¹’ (Doha no. 162)

[Note—¹Of all the claims that this hermit made this was the most outlandish. This is a mortal world, and no creature can claim immortality for its gross body; no human being can claim that his gross body has survived and lived in the same way since the beginning of creation. It’s absurd and impossible.

This ridiculous claim of the hermit should have rung alarm bells for the king. But as destiny had planned otherwise, the king’s wisdom was eclipsed and he could

not see the tell-tale signs of lies and falsehood in the hermit's words of excessive absurdity.

Well, the hermit made a final test to see whether some sense of prudence and common sense still was left with the king, or has he become totally numbed in his mind and intellect. When a thug wants to rob his victim, he first gives him some intoxicating substance, and then waits and watches what effect it has on the victim. Only when he finds that the drug has its full effect upon the prey that the villain strikes and then flees with the booty.

There is one very interesting observation that can be made here in connection with the word 'Ekatanu'. While one of its meanings is as described above—i.e. a person who has had the same body since the creation started, the other meaning is that 'I have no other physical body', or 'I don't have a second or duplicate body'. If we were to take this second meaning into consideration then also we conclude that the king had been very stupid not to realize that no one has a 'duplicate body' or a 'parallel body' or 'a second body other than one's own body'. The hermit was playing a trick with words upon the king—and the deluded king could not see through it!

This term may also mean that the hermit was the 'only son of his parents'. If he had some other sibling, especially a 'twin', then it could be said that there is another person in the likeness of the hermit as brothers carry the same genes in them, have the same parents, and their features also match each other to a great extent.]

चौ०. जनि आचरजु करहु मन माहीं । सुत तप तें दुर्लभ कछु नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
 तपबल तें जग सृजइ बिधाता । तपबल बिष्नु भए परित्राता ॥ २ ॥
 तपबल संभु करहिं संघारा । तप तें अगम न कछु संसारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jani ācaraju karahu mana māhīm. suta tapa tēm durlabha kachu nāhīm. 1.
 tapabala tēm jaga srja'i bidhātā. tapabala biṣnu bha'ē paritrātā. 2.
 tapabala sambhu karahīm saṅghārā. tapa tēm agama na kachu sansārā. 3.

[The hermit continued to explain to the king the meaning of his name. Thus he said—
] 'Oh son¹, don't be surprised at all about this (that I have not died and thus have been able to live through countless ages with this same body with which I took birth at the beginning of creation as I have told you about myself). For, nothing is impossible by the virtue of the powers granted by doing Tapa (strict spiritual practices such as observing austerity, doing penance and offering self-sacrifices)². (1)

[Elaborating upon the stupendous powers and astounding abilities that are granted by doing Tapa, the hermit said—] The creator Brahma creates this universe on the strength of Tapa; it is on the strength of Tapa that Lord Vishnu is able to take care of this creation and provide for its needs; (2)

Lord Shiva is able to conclude or bring to an end this creation by relying on the powers granted by Tapa.

Verily indeed, there is nothing impossible and there is nothing that can't be done or achieved in this world by relying on the strength of Tapa.³ (3)

[Note—¹Earlier the hermit had addressed the king as a 'brother', and now he addresses him as a 'son'. This is an obvious attempt on his part to gain the king's unbridled confidence and faith. The hermit plays subtly on the king's emotions by referring to the king's own submission at the time he accepted the hermit's offer to spend the night at the hermitage when the king had said to the hermit that he was like a 'father' for him—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160.

The cunning hermit decided that before he bared his fangs and dug his teeth deep into the victim it is crucial for him that his prey is firmly in his clutches so much so that he would do the hermit's bidding faithfully and obediently like a devoted disciple who carries out his Guru's (preceptor's) orders without asking any questions or expressing any doubts.

²When the hermit had said that he has retained the same body ever since the dawn of creation, without dying and taking birth even once, the king was incredulous and absolutely astonished as this seemed to be an outlandish and impractical suggestion that defied the laws of Nature. The clever hermit was closely observing every gesture and expression on the face of the king, so he immediately picked up the signal that the king is not ready to take this bait so easily. Hence, he went on an overdrive to explain why he has managed to retain the same body ever since taking birth at the beginning of civilization.

He gave credit to his doing severe Tapa for this most magical feat. This explanation seemed reasonable and acceptable to the king because he was himself very well-versed in the doctrines of religious practices and knew that anything can be achieved by the force and power of Tapa. He knew that Tapa grants transcendental and supernatural powers to its practitioners.

When the hermit observed that the king seemed satisfied with this explanation, he felt very glad in his heart, because now he could use this ruse of his being able to do the impossible by the powers gained by him due to his Tapa in order to give effect to his nefarious designs to take revenge upon the king, as would be evident shortly.

³The hermit wished to be sure that the king is convinced of his reasoning that he has been able to live with the same body for ages after ages on the strength of Tapa. So he cites some of the irrefutable proofs for it—that of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Even the scriptures have endorsed this point that these three Gods of the Trinity gain their powers by doing Tapa.]

भयउ नृपहि सुनि अति अनुरागा । कथा पुरातन कहै सो लागा ॥ ४ ॥

करम धरम इतिहास अनेका । करइ निरूपन बिरति बिबेका ॥ ५ ॥

उदभव पालन प्रलय कहानी । कहेसि अमित आचरज बखानी ॥ ६ ॥

bhaya'u nr̥pahi suni ati anurāgā. kathā purātana kahai sō lāgā. 4.

karama dharama itihāsa anēkā. kara'i nirūpana birati bibēkā. 5.

udabhava pālana pralaya kahānī. kahēsi amita ācaraja bakhānī. 6.

Hearing these sagacious words of wisdom, the king felt very enamoured of the hermit and developed great admiration for him.

Then the hermit began to tell him many ancient stories and antecedents from the Purans (mythological histories)¹. (4)

He (the hermit) then gave a lengthy discourse on the principles of Karma and Dharma (the principles governing deeds and righteousness as laid down in the scriptures) along with many stories that would explain these doctrines.

He also gave discourses elaborating on the virtues of Gyan (gnosis; knowledge and spiritual enlightenment) and Vairagya (renunciation and detachment).² (5)

He told the king many wonderful and fascinating stories about this creation—about its origin, its sustenance, and its final end, stories that were awe-inspiring and interesting. (6)

[Note—¹It was a usual practice in ancient times that when someone went to a great sage and sought his blessings, the sage would spend some quality time with his guest by talking about the scriptures and spiritual topics. Great sages who had established hermitages would routinely give discourses on ancient scriptures and explain them to the host of other junior sages and disciples who lived with him to acquire knowledge.

²The hermit wanted to keep the king engaged in conversation and create an impression on him. He wanted to subtly tell the king that he was no ordinary hermit but was indeed a great and learned sage who is well acquainted with all the scriptures as a sage ought to be, and there is aught nothing that he knows not. That he lives alone and does not have many juniors surrounding him does not mean that he is not highly knowledgeable and wise.

So therefore he gave a long discourse on a wide variety of topics so that the king is fully convinced of his greatness and vast knowledge.]

सुनि महीप तापस बस भयऊ । आपन नाम कहन तब लयऊ ॥ ७ ॥
कह तापस नृप जानउँ तोही । कीन्हेहु कपट लाग भल मोही ॥ ८ ॥

suni mahīpa tāpasa basa bhaya'ū. āpana nāma kahana taba laya'ū. 7.
kaha tāpasa nrpa jāna'um' tōhī. kīnhēhu kapaṭa lāga bhala mōhī. 8.

Hearing all these wise talks, the king was fully convinced of the greatness of this hermit, and he developed full faith in him. The king now trusted the hermit so much that he proceeded to disclose his real name to the latter. (7)

But the hermit interjected, and before the king could divulge his true identity the hermit said, 'Oh king, I know already who you actually are. I very much appreciate your stance that you tried to withhold the truth from me¹. [In Doha no. 163 herein below the hermit explains why he appreciated the king's deception.] (8)

सो०. सुनु महीस असि नीति जहँ तहँ नाम न कहहिं नृप ।

मोहि तोहि पर अति प्रीति सोइ चतुरता बिचारि तव ॥ १६३ ॥
sōraṭhā.

sunu mahīsa asi nīti jaham̐ taham̐ nāma na kahahim̐ nṛpa.
mōhi tōhi para ati prīti sō'i caturatā bicāri tava. 163.

‘Listen oh king. It is a well established doctrine of statecraft that a king should not divulge his name (and true identity) at an alien place or before a stranger.

Observing this wisdom, prudence and sagacity of yours, I have developed great affection and respect for you. [To wit, instead of feeling offended that you have tried to deceive me by telling me an untrue statement about your identity when I asked you about it, I, on the contrary, liked your approach that you followed the principles of kingship by concealing your identity before a stranger like me.]’ (Doha no. 163)

चौ०. नाम तुम्हार प्रताप दिनेसा । सत्यकेतु तव पिता नरेसा ॥ १ ॥
गुर प्रसाद सब जानिअ राजा । कहिअ न आपन जानि अकाजा ॥ २ ॥
caupāṭi.

nāma tumhāra pratāpa dinēsā. satyakētu tava pitā narēsā. 1.
gura prasāda saba jāni'a rājā. kahi'a na āpana jāni akājā. 2.

[The hermit continued—] ‘Your name is Bhanupratap, and king Satyaketu was your father. (1)

*Oh king! By the grace of my Guru (spiritual preceptor) I know everything, but perceiving that telling the complete truth could bring harm to me I do not wish to tell more¹.

{*This verse may be read as follows also: ‘Oh king! I know everything by the grace of my Guru. It is alright that you did not tell the truth about yourself to me for fear of harming your self interests as I have already explained that a king is well within his rights to do so.’² (2)

[Note—¹The hermit has given ample hints to the king that there is something amiss. What was there that the hermit feared from the king that prevents him from telling the ‘whole truth’? Surely if the full truth came out, the king would know that this hermit was his enemy!

But it is an irony of fate and a quirk of providence that still the king could not realize that there was something wrong somewhere. Why would a hermit who claims possessing exceptional mystical powers by the virtue of Tapa so much so that he could even defer death and overturn the laws of Nature by remaining alive and retaining the same body ever since the dawn of creation, fear harm from an ordinary mortal such as a human king if he told him the whole truth? Wasn’t there something obviously mysterious in this? Obviously the king was so much influenced by the hermit that he had let down his guard beyond reason.

²This interpretation may be okay on the face of it, but since it is a repetition of what has already been said in Doha no. 163, the other explanation—that the hermit did not wish to tell more about what he knew about the king because it may bring harm to him—seems more plausible here. What harm would it bring to the hermit? If told the full truth the king would know that this hermit was actually his arch enemy!]

देखि तात तव सहज सुधाई । प्रीति प्रतीति नीति निपुनाई ॥ ३ ॥
उपजि परी ममता मन मोरें । कहउँ कथा निज पूछे तोरें ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi tāta tava sahaja sudhā'ī. prīti pratīti nīti nipunā'ī. 3.
upaji parī mamatā mana mōrēm. kaha'um' kathā nija pūchē tōrēm. 4.

Oh dear, observing your simplicity of manners, straightforwardness, affection and faith in me, as well as your prudence of mind and expertise in political wisdom – (3)

-- I developed affection and liking for you. That is why I told you about myself when you had asked me about it¹. (4)

[Note—¹The hermit is clearly double-talking. On the one hand he says that he does not want to tell the whole truth as it may harm him, and then he says he has told the king about himself in a truthful manner. If that is the case, then what was that extra information which the hermit did not wish to disclose to the king for fear of inviting harm to his own security or welfare as he has said in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above? Obviously the hermit wished to keep secret his own true identity from the king for it was definitely going to bring harm to him as he was the king's sworn enemy.

We have read that the hermit said that he has retained the same body since he took birth at the beginning of creation, and so there was nothing else to tell except about his present life. To wit, he seems to convey the idea that he has told the 'whole truth' to the king. This is contrary to his own admission that he would not like to tell the whole truth for fear of harm coming his way.]

अब प्रसन्न मैं संसय नाहीं । मागु जो भूप भाव मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥
सुनि सुबचन भूपति हरषाना । गहि पद बिनय कीन्हि बिधि नाना ॥ ६ ॥

aba prasanna mair̄m sansaya nāhīm. māgu jō bhūpa bhāva mana māhīm. 5.
suni subacana bhūpati haraṣānā. gahi pada binaya kīnhi bidhi nānā. 6.

Now since I am very pleased with you, you can ask for any boon from me that you wish for in your heart.' (5)

When the king heard these pleasant and favourable words, he felt very fortunate and exhilarated. He held the feet of the hermit and prayed to him in many ways (i.e. devotedly and faithfully, to express his gratitude and devotion for his benefactor)¹. (6)

[Note—¹Here we see that the king has totally surrendered himself before the cunning hermit—by his actions, mind and emotions, as is evident in his (i) holding the hermit's feet, (ii) feeling exhilarated, and (iii) praying to him with devotion.]

कृपासिंधु मुनि दरसन तोरें । चारि पदारथ करतल मोरें ॥ ७ ॥

प्रभुहि तथापि प्रसन्न बिलोकी । मागि अगम बर होउँ असोकी ॥ ८ ॥

krpāsindhu muni darasana tōrēm. cāri padāratha karatala mōrēm. 7.
prabhuhi tathāpi prasanna bilōkī. māgi agama bara hō'um' asōkī. 8.

The king prayed, 'Oh sage who is an ocean of mercy, kindness and grace! By having had the good fortune of seeing your holiness I feel that all the four fruits that come to meritorious persons¹ have come in my hands. [Say, what more would I want!] (7)

But still oh my lord, since you are so pleased with me I beg your leave to ask for a boon that is very difficult to obtain². (8)

[Note—¹The four great fruits that come to a person for meritorious life are the following—(i) Artha—wealth and prosperity; (ii) Dharma—credit that comes with righteousness and auspiciousness; (iii) Kaam—fulfillment of all desires; and (iv) Moksha—liberation and deliverance of the soul; emancipation and salvation at the time of death.

²The king decided that he has got one rare god-sent chance to fulfill his unfulfilled desires which he would express in the next verse, and he did not want to miss this golden opportunity. By all that the hermit told him about himself—about his transcendental knowledge, about his doing great Tapa and about living like an immortal being—the king was convinced that this hermit indeed has the mystical ability to grant him what is virtually impossible to attain. And since the offer of granting boons came from the hermit himself, the king felt sure that he was too willing to grant whatever the king would ask for.

The king thought that he would be foolish for him to let go of this chance.]

दो०. जरा मरन दुख रहित तनु समर जितै जनि कोउ ।

एकछत्र रिपुहीन महि राज कल्प सत होउ ॥ १६४ ॥

dōhā.

jarā marana dukha rahita tanu samara jitai jani kō'u.
ēkachatra ripuhīna mahi rāja kalapa sata hō'u. 164.

[The king now makes his request in one breath, without a pause.] 'Let my body be free from the pains and misery associated with old age and death; let no one defeat me in battle; let me have sole sovereignty of the whole world (i.e. let my reign be unopposed and unchallenged, and let me be a sole monarch of the whole world); let there be no enemy of mine on this earth; and let my reign last for a hundred Kalpas¹.'* (Doha no. 164)

[Note—(a) 1 Kalpa = It is equivalent to 1 day in the creator Brahma's total life span of 100 years. Each Kalpa consists of 1000 four-Yug cycles, called the 'Chatur Yugs'. The visible creation's one life-span consisting of this four-Yug cycle called the 'Chatur Yugs' is this one day of Brahma. At the end of this Chatur Yug, there would be dissolution or the so-called 'dooms-day' when everything would be submerged in water. Then the next phase of life consisting of the next four-Yug cycle would start.

Each Kalpa (i.e. 1 day of Brahma's life) is also divided into 14 *Manvantars*, and each such Manvantars is ruled by one Manu, the first male. Therefore, 1 Manu rules over 71.42 (1000/4) four-Yug cycles.

We are now passing through the 51st year of Brahma's life, and our present Kaliyug belongs to the 7th Manvantar out of the 14 Manvantars, and its Manu is called Vaivasvata, and it is 28th Kaliyug of the four-Yug cycle.

In human years, 1 Kalpa is equivalent to 4.32 billion (4.32×10^9) years.

To wit, the king wanted that he should rule for virtually an eternity! When he discovered that his host, the hermit, had himself lived for eternity by the virtue of the great magical powers of Tapa that he said he did, the king became greedy and thought that here was an opportunity for him to acquire 'a life of eternity' without having to undertake the stress of doing Tapa. He must have sat on the edge of his seat and trembling with excitement at this fantastic prospect. And the fraudster hermit must surely have read the expression on the king's face that revealed his eagerness and willingness to do anything the former asked him to do if it would fulfill his outlandish desires. So the preying hermit must have smiled within himself that his trick is working perfectly and having the desired effect on his victim.

*The king was so excited that he asked for so many boons in one breath; he did not want to pause and lose time for the fear that the hermit may say 'granted' even before all that he wanted to say was complete.

The king was very wise. He thought that in case the hermit would say that he can grant only one boon, the king asked for protection from the fear of death and old age as the first request. He guessed that this boon was surely within the reach of the hermit to grant as he himself has conquered death and old age by his own admission—refer: Doha no. 162 herein above.

So in case the hermit refused or was unable to grant the rest of the boons, then at least the king thought that he will be free from death.

Then he did not lose a breath in asking for the boon of invincibility and sovereignty over the whole world almost for eternity. This shows how highly ambitious and greedy-for-power he was.

Another important observation about the king is that completely worldly man and had no element of spiritualism in him even in its rudimentary form, for had he been a spiritually-minded person and a devotee of the Lord God then when he had got the rare opportunity to ask for any boons that he wished to be granted, howsoever difficult they may be, he would have sought for his spiritual welfare, enhancement of his devotion for God, and for liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation of his soul. He would never have asked for worldly gains, and would never have lusted for eternal life of his body so that he could enjoy the pleasures and comforts of material things of this gross, mortal world that come in abundance to a mighty emperor that he wanted to become.

This perhaps explains why his downfall was never regretted by anyone, not even by the gods. And this is also the reason why the so-called hermit had no remorse at having misused his holy attire to defraud the king as the latter was not a spiritually inclined man, but a completely selfish and worldly man of great greed and lust for power.]

चौ०. कह तापस नृप ऐसेइ होऊ । कारन एक कठिन सुनु सोऊ ॥ १ ॥
 कालउ तुअ पद नाइहि सीसा । एक बिप्रकुल छाड़ि महीसा ॥ २ ॥
 तपबल बिप्र सदा बरिआरा । तिन्ह के कोप न कोउ रखवारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kaha tāpasa nr̥pa aisē'i hō'ū. kārana ēka kaṭhina sunu sō'ū. 1.
 kāla'u tu'a pada nā'ihī sīsā. ēka biprakula chāḍi mahīsā. 2.
 tapabala bipra sadā bari'ārā. tinha kē kōpa na kō'u rakhavārā. 3.

[The hermit told the king that it would be as he wished, but there was an obstacle in its successful implementation, so the king should know about it.]

The hermit replied to the king, ‘Oh king, it could be as you wish, but there is a certain difficult reason why its successful implementation becomes doubtful. (1)

[And what is that reason?] Even Kaal (the god of death) would bow his head before you (i.e. even ‘Death’ would obey you, and would not be able to harm you). But oh great king, there is one exception—and it is the Brahmins.

[To wit, except the Brahmins no one would be able to harm you in any way and bring about your death. So the only ones who could destroy your dreams to live for eternity and rule over the world as its sole and unopposed emperor who has no enemy to fear from are the Brahmins. Why is it so? The answer is this—] (2)

This is because the Brahmins are always superior to others in this world by the virtue of the natural powers vested in them due their doing Tapa. Hence, there is no one who can protect anyone against their wrath and curse. (3)

[Note—The hermit spoke in a very amiable and convincing way. It is true that Brahmins are deemed to be superior to others in the world by the virtue of their knowledge and spiritual way of life. So the king was all the more sure that the hermit is his guardian and benefactor who though wishing to willingly grant all that he wants also wants to warn him of the only obstacle that stands in the way of fulfillment of his wishes, so that precautionary measures can be taken. And the king felt more thankful for this sagacious advice.

Now the next question was: how to overcome this obstacle? The eager king decided that he must obey what the hermit, whom by this time he had begun to trust unquestionably and completely as his best friend and well-wisher, would advise him to do.

The hermit on his part was taking extra care not to arouse any suspicion in the mind of the king that the hermit is taking him for a ride for what he wants is impossible for even the Creator to grant, so how can a human being do so. Even the

Brahmins, who can curse and cause ruin, cannot grant anyone eternity! Besides this, the hermit wished that he alone should not be seen as the one who is to be blamed for the destruction of the career of a great king and cause ruin and suffering to the kingdom and its innocent subjects. So why not devise a device whereby the entire Brahmin community would share the blame, and unless one knows this secret history of the king meeting the hermit in the deep forest no one would ever cast aspersions on the hermit.

So the cunning hermit thought that in case his plan failed and king Pratapbhanu could not be totally ruined but escaped with minor problems caused by Brahmins, then the king would at least not harm the hermit, but would always feel obliged and grateful to him instead.

May be that the king, on his return to his capital, arrange for some huge gift or a large largesse for the hermit as an immediate reward for his benefactor, before his ruin actually happens. So it was a win-win situation for the clever hermit.]

जौं बिप्रन्ह बस करहु नरेसा । तौ तुअ बस बिधि बिष्नु महेसा ॥ ४ ॥
 चल न ब्रह्मकुल सन बरिआई । सत्य कहउँ दोउ भुजा उठाई ॥ ५ ॥
 बिप्र श्राप बिनु सुनु महिपाला । तोर नास नहिं कवनेहुँ काला ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ bipranha basa karahu narēsā. tau tu'a basa bidhi biṣṇu mahēsā. 4.
 cala na brahmakula sana bari'ā'ī. satya kaha'um̃ dō'u bhujā uṭhā'ī. 5.
 bipra śrāpa binu sunu mahipālā. tōra nāsa nahim̃ kavanēhum̃ kālā. 6.

Therefore oh king, if the Brahmins could be somehow controlled and brought under your wish (i.e. if some device can be devised by which the Brahmins could be subjugated and reined in by you) then it is certain that even the creator Lord Brahma, the protector Lord Vishnu and the concluder of creation Lord Shiva would all be yours. [To wit, if you can make the Brahmins obey you then you can also make the Gods of the Trinity obey your will.] (4)

In all sooth and without gainsay, I raise my two arms to solemnly declare the truth that it is not possible to exert any pressure and compel the Brahmin race to surrender to one's wishes and whims. (5)

So let it be known that without the curse of Brahmins, your ruin cannot happen any time, in any era, and under any circumstance.¹ (6)

[Note—¹The bait was too alluring for the rapacious king to let go so easily. Why, so thought the ambitious king who was made more greedy by the prospect of ruling over the earth as well as the heaven—now he was on the verge of conquering not only the mortal world but even superseding the three great Gods of the Trinity, what to talk of humbler gods such as the 'god of death' or the 'god of war'! Why not clinch the deal with both hands and do the bidding of this great hermit who was so willing to help, reasoned the gullible king.

And as a consequence, the 'dagger' was being sunk deeper and deeper into the king by his treacherous enemy who was disguised as a 'holy' hermit!]

consequences of offending the Brahmins only if he could subjugate them in entirety, the ministers, whom the hermit knew from his early days as an erstwhile king to be extremely wise and intelligent, would immediately smell that something was amiss, and they were sure to alert the king, who would then send his army to capture the fictitious hermit and bring him to justice.

So therefore the hermit instilled the fear of ruin and harm should the king divulge anything of his meeting with the hermit.

He also warned the king that it would be very demeaning and insulting for his own reputation, dignity and self-respect to admit that he 'got lost in the forest'. Say, what his courtiers and subjects would think of his majesty when they learn that their great king could not find his own way back to the capital and needed the help of a hermit to return!

And that, inspite of already being an emperor and ruling over interminable tracts of land on the earth, their king was still not satisfied and wanted more and still more of everything. This would not auger well for the king's reputation as it would portray him as a greedy, rapacious and selfish man who has no end to his yearnings, especially if it becomes known that he wants to subjugate the Brahmins, whom the whole society respects, so that he can become a virtual demi-god or a despotic dictator who would not tolerate anyone to oppose him.

To wit, the hermit created so much fear in the mind of the king that he would never disclose about his meeting with the hermit to anyone. See Chaupai line no. 2 herein below where the hermit has clearly warned the king of personal harm if this story is leaked.

This veil of secrecy was necessary so that the enemy-hermit could put into effect the plan he had devised in his mind to bring about the fall of king Pratapbhanu.]

चौ०. तातेँ मैँ तोहि बरजउँ राजा । कहें कथा तव परम अकाजा ॥ १ ॥

छठें श्रवन यह परत कहानी । नास तुम्हार सत्य मम बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tātēṁ mair̥m tōhi baraja'um̃ rājā. kahēṁ kathā tava parama akājā. 1.

chaṭhēṁ śravana yaha parata kahānī. nāsa tumhāra satya mama bānī. 2.

[The hermit told the king—] 'Oh king, the reason why I advise you not to disclose anything about our meeting to anyone else is that it would cause great harm to your own interests (and jeopardize the successful accomplishment of the plan by which your desires could be fulfilled).

[To wit, if you tell anyone about our meeting then it would create an obstacle in the fulfillment of your wishes, and would be against your own good. That is why I have told you earlier that if you disclose anything, then the consequences of such disclosure would be yours. So I pray that you keep quiet and maintain a discreet silence about everything—our meeting and whatever we have discussed here.¹] (1)

If any sixth ear (i.e. anyone third person other than the two of us) comes to hear of this story (of our meeting and what transpired between us), then I tell you truly that your ruin is certain². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Doha no. 165 herein above.

²Refer to the note that is appended to Doha no. 165 herein above. The hermit tried his best to bar the king from disclosing anything to anyone, not even to his trusted ministers, for the fear of certain harm. If the king had not been swept off his feet by the prospect of gaining unbridled powers and authority in this world by toeing the line of this hermit, and had been a little more scrupulous and alert than what he seemed to be at present, he wouldn't have reposted so much complete trust on a stranger as to not even disclose anything about his meeting with him to his own trusted aides and ministers, for it is an established doctrine for a king that he should not hide anything of importance from his most trusted ministers on whom his own safety and the security of the kingdom depend.

Had the king discussed this event with his trusted ministers upon his return to the capital, it is almost certain that his ruin could have been averted—for the wise ministers would have smelled a rat and started their investigation.]

यह प्रगटें अथवा द्विजश्रापा । नास तोर सुनु भानुप्रतापा ॥ ३ ॥
आन उपायँ निधन तव नाही । जौं हरि हर कोपहिं मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

yaha pragaṭēm athavā dvijaśrāpā. nāsa tōra sunu bhānupratāpā. 3.
āna upāyam' nidhana tava nāhīm. jaurm hari hara kōpahim mana māhīm. 4.

Listen oh king Bhanupratap. Your ruin will happen if either you reveal anything of this story to anyone, or due to the curse of Brahmins¹. (3)

Your death would not happen by any other means, even if the Lord Hari (Vishnu, the protector of creation) and Lord Har (Shiva, the concluder of creation) become wrathful at you. [To wit, except the two conditions—viz. (i) your disclosing our meeting to anyone else, and (ii) the Brahmins cursing you—you would be fearless, and no other power in creation could bring about your death.]² (4)

[Note—¹The hermit knew that the king would be scared out of his wits if he is convinced that his ruin can come if he discloses this story to anyone. Earlier the king was told that no one can ruin him except the Brahmins, and the king had joyously exclaimed that now he was certain that no one can harm him as he was sure the Brahmins would not cause his ruin as he was their greatest patron and protector.

So the hermit changed his tactic immediately—because he did not want anyone, especially the Brahmins, to know beforehand what he had planned to do. We shall learn gradually that the hermit had planned a dirty scheme whereby he would get the Brahmins to curse the king to get ruined and become a demon. And to give effect to this plan it was essential that the Brahmins did not know that the horrible mischief that was about to happen was not the creation of the king to defile their religious beliefs or make them do something that is evil and sinful for Brahmins. But if this story was disclosed before the mischief actually happened, then the Brahmins would be alerted as to the real culprit, and then they would curse this hermit instead of the king. Obviously the hermit would not want this to occur. So he virtually threatened the king with ruin if he told anyone about what transpired at the hermitage.

²It is to be noted here that the hermit has cleverly omitted 'Brahma, the creator', who is the first of the Trinity of Gods, when he names Vishnu and Shiva who would not be able to harm the king. This is because of two reasons—(i) the Brahmins represent Brahma, and in fact they derive their name from the word 'Brahma', and he has already said that Brahmins can cause the king's ruin and downfall if they so wish and curse him; and (ii) Brahma is the patriarch of creation, the Father of creation, and hence the senior-most God, so his most exalted stature must not be compromised for selfish interests of mortals—for after all, no matter how much the hermit was burning with the fire of revenge upon the king, he himself feared the wrath of the supreme Creator if he dared to insult him by implying that the mortal king was superior to the Creator himself because he would be immune to the Creator's writ.

Since the Brahmins represent the creator Brahma, so it is why there is no one to supersede them. It is said that those who cannot be killed by the fierce weapon of Indra, the king of the Gods, or the death-baton of Kaal, the god of death, or by the discus of Lord Vishnu—even such powerful and invincible ones are reduced ashes by the fire of wrath of Brahmins. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 109 which expressly endorses this view.]

सत्य नाथ पद गहि नृप भाषा । द्विज गुर कोप कहहु को राखा ॥ ५ ॥
राखइ गुर जौ कोप बिधाता । गुर बिरोध नहिं कोउ जग त्राता ॥ ६ ॥

satya nātha pada gahi nrpa bhāṣā. dvija gura kōpa kahahu kō rākhā. 5.
rākha'i gura jaum kōpa bidhātā. gura birōdha nahim kō'u jaga trātā. 6.

The king reverentially held the feet of the hermit and said, 'Oh lord, what you say is indeed the truth. Who can protect one against the wrath of Brahmins and the Guru (moral preceptor and spiritual guide)¹. (5)

If the creator Brahma becomes angry at someone then his Guru can provide protection to him against Brahma's wrath. But if the Guru himself becomes angry or annoyed due to some reason, then say who in this creation can provide solace and succour to anyone against his Guru?

[To wit, the Guru can protect his disciple from any harm even if the creator himself becomes angry at him, but if the Guru is offended for any reason then there is no succour or solace to be found from any quarter anywhere in this world.] (6)

[Note—¹The king was so much awed by the hermit's grandiose talk and got so influenced by him that he regarded the latter as his 'Guru'. This is clearly hinted in the pervious verses where we read that the king has submitted himself unconditionally before the hermit. Refer especially to Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 160; Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 161; Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 162; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 163; Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 164; and Doha no. 167 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

जौ न चलब हम कहे तुम्हारे । होउ नास नहिं सोच हमारे ॥ ७ ॥

एकहिं डर डरपत मन मोरा । प्रभु महिदेव श्राप अति घोरा ॥ ८ ॥

jaum̐ na calaba hama kahē tumhārēm̐. hō'u nāsa nahim̐ sōca hamārēm̐. 7.
ēkahim̐ ḍara ḍarapata mana mōrā. prabhu mahidēva śrāpa ati ghōrā. 8.

So therefore, if I do not follow your instructions and do as you tell me, then I shall not regret if any harm or ruin comes to me from any quarter. [To wit, I promise you that will fully obey your commands like a faithful follower.] (7)

But oh lord, there is now but only one fear that is tormenting my heart and mind, and it is that the curse of Brahmins is very fierce.

[To wit, by your grace I have now nothing to fear from anyone because since I have decided to treat you as my Guru, I am sure that even Brahma would not be able to harm me. But my only fear is from the curse of Brahmins, for which there seems to be no remedy.] (8)

दो०. होहिं बिप्र बस कवन बिधि कहहु कृपा करि सोउ ।
तुम्ह तजि दीनदयाल निज हितू न देखउँ कोउ ॥ १६६ ॥

dōhā.

hōhim̐ bipra basa kavana bidhi kahahu kṛpā kari sō'u.
tumha taji dīnadayāla nija hitū na dēkha'um̐ kō'u. 166.

Hence, oh lord, please be kind enough to tell me how the Brahmins can be brought under my control and how I can prevail upon them.

For oh lord, I do not see anyone else who would think for my good and welfare more than you.¹ (Doha no. 166)

[Note—¹This Doha clearly shows that the king has become completely subdued by the pretentious hermit. He has become subservient to the hermit in his selfishness to rule over the world unopposed. The lesson we get here is often times one's greed and selfish ambitions lands one in such grave and dire situations that one's wisdom and prudence are eclipsed, one lets down one's guard, and allows oneself to fall prey to circumstances that could well have been avoided with a little astuteness, a little alertness and a little application of mind.

To wit, a person whose desires don't end will some day find himself in a difficult situation that would only cause him misery and pain.]

चौ०. सुनु नृप बिबिध जतन जग माहीं । कष्टसाध्य पुनि होहिं कि नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
अहड़ एक अति सुगम उपाई । तहाँ परंतु एक कठिनाई ॥ २ ॥
मम आधीन जुगुति नृप सोई । मोर जाब तव नगर न होई ॥ ३ ॥
आजु लगे अरु जब ते भयऊँ । काहू के गृह ग्राम न गयऊँ ॥ ४ ॥
जौ न जाऊँ तव होइ अकाजू । बना आइ असमंजस आजू ॥ ५ ॥

caupā'ī.

sunu nr̥pa bibidha jatana jaga m̥hīm. kaṣṭasādhyā puni hōhīm ki nāhīm. 1.
 aha'i ēka ati sugama upā'ī. tahām̥ parantu ēka kaṭhinā'ī. 2.
 mama ādhīna juguti nr̥pa sō'ī. mōra jāba tava nagara na hō'ī. 3.
 āju lagēm aru jaba tēm bhaya'ūm̥. kāhū kē gṛha grāma na gaya'ūm̥. 4.
 jaur̥m na jā'ūm̥ tava hō'i akājū. banā ā'i asaman̥jasa ājū. 5.

[The hermit now decided that it was the right time to roll out his plan which would bring about ruin of his arch enemy who was now firmly in his grip. So he replied to the king—] ‘Listen king. There are many ways in this world (by which what you desire can be achieved), but while on the one hand they are difficult to implement, it is also not certain whether the desired result can be obtained by pursuing them. (1)

However, there is one simple and easy way out, but even in this device there is one great difficulty. (2)

Oh king! This easy device is known only to me, and it is me alone who can put it into effect. But the only problem is that it is not possible for me to go to your capital city. (3)

The reason is till this day, ever since I was born and have been living in this hermitage, I have never gone out to visit any village or anyone’s home. (4)

But if I do not go to your place it would mean that your future good would suffer. It’s surely a very piquant situation, and it has left me in a grave dilemma¹.’ (5)

[Note—¹The enemy-hermit pretends to be a great friend, well-wisher and benefactor of the unsuspecting king. He in effect tells the king that the only thing that separates the king and the fulfillment of his desires is the reluctance of the hermit, whom by now the king has begun to treat as his Guru and true friend, to go to his capital so that the method by which the king would achieve what he wants can be put into effect. This was a clever ploy to prevail upon the king that things should be managed in such a way that the identity of the hermit could be kept a top secret. The hermit knew that if he accompanied the king to the capital, or even if he went alone after the king had returned and the king showed acquaintance with him, he would certainly draw immense attention from all quarters, and it is almost certain that one of the wise ministers or captains of the king’s army would recognize him as an erstwhile king who was defeated once by Pratapbhanu, and who ran away from the battle-field to avoid being captured. Oh no, this risk is not acceptable. So the hermit did not like to go to the capital openly.

First the hermit says that he could help the king achieve his objective of ruling unopposed in the world for eternity and also being able to have sway over the pious Brahmins and make them all obey his wishes. But for that it is necessary that he visit the king’s capital as the way to do it was known only to him, and he cannot go as it would make him break his vows of not going to any village or home throughout life like a true ascetic who should not.

Then the hermit immediately realized his error—that should the king decide it would not be proper to compel his Guru to break his vows to achieve selfish ends, then all the planning that the hermit had meticulously done so far would come crumbling like a pack of cards.

Hence the cunning fellow instantly changed track and showed his willingness to help the king, for whom he pretended to have developed a great liking, if some way could be devised by which he can remain incognito and anonymous while implementing the plan by which the king's desires could be fulfilled. This strategy would help the enemy-hermit to escape detection and capture.

He was sure that the king, who was bent to fulfill his wants by any means, would go to any length to realize his dreams, and so he will make sure that the hermit could remain secret during his visit to the capital.]

सुनि महीस बोलेउ मृदु बानी । नाथ निगम असि नीति बखानी ॥ ६ ॥
बड़े सनेह लघुन्ह पर करहीं । गिरि निज सिरनि सदा तृन धरहीं ॥ ७ ॥
जलधि अगाध मौलि बह फेनू । संतत धरनि धरत सिर रेनू ॥ ८ ॥

sunī mahīsa bōlē'u mṛḍu bānī. nātha nigama asi nīti bakhānī. 6.

baṛē sanēha laghunha para karahīm. giri nija sirani sadā tṛna dharahīm. 7.

jaladhi agādha mauli baha phēnū. santata dharani dharata sira rēnū. 8.

[The hermit had guessed it right, for the king now began earnestly beseeching him to endure some sufferance for the welfare of his disciple. It would be a noble deed on the part of the hermit, said the king, as great and pious souls willingly undergo hardship if it brings happiness and good to others. So the hermit should overcome his reluctance and help the king.]

Hearing what the hermit said, the king pleaded with him with a sweet and pleasant voice, 'Oh lord. The Vedas (scriptures) have praised the maxim [6] that those who are senior and great ought to show kindness to those who are junior and subordinate to them. For instance, great and majestic mountains always cheerfully bear countless humble twigs or blades of grass on their summits [7]. (6-7)

Similarly, the vast and fathomless ocean always allows the foam to flow easily over its surface.

The great earth too bears dust particles on its head (i.e. on its surface).' (8)

[Note—The king was alarmed when he felt that the magic pot was slipping from his hand, for if the hermit refused to go to his capital then his dreams of attaining eternal sovereignty over one and all would fail miserably. So he virtually bent over backwards and employed the best of skills at pleading he could muster at the moment to somehow prevail upon the hermit to overcome his reluctance to come to the king's capital and complete the rituals that he alone could do.

So the king was extremely polite because at this juncture he could not force the hermit to do anything against the latter's wishes. The king guessed that if he managed to evoke the natural kindness and graciousness that was present in the hermit's heart then there are fair chances that the hermit would agree to suffer a little for the larger good of his devoted disciple.

This is why the king invoked the Vedas as it would be difficult to contradict what they proclaim. Then he also cited some obvious examples to drive home the point that great men do not hesitate to suffer a bit if this sufferance would bring

happiness and good to others. It would be a charitable deed on the part of the hermit to ensure the king's better future.

Saying this, the king fell at the hermit's feet and clasped it so that the hermit wouldn't gather courage to say 'no' as we will read in the following Doha.]

दो०. अस कहि गहे नरेस पद स्वामी होहु कृपाल ।
मोहि लागि दुख सहिअ प्रभु सज्जन दीनदयाल ॥ १६७ ॥

dōhā.

asa kahi gahē narēsa pada svāmī hōhu kṛpāla.
mōhi lāgi dukha sahi'a prabhu sajjana dīnadayāla. 167.

Saying this, the king fell at the hermit's feet and clasped them. He pleaded, 'Oh lord, please show kindness and grace upon me; please have pity on me. Please endure a little sufferance for my sake as you are very gentlemanly (sajjana) as well as kind and gracious towards those who are miserable and in a pitiable situation (like me) (dīnadayāla)'. (Doha no. 167)

[Note—We will note how a selfish and rapacious person falls from grace, sacrifices his stature and self-respect, and compromises his dignity and honour in order to achieve his goals and satisfy his never-ending greed.

This king was not an ordinary king—for he was already an emperor who had conquered countless kings and extended his domain to virtually cover the entire length and breadth of the earth; he had all that a king would normally want to have. His kingdom was great; he had renown as being a righteous and meritorious king; his subjects were happy and prosperous; his writ prevailed everywhere. Refer: Doha no. 153—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 156.

But still he was not contented! He now wanted to supersede even the Trinity Gods, to overcome the Laws of Nature, and to attain eternity which even the creator Brahma does not have as his life also has an end. So when the hermit promised the impossible to him the king virtually started salivating. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 165.

So therefore, when the king found that as simple an obstacle as a hermit's vows that he would not visit any city or a household—a vow that seemed utterly frivolous, ridiculous and obsolete to the king who was accustomed to material comforts and sensual pleasures of the world, and who was surrounded by submissive priests who lived a comfortable life of material comfort relying solely on the king's largesse, never once talking of renunciation and dispassion—stood between the success and failure of his goals, he was utterly flabbergasted and disgusted. He decided he must somehow prevail upon the hermit to fulfill his wishes, no matter what.

But he also feared the hermit's wrath, so preferred to take a soft approach rather than using a king's usual method of insisting that his orders be carried out either by the fear of punishment or by the bait of a grand reward.]

चौ०. जानि नृपहि आपन आधीना । बोला तापस कपट प्रबीना ॥ १ ॥

सत्य कहउँ भूपति सुनु तोही । जग नाहिन दुर्लभ कछु मोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāni nr̥pahi āpana ādhīnā. bōlā tāpasa kapaṭa prabīnā. 1.

satya kaha'um̃ bhūpati sunu tōhī. jaga nāhina durlabha kachu mōhī. 2.

When the hermit, who was expert in conceit, deceit and pretensions, became absolutely sure that the king had come completely under his influence, he said, --- (1)

'Listen oh king. I tell you the truth that there is nothing in this world that is not possible for me'. (2)

[Note—¹The hermit has already said that he can do the impossible by the virtue of the powers that Tapa has granted him—refer Doha no. 162 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

He repeats his stupendous abilities here once again to refresh the king's memory and make him more submissive and devoted, as well as to prepare the king mentally to believe that the seemingly incredulous magical feat the hermit would propose in a moment can actually be done successfully and desired fruits obtained.]

अवसि काज मैं करिहउँ तोरा । मन तन बचन भगत तैं मोरा ॥ ३ ॥

जोग जुगुति तप मंत्र प्रभाऊ । फलइ तबहिं जब करिअ दुराऊ ॥ ४ ॥

avasi kāja mair̃ kariha'um̃ tōrā. mana tana bacana bhagata tair̃ mōrā. 3.

jōga juguti tapa mantra prabhā'ū. phala'i tabahir̃ jaba kari'a durā'ū. 4.

I (hermit) will certainly do the work for you as you are my devoted follower and an ardent devotee by your Mana (heart and mind), by your body (deeds and actions) and by your words (by what you say; by the words that express your inner feeling for me)¹. (3)

But mind you—Yoga (meditation), Yukti (clever planning, means and ways, and proper devices employed to achieve success in any secret endeavour), Tapa (austerity and penance) and Mantra (divine esoteric formulas that grant mystical powers) bear fruit only when they are kept secret.

[To wit, if you indeed want success then you must vow to keep secret what I am about to divulge presently, as it involves certain magical charms and esoteric rituals that needed to be done so as to cast a mystical spell upon the objects that are needed to be tamed, in this case the Brahmins.]² (4)

[Note—¹The king had become so overwhelmed by the hermit's holy attire and pious talk that he had submitted himself completely to the latter and thought himself to be extremely lucky to have discovered a great sage. The clever hermit had adroitly observed this quite early during the meeting: Refer to (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 161, and again to (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 162.

²Not wanting to take any risk caused by revelation of his identity and evil designs, and thereby putting to grave peril his own security and life, the evil hermit continues to harp on the importance and the necessity of complete secrecy of the plan and its implementation.]

जौं नरेस में करौं रसोई । तुम्ह परसहु मोहि जान न कोई ॥ ५ ॥
 अन्न सो जोड़ जोड़ भोजन करई । सोड़ सोड़ तव आयसु अनुसरई ॥ ६ ॥
 पुनि तिन्ह के गृह जेवँइ जोऊ । तव बस होइ भूप सुनु सोऊ ॥ ७ ॥
 जाइ उपाय रचहु नृप एहू । संबत भरि संकल्प करेहू ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ narēsa maim̐ karaum̐ rasō'ī. tumha parusahu mōhi jāna na kō'ī. 5.
 anna sō jō'i jō'i bhōjana kara'ī. sō'i sō'i tava āyasu anusara'ī. 6.
 puni tinha kē gr̥ha jēvam̐ jō'ū. tava basa hō'i bhūpa sunu sō'ū. 7.
 jā'i upāya racahu nr̥pa ēhū. sambata bhari saṅkalapa karēhū. 8.

[And finally the hermit reveals to the king the formidable and monster plan. He said assertively—] If I prepare and cook the meal for a grand feast that you are required to organize for all the Brahmins, and you serve this food yourself to the invited guests (the Brahmins) without anyone knowing that the food has been cooked by me, --- (5)

--- Then all those who partake of this food will become unquestionably obedient to you; they would obey your commands without reservations, become totally subservient to you, and be under your full sovereignty. (6)

Listen oh king. Not only this, but all those who would subsequently eat food in the homes of such guests whom you would have served in the feast too would come under your spell and command, and this chain would go on expanding and getting wider in an exponential manner to eventually cover the entire Brahmin race! (7)

So, oh king, go and make haste to carry out this magical device. And make sure that you take a vow that such feasts would be organized on a regular basis for one full year. (8)

[Note—The credulous king obviously had lost all his wits in his zeal to accomplish the impossible. Couldn't he logically think how a hermit, who has lived all his life in the forest subsisting on forest produce and lean and simple food, would be skilled enough to cook delicious fare for a grand royal feast where thousands of guests would be fed—not for one day but for a whole year.

Would that not mean that the hermit would not be able to attend to his routine of spiritual practices for this long period of time? No matter how nice and obliging the hermit may be, but this proposition of abstaining from his religious practices for one full year just for the sake of a king ought to be absolutely unacceptable and ridiculous for any good hermit to even contemplate. Wasn't there something fishy in the whole matter?

But what to say—destiny's writ is so strong and blinding that the wisest and the cleverest fall in the trap as if a piece of iron is being pulled by an invisible magnet.]

दो०. नित नूतन द्विज सहस सत बरेहु सहित परिवार ।
मैं तुम्हरे संकल्प लागि दिनहिं करबि जेवनार ॥ १६८ ॥

dōhā.

nita nūtana dvija sahasa sata barēhu sahita parivāra.
mair̥ tumharē saṅkalapa lagi dinahim̥ karabi jēvanāra. 168.

Everyday you must invite a hundred thousand Brahmins with their families! I will personally prepare the food daily that you would serve the guests for one full year. (Doha no. 168)

[Note—The hermit knew fully well that all that he proposes to do is absurd and ridiculous to the extreme. If the number of Brahmins he said the king must feed daily extends for a year then it does not need a mathematician to calculate after all the Brahmins who live on this earth would have partaken of the food in one round would be invited repeatedly again and again. What after all is the use of this futile exercise if one meal is enough to cast a magical spell on the Brahmins, especially if all those who eat in the household of the Brahmin who has already eaten the king's food at the feast would also come under the king's spell?

It seems extraordinarily superfluous and extravagantly unnecessary. But still the greedy and deluded king could not see the trap laid out for him!]

चौ०. एहि बिधि भूप कष्ट अति थोरें । होइहहिं सकल बिप्र बस तोरें ॥ १ ॥
करिहहिं बिप्र होम मख सेवा । तेहिं प्रसंग सहजेहिं बस देवा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi bhūpa kaṣṭa ati thōrēm̥. hō'ihahim̥ sakala bipra basa tōrēm̥. 1.
karihahim̥ bipra hōma makha sēvā. tēhim̥ prasaṅga sahajēhim̥ basa dēvā. 2.

'Oh king, in this easy way and with the least of trouble all the Brahmins would come under your spell. (1)

The Gods, in turn, would easily come under your sway by the virtue of the various 'Sewas' (services) that these Brahmins offer to them, such as doing 'Homa' (offerings meant for the Gods that the Brahmins make to the sacred fire during sacrifices), and 'Makha' (fire sacrifice rituals)¹. (2)

[Note—¹The offerings that are made to the sacred fire during sacrifices are meant for the Gods as they derive their nourishment and strength from the food that are offered during such rituals.

It has already been assured by the hermit in Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 168 herein above that "all those who eat in the households of Brahmins who were fed by the king during the grand feast that is being planned in order to cast a spell of magical charm upon the Brahmins and bring them all under the will of the

king, would also become obedient to him, and this chain would continue so that ultimately the entire Brahmin race would be under the king's magical charm".

So therefore it is logical that the food which the Brahmins, who have already eaten the magically charmed food at the king's feast and have come under his spell, prepare in their homes and then offer such food to the Gods via the medium of the fire sacrifices that they do would also bring the Gods who partake this magically charmed food to come under its effect, which means that they would also become obedient to the king just like the other Brahmins who happen to eat this food.

It indeed is a fantastically clever idea that is wonderfully planned and proposed to be executed in a masterly fashion aimed to bring both the Brahmins and the Gods under the tutelage of the king at one stroke. No wonder than that the king was awe-struck at the ingenuity of the hermit! Anyone in his place would have marveled at the hermit's stupendous intellect and astounding genius at being able to devise such a flawless device as so short a notice.]

और एक तोहि कहउँ लखाऊ । मैं एहिं बेष न आउब काऊ ॥ ३ ॥
 तुम्हरे उपरोहित कहूँ राया । हरि आनब मैं करि निज माया ॥ ४ ॥
 तपबल तेहि करि आपु समाना । रखिहउँ इहाँ बरष परवाना ॥ ५ ॥
 मैं धरि तासु बेषु सुनु राजा । सब बिधि तोर सँवारब काजा ॥ ६ ॥

aura ēka tōhi kaha'um' lakhā'ū. mair̥m ēhir̥m bēṣa na ā'uba kā'ū. 3.
 tumharē uparōhita kahum' rāyā. hari ānaba mair̥m kari nija māyā. 4.
 tapabala tēhi kari āpu samānā. rakhiha'um' ihām' barāṣa paravānā. 5.
 mair̥m dhari tāsu bēṣu sunu rājā. saba bidhi tōra sam'vāraba kājā. 6.

[I shall now tell you another important secret.] (Since) I will never come to your place to accomplish your objective in my present form (as I have already told you that my identity should be kept completely secret), so I give you a sign or a hint (by which you would be able to recognize me). (3)

Oh king, I shall carry-off your family priest by the virtue of my magical powers (nija māyā). (4)

Employing the mystical powers that I possess by the virtue of my Tapa, I shall keep him here in this hermitage disguised as myself during the whole year (while I would be at your place to keep my promise to you and carry on with my obligations of preparing the magical food to be served at the feast). [To wit, by this ruse no one will doubt or become suspicious of anything. Should any secret agent come to enquire here at my hermitage, he will find the dummy hermit here and become assured that everything is alright. And since your priest would be under the spell of my charm he too would be so much deluded that he wouldn't ever know who he actually is or anything about his changed circumstances.] (5)

I will assume his (your priest's) form and fulfill all your desires in every possible way. [The people will think that it is your own family priest who has advised you to undertake this grand and novel exercise. It is he who is overseeing the entire process, right from organizing the feast, inviting Brahmins, preparing food, and serving it to

the guests. No one would doubt anything, and you will have nothing to fear. I too will be able to carry out my plans with a free hand.] (6)

गै निसि बहुत सयन अब कीजे । मोहि तोहि भूप भेंट दिन तीजे ॥ ७ ॥
मैं तपबल तोहि तुरग समेता । पहुँचैहउँ सोवतहि निकेता ॥ ८ ॥

gai nisi bahuta sayana aba kījē. mōhi tōhi bhūpa bhēṅṭa dina tijē. 7.
mair̥m tapabala tōhi turaga samētā. pahum̐cāiha'um̐ sōvatahi nikētā. 8.

It is now quite late in the night, so go and sleep. Oh king, I shall meet you three days from now¹. (7)

While you would be asleep, I shall employ the magical powers that I have got by the virtue of my Tapa and convey you and your horse to your home (even without waking you up from your sleep). (8)

[Note—¹The hermit did not want to show that he was in any great hurry. The king must be given due time to rest and think. After all that had happened during the course of that day, the king would be too upset and weary to act in a proper way if the entire plan was to be rolled out the very next day. It will also create suspicion in the mind of the king's ministers etc. who, in all probability, must be in great anxiety and alarmed beyond measure when they failed to follow the king and had lost track of him as he was running behind the game during the hunt. Surely they would be searching for the king in the forest the entire next day of the hunt.

When the hermit would transport the king back home by some magical means he plans to employ about which we shall read in a moment, the good news that the king has returned unharmed would spread immediately. And by-and-by the search party would come to know of it and return to the capital by the end of the day or the next day.

Everyone will think that after hotly pursuing the game and slaying it in some distant part of the forest, the king had returned home late in the night and sneaked in. It would seem absolutely okay as great kings would often go out in disguise and in a surreptitious manner to find out how the things were going on in the kingdom and what the condition of its citizens was. This is because they wanted to take stock of the situation first hand without relying blindly upon their informers and spies.

So the next one day or two would be spent in this way. By the third day however, the things would settle down to normal. This is why the hermit chose the 'third day' to carry out the plan.]

दो०. मैं आउब सोइ बेषु धरि पहिचानेहु तब मोहि ।
जब एकांत बोलाइ सब कथा सुनावीं तोहि ॥ १६९ ॥

dōhā.

mair̥m ā'uba sō'i bēṣu dhari pahicānēhu taba mōhi.
jaba ēkānta bōlā'i saba kathā sunāvaur̥m tōhi. 169.

Now remember, I shall come there in the disguise I have told you about (i.e. as your royal priest). So you must recognize me when I call you for a private meeting and narrate this entire story for your recollection¹. (Doha no. 169)

[Note—¹How will the king know whether or not the priest to whom he is talking in his capital is his benefactor hermit? It will be when the hermit, who would be disguised as the royal priest, tells the king all that had transpired in the hermitage in the forest. Then the king would immediately know who the priest actually was, and then he must obey what is commanded to him to do.]

चौ०. सयन कीन्ह नृप आयसु मानी । आसन जाइ बैठ छलग्यानी ॥ १ ॥
श्रमित भूप निद्रा अति आई । सो किमि सोव सोच अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

sayana kīnha nṛpa āyasu mānī. āsana jā'i baiṭha chalagyānī. 1.
śramita bhūpa nidrā ati ā'ī. sō kimi sōva sōca adhikā'ī. 2.

The king obeyed the hermit's orders and went to sleep, while the deceitful and fraudulent hermit, who pretended to be all-knowing and possessing mystical powers, went and sat down on his seat¹. (1)

The king was very tired, so he immediately fell asleep. But how could the hermit sleep as his mind was very busy with thoughts². (2)

[Note—¹The false hermit was extra cautious. He thought that the king may pretend to sleep but might be watching what the hermit does for the rest of the night. Since the hermit had given the impression that he does a lot of Tapa, he thought that it would be wise to go and sit on his seat and pretend to be doing meditation.

Besides this, he did not want to sleep just to ensure that the king did not get up quietly and slip away in the dead of night. It would bring every thing that the hermit had planned coming down with a crash. And he also did not want to sleep for the fear that the king might have seen through the veil of deceit and would get up quietly and kill the hermit by his sword.

²This is the fourth reason why the hermit did not go to sleep. His mind was too occupied with thoughts and plans that sleep defied him. His arch enemy was right in his front, sleeping soundly and unarmed. Should he stab him here and now? No, that would destroy the bigger plan. He wanted the entire family of king Pratapbhanu to be destroyed, and so if he killed the king alone now then the rest of them will remain alive, and one day they will surely spy him out and then torture him to death.

So the hermit sat and contemplated.]

कालकेतु निसिचर तहँ आवा । जेहिं सूकर होइ नृपहि भुलावा ॥ ३ ॥

परम मित्र तापस नृप केरा । जानइ सो अति कपट घनेरा ॥ ४ ॥

kālakētu nīsicara taham'āvā. jēhim sūkara hō'i nṛpahi bhulāvā. 3.
parama mitra tāpasa nṛpa kērā. jāna'i sō ati kapaṭa ghanērā. 4.

Meanwhile, Kalketu, a demon who used to roam around during the night (kālakētu nīsicara), arrived there. It was he who had disguised himself as a wild boar to waylay the king (Pratapbhanu) and make him go astray¹. (3)

This demon had become a fast friend of the hermit, and he was skilled in deceit and carrying out magical feats of delusion. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 156—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 157.]

तेहि के सत सुत अरु दस भाई । खल अति अजय देव दुखदाई ॥ ५ ॥
प्रथमहिं भूप समर सब मारे । बिप्र संत सुर देखि दुखारे ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi kē sata suta aru dasa bhā'ī. khala ati ajaya dēva dukhadā'ī. 5.
prathamahim bhūpa samara saba mārē. bipra santa sura dēkhi dukhārē. 6.

He (the demon Kalketu) had seven sons and ten brothers. They had become invincible and used to torment the Gods a lot. (5)

When the great king Pratapbhanu saw the misery and sufferings to which the Brahmins, saints and sages as well as the Gods were subjected to by these demons, he had slayed them in the beginning of his many campaigns. [But somehow this demon Kalketu managed to escape, and he went to the dense forest to hide in it.] (6)

तेहिं खल पाछिल बयरु सँभारा । तापस नृप मिलि मंत्र बिचारा ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं रिपु छय सोइ रचेन्हि उपाऊ । भावी बस न जान कछु राऊ ॥ ८ ॥

tēhim khala pāchila bayaru sambhārā. tāpasa nṛpa mili mantra bicārā. 7.
jēhim ripu chaya sō'i racēnhi upā'ū. bhāvī basa na jāna kachu rā'ū. 8.

This wicked fellow developed hatred for the king and vowed to take revenge when the opportunity would come in due course. He forged a friendship with the hermit (who was also an enemy of king Pratapbhanu as he had been defeated in a battle and had managed to escape to the forest where he hid in the guise of a hermit).

Both of them (i.e. the demon Kalketu whose family members were killed by Pratapbhanu, and the erstwhile king who was defeated in battle and whose kingdom was snatched by Pratapbhanu, and who now lived in disguise as a hermit) hatched a conspiracy by which a plan was contrived to bring about complete ruin of their common enemy (i.e. king Pratapbhanu).

But unfortunately due to the fiat of fate, the king was totally unaware of this wicked plot and the identity of the perpetrators of this sinister conspiracy. (7-8)

दो०. रिपु तेजसी अकेल अपि लघु करि गनिअ न ताहु ।
अजहुँ देत दुख रबि ससिहि सिर अवसेषित राहु ॥ १७० ॥
dōhā.

ripu tējasī akēla api laghu kari gani'a na tāhu.
ajahum̐ dēta dukha rabi sasihi sira avasēṣita rāhu. 170.

[The sagacious and erudite poet-saint Tulsidas, the author of this classic Ram Charit Manas, cites a well established maxim which states that—] One must not underestimate and take lightly a powerful enemy even though he may be alone (at the time due to certain circumstances)¹.

For instance, the demon Rahu, who has nothing left out of his body except his head, is able to perpetually torment both the Sun and the Moon by devouring them periodically (inspite of being fully aware that he cannot permanently harm them in any way as they would soon emerge from the severed part of his neck)². (Doha no. 170)

[Note—¹King Pratapbhanu was so over-confident of his own invincibility, of his strength, powers and authority that at the time the defeated king as well as the defeated demon ran away from his clutches he had not searched them out and take them into his custody or had completely eliminated them because he thought that they wouldn't be of any consequence in the future, and they would not dare and would not be able to cause him any harm whatsoever. So he paid no attention to the escapees. Little did he know at the time that these two seemingly impotent enemies who had been completely routed, and hence rendered toothless and harmless as they had no support of arms or an army, would one day prove to be his nemesis and the cause of his ruin.

Had the king been wise he would have hunted them down and put them into a prison. To the message is that even the smallest and seemingly harmless enemy is dangerous and he should never be taken lightly, nor should his sweet words be taken at face value. Even if an enemy can't do much harm to his adversary he can still be a cause of incessant problems and constant harassment that is more irritating than an outright confrontation. It's like something of a skin affection that causes constant irritation and incessant annoyance even if it is not life-threatening.

²The demon Rahu had his head severed from his neck by Lord Vishnu's discus when he had tried to cheat on the Gods by disguising himself as one of them and sitting surreptitiously between the Sun God and the Moon God when the Amrit, the nectar of immortality, was being distributed at the time when it was produced by the legendary 'churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons'. The Sun and the Moon discovered his deceit and they warned Lord Vishnu who cut off Rahu's head, but by that time a drop of Amrit had fell in his head. So he couldn't be killed.

The Creator then found a way out so that Rahu may survive inspite of being decapitated. He told him that once in a while he would be able to devour one of the Gods as a retribution for what has been done to him. Since the cause of this

misfortune that befell Rahu was the Sun and the Moon gods, he took a pledge that when he felt hungry he would gobble up the rounded ball of the Sun and the Moon as a repast to feed his hunger.

So whenever Rahu feels hungry he lunges at the ball of the Moon and the Sun and swallows them into his open mouth. But soon these balls emerge from the hollow cavity of the neck from where the body of Rahu was severed. According to mythology, these two events—i.e. eating and then discharging of the Sun and the Moon by Rahu are known as the Solar and the Lunar eclipses respectively. The eclipse starts when either of the two enters Rahu's mouth, and the eclipse ends when they emerge from his severed neck.

What is implied here is that the Sun and the Moon Gods took Rahu very lightly when his head was cut off from his neck, as they thought what a decapitated enemy would ever do to them, never realizing that the same enemy, who seemed rendered impotent to cause any harm as his body was cut into two, would continue to torment them till the end of creation.

Similarly, king Pratapbhanu had thought that since he was so mighty that he had conquered all the great kings and valiant warriors of the time, a single king or demon who ran away like an impotent coward from the battle field were of no more importance than a tiny insect, and so he did not bother to waste his energy and time to pay any heed to them for he feared nothing from their quarter. And now this negligence on his part proved to be his own grave.]

चौ०. तापस नृप निज सखहि निहारी । हरषि मिलेउ उठि भयउ सुखारी ॥ १ ॥

मित्रहि कहि सब कथा सुनाई । जातुधान बोला सुख पाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tāpasa nrpa nija sakhahi nihārī. haraṣi milē'u uṭhi bhaya'u sukhārī. 1.
mitrahi kahi saba kathā sunāī. jātudhāna bōlā sukha pāī. 2.

The hermit-king saw his friend, the demon (Kalketu), arrive. So he got up and met him cheerfully, feeling very glad and accomplished. (1)

Then the hermit told him the entire story (of what had transpired between him and king Pratapbhanu). Hearing everything the demon felt very happy, and he then said—
(2)

अब साधेउँ रिपु सुनहु नरेसा । जाँ तुम्ह कीन्ह मोर उपदेसा ॥ ३ ॥

परिहरि सोच रहहु तुम्ह सोई । बिनु औषध बिआधि बिधि खोई ॥ ४ ॥

कुल समेत रिपु मूल बहाई । चौथें दिवस मिलब मैं आई ॥ ५ ॥

aba sādhe'um' ripu sunahu narēsā. jaum tumha kīnha mōra upadēsā. 3.
parihari sōca rahahu tumha sōī. binu auṣadha bi'ādhi bidhi khōī. 4.
kula samēta ripu mūla bahāī. cauthēm divasa milaba mairm āī. 5.

‘Listen king. If you do according to what I advice you then be sure that I have finally conquered our common enemy (i.e. we will now be able to destroy him without bringing any harm to our own safety). (3)

Now discard all worries and go to sleep. The Creator has become benevolent upon us and he has virtually cured the disease without any medicine! [To wit, it was not an easy thing to bring about our enemy’s destruction so easily. But it seems that the Creator has listened to our prayers as now this destruction of our arch enemy is certain, and that also by an easy method and the least effort. It’s a virtual boon for us!] (4)

After eliminating the enemy and throwing him out (ruining him) from his very roots along with his entire family, I shall come back to meet you on the fourth day.’¹ (5)

[Note—¹It is obvious by now that this demon, who had great magical powers in him as demons usually had and as proved by his becoming a wild boar earlier, was the one who would do all the nasty tricks that would culminate in king Pratapbhanu’s fall. The hermit-king played the role of laying the bait and trapping the prey, but the actual killing was done by this demon.

The hermit had told king Pratapbhanu that he would meet him on the ‘third day’. So now the demon tells him that everything would be fixed and ended on the third day itself if things go according to plan, and on the fourth day he will return to convey the good news of Pratapbhanu’s destruction to his friend, the hermit. Then it would be time to rejoice!]

तापस नृपहि बहुत परितोषी । चला महाकपटी अतिरोषी ॥ ६ ॥
 भानुप्रतापहि बाजि समेता । पहुँचाएसि छन माझ निकेता ॥ ७ ॥
 नृपहि नारि पहिं सयन कराई । हयगृहँ बाँधेसि बाजि बनाई ॥ ८ ॥

tāpasa nr̥pahi bahuta paritōṣī. calā mahākapaṭī atirōṣī. 6.
 bhānupratāpahi bāji samētā. pahum̐cā'ēsi chana mājha nikētā. 7.
 nr̥pahi nāri pahim̐ sayana karā'ī. hayagr̥ham̐ bām̐dhēsi bāji banā'ī. 8.

After having reassured the hermit in various ways¹, the angry demon (Kalketu), who was exceptionally cunning, deceitful and wicked, started on his mission with a vengeance. (6)

He (the demon) used his magical powers to convey (transport) the king and his horse to the palace almost in an instant. (7)

The king was placed at his usual place by the queen’s side, and the horse was taken to the stable and tied up properly there in the usual manner². (8)

[Note—¹The hermit was very skeptical if this master scheme of deceit and stab-in-the-back would actually succeed as he knew of the might and the intelligence of king Pratapbhanu as well as his ministers. He was apprehensive that the king may become suspicious in case the demon, who would actually carry out the plan instead of the hermit himself, made any slip or committed some error somewhere, wittingly or

unwittingly. That would be disastrous for both of them—for the king would immediately capture the demon and torture him to reveal the truth of his companion, the hermit. And then both of them would be sent to the gallows.

So it was necessary for the demon to reassure his friend, the hermit, not to worry on any count.

²It is indeed a great feat of magic that is beyond imagination. Surely the queen was asleep at the time, and the guards of the stable must be dozing. None got the hint that the king and the horse have come back all of a sudden. When we read this story of magical transportation and of the subsequent feast that was organised in the king's capital, then many of the tales from the fables of 'One Thousand and One Arabian Nights' come to the mind.]

दो०. राजा के उपरोहितहि हरि लै गयउ बहोरि ।
लै राखेसि गिरि खोह महुँ मायाँ करि मति भोरि ॥ १७१ ॥

dōhā.

rājā kē uparōhitahi hari lai gaya'u bahōri.
lai rākhēsī giri khōha mahum̃ māyām̃ kari mati bhōri. 171.

The demon carried away the king's royal priest (employing the same magical powers with which he had brought the king and his horse), and after casting a delusory spell upon the abducted priest, he hid him in a cave in the mountain. (Doha no. 171)

चौ०. आपु बिरचि उपरोहित रूपा । परेउ जाइ तेहि सेज अनूपा ॥ १ ॥
जागेउ नृप अनभाएँ बिहाना । देखि भवन अति अचरजु माना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

āpu biraci uparōhita rūpā. parē'u jā'i tēhi sēja anūpā. 1.
jāgē'u nr̥pa anabha'ēm̃ bihānā. dēkhi bhavana ati acaraju mānā. 2.

He (the demon Kalketu) disguised himself as the royal priest and went to lie down on his wonderful bed. (1)

The king woke up before dawn, and when he found himself inside the palace he was astonished beyond measure¹. (2)

[Note—¹The last thing of which the king was aware of was his being in a hermit's hermitage in the midst of a forest in the night, and of his going to sleep at the hermit's request. Then as he was very tired he immediately sank into deep sleep. But when he woke up he found himself inside his palace and lying on his own bed. It was sure to stun him and befuddle his mind. For a moment he could not bring himself to understand that what he was seeing was actually a fact and not merely a dream. It took him some time to reflect on the developments of the previous night and gather his wits sufficiently enough to have some bearing about himself and his whereabouts.]

मुनि महिमा मन महँ अनुमानी । उठेउ गवँहिं जेहिं जान न रानी ॥ ३ ॥
कानन गयउ बाजि चढ़ि तेहीं । पुर नर नारि न जानेउ केहीं ॥ ४ ॥

muni mahimā mana mahum̃ anumānī. uṭhē'u gavam̃him jēhim jāna na rānī. 3.
kānana gaya'u bāji caḍhi tēhim̃. pura nara nāri na jānē'u kēhim̃. 4.

Reflecting upon the developments the king concluded that it is due to the hermit's astounding mystical powers that this miracle could happen (that he has been transported so secretly from the hermitage in the deep forest to his palace in the capital, a distance of seventy yojans, so quickly and imperceptibly). [To wit, the awe-inspired king attributed his presence in the palace to the magical powers of the hermit whom he believed could do the most supernatural things one can hardly think of.]

So (to ensure that no one could know what had happened) he got up very quietly in such a way that the queen would have no inkling that he had come there and then gone away, and sneaked out of the palace surreptitiously. (3)

He silently picked up the same horse and secretly rode out to the forest so that no one in the city, not a single male or female citizen, could know anything of the matter¹. (4)

[Note—¹One would wonder how the king managed to go out of his palace to the stable, collect his horse, and from there go out of the city to the forest without anyone knowing anything about it.

The answer is common sense and it lies in the precautions that kings normally took as a matter of security. In the case of danger, a king had some secret route by which he would escape before the enemy could lay his hand upon him. King Pratapbhanu had gone out of the city by this route.]

गएँ जाम जुग भूपति आवा । घर घर उत्सव बाज बधावा ॥ ५ ॥
उपरोहितहि देख जब राजा । चकित बिलोक सुमिरि सोइ काजा ॥ ६ ॥

ga'ēm̃ jāma juga bhūpati āvā. ghara ghara utsava bāja badhāvā. 5.
uparōhitahi dēkha jaba rājā. cakita bilōka sumiri sō'i kājā. 6.

When it was noon time, the king returned. When the news spread of his return safely, there was mass celebration in the city as every household rejoiced with playing of music and singing of songs. (5)

When the king saw his priest he was speechless as he immediately recollected the work that was discussed between him and the hermit, and for which this priest was chosen as a medium by which it could be successfully accomplished¹. (6)

[Note—¹The king upon his safe return was met by all his anxious ministers, courtiers, commanders and citizens. Of course the royal priest was one of them. So as soon as the king's eyes fell upon this unfortunate man his mind alerted him about all that the hermit had said the previous night.

Let us not forget that the demon had abducted the original priest and replaced him with his own disguised form—refer: Doha no. 171 herein above. The demon was a master in deceit and magic, so he also knew the art of hypnotism. When the eye of the king met this decoy priest's eyes, the demon cast his deep, penetrating and hypnotic gaze upon the king to bring him under his magical spell. The deluded king thereafter acted like a puppet, meekly dancing to the tune of the crafty puppeteer!

One can very well visualize the scene of the moment—while everyone was exuberant and lively, embracing each other and thanking God for the king's safe return, and all the chief courtiers and ministers joyously milling around the king and expressing their happiness at his coming back with a smile on their cheerful faces, the priest stood quite aloof and almost emotionless even though he also attended the welcoming ceremony for the king and sported a formal smile on his otherwise somber face. No one noticed it as no one could ever doubt, even in their wildest of imaginations, about anything being amiss or any kind of fish-play, chiefly with respect to the royal high priest who was held in high esteem.

But when the eyes of the two met, i.e. of the king and the priest, some unworded and silent message was exchanged between the two of them. Even if the king felt excited for a fleeting moment and blood rushed to his cheeks, he suppressed his emotions consciously as he remembered the word of honour he had given to the hermit—which was to exercise the greatest of restraint and discretion, and keep everything top secret.]

जुग सम नृपहि गए दिन तीनी । कपटी मुनि पद रह मति लीनी ॥ ७ ॥
समय जानि उपरोहित आवा । नृपहि मते सब कहि समुझावा ॥ ८ ॥

juga sama nr̥pahi ga'ē dina tīnī. kapaṭī muni pada raha mati līnī. 7.
samaya jāni uparōhita āvā. nr̥pahi matē saba kahi samujhāvā. 8.

The king remained on tenterhooks for three days that passed (while he waited for the hermit to come and meet him), and these three days seemed to be like three Yugs for him to pass. [To wit, the three days looked like ages for the king, and the time passed so slowly for him as if three cycles of creation and destruction had passed.]

During this time the king's mind was always thinking reverentially of the hermit who pretended to be holy and pious but albeit was full of wickedness, deceit and fraud¹. (7)

When the appointed time arrived (i.e. the third day), the priest came to the king and told the king about the secret story (to signal him about his identity and to remind him about the job at hand)². (8)

[Note—¹That is why the word used for the hermit in the text is 'kapaṭī muni'—i.e. a sage or hermit who is full of wickedness, fraud, deceit and pretension.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 169 in this context where the hermit had told the king that when he would come to him and remind him about the work to be done on the third day, then the king must recognize him.]

दो०. नृप हरषेउ पहिचानि गुरु भ्रम बस रहा न चेत ।
बरे तुरत सत सहस बर बिप्र कुटुंब समेत ॥ १७२ ॥

dōhā.

nṛpa haraṣē'u pahicāni guru bhrama basa rahā na cēta.
barē turata sata sahasa bara bipra kuṭumba samēta. 172.

The king was jubilant when he recognized his Guru. He was unaware of the reality due to the veil of delusions which had been cast upon him to shroud his wisdom and make his mind and intellect become defunct so much so that even his natural instincts for prudence and self-preservation were undermined¹.

So he immediately (without due diligence and consulting his advisors) invited a hundred thousand chosen Brahmins along with their families for a meal². (Doha no. 172)

[Note—¹One very important observation can be made here. The king was driven blind by his ambitions to bring even the learned Brahmins under his sway, and through them to have control over the Gods—this was what was promised to him by the hermit. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 168 herein above. This would make him the sole and unchallenged ruler of the whole world as he desired—refer: Doha no. 164 herein above.

In his eagerness to accomplish even the impossible, the greedy king had thrown to the winds the basic principles of caution that should have warned him much early of something being wrong when the hermit had told him that “he would remove his royal priest surreptitiously using his powers of Maya or the ability of creating delusions, and sneak himself in his stead”—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 169.

The king should have thought this matter over carefully: Why would a holy and pious hermit—who is supposed to lead a life of renunciation and detachment from all worldly pursuit—adopt such wrong and deceitful ways to please someone, no matter what the motivation was? Why would a holy man cheat someone, especially when the object of such cheating was himself supposed to be a pious and holy man as the royal priest was expected to be? How can a person who practices cheating and deceit for any reason or cause be a true hermit or sage? But the king was so overwhelmed by his ambitious greed that he did not bother to pay attention to such tell-tale signs of fraud and mischief that seemed to be insignificant or inconsequential to him as long as his wishes could be fulfilled.

²On the face of it, things looked perfectly normal. The king had faced some grave misadventure when it appeared that he was all but lost in the un-chartered forest; then he returned safe and sound the next day. It was obviously a time to celebrate. In such good times great kings were accustomed to give a grand feast to feed the Brahmins and others in the kingdom. The citizens and the ministers thought that the priest was within his rights and was doing his duty to advise the king for the grand feast. So no suspicion was raised!]

चौ०. उपरोहित जेवनार बनाई । छरस चारि बिधि जसि श्रुति गाई ॥ १ ॥

मायामय तेहिं कीन्हि रसोई । बिंजन बहु गनि सकइ न कोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

uparōhita jēvanāra banāṭi. charasa cāri bidhi jasi śruti gāṭi. 1.

māyāmaya tēhim kīnhi rasōṭi. binjana bahu gani saka'i na kōṭi. 2.

The royal priest (who was actually the demon Kalketu in a disguised form) supervised the preparation of the food for the grand repast. He prepared the food according to the way prescribed in the Vedas for a grand feast that is organized on such occasions—i.e. the food was of all the four categories, and had all the six kinds of tastes¹. (1)

He used his magical powers to create a huge illusion that made the food look extraordinarily wonderful and supernaturally good, with a wide variety of viands and sumptuous delicacies that defied imagination and description. (2)

[Note—¹The four classical categories of food are—(a) Bhakshya--that which is eaten raw by tearing and lacerating with the help of teeth, that which requires proper chewing and mastication before it can enter the food pipe, e.g. bread, fruits, vegetables, chewing of sugarcane; (b) Bhojya--that which is cooked and eaten with fingers or spoons, requiring least chewing or masticating and can be easily swallowed down the gullet, e.g. rice, curry; (c) Lehya--that which is licked with the tongue, e.g. eating pickles or honey; and (d) Choshya--that which is sipped or sucked, e.g. water, milk, tea.

The *Garbho-panishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 5 however classifies the four basic types of foods as—(i) Lehya: that which is licked; (ii) Peya: that which is drunk; (iii) Khaadya: that which is chewed or masticated; and (iv) Choshya: that which is sucked.

The six classical forms of tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

बिबिध मृगन्ह कर आमिष राँधा । तेहि महुँ बिप्र माँसु खल साँधा ॥ ३ ॥

भोजन कहुँ सब बिप्र बोलाए । पद पखारि सादर बैठाए ॥ ४ ॥

bibidha mṛganha kara āmiṣa rāṁdhā. tēhi mahum̃ bipra māṁsu khala sām̃dhā. 3.

bhōjana kahum̃ saba bipra bōlā'ē. pada pakhāri sādara baiṭhā'ē. 4.

And in this food he mixed meat of different animals as well as that of Brahmins. [To wit, in order to ensure that the food served by the king to the invited guests would be completely defiled and polluted in terms of its sanctity, the wicked demon did not

limit himself to mixing animal meat, but he went further to mix even the flesh of dead Brahmins with the food.] (3)

The ignorant king welcomed the invited Brahmins for the repast, and he duly washed their feet as a mark of respect before they were seated. (4)

परुसन जबहिं लाग महिपाला । भै अकासबानी तेहि काला ॥ ५ ॥
 बिप्रबृंद उठि उठि गृह जाहू । है बड़ि हानि अन्न जनि खाहू ॥ ६ ॥
 भयउ रसोई भूसुर माँसू । सब द्विज उठे मानि बिस्वासू ॥ ७ ॥
 भूप बिकल मति मोहँ भुलानी । भावी बस न आव मुख बानी ॥ ८ ॥

parusana jabahim lāga mahipālā. bhai akāsabānī tēhi kālā. 5.
 biprabṛnda uṭhi uṭhi gr̥ha jāhū. hai baḍi hāni anna jani khāhū. 6.
 bhaya'u rasō'īm bhūsura māṁsū. saba dvija uṭhē māni bisvāsū. 7.
 bhūpa bikala mati mōham' bhulānī. bhāvī basa na āva mukha bānī. 8.

As soon as the king started serving the meal to the invited Brahmins, a mysterious voice was heard in the sky which warned the guests¹—(5)

‘Oh Brahmins! Get up and go back to your homes. To eat this food would be very demeaning and sinful for you all, so don't eat it even taste a bit of it. (6)

The meal is mixed with the flesh of Brahmins.’

All the assembled Brahmins believed this mysterious voice that warned them, and they got up immediately. (7)

The stunned king was dumbfounded and taken aback. His mind was befuddled by delusory veil that was already cast upon it, so he couldn't think coherently. He was under the spell of ill-fate that had provisioned for his doom, and so he could not say a word (in self-defense). (8)

[Note—¹One may wonder who was he that spoke mysteriously from the sky? Was this some God warning the Brahmins that the food was defiled by meat?

No, it was not the voice of any God, but it was the demon Kalketu himself. How can we deduce this? Well, if it had been some God then the voice would have also told the Brahmins that one demon named Kalketu had mixed meat in the food that was being served.

Not only that, the Gods would have alerted the unsuspecting king at the very beginning that meat was being mixed in the royal kitchen, and he must inspect it immediately.

Therefore in all probability, the meat was actually mixed just at the nick of time when the food was taken from the kitchen and was being served to the Brahmins. This ensured that no alarm was raised and the king alerted, for if the mixing was done in the kitchen itself then at least some of the cooks and assistants who were engaged keeping in mind the vastness of the scale of the enterprise, at least some would have known that meat is being mixed, and it is absolutely sure that the king would have

been informed. Obviously no one in his right mind would have ever expected that the king would order meat to be mixed in the food meant for the Brahmins.

That is why he was stunned and stood dazed as he just could not comprehend what was happening.

So it is definitely the voice of the demon Kalketu.

We shall read shortly that this voice is heard again, but the second time it is the Gods who are speaking because they realized that the Brahmins had unwittingly cursed an innocent king whose only fault was that he believed a hermit and also that he was unduly ambitious. But that does not mean that he had planned to defile the religious beliefs of the Brahmins and make them commit such a grave sin as eating meat. So the Gods came to the defense of the king, but by this time the damage was already done and it was too late to rectify it.]

दो०. बोले बिप्र सकोप तब नहिं कछु कीन्ह बिचार ।
जाइ निसाचर होहु नृप मूढ़ सहित परिवार ॥ १७३ ॥

dōhā.

bōlē bipra sakōpa taba nahim kachu kīnha bicāra.
jā'i nisācara hōhu nr̥pa mūr̥ha sahita parivāra. 173.

The Brahmins were taken aback and became very angry, and without thinking anything they vehemently cursed the king, 'Oh stupid king! Go and become a demon yourself, along with all your other family members. (Doha no. 173)

चौ०. छत्रबंधु तैं बिप्र बोलाई । घालै लिए सहित समुदाई ॥ १ ॥
ईस्वर राखा धरम हमारा । जैहसि तैं समेत परिवारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

chatrabandhu tair̥m bipra bōlāī. ghālai li'ē sahita samudāī. 1.
īsvara rākhā dharama hamārā. jaihasi tair̥m samēta parivārā. 2.

Oh fallen Kshatriya (king) who pretended to be friend of all (chatrabandhu)! You had invited all the Brahmins along with their kith and kin in order to destroy their religion and make them all fall into committing a grave sin (because eating meat is strictly prohibited for a Brahmin). (1)

It is by the grace of God that our religion and spiritual practices could be saved, but you will be condemned and destroyed along with all your kith and kin. [To wit, you had tried to make us eat meat, so you too would be turned into meat-eating monster along with your entire family.] (2)

संबत मध्य नास तव होऊ । जलदाता न रहिहि कुल कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥
नृप सुनि श्राप बिकल अति त्रासा । भै बहोरि बर गिरा अकासा ॥ ४ ॥
बिप्रहु श्राप बिचारि न दीन्हा । नहिं अपराध भूप कछु कीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

sambata madhya nāsa tava hō'ū. jaladātā na rahihi kula kō'ū. 3.
 nṛpa suni śrāpa bikala ati trāsā. bhai bahōri bara girā akāsā. 4.
 biprahu śrāpa bicāri na dīnhā. nahim̐ aparādha bhūpa kachu kīnhā. 5.

Your complete ruin shall occur within a year. No one would be left in your clan to offer water to your spirit after you are dead.' (3)

The king was extremely agitated and horrified with fear when he heard the curse.
 The voice from the sky spoke once again¹— (4)

'Oh Brahmins! You had not given due thought before cursing the king, for the king is not at fault at all.' (5)

[Note—¹In this context, refer to the note appended to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 173 herein above.

The first time it was the demon Kalketu who spoke so that the Brahmins would curse the king. But this second time it is the Gods who are speaking because they realized that the Brahmins had unwittingly cursed an innocent king whose only fault was that he believed a hermit and also that he was unduly ambitious. But that does not mean that he had planned to defile the religious beliefs of the Brahmins and make them commit such a grave sin as eating meat. So the Gods came to the defense of the king, but by this time the damage was already done and it was too late to rectify it as the Brahmins regretted for their curse but were unable to do anything now.]

चकित बिप्र सब सुनि नभबानी । भूप गयउ जहँ भोजन खानी ॥ ६ ॥
 तहँ न असन नहिं बिप्र सुआरा । फिरेउ राउ मन सोच अपारा ॥ ७ ॥
 सब प्रसंग महिसुरन्ह सुनाई । त्रसित परेउ अवनीं अकुलाई ॥ ८ ॥

cakita bipra saba suni nabhabānī. bhūpa gaya'u jaham̐ bhōjana khānī. 6.
 taham̐ na asana nahim̐ bipra su'ārā. phirē'u rā'u mana sōca apārā. 7.
 saba prasaṅga mahisuranha sunā'ī. trasita parē'u avanīm̐ akulā'ī. 8.

The Brahmins were astonished and speechless when they heard this message from the heaven¹.

Meanwhile, the vexed king went to the kitchen to inspect the stock of food kept there in preparation for it being served. (6)

There in the kitchen he discovered that neither was there any food nor the Brahmin cook (i.e. the priest who was supposed to be supervising the cooking of the meal)².

Flabbergasted and completely crestfallen by the misfortune that stared on his face, the king returned with a heavy heart and overcome with dark foreboding thoughts crowding his mind. (7)

He came back to where the Brahmins were waiting³, told them the entire story, and terrified and out of his wits, he fell down trembling out of fear at their feet (seeking mercy and reprieve). (8)

[Note—¹The Brahmins could neither imagine nor believe that such a grand event can take place in full public view without the king being in the knowledge of what is actually happening. But since this was proclaimed by the heavenly voice they had to believe its truthfulness.

²We have read that the demon Kalketu knew stupendous magical tricks, and he had used his magical abilities to prepare a huge feast with diverse categories of food in such a short span of time as a single day. This feat is not practical and humanly possible even for a great king to pull off. Hence the demon had just created an illusion of prepared food.

³Why were the Brahmins waiting? It is because they were themselves confused about what had actually happened and wanted to know the truth. So they waited out of curiosity for the king to go and find out what had actually happened.

Meanwhile their anger abated a little and they began regretting that they had been too hasty in making the curse.]

दो०. भूपति भावी मिटइ नहिं जदपि न दूषन तोर ।
किँ अन्यथा होइ नहिं बिप्रश्राप अति घोर ॥ १७४ ॥

dōhā.

bhūpati bhāvī miṭa'i nahim jadapi na dūṣana tōra.
ki'ēṁ an'yathā hō'i nahim bipraśrāpa ati ghōra. 174.

The Brahmins said to the king, 'Oh king! It is not possible to change what has been written in one's fate by providence, though it is clear that you were not at fault.

A Brahmin's curse is very terrible and it cannot be altered or revoked.¹ (Doha no. 174)

[Note—¹If one were to look at this episode dispassionately, one is bound to think that if the Brahmins could curse someone if he is at fault, then they should also show some sort of mercy and compassion when it is proved that the cursed person is not at all at fault. Why is this one-sided approach? If someone is empowered to punish then he is also empowered to give reward, or at least reduce the intensity or severity of the punishment.

If the Brahmins cursed the king to become a flesh-eating ogre when they believed that he was trying them to eat meat and fall into committing a grave sin, then when it was revealed that the king was innocent they could have reduced the gravity of the curse and diluted it with some kind of positive boon even if it was not possible to completely revoke the main curse.

That is possibly why when the king became a demon named Ravana he wrecked havoc on the Brahmins. He was particularly antagonistic with the hermits and others who were attired in a holy garb as it is they and this garb that had cheated him in his previous life.

Why was Ravana not antagonistic with the demons? It is because he was totally unaware that some demon named Kalketu was the chief culprit that brought ruin to him.]

चौ०. अस कहि सब महिदेव सिधाए । समाचार पुरलोगन्ह पाए ॥ १ ॥
सोचहिं दूषन दैवहि देहीं । बिरचत हंस काग किय जेहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

asa kahi saba mahidēva sidhā'ē. samācāra puralōganha pā'ē. 1.
sōcahiṁ dūṣana daivahi dēhīṁ. biracata hansa kāga kiya jēhīṁ. 2.

The invited Brahmins went their way, and the citizens heard the news¹. (1)

All the citizens were extremely distressed, perturbed and perplexed beyond measure. They began to blame Providence for the most unexpected evil turn of events, lamenting that the Creator had begun the process of making a swan but produced a crow instead². (2)

[Note—¹When the large group of Brahmins were going back home it is but natural that they were all animatedly talking and discussing about the events of the day. Besides them, there were countless attendants, waiters and servitors of the king at the feast. So the news of the king being cursed spread like wild-fire all through the length and breadth of not only the city but even to the distant realms of the kingdom.

The citizens loved their king very much as he was a very righteous ruler who ruled judiciously and in accordance with the laws of Dharma (propriety and probity; principles laid down for good governance in the scriptures). If the king became great and strong it was so much the better for the common man as it would deter attack from enemies and herald peace and prosperity.

The happy citizens therefore looked forward to a great future when suddenly this bad turn of events struck them like lightening—for they knew that their own future was intricately and inseparably linked to the future of their king, and so if the king was doomed their own future was doomed too.

As a result, a dark pall of gloom descended upon the capital. What was a bright day of celebrations and rejoicing a moment ago suddenly turned into a gloomy day of mourning and grief.]

उपरोहितहि भवन पहुँचाई । असुर तापसहि खबरि जनाई ॥ ३ ॥
तेहिं खल जहँ तहँ पत्र पठाए । सजि सजि सेन भूप सब धाए ॥ ४ ॥

uparōhitahi bhavana pahum'cā'ī. asura tāpasahi khabari janā'ī. 3.
tēhiṁ khala jaham'taham'patra paṭhā'ē. saji saji sēna bhūpa saba dhā'ē. 4.

Meanwhile, the demon brought the royal priest back home, and then he informed his friend, the hermit, of the news (that the mission has been successfully accomplished). (3)

That rascal (the hermit-king) then immediately sent out letters to other kings (who were defeated and conquered by Pratapbhanu earlier, and had harboured a secret desire for revenge)¹.

When these kings (who were obviously acquainted with this hermit-king, and so could recognize his signature or handwriting or the language that kings usually use for royal messages) heard the news (which greatly pleased them), all of them made haste, arranging their armies and launching attacks either singly or in groups (to vanquish king Pratapbhanu once and for all)². (4)

[Note—¹The hermit-king was well acquainted with the events of king Pratapbhanu's 'campaign of conquest' when he had fought many battles and had subjugated countless kings by the force of his arms in order to become an emperor. Not a single king was happy at this development, and though they all surrendered to Pratapbhanu but secretly all of them hated him and would welcome a chance to square accounts with him.

The question arises—who was the messenger who took the hermit-king's letters to these kings? The answer is easy—it was his demon friend Kalketu. We have already seen that Kalketu possessed great magical powers, so it was just a sport for him to reach all the kings and deliver the message in a short span of time.

²It is quite possible that this hermit-king had been maintaining some sort of secret contact with all like-minded kings. They were all waiting for such an opportunity, so as soon as the message came that their sworn enemy king Pratapbhanu had been cursed to doom by the Brahmins, a curse which is bound to be true no matter how strong Pratapbhanu was, they hurried to grab the chance and get the honour of being the first one to vanquish an all-powerful emperor whom the world praised as being invincible a day ago.

These kings were sure that they will now certainly succeed to bring Pratapbhanu to his knees and force him to bite dust as he was now heavily encumbered with a great mill-stone in the form of the Brahmin's curse around his neck; it was like a shackle from which he can't break free, and which was bound to sink him, and along with him his entire family, into an abyss from which there was no door of recovery.]

घेरेन्हि नगर निसान बजाई । बिबिध भाँति नित होइ लराई ॥ ५ ॥

जूझे सकल सुभट करि करनी । बंधु समेत परेउ नृप धरनी ॥ ६ ॥

ghērēnhi nagara nisāna bajā'ī. bibidha bhām̐ti nita hō'i larā'ī. 5.

jūjhē sakala subhaṭa kari karanī. bandhu samēta parē'u nr̥pa dharanī. 6.

These enemy-kings surrounded the capital city from all the sides, playing their battle drums and sounding their trumpets of war. Every day there were fierce battles. (5)

All the greatest of warriors and fighters of the kingdom fought bravely and courageously before all of them fell down in the battle-field one-by-one (to have a dignified death befitting an honourable warrior who is lauded for such a death, instead of running away from the battle-field).

Ultimately even the king (Pratapbhanu) fell down in the battle-field along with his brother (named Arimardan). [Alas, the noble king Pratapbhanu and his brave brother Arimardan too died in the battle.] (6)

सत्यकेतु कुल कोउ नहिं बाँचा । बिप्रश्राप किमि होइ असाँचा ॥ ७ ॥
रिपु जिति सब नृप नगर बसाई । निज पुर गवने जय जसु पाई ॥ ८ ॥

satyakētu kula kō'u nahim bāmčā. biprasrāpa kimi hō'i asāṁčā. 7.
ripu jiti saba nrpa nagara basāī. nija pura gavanē jaya jasu pāī. 8.

Alack, no one in the illustrious family of the great and noble king Satyaketu (i.e. his descendants king Pratapbhanu, his brother Arimardan, and others) survived!

[To wit, all in the family of king Satyaketu died one after another in the battles that raged in the wake of the Brahmins cursing king Pratapbhanu and his entire family.]

Say, how can a curse of Brahmins be false?

[To wit, it was only due to this curse that every single member of the great king Pratapbhanu's family died; no one escaped. His clan was completely annihilated. Had it not been for the curse there was no one on earth who would have dared to defeat the mighty king.] (7)

After having conquered and completely destroying their arch enemy (king Pratapbhahu), all the attacking kings re-established the city, and collecting rich spoils of war and tributes from its citizens they went back to their respective kingdoms, basking in the glory of conquest and feeling exuberant at having had the honour of defeating a seemingly invincible emperor¹. (8)

[Note—¹As is normally the case in such situations of military campaigns where a number of allied forces unite against a single enemy, when the war is over and the allied forces become victorious, they divide the spoils of war in proportion to their contribution in the war effort, restore and reconstruct the city, reach an agreement whereby the dominant partner or the one who had first entered the besieged city and conquered it is given control over the city, agreeing to appoint a governor who presides over a senate having representatives of all the partners, and then the rest of the partners return home leaving the day-to-day administration of the city to the people chosen by them by common consent.

So was also the case with the capital city of king Pratapbhanu. After the war ended, its citizens were rehabilitated, a new administrative machinery was put into place, the victors exacted their share of tributes and spoils of war, and then they returned jubilant and victorious to their own homelands.]

दो०. भरद्वाज सुनु जाहि जब होइ बिधाता बाम ।
धूरि मेरुसम जनक जम ताहि ब्यालसम दाम ॥ १७५ ॥

dōhā.

bharadvāja sunu jāhi jaba hō'i bidhātā bāma.
dhūri mērusama janaka jama tāhi byālasama dāma. 175.

[This story was narrated by sage Yagyawalkya to sage Bharadwaj. So Yagyawalkya said—]

‘Listen Bharadwaj. When the Creator turns hostile and becomes malevolent towards someone then even an inconsequential particle of dust turns into an insurmountable mountain as huge as Meru¹ for him, his own father becomes a personified form of the god of death for him, and the harmless rope or an ordinary garland becomes like a poisonous snake for him². (Doha no. 175)

[Note—¹Mt. Meru is the huge mountain where Gods are supposed to have their abode on earth.

²All these three instances can be seen to have proved themselves in the case of king Pratapbhanu.

The first is the instance of “an inconsequential particle of dust turns into an insurmountable mountain as huge as Meru”. The king who was defeated by the mighty king Pratapbhanu and who ran away from the battle-field to hide in the forest disguised as a hermit, was most inconsequential and not worthy of paying any more attention because he had lost his army and all his supporters. He was alone and banished to the forest. For all practical purposes this disenfranchised and defeated hermit-king presented no cause of worry for the mighty king Pratapbhanu. He was virtually like a speck of dust against the might of an emperor. But as it happened, this seemingly harmless and hapless hermit turned to be the nemesis of Pratapbhanu. So in effect, ‘the miniscule dust became like a huge mountain which crushed Pratapbhanu underfoot’.

The second instance of “father becoming a personified form of the god of death” is made true also as Pratapbhanu himself calls the hermit ‘father-like’ in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 160 herein above, but this same fellow mercifully plotted the ruin of a person whom he accepted as his ‘son’—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 163 herein above.

In the third instance of “the harmless rope or an ordinary garland becoming like a poisonous snake” we find that the large number of Brahmins whom the king had always shown respect and who had always benefited from the king’s charities and patronage now did not hesitate to bite him viciously by cursing him to utter doom].

चौ०. काल पाइ मुनि सुनु सोइ राजा । भयउ निसाचर सहित समाजा ॥ १ ॥

दस सिर ताहि बीस भुजदंडा । रावन नाम बीर बरिबंडा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāla pā'i muni sunu sō'i rājā. bhaya'u nisācara sahita samājā. 1.
dasa sira tāhi bīsa bhujadaṇḍā. rāvana nāma bīra baribaṇḍā. 2.

[Sage Yagyawalkya told sage Bharadwaj—] ‘Listen oh sage! In due course of time the same king (Pratapbhanu) became a demon along with his whole clan.

[To wit, all the members of his near and extended family as well as his close associates such as ministers and courtiers and commanders and servitors and other members of the royal entourage became demons in their next births¹.] (1)

He had twenty arms and ten heads, and his name was ‘Ravana’². He was extraordinarily strong and brave, and had long and sturdy arms that were like huge maces or clubs. (2)

[Note—¹It is not clearly said here if the citizens of his capital and the subjects of his kingdom too became demons. In the previous Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 175 it is mentioned that the victorious kings ‘re-established the capital before returning back home’.

This question is answered below in Chaupai line no. 6 which says that king Pratapbhanu’s servitors, his attendants, servants, ministers, courtiers, commanders of the army, governors of his kingdom and all others who served him directly or indirectly, along with their own family members such as their sons etc, had become demon in the next birth.

We can visualise two scenes here as follows:

(i) It may be that only those who were close to king Pratapbhanu and fought for him in the battles to die in the battle-field were the ones who ‘were reborn as demons’. The ordinary citizens did not participate in the actual battles, and so they escaped death. Hence there was no question of their being ‘born again or taking a rebirth’ as either demons or anyone else.

(ii) The other possibility is that everyone, including the citizens, became demons. But then it would mean that every single person was slaughtered in the war. This was obviously not the case as then who would live in the reconstructed city. Even during modern wars when the army defending a city surrenders, its inhabitants are spared death. The only casualties are the ones that occur while the battle rages, and not after the defending army surrenders. In this case therefore, after king Prtapbhanu was killed the war automatically ended, and with it ended further bloodshed.

So in all probabilities, and logically also, only those who died during the duration of the battles and who were close to king Pratapbhanu became demons. The rest of the subjects, who were not directly serving the king or who had managed to flee the city, survived, only to come back when the war ended and the victors were rehabilitating it.

²Thus, king Pratapbhanu became the demon king Ravana in the next birth.

The Atharva Veda’s *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse no. 18 describes the meaning of the word ‘Ravana’ as follows—

“Since the demon had abducted Ram’s consort (Sita) from a ‘Van’ (pronounced as *won* or *one*; meaning a dense forest), he was called ‘Ravana’¹. [The first letter of the word *Ram* and the word *Van* are combined to form the name of the demon as ‘Ra+van = Ravana’.]

There is another interpretation. ‘Ravana’ also means—‘the one who makes others weep, cry, lament and wail due to the severe pain, misery, torments, terror and sorrows inflicted upon them’ (for Ravana’s actions had made Sita suffer, weep and wail). Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse no. 16.

Further, he made a lot of noise or false claims, or he used to brag haughtily about his achievements, his strength and powers as well as of his invincibility and lordship over even the heavens. Wherever he went, he behaved most wildly and acted like a savage, making a lot of din and clamour to spread fear and terror.

So, the first part of his name *Ravana* comes from the word *Rav* for ‘fuss, noise, chatter, clamour, nuisance and din’². Thus, he became famous as ‘Ravana’ because he made a lot of noise and false claims.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Laxman began their search for Sita (18).

[Note—¹There is an interesting connotation of the word ‘Ravana’. Since his name includes the Beej Mantra for Lord Ram which incidentally is also the Beej Mantra for the eternal fire element, i.e. the letter ‘Ra’, it implies that Ravana was not an ordinary soul but a highly learned and scholarly one. Then, the word ‘Van’, meaning a forest, implies that he was a ‘treasury’ of scriptural knowledge and learning. The fact that he became a ‘demon’ instead of a living being behooving of his high standard of scriptural scholarship, knowledge, learning and erudition as well as his birth in the Brahmin race shows how merely literal knowledge and expertise in the scriptures would not necessarily mean that a person is exalted, worthy of honour and reverence, and spiritually liberated if he has not actually understood the hidden meaning of the doctrines and philosophy of the scriptures, and if he has not actually implemented them in practice in his life and deeds.

Ravana had become extremely haughty and arrogant because of his knowledge and acquisition of mystical powers that come naturally to them who do severe Tapa (penances, austerities, religious exercises), and Ravana had scored high on this count. He had done exemplary Tapa so much so that it had pleased Brahma the creator as well as Shiva the concluder. There are numerous instances in the story of the Ramayana when he has told those who had tried to persuade him to abandon his stubbornness and make peace with Lord Ram that he knows fully well that Ram is not an ordinary prince but the Supreme Being himself, and that Sita is not an ordinary woman but Shakti herself. He had stressed to them that he has purposely created this situation of animosity with the Lord by stealing Sita with full knowledge that this would lead to his getting slayed at the hands of the Lord, and that this was the only once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that he has got for his spiritual liberation from the prison of the evil body of a demon that he had acquired for himself due to his own follies and misdeeds. He would not let go of this golden chance by any means. When we take this point of view of Ravana into account, the whole story of Ramayana assumes a divine hue as the story of a highly learned and realised soul who has committed some mistakes in the past due to arrogance and lack of wisdom as to what his deeds would amount to, but realises and acknowledges later on that he is a sinful man. All the deplorable actions of Ravana around which the story of the epic Ramayana is woven are actually the attempt of a soul to find redemption for its past sins, and find emancipation and salvation once and for all.

Besides this point of his scriptural knowledge, it is also well established that he was the greatest devotee of Lord Shiva at that time. Shiva is the Lord who is honoured by the title of being a ‘Maha-Deva’—the great Lord God. Shiva is also the patron God of ascetics and hermits, and he is the wisest and most enlightened God in the pantheon of Gods. So, the point is—how can one expect an ardent and faithful devotee of such a great God as actually being as sinful and unholy internally as Ravana’s external behaviour and life has made him appear to be?

²In this regard there is a legend that when Ravana lifted Mount Kailash, where Lord Shiva has his abode, in order to transplant it in his own kingdom of Lanka, Lord Shiva had exerted immense pressure on this mountain so as to make it exceedingly heavy and difficult to be shifted and moved over to Lanka by Ravana. At that time, Ravana had made a lot of fuss and created a lot of nuisance. Hence he came to be known as ‘Ravana’.]”

The ‘ten’ heads of Ravana has a symbolic meaning. Usually the demons had only one head like all living beings. They were called ‘demons’ because of their evil and sinful deeds, corrupt and pervert mind and intellect, cruelty of behaviour, reckless and

ruthlessness tendencies, and despicable general demeanours. The demons had a preponderance of the Tama Guna, and a negative nature marked by horribly violent and intolerably volatile temperament. They had contempt for ethics and morality; they paid no heed to the principles of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility and auspiciousness).

The numeral ‘ten’ simply means that their king Ravana was ten times more sinful and ten times more powerful than the rest of them. It also means that negativity and evil nature of Ravana was ten times more than other demons of his race. So the Lord decided to get rid of this great menace for creation first, and then treat the ten-headed Ravana’s killing as a warning to the rest of the demon race to mend their selves or face the same punishment. The Lord wished to give the rest of the demons a chance to mend their ways out of fear for their lives, if for nothing else. In fact, this is what exactly happened. Not all the demons were killed and eliminated from the surface of earth during the epic war at Lanka—and the surviving ones were ruled by Vibhishan who was the younger brother of Ravana and who had taken sides with Lord Ram in the epic war at Lanka in which his elder brother Ravana was killed.

This proves one more very important and pertinent point—merely possessing a gross body like that of a demon does not mean that a Jiva is condemned if his Atma, his inner being is not demonic or sinful, and instead is holy and pious like other wise and realized souls in this creation. Further, merely Gyan or knowledge of the scriptures does not ensure that the creature would be provided with Mukti or spiritual liberation and deliverance—this is proved by the fact that though Ravana was an expert in the knowledge of the Vedas and other scriptures, and though he was a Brahmin by birth, he still was the most evil Jiva alive at that time. Therefore, it is how a Jiva (living being, a creature) puts his body and knowledge to practical use that is of paramount importance rather than merely possessing a certain type of gross body or being able to have an access to knowledge and scriptures.

Hence, while the Lord felt it necessary to eliminate the demon king Ravana, the same Lord made his brother Vibhishan as the king of the remaining demon race.

There is another interpretation of depicting Ravana with ten heads. He was not an ordinary demon or villain, for Ravana was an expert in the four Vedas (Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva), the four Up-Vedas or sub-Vedas (Dhanur Veda pertaining to the science of warfare, Aurveda pertaining to herbal medicines, Arthashastra pertaining to economics and public administration, and Gandharva-veda related to music, song and dance-drama), the Purans (mythological histories) and the Dharmashastras (other scriptures relating to the philosophy of Dharma or the laws of probity, propriety and righteousness). But inspite of having thoroughly studied all the Vedas and scriptures, inspite of being an expert in their tenets, and inspite of having this huge body of knowledge at his disposal, Ravana still became extremely pervert and sinful because of his vanity, passions, lust for power, ego, haughtiness and arrogance. He did not understand the spiritual message and meaning of the scriptures, and he did not utilise this knowledge for his spiritual welfare, most probably because he limited himself to their literal knowledge only, a knowledge that gave him immense temporal powers and fame but proved to be his unmaking.

This has the message for all spiritual aspirants and seekers of Mukti that mere knowledge of the scriptures is not sufficient for one’s salvation; one must implement them in practice. By killing Ravana the Lord has sent a strong message to such people who are proud of their overpowering control over the literal versions of the scriptures that salvation is not theirs if they are not careful in how they utilise this knowledge and skill intelligently with proper wisdom. The Lord would not excuse them even if

they are Brahmins (Ravana was a Brahmin by birth) and learned (Ravana was matchless in his knowledge of the scriptures) if they become sinful and fall from their path.

Why is he known as ‘Ravana’? According to one story, once Ravana got on his chariot and flew above Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Shiva. Nandi, the mount of Shiva, told him to stop, but the arrogant Ravana did not pay any heed. So Nandi blocked his path in the sky. Peeved and feeling insulted, Ravana scooped up the entire mountain and put it on his shoulder to throw it somewhere. Lord Shiva used his might and pressed the mountain with his big toe. This crushed Ravana under the weight and the pressure, and he began to yell. He remained for a thousand years crushed under the weight of the mountain and continued to pray to Lord Shiva to free him. At that time Shiva cursed him—‘you have been wailing for so long under the weight of the mountain and you are in the habit of making others wail by your cruelty, so your name will be Ravana, or ‘the one who wails himself and make others wail too’.’ This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan, Saar Kand, Sarga 13, verse nos. 84-85.

His ten heads—Ravana had pleased Lord Shiva by offering his own head. As soon as he offered one head, another came up on his shoulder. He continued to offer them ten times, and each time a new head was created.

Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Vaali (or Baali), had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana’s arrogance and impertinence, Vaali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. Angad, the emissary of Lord Ram, refers to that incident when Ravana had tried his best to escape from Vaali but could not do so, and remained clamped and squeezed under his armpit for a long time in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 24. This story is narrated in Valmiki Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Sarga 34; Veda Vyas’ Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.

There is another legend associated with Ravana. Once, he had asked Lord Shiva to come and stay at Lanka, the demon capital. But the Lord refused. So, determined to fulfill his wish, Ravana had scooped up the entire mountain Kailash where Shiva lives in the upper reaches of the Himalayas in his bid to plant the whole mountain at Lanka. The Gods were flabbergasted and shocked at this, so they devised a device whereby the Wind God and the Water God entered Ravana’s abdomen, which resulted in a strong urge in him to urinate somewhere between the original location of Kailash and Lanka.

Now it so happened that at the time of lifting the mountain, Ravana had pledged that he will not place Mt. Kailash on the ground before reaching Lanka, and should he do so then he would not be able to lift it again. Taking advantage of this pre-condition, the two Gods, the Wind and Water Gods, created a situation whereby Ravana could no longer hold his urine, and putting Kailash at a secure place he went to relieve himself. But when he came back, the great mountain refused to budge. This immensely annoyed Ravana and in disgust he pushed the Shiva’s Lingam with his big toe so hard that it sunk into the ground. It is believed that this insult that Ravana did to Shiva was the root cause of his fall and final death—because Shiva’s eleventh form known as ‘Rudra’, the God of wrath and annihilation, assumed the form of Hanuman,

the monkey warrior who led the charge of Lord Ram's army on Lanka that culminated in Ravana's death and defeat of the entire demon army.]

भूप अनुज अरिमर्दन नामा । भयउ सो कुंभकरन बलधामा ॥ ३ ॥
 सचिव जो रहा धरमरुचि जासू । भयउ बिमात्र बंधु लघु तासू ॥ ४ ॥
 नाम बिभीषन जेहि जग जाना । बिष्नुभगत बिग्यान निधाना ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpa anuja arimardana nāmā. bhaya'u sō kumbhakarana baladhāmā. 3.
 saciva jō rahā dharamaruci jāsū. bhaya'u bimātra bandhu laghu tāsū. 4.
 nāma bibhīṣana jēhi jaga jānā. biṣṇubhagata bigyāna nidhānā. 5.

The king's younger brother named Arimardan became a demon named Kumbhakaran in the new birth. He was a virtual treasury of strength and valour.

[To wit, Kumbhakaran became Ravana's younger brother, and he was exceptionally strong, possessing immense strength and valour.] (3)

The king's chief minister who took interest in the principles of 'Dharma' (righteousness, probity, propriety, nobility in thought and conduct) became his younger step-brother¹. (4)

His name was Vibhishan. The world knows him as one who was a devotee of Lord Vishnu, and as one who was well endowed with the virtues of wisdom, sagacity, prudence and intelligence². (5)

[Note—¹King Pratapbhanu must have had many ministers like other great kings. But one of them was very close to him and the chief amongst all the ministers. He was the king's main advisor. This chief minister became Ravana's step-brother named Vibhishan.

This minister was not directly related to the king by blood, but since he was so nice and sagacious the king treated him like his own brother. So in the next birth too they were brothers but separated by blood—Vibhishan became Ravana's step-brother instead of being his direct blood-related sibling like Kumbhakaran who was Pratapbhanu's direct younger brother in the previous life.

According to Mahabharat, Vanparva, Chapter 275, Vibhishan is said to be a step-brother of Ravana. Briefly this story is as follows:-

Kuber, the treasurer of Gods, had appointed three young maidens of the demon race to serve sage Visrawa who happened also to be Kuber's father. Their names were Pushpotkataa, Raakaa and Maalini. They were experts in music and dance, and they used to keep the sage entertained. The sage was eventually pleased by their service and blessed them with boons that they would have three sons who would be as powerful and glorious as the three Lokpals, the three custodians of the three divisions of the world. By-and-by, Pushpotkataa gave birth to two sons—Ravana and Kumbhakaran, and Malini gave birth to a son named Vibhishan. The third woman named Raakaa gave birth to a daughter named Supernakha. Refer: Mahabharat, Vanparva, Chapter 275, verse nos. 7-8.

²It was expected of Vibhishan because in his previous life also he was a noble chief minister of king Pratapbhanu, and had always taken interest in following the principles of Dharma. That is why he was honoured with the name of 'Dharmaruchi'—one who takes interest in matters related to Dharma.]

रहे जे सुत सेवक नृप केरे । भए निसाचर घोर घनेरे ॥ ६ ॥
 कामरूप खल जिनस अनेका । कुटिल भयंकर बिगत बिबेका ॥ ७ ॥
 कृपा रहित हिंसक सब पापी । बरनि न जाहिं बिस्व परितापी ॥ ८ ॥

rahē jē suta sēvaka nṛpa kērē. bha'e nisācara ghōra ghanērē. 6.
 kāmarūpa khala jinasa anēkā. kuṭila bhayaṅkara bigata bibēkā.
 kṛpā rahita hiṁsaka saba pāpī. barani na jāhiṁ bisva paritāpī. 4.

All the sons of the king (Pratapbhanu) as well as those who were serving him, along with their own kith and kin, became demons in their next birth. These demons were extremely ferocious and vicious, and countless in numbers. (6)

All of them were personified forms of passion and lust, and they had magical powers by which they could assume any form they wished¹. They were of many classes and orders. All were however highly wicked and deceitful, were fierce and terrible by all means, had no wisdom worth the name, and lacked all sense of propriety and probity. (7)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181 where also this unique quality of the demon race has been reiterated.]

They had no trace of mercy or compassion in them. They were all sinful, cruel, vicious and ferocious to the extreme. It is not possible to narrate the way they ruthlessly tormented the whole world with virtual impunity. (8)

दो०. उपजे जदपि पुलस्त्यकुल पावन अमल अनूप ।
 तदपि महीसुर श्राप बस भए सकल अघरूप ॥ १७६ ॥
 dōhā.

upajā jādapi pulastyakula pāvana amala anūpa.
 tadapi mahīsura śrāpa basa bha'e sakala agharūpa. 176.

Though the demons were born in the worthy and honourable clan of sage Pulsatya which was held in great esteem, a family that was revered, free from taints, and deemed to be pious and holy, yet by the virtue of the curse of Brahmins the monstrous off-springs of the same clan became loathsome and degraded to the extreme, reaching the nadir of spiritual depravation and sinfulness, and transformed into embodiments of every sort of vice, evil, cruelty and wickedness that can be thought of. (Doha no. 176)

[Note—So far we have read about the life of Ravana in his previous birth. As a result of the Brahmins' curse all the members of king Pratapbhanu's family, either close or distant, as well as all his ministers, courtiers, servitors, commanders of the army, and

all others who directly or indirectly served him or were related to him, became demons in their next birth.

Now we shall commence reading this fascinating part of the story of Ravana as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Doha no. 180 as follows herein below:-]

चौ०. कीन्ह बिबिध तप तीनिहुँ भाई । परम उग्र नहिं बरनि सो जाई ॥ १ ॥
 गयउ निकट तप देखि बिधाता । मागहु बर प्रसन्न मैं ताता ॥ २ ॥
 करि बिनती पद गहि दससीसा । बोलेउ बचन सुनहु जगदीसा ॥ ३ ॥
 हम काहू के मरहिं न मारें । बानर मनुज जाति दुइ बारें ॥ ४ ॥
 एवमस्तु तुम्ह बड़ तप कीन्हा । मैं ब्रह्माँ मिलि तेहि बर दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

kīnha bibidha tapa tīnīhum̃ bhāī. parama ugra nahim̃ barani sō jāī. 1.
 gaya'u nikaṭa tapa dēkhi bidhātā. māgahu bara prasanna mair̃m tātā. 2.
 kari binatī pada gahi dasasīsā. bōlē'u bacana sunahu jagadīsā. 3.
 hama kāhū kē marahim̃ na mārēm̃. bānara manuja jāti du'i bārēm̃. 4.
 ēvamastu tumha barā tapa kīnhā. mair̃m brahmām̃ mili tēhi bara dīnhā. 5.

All the three brothers (Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan) did severe Tapa (penance) with all sincerity and diligence, employing all means within their reach to attain success in it. Their Tapa was so harsh, strict and intense that it is beyond words to describe it¹. (1)

The Creator (Brahma) was pleased when he observed their Tapa, and he went to them and said, 'Dear, I am very pleased with you. Ask any boon that you desire from me.' (2)

[The Creator had first approached the eldest of the three brothers, Ravana.] The 10-headed one (Ravana) bowed to the Creator most reverentially and caught hold of his feet. Then he said prayerfully, 'Listen, oh the lord of the world. (3) ----

I must not be killed by anyone, except monkeys and human beings².' (4)

Brahma replied, 'So shall it be. You have done severe Tapa by the virtue of it you have met me, Brahma the Creator. So I bless you with this boon that you desire.' (5)

[Note—¹In Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2 we read about the severity of their Tapa. Ravana fasted for one thousand years, at the end of which he offered one of his heads to the sacrificial fire. Then he fasted for another thousand years, offering his second head at the end of this period. He continued with this practice for ten thousand years, and when he was ready to offer his last head, Brahma appeared before him. (Refer: verse nos. 10-11.)

Kumbhakarna did Tapa for ten thousand years, and Vibhishan for five thousand years while standing on the toe of one foot. (Refer: verse nos. 8-9.)

A similar version is found in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 47-50.

²In Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 13, Ravana has been specific in seeking immunity from Garuda (the mount of Lord Vishnu, representing all sky-borne creatures), Serpents (representing all subterranean creatures and reptiles), Yaksha (demi-gods and spirits), Gods (residents of heaven), Demons (residents of nether world as well as members of his own race who may oppose and challenge his authority).

He thought that if he is granted fearlessness from such powerful forces, then humble monkeys and humans would be like dust for him, for they would never dare to stand before him. This loophole was later used to derive the maximum benefit by the Gods and Lord Vishnu when Ravana went berserk, killing, plundering and ravaging the creation merciless, because the Gods assumed the form of monkeys and Lord Vishnu of a human prince called Lord Ram to finally slay Ravana and eliminate the scourge of the cruel demons.]

पुनि प्रभु कुंभकरन पहिं गयऊ । तेहि बिलोकि मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥
 जौं एहिं खल नित करब अहारू । होइहि सब उजारि संसारू ॥ ७ ॥
 सारद प्रेरि तासु मति फेरी । मागेसि नीद मास षट केरी ॥ ८ ॥

puni prabhu kumbhakarana pahim gaya'ū. tēhi bilōki mana bisamaya bhaya'ū.
 6.

jaum ēhim khala nita karaba ahārū. hō'ihī saba ujāri sansārū. 7.
 sārada prēri tāsū mati phērī. māgēsī nīda māsa ṣaṭa kērī. 8.

[Then the Lord (Brahma) went to Kumbhakarna. As he saw his colossal form he was confounded and alarmed, wondering what would happen to this creation if all these wicked demons got absolute immunity from punishment and death, because then they will unleash a horrible torrent of torments with impunity, causing untold misery, grief and pain to all the creatures of the creation. This was not acceptable to the Creator, as it was his moral duty to protect the creation and its inhabitants he had himself created; being the great forefather of this creation he was also its patron caretaker and protector, responsible for its security and well-being. He cannot allow his discretionary powers to grant boons to come in the way of fulfilling his larger duties and responsibilities in this creation. So he was alarmed when he saw Kumbhakarna.

He thought for a while and decided that since he has already granted boons to Ravana and it cannot be reverted, the best he can do now was to limit the damage already done by stopping it from getting doubled by granting unbridled powers to Kumbhakarna. To wit, if he manages Kumbhakarna into asking some inconsequential boon, something nonsense and idiotic, then at least the horrors that the world would face would be reduced by half, as it then would only be limited to Ravana's whims.

Therefore, Brahma signaled Saraswati, the goddess of speech and wisdom, to act swiftly and delude Kumbhakarna's mind so that he asks something foolish and harmless.]

The Lord then went to Kumbhakarna, and seeing him he was filled with dismay. (6)

He thought to himself, “If this colossus fellow eats to his fill every day, the world would starve and there would be famine all around; the earth would become barren and ravished. [To wit, he will eat everything, and there would be nothing left for the rest of the creatures to survive on.]” (7)

So the wise and prudent Creator signaled Saraswati to delude Kumbhakarna’s mind, as a result of which he asked for a stupid and ridiculous boon of ‘sleeping uninterrupted for a period of six months at a time’¹. (8)

[Note—¹On the single day when he woke up and ate, there was a virtual famine in the whole world, for he ate up everything that was available that day. Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 180.

What did Kumbhakarna eat? Well, a glimpse is available in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 64 which says he gobbled up entire buffalos and drank huge cans of wine. The demons in general feasted on all living beings, such as humans, including sages, animals of all denominations, such as the cows and the buffaloes to mention only a few—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chanda line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 45.

And how huge was he? He was like a living God of Death, and colossus as a mountain. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 62; and Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 65 respectively.)

It was not only ‘food’ that Brahma had in mind when he inspired Saraswati to prevail upon Kumbhakarna to ask for this absurd boon. As has been noted in the introductory paragraphs, Brahma reasoned that if Kumbhakarna was knocked out into deep slumber, then Ravana would be left alone. He won’t be able to cause much nuisance single-handed as he would be able to do if he had an active support of his equally wicked brother Kumbhakarna. So the expected horrors would at least be reduced by half. The physical dimensions of Kumbhakarna’s body were exceptionally huge, for he was as colossal as a great mountain. This meant that his physical strength and powers much surpassed that of Ravana.

So therefore, if the two, Ravana and Kumbhakarna, had joined hands in running around berserk, recklessly killing and spreading mayhem in this world, then whatever managed to survive from Ravana’s cruelty would also have perished. To wit, Brahma’s clever wit in provoking Kumbhakarna into asking a stupid boon of ‘sleep’ helped the world to survive for a longer period of time than it would have if both the brothers were actively involved in spreading the horrifying reign of the demons marked by cruelty, terror and dread in this world.]

दो०. गए बिभीषन पास पुनि कहेउ पुत्र बर मागु ।

तेहिं मागेउ भगवंत पद कमल अमल अनुरागु ॥ १७७ ॥

dōhā.

ga'ē bibhīṣana pāsa puni kahē'u putra bara māgu.

tēhiṁ māgē'u bhagavanta pada kamala amala anurāgu. 177.

After that, Brahma went to Vibhishan, and said, ‘Son, ask for your desired boon.’

He (Vibhishan) asked for a boon that he should have unwavering, undiluted, unhindered and eternal devotion and affection for the lotus-like holy feet of the Lord God¹ (Doha no. 177)

[Note—¹In his previous life, Vibhishan was the chief minister of king Pratapbhanu. His name was ‘Dharmaruchi’, one who took great interest in the virtues of goodness and righteousness. He was a pious soul, and this great trait in his character came down to him in his current birth as Vibhishan. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 176.]

चौ० तिन्हहि देइ बर ब्रह्म सिधाए । हरषित ते अपने गृह आए ॥ १ ॥
 मय तनुजा मंदोदरि नामा । परम सुंदरी नारि ललामा ॥ २ ॥
 सोइ मयँ दीन्हि रावनहि आनी । होइहि जातुधानपति जानी ॥ ३ ॥
 हरषित भयउ नारि भलि पाई । पुनि दोउ बंधु बिआहेसि जाई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tinhabi dē'i bara brahma sidhā'ē. haraṣita tē apanē gr̥ha ā'ē. 1.
 maya tanujā mandōdari nāmā. parama sundarī nāri lalāmā. 2.
 sō'i mayam' dīnhi rāvanahi ānī. hō'ihi jātudhānapati jānī. 3.
 haraṣita bhaya'u nāri bhali pāī. puni dō'u bandhu bi'āhēsi jāī. 4.

Brahma went to his abode after granting them their desired boons. Then they (the three brothers) came back home elated and happy. (1)

A demon named ‘Maye’ (who was the architect of the demon race) had a most beautiful and charming daughter named Mandodari. (2)

He brought her and gave her in marriage to Ravana as he realized that soon the latter would be the ruler of the demon race (and the most powerful one in the whole world). (3)

Ravana was very pleased to get a nice wife for himself. By-and-by he also got his other two brothers married. (4)

[Note—Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 39-43. It says Kumbhararna was married to Vrittajwala, the daughter of demon Virochan, and Vibishan to Sarma, the daughter of Sailush who was a king of the Gandharvas (celestial musicians).

Similar thing has been said in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 44, and 65-66.]

गिरि त्रिकूट एक सिंधु मझारी । बिधि निर्मित दुर्गम अति भारी ॥ ५ ॥
 सोइ मय दानवँ बहुरि सँवारा । कनक रचित मनिभवन अपारा ॥ ६ ॥
 भोगावति जसि अहिकुल बासा । अमरावति जसि सक्रनिवासा ॥ ७ ॥

तिन्ह तें अधिक रज्ज अति बंका । जग बिख्यात नाम तेहि लंका ॥ ८ ॥

giri trikūṭa ēka sindhu majhārī. bidhi nirmīta durgama ati bhārī. 5.
sō'i maya dānavam̐ bahuri samvārā. kanaka racita manibhavana apārā. 6.
bhōgāvati jasi ahikula bāsā. amarāvati jasi sakranivāsā. 7
tinha tēm adhika ramya ati baṅkā. jaga bikhyāta nāma tēhi laṅkā. 8.

In the middle of the ocean was a wonderful mountain with three lofty summits. It was called 'Trikuṭ'; it was extensive in dimensions and most difficult to access. (5)

The demon Maye (who was the architect of the demon race) re-constructed and renovated it wonderfully, with full majesty, splendour and glamour. The newly refurbished city had countless majestic gilded palaces that were decorated with priceless gems. (6)

This city was as wondrous and beautiful as the legendary city of the serpents in the subterranean world, known as Bhogawati, as well as the city of Indra, the king of gods, that is known as Amravati. (7)

Nay, this newly founded city of the demons actually much surpassed these two legendary capitals (of the serpents and the demons) in its majesty, splendour and glamour; it was more charming, wondrous, beautiful and glamorous than the two of them. It was impenetrable and most awe-inspiring. Its name was 'Lanka'¹. (8)

[Note—¹This city was earlier the residents of the demons, but they had abandoned it out of fear of Lord Vishnu. They went and started living in the nether world. For some time it was left in ruins, but it was re-build by Kuber, the treasurer of gods, with the help of Vishwakarma. When Ravana assaulted and sacked it, it was once again reduced to rubble. Then Maye re-constructed it much better than what it previously was to convert it into a permanent dwelling place and the capital of the demon race after Ravana ascended to power. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 179 herein below.

Refer also to (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 42-44; and (ii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 13-15.]

दो०. खाई सिंधु गभीर अति चारिहुँ दिसि फिरि आव ।
कनक कोट मनि खचित दूढ़ बरनि न जाइ बनाव ॥ १७८ (क) ॥
हरि प्रेरित जेहिं कलप जोइ जातुधानपति होइ ।
सूर प्रतापी अतुलबल दल समेत बस सोइ ॥ १७८ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

khā'im̐ sindhu gabhīra ati cārihum̐ disi phiri āva.
kanaka kōṭa mani khacita dṛṛha barani na jā'i banāva. 178 (a).
hari prērita jēhim̐ kalapa jō'i jātudhānapati hō'i.
sūra pratāpī atulabala dala samēta basa sō'i. 178 (b).

The mighty ocean, which is most formidable and deep, forms an un-crossable moat all around this city of Lanka, making it inaccessible and unapproachable.

It had a fort with strong fortified walls and ramparts, decorated with gold and gems. It was so wonderful to behold that its beauty cannot be sufficiently described in words. (Doha no. 178-a)

Whoever is preordained by the will of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being) to become an exceptionally brave, courageous and valiant king of the world, in any of the many eras of creation, lives in this city with his army and subjects. (Doha no. 178-b)

चौ०. रहे तहाँ निसिचर भट भारे । ते सब सुरन्ह समर संघारे ॥ १ ॥
अब तहँ रहहिं सक्र के प्रेरे । रच्छक कोटि जच्छपति केरे ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

rahē tahām̃ nisicara bhaṭa bhārē. tē saba suranha samara saṅghārē. 1.
aba tahām̃ rahahim̃ sakra kē prērē. racchaka kōṭi jacchapati kērē. 2.

In an earlier time there lived in that city (of Lanka) great demon warriors who were brave and valiant. All of them were defeated or killed in battle by the Gods. (1)

At the behest of Indra (the king of Gods—“sakra”), who had conquered the city, many thousand warriors of Kuber (the Gods’ treasurer—“jacchapati”) lived in that place at the moment. (2)

दसमुख कतहुँ खबरि असि पाई । सेन साजि गढ़ घेरेसि जाई ॥ ३ ॥
देखि बिकट भट बड़ि कटकाई । जच्छ जीव लै गए पराई ॥ ४ ॥

dasamukha katahum̃ khabari asi pāī. sēna sāji gaṛha ghērēsi jāī. 3.
dēkhi bikaṭa bhaṭa baḍi kaṭakāī. jaccha jīva lai ga'ē parāī. 4.

Ravana heard of it somehow. So he gathered an army of his demon warriors and launched an assault, besieging the city. (3)

A no-holds fierce battle ensued. When Yaksha, the commander of the garrison appointed by Kuber to protect Lanka, saw the formidable demon army of a ferocious and vicious disposition, he was sore affright, and abandoning the city he fled for his life. (4)

फिरि सब नगर दसानन देखा । गयउ सोच सुख भयउ बिसेषा ॥ ५ ॥
सुंदर सहज अगम अनुमानी । कीन्हि तहाँ रावन रजधानी ॥ ६ ॥

phiri saba nagara dasānana dēkhā. gaya'u sōca sukha bhaya'u bisēṣā. 5.
sundara sahaja agama anumānī. kīnhi tahām̃ rāvana rajadhānī. 6.

The victorious Ravana entered the city in triumph. He went around it to inspect it. Observing its magnificence, splendour and majesty, he felt extremely glad. (5)

Realising that it was not only beautiful and pleasant but very secure and safe from intrusion as it was inaccessible from any side (being surrounded by the ocean which formed a deep and huge moat around it), Ravana decided to establish his capital there. (6)

जेहि जस जोग बाँटि गृह दीन्हे । सुखी सकल रजनीचर कीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥
एक बार कुबेर पर धावा । पुष्पक जान जीति लै आवा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhi jasa jōga bāmṭi gr̥ha dīnhē. sukhī sakala rajanīcara kīnhē. 7.
ēka bāra kubēra para dhāvā. puṣpaka jāna jīti lai āvā. 8.

He distributed the buildings of the city amongst his demon warriors in accordance to their rank and status, and their eligibility. This was welcomed by one and all, making all the demons feel happy and contented.

[To wit, the demons felt obliged to Ravana as he liberally shared the spoils of war with them, like an adroit conqueror who knows how to keep his army in good humour and loyal.] (7)

Once upon a time he launched an attack on Kuber, and snatched his air-plane called Pushpak. He then brought it to Lanka as another trophy of his conquest¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 48-49; and (ii) Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 69-71.]

दो०. कौतुकहीं कैलास पुनि लीन्हेसि जाइ उठाइ ।
मनहुँ तौलि निज बाहुबल चला बहुत सुख पाइ ॥ १७९ ॥

dōhā.

kautukahīm̐ kailāsa puni līnhēsi jā'i uṭhā'i.
manahum̐ tauli nija bāhubala calā bahuta sukha pā'i. 179.

Emboldened by his successive successes, Ravana attacked Mt. Kailash (the abode of Lord Shiva), and lifted it in his arms as if trying to judge for himself as well as to show others how strong he was. Being successful in it, he felt extremely elated. Then he went away. (Doha no. 179)

[Note—Ravana only lifted Mt. Kailash, but he soon placed it back. With this single feat he sent a signal to the Gods and to everyone else in this creation to be careful with him—for he is extremely strong and powerful inasmuch as he could easily lift Mt. Kailash, and so no one stands any chance against him if they dared to challenge his might.

Ravana was so proud of this singular feat that he boasted of it repeatedly whenever he found a chance to do so. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha

no. 22-b; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

चौ०. सुख संपति सुत सेन सहाई । जय प्रताप बल बुद्धि बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥
 नित नूतन सब बाढ़त जाई । जिमि प्रतिलाभ लोभ अधिकाई ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

sukha sampati suta sēna sahāī. jaya pratāpa bala bud'dhi baṛāī. 1.
 nita nūtana saba bāṛhata jāī. jimi pratilābha lōbha adhikāī. 2.

Ravana's fortunes were on the ascendance, as his happiness, joy and pleasures, his wealth and prosperity, his sons, army and close attendants, his fame, glory, strength and majesty, his mind and its various faculties, as well as the praise and honour heaped upon him for his exploits—everything kept on increasing with the passage of time. It was like the case of greed and yearnings increasing exponentially with each gain or success that one attains. (1-2)

अतिबल कुंभकरन अस भ्राता । जेहि कहूँ नहिँ प्रतिभट जग जाता ॥ ३ ॥
 करइ पान सोवइ षट मासा । जागत होइ तिहूँ पुर त्रासा ॥ ४ ॥
 जौँ दिन प्रति अहार कर सोई । बिस्व बेगि सब चौपट होई ॥ ५ ॥
 समर धीर नहिँ जाइ बखाना । तेहि सम अमित बीर बलवाना ॥ ६ ॥

atibala kumbhakarana asa bhrātā. jēhi kahum̃ nahim̃ pratibhaṭa jaga jātā. 3.
 kara'i pāna sōva'i ṣaṭa māsā. jāgata hō'i tihūm̃ pura trāsā. 4.
 jauṃ dina prati ahāra kara sōī. bisva bēgi saba caupaṭa hōī. 5.
 samara dhīra nahim̃ jā'i bakhānā. tēhi sama amita bīra balavānā. 6.

His brother was Kumbhakarna; he was so strong, powerful and valiant that no one was ever born in this world to match him in these glorious virtues. (3)

He used to drink a lot of wine and slept for six months at a stretch. (4)

The day he would wake up to eat, it would be a calamitous day for the world as everything would be completely ruined. [To wit, he wiped out everything worth eating, and so the world was left high and dry as if there was a great famine on the day Kumbhakarna ate.]¹ (5)

His valour, courage and steadfastness in the battle-field was so laudable and great that it cannot be described so much so there was not a single warrior in the whole of Lanka (and by implication in the whole of the demon race) who could ever match him in these qualities. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 177.]

बारिदनाद जेठ सुत तासू । भट महुँ प्रथम लीक जग जासू ॥ ७ ॥
जेहि न होइ रन सनमुख कोई । सुरपुर नितहिं परावन होई ॥ ८ ॥

bāridanāda jēṭha suta tāsū. bhaṭa mahum̐ prathama lika jaga jāsū. 7.
jēhi na hō'i rana sanamukha kōī. surapura nitahim̐ parāvana hōī. 8.

Baridnatha (another name for Meghanad, also spelled as Meghnaad) was Ravana's elder son. He was counted as being the first in the rank of great warriors. (7)

No one dared to face him in the battle-field. His name created a virtual stampede in the heaven as every one of the gods ran helter-skelter and scampered for cover by the mere mention of his name. (8)

दो०. कुमुख अकंपन कुलिसरद धूमकेतु अतिकाय ।
एक एक जग जीति सक ऐसे सुभट निकाय ॥ १८० ॥

dōhā.

kumukha akampana kulisarada dhūmakētu atikāya.
ēka ēka jaga jīti saka aisē subhaṭa nikāya. 180.

There were excellent valiant warriors there (in Lanka); some of the names of such great warriors were Durmukha (literally meaning one with an ugly face), Akampan (literally meaning one who never shook in fear), Vajradanta (literally meaning one with teeth that were as strong as Vajra, the strong weapon of Indra, the king of gods), Dhumketu (literally meaning who was like a comet), Atikaye (literally meaning one with a colossus body), etc.

These are but only a few names, for there were countless other matchless warriors like them in Lanka. Every one of them was competent to win the world single-handedly, without assistance. (Doha no. 180)

[Note—We have read how the demons, led by their king Ravana, established their kingdom with its capital at Lanka, a magnificent city situated on an island in the middle of the ocean. Initial resounding successes that were compounded by the boons Ravana had received from the Creator made him excessively arrogant and haughty beyond reason. He thought that the time of the demons had arrived, and fate was in their favour after a long time. Confident of his own strength and powers and invincibility, he became belligerent and determined to settle old scores with the Gods and also with the Brahmins due to whose curse he had to become a demon in the first place.

He also decided to go after the blood of sages and all other holy men as he feared that they have such great mystical powers that if he left them alone unharmed then they would team with the Brahmins and Gods, the deemed arch enemies of the demons, and the result would be a formidable force that may obstruct his plans to become the sole sovereign of the world and restore the lost glory of the demon race. A prudent king does not allow even a single seed of dissent or discontent or opposition to remain uncrushed, because a single, seemingly harmless seed might produce a

thorny, poisonous plant that would one day prick and kill the same person who had had mercy on it and had spared it from being smothered earlier.

So therefore, Ravana decided to vanquish all Brahmins and Gods, as well as all sages and saintly persons, instilling such fear in their mind and heart that they would dare not raise their heads against him. The demons had always thought that the Brahmins, the Gods and the sages were their greatest enemies, so now that they had a powerful king in the person of Ravana it was the right time for them to assert their authority and reclaim their lost glory and powers.

Like a person who is long deprived of food and longs for even a morsel suddenly gets free access to a larder full of delectable delicacies, at which he lunges greedily and with full force, the demons, who were emboldened by Ravana's extraordinary prowess and powers that were bolstered by the boons of Brahma, and who felt that for far too long they had been subjected to harsh treatment, injustice and unfair deal at the hands of Gods and Brahmins, went amok with full vigour, going on a recklessly spree spreading dread, terror and havoc on all the corners of the earth, killing, plundering and tormenting all and sundry without exception. They wanted to wreak vengeance with full punch and force upon those whom they perceived as their hereditary arch enemies.

In the larger scheme of things, however, the demons' unbridled reign of terror and endless cycle of crimes and vices, excessive sinfulness, decadence and turpitude et al, suited well the Creator, because only when the balloon is full of gas, and when more and more of it is pumped into the balloon till it can't hold any more of this gas that it would finally burst, the Creator waited patiently and bid for time till all the limits of tolerance and forbearance and forgiveness were crossed by the demons, which was when the Creator would have an excuse to find a way to neutralize or rescind on his own boons without anyone accusing him of any wrong-doing. And so, in due course of time, it did happen that way, because the demons, finding no opposition to them and having acquired immense powers and strength, virtually sledge-hammered and bludgeoned their way through this world, reducing Dharma (religion and noble principles) to rubble, and making all the horrified creatures wail and grieve in excess of pain and misery.

We shall read all about the way the demons, led by their invincible and haughty king Ravana, had spread terror and dread throughout the creation. Ravana had become a big Hector and Achilles of his time; a big bully and tormentor, a merciless brute, a ruthless and unbridled warrior, a haughty, arrogant and egoist ruler of the world, but at the same time matchlessly brave, bold, valorous, courageous, strong, fearless and mighty, someone invincible and immune to death except for one weakness in his body which made him vulnerable, his Navel, for if someone hit him here with a sharp weapon, such as an arrow, it was destined that Ravana would die, very much like Achilles' Heels.

The narration of the demons' reign of terror, and the dread and havoc they created in this world has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 181—to Doha no. 183 as follows herein below:-]

चौ०. कामरूप जानहिं सब माया । सपनेहुँ जिन्ह कें धरम न दाया ॥ १ ॥
दसमुख बैठ सभाँ एक बारा । देखि अमित आपन परिवारा ॥ २ ॥
सुत समूह जन परिजन नाती । गनै को पार निसाचर जाती ॥ ३ ॥

सेन बिलोकि सहज अभिमानी । बोला बचन क्रोध मद सानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kāmarūpa jānahim̃ saba māyā. sapanēhum̃ jinha kēm dharama na dāyā. 1.
dasamukha baiṭha sabhām̃ ēka bārā. dēkhi amita āpana parivārā. 2.
suta samūha jana parijana nātī. ganai kō pāra nisācara jāṭī. 3.
sēna bilōki sahaba abhimānī. bōlā bacana krōdha mada sānī. 4.

All the demons were personified forms of worldly passion and lust; they also had the magical ability to assume any form they wished (kāmarūpa)¹.

Besides this, they knew all sorts of wicked tricks, and were experts in the art of creating delusions and hallucinations (jānahim̃ saba māyā).

They never ever dreamt of Dharma (religion, righteousness, probity, propriety and nobility—“sapanēhum̃ jinha kēm dharama”), nor of mercy and kindness (na dāyā). (1)

[¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 176 where also this unique quality of the demon race has been reiterated.]

One day, while sitting in his royal court, the 10-headed Ravana looked around proudly and saw his huge family consisting of a countless number of demons. (2)

His extensive family consisted of his sons, attendants, kith and kin, and other relatives that were close to him, as well as the innumerable subjects of the demon kingdom that were divided into many other clans, sects and denominations having countless members. (3)

When he observed his huge army, he felt a natural sense of pride. Emboldened by this sight, his ego was stoked; he said very angrily and haughtily, ---- (4)

सुनहु सकल रजनीचर जूथा । हमरे बैरी बिबुध बरूथा ॥ ५ ॥
ते सनमुख नहिं करहिं लराई । देखि सबल रिपु जाहिं पराई ॥ ६ ॥
तेन्ह कर मरन एक बिधि होई । कहउँ बुझाइ सुनहु अब सोई ॥ ७ ॥
द्विजभोजन मख होम सराधा । सब कै जाइ करहु तुम्ह बाधा ॥ ८ ॥

sunahu sakala rajanīcara jūthā. hamarē bairī bibudha barūthā. 5.
tē sanamukha nahim̃ karahim̃ larāī. dēkhi sabala ripu jāhim̃ parāī. 6.
tēnha kara marana ēka bidhi hōī. kaha'um̃ bujhā'i sunahu aba sōī. 7.
dvijabhōjana makha hōma sarādhā. saba kai jā'i karahu tumha bādhā. 8.

[Ravana addressed his generals and courtiers, speaking with a strong hint of vengeance in his voice. He instructed his army, saying in an angry tone marked with vengefulness—] ‘Listen all of you demon warriors. The Gods and their followers are our natural enemies¹. (5)

They are so cowardly that they don't fight face to face with their enemies, and as soon as they discover that their adversary is strong, they flee from the place. (6)

There is one way by which they can be annihilated. I shall now tell all of you how to go about it. Listen carefully. (7)

Go and prevent the Brahmins from feeding themselves and making offerings to these Gods through fire sacrifices. Stop them from doing religious practices and performing rituals such as offering oblations, doing ablutions and performing fire sacrifices, as well as other ceremonies such as offering food and water to the spirits of dead ancestors.

[To wit, force the Brahmins and the Gods and the Spirits to starve. These Brahmins are deemed to be representatives of the Gods on earth, so if they starve they will become weak and ultimately die. The offering that these Brahmins make to the fire during the sacrifice provide nourishment to the Gods in heaven; so if you stop these religious practices the Gods too will die of hunger. Just like the Gods, the Spirits too will die of hunger and thirst if no one offers them food and water during ceremonies to mark the dead. So therefore, if we, the demons, wish to eliminate all opposition to our rule and well-being then it is absolutely essential to weaken the Gods and the Brahmins by making them starve.] (8)

[Note—¹The Gods and the Demons had been natural enemies from the very beginning. The simple reason, without going into the mythological history, is that they represent two absolutely opposite and inimical aspects and virtues in this creation. It is just like the case of day and night; though both form an integral part of life on earth but they can't exist simultaneously—for if it is day then there cannot be night, and if it is night then daylight is out of the picture. It's a natural phenomenon. So, while the Gods represent all that is good, righteous, noble, holy and auspicious in this world, the Demons symbolize just the opposite—i.e. everything that stands for evil, sin and wickedness.

Coming specifically to the case of Ravana and his clan of demons, the special reason for his aggravated hate and spiked antagonism for the Gods, the Brahmins and the holy people attired like the hermits, the sages and the ascetics lie in the history of his previous life when he was king Pratapbhanu, the story which we have already read earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 176.

It was a person disguised as a 'hermit' who had cheated him and maneuvered things in such a wicked way that Pratapbhanu, who was otherwise a noble and righteous king, was cursed to become a demon with his entire family and subjects of his kingdom. Who cursed him? It were the 'Brahmins' who had cursed him, without verifying facts and without determining if he was actually at fault or not. Further, when these proud Brahmins learnt a little while later that the king had no role to play in the circumstances that led them to curse him, they did not make any effort to amend their curse or reduce its intensity so that some soothing balm could be applied over the severe harm that was caused to Pratapbhanu due to the unjust curse that they had so hastily cast upon him. Say, if they could be in such a hurry to give a curse of condemnation on an innocent person, albeit out of misunderstanding or misinformation, why couldn't they ameliorate the suffering of the accursed by giving him a boon to counter the pain and injury caused by the unmerited curse?

Then come the role of the 'Gods'. Though it is true that they had informed the Brahmins that the curse which they had cast on king Pratapbhanu was unjust and unwarranted as the king was at no fault, but the Gods could have told this fact to the

Brahmins earlier also—at the time when there was an invisible voice from the sky warning the Brahmins that meat had been mixed in their food, that had made them so angry that they cursed the king to become a mean-eating demon—so that the Brahmins would not have become angry at the king, but instead would have cursed the wicked hermit and his equally wicked friend, the demon, who actually were behind the whole conspiracy.

These developments had an immense psychological impact on Pratapbhanu which shook him to the core, and he determined to teach, when the proper time comes, all these three categories—the Brahmins, the Gods, and all those who were attired as hermits, ascetics and sages—a bitter lesson which they will remember for countless generations to come!

So once Pratapbhanu's soul entered the body of a demon to become Ravana, and Ravana acquired boons of invincibility and unparalleled strength from the creator Brahma, he went ahead with his 'teaching' project with unbridled vehemence and excessive wrath known only to a person who seeks retribution with a vengeance as he feels that some great injustice had suddenly been heaped upon him at a time when he had no wherewithal to protect himself, nor had he been given a chance to stand trial and explain himself.

Ravana's actions and deeds are reminiscent of a volcano suppressed over a long period of time, and then it suddenly bursts forth with a force of intense fury when it finds a crevice or a vent on the surface of the earth to pour out scorching lava that can wipe out entire civilisations, reduce earth to a barren landscape of lifeless rocks, and also boil the cold water of the ocean to where it flows in streams that are bubbling hot like oil spluttering on a pan over the fire place. Like this lava, there was no stopping of Ravana!]

दो०. छुधा छीन बलहीन सुर सहजेहिं मिलिहहिं आइ ।
तब मारिहउँ कि छाड़िहउँ भली भाँति अपनाइ ॥ १८१ ॥

dōhā.

chudhā chīna balahīna sura sahajēhiṁ milihahiṁ ā'i.
taba māriha'um' ki chāḍiha'um' bhalī bhāṁti apānā'i. 181.

When the Gods would have sufficiently starved, they will become weak and famished. So sooner or later they will come to us (to surrender and beg for mercy); at that time I will either slay them or spare them after fully subjugating them and ensuring their loyalty and allegiance to me. (Doha no. 181)

चौ०. मेघनाद कहूँ पुनि हँकरावा । दीन्ही सिख बलु बयरु बड़ावा ॥ १ ॥
जे सुर समर धीर बलवाना । जिन्ह कें लरिबे कर अभिमाना ॥ २ ॥
तिन्हहि जीति रन आनेसु बाँधी । उठि सुत पितु अनुसासन काँधी ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'i.

mēghanāda kahum' puni haṁkarāvā. dīnhī sikha balu bayaru baḍhāvā. 1.
jē sura samara dhīra balavānā. jinha kēm laribē kara abhimānā. 2.

tinhabi jīti rana ānēsu bām̐dhī. uṭhi suta pitu anusāsana kām̐dhī. 3.

He (Ravana) summoned Meghnad (his son), encouraging and motivating him by praising his abilities, valour and strength. Then Ravana advised his son [1], ‘All those Gods who pride themselves as being steady and invincible in battle, who are proud of their strength and courage and privileges [2], you must go and defeat them in the battle-field, and then having conquered them and crushed their pride, you must tie them up and bring them here in captivity as trophies of war.’

When his son heard these instructions of his father, he got up immediately to carry them out outright with diligence and vehemence [3]. (1-3)

एहि बिधि सबही अग्या दीन्ही । आपुनु चलेउ गदा कर लीन्ही ॥ ४ ॥
चलत दसानन डोलति अवनी । गर्जत गर्भ स्रवहिं सुर रवनी ॥ ५ ॥

ēhi bidhi sabahī agyā dīnhī. āpunu calē'u gadā kara līnhī. 4.
calata dasānana ḍōlati avanī. garjata garbha sra vahim̐ sura ravanī. 5.

In this way, after having given appropriate instructions to everyone (i.e. to all his family members, all his commanders, as well as the countless other chiefs of the demon race), Ravana himself got up with a formidable mace in his hand. (4)

When the ten-headed Ravana stoutly set out on his mission of conquest of the world, the whole earth shook under his commanding feet (even as he stomped and stamped angrily on the earth while moving ahead briskly to seek and destroy any opposition that he may encounter on the way).

When he roared, yelled and thundered, those spouses of the Gods in the heaven who happened to be pregnant at the time, they miscarried¹. (5)

[Note—¹A similar thing is reported when Hanuman launched himself, with a great sound of thunder and blast in the skies of Lanka, when he was on his way back to the other side of the ocean where his companions were waiting for his arrival. At that time also, the pregnant women folks of the demons had aborted out of terror. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28.]

रावन आवत सुनेउ सकोहा । देवन्ह तके मेरु गिरि खोहा ॥ ६ ॥
दिगपालन्ह के लोक सुहाए । सूने सकल दसानन पाए ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि पुनि सिंघनाद करि भारी । देइ देवतन्ह गारि पचारी ॥ ८ ॥

rāvana āvata sunē'u sakōhā. dēvanha takē mēru giri khōhā. 6.
digapālanha kē lōka suhā'ē. sūnē sakala dasānana pā'ē. 7.
puni puni singhanāda kari bhārī. dē'i dēvatanha gāri pacārī. 8.

When the Gods heard that Ravana is coming their way angrily, they were terrified out of their wits and scampered for cover, quickly hiding themselves in the many grottos

(caves and catacombs) in Mt. Meru (the great mountain in the heaven on the summit of which the Gods had their capital). (6)

When the ten-headed Ravana reached the wonderfully charming and exceedingly pleasant capital city of the ‘custodians of the world’ (i.e. the God; “*digapāla*”), he found it abandoned. (7)

He repeatedly roared victoriously like a lion, profusely and vehemently abusing the Gods again and again, shaming them contemptuously, and challenging them for a duel.

[To wit, when Ravana found that the Gods had already run away before his arrival in the heaven, he felt very proud of his own strength and powers as now he was certain that none of them had the stomach to face him. To further humiliate the Gods, who were eternal enemies of the demons, and to demoralize them, to crush their self-respect, and to smother their dignity further, he abused them and taunted them in the most insinuating way he could devise.] (8)

रन मद मत्त फिरड़ जग धावा । प्रतिभट खोजत कतहुँ न पावा ॥ ९ ॥
रबि ससि पवन बरुन धनधारी । अगिनि काल जम सब अधिकारी ॥ १० ॥
किंनर सिद्ध मनुज सुर नागा । हठि सबही के पंथहिं लागा ॥ ११ ॥

rana mada matta phira'i jaga dhāvā. pratibhaṭa khōjata katahum'na pāvā. 9.
rabi sasi pavana baruna dhanadhārī. agini kāla jama saba adhikārī. 10.
kinnara sid'dha manuja sura nāgā. haṭhi sabahī kē panthahim lāgā. 11.

He ran amok and went wild in this world, running briskly from one of its three corners to the other (i.e. to all the parts of the heaven, the earth and the nether world) to find anyone who would dare challenge him, as he was intensely itching for a fight and was maddened with a burning desire for a duel that would spill blood.

But to his dismay, and satisfaction at the same time¹, he did not find one single challenger to his might, anywhere.

[¹He was dismayed because his itch for a battle was irritating him, and he could not find someone against whom he could rub himself to ease this annoying irritation. At the same time he was immensely satisfied to discover that he was the mightiest and the strongest one in the whole creation, someone who has sent even the Gods, who otherwise are very proud of their own powers, authority and strength, shivering for cover out of fear of him, with their wives aborting their embryos! It surely must have granted sadistic comfort to Ravana.] (9)

All the prominent Gods such as the Sun, the Moon, Pawan (Wind-God), Varun (Water-God), Kubera (the treasurer of Gods), Agni (Fire-God), Kaal (God of Death and Time), Yamraj (the God of Hell)—all these higher authorities and senior custodians of their respective realms [10], as well as the Kinnars (heavenly dancers), the Siddhas (mystics), human beings, and all the other remaining junior or demi-gods, as well as the Nagas (serpents; the custodians of the nether and subterranean worlds)—Ravana pursued them all relentlessly, without exception [11]. (10-11)

ब्रह्मसृष्टि जहँ लागि तनुधारी । दसमुख बसबर्ती नर नारी ॥ १२ ॥
आयसु करहिँ सकल भयभीता । नवहिँ आइ नित चरन बिनीता ॥ १३ ॥

brahmasṛṣṭi jaham̃ lagi tanudhārī. dasamukha basabartī nara nārī. 12.
āyasu karahim̃ sakala bhayabhītā. navahim̃ ā'i nita carana binitā. 13.

In every corner of the Creator's creation, wherever there lived any living being, verily, every one of them was subjugated by Ravana, and all of them became obedient to him (for fear of their lives). (12)

All the living beings professed their allegiance to him; they obeyed him and came to pay their respects to him by bowing at his feet virtually on a daily basis (i.e. regularly and without fail). (13)

दो०. भुजबल बिस्व बस्य करि राखेसि कोउ न सुतंत्र ।
मंडलीक मनि रावन राज करइ निज मंत्र ॥ १८२ (क) ॥

dōhā.

bhujabala bisva basya kari rākhēsi kō'u na sutantra.
maṇḍalīka mani rāvana rāja kara'i nija mantra. 182 (a).

He (Ravana) conquered the whole creation, subjugating everyone and keeping them loyal under the might of his arms; none was left independent as everyone was bound in bonds of allegiance to him.

In this way, there was only one sovereign in the whole of the Creator's realm, and he was the ten-headed Ravana. He ruled with an iron hand; his word was the final law, and whatever he pronounced became the inviolable mandate for one and all. (Doha no. 182-a)

देव जच्छ गंधर्ब नर किंनर नाग कुमारि ।
जीति बरीं निज बाहुबल बहु सुंदर बर नारि ॥ १८२ (ख) ॥

dēva jaccha gandharba nara kinnara nāga kumārī.
jīti barīm̃ nija bāhubala bahu sundara bara nārī. 182 (b).

He forcefully conquered, by the strength of his arms, and then married countless maidens belonging to the a wide genres of gods and humans, such as the many senior Gods, their junior counterparts such as the Yakshas (spirits), Gandharvas (musicians of heaven), humans (of all categories, from the humble man to the mighty kings), Kinnars (dancers of heaven), and Naagas (serpents and rulers of the subterranean and nether worlds).

Not only limiting himself to the maidens of the categories listed above, he forced his marriage upon countless other beautiful girls and virgins wherever he took fancy upon them. (Doha no. 182-b)

चौ०. इंद्रजीत सन जो कछु कहेऊ । सो सब जनु पहिलेहिं करि रहेऊ ॥ १ ॥
 प्रथमहिं जिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीन्हा । तिन्ह कर चरित सुनहु जो कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

indrajīta sana jō kachu kahē'ū. sō saba janu pahilēhim kari rahē'ū. 1.
 prathamahim jinha kahum'āyasu dīnhā. tinha kara carita sunahu jō kīnhā. 2.

Whatever he (Ravana) had instructed his son Indrajeet (Meghnad) to do¹, the latter had done it so quickly that it appeared that he had accomplished his mission even before his father had finished his own campaign. (1)

Now listen to the deeds done by those other demons who were also instructed alongside Meghnad in the beginning². (2)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no.182.]

देखत भीमरूप सब पापी । निसिचर निकर देव परितापी ॥ ३ ॥
 करहिं उपद्रव असुर निकाया । नाना रूप धरहिं करि माया ॥ ४ ॥
 जेहि बिधि होइ धर्म निर्मूला । सो सब करहिं बेद प्रतिकूला ॥ ५ ॥
 जेहिं जेहिं देस धेनु द्विज पावहिं । नगर गाउँ पुर आगि लगावहिं ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhata bhīmarūpa saba pāpī. nisicara nikara dēva paritāpī. 3.
 karahim upadrava asura nikāyā. nānā rūpa dharahim kari māyā. 4.
 jēhi bidhi hō'i dharma nirmūlā. sō saba karahim bēda pratikūlā. 5.
 jēhim jēhim dēsa dhēnu dvija pāvahim. nagara gā'um' pura āgi lagāvahim. 6.

All the demons, individually as well as in groups, were of colossus sizes, very sinful and exceedingly evil, and were inveterate tormentors of the Gods. (3)

Huge hordes of demons unleashed an uncontrolled reign of terror and mayhem all around. They were able to assume magical forms in the way they liked (to carry out their schemes). (4)

They did everything that was against the principles of Dharma (probity, propriety, righteousness and noble thought and conduct) and the Vedas (ancient scriptures) to ensure that they were completely ruined and utterly defiled. (5)

In whichever city, town or village they found Brahmins and cows (symbolizing domesticated animals), they relentlessly set the whole habitations on fire to burn

everything down. [To wit, they behaved like an invading army of savages and fiends who kill and plunder and burn just for the sadistic pleasure of it.] (6)

सुभ आचरन कतहुँ नहिं होई । देव बिप्र गुरु मान न कोई ॥ ७ ॥
नहिं हरिभगति जग्य तप ग्याना । सपनेहुँ सुनिअ न बेद पुराना ॥ ८ ॥

subha ācarana katahum' nahim hō'i. dēva bipra guru māna na kō'i. 7.
nahim haribhagati jagya tapa gyānā. sapanēhum' suni'a na bēda purānā. 8.

As a consequence, there was no morality, righteousness, propriety and probity left anywhere in the world; no one behaved rightly and all traces of goodness vanished.

No one paid heed to or respected the Gods, the Brahmins or their Guru (teachers; preceptors; guides), treating them with utter disrespect and neglect. (7)

There was no devotion for Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; the Lord God), and neither were there any Yagyas (fire sacrifices), Tapa (penance and austerity) or Gyan (spiritual wisdom and gnosis; learning and knowledge of the scriptures and other metaphysical branches of knowledge).

No one even dreamt of hearing any of the scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans. (8)

[Note—There was a complete breakdown of law and order; goodness, righteousness and all other virtues evaporated, and these were replaced by sins, vices, evil and perversion that metaphorically turned the green earth into a barren desert.

There were two obvious reasons for this sorry state of affairs to come about. One of course was the direct action of the demons, and the other was an indirect affect. The people realized that if they had to survive and live in reasonable peace then they ought to do the demons' bidding, for otherwise these cruel and remorseless demons would not only kill them but also burn everything down. Hence, as a measure of survival the general populace did what pleased the demons, as in the present frame of time they were the realm's rulers. To do anything that Ravana and his followers did not want was inviting death and destruction voluntarily. Who in his right mind would want it?]

छं०. जप जोग बिरागा तप मख भागा श्रवन सुनइ दससीसा । १ ।
आपुनु उठि धावइ रहै न पावइ धरि सब घालइ खीसा ॥ २ ॥
अस भ्रष्ट अचारा भा संसारा धर्म सुनिअ नहिं काना । ३ ।
तेहि बहुबिधि त्रासइ देस निकासइ जो कह बेद पुराना ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

japa jōga birāgā tapa makha bhāgā śravana suna'i dasasīsā. 1.
āpunu uṭhi dhāva'i rahai na pāva'i dhari saba ghāla'i khīsā. 2.
asa bhraṣṭa acārā bhā sansārā dharma suni'a nahim kānā. 3.
tēhi bahubidhi trāsai' dēsa nikāsa'i jō kaha bēda purānā. 4.

If the ten-headed Ravana happened to hear that someone was engaged in doing Japa (repetition of Mantras and Lord God's holy name), Yoga (meditation, contemplation), Vairagya (renunciation), Tapa (penance and austerity), or Yagya (fire sacrifice) and offering oblations to the Gods during the process—he would get up instantly himself, rush to that place, and lay to waste everything around, killing or arresting all those who were engaged in these religious activities, and generally plundering the place. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

In this way, the whole world was rife with widespread evil and sinful deeds; no one bothered to hear anything pertaining to Dharma (righteousness, goodness, probity and propriety).

If anyone said or heard the scriptures, such as the Vedas and the Purans, he (Ravana) would terrorize him in many ways, and forced him out of his country (i.e. snatched his home and sent him to the wilderness to suffer and die). (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

सो०. बरनि न जाइ अनीति घोर निसाचर जो करहिं ।

हिंसा पर अति प्रीति तिन्ह के पापहि कवनि मिति ॥ १८३ ॥

sōraṭhā.

barani na jā'i anīti ghōra nisācara jō karahim̄.

hinsā para ati prīti tinha kē pāpahi kavani miti. 183.

Indeed, it is not possible to describe the extent and intensity of sins and evil deeds that the demons were recklessly perpetrating in this world.

Verily, those who have no morality and sense of propriety worth the name left in them, those who have no conscience left in them at all, say what is the use of talking about the extent of decadence and degradation to which they can fall, and the nadir of evilness and sinfulness to which they could stoop? [To wit, there is no limit or end to it.] (Sortha no. 183)

[Note—We have read till now how the demons led by their invincible king Ravana had spread a ferocious and vicious reign of excessive of terror and mayhem, horrifying the entire creation and causing havoc and torment all around. All good virtues were trampled underfoot, and everything that stood for evil, sin, vice, perversion, decadence and outright immorality took the front stage.

Beyond a certain limit everything is bad. When a certain threshold was crossed, when the things reached a nadir and became simply and absolutely intolerable, when the very existence was in question, then the Gods and Mother Earth decided to approach the Supreme Being to do something to save them from further horrors, grief, torments and humiliation, and to protect this creation from complete annihilation.

So the Lord promised them that he will come down to earth himself in the form of Lord Ram, and do what is necessary to eliminate the scourge of the evil Ravana and his clan of cruel, vicious and ferocious demons. On their part the Gods decided to help the Lord by coming down to the earth by assuming the forms of monkeys and bears, and then join the Lord in his campaign to eliminate the demons and free everyone of their fear.

This part of the story has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188 as follows herein below:-]

चौ०. बाढ़े खल बहु चोर जुआरा । जे लंपट परधन परदारा ॥ १ ॥
 मानहिं मातु पिता नहिं देवा । साधुन्ह सन करवावहिं सेवा ॥ २ ॥
 जिन्ह के यह आचरन भवानी । ते जानेहु निसिचर सब प्रानी ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

bārḥē khala bahu cōra ju'ārā. jē lampṭa paradhana paradārā. 1.
 mānahim mātu pitā nahim dēvā. sādhunha sana karavāvahim sēvā. 2.
 jinha kē yaha ācarana bhavānī. tē jānēhu nisicara saba prānī. 3.

During the period when the demons' had established sovereignty over the world and their power and authority were in the ascendance, there was an exponential increase in the number of villains and scoundrels who were unabashedly wicked, thieves and gamblers, and who greedily coveted the wealth and women of others. (1)

They paid no heed or showed respect to either their own parents or to the Gods; they made saintly people serve them like slaves or servants.

[To wit, these demons had no scruples or morality. They feared none, and treated all with utter disdain.] (2)

[Lord Shiva said to Parvati to whom he is narrating this story—] Oh Bhavani! All those who exhibit the traits briefly outlined in the foregoing verses¹ should be regarded as 'demons'.

[To wit, even if the concerned creature is not in the physical form that is usually identified with an ugly, hideous, fearsome and horrifying form of a demon, even if the creature has a pleasant countenance and a attractive visage that seems sweet to the eye, but if that creature's acts and deeds are anywhere close to the way demons have been described in these verses, then let it be known for sure that that particular creature is a demon in disguise.] (3)

[Note—¹The notorious character of demons, their despicable nature and the evil deeds that define them have been outlined briefly in the verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1, 8 that precede Doha no. 181; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 184.]

अतिसय देखि धर्म कै ग्लानी । परम सभीत धरा अकुलानी ॥ ४ ॥
 गिरि सरि सिंधु भार नहिं मोही । जस मोहि गरुअ एक परद्रोही ॥ ५ ॥
 सकल धर्म देखइ बिपरीता । कहि न सकइ रावन भय भीता ॥ ६ ॥

atisaya dēkhi dharma kai glānī. parama sabhīta dharā akulānī. 4.
 giri sari sindhu bhāra nahim mōhī. jasa mōhi garu'a ēka paradrōhī. 5.

sakala dharma dēkha'i biparītā. kahi na saka'i rāvana bhaya bhītā. 6.

When Mother Earth observed that there was an extreme decline of morality, ethics and righteousness, when she was alarmed at the level of decadence to which the society had stooped, and when all the parameters of Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility and goodness) were violated and trampled upon (by the demons and their followers), she felt sore affright and became extremely restless¹.

[¹The Earth was terrified as she did not know what to do and how to get rid of the scourge symbolized by the demons. She was agitated because she is like a 'mother' for this creation; for it is in the symbolic womb of the Earth that all living beings have their origin, and it is Earth that nourishes and sustains them all from their cradle to their grave. Even for the trees and the organisms low down in the hierarchy of creation, Earth is not only their dwelling place but also their sustainer and nourisher. So therefore, even as a mother feels extremely annoyed, sorry and agitated if her children go out of her hands to cause unwarranted and intolerable nuisance and mischief everywhere, when Mother Earth saw the kind of mayhem and chaos that the demons unleashed in this world, and utter disregard for any principles and scruples that they exhibited, creating extreme torment, suffering and hardship for the rest of the inhabitants of the Earth, she was gravely hurt and remorseful. Mother Earth could not cope with this sort of suffering any longer; the sinfulness and evilness and cruelty and horror that prevailed on her surface was unbearable for her. The demons were like a poisonous thorn stuck deep into her bosom, bleeding her, tormenting her and constantly rubbing salt over her sore wounds, day in and day out.] (4)

Mother Earth thought to herself, 'I do not regard the mighty mountains, the great rivers and the endless ocean as any kind of weight on my self, and I do not feel inconvenienced or oppressed by them, but someone who is malevolent towards others, someone who torments and causes suffering and pain to others, is a weight that I can't bear, for I feel suffocated by such creatures' presence.' (5)

Earth observed that all the principles of Dharma had been corrupted so much so that not even a trace of any of the principles of goodness, righteousness and probity remained in their primal form.

[The situation had become so serious and alarming that—] Everyone (i.e. even the sages and seers, the mystics and the gods et al) was so terrified of Ravana that no one dared speak a word (against him, nor raise any objection or opposition to his misdeeds). [To wit, the whole world was so terrified of Ravana's wrath that they thought it better to keep quiet. Even the so-called keepers of Dharma, such as the sages, seers and the gods, too preferred to keep mum.] (6)

धेनु रूप धरि हृदयँ बिचारी । गई तहाँ जहँ सुर मुनि झारी ॥ ७ ॥
निज संताप सुनाएसि रोई । काहू तें कछु काज न होई ॥ ८ ॥

dhēnu rūpa dhari hr̥dayam̐ bicārī. ga'ī tahām̐ jaham̐ sura muni jhārī. 7.
nija santāpa sunā'ēsi rō'ī. kāhū tēm̐ kachu kāja na hō'ī. 8.

After contemplating over the matter a lot, Earth decided to assume the form of a cow. Then she went to a place where other great sages and the gods had already assembled¹. (7)

She wept bitterly and narrated her tale of woes. But no one had any solution or an answer for her predicaments; everyone, the great sages as well as the mighty gods, listened to Earth helplessly, and none could or would offer a solution to her (because they were in the same state of confusion and consternation as the Earth)². (8)

[Note—¹When Earth saw that she had no hope from anyone else because no one would stand up against Ravana and the demons to invite their cruel wrath, she decided to do something herself. So she assumed the form of a ‘cow’ and went to place where all the great sages and gods had got together in a huddle. They too were worried, and so they secretly assembled at some out-of-sight place at which the demons had yet not paid any attention. These sages and gods were discussing the same matter that had created so much consternation for the Earth, and it was of finding a way to get rid of this problem of the demons led by Ravana.

²Earth did not know that these powerful sages, seers and gods were as helpless as her. In fact, they had assembled at a place precisely for discussing this problem of Ravana, and how to find a way out it. So when she wept and sought their help, they kept quiet and pleaded helplessness. It has already been said that Ravana had forcefully subjugated sages and gods after getting boons from Brahma. Refer: (i) Doha no. 181 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-3, 6-13 that precede it; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 183.]

छं०. सुर मुनि गंधर्वा मिलि करि सर्बा गे बिरंचि के लोका । १ ।
संग गोतनुधारी भूमि बिचारी परम बिकल भय सोका ॥ २ ॥
ब्रह्माँ सब जाना मन अनुमाना मोर कछू न बसाई । ३ ।
जा करि तैं दासी सो अबिनासी हमरेउ तोर सहाई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

sura muni gandharbā mili kari sarbā gē birañci kē lōkā. 1.
samṅa gōtanudhārī bhūmi bicārī parama bikala bhaya sōkā. 2.
brahmām̃ saba jānā mana anumānā mōra kachū na basā'ī. 3.
jā kari taim̃ dāsī sō abināsī hamarē'u tōra sahā'ī. 4.

All those who had assembled to discuss the matter—such as the Gods, the learned Munis (sages) and the Gandharvas (demi-gods)—went together to the abode of Brahma, the creator. [The immediate matter that concerned them all was Ravana and his army of demons who had spread their atrocious rule of horror and grief which had made life hell for all living beings. The gods were representatives for all those who were suffering at the hands of the cruel and wicked demons, and they went to the Creator to seek his help and advice to find out a way of their predicament.] (Chanda line no. 1)

They were accompanied by earth which was extremely terrified, worried and sad; she was in the form of a 'cow'. (Chanda line no. 2)

When Brahma learnt everything about the gravity of the matter, he felt that the situation was beyond his ability and power to either mend or control; he was dismayed that he has to concede his helplessness in being able to render any help in this matter. (Chanda line no. 3)

[Brahma's attention was drawn specially to the pitiable condition of earth who was in the form of a cow. He felt extremely sorry and worried for her, but though he had great sympathy and empathy he was distressed that he could not help her in the least. However, being wise and elderly in creation, Brahma had great experience of similar situations from the past. Upon deep contemplation he felt that inspite of all odds there was still a ray of hope left. So he turned to earth and advised her as follows—]

Brahma advised earth, which was in the form of a cow, 'He who is immortal and eternal, and whom you serve as a maid (i.e. the Supreme Lord whose command you obey most faithfully)—well, that (merciful and gracious) Lord will surely be of help to you, as well as for us. [To wit therefore, let us all join hands to pray to that Lord and seek his blessing and intervention. I tell you all truly that it is the only feasible solution for our predicament.]' (Chanda line no. 4)

सो०. धरनि धरहि मन धीर कह बिरंचि हरिपद सुमिरु ।

जानत जन की पीर प्रभु भंजिहि दारुन बिपति ॥ १८४ ॥

sōraṭhā.

dharani dharahi mana dhīra kaha birañci haripada sumiru.
jānata jana kī pīra prabhu bhañjihi dārūna bipati. 184.

Brahma the creator (birañci) told earth, 'Oh Earth! Have patience and courage; contemplate upon and remember the holy feet of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu).

The gracious and merciful Lord understands the pain and grief in the heart of his devotees. So he will immediately take cognizance of your prayers and initiate steps to eliminate the very cause that is tormenting you so much and giving you such extreme misery.' (Sortha no. 184)

[Note—It ought to be noted here that Brahma has addressed Mother Earth specifically, and makes no mention of others who were with her, such as the Gods, the sages and the Gandharvas. It clearly means that he was much moved by her pitiful condition. Since earth is the dwelling place of all living beings in this world, her miserable condition represented the horrors and torments faced by every single creature of Brahma's creation.

Brahma is the 'creator' and the 'grandfather' of this creation, and he had himself assigned Mother Earth the duty to take care of the day-to-day sustenance of his creation. So it is but natural that when he saw Mother Earth, who is his own representative, coming to him in utter distress with her grievances and complain to

him that his creation is being subjected to immense torture, he will be duty-bound to give her a special audience.

This episode also shows that the Creator is more concerned about the welfare and well-being of the humble subjects of his creation than he is for those who highly placed in the hierarchy of creation. To wit, Brahma is very worried about the suffering of ordinary creatures who live an ordinary life on earth, creatures who have no high contacts and who are not high-profile individuals like the gods, the sages and the gandharvas who had accompanied mother earth. Brahma knew very well that these gods, sages and gandharvas etc. are capable of taking care of themselves, but the poor creatures whom earth represents are absolutely helpless and hapless, and therefore they need special attention.

That is why Brahma paid special attention to the complaint of Mother Earth, and addressed her personally. Obviously all the Gods, Munis and Ghandharvas who were with Earth too heard what Brahma said, and everyone decided to jointly pray to the Supreme Being to intervene and save them from more horrors and sufferings.]

चौ०. बैठे सुर सब करहिं बिचारा । कहँ पाइअ प्रभु करिअ पुकारा ॥ १ ॥
 पुर बैकुंठ जान कह कोई । कोउ कह पयनिधि बस प्रभु सोई ॥ २ ॥
 जाके हृदयँ भगति जसि प्रीती । प्रभु तहँ प्रगट सदा तेहिं रीती ॥ ३ ॥
 तेहिं समाज गिरिजा मैं रहेऊँ । अवसर पाइ बचन एक कहेऊँ ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

baiṭhē sura saba karahim bicārā. kham' pā'i'a prabhu kari'a pukārā. 1.
 pura baikunṭha jāna kaha kōī. kō'u kaha payanidhi basa prabhu sōī. 2.
 jākē hṛdayam' bhagati jasi prīti. prabhu taham' pragata sadā tēhim rīti. 3.
 tēhim samāja girijā maim rahē'um'. avasara pā'i bacana ēka kahē'um'. 4.

[Now the crucial thing was to find out where the Supreme Lord was, how to find him, so that a request can be made to him to save the world from the horrors of Ravana and his race of demons.]

All the Gods and others who were with them (i.e. the sages, the Gandharvas, Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder etc.) sat down to ponder over the matter of how and where to find the Supreme Lord so that they can plead before him and request him for help. (1)

Someone in the assembly advised that the Lord resides in the heaven known as Vaikuntha so they must make haste to go there, while someone else said that the Lord lives in the middle of the celestial Ocean (called the “payanidhi”, literally the endless treasury of water, where Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath, the celestial serpent, as the latter floats on the surface of this vast ocean). (2)

The fact is that it is an established principle that the Lord always reveals himself in response to devotion and the extent of affection and faith that a devotee has in his heart.

[To wit, there is no need to go anywhere in search of the Supreme Being, for he is omnipresent and all-pervading. The only single requirement to make the Lord

reveal himself is to have high level of devotion, affection and faith in him. The term 'extent' indicates that the greater is the intensity of devotion, affection and faith that the devotee has in his heart, the easier it is for him to make the Lord manifest himself.] (3)

[Lord Shiva, who was also present during the confabulation, told Parvati to whom he is narrating this episode—] “Listen Girija (Shiva’s consort)! I was also present in that assembly. When I found an opportunity, I spoke up and gave them an advice. (4)

हरि व्यापक सर्वत्र समाना । प्रेम तें प्रगट होहिं मैं जाना ॥ ५ ॥
 देस काल दिसि बिदिसिहु माहीं । कहहु सो कहाँ जहाँ प्रभु नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 अग जगमय सब रहित बिरागी । प्रेम तें प्रभु प्रगटइ जिमि आगी ॥ ७ ॥
 मोर बचन सब के मन माना । साधु साधु करि ब्रह्म बखाना ॥ ८ ॥

hari byāpaka sarbatra samānā. prēma tēm pragaṭa hōhim mair̥ jānā. 5.
 dēsa kāla disi bidisihu māhīm. kahahu sō kahām̃ jahām̃ prabhu nāhīm. 6.
 aga jagamaya saba rahita birāgī. prēma tēm prabhu pragaṭa'i jimi āgī. 7.
 mōra bacana saba kē mana mānā. sādhu sādhu kari brahma bakhānā. 8.

[Lord Shiva said—] I told them that Lord Hari (Vishnu) is omnipresent, immanent and all-pervading in this creation; he is present everywhere in an even manner. I (Shiva) know for certain (by my personal experience) that he reveals himself in response of the affection of his devotees. (5)

Tell me if there is a single place, time, direction and quarter of this creation where the Lord is not present. In all sooth and without gainsay, the Lord is present everywhere, at all times, and in every imaginable situation in this creation. (6)

The Lord pervades this creation from the within and the without, for he is revealed in the form of the animate as well as the inanimate components of this creation. In spite of this, he is separate and detached from this creation¹.

[¹This is the great paradox with the Supreme Being—that though on the one hand it is said that every single entity in this creation is a revelation of the Lord in its individual form, that the creation itself is an image of the Supreme Being who is also known as ‘Brahm’, yet on the other hand the Lord himself is distinct and different from any one or all the entities of creation taken together.]

The Lord manifests himself everywhere as if by magic if there is devotion and affection for him just fire that can be ignited with the firewood anywhere if the conditions are right².

[²The ‘fire element’ is inherently present in the firewood in a latent form, for it ordinarily remains invisible and dormant. When the right conditions prevail, such as when the firewood is vigorously rubbed and a little air is available, this hidden fire suddenly emerges in a visible form. Likewise, the Supreme Being is present in an invisible form everywhere in this creation. It simply requires devotion, faith and affection for the Lord to make him reveal himself instantly.]’ (7)

These words (advice) of mine were well-received by one and all. Brahma praised me and welcomed this advice by an applause, saying ‘well said, well said indeed’.” (8)

दो०. सुनि बिरंचि मन हरष तन पुलकि नयन बह नीर ।
अस्तुति करत जोरि कर सावधान मतिधीर ॥ १८५ ॥

dōhā.

suni birañci mana haraṣa tana pulaki nayana baha nīra.
astuti karata jōri kara sāvadhāna matidhīra. 185.

When Brahma the creator heard these words (of Lord Shiva), he felt exhilarated in his heart; his body was thrilled and tears began to roll down from his eyes.

Then he joined his hands in a prayerful mode, stabilized his mind, and began to offer his sincere prayers to the Lord carefully.

छं०. जय जय सुरनायक जन सुखदायक प्रनतपाल भगवंता । १ ।
गो द्विज हितकारी जय असुरारी सिंधुसुता प्रिय कंता ॥ २ ॥
पालन सुर धरनी अद्भुत करनी मरम न जानइ कोई । ३ ।
जो सहज कृपाला दीनदयाला करउ अनुग्रह सोई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

jaya jaya suranāyaka jana sukhadāyaka pranatapāla bhagavantā. 1.
gō dvija hitakārī jaya asurārī sindhusutā priya kantā. 2.
pālana sura dharanī adbhuta karanī marama na jāna'i kōī. 3.
jō sahaja kṛpālā dīnadayālā kara'u anugraha sōī. 4.

[Brahma offered his prayers to the Supreme Being with these words—]

‘Glory to the Supreme Lord¹ who is the Lord of all the Gods, who gives joy and comfort to his devotees, and who grants unquestioned protection to all those who come to him to surrender and seek refuge! Glory to him; glory to such a Supreme Being! (Chanda line no. 1)

[¹In the next stanza we will read that the Supreme Being to whom this prayer is being offered is Lord Vishnu, the husband of Laxmi—“sindhusutā priya kantā”.]

You are a benevolent benefactor of the cows (representing all humble and harmless creatures), the Brahmins (representing the elderly, learned and wise ones in the society).

Glory to the Lord who is an enemy of the demons (representing the evil, sinful, cruel and dark forces of creation), and who is the dear husband of the daughter-of-the-ocean (i.e. goddess Laxmi)! [This last statement means that the ‘Lord’ and the ‘Supreme Being’ to whom Brahma and the other Gods are offering their prayers is Lord Vishnu as he is the consort of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. She is called the ‘daughter-of-the-ocean’ because she had her origin in the ocean when it

was being churned by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of immortality.] (Chanda line no. 2)

You are the sustainer and the protector of the gods and the earth. No one can know your mysteries or the secret behind your wonderful maverick deeds. [To wit, the ways of the Lord are beyond the understanding of ordinary mortals. Nay, even the gods fail to understand them.] (Chanda line no. 3)

Oh Lord, who by his very nature and habit most gracious, compassionate and benevolent, please be kind upon us (the gods and the earth with all its inhabitants). [Oh Lord, we are suffering horribly under the atrocities unleashed by Ravana and his army of demons. So we most humbly plead with you to save us and grant us your protection.] (Chanda line no. 4)

जय जय अबिनासी सब घट बासी व्यापक परमानंदा । ५ ।
 अबिगत गोतीतं चरित पुनीतं मायारहित मुकुंदा ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहि लागि बिरागी अति अनुरागी बिगतमोह मुनिबृंदा । ७ ।
 निसि बासर ध्यावहिं गुन गन गावहिं जयति सच्चिदानंदा ॥ ८ ॥

jaya jaya abināsī saba ghaṭa bāsī byāpaka paramānandā. 5.
 abigata gōtītaṁ carita punītaṁ māyārahita mukundā. 6.
 jēhi lāgi birāgī ati anurāgī bigatamōha munibrndā. 7.
 nisi bāsara dhyāvahim̐ guna gana gāvahim̐ jayati saccidānandā. 8.

Glory to the Lord who is imperishable and eternal, who dwells in the inner-self of all living beings in the form of their Atma (which is pure consciousness), who is all-pervading, omnipresent and immanent, and who is an embodiment of supreme bliss, felicity and beatitude. (Chanda line no. 5)

The Lord is beyond comprehension; no one knows or understands either who he is or his mysterious ways. He is beyond the perception or reach of the sense organs¹ (and none of these sense organs of perception are able to perceive anything about the Lord).

The deeds and actions as well as the stories that are related to his different manifestations—all of them are holy and divine.

The Lord is free from all Maya (delusions and its affect), and so he is the one who grants the nectar of immortal bliss and happiness².

¹There are five gross organs of perception in the body: ears that hear, eyes that see, tongue that tastes, skin that feels, and nose that smells. A person knows anything about the world with the help of one or more of these organs. This stanza affirms that the Supreme Being cannot be understood by employing any of these gross instruments. Besides these five gross organs of perception, there is the mind and the intellect which also act as organs of perception, but at a subtler level. The Lord is beyond their reach too.

²This stanza clearly means that ‘Maya’, or the different kinds of worldly delusions and infatuations, is the root cause of all sorts of unhappiness and sorrow

that torment a living being. Since the Lord is unaffected by Maya, he is therefore an eternal source of happiness and bliss.] (Chanda line no. 6)

It is for the love of the Lord and his sake that those who wise and enlightened renounce the gross world and its material temptations, and then they sincerely strive to develop deep and unwavering devotion and affection for him within their heart. (Chanda line no. 7)

Such wise and enlightened sages, hermits and ascetics pursue the Lord; they always think of him, remember him, constantly contemplate and meditate upon him, and sing his glories and invoke his divine name, day and night.

Glory to this honourable and great Lord who is Truth and eternal Consciousness personified, and who is truly an embodiment of infinite bliss, felicity and beatitude. (Chanda line no. 8)

जेहिं सृष्टि उपाई त्रिबिध बनाई संग सहाय न दूजा । ९ ।
 सो करउ अघारी चिंत हमारी जानिअ भगति न पूजा ॥ १० ॥
 जो भव भय भंजन मुनि मन रंजन गंजन बिपति बरूथा । ११ ।
 मन बच क्रम बानी छाडि सयानी सरन सकल सुर जूथा ॥ १२ ॥

jēhim sṛṣṭi upā'ī tribidha banā'ī saṅga sahāya na dūjā. 9.

sō kara'u aghārī cinta hamārī jāni'a bhagati na pūjā. 10.

jō bhava bhaya bhañjana muni mana rañjana gañjana bipati barūthā. 11.

mana baca krama bānī chāḍi sayānī sarana sakala sura jūthā. 12.

The Supreme Lord who created this three dimensional world¹ all by himself, without anyone to help him at all [line no. 9] ---

---Let this Lord, who is a destroyer of sins and evil forces of creation, also listen to our humble prayers offered with the greatest supplication by us, and relieve us of all our worries and fears (for we are humble and we do not even know how to offer worship or prayers to him in the proper way; so let the Lord forgive us for our incompetence in the manner in which we offer this prayer to him) [line no. 10]². (Chanda line nos. 9-10)

[¹This creation is said to be of 'three dimensions' because it has three basic types of Gunas or qualities in it: viz. the Sata Guna, the Raja Guna and the Tama Guna. The 'Sata Guna' represents the positive qualities of virtuousness, righteousness and goodness in their best forms; the 'Tama Guna' is the opposite of the Sata Guna and represents everything that is dark, negative, evil and sinful; the 'Raja Guna' stands for those qualities that are combinations of these two, and therefore the median quality that acts as a balancing force. In some way or the other, these three qualities are represented by the three basic types of inhabitants of this world—the 'gods' and the 'demons' at the two extremities, and the 'humans' somewhere in the middle.

²Brahma wishes to request the Supreme Lord that he should not pay any attention to the words which are being used in the prayer that the former is saying, for no one is so skilled that he can boast of saying a prayer that is perfect and of the highest mark. It pleases the Lord to be humble and unpretentious before him, and so even Brahma—who had created the Vedas, the primary scriptures, and as such cannot

be regarded as unlettered or unskilled—decided to become humble and unpretentious before the Supreme Being.]

The Supreme Lord who destroys the fetters represented by this gross mortal world and its many delusions and miseries, the Lord who provides joy and bliss to the Mana (mind and heart) of sages, seers and hermits, the Lord who destroys troubles and ill-fortunes [line no. 11]---

---We the Gods have come to take shelter in the holy feet of such a Lord with all humility in our command, without any pretension or right to privileges of any kind in any of our thoughts, words and deeds (i.e. we are extremely honest in our prayers of supplication and in our request for protection from the Lord) [line no. 12]. (Chanda line nos. 11-12)'

सारद श्रुति सेषा रिषय असेषा जा कहँ कोउ नहिं जाना । १३ ।
 जेहि दीन पिआरे बेद पुकारे द्रवउ सो श्रीभगवाना ॥ १४ ॥
 भव बारिधि मंदर सब बिधि सुंदर गुनमंदिर सुखपुंजा । १५ ।
 मुनि सिद्ध सकल सुर परम भयातुर नमत नाथ पद कंजा ॥ १६ ॥

sārada śruti sēṣā riṣaya asēṣā jā kahum̃ kō'u nahim̃ jānā. 13.

jēhi dīna pi'ārē bēda pukārē drava'u sō śrībhagavānā. 14.

bhava bāridhi mandara saba bidhi sundara gunamandira sukhapuñjā. 15.

muni sid'dha sakala sura parama bhayātura namata nātha pada kanjā. 16.

No one has ever known or understood the mysteries of the Lord—not even Sarada (goddess Saraswati who is the patron of knowledge, wisdom and intelligence), the Srutis (Vedas, the most ancient scriptures that are repositories of knowledge), Seshnath (the legendary serpent-god who is said to be very close to Lord Vishnu, and who has thousand hoods symbolizing someone who has a thousand-fold knowledge of any thing), the Rishsis (great sages and seers) and the Ashesas (the remaining sages such as the mystics, hermits, ascetics etc.) are able to know the Lord. (Chanda line no. 13)

Oh the Supreme God whom the Vedas proclaim as the one who loves all those who are humble, distressed, downtrodden and lowly—please be kind to have pity on us and take merciful cognizance of our precarious situation. (Chanda line no. 14)

You are metaphorically like the great Mt. Mandrachal¹ for the purpose of overcoming the fear arising out of this vast ocean-like mortal world of transmigration; you are charming and appealing in all possible ways; you are a treasure-trove of all the excellent virtues and the best of qualities; and you are a fountain-head of eternal bliss, joy and peace.

[¹Mt. Mandrachal was used as a churning rod by the Gods and the Demons to churn the celestial ocean in the beginning of creation to produce the ambrosia of immortality. This ambrosia was called 'Amrit', and it removed the fear of death. This metaphor is used to imply that the Lord can remove all sorts of fears that the creature has in this mortal world.] (Chanda line no. 15)

All of us—all the sages and seers and hermits, all the mystics as well as the gods who are extremely terrified and sore with fright—bow and surrender ourselves at your holy lotus-like feet².

[²Though the gods and the sages have not expressly said that they are terrified of Ravana and are being tormented by the demons for which purpose they have come to the Supreme Being to ask him to protect them from this scourge and eliminate the demons, but it is understood and expected from the Lord that he knows everything even without telling him clearly. So the gods and sages thought it wiser and more prudent to limit themselves to just offering their obeisance and prayers, and leave the rest of the things to the Supreme Being himself.

Another reason for not specifically mentioning Ravana and the demons was to avoid provoking them openly because there were chances that some spy might be watching them and he would go and report everything to Ravana. If that happens then Ravana would either kill all of them outright for complaining against him, or at least make life a burning hell for them by hounding them and subjecting them to endless tortures even before the Supreme Being can find time to put into effect his promises. So the gods and sages decided to maintain secrecy and show discretion while offering their prayers.] (Chanda line no. 16)

दो०. जानि सभय सुरभूमि सुनि बचन समेत सनेह ।
गगनगिरा गंभीर भङ्ग हरनि सोक संदेह ॥ १८६ ॥

dōhā.

jāni sabhaya surabhūmi suni bacana samēta sanēha.
gaganagirā gambhīra bha'i harani sōka sandēha. 186.

Realising that the Gods and the Earth were sore affright, terrorized and extremely distressed, and hearing their prayerful entreaties made with the greatest of affection and reverence, an invisible Being spoke from the sky (heaven) in a deep-sounding and resonating voice that removed their grief, worries and doubts. (Doha no. 186)

[Note—This was the Supreme Being known as ‘Brahm’ speaking himself—refer Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187 herein below.

Earlier too, when we have read about Manu and Satrupa doing severe Tapa, and the Supreme Being revealing himself before them, it is said that “a voice was heard in the sky as if someone with no physical body was speaking from above, because the sound filled the entire space of the dome of the firmament above the earth, and it was exceptionally deep, grave and reverberating like the rumble of a fast approaching rain-cloud during a thunderstorm.” {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 145.}

The Lord’s voice was grave, deep and resounding like the distant rumble of thunder, and as it reverberated all over the place it sent cheers in the rank of the gods and made earth smile in joy. It is because when the gods and the earth heard this voice they felt reassured as it clearly indicated that their prayers have been answered by the Supreme Lord, and the Lord wants to be responsive to their pleas. This was half battle won for the gods and the earth, for they were sure that if the Lord has chosen to respond to them and reply to their prayers then he will also make sure that their

prayers are answered in an adequate way, that their requests are satisfactorily attended to, and they don't have to go empty-handed and rejected from his doorstep.]

चौ०. जनि डरपहु मुनि सिद्ध सुरेसा । तुम्हहि लागि धरिहउँ नर बेसा ॥ १ ॥
अंसन्ह सहित मनुज अवतारा । लेहउँ दिनकर बंस उदारा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jani ḍarapahu muni sid'dha surēsā. tumhahi lāgi dhariha'um' nara bēsā. 1.
ansanha sahita manuja avatārā. lēha'um' dinakara bansa udārā. 2.

[The unknown voice of in the sky, which was actually the Supreme Lord speaking, said in reassuring words—] ‘Oh sages, mystics and gods¹, don't be afraid at all. I shall assume a human form for your sake. (1)

I shall take birth myself as a human being, along with my fractions that would also manifest themselves alongside me (ansanha sahita)², in the glorious Solar Race (of Ayodhya) that is renowned for its liberal ways in magnanimity, benevolence, charity and graciousness (dinakara bansa udārā)³. (2)

[Note—¹The Lord has addressed the sages, the mystics and the then the gods in that order. It is because this is the order in which these exalted ones had mentioned themselves to the Supreme Lord while concluding their prayers—refer: Chanda line no. 16 herein above.

²When the Lord says that he will come down to earth accompanied by his fractional parts it simply means that he will be accompanied by his assistants or close associates to help him fulfill the promises he has made to the gods, sages and earth.

Had the Lord so wished he could have come alone and slay the demons and their leader Ravana by his mere wish, for there is nothing in this creation which is impossible for him or beyond his abilities, but that would have gone against the boons granted to Ravana by Brahma—that he would only be killed at the hands of a human being. In deference to this boon the Lord was obliged to act like an ordinary human being in order to keep the sanctity of Brahma's words, and so he needed assistance. He could not act like some super-man having some super-natural power to slay Ravana.

It is the way of the world that even the mightiest and ablest of kings need assistance of many ministers and administrators to run his kingdom, as well as commanders and a huge garrison of soldiers to maintain peace and order in his kingdom; the king is not a magician who can do things by swinging a magic wand! So therefore, if the Lord were to act like a human being in order to slay Ravana and keep his words to the gods etc. then he had to refrain from doing anything that is beyond any man to do.

Besides this, it was imperative for the Supreme Being to maintain top secrecy in putting his plans into practice lest Ravana would get a hint and quickly undo everything before the Lord can even initiate any action. Hence, the Lord had to act perfectly like an ordinary human being, not giving any single hint about who he actually was. When we read the story of the Ramayana we will realize that the Lord

had taken strict precautions in this matter—never for even once did he let anyone know that he was the Supreme Being and possesses supernatural powers.

That said, the Supreme Being had to consciously delegate some of his own powers and authority to entities that appeared to be separate and distinct from him, but were actually the Lord's own fractional forms that were his own image, in order to play his role as a human to perfection. It was done with the express purpose to maintain utmost secrecy of the project. It was done so as to make it appear, at least on the surface that the Lord's powers and abilities were limited like an ordinary man, and that his ultimate slaying of Ravana and elimination of the cruel demons were the natural culmination of a long sequence of events that started when Lord Ram was sent to the forest due to family intrigue over the crown of the kingdom, and which went on to the point when Sita, Ram's wife, was kidnapped by Ravana, compelling Lord Ram to go to Lanka in an effort to free his wife, which is something any other honourable man would have done himself, and which led to the fierce war of Lanka and the slaying of Ravana and other cruel demons who had been tormenting the gods, sages and earth.

So now, the question arises 'who were these fractional forms of the Supreme Being who had accompanied him when he manifested himself as a human being'?

This question can be answered at two levels, viz. the metaphysical and the mythological. We shall briefly glance at both of them.

At the time creation, when Brahm, the personified form of the cosmic super Consciousness, decided to initiate the process of creation, it metamorphosed into three cosmic forms to carry out this gigantic task smoothly. It was the first instance of the principle of 'delegation of authority' when some Superior Authority decides to do something great and extraordinary, and in order to attain success in this enterprise this Authority divides the main task into its smaller components, assigning one component to one of the many junior authorities that are appointed by it to specifically carry out a specific job.

This mechanism helped Brahm to regulate the entire process and also maintain self-discipline because though the three forms into which Brahm transformed itself were in fact the same Brahm operating at different levels and carrying out different tasks. It helped Brahm to easily maintain control over the developments, as for all practical purposes these three forms were distinct from Brahm and independent Authorities in their own right, and so a close watch could be kept on their functioning. In case one of these forms failed to function properly then remedial methods could be initiated, leaving the others to carry out their duties in the normal way.

Since the three primary forms into which the supreme Brahm metamorphosed himself, albeit different and distinct from Brahm, were however the same Supreme Being operating through these forms, and so therefore it is said that these three forms or Authorities of creation were the 'fractional parts' of Brahm.

And who were these three Authorities? The stupendous task of 'creation of this world' had three basic steps—viz. first was creation, then came its sustenance and protection, and finally its conclusion. The form of Brahm responsible for the first step, i.e. 'creation', was called Brahma, the creator. The form of Brahm responsible for the second step, i.e. 'sustenance and protection of the creation', was called Vishnu, the sustainer and protector. And finally, the form of Brahm responsible for the third step, i.e. 'conclusion of creation', was called Shiva, the concluder. Thus came into being the 'Trinity of Gods'.

The Supreme Being now wished to devise a device by which this creation could be created from nothing, because in the beginning there was nothing but pure

cosmic Consciousness. Brahm had to ‘imagine’ in his mind that there is something called ‘creation’, because actually there was nothing. Hence the Upanishads say that ‘this world is merely an image, that it is an imagination of the mind’.

To wit, the supreme Brahm employed his ‘Shakti’, or his dynamic power, to create an imaginary thing in order to give shape to this world. This Shakti was called ‘Maya’, meaning delusion, as it created an illusion of reality when there was none!

The supreme Brahm used this Maya for another reason too. He wished his creation to be self-sustaining and keep on rolling on its own account, without his day-to-day role. So he created ‘Maya’ and its associated components. What then do stand for? They represent worldly delusions, ignorance, temptations, infatuations, desires, greed, and all other such negativities that are associated with this gross mundane world. This ensured that the creatures that would be produced in the course of evolvment of creation would be able to keep themselves so engrossed in a make-belief world in which that they would procreate themselves in the erroneous belief that they are masters of their own destiny and are the ones who can create, sustain and destroy at their own free will—till of course the time comes when the Supreme Authority decides that his creation has become a monster, a Frankenstein, at which time he assumes the role of the ‘concluder’ to bring an end to the grand drama.

So the fourth component that was also a fraction of Brahm was ‘Maya Shakti’, the dynamic power to create delusions at the cosmic level, because without this Shakti nothing could be achieved.

With this primary background understanding we conclude that when Brahm, the Supreme Being, assured the gods, the sages and the earth that he would come to help them with his fractions to assist him, he meant that he himself would assume the form of Lord Ram, the one who would play the main role in the elimination of Ravana and the demons, and his other subtle forms such as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva along with Maya too would come in different forms to assist him.

So therefore it was the Supreme Being known as Brahm who became Lord Ram. He had three brothers—Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan. ‘Bharat’ was the one who took care of the welfare of the world, and therefore he stood for Lord Vishnu; ‘Laxman’ was the one who was an embodiment of all excellent virtues, and so he stood for Lord Shiva, and like Shiva, Laxman was also very dear to Lord Ram; and ‘Shatrughan’ was a destroyer of enemies symbolizing ignorance and delusions, and since knowledge helps to eliminate these negative factors, he stood for Brahma, the creator of the Vedas. {Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193, and (ii) Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 40-41.

Then there was Sita, the wife of Lord Ram. She was the other assistant of the Lord and who played a pivotal role in helping the Lord fulfill his divine mission. It was Sita’s abduction by Ravana which became the excuse for Lord Ram to eliminate Ravana. Who then was she? From the metaphysical perspective she represented Maya, the cosmic Shakti that enabled Brahm to carry out his wishes as outlined herein above.

The supreme Brahm succeeded in his mission of creation with the help of his Maya Shakti, and in a similar way his human incarnation Lord Ram succeeded in his mission of eliminating Ravana by employing the services of Sita—because Sita had played a dynamic and central role in the fulfillment of this mission, as it was Sita’s abduction by Ravana that set in motion a chain of events that ended with his slaying by Lord Ram.

There is another view about the form in which the Supreme Being revealed himself along with his fractional parts as indicated in this verse. According to Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 55-58, (a) Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of this creation, became Lord Ram; (b) the Seshnath, who is the celestial serpent on whose coiled body Vishnu reclines on the surface of the primordial ocean and who supports the earth on his thousand hoods, became Laxman; (c) Vishnu's weapon called Chakra, the serrated discus he hold, became Bharat; and (d) Vishnu's conch became Shatrughan. Meanwhile, 'earth' herself became Sita—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, (a) Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 58-72; and (b) Uttar Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 41-44.

³The Solar Race of Ayodhya is honoured as being very charitable and liberal because it had countless kings who became famous for their graciousness and merciful disposition as well as for liberal attitude towards charity, magnanimity and benevolence.

Lord Ram taking birth in the 'Sun' race is a metaphoric way of saying that the Lord's glories and virtues were as splendid and radiant as the sun itself. It also means that even as the sun removes all darkness by its mere presence, the advent of Lord Ram removed all darkness symbolized by the wicked, evil and sinful forces in this creation that the demons represented. Even as sunrise immediately dispels fear of ghosts and phantoms that lurk in the darkness of the night, the presence of Lord Ram in this world eliminated all the fear from the dark forces that create delusions, ignorance and all other such negative factors that cause immense horror, grief, misery and consternation in the mind and heart of creatures of this world.]

कस्यप अदिति महातप कीन्हा । तिन्ह कहूँ मैं पूरब बर दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
 ते दसरथ कौसल्या रूपा । कोसलपुरीं प्रगट नरभूपा ॥ ४ ॥
 तिन्ह कें गृह अवतरिहउँ जाई । रघुकुल तिलक सो चारिउ भाई ॥ ५ ॥

kasyapa aditi mahātapa kīnhā. tinha kahum̃ mair̃ pūraba bara dīnhā. 3.
 tē dasaratha kausalyā rūpā. kōsalapurīm pragata narabhūpā. 4.
 tinha kēm gr̃ha avatariha'um̃ jāī. raghukula tilaka sō cārī'u bhāī. 5.

Sage Kashyap and his wife Aditi had done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) in some ancient time, and at that time I had already given them a word to become their son¹. (3)

They (Kashyap and Aditi) have appeared as king Dasrath and his queen Kaushalya in the kingdom of 'Kaushal Puri' (Ayodhya). (4)

I shall go and take birth in their royal household in the form of his four sons who would be the glory of the race of king Raghu² (5)

[Note—¹It ought to be remembered here that the wheel of creation continues to rotate in a cyclic form and in a rhythmic manner. The measurement of time at the cosmic scale is mind-boggling. It would suffice for our purpose here to say that in every cycle of creation there is a manifestation of Lord Ram, and in each generation there is a

unique reason for it. This fact is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 122.

In Ram Charit Manas, we read about two instances when the Supreme Being has blessed two pious couples that he would manifest himself as the couple's son in order to fulfil their wish. One is the promise made to Manu and Satrupa*, and the other to Kashyap and Aditi#. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *Doha no. 149 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it; and #Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123.}

From the wordings of the present verse it appears that the story of Lord Ram which we are about to read in the forthcoming verses pertains to the Kalpa when the Lord had blessed Kashyap and Aditi, but upon close analysis we are left in doubt, for a little later the poet Tulsidas (who had written this book Ram Charit Manas) says “now I shall pick up the story from the point I had ‘paused’ it earlier to describe some other related episodes”—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 188 herein below.

This ‘pause’ refers to the end of episode when Tulsidas had described how Manu and Satrupa were blessed by the Lord that he would become their son, and then began describing another story of king Pratapbhanu and how he became a demon named Ravana*, followed by how the Supreme Being promised the gods and mother earth that he would come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the cruel demons as we are presently reading. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 152—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 153.}

So if we take into consideration these above mentioned facts then it can also be said that the story which we are about to commence reading pertains to the Kalpa of Manu and Satrupa.

Scholars are of two views: one school of thought says that the story of Lord Ram as narrated in ‘Ram Charit Manas’ pertains to the Kalpa in which Manu and Satrupa were blessed by the Lord, while the other group says that it belongs to the Kalpa of Kashyap and Aditi. Hence, it cannot be said conclusively to which era the story actually belongs.

Nevertheless, just like so many rivers having different origins finally become one when they fall into the ocean and become one vast uniform body of water, one part of which is indistinguishable from the other, thereby making these diverse rivers lose their individual characters and identities, as well as from where they originated and through which land they travelled before falling into the ocean and merging with it and becoming one it, so likewise it matters little from where the divine story of Lord Ram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas had originated, or what were the different causes of its origin, for it is only of an academic value, but what really matters is its spiritual value and divine nature, the fact that it paves the way for a seeker to access the nectar of spiritual bliss and joy very easily, for this story is rich in its spiritual and metaphysical message of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) and Gyan (gnosis; true wisdom and knowledge pertaining to the Supreme Being who represents cosmic Consciousness, a realisation that leads to deliverance, emancipation and salvation of the creature).

A concordant idea is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Sortha no. 90-b, where what sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud can be interpreted in the present context as meaning that a wise person with a steady mind is he who is focused on his target, and such an enlightened, erudite and sagacious person would not get unnecessarily involved or entangled in futile debates and harbour unwarranted doubts regarding Lord Ram as are normally caused by the many variations in the Lord's story and their

sources of origin, for he would instead concentrate on having devotion and love for the Lord, and in worshipping the Lord who is an ocean of mercy, compassion and grace, because this latter approach would give him immense internal happiness and peace, as well as spiritual bliss, rather than creating more and more vexation in his mind and robbing him of whatever peace he has if he allows himself to get unnecessarily dragged into debates and discussions that are nothing but futile mental exercises of mere academic value, because they lead to no conclusion.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121 which explicitly asserts that Lord Ram is a transcendental Being who cannot be a subject matter of debates and application of worldly logic that one applies to understand other things in this mortal creation, for the Lord is beyond comprehension and reach of the mind.

It is like the case of a thirsty person coming to a water body to quench his thirst. If he is wise then he would be more interested in quenching his thirst first and foremost rather than standing by the side of the water and contemplating on its history, the geography and geology of the place, the astrological chart, the time of the day, the position of the sun and the moon et al, to decide whether or not he should drink the nectar-like water that beckons him to come and remove his thirst first and protect his life instead of making a clown of himself by getting involved in such senseless contemplations while dying for want of water. A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 43.

In the context of this divergent view on the actual period to which our story belongs, the esteemed reader is advised to also refer to a detailed note appended earlier to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 152 to get a more comprehensive understanding of the point of view expressed herein above.

²Earlier it was said that the Lord took birth in the Solar Race, and now it is said that he took birth in the Raghu Race. The idea is that originally this race descended from the Sun God, and hence got its name. But in due course and with the passage of time a great king by the name of Raghu was born in it; this particular king was so great and glorious and his rule so magnificent that the world henceforth began to identify the Solar Race after the name of this king in order to honour his memory and name. So it came to be that the Solar Race became the Race of king Raghu, or the 'Raghu-Race'.

The four sons of king Dasrath were Lord Ram, and his three brothers Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan.]

नारद बचन सत्य सब करिहउँ । परम सक्ति समेत अवतरिहउँ ॥ ६ ॥

हरिहउँ सकल भूमि गरुआई । निर्भय होहु देव समुदाई ॥ ७ ॥

nārada bacana satya saba kariha'um̐. parama sakti samēta avatariha'um̐. 6.
hariha'um̐ sakala bhūmi garu'āī. nirbhaya hōhu dēva samudāī. 7.

I shall also be able to prove true the words of sage Narad¹. I shall manifest myself with my cosmic powers (so that I can successfully eliminate the powerful demons led by Ravana). (6)

Oh Gods, be reassured and feel freed from fear, for I shall surely eliminate (remove, take away—“hariha'um^३”)² all that is burdensome for earth and free her from all such encumbrances that are bothering her. (7)'

[Note—¹‘Narad’s words’: Once sage Narad had cursed Lord Vishnu to become a human being. The Lord now wishes to fulfill that curse so that the sanctity of Narad’s words is upheld. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 124—to Doha no. 139.

²Please refer to an interesting note appended to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 190 that follows herein below in the context of the word “hariha'um^३”.]

गगन ब्रह्मबानी सुनि काना । तुरत फिरे सुर हृदय जुड़ाना ॥ ८ ॥
तब ब्रह्माँ धरनिहि समुझावा । अभय भई भरोस जियँ आवा ॥ ९ ॥

gagana brahmabānī suni kānā. turata phirē sura hṛdaya juṛānā. 8.
taba brahmām̃ dharanihi samujhāvā. abhaya bhaī bharōsa jiyam̃ āvā. 9.

When the gods thus heard Brahm’s words of reassurance thus spoken from the sky (heaven), they were immensely relieved in their hearts, and being now confident of salvation and protection from their horrors, they immediately turned back. (8)

Then the creator Brahma addressed earth and explained to her the ramifications and implications of words of Brahm, advising her to feel fearless from now onwards. At this assurance from Brahma the earth felt free from the burden of fear and terror that had made her suffer her till now. (9)

दो०. निज लोकहि बिरंचि गे देवन्ह इहइ सिखाइ ।
बानर तनु धरि धरि महि हरि पद सेवहु जाइ ॥ १८७ ॥
dōhā.

nija lōkahi birāñci gē dēvanha iha'i sikhā'i.
bānara tanu dhari dhari mahi hari pada sēvahu jā'i. 187.

Then Brahma went back to his abode after advising all the Gods that they should all assume the forms of monkeys and go down to live on earth so that they can serve the holy feet of Lord Hari (Vishnu) when he manifests himself there. (Doha no. 187)

[Note—This Doha clearly establishes that the ‘monkeys’ who formed the formidable army that helped Lord Ram in his campaign of Lanka in which the Lord eliminated Ravana and the rest of the cruel demons were none others than these Gods themselves.]

चौ०. गए देव सब निज निज धामा । भूमि सहित मन कहँ बिश्रामा ॥ १ ॥

जो कछु आयसु ब्रह्माँ दीन्हा । हरषे देव बिलंब न कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ga'ē dēva saba nija nija dhāmā. bhūmi sahita mana kahum' biśrāmā. 1.
jō kachu āyasu brahmām' dīnhā. haraṣē dēva bilamba na kīnhā. 2.

After being assured by Brahm that the Lord would come down personally to eliminate the cause of their sufferings, all the Gods went back to their respective abodes. Together with Mother Earth, all the Gods found peace in their hearts, and their minds became calm. (1)

The Gods were very happy to implement the advice given to them by Brahma, and they did not waste time in doing what they were told to do. [And what did Brahma advice them? In Doha no. 187 we read that Brahma had advised the Gods to assume the form of monkeys and go down to earth to help the Supreme Lord when he goes there in the form of a human being to eliminate the demons.] (2)

बनचर देह धरी छिति माहीं । अतुलित बल प्रताप तिन्ह पाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

गिरि तरु नख आयुध सब बीरा । हरि मारग चितवहिं मतिधीरा ॥ ४ ॥

गिरि कानन जहँ तहँ भरि पूरी । रहे निज निज अनीक रचि रूरी ॥ ५ ॥

banacara dēha dharī chiti māhīm. atulita bala pratāpa tinha pāhīm. 3.
giri taru nakha āyudha saba bīrā. hari māraga citavahim matidhīrā. 4.
giri kānana jaham' taham' bhari pūrī. rahē nija nija anīka raci rūrī. 5.

The Gods assumed the forms of countless 'forest dwellers' (monkeys, bears) and came to live on earth¹. These creatures had stupendous strength and astounding valour. (3)

All of them were brave warriors. Their weapons consisted of mountains (huge rocks and boulders), trees, and their own nails (that were long and sharp).

After descending upon earth they waited patiently, keeping an eager watch on the path and bidding for the time when Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram) would come that way. (4)

All of them spread over the earth, living on mountains and in forests, wherever they liked, and in whatever way they fancied. (5)

[Note—¹There is a very remarkable point that is to be noted here in the context of the Gods being asked by Brahma, the creator, to assume the forms of monkeys and bears and come down to earth to help the Supreme Being when he manifests himself as Lord Ram. These are the same so-called all-powerful Gods who were unable to stand against the might of Ravana even when they had used their combined strength to face the demon king, yet when they became humble creatures such as monkeys and bears, and submitted themselves to the command of the Supreme Being in his form as Lord Ram, they could easily defeat the same demon king Ravana and vanquish his invincible army.

So therefore, what is that remarkable point that is to be noted here? It is this: As long as the Gods were proud of, and relied upon, their own strengths and abilities, they were chased away by Ravana like stray paper blown away in a fierce storm. But when the same Gods became humble and put themselves in the care of the almighty Lord God, Lord Ram who represented the Supreme Being, these Gods had a field day in defeating the same ferocious demons and their powerful king Ravana from whom they had fled in the heaven. What's more, in the fight in the heaven with Ravana the Gods had access to so many powerful weapons, but as monkeys and bears they had none, for they relied on their nails, teeth, rocks and boulders, and other such primitive means of warfare to win a powerful force represented by the demon army.

So the message is loud and clear: If we submit ourselves to the grace of the Lord God and become humble, if we shake off our arrogance, ego and haughtiness, if we realize that what we are able to achieve in this life is not of our own making but a divine grace of the Lord God upon us that has made it possible, if we thank the Lord for the smallest of things we are given by him, then it is certain we can do the unimaginable, we can reach lofty heights of success in our lives which would otherwise elude us.

It is very interesting to note here that the actual word used in the text is “banacara”. This word clearly means ‘those who move around in the forest’, ‘the forest dwellers’. It is not said at all that the gods became ‘monkeys or bears’. The word “banacara” could also mean forest dwelling tribes who were expected to be naturally fierce, ruthless and brave because of the harsh and tough environ of the wilds in which they lived all their lives.

But the convention is that the forest dwellers, the “banacaras”, who helped Lord Ram and formed his army were ‘monkeys and bears’, i.e. that they ‘were not humans’. Why is it so; what led our ancient chroniclers to decide that the gods had assumed the form of ‘monkeys and bears’?

Well, the simple and straightforward answer is this: Ravana had been granted a boon that he can be killed only by a human being and monkeys, and no one else would ever be able to cause his death. So it was determined that besides Lord Ram, who was in the physical form of a human being, all the others who played a pivotal role in causing Ravana's death must have been monkeys, and their close companions the bears, and no one else. Hence, it was concluded by ancient narrators that the word ‘banacara’ indeed referred to the forest dwelling creatures such as monkeys and bears alone, and not to any others.

But in reality these ‘banacaras’ were forest tribes. Their physical features, body-hair, countenance, manners, language, habits, dwelling places, custom and culture were so strikingly different from those who lived in the north of the Vindya mountains that when the latter came in contact with the former they called them monkeys and bears because of their unconventional life-style and visage. But I doubt very much that they were actually animals called monkeys and bears.]

यह सब रुचिर चरित मैं भाषा । अब सो सुनहु जो बीचहिं राखा ॥ ६ ॥
 अवधपुरीं रघुकुलमनि राऊ । बेद बिदित तेहि दसरथ नाऊँ ॥ ७ ॥
 धरम धुरंधर गुननिधि ग्यानी । हृदयँ भगति मति सारँगपानी ॥ ८ ॥

yaha saba rucira carita mair̄ bhāṣā. aba sō sunahu jō bīcahir̄ rākhā. 6.
 avadhapur̄im̄ raghukulamani rā'ū. bēda bidita tēhi dasaratha nā'ūm̄. 7.
 dharama dhurandhara gunanidhi gyānī. hr̄dayam̄ bhagati mati sāram̄gapanī.
 8.

[Tulidas says—] ‘I have described all these interesting episodes till now¹.

Now, after this interlude, listen to the rest of the original story which I had paused for a while earlier². (6)

In the capital city of the kingdom of Avadh, also known as Ayodhya³, there was a king named Dasrath⁴. He was like a jewel in the line of kings descending from the great ancient King named Raghu, and he was famous so much that his glory has been recounted by the Vedas too. (7)

He (Dasrath) was an ardent upholder of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, ethics, and goodness of thought and conduct), was a treasury of Guna (excellent virtues and character), was a Gyani (well versed in all sorts of knowledge), and had the glorious virtue of Bhakti (devotion and love for Lord God) firmly established in his heart, with a firm conviction that the Lord who holds the bow called ‘Saarang’ (i.e. Lord Vishnu)⁴ is the Supreme Being (Brahm) himself personified in that form. (8)

[Note—¹This refers to the episode of king Pratapbhanu and his becoming the demon king Ravana, and the subsequent developments which compelled the gods and mother earth to pray to the Supreme Being to protect them against his cruelty. These two episodes are the interlude between the end of the episode of Manu and Satrupa*, and the resumption of the main story of Lord Ram as is being done now. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 152—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 153.}

²In this context, the honourable reader of this wonderful Book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is advised to refer to notes of this humble author that have been appended to the following set of verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, earlier: (a) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 152; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 187.

³The grandeur, magnificence and the beauty of the city of Ayodhya has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 29.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 151 (as the Lord promised Manu and Satrupa); and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 187 (as the Lord told the gods and mother earth) as well as (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 123 (as said by Lord Shiva to Parvati earlier).

The word ‘Dasrath’ means one whose chariot (Ratha) could go in all the ten directions (Dasa = 10) of the known world. To wit, king Dasrath had access to all parts of the world, all the corners of earth, as well as to the heaven above and the nether world below. These “ten directions” are the following: north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west (i.e. all the directions of the earth), zenith (heaven) and nadir (nether world).

⁴Lord Vishnu's Bow is called 'Saarang', and the Lord is therefore called 'Saarang-Paani', one who holds a bow called Saarang in his hands.]

दो०. कौसल्यादि नारि प्रिय सब आचरन पुनीत ।
पति अनुकूल प्रेम दृढ़ हरि पद कमल बिनीत ॥ १८८ ॥

dōhā.

kausalyādi nāri priya saba ācarana punīta.
pati anukūla prēma dṛṛha hari pada kamala binīta. 188.

The King (Dasrath) had Kaushalya and others as his consort (queens); they were of a righteous character and immaculate in every way. These queens were faithful and loyal to their husband, and they had steady affection for the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Hari to whom they were submissive and devoted. (Doha no. 188)

[Note—King Dasrath had three chief queens, viz. Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Of the three, Kaushalya was the chief queen. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 190.

During the point of time this story is related to, it was not improper or odd for great kings to have more than one wife. Amongst the many reasons for the prevalence of this system in ancient times was that matrimonial relationships between two great kingdoms was usually done to establish diplomatic alliances and military pacts, that not only came in handy during frequent wars fought during those times for expansion of kingdoms and empires, but also enabled the king who would marry another king's daughter to expand his influence in a peaceful manner without bloodshed.

Sometimes the marriage was done as part of a military truce to end current wars, or even pre-empt an impending war.

Such matrimonial alliances had many other backgrounds also—such as the routine marriage of a king's daughter to another king, preferably to one who would be more powerful and influential than the bride's father, or marriages solemnized during 'Swayambars' which was an ancient system of marriage whereby the girl had the right to choose her groom, or her father set a condition for her marriage and whosoever fulfilled that condition would marry the princess (as it happened in the case of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita).

Meanwhile, it ought to be noted that (a) Kaushalya was the princess of the kingdom of south Kaushal whose king was called Bhaanumanta; (b) Sumitra was the princess of the kingdom of Magadha (in the present day state of Bihar in India) and the daughter of its king named Sursen; and (c) Kaikeyi was the daughter of king Ashwapati, who was a descendent of king Kaikaye after whom his kingdom was named as 'Kaikaye Desh'.]

चौ०. एक बार भूपति मन माहीं । भै गलानि मोरें सुत नाहीं ॥ १ ॥
गुर गृह गयउ तुरत महिपाला । चरन लागि करि बिनय बिसाला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēka bāra bhūpati mana māhīm. bhāi galāni mōrēm suta nāhīm. 1.
gura gr̥ha गया'u turata mahipālā. carana lāgi kari binaya bisālā. 2.

Once upon a time, the king (Dasrath) felt very sad and regretted that he had no son (to become an heir of his kingdom after his death). (1)

So, he immediately went to the home of his royal Guru (i.e. sage Vasistha¹, also pronounced as 'Vasistha'; he was the chief priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya), and after paying his obeisance at the Guru's holy feet, the king prayed most humbly and earnestly (as follows). (2)

[Note—¹Who was sage Vasistha? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.

In these verses, Vasistha has himself said that he is the son of the creator Brahma. When he was reluctant to become a priest of a kingdom, as he deemed this a lowly job for an exalted sage of his stature, his father Brahma told him that in spite of the truth that this job is not to his liking, yet there is a great reward attached to it, and it was that Vasistha would be able to have a close and personal interaction with the Supreme Being when he manifests as Lord Ram in the same kingdom. This motivated Vasistha to accept the job of a priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya. His wife was Arundhati.]

निज दुख सुख सब गुरहि सुनायउ । कहि बसिष्ठ बहुविधि समुझायउ ॥ ३ ॥
धरहु धीर होइहहिं सुत चारी । त्रिभुवन बिदित भगत भय हारी ॥ ४ ॥

nija dukha sukha saba gurahi sunāya'u. kahi basiṣṭha bahubidhi samujhāya'u.
3.

dharahu dhīra hō'ihahim suta cārī. tribhuvana bidita bhagata bhaya hārī. 4.

The king (Dasrath) confided in his Guru and shared with him everything that was in his mind, both regarding his joys as well as the reason for his sorrows.

[To wit, king Dasrath told Vasistha that by the latter's blessings he had no other problem or pain or grief in his life, except that he had no son would become his heir upon his death. This was a great vacuum in his otherwise prosperous, contented and happy life.]

After patiently listening to the king, sage Vasistha assured him in various ways (that there is a solution for every problem, and the king ought not to worry so much about the issue that is nagging at him). (3)

Sage Vasistha told king Dasrath: 'Oh King; have patience. You will be blessed with four noble sons. They will gain fame in all the three parts of the world (i.e. in the heaven, the earth and the nether world), and attain acclaim as they would be able to eliminate the fears of devotees¹. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 187; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193; (iii) Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it.]

सृंगी रिषिहि बसिष्ठ बोलावा । पुत्रकाम सुभ जग्य करावा ॥ ५ ॥
 भगति सहित मुनि आहुति दीन्हें । प्रगटे अग्नि चरू कर लीन्हें ॥ ६ ॥

ṣṛṅgī riṣiḥi basiṣṭha bōlāvā. putrakāma subha jagya karāvā. 5.
 bhagati sahita muni āhuti dīnhēm. pragaṭē agini carū kara līnhēm. 6.

Sage Vasistha sent for sage Sringi¹, and when he arrived he was requested to perform a fire sacrifice with aim that the chief patron of the ritual (i.e. king Dasrath) would be blessed with sons. (5)

When the sage (i.e. Sringi) made offerings to the sacred fire with full devotion and faith, the Fire God revealed himself with a cup full of a sweet pudding or porridge² in his hands. (6)

[Note—¹Sage Sringi was the son of sage Vibhaanda. Once upon a time, sage Vibhaanda was doing meditation in a pond, while an Apsara, a female courtesan of the court of Indra, the king of gods, named Urvashi passed that way. Seeing her beauty, the story goes, that sage Vibhaand could not restrain himself and he ejaculated his sperms. A female deer was drinking water at that time, and it gulped down that sperm with the water. Sage Sringi was produced as a result, and hence he was named ‘Sringi’, meaning one born from a mother having horns. That is why his father, sage Vibhaanda, named his son ‘Sringi’, for he was born with small horn-like rudimentary protuberances on his head.

Once it so happened that in a kingdom known as Anga there was a severe drought. The wise sages of that period advised the king named Rompaad that if sage Sringi, who was a celibate since birth (i.e. a Brahmachari), was called to the kingdom, then his mere arrival there would be so auspicious that it might cause rainfall. On this advice, the king somehow managed to request sage Sringi to bless his kingdom. When the sage arrived, there was abundant rainfall, ending the prolonged drought. The king was so grateful and awed by the sage’s mystical powers that he married his daughter named Shaanta (pronounced ‘Shanntaa’) to him.

According to some versions of ancient mythology, Shaanta was a daughter of king Dasrath of Ayodhya, and the king had later on given her in adoption to king Rompaad.

In the story of the Ramayana, sage Sringi was called by king Dasrath to perform a fire sacrifice so that the king could be blessed with sons. It is on the successful performance of this sacrifice in which sage Sringi was the chief priest, the Fire God had revealed himself to give a cup of sweet pudding or porridge to Dasrath, asking the king to distribute it to his queens as he deemed fit. So Dasrath called his three chief queens, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, who shared portions of this sanctified sweet dish. This resulted in the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shtrughan. Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 190; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-12.

²The word used in the text is “carū”. It is an Indian dish prepared by boiling rice in sweetened milk.]

जो बसिष्ठ कछु हृदयँ बिचारा । सकल काजु भा सिद्ध तुम्हारा ॥ ७ ॥
यह हबि बाँटि देहु नृप जाई । जथा जोग जेहि भाग बनाई ॥ ८ ॥

jō basiṣṭha kachu hṛdayam̃ bicārā. sakala kāju bhā sid'dha tumhārā. 7.
yaha habi bām̃ṭi dēhu nṛpa jā'ī. jathā jōga jēhi bhāga banā'ī. 8.

The Fire God said to king Dasrath: 'What sage Vasistha had thought of in his heart has been successful, and all your desires would be fulfilled¹.' (7)

Oh King! Take this porridge and distribute it to your queens in the way you deem proper and fit.² (8)

[Note—¹What did Vasistha think of in his heart to which the Fire God is now referring, and what was king Dasrath's wish that would be fulfilled now?

Well, king Dasrath had no sons, and it was a great void in his life which robbed him of his peace of mind and emotional comfort because he was worried that there would be no heir to his kingdom after his death. Further, he could not enjoy the pleasures and happiness that a father naturally gets when he has young sons or daughters playing around in his home. So, Dasrath had approached sage Vasistha with a prayer to find out a practical solution so that his desire to have sons as his heirs could be fulfilled. The sage thought over the matter and contemplated upon solutions that can be found to resolve this issue. After exploring various options he finally resolved that the best and the surest way of fulfilling Dasrath's desires was to invite sage Sringi and get a son-begetting fire sacrifice done with the invited sage as its chief priest. Now that plan had succeeded, because the Fire God has himself appeared with a magical potion, duly sanctified and potent enough to enable the queens to conceive. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 189.}

²It ought to be noted here that the Fire God has not specified how the porridge is to be shared between the queens; he left it on Dasrath to decide which queen gets what portion of the porridge. So, how did the king distribute this blessed and sanctified dish that would fulfill his desire to have sons? The answer is found in the verses that follow immediately herein below.]

दो०. तब अदृश्य भए पावक सकल सभहि समुझाइ ।
परमानंद मगन नृप हरष न हृदयँ समाइ ॥ १८९ ॥

dōhā.

taba adr̥śya bha'ē pāvaka sakala sabhahi samujhā'i.
paramānanda magana nṛpa haraṣa na hṛdayam̃ samā'i. 189.

Then the Fire God vanished from sight after explaining everything to the assembly¹.

Meanwhile, the king was overjoyed and felt ecstatic so much that his happiness overflowed his heart as he could not restrain himself from exhibiting profound sense of joy and unbound exhilaration. (Doha no. 189)

[Note—The earlier conversation between Dasrath and Vasistha was held in private. No one else knew why this grand fire sacrifice was being organized. Soon the queens would conceive, and in due time they will have sons. The whole kingdom would be highly astonished at this development, as everyone knew that the king had remained child-less for all his life, and a sudden conception by the queens could be the cause of a mighty scandal and nasty gossip amongst the citizens. So to prevent any adverse situation from developing and casting a taint on the noble king's reputation, the Fire God deemed it necessary and fit to declare everything in full public view as to how the queens would conceive and how the king would get sons.

Another reason was to advice the priests who were performing the rituals as to how to conclude it in the proper way so that no harm befalls upon the unsuspecting king, because it is well known that while fire sacrifices had the power to grant great boons and fulfill the desire of the patron, they could also prove disastrous if done in the wrong way. It is like the case of modern medicine; the same drug would cure a disease in a person if given correctly according to the disease for which it is meant, but given to a patient with a different disease the same medicine would kill him.]

चौ०. तबहिं रायँ प्रिय नारि बोलाई । कौसल्यादि तहाँ चलि आई ॥ १ ॥
 अर्ध भाग कौसल्यहि दीन्हा । उभय भाग आधे कर कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥
 कैकेई कहँ नृप सो दयऊ । रह्यो सो उभय भाग पुनि भयऊ ॥ ३ ॥
 कौसल्या कैकेई हाथ धरि । दीन्ह सुमित्रहि मन प्रसन्न करि ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tabahim rāyam' priya nāri bōlā'īm. kausalyādi tahām' cali ā'īm. 1.
 ardha bhāga kausalyahi dīnhā. ubhaya bhāga ādhē kara kīnhā. 2.
 kaikē'ī kaham' nrpa sō daya'ū. rahyāō sō ubhaya bhāga puni bhaya'ū. 3.
 kausalyā kaikē'ī hātha dhari. dīnha sumitrahi mana prasanna kari. 4.

Then the king (Dasrath) called his queens who were dear to him¹, and so Kaushalya and others came to meet him. (1)

The king gave a half-portion of the porridge to her, and divided the remaining half into two parts. (2)

Out of these two parts of the second half, the king gave one to Kaikeyi². Then he split the last part (which was the fourth quarter of the whole porridge) again into two parts. (3)

Then the king put each of these two final portions in the hands of Kaushalya and Kaikeyi respectively, and asked them individually to give these parts to Sumitra to please the king³. (4)

[Note—¹It ought to be remarked here that Dasrath had many wives. Amongst them, there were three who were the king's favourite queens: Kaushalya, who was the eldest and the chief queen, Sumitra, the second queen, and Kaikeyi who was the youngest but the most preferred one. The reader is requested to refer to a note appended earlier which explains why kings of that era used to have more than one queens. Refer to Doha no. 188 herein above and the note appended to it.

²Dasrath was passionately in love with Kaikeyi*; this weakness in his character would be exploited by her later on in the story to prevail upon him to promise to make her son Bharat the next king of Ayodhya, and send the eldest son, Lord Ram, who had the right to the crown and could pose a hindrance in her son's ascension, to the forest#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, *Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 28 (that show how smitten the king was by Kaikeyi's charms); #Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 29 (where we read how she asked the unsuspecting king to appoint her son Bharat to the throne and send Lord Ram to the forest.)}

³Let us see how the porridge was divided. First it was divided into two parts, and one half was given by the king to Kaushalya. Then he divided the second half into two equal parts. Out of these two, he gave one, which meant a quarter of the whole potion, to Kaikeyi. The last quarter was divided again into two equal parts. These two smaller parts, which together formed the last quarter of the porridge, were first given to Kaushalya and Kaikeyi, each holding one part of these two final parts, and then the king asked them to give these last portions to Sumitra in order to please her as well as him.

This in effect means that Kaushalya got the largest portion of the holy porridge, i.e. the first half of it, while Kaikeyi and Sumitra received a quarter of the porridge each, with the difference that while Kaikeyi got it directly from the king in one portion, Sumitra received it through her sister-queens in two portions, each being a half of a quarter of the whole porridge.

What would be the result of this way of distribution of this sanctified porridge? Kaushalya had one son, Lord Ram, the eldest of the brothers. Kaikeyi too had one son, Bharat, who was younger to Lord Ram. And Sumitra had two sons, Laxman and Shatrughan—because she had two parts given to her separately, one by Kaushalya and the other by Kaikeyi.

The same sequence of distribution of the porridge and conception of the queens has also been described in (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, Canto 98, verse nos. 19-22; and (ii) Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 242, verse nos. 59-61.

In sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-12, a different version is given regarding the distribution of this holy porridge. It was divided into two equal halves by Dasrath, and he gave one each to Kaushalya and Kaikeyi. At that time Sumitra also came in, so to please her, the two queens, i.e. Kaushalya and Kaikeyi, divided their own shares into two equal halves, and then both of them gave one such part to Sumitra. So therefore, Kaushalya and Kaikeyi ate a quarter part of the whole porridge each, and Sumitra had the privilege of eating two such quarters given to her by her two sister-queens, i.e. Sumitra actually had half of the entire porridge, albeit in two quarter portions.]

एहि बिधि गर्भसहित सब नारी । भई हृदयँ हरषित सुख भारी ॥ ५ ॥

जा दिन तें हरि गर्भहिं आए । सकल लोक सुख संपति छाए ॥ ६ ॥

ēhi bidhi garbhasahita saba nārī. bha'īm hṛdayam̐ haraṣita sukha bhārī. 5.
jā dina tēm hari garbhahim̐ ā'ē. sakala lōka sukha sampati chā'ē. 6.

In this way, the three queens became pregnant. This made everyone joyful in their hearts, and all felt very happy by this development. (5)

From the very first day Lord Hari¹ entered the womb of the mother², joy, happiness and prosperity spread in all parts of the world³. (6)

[Note—¹The use of the word “Hari” for the Divine Being, the Supreme Lord, who came down to earth as Lord Ram, is very clever and significant here. The word ‘Hari’ has many connotations: it means someone who takes away, removes, steals, eliminates and dispels, and all these apply to the Lord. He takes away sorrows of his devotees and removes the cause of their miseries and grief, replacing them with joy, happiness and well-being. He steals the different negativities that the devotee might have unintentionally or inadvertently accumulating over the years, and replaces it with positive virtues. He dispels fears and instills fearlessness; He eliminates sorrows and pains, replacing them with cheer and joy.

It is remarkable that the word ‘Hari’ has been used by the Supreme Being with an eye on all the above meanings when he assured the gods and mother earth that he would come down to earth to take care of all their problems arising out of the tyranny unleashed by the demons—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187. The Lord has said—‘hariha'um̐’ (hari + ha'um̐) i.e. ‘I will (ha'um̐) remove, take away and eliminate (hari) all the burden of earth, so oh gods, become fearless’.

²Remember: The conception of the queens was an unusual affair; they had not conceived by any physical intercourse like done by other human beings, but by eating a sanctified porridge given to them by none else but the Fire God himself. The ‘fire’ is one element famed for its purification powers; the fire can burn impurities and leave untouched the pure thing. This is how gold is said to be purified by putting it into the fire. So therefore, this conception was an immaculate form of conception: achieved not through physical intercourse, but by divine intervention.

Soon we would read what is meant here by saying “Hari entering the womb of the mother”. The correct interpretation of this verse would be as follows: “Lord Hari revealed himself in a spontaneous manner, but in order to conform to the rule of Mother Nature with respect to how creatures who have a body are born on this earth, as well as to honour the promise the Lord had made earlier to the pious couple that he would become their son, the Lord immediately transformed himself to assume the form of a human child, and made it appear that he was born in the same way as it normally happens when a mother gives birth to her son.”

³The arrival of the Lord was marked by all-round cheer and joy in the world. There were auspicious signs and good omens everywhere. It is just like the case of the sun rising on the eastern horizon: even before the sun is actually visible in the sky, its arrival is marked by the fading of the darkness of the night and the sky getting gradually illuminated much before the sun makes its physical appearance.]

मंदिर महँ सब राजहिं रानीं । सोभा सील तेज की खानीं ॥ ७ ॥
सुख जुत कछुक काल चलि गयऊ । जेहिं प्रभु प्रगट सो अवसर भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

mandira maham̐ saba rājahim̐ rānīm̐. sōbhā sīla tēja kī khānīm̐. 7.
sukha juta kachuka kāla cali gaya'ū. jēhim̐ prabhu pragaṭa sō avasara
bhaya'ū. 8.

All the queens looked glorious in the royal palace, and they were exceptionally happy, full of enthusiasm, energy and radiance. (7)

In this way, some time passed with joy and happiness abounding everywhere, till the time came when the Lord had to finally reveal himself¹. (8)

[Note—¹How much time passed between the fire sacrifice and the queens eating the porridge, and the actual birth of the four brothers?

According to Adhyatma Ramayan, it was nine months*, and according to Valmiki's Ramayan, it was twelve months#. {Refer: *Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 13; and #Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 18, verse no. 8.}

दो०. जोग लगन ग्रह बार तिथि सकल भए अनुकूल ।
चर अरु अचर हर्षजुत राम जनम सुखमूल ॥ १९० ॥

dōhā.

jōga lagana graha bāra tithi sakala bha'e anukūla.
cara aru acara harṣajuta rāma janama sukhamūla. 190.

During those moments of that day of the week of that month when the Supreme Being had manifested himself, the position of the sun and the moon, as well as the stars and the planets and other zodiacal signs of the astrological chart were all aligned in such a way that every circumstance had become favourable and auspicious for this divine revelation.

The entire world, consisting of animate beings (creatures) as well as inanimate things (such as plants), was exhilarated because the advent of the Supreme Being on this earth in the form of the birth of Lord Ram was an occasion to celebrate as it was the root of all auspiciousness and joy for this world and its inhabitants¹. (Doha no. 190)

[Note—¹Just as a great tree grows up from its root and reaches high up towards the sky while spreading its branches, with their rich foliage, in all the directions to provide shelter, shade, fruits, flowers and wood to the world, so would the birth of Lord Ram provide the fruits of happiness, joy, fearlessness and spiritual bliss in abundance to the world; the Lord would remove the burden of the earth that the demons had become for it, and the divine story of the Lord during his sojourn on earth

would be remembered, recounted and retold over generations and generations to come, granting everyone a divine experience of bliss and ecstasy, showing them the path of devotion and love for the Lord God, as well as paving the way for their deliverance, emancipation and salvation from this mortal world of transmigration.

It ought to be noted here that once the Fire God had declared that four noble princes would be born in the royal household of king Dasrath, grand preparations for the great occasion must naturally have commenced forthwith on a large scale—because the word of the Fire God could not go in vain. An heir to the throne was coming after what seemed to be an eternal wait bordering on hopelessness and helplessness. The time when the Fire God had made this prophesy, and the actual birth of the four princes was the natural time a human child takes to come into this world, a time of roughly nine months, take or give a few days either way, which was surely enough to make grand preparations and be ready for the Great Moment. There was expectation in the air; every citizen as well as members of the royal household were anxious and eager to hear the good news, when finally that ‘Great Moment’ arrived.

[That auspicious moment is being described in the following verses now.]

चौ०. नौमी तिथि मधु मास पुनीता । सुकल पच्छ अभिजित हरिप्रीता ॥ १ ॥

मध्यदिवस अति सीत न घामा । पावन काल लोक बिश्रामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāṭi.

naumī tithi madhu māsa punītā. sukala paccha abhijita hariprītā. 1.
madhyadivasa ati sīta na ghāmā. pāvana kāla lōka biśrāmā. 2.

*It was the ninth day of the bright half of the lunar month during the sacred month of Chaitra (according to the Hindu calendar)¹. The moon had entered the asterism called Abhijit², a constellation which is very dear to Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Vishnu)³. (1)

It was mid-day and the sun was at its meridian⁴; and the weather was very pleasant and relaxing, for it was neither too cold nor too hot⁵. The time and the season were such that it gave pleasure and comfort to everyone (obviously because it was neither hot nor cold).

[To wit, it was a balmy and pleasant day, with bright sunshine, a cool breeze that was fragrant and caressed the skin, and an atmosphere electrified by eager expectation and ardent hope that usually precedes the occurrence of a great historic event that is of profound importance for an entire civilization, as that would be an epoch making occurrence which would be the turning point for good for an entire era.] (2)

[Note—*One relevant thing to note here is that the significance of the moment when Lord Ram was born, and what his birth chart predicted about him has been elaborately explained by sage Bhrigu in his Sanghita, during the course of a conversation between sage Bhrigu and sage Shukra, as narrated in Bhrigu Sanghita, Vedasaagar-Stava, Canto 36, verse nos. 1-30.

¹This corresponds roughly to the months of mid March to mid April according to the Gregorian English calendar.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34 which is very specific in this context.

²The word “Abhijit” means victory; to be invincible. It is believed that if a son is born during the presence of this constellation, then the child would become an invincible king in his realm. Any enterprise he enters into would be successful. This constellation occurs right at mid-day, and consists of three stars forming a triangle.

³Since Lord Vishnu is responsible for protection and taking care of this creation, this Abhijit asterism is favoured by him as it would help him fulfill his divine mandate without much of a problem.

⁴The significance of the sun being at its meridian and the time of the day being noon is that this is the brightest time of the day, and it symbolizes that the glory of Lord Ram would shine brightly and brilliantly in this world, and his presence would remove the darkness associated with gloom, pain, grief and all other sorts of misery of life in this mortal world.

⁵Further, the presence of Lord Ram will have a soothing effect on the world and its inhabitants. This aspect is repeatedly verified in the story of the Ramayan because we shall read by-and-by that wherever the Lord went during his journey in the forest, which we can take as a sample, he spread cheer and joy all around. It were not only persons whom the Lord met who had felt blessed by his presence, even the trees, the mountains, the rivers and the earth over which he walked had felt thoroughly blessed. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 109; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 113—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122; (iv) Doha no. 123 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 134; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 136; (vii) Doha no. 137 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it; (b) Kishkindha Kand, (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17.}

Great sages such as Bharadwaj*1, Valmiki*2, Atri*3, Sutikshan*4, Agastya*5—all had felt extremely blessed by meeting Lord Ram. {Refer: (a) Ayodhya Kand, *1=Doha no. 107 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it (Bharadwaj); *2= Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 125 (Valmiki); (b) Aranya Kand, *3= Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 3 (Atri); *4= Chaupai line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 10 (Sutikshan); *5= Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12 (Agastya).

There were many other un-named sages, hermits and ascetics, as well as the different forms that Mother Nature had taken, such as rivers, mountains, animals, trees etc.—all had felt blessed by the presence of Lord Ram in their midst as is clearly indicated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 14.]

सीतल मंद सुरभि बह बाऊ । हरषित सुर संतन मन चाऊ ॥ ३ ॥

बन कुसुमित गिरिगन मनिआरा । स्रवहिं सकल सरिताऽमृतधारा ॥ ४ ॥

sītala manda surabhi baha bā'ū. haraṣita sura santana mana cā'ū. 3.
bana kusumita girigana mani'ārā. sravahim sakala saritāmṛtadhārā. 4.

There was a breeze blowing that was cool, soft and fragrant. The Gods were exhilarated, and the hearts of pious souls were brimming over with joy and enthusiasm¹. (3)

The forests and gardens were lush with greenery, and mountains had abundance of gems embedded in them. The rivers and streams flowed with nectarine water in them². (4)

[Note—¹The gods were happy as now the time had come when their prayers would be answered, and the pious sages, saints and others were happy because now they will get an opportunity to have a direct communication and communion with the supreme Lord.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 137—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 139.

Though these above verses describe the heavenly atmosphere of the forest around Chitrakoot where Lord Ram had abided for a while during his stay in the forest, yet it gives a general idea of the sort of auspiciousness and pleasant environment that prevailed all over the earth at the time of Lord Ram's presence in the mortal world.

Another such instance of the beauty and richness of Nature is found at the time when the Lord styed on Mt. Prabarshan near Kiskindha—refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 12—to Doha no. 17.]

सो अवसर बिरंचि जब जाना । चले सकल सुर साजि बिमाना ॥ ५ ॥
गगन बिमल संकुल सुर जूथा । गावहिं गुन गंधर्ब बरूथा ॥ ६ ॥

sō avasara biran̄ci jaba jānā. calē sakala sura sāji bimānā. 5.
gagana bimala saṅkula sura jūthā. gāvahim̄ guna gandharba barūthā. 6.

When Biranchi (i.e. the creator Brahma) realized that the time for the birth of the Lord was at hand, he and other Gods assembled, and they boarded their respective aerial vehicles, that were especially decorated for the occasion, as they proceeded to the venue of the Lord's birth in Ayodhya (to witness the auspicious occasion, and participate in the celebrations). (5)

The whole space of the otherwise clear sky was filled chock-a-block by vehicles of gods, even as groups of celestial damsels called Apsaras added glamour to the procession by dancing and singing along the way as they too accompanied the gods to participate in the celebrations marking the birth of the Lord. (6)

बरषहिं सुमन सुअंजुलि साजी । गहगहि गगन दुंदुभी बाजी ॥ ७ ॥
अस्तुति करहिं नाग मुनि देवा । बहुबिधि लावहिं निज निज सेवा ॥ ८ ॥

baraṣahim̐ sumana su'an̐juli sājī. gahagahi gagana dundubhī bājī. 7.
astuti karahim̐ nāga muni dēvā. bahubidhi lāvahim̐ nija nija sēvā. 8.

They (the gods and the celestial damsels) held flowers in their cupped palms and showered them from the sky on the earth below. The sound of kettle-drums and other musical instruments, that were played enthusiastically, reverberated in the sky. (7)

Other divine beings, such as the Nagas (celestial serpents), sages and mystics (who had the mystical power that enabled their consciousness to leave their physical body and assume a spirit form to roam freely in the sky), and the gods themselves were offering various kinds of prayers and doing whatever services they thought fit for the auspicious occasion¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, there was immense enthusiasm and abounding zest in the rank and file of the Gods, Nagas, Munis (sages and mystics) and Apsaras as they jostled and merrily crowded around each other to bless the happy occasion and thank their own good fortunes, while holding animated discussions on the various ways they would serve the Lord when their services would be needed. Some said they would sing hymns, others said they would participate in celebratory songs, some said they would arrange for fireworks on display, some said they would carry baskets full of flowers and sweets and other gifts, others promised that they would use their skills in decorating the city in myriad hues of colours, with flowers, buntings, hangings, arches, gateways etc., some had clothes as gifts for the four princes, some had toys for them, some had little ornaments befitting little children, and so on and so forth—with cheer and warmth bubbling all over as the grand procession of the Gods' chariots and dancing-and-singing Apsaras moved ahead majestically in the sky in the direction of Ayodhya, the venue of the birth of Lord Ram.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 34 which are very specific in this context.]

दो०. सुर समूह बिनती करि पहुँचे निज निज धाम ।
जगनिवास प्रभु प्रगटे अखिल लोक बिश्राम ॥ १९१ ॥

dōhā.

sura samūha binatī kari pahum̐cē nija nija dhāma.
jaganivāsa prabhu pragaṭē akhila lōka biśrāma. 191.

These groups of gods offered their prayers to the Supreme Being and then went back to their respective abodes in the heaven¹.

Then, the Lord who is the cause of this whole creation, who lives everywhere in this creation as he is all-pervading and immanent, and in whom this creation finds its ultimate rest (jaganivāsa; akhila lōka biśrāma)², finally manifested himself. (Doha no. 191)

[Note—¹The Supreme Being had not manifested himself till this point of time; he was still in his primary form as the cosmic Being who has no physical form, who was

invisible, all-pervading and immanent in this creation, in his primary form as cosmic Consciousness.

The creator Brahma knew the secrets, so he advised the gods to come along quickly to pay their obeisance to the Lord first before preparing for the next things to be done, as there was no time to lose.

What were these ‘next set of things’ that the gods would prepare to do after first paying their obeisance to the Lord? Well, to begin with, they would assume human forms and participate in the grand celebrations that would take place in Ayodhya to mark the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers—this would be evident soon in (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 196 herein below. This fact has been reiterated earlier too in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 34 which are very specific in this context.

Then, the gods would assume the forms of monkeys and bears to stay for a while in the forest, waiting for the arrival of Lord Ram whom they would help to fight Ravana and eliminate the cruelty of the demon race. This is exactly what Brahma had advised them to do earlier—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187.

Since Brahma had made the announcement of the time of the Supreme Being’s revelation as Lord Ram so suddenly that the gods had no time to make elaborate preparations, and they had to go in haste, scrambling as fast as they could. So therefore, they came back to their abodes after this initial offering of prayers etc., made proper arrangements, and proceeded once again to Ayodhya to participate in the Lord’s birth celebrations, and then later on to join the Lord as monkeys and bears to help him in his mission of eliminating the demons, as the next phase of their plan.

To wit, the sequence of events is an easy flow of events—viz. first the gods came to thank the Supreme Being for finally taking the trouble to come down to earth as Lord Ram to fulfill the promise he made to the gods and mother earth; then they go back home to prepare to attend the Lord’s birth celebrations when they would come to Ayodhya and participate in it; and finally they would take a long leave from their respective abodes in the heaven to become monkeys and bears as ordered by Brahma, in order to serve Lord Ram while the Lord goes on the mission of eliminating the demons.

²In this context of the divine nature of Brahm, the Supreme Being, who would soon manifest himself as Lord Ram, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 and Chanda line nos. 9 and 13 that precede Doha no. 185; (iv) Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 192; (b) Uttar Kand, (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 48.]

छं०. भए प्रगट कृपाला दीनदयाला कौसल्या हितकारी । १ ।
हरषित महतारी मुनि मन हारी अद्भुत रूप बिचारी ॥ २ ॥
लोचन अभिरामा तनु घनस्यामा निज आयुध भुज चारी । ३ ।
भूषन बनमाला नयन बिसाला सोभासिंधु खरारी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bha'e pragata krpālā dīnadayālā kausalyā hitakārī. 1.
 haraṣita mahatārī muni mana hārī adbhuta rūpa bicārī. 2.
 lōcana abhirāmā tanu ghanasyāmā nija āyudha bhuja cārī. 3.
 bhūṣana banamālā nayana bisālā sōbhāsindhu kharārī. 4..

The kind and merciful Lord (Vishnu), who is gracious and compassionate towards the lowly and the humble as well as the benefactor of mother Kaushalya, revealed himself before her (in the form of a child who will be later on named Lord Ram). (1)

The mother was exceedingly thrilled and overwhelmed as she observed the Lord's marvelous and most astounding form that was so extremely beautiful as to be able to steal the mind and heart of even the sages and hermits (who are usually immune to physical charms and attractions). (2)

His delightful form was dark as the (rain-bearing) clouds, and it provided joy, happiness and comfort to the eyes of the beholder. He held in his four hands his characteristic emblems (or equipments—"āyudha"). [These are—a conch-shell, a discus, a mace and a lotus.]¹ (3)

He was wearing fine ornaments and excellent garments, and was adorned with a garland of sylvan flowers (called the "banamālā"). His eyes were large (like the lotus flower). To wit, this was how the Lord, who is an ocean of beauty and charm, and is a destroyer or slayer of the demon named Khar, revealed himself (before mother Kaushalya). (4)

[Note—¹There are three instances in the story of Ram Charit Manas where we get a direct hint that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu who is distinguished by having four arms. The first is the one we are currently reading, where the Lord appeared before mother Kaushalya in his form with four arms, a divine form that is unique to Lord Vishnu.

The second instance is that of sage Sarbhanga to whom also Lord Ram showed his divine form as Lord Vishnu who has four arms—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 10.

And the third instance is when sage Narad approaches Lord Ram and asks the latter why he had not allowed the sage to marry the girl of his choice. This incident is directly related to Lord Vishnu who had prevented Narad from marrying, which had angered the sage so much that he had cursed the Lord that he would have to become a human being. We have already read all about it earlier, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 125—to Doha no. 139.

Hence, Narad asking Lord Ram this question directly, using the pronouns 'you' and 'me' when he asked Lord Ram "why did you not allow me to marry", and the Lord replying by using the pronouns 'I' and 'you' when he said "I did not allow you to marry because --- ", clearly implies that both Lord Ram and Lord Vishnu are the same Lord in two forms. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44.]

कह दुइ कर जोरी अस्तुति तोरी केहि बिधि करौं अनंता । ५ ।

माया गुन ग्यानातीत अमाना बेद पुरान भनंता ॥ ६ ॥

करुना सुख सागर सब गुन आगर जेहि गावहिं श्रुति संता । ७ ।
सो मम हित लागी जन अनुरागी भयउ प्रगट श्रीकंता ॥ ८ ॥

kaha du'i kara jōrī astuti tōrī kēhi bidhi karaum anantā. 5.
māyā guna gyānātita amānā bēda purāna bhanantā. 6.
karunā sukha sāgara saba guna āgara jēhi gāvahiṁ śruti santā. 7.
sō mama hita lāgī jana anurāgī bhaya'u pragata śrīkantā. 8.

The mother joined her two palms (hands—"du'i kara jōrī") together and said, 'Oh Lord Anant (i.e. the Lord who has no end; who is without a beginning or end; who is infinite and eternal)! Say, how and with what words can I say a prayer to you to praise you, or show my earnest respect to you (for I am absolutely incompetent to do so, and am stunned by your august presence). (5)

Verily, the Vedas and the Purans (primary and ancient scriptures) hold and declare unequivocally that you are beyond the reach of Maya (delusions), free from the various the Gunas (attributes of creation) and transcend Gyan (knowledge), as well as are measureless and beyond comprehension. (6)

You are lauded by the exalted saints and sages as well as the scriptures as being an ocean of mercy, compassion and kindness, and as being a repository of bliss, happiness and joy, as well as of all the excellent virtues. (7)

Oh! The same Lord known as 'Srikanta' (i.e. Lord Vishnu who is dear to goddess Laxmi, also known as "Sri" because she is the patron goddess of prosperity, wealth and well-being), who loves his devotees and is gracious towards them, has revealed himself for my sake and good. (8)

ब्रह्मांड निकाया निर्मित माया रोम रोम प्रति बेद कहै । ९ ।
मम उर सो बासी यह उपहासी सुनत धीर मति थिर न रहै ॥ १० ॥
उपजा जब ग्याना प्रभु मुसुकाना चरित बहुत बिधि कीन्ह चहै । ११ ।
कहि कथा सुहाई मातु बुझाई जेहि प्रकार सुत प्रेम लहै ॥ १२ ॥

brahmāṇḍa nikāyā nirmita māyā rōma rōma prati bēda kahai. 9.
mama ura sō bāsī yaha upahāsī sunata dhīra mati thira na rahai. 10.
upajā jaba gyānā prabhu musukānā carita bahuta bidhi kīnha cahai. 11.
kahi kathā suhāī mātu bujhāī jēhi prakāra suta prēma lahai. 12.

The Vedas assert that in each of the pores of your divine cosmic body, there are multitudes of universes (brahmāṇḍa) that have been brought forth by the creative power of Maya¹. (9)

That such a Great Lord of the Cosmos would stay in my womb—this is so wonderful a thing and amusing that when learned and wise sages and seers hear of it, they are absolutely confounded and awe-struck; their mind and intellect fail to comprehend this phenomenon.' (10)

When the mother came to grasp with the profundity of the occasion and its stupendous significance, when she realised the import of what she was observing before her own eyes, the Lord smiled, for he wished to do many fantastic things and perform many mysterious deeds². (11)

[The Lord wished to do some worldly sports or deeds, and so—] He explained the situation to her (as to why he had revealed himself) by telling her the pleasant story (or event) of her previous life when she had desired to experience the joy and exhilaration of uninhibited closeness with the Lord as a mother has with her own child, and so be able to offer her love and affection to the Lord with the freedom she would have then.³ (12)

[Note—¹This is the Lord's "Viraat Purush" form, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 51 (Shiva tells Parvati); (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116 (Shiva tells Parvati); (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 150 (Satrupa reiterates this fact); (b) Lanka Kand, (v) Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 (Mandodari, wife of Ravana); (vi) Chanda line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 111 (Brahma, the creator); (c) Uttar Kand, (vii) Chanda line nos. 5-6, and 21 that precede Doha no. 13 (Vedas); (viii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 72 (Kaagbhusund tells Garud).

The power of Maya that has been the cause of this creation is described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 44; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 72.

²To wit, the Lord was amused by the mother's submissions now when she talked as if she was a highly erudite woman who knew the reality and truth of the Lord like the back of her hands, for soon she would forget all this momentary talk of wisdom and enlightenment and start treating him as 'her' son'. This would be evident later on in an incident when the mother had placed her child in a cradle to sleep and went to her worship-room to offer worship to the family deity. There she found the same child partaking of the offerings meant for the deity. Astonished and confounded, she rushed back to the cradle, only to find the child comfortably sleeping in it. She rushed back to the worship-room and found the child enjoying himself there with the sweets. The mother ran back and forth as she was completely dazed by this magical sight of seeing the child simultaneously at two places! She feared for some spell being cast either on her self or on the child. It was then Lord Ram once again revealed his cosmic form as the four-armed Lord Vishnu to dispel all her doubts and misgivings. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201—to Doha no. 202.

Hence presently, this is the reason why the Lord wryly smiled at her now with great humour. He hinted to her that it is good that she has, at least for once, realised who her child is, for soon she would be so overcome by the Lord's delusion-creating powers that she would forget who the child she called as her son actually was.

³This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 152.

Briefly, the story is that king Manu and his queen Satrupa did severe Tapa or penance with a desire to have a divine glimpse of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. When the Lord manifested himself before them, the couple sought the boon that the

Lord would become their child so they would love him and shower their affection upon him in an uninhibited form, as well as enjoy the bliss and happiness of being so close to the Lord if he would graciously agree to become their child. Of course the Lord obliged, and he wanted to inform Kaushalya that it is one of the many reasons why he has now revealed himself before her—for she was Satrupa in her previous life.]

माता पुनि बोली सो मति डोली तजहु तात यह रूपा । १३ ।
 कीजै सिसुलीला अति प्रियसीला यह सुख परम अनूपा ॥ १४ ॥
 सुनि बचन सुजाना रोदन ठाना होइ बालक सुरभूपा । १५ ।
 यह चरित जे गावहिं हरिपद पावहिं ते न परहिं भवकूपा ॥ १६ ॥

mātā puni bōlī sō mati ḍōlī tajahu tāta yaha rūpā. 13.
 kijai sisulilā ati priyasilā yaha sukha parama anūpā. 14.
 suni bacana sujānā rōdana ṭhānā hō'i bālaka surabhūpā. 15.
 yaha carita jē gāvahiṁ haripada pāvahiṁ tē na parahiṁ bhavakūpā. 16.

The mother changed her mind as she was so dazed and overwhelmed by the Lord's cosmic and almighty form that she could not afford any longer to experience its presence and closeness, though, nonetheless, she felt exceptionally blessed and privileged and wished to enjoy the bliss and beatitude that comes with closeness with the Lord. So, she requested the Lord as follows: 'Oh my dear Lord! Please be kind to discard this superhuman and cosmic form (as it has overwhelmed me, and I am utterly confounded and dazed by it). (13)

Instead, please assume a more acceptable and pleasing form of a lovable child, and do act like one. Your deeds and acts in this pleasant form of a child would be very endearing, nice and pleasing for me.' (14)

Upon hearing her request, the Lord who is the 'God Superior amongst all the Gods', or who is the 'King of all the Gods' (surabhūpā), immediately assumed the pleasant form of a little child, and began to cry aloud in the likeness of a newly born infant. (15)

[Tulsidas says that—] Anyone who sings (with devotion) this glorious event (when the 'Lord of the universe' transformed himself into a 'human child') is sure to attain the exalted abode of the Lord and never again, as a consequence, fall in the dark well of transmigration symbolised by this mortal world. (16)

दो०. बिप्र धेनु सुर संत हित लीन्ह मनुज अवतार ।
 निज इच्छा निर्मित तनु माया गुन गो पार ॥ १९२ ॥
 dōhā.

bipra dhēnu sura santa hita līha manuja avatāra.
nija icchā nirmīta tanu māyā guna gō pāra. 192.

Verily indeed, in all sooth and without gainsay, the Supreme Lord manifested himself as a human for the good and welfare of the Vipras (literally the ‘Brahmins’, but implying all noble and learned people), the cows (representing all humble and docile creatures), the Gods (representing all exalted souls), and the saints and sages and other humble and pious people¹.

The Lord who is beyond the purview of Maya (delusions) and the different Gunas, which are characteristic features that are naturally associated with Maya, revealed himself out of his own free will.

He assumed a physical form that appeared to be gross like ordinary humans—but was actually subtle in essence and divine in its reality, for it was a form that transcended Maya with its associated Gunas². (Doha no.192)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72-a where the saintly crow Kaagbhusund tells the same thing to Garud.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 121; (ii) Doha no. 198.

²What are the associated Gunas of Maya. They have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Doha no. 70. Sage Kaagbhusund tells Garud that this Maya is so powerful and fearless that even Lord Shiva and Brahma are in affright of it, so what to talk of ordinary creatures. But this all-powerful Maya is but a humble maid of Lord Ram, and she cannot disobey the Lord’s command. Further, she is scared of ‘Bhakti’, or the virtue of devotion and love for the Lord, and does not disturb anyone who has Bhakti on his side, because Bhakti is very dear to Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 79; (ii) Doha no. 85—to Sortha no. 87; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116.]

चौ०. सुनि सिसु रुदन परम प्रिय बानी । संभ्रम चलि आई सब रानी ॥ १ ॥
हरषित जहँ तहँ धाई दासी । आनँद मगन सकल पुरबासी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suni sisu rudana parama priya bānī. sambhrama cali ā’īm saba rānī. 1.
haraṣita jaham̐ taham̐ dhā’īm dāsī. ānam̐da magana sakala purabāsī. 2.

Hearing the cry of the new-born babies, a sound that appeared very dear to all who heard it, the queens of the royal household dashed excitedly to the rooms from where the sound came¹. (1)

The maid servants of the palace ran hither and thither in excitement, and as the news spread, all the citizens of Ayodhya were overwhelmed with surging joy and a feeling of ecstasy². (2)

[Note—¹As has been said previously, king Dasrath had three chief wives, queens Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, while others were juniors, and though they were members of the royal household, yet had no special role as royal consorts in any official ceremony.

²Again, as has been observed earlier, ever since the time the Fire God had prophesized that four noble princes would be born in the royal household of king Dasrath, cheer had prevailed over the entire city of Ayodhya as well as the rest of the kingdom. Up until now there was no heir to the throne of Ayodhya, and the subjects were worried about their fate in the eventuality of Dasrath's death. So, the birth of not one but four sons was a mighty good and welcome news for the whole populace. Everyone waited with expectation in their hearts, and the atmosphere was full of suspense and eagerness. The news of the birth of the four princes was imminent, but till it actually happened, the suspense remained.

So, as soon as the sound of the newly born babies was heard, the news spread like wildfire, both within the wall of the palace and without it too, and therefore, sooner than would have been expected under normal circumstances, the whole city of Ayodhya was aware of this good news. And as we shall soon read in the verses that follow herein below, it erupted wildly in a burst of spontaneous joy.]

दसरथ पुत्रजन्म सुनि काना । मानहुँ ब्रह्मानंद समाना ॥ ३ ॥

परम प्रेम मन पुलक सरीरा । चाहत उठन करत मति धीरा ॥ ४ ॥

dasaratha putrajanma suni kānā. mānahum'brahmānanda samānā. 3.

parama prēma mana pulaka sarīrā. cāhata uṭhana karata mati dhīrā. 4.

When king Dasrath heard of the birth of sons, this good news was received by him with exceptional joy and made him ecstatic so much that he was in a state of total bliss like the one obtained by a person when he reaches the higher state of existence of consciousness that transcends this gross material world. This blissful state is called 'Brahmanand'—the joy of Brahm-realisation. (3)

The excess of joy and ecstasy made his body thrilled, and he was so overwhelmed with happiness that he found it difficult to restrain his joy, and sufficiently control his mind and compose himself so that he can get up and go to see the newly born princes¹. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, the excellent news virtually numbed his senses. For a few moments Dasrath could not move, as he felt literally transfixed and paralysed with joy so much so that his legs gave way. When he attempted to stand, he floundered and sat down. It took sometime for him to gather his wits together and compose himself sufficiently enough to be able to do the next thing that needed to be done.

In this context, we find a concordant verse in Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 3, verse no. 36.

जाकर नाम सुनत सुभ होई । मोरें गृह आवा प्रभु सोई ॥ ५ ॥

परमानंद पूरि मन राजा । कहा बोलाइ बजावहु बाजा ॥ ६ ॥

jākara nāma sunata subha hō'ī. mōrēm gr̥ha āvā prabhu sō'ī. 5.
paramānanda pūri mana rājā. kahā bōlā'i bajāvahu bājā. 6.

He thought to himself: 'The Lord whose holy name is so divine and sacred that if one as much as simply hears it then all auspiciousness come to him, it is so great an honour for me, and a rarest of rare privilege indeed, that the same Lord has come himself to (visit) my household (to become my son)!' (5)

The King's Mana (mind and heart) were overwhelmed with supreme joy and bliss.

He summoned his attendants and ordered them to play musical instruments to mark the auspicious occasion. (6)

गुर बसिष्ठ कहँ गयउ हँकारा । आए द्विजन सहित नृपद्वारा ॥ ७ ॥
अनुपम बालक देखेन्हि जाई । रूप रासि गुन कहि न सिराई ॥ ८ ॥

gura basiṣṭha kaham̃ gaya'u ham̃kārā. ā'ē dvijana sahita nṛpadvārā. 7.
anupama bālaka dēkhēnhi jā'ī. rūpa rāsi guna kahi na sirā'ī. 8.

He sent an urgent messenger to sage Vasistha, the royal priest, who came to the gate of the royal palace along with other Brahmins who accompanied him. (7)

Then, accompanied by his guru sage Vasistha and other learned Brahmins, the king went to see the newly born princes who were personified forms of beauty and charm, and had so many virtues that they cannot be listed¹. (8)

[Note—¹The king called sage Vasistha to thank him and show due reverence to him because it was the sage's advice that had borne fruit now in the form of the birth of these four sons. Further, the presence of the sage and other Brahmins was necessary in order to perform the various rites that are done at the time a son is born in the household.]

दो०. नंदीमुख सराध करि जातकरम सब कीन्ह ।
हाटक धेनु बसन मनि नृप बिप्रन्ह कहँ दीन्ह ॥ १९३ ॥

dōhā.

nandīmukha sarādha kari jātakarama saba kīnha.
hāṭaka dhēnu basana mani nṛpa bipranha kaham̃ dīnha. 193.

The king performed the 'NandiMukha Shradha¹' and all other necessary rituals that are ordained to be done at the time of birth of a son in one's household.

Then, the king cheerfully made a lot of charity by way of donating gold, cows, clothes, and precious gems to Brahmins (and other alms seekers). (Doha no. 193)

[Note—¹The “nandī mukha sarādhā” is a ritual when food offering is made to the sacred Bull, called Nandi, as well as to the Spirits of ancestors as part of a ritual to worship them to invoke their blessings at the time of child birth in a family.]

चौ०. ध्वज पताक तोरन पुर छावा । कहि न जाइ जेहि भाँति बनावा ॥ १ ॥
सुमनबृष्टि अकास तें होई । ब्रह्मानंद मगन सब लोई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhvaja patāka tōrana pura chāvā. kahi na jā'i jēhi bhāmṭi banāvā. 1.
sumanabrṣṭi akāsa tēm hō'ī. brahmānanda magana saba lō'ī. 2.

The whole city of Ayodhya was so beautifully decked up in the greatest of finery, with colourful flags, banners, hangings, buntings and festoons of all shapes and sizes, and of all hues of colours, that its beauty and magnificence cannot be described sufficiently in words. (1)

Flowers were being rained on it from the heavens (by the gods), and everyone was ecstatic with joy (both in the heavens as well as on the ground). (2)

बृंद बृंद मिलि चलीं लोगाई । सहज सिंगार किएँ उठि धाई ॥ ३ ॥
कनक कलस मंगल भरि थारा । गावत पैठहिं भूप दुआरा ॥ ४ ॥

br̄nda br̄nda mili calīm lōgā'īm. sahaja singāra ki'em' uṭhi dhā'īm. 3.
kanaka kalasa maṅgala bhari thārā. gāvata paiṭhahim̄ bhūpa du'ārā. 4.

Groups of females in the city, who were attired in their natural finery, streamed enthusiastically towards the royal palace. (3)

They held in their hands golden pots and plates containing auspicious paraphernalia that are traditionally used to celebrate such occasions marking the births of princes as they jubilantly entered the gates of the royal palace (to felicitate the king and bless the princes). (4)

करि आरति नेवछावरि करहीं । बार बार सिसु चरनन्हि परहीं ॥ ५ ॥
मागध सूत बंदिगन गायक । पावन गुन गावहिं रघुनायक ॥ ६ ॥

kari ārati nēvachāvāri karahīm. bāra bāra sisu carananhi parahīm. 5.
māgadha sūta bandigana gāyaka. pāvana guna gāvahim̄ raghunāyaka. 6.

When they reached the inner part of the palace, they performed Aarti¹ and made offering of gifts to the princes (to bless them), and repeatedly fell down at the children's feet (as a gesture of paying obeisance and vowing allegiance to their future king). (5)

Royal singers, minstrels and bards sang glories of the great Lord who would lead the in the family of the legendary kings descending from the ancient king Raghu (raghunāyaka)². (6)

[Note—¹Aarti is a traditional Hindu ritual whereby small lighted earthen lamps, that are usually arranged on a plate, are waved slowly in a clock-wise circular movement before someone who is being honoured or shown special respect. Simultaneously, flowers and gifts are given to the person shown honour, or such gifts are distributed amongst those who are witnessing the event.

²The term “raghunāyaka”, as defined here, is invariably used for Lord Ram throughout the book ‘Ram Charit Manas’. Since the child, who would be named ‘Ram’ soon, was the eldest of the four princes, it was natural for the citizens to show greater respect to him, as he would be the one who would one day become their future king, because the eldest son of a king usually ascended the throne upon his father’s death.]

सर्बस दान दीन्ह सब काहू । जेहिं पावा राखा नहिं ताहू ॥ ७ ॥
मृगमद चंदन कुंकुम कीचा । मची सकल बीथिन्ह बिच बीचा ॥ ८ ॥

sarbasa dāna dīnha saba kāhū. jēhim pāvā rākhā nahim tāhū. 7.
mṛgamada candana kuṅkuma kīcā. macī sakala bīthinha bica bicā. 8.

Everyone was exceedingly liberal in giving gifts and making charities on this happy occasion, and those who willingly received them would themselves give away these things immediately to others in their turn¹. (7)

The festivities and celebrations were so enthusiastically engaged into by the citizens that throughout the city, in all its lanes and streets, there spread a layer of a mixture of powdered musk, sandalwood and saffron (because this mixture was liberally sprinkled on the ground and cheerfully sprayed by the people over one another to mark this auspicious occasion). (8)

[Note—¹To wit, no one kept anything that he received as gift and largesse on that auspicious occasion. All wished to share the joy with others. If some did keep some token gift with themselves, it was more in the form of a memorabilia or a memento for future generations in the family, rather than keeping it because either they longed for it owing to its value or because they would need it for some personal use. Remember: Ayodhya was a prosperous state, and every citizen was fully provided for, with no poverty or want anywhere.]

दो०. गृह गृह बाज बधाव सुभ प्रगटे सुषमा कंद ।
हरषवंत सब जहँ तहँ नगर नारि नर बृंद ॥ १९४ ॥

dōhā.

gr̥ha gr̥ha bāja badhāva subha pragaṭē suṣamā kanda.
haraṣavanta saba jaham̐ taham̐ nagara nāri nara bṛnda. 194.

There were celebrations galore and playing of musical instruments as well as singing of felicitous songs in great abundance in every household of the city in order to mark the birth of the Lord (Ram representing the Supreme Being, the Lord who was the Saviour, Protector and the Redeemer of the world) who is an embodiment of all auspiciousness and beauty.

In every nook and corner of the city there were bands of exhilarant citizens, both males and females, thoroughly enjoying the time of their lives¹. (Doha no. 194)

[Note—¹Geetawali Ramayan of Tulsidas, in its Baal Kand, verse nos. 1-5, vividly describes the elaborate ceremonies, grand festivities and mass rejoicings in the city of Ayodhya that marked the birth of Lord Ram. An English version of Geetawali has been published by this humble author separately.

As has been noted earlier, there was ample time to decorate the city of Ayodhya elaborately, from the time of the fire sacrifice when the Fire God had prophesized the birth of the four princes, to the actual moment of their birth.

The whole city was decked up gorgeously, with a fastidious eye on each detail, like a bride in her natural pristine beauty. It was painted gaily; beautiful ceremonial gates and arches were erected with intricate designs and decorated by coloured paper and gems; multi-coloured flags and royal standards fluttered from atop buildings and gateways and arches and royal palaces; banners, buntings and festoons of all shapes, sizes and hues of colours, made from the finest of satin and silk, with fringes of valvet, were strung across streets, lanes and squares, as well as in courtyards and porticos of private homes and public houses, as well as in market places; gorgeous stages were put up where many kinds of artists would display their skills in music, dance and singing with a great deal of flourish; scented water was sprinkled throughout the city, and the avenues and parks were washed clean; flowers and trees were planted everywhere, along the sides of streets, in public parks, along boundary walls of homes and every nook and corner of the city; a rainbow of colours formed in the sky with the spraying of different kinds of powder made from herbs and flowers that got mixed with the dense smoke arising from incense burning here and there all over the city; a sweet fragrance permeated everywhere as powdered saffron, musk and sandalwood were liberally sprayed in the city; clusters of jubilant citizens, all attired in their finest of embroidered clothes and glittering ornaments, stood in large or small groups here and there discussing the auspicious events of the day, or walked around cheerfully in the city exchanging pleasantries and greetings; band-stands were erected where musical bands would start playing as soon as the good news of the birth of the four princes was announced, and in similar stages elsewhere bards, poets and minstrels would sing the glories of the royal family which has an ancient ancestry, being descendants of the great legendary kings named Ikshwaku and Raghu, as well as of the princes who are newly born, princes whose glories would shine eternally for all times to come, for as long as the sun and the moon shine in the sky.

To wit, the general atmosphere was one of great festivity and ceremony, not only because an heir to the throne was coming along, but more so because that heir was not an ordinary prince but the Redeemer, the Saviour and the Protector of the world himself. It was surely an occasion to rejoice and celebrate by the citizens of Ayodhya who felt so singularly honoured and extremely blessed that the Lord had chosen them to be his subjects, to come and live amongst them as one of them, and

give these humble people the rarest of rare privilege of being able to directly interact with the Lord of the World, for in all sooth and without gainsay it was 'He' who would manifest himself as Lord Ram, a lovable prince of the realm, a dear friend of one and all, a prince who would be a fountainhead of all auspicious virtues known to mankind. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297 in this context, though the occasion was the arrival of news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita. The city of Ayodhya was elaborately decorated at that time too, in the same fashion as it was done during the Lord's birth.

The esteemed reader would get an idea of what has been narrated herein above when he or she reads the verses that follow herein below.]

चौ०. कैकयसुता सुमित्रा दोऊ । सुंदर सुत जनमत भैं ओऊ ॥ १ ॥

वह सुख संपति समय समाजा । कहि न सकइ सारद अहिराजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaikayasutā sumitrā dō'ū. sundara suta janamata bhairṁ ō'ū. 1.

vaha sukha sampati samaya samājā. kahi na saka'i sārada ahirājā. 2.

Queen Kaikeyi, who was the daughter of king Kaikaye, and queen Sumitra too gave birth to beautiful princes¹. (1)

The atmosphere of abundant joy, happiness and exhilaration, the environment of excess of cheer and the feeling of intense ecstasy that prevailed at that time were so profound and beyond measurement that even the goddess of speech known as Sarada (i.e. goddess Saraswati) as well as the king of serpents, known as Lord Seshnath (who has a thousand tongues because he has an equal number of heads), were unable to describe them². (2)

[Note—¹Kaikeyi had one son named Bharat, while Sumitra had two sons named Laxman and Shatrughan. The eldest of the four brothers was Lord Ram whose mother was the chief queen Kaushalya. We shall soon read about this when the four princes were given their names by the priest of the kingdom, sage Vasistha. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it.}]

²A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas when we read about the celebrations marking the return of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita from the forest. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 9.}]

अवधपुरी सोहड़ एहि भाँती । प्रभुहि मिलन आई जनु राती ॥ ३ ॥

देखि भानु जनु मन सकुचानी । तदपि बनी संध्या अनुमानी ॥ ४ ॥

avadhapurī sōha'i ēhi bhāmṭī. prabhuhi milana āī janu rātī. 3.
dēkhi bhānu janu mana sakucānī. tadapi banī sandhyā anumānī. 4.

On that auspicious occasion, the city of Ayodhya looked so glamorous and magnificent that it gave the impression that the goddess of night had come personally to visit and pay her homage to the Lord (i.e. to Lord Ram), --- (3)

--- But finding that it was noon time, and the splendid sun was shining with all its brilliance in the sky, she hesitated to come forward, but at the same time was reluctant to go back without seeing the Lord, so she transformed herself as dusk and stayed on in the city¹. (4)

[Note—¹This is a classic case of imagery by a brilliant poet, as Tulsidas surely was. We shall read below that colourful powder made of herbs, flowers, saffron, musk and sandalwood was liberally sprayed all over the city, and it formed a cloud in the sky—apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 herein below.

Besides the above, there were other factors that contributed to the formation of an artificial twilight. In the city there were many public fountains spewing water from their spouts with such force that sprays of water rose up high in the air, and similarly, scented water was sprayed manually throughout the city, so that these two factors together caused a mist to form all over the city due to moisture that hung heavily in the air. Then there were large trees with their thick foliage; and huge banners, festoons, hangings etc. which cast their own shadows on the ground below. Then large tents and pavilions were erected all over the sprawling city, where large crowds would gather and celebrate publicly, which in their turn prevented sunlight from reaching the ground.

The net effect of all these and other factors was that though the sun was in the middle of the sky as it was noon time, yet its light was obscured to such an extent that it created an impression that it was the time of dusk or twilight, and not that of noon.]

अगर धूप बहु जनु अँधिआरी । उड़इ अबीर मनहुँ अरुनारी ॥ ५ ॥
मंदिर मनि समूह जनु तारा । नृप गृह कलस सो इंदु उदारा ॥ ६ ॥

agara dhūpa bahu janu am̄dhi'ārī. uṛa'i abīra manahum̄ arunārī. 5.
mandira mani samūha janu tārā. nr̄pa gr̄ha kalasa sō indu udārā. 6.

The cloud that formed by burning of incense obstructed sunlight to create the impression of dusk.

Fistfuls of Abir (a red powder used during celebrations) were tossed into the air, and the atmosphere was so laden with it that the sun's light filtering through this cloud looked red enough to give the impression of the sun's light as it is seen at sunset time. (5)

The tops of the houses of the citizens were decorated with gems that looked like so many stars twinkling in the fading sunlight during the twilight time.

In their midst, the magnificent and large pinnacle with a cupola that sat atop the royal palace of the king gave the impression of a full moon looking majestic in a sky full of clusters of stars. (6)

भवन बेदधुनि अति मृदु बानी । जनु खग मुखर समयँ जनु सानी ॥ ७ ॥
कौतुक देखि पतंग भुलाना । एक मास तेईँ जात न जाना ॥ ८ ॥

bhavana bēdadhuni ati mṛdu bānī. janu khaga mukhara samayam̐ janu sānī.
7.

kautuka dēkhi pataṅga bhulānā. ēka māsa tē'im̐ jāta na jānā. 8.

The sound of the Brahmins chanting verses from the Vedas (scriptures) with a sweet voice in the royal palace resembled the pleasant chirping of birds during evening hours. (7)

The Sun God was himself so much confused by this sight that he beheld in the city below (of dusk appearing during noon time) that he failed to move forward in the sky, but instead moved his celestial chariot round and round to make sense of things, as a result of which one month passed while it was still daytime¹. (8)

[Note—¹To wit, the day on which Lord Ram was born seemed to stretch indefinitely, lasting for about a month's time. No one could distinguish between night and day.

In practical terms it means that every moment of the day was being thoroughly enjoyed by everyone so much so that time seemed to have lost meaning for the revelers. No one knew or bothered as to when the night came and the next day dawned; one day stretched seamlessly into the other day. The festivities and celebrations were continuous and never-ending. The city itself was so brilliantly illuminated that night had no practical meaning, and neither could the sun make his independent presence felt during the day as the daytime seemed to be dusk-time, as already said in the verses that we have just read heretofore.]

दो०. मास दिवस कर दिवस भा मरम न जानइ कोइ ।
रथ समेत रबि थाकेउ निसा कवन बिधि होइ ॥ १९५ ॥

dōhā.

māsa divasa kara divasa bhā marama na jāna'i kō'i.
ratha samēta rabi thākē'u nisā kavana bidhi hō'i. 195.

It was so strange indeed that a day lasted as long as a month, and no one had an inkling of this mysterious happening.

The Sun God was tired (going around in circles), wondering how it would be night time (and also wondering if he has lost his way across the endless stretch of an unmarked sky in front of him)¹. (Doha no. 195)

[Note—¹An explanation of this phenomenon is given as a note appended to verse nos. 7-8 herein above.

A similar idea has been expressed in Tulsidas' 'Geetawali Ramayan', in its Uttar Kand, verse no. 23, line nos. 7-8 where it is said that during the celebrations that marked the arrival of Lord Ram back to Ayodhya from the forest, the sun and the

moon stood for some time in the sky as they were overwhelmed with joy and greatly amazed at the sight of grand festivities that were being held on the ground in the city of Ayodhya at that time.

In this imagery, one can visualize a traveler passing across a sand-covered endless stretch of barren land in a desert. Often it may happen that, due to a variety of reasons, the traveler would lose his way as he becomes so confused that he would go round and round in the same area. This loss of direction and sense of bearing may happen due to emotional stress arising out of a sense of hopelessness and helplessness in a vast stretch of wilderness with no sign of succour or help coming his way, or due to physical fatigue caused by sunstroke and heat and thirst, or for other reasons. But the net effect is that though the traveler exerts himself by walking and walking all day, he still sees the same terrain of sand and dunes stretching before him till the distant horizon—making him utterly dismayed, frustrated, bewildered and unhinged.

A similar thing happened with the Sun God. He could not understand why there is dusk when it ought to have been a bright sun-lit day time. He waited for some hours when he expected nightfall, but discovered that the city below was as illuminated as if it would have been during the day time. So, night appeared to be day, and day was nearly night with the sunlight obscured. This caused a lot of confusion to the Sun God.]

चौ०. यह रहस्य काहूँ नहिं जाना । दिनमनि चले करत गुनगाना ॥ १ ॥

देखि महोत्सव सुर मुनि नागा । चले भवन बरनत निज भागा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

yaha rahasya kāhūṁ nahim jānā. dinamani calē karata gunagānā. 1.

dēkhi mahōtsava sura muni nāgā. calē bhavana baranata nija bhāgā. 2.

The mystery of this strange phenomenon (that there was neither a complete night nor a fully bright day during one month of celebrations marking the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers as described heretofore) was not marked by anyone, nor did anybody bother to pay attention to its occurrence (because the celebrations in the city were one continuous event, without a break, and every single person was engaged in some or the other activity so much so that virtually the whole population remained awake throughout the time as long as the festivities lasted).

By-and-by, the Sun God, who was already amazed at this mysterious occurrence, finally recognized the mystical aspect of it (that it was the time of the advent of the Supreme Lord on earth, something that was extraordinary, and hence all events associated with that time would be extraordinary too) and went his way, all the while praising the glory of the Lord and reverentially paying his respect to the latter. (1)

The Gods, the Sages and the Nagas¹ (representing those who lived in the heaven, the pious souls who inhabited the earth, and the residents of the subterranean world respectively, i.e. inhabitants of all the three divisions of the world), having witnessed the grand celebrations and festivities marking the birth of Lord Ram, too paid their obeisance and went back to their respective abodes (in the heaven, hermitages and the subterranean world respectively), all the while thanking their good luck and feeling

extremely honoured to have been able to participate in the auspicious events (marking the advent of the Supreme Being on earth in the form of Lord Ram). (2)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that these gods, sages and the nagas had come to pay their respects to the Supreme Being just prior to the Lord's revelation. Then they had gone back to their respective homes* to prepare and come back once again to participate in the celebrations attending the birth of the same Supreme Lord in the form of Lord Ram. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 191 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.}

Earlier they had to rush to offer their obeisance to the Lord as there was no time for elaborate preparations, as the creator had suddenly announced the time, without giving them any advance notice. But now they came back fully prepared, gods and nagas in their finery, holding flowers and fruits and other gifts, and the sages and seers came prepared with small items that they need for blessing a newly born child, such as sacred water, kush grass, rice grains, vermilion and saffron powder, and so on.

Now, they assumed human forms once they were in the city of Ayodhya, and then they mingled with the local population and participated in the festivities without anyone noticing them. A proof of this happening is that Lord Shiva and sage Kaagbhusund had assumed the form of human beings so that they can personally take part in the celebrations, and they did it not only in the streets but also from within the palace where they had gone to pay their obeisance to Lord Ram. There are clear hints to it in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 194 herein above; and Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 196 herein below.}

A similar thing has also happened during the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita, when the gods and goddesses and other celestial beings as well as sages and mystics had assumed human forms to personally participate in the celebrations that attended that auspicious occasion. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 319; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 321.}

औरउ एक कहउँ निज चोरी । सुनु गिरिजा अति दूढ़ मति तोरी ॥ ३ ॥

काकभुसुंड़ि संग हम दोऊ । मनुजरूप जानइ नहिं कोऊ ॥ ४ ॥

परमानंद प्रेमसुख फूले । बीथिन्ह फिरहिं मगन मन भूले ॥ ५ ॥

aura'u ēka kaha'um' nija cōrī. sunu girijā ati dṛṛha mati tōrī. 3.
kākabhusuṇḍi saṅga hama dō'ū. manujarūpa jāna'i nahim kō'ū. 4.
paramānanda prēmasukha phūlē. bīthinha phirahim magana mana bhūlē. 5.

[Lord Shiva told Parvati—] ‘Listen oh daughter of the King of Mountains (“giriḥjā”; i.e. Parvati, his consort). Since you have a steady mind and would understand the real intent of what I am going to tell you presently, I would disclose to you the stratagem I had employed to personally participate in the gaieties and celebrations marking the auspicious occasion of birth of our beloved Lord Ram. (3)

I and sage Kaagbhusund had assumed human forms and mingled with the crowd in Ayodhya, but no body could know who we were¹. (4)

We two were ecstatic with joy, and literally puffed up with exhilaration as we roamed around the streets and lanes of the city of Ayodhya. We were so amazed and lost in enjoying the moment that we had no sense of time and direction, or who we were. (5)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva told Parvati: “To wit, it is a secret affair as no one knew what we two did, and no one cared either. It was done with a good intention, and though employment of some cunning method is not good for a noble and upright soul, yet since our intention was not bad but very noble and upright indeed, and also because this deceit was not meant to cheat or harm anyone but to enjoy the sacred bliss which we would have missed if we were too rigid about having a moral high ground just for the sake of false ego of being upright and religious in our conduct, so it was eligible for forgiveness. I am willing to disclose the trick we two employed to participate in the celebrations marking the birth of Lord Ram because I am certain you would see it in the right light, and not misconstrue it as a mischief committed by your husband who had earlier punished you for the same error of trying a dirty trick in order to judge the authenticity of Lord Ram, and then covering up your mischief by telling a lie, during your previous life as Sati—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 57.

You see the difference between our two cases: you had used cunning to test Lord Ram, and then aggravated your sin by telling a lie to me; while we two, myself and Kaagbhusund, had used a trick to enjoy the spiritual bliss that came by participating in the birth festivities of the same Lord, and I am not telling a lie to you as you had done to me at that time, for I am owning my actions.”

This particular confession by Lord Shiva shows how truthful he was, that he did not hesitate or feel bashful to own-up his trick, that he had assumed a false form of a human being to go and participate in the grand festivities coinciding with Lord Ram’s birth with the main purpose of being able to go near his beloved Lord Ram and seek the Lord’s personal attention.

Now howbeit, a question arises: what ‘human form’ had Shiva and Kaagbhusund assumed on that occasion? Well, though it is not expressly stated anywhere in the text what it was, i.e. out of the four classes of men in ancient societies, such as Brahmins (upper class consisting of learned men, teachers and priests), Kshatriyas (the warrior class), Vaishyas (the merchant or trading class) and Sudras (the section of society that served the other three), it can be safely assumed that they had disguised themselves as Brahmins. The reason is easy to understand: since their main objective in assuming a human form and visiting Ayodhya at the time of Lord Ram’s birth was not only to enjoy the celebrations attending the Lord’s birth and participate in the festivities, but using that opportunity to have direct access to their beloved Lord so that they can see him from close quarters to pay their obeisance to the Lord personally, and to express their love and affection and devotion to the Lord from up close, the safest and surest way to achieve this goal was to become a Brahmin. This would give them free and unhindered access to the inner part of the royal palace, because in a tradition-bound society of those ancient days, males were usually not allowed to be admitted into the female quarters of royal households, where the infant princes would naturally have been with their mothers, but Brahmins were exceptions to this general restriction, especially on an auspicious occasion as birth of a child, as then they were not only most welcome but even invited to come in and

bless the new-born child. Besides, as Brahmins, they will be given right-of-way to visit any part of the city they wished, with no one questioning who they were, as Brahmins were always shown great respect by one and all.

Another point to remark here is that Lord Shiva and the saintly crow Kaagbhusund were close friends. It was expected this way, as both of them were ardent devotees of Lord Ram, and totally dedicated to the latter. In this context, one more important thing comes to our mind—and it is that the story of Lord Ram was first revealed in its present form in the Mana (collectively meaning the heart and the mind) of Lord Shiva while he was meditating on Lord Ram, and then this divine story was revealed by Shiva to only two other pious souls directly: one was his consort, goddess Parvati, and the other hearer was Kaagbhusund. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30.}

Who was Kaagbhusund? He was a saintly crow who lived in the higher reaches of the northern Mountains, i.e. in the Himalayas, somewhere near-about Mt. Kailash, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. His abode was called the Neel Giri, the ‘blue mountain’, with a summit that looked ‘golden’ in hue due to the sunlight falling on it at an angle due to its astounding height. Establishing his hermitage in that pleasant environ that was conducive to spiritual practice, Kaagbhusund used to preach other birds the story of Lord Ram. Even Lord Shiva had once gone to him incognito, disguised as a swan, and heard him give discourse on the story of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 56—to Doha no. 57.}

At the time of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita too, a similar thing had happened when the creator Brahma, the gods and goddesses and other celestial beings, as well as sages and mystics had assumed human forms to personally participate in the celebrations that attended that auspicious occasion. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 319; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 321.}

In Tulsidas’ ‘Geetawali Ramayan’ an incident is narrated wherein Lord Shiva had disguised himself as a soothsayer and went to Ayodhya; he had a young Brahmin boy as his disciple with him. Now, though it is not said clearly who this disciple was, but in all probability he was none but Kaagbhusund. Lord Ram’s mother Kaushalya heard that a great fortune-teller has arrived from somewhere with a young disciple, so she called them in and asked Shiva, disguised as a soothsayer, to see and bless the child named Ram, and tell something about his future, as all mothers are eager to know what fate has in store for their sons. This gave Lord Shiva the rare opportunity he was seeking—to be invited to come and be near to his beloved Lord Ram, to touch the divine child’s feet, head and hands, to take the child in his arms and caress him, and in general show excess of love, affection and reverence to the Lord on the pretence of examining him closely to prophesize about his future, while nobody would be able to guess who the soothsayer actually was, and what was his real aim. Having satisfied his heart and feeling extremely fortunate and blissful, and with the main objective of his visit served, Lord Shiva made some general good comments about the future of the children, such as sage Vishwamitra coming and taking Ram with him to perform a deed that would give the adolescent boy a great fame, and later on to get him as well as all his three brothers married; Shiva also predicted that all the four children would gain immense fame and glory in their lives. This good news obviously thrilled all the mothers beyond measure, and then Shiva and his companion disciple went their way. {Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 17.}

यह सुभ चरित जान पै सोई । कृपा राम कै जापर होई ॥ ६ ॥
 तेहि अवसर जो जेहि बिधि आवा । दीन्ह भूप जो जेहि मन भावा ॥ ७ ॥
 गज रथ तुरग हेम गो हीरा । दीन्हे नृप नानाबिधि चीरा ॥ ८ ॥

yaha subha carita jāna pai sōī. kṛpā rāma kai jāpara hōī. 6.
 tēhi avasara jō jēhi bidhi āvā. dīnha bhūpa jō jēhi mana bhāvā. 7.
 gaja ratha turaga hēma gō hīrā. dīnhē nṛpa nānābidhi cīrā. 8.

Only those who are blessed by the grace of Lord Ram would understand the secret of the auspicious intention we had then, and the extreme level of bliss and ecstasy that we had experienced during those heavenly moments when we (myself and Kaagbhusund) had participated in the birth celebrations of Lord Ram. (6)

On that occasion, all those who came to the palace were gifted with whatever they wanted by king Dasrath¹. (7)

The king liberally gifted elephants, chariots, horses, gold, cows, diamonds, and all sorts of wearing apparels and robes to all who sought them, and everything was available for the asking by the visitors. (8)

[Note—¹A very clever statement by Lord Shiva! He and Kaagbhusund had assumed a human form, and they had roamed around in the city as already mentioned by the Lord. But their main aim was to visit Lord Ram and pay their obeisance to the Lord whom they loved so much. So it was but natural that they must have gone to the palace and stood in the queue with other visitors. When their turn came, it is equally natural that they would have got a chance to go to the child Ram and offer their respects to him just like others, who had stood in the queue for their turn to come to go near the child, had been doing. Now, of course they had not come to seek material gifts, so after paying their respects to their beloved Lord Ram, Shiva and Kaagbhusund quietly moved out of the palace and started roaming in the city, left alone to themselves, unnoticed and un-bothered by anyone. It is quite possible that they went inside the palace and met Lord Ram more than once, for the simple reason that the crowd was so huge and the spirit of celebration so high that no one had the mind to keep tabs on who came or went out of the palace.

Truly indeed, it was this exclusive opportunity of being so close and near to their beloved Lord Ram that they could even touch him, put their heads at his feet, and caress the child Ram lovingly as one would do to a child when one goes to bless him during the celebrations of the child's birth, that Lord Shiva and sage Kaagbhusund decided to bear with the accusation of using a trick just so that they can have the good fortune to express their love and affection for their beloved Lord personally, for they realised that they would not get such a golden opportunity ever in their lives again when Lord Ram grows up a little, for then free and direct access to the Lord would be very limited in accordance with traditional protocols that would come into play, which, inter alia, restrict access to princes and other members of the royal household. Obviously, the gates of the palace won't remain open for one and all for all times to come in.]

दो०. मन संतोषे सबन्धि के जहँ तहँ देहिं असीस ।
सकल तनय चिर जीवहुँ तुलसिदास के ईस ॥ १९६ ॥

dōhā.

mana santōṣē sabanhi kē jaham̃ taham̃ dēhim̃ asīsa.
sakala tanaya cira jīvahum̃ tulasidāsa kē īsa. 196.

The alms, gifts and largesse granted by king Dasrath satisfied everyone, and all were profusely blessing him from every direction, saying that all the sons, including the Lord of Tulsidas (i.e. Lord Ram), may have long and fruitful lives¹. (Doha no. 196)

[Note—¹We must not forget that Tulsidas was not merely a poet or scribe, but he was an ardent devotee of Lord Ram too. So therefore, while describing all the events associated with the birth of the Lord, Tulsidas personally gets involved at the emotional and spiritual level in the festivities. So he imagines that he too is roaming on the streets of Ayodhya with Lord Shiva and Kaagbhusund, that he too can feel the level of bliss and joy they had themselves experienced, he joins the crowd that queues to visit Lord Ram and bless the child, and like Shiva and Kaagbhusund and others he too expresses his profound love to his beloved Lord Ram, albeit only in a token way in his mind and heart.

So, when Shiva, Kaagbhusund, Brahmins, Gods, Goddesses, Sages, Mystics and others were blessing Lord Ram when their turn in the queue came, Tulsidas too stands up and gives his emotional blessings to his beloved Lord when his own turn comes!

To wit, though the pious saint Tulsidas was not physically present at that time, yet his presence is most remarkable at the emotional, spiritual and mental level, for a true devotee always feels that the Lord is eternally present by his side, and time and distance do not mean anything to him.]

चौ०. कछुक दिवस बीते एहि भाँती । जात न जानिअ दिन अरु राती ॥ १ ॥
नामकरन कर अवसरु जानी । भूप बोलि पठए मुनि ग्यानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kachuka divasa bītē ēhi bhām̃tī. jāta na jāni'a dina aru rātī. 1.
nāmakarana kara avasaru jānī. bhūpa bōli paṭha'ē muni gyānī. 2.

Some days passed in this way during grand celebrations and festivities that marked the birth of the four princes, when days and nights passed unnoticed. (1)

Finally the time arrived when a formal name was to be given to the four princes¹. At that time, the king sent a messenger to the learned guru (sage Vasistha), asking him to come and assign auspicious names to the four children. (2)

[Note—¹Tulsidas has described this episode elaborately in his 'Geetawali Ramayan', in its Baal Kand, verse no. 6.

According to Hindu tradition, this naming ceremony of a child is usually done by the family priest on the 11th or 12th day from birth. We would note here that

previously it has been said that the day the four princes were born extended up to one full month—apropos: Doha no. 195. Then at the end of this period, finally, the sun god moved towards the horizon and night fell—apropos: Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 195.

Therefore, we can safely assume that the counting of the days must have started from the end of this period, i.e. after one month, during which there was constant daylight. In practical terms it would mean that king Dasrath was himself so lost in the celebrations and so overwhelmed with joy and happiness that he forgot all other things and formalities that needed to be attended to. On the other hand, his guru sage Vasistha too kept quiet as he did not wish to act as a hindrance or a spoil-sport in the mass merry-making, for he well knew who the four children were, and so whatever time was chosen for their naming ceremony would become automatically auspicious—for, wherever the Lord goes the time and circumstance become auspicious and favourable. Hence, there was no need for hurry and creating an unnecessary fuss over inconsequential issues.]

करि पूजा भूपति अस भाषा । धरिअ नाम जो मुनि गुनि राखा ॥ ३ ॥
इन्ह के नाम अनेक अनूपा । मैं नृप कहब स्वमति अनुरूपा ॥ ४ ॥

kari pūjā bhūpati asa bhāṣā. dhari'a nāma jō muni guni rākhā. 3.
inha kē nāma anēka anūpā. maim̐ nṛpa kahaba svamati anurūpā. 4.

When the guru (sage Vasistha) arrived, the king duly worshipped him and said reverentially: ‘Oh sage (muni)! Please assign names to these four children in accordance with what you may have decided for them, keeping in mind their special qualities and virtues that you see in them.’ (3)

The sage replied: ‘Oh king (nṛpa)! They have many names, and all are beautiful as well as auspicious in their own rights. However, I will give them individual names which I think are most appropriate for the four children. (4)

जो आनंद सिंधु सुखरासी । सीकर तें त्रैलोक सुपासी ॥ ५ ॥
सो सुख धाम राम अस नामा । अखिल लोक दायक बिश्रामा ॥ ६ ॥

jō ānanda sindhu sukharāsī. sīkara tēm trailōka supāsī. 5.
sō sukha dhāma rāma asa nāmā. akhila lōka dāyaka biśrāmā. 6.

He who is an ocean of bliss, and a treasury of felicity and beatitude so much so that a drop of this ocean and a small bit from this treasury is enough to grant bliss and happiness to the whole world, --- (5)

---He who is an embodiment of the virtues of bliss, happiness and joy of all kinds, and who grants peace and tranquility to the whole world—well, he would be called ‘Ram (pronounced as “Rāma”)¹. (6)

[Note—¹It was either that the queens were sitting side-by-side with their sons in their laps, or all the four princes were lying in small independent cradles during the naming ceremony. So therefore, sage Vasistha pointed out each child while assigning a name to him. He first named the eldest prince as ‘Ram’.]

बिस्व भरन पोषन कर जोई । ताकर नाम भरत अस होई ॥ ७ ॥
जाके सुमिरन तें रिपु नासा । नाम सत्रुहन बेद प्रकासा ॥ ८ ॥

bisva bharana pōṣana kara jō'ī. tākara nāma bharata asa hō'ī. 7.
jākē sumirana tēm ripu nāsā. nāma satruhana bēda prakāsā. 8.

[Pointing the second child, sage Vasistha said—] ‘He who looks after the material needs of the world and makes necessary arrangements to supply the necessities of life—he would be known as ‘Bharat’.’ (7)

[Turning to the third child, sage Vasistha said—] ‘He whose mere remembrance is sufficient to enable one to eliminate or overcome one’s enemies, and whose virtues have been highlighted even in the Vedas—he would be known as ‘Shatrughan (also pronounced as “satruhana”)¹’ (8)

[Note—¹The word “satruhana” has two parts: (i) satru = enemy; and (ii) hana = destroyer. Hence, ‘Shatrughan’, the way satruhana is normally pronounced, is the one who destroys enemies.]

दो०. लच्छन धाम राम प्रिय सकल जगत आधार ।
गुरु बसिष्ट तेहि राखा लछिमन नाम उदार ॥ १९७ ॥

dōhā.

lacchana dhāma rāma priya sakala jagata ādhāra.
guru basiṣṭa tēhi rākhā lachimana nāma udāra. 197.

Then finally, he who is an embodiment of all auspicious virtues, is very dear to Ram, and is the one who supports the whole creation¹—sage Vasistha graciously named that child (i.e. the fourth) as ‘Laxman (also pronounced as “lachimana”)²’. (Doha no. 197)

[Note—¹Laxman was a manifestation of Lord Seshnath, the celestial serpent with a thousand hoods. Seshnath is believed to support the earth and the rest of the known living world on top of his thousand hoods. Lord Vishnu too reclines on Seshnath’s coiled body as the latter floats on the surface of the celestial ocean known as Kshirsagar.

²The word ‘lachimana’ means one who abounds in good virtues.]

चौ०. धरे नाम गुर हृदयं बिचारी । बेद तत्व नृप तव सुत चारी ॥ १ ॥
मुनि धन जन सरबस सिव प्राना । बाल केलि रस तेहिं सुख माना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dharē nāma gura hṛdayam̐ bicārī. bēda tattva nṛpa tava suta cārī. 1.
muni dhana jana sarabasa siva prānā. bāla kēli rasa tēhim̐ sukha mānā. 2.

The Guru (i.e. sage Vasistha, who was the royal priest and an advisor on religious matters to the royal family) named the four princes in accordance with the special characters and qualities he perceived in them.

Turning to king Dasrath, he said: ‘Oh king (nṛpa)! Your four sons represent the essence of the four Vedas, and the virtues they stand for and extol. (1)

The Lord who is the beloved of great sages and mystics, who is very dear to all living beings, and whom Lord Shiva reveres as dearly as his own life—verily indeed, it is the same Lord who decided to assume the form of a child as it would give immense joy and happiness to one and all¹. (2)

[Note—¹In this verse, sage Vasistha is obviously referring to Lord Ram as the three instances he cites—of the Lord being dear to the sages and mystics as well as to rest of all living beings, and to Lord Shiva—applies exclusively to Lord Ram.

In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 209; (iii) Doha no. 204; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Doha no. 130; (c) Uttar Kand, (v) Doha no. 88.

Refer also to: “Kavitwali Ramayan” of Goswami Tulsidas, its Uttar Kand, verse nos. 36 and 110 which are very explicit on this subject.

Sage Vasistha says that Lord Ram has assumed the form of a child because the great sages, saints and other pious people, as well as ordinary persons, and even Lord Shiva, had desired to derive immense pleasure by seeing the Supreme Lord in the form of a child, for then they would have an opportunity to see the Lord from up close, as a child playing around in his home, then slowly growing up to become a teen-aged prince, then marrying, and then doing so many other things during his tenure as a human being that later on these events would be duly chronicled into a legendary history called the Ramayana, which would then be recounted and retold by generations after generations of saints, poets, bards and minstrels for all times to come, thereby providing the world an opportunity to have access to something that would help the people to find spiritual peace and mental solace and succour in a world full of miseries and pains and grief.]

बारेहि ते निज हित पति जानी । लछिमन राम चरन रति मानी ॥ ३ ॥
भरत सत्रुहन दूनउ भाई । प्रभु सेवक जसि प्रीति बड़ाई ॥ ४ ॥

bārēhi tē nija hita pati jānī. lachimana rāma carana rati mānī. 3.
bharata satruhana dūna'u bhā'ī. prabhu sēvaka jasi prīti baṛā'ī. 4.

From the very days of his infancy, Laxman realized that Lord Ram was his only Lord, someone who was dearest to him and his best well-wisher¹—and with this firm

conviction he (Laxman) developed intense affection for the feet of his Lord, becoming Lord Ram's ardent follower and a faithful devotee². (3)

Meanwhile, the other two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, too were very devoted to Lord Ram, and their affection, devotion and commitment towards the Lord was truly of the standard expected between a loving-and-caring Master and his devoted servants. [To wit, the love, affection and devotion of Bharat and Shatrughan for Lord Ram was not one whit less than that of Laxman.]³ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 71—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 73 where Laxman's love, dedication, complete submission and total commitment towards Lord Ram, and his vow that everything for him is secondary in this world when it comes to his relationship with the Lord, is as crystal clear as it could ever be.

²This devotion and unyielding commitment to his dearest Lord Ram would become evident a little later on in our reading of the story of Ram Charit Manas. Here, let us briefly have a glimpse of four such remarkable occasions as follows:

The first two occasions were during the bow breaking ceremony held in Janakpur to select a groom for Sita. There, when no one could break the bow, king Janak had lamented and remarked that it seemed to him that the world has no true man worth his name who would have the strength of his arms so as to break the bow, when no one could as much as move it even an inch. This infuriated Laxman as he took it as a direct insult of his beloved Lord, Sri Ram, so much so that he instantly got up and fiercely rebuked Janak, not bothering to mind whom he was speaking against, or for protocol and decency of behaviour that ought to be observed during such events. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.}

Soon, when sage Parashuram came to punish Lord Ram for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva, Laxman stood between the angry sage and the Lord, and fearlessly defended his brother while shaming the sage and putting him on the back foot, to the amazement of the entire assembly and confounding the sage himself. He challenged the sage to try to harm Lord Ram, and Laxman would make him learn a bitter lesson of his life. Ultimately, the sage surrendered and went his way. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

The third occasion comes when news arrived in the forest that Bharat, Lord Ram's younger brother, was coming to him with a huge army. Though Bharat had as much love for Lord Ram as had Laxman, and his purpose of coming to meet the Lord in the forest was to try to take him back to Ayodhya, but the news of a great army accompanying him gave a wrong impression—that he was coming to fight and imprison the two brothers, Laxman and Lord Ram, in an attempt to usurp the crown of Ayodhya. This news fuelled Laxman's wrath so much so that he got up determined to fight-to-finish and kill Bharat along with all those who accompanied him for daring to raise their eyes against Lord Ram and attempting to confront and insult him in this impudent manner. This also shows how deeply Laxman loved Lord Ram and was totally devoted to him, because he was ready to kill even his own brother Bharat and subjects of his kingdom because they dared to affront Lord Ram. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 230.}

And then finally, we read that during the famous War of Lanka, Laxman had fallen to the ground fighting Meghanad on behalf of Lord Ram, and then the Lord had wailed and lamented as if he has lost his very own son and the dearest friend in this world. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 54; (ii) Doha no. 61 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-18 that precede it.}

³This fact, that Bharat was a great devotee of Lord Ram and faithful to him, is evident in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas: (a) Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 178; (ii) Doha no. 182 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it (Bharat refuses to accept the throne of Ayodhya, saying that his primary duty is to serve Lord Ram and nothing else); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 208 (sage Bharadwaj praises Bharat's devotion, and says that he is extremely dear to Lord Ram); (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 218; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 217 (Mother Nature lauds Bharat's devotion for Lord Ram); (vi) Doha no. 219 (the creator affirms Bharat's devotion for Lord Ram); (vii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precede Doha no. 222—to Doha no. 224 (where we read how the people whom Bharat met on the way to meet Lord Ram in the forest have appreciated Bharat's devotion for the Lord); (viii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 231—to Doha no. 232 (Lord Ram's praise for Bharat and his acknowledgement that there is no one like Bharat in the whole creation of the creator); (ix) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259 (Lord Ram expresses his happiness when sage Vasistha praised Bharat); (x) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 266 (the guru of the gods praises Bharat); (xi) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 283 (praise of Bharat during the conversation of Kaushalya and consort of Janak); (xii) Doha no. 288 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it (praise by king Janak); (xiii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294 (where it is said that Bharat was an embodiment of the virtue of devotion for Lord Ram); and (xiv) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 260 (where Bharat tells Lord Ram how the Lord would lose a game so that Bharat could win it during their childhood days); and (xv) Doha no. 168 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it (mother Kaushalya's praise for Bharat).

It ought to be clearly noted here that Shatrughan had always preferred to stay in the shadows of Bharat; he never stepped out of this shadow; he never yearned to be in the limelight or get fame. It is so praise worthy a character of Shatrughan that though he took full control of the administration of the great empire of Ayodhya while his other three brothers were absent from the capital city, with Lord Ram and Laxman gone to the forest, and Bharat living as a hermit in a nearby suburb called Nandigram*, thereby obviously leaving the administration of the empire entirely in the hands of Shatrughan, the latter never sought to take any credit for it, he never hogged any attention—which is evident when we consider the fact that Shatrughan's name is rarely mentioned in the whole story of the Ramayan, yet there is no denying the fact that it was no one but he alone who had meticulously and perfectly run the affairs of the mighty kingdom when there was no one else to look after it and run its affairs. {Refer: *Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 324.}

Upon his return from the forest, Lord Ram must surely have acknowledged Shatrughan's great contribution towards keeping Ayodhya as prosperous and mighty as it was when the Lord had left it fourteen years ago. It must be noted here that for

fourteen long years when the throne of Ayodhya was virtually empty, no rival king dared to invade or attack the kingdom to take advantage of the power vacuum that existed—because they knew the reputation of Shatrughan that he was a vanquisher of enemies*, and his name so terrified all evil eyes that they spared Ayodhya the horrors that would have befallen it had Shatrughan not been in charge. Sure and certain it is that this obvious point must not have escaped Lord Ram’s attention on his return from the forest. {*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 197.}}

स्याम गौर सुंदर दोउ जोरी । निरखहिं छबि जननीं तृन तोरी ॥ ५ ॥

चारिउ सील रूप गुन धामा । तदपि अधिक सुखसागर रामा ॥ ६ ॥

syāma gaura sundara dō'u jōrī. nirakhahim̐ chabi jananiṁ tr̥na tōrī. 5.
cāri'u sīla rūpa guna dhāmā. tadapi adhika sukhasāgara rāmā. 6.

The four brothers formed a magnificent pair of two, one pair of siblings having a fair complexion, and the other pair being of a dark complexion¹.

When the mothers would see this wonderful and heavenly sight (of the four children forming two natural pairs as if born to be such as giving the impression of them being a pair of twins), they would be filled with ecstasy so much so that they would break ends of twigs as a charm to ward off evil eyes from harming the children. (5)

Though without doubt all the four siblings were equal embodiments of excellent virtues, good manners and exemplary characters, yet Lord Ram was a wee whit senior or superior to them in all respects². (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Bharat had dark complexion like that of a rain-bearing cloud, while Laxman and Shatrughan were of a fair complexion like that of molten gold.

Refer some instances in this connection: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 229; (ii) Doha no. 242; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 311 where this fact of the four brothers forming two pairs, one pair consisting of Lord Ram and Bharat having a fair complexion, and the other consisting of Bharat and Shatrughan of being dark, is affirmed by the residents of Janakpur (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iii) Doha no. 116 along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it (the villagers whom Lord Ram met on the way to the forest were also overwhelmed by the beauty of the two brothers, one being dark and the other fair).

²It was because Lord Ram was not only the eldest of the four brothers but Lord Vishnu himself personified in that form, while the other three brothers were manifestations of those who were very close to Vishnu. Laxman represented Seshnath, the legendary celestial Serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the Kshirsagar, the celestial ocean; Bharat represented Vishnu’s weapon called ‘Chakra’ (the serrated circular discus); and Shatrughan was a personified form of the Lord’s conch. This is clearly stated in Adyhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 9, verse nos. 56-57.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 16 where a similar idea has been expressed.

We read in Ram Charit Manas that when the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, had gone out to take a round of the city of Janakpur, every single citizen was awed by the charm of Lord Ram so much so that a huge crowd followed the two brothers wherever they went, and the ladies of the city had flocked on the balconies and roof tops of their homes to have a look at Lord Ram*. At that time, though the two brothers walked side-by-side, it was Lord Ram's beauty and charm that drew everyone's attention#. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, *Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line nos. 1, 5-8 that precede Doha no. 221; #Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222 (at Janakpur); and Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes Doha no. 114 (during the Lord's journey to the forest when the humble villagers and travelers were charmed by his magnificent beauty and personality.)}]

हृदयं अनुग्रह इंदु प्रकासा । सूचत किरन मनोहर हासा ॥ ७ ॥

कबहुँ उछंग कबहुँ बर पलना । मातु दुलारइ कहि प्रिय ललना ॥ ८ ॥

hrdayam' anugraha indu prakāsā. sūcata kirana manōhara hāsā. 7.

kabhum' uchaṅga kabhum' bara palanā. mātu dulāra'i kahi priya lalanā. 8.

In his (i.e. in Lord Ram's) heart the Moon of mercy, compassion and grace always shone, and the Lord's enchanting smile was like the rays of that moon as it illuminated the world with its soothing and comforting rays (because the smile of Lord Ram removed all sorrows and provided immense joy and comfort to all those who were around). (7)

The mothers showered their bounty of love and affection on the children by calling out to them using sweet nicknames that were endearing (priya lalanā), sometimes picking them up in their laps, and at other times putting them in their respective cradles¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 18-20 where this scene has been beautifully described.]

दो०. व्यापक ब्रह्म निरंजन निर्गुन बिगत बिनोद ।

सो अज प्रेम भगति बस कौसल्या कें गोद ॥ १९८ ॥

dōhā.

byāpaka brahma niranjana nirguna bigata binōda.

sō aja prēma bhagati basa kausalyā kēm gōda. 198.

Indeed and forsooth, it is such a great wonder that Brahm, the Lord who is all-pervading and immanent throughout the endless creation, who is invisible and formless, who has no attributes or a trace of grossness, and who is unconcerned with such worldly things as pleasure and joy, would assume the form of a child and play in the lap of mother Kaushalya just because the Lord was obliged to do it as he submitted to the grand virtue of love that a devotee has for him¹. (Doha no. 198)

[Note—¹We must not forget what Satrupa and Manu had requested from Brahm: that they wished to have the Lord as their son so that they can enjoy the pleasure of showing their love and affection for the Lord just like parents would do to their dear son, at which the Lord had promised them that he would fulfill their wish and become their son. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 149—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 152.}

A similar promise was made by Brahm to sage Kashyap and Aditi—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 187.

Lord Shiva too has affirmed this fact in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Doha no. 192; (b) Uttar Kand, (iii) Doha no. 72-a; (iv) Doha no. 85-b. In all these verses the same idea is expressed—that the Supreme Being goes out of his way to oblige his devotees, and the Lord assumed a human form to fulfill their wishes, thereby providing the rest of the world an opportunity to find an easy source of beatitude and felicity, a way to obtain spiritual bliss, deliverance, emancipation and salvation by singing and remembering the Lord and his divine story.]

चौ०. काम कोटि छबि स्याम सरीरा । नील कंज बारिद गंभीरा ॥ १ ॥

अरुन चरन पंकज नख जोती । कमल दलन्हि बैठे जनु मोती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāma kōṭi chabi syāma sarīrā. nīla kaṅja bārīda gambhīrā. 1.

aruna carana paṅkaja nakha jōtī. kamala dalanhi baiṭhē janu mōtī. 2.

[The following verses describe the magnificent charm and bewitching beauty of Lord Ram as a child. This pen-portrait resonates with what sage Kaagbhusund describes in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 77. Kaagbhusund's description is based on his personal experience when he had gone incognito, in his form as a crow, to play and hop around in the courtyard of the palace where the child Ram too used to play, thereby giving this great sage a chance to see Lord Ram from up close and enjoy playing with the divine child without arousing any suspicion in anyone's mind about his true identity.

Refer also to: (a) Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 2-3; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 2-17 where we read in detail about the wonderful charm of Lord Ram's image that was divine and heavenly to behold. Both these books have been published by this author in English versions]

Child Ram's image was dark-complexioned (syāma sarīrā) and it looked as magnificent as of a blue-hued lotus flower (nīla kaṅja) and a dense bank of dark rain-bearing clouds (bārīda gambhīrā). It was like a form that embodied the magnificence, beauty and charm of countless Kamdeos (who is a patron god of these virtues) (kāma kōṭi chabi)¹. (1)

The shine of the nails (*nakha jōtī*) on the toes of the child's feet that resembled red-lotus flowers (*aruna carana pañkaja*) was such as if pearls were studded (or fresh dew-drops were perched) on the petals of the said lotus flowers (*kamala dalanhi baiṭhē janu mōtī*)². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 146.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148.]

रेख कुलिस ध्वज अंकुस सोहे । नूपुर धुनि सुनि मुनि मन मोहे ॥ ३ ॥
कटि किंकिनी उदर त्रय रेखा । नाभि गभीर जान जेहिं देखा ॥ ४ ॥

rēkha kulisa dhvaja aṅkusa sōhē. nūpura dhuni suni muni mana mōhē. 3.
kaṭi kiṅkinī udara traya rēkhā. nābhi gabhīra jāna jēhim dēkhā. 4.

On the sole of child Ram feet there are the auspicious marks of a Vajra (thunderbolt), a Flag and Ankush (a goad) (*kulisa dhvaja aṅkusa*)¹.

The soft sound emanating from the anklets worn around the child's feet (*nūpura dhuni*) enrapture the mind of Munis (sages, seers, mystics and hermits) when they hear it (*sunī muni mana mōhē*). (3)

Around his hip is the hip-band from which small bells hang (*kaṭi kiṅkinī*) (and as the child moves they swing and give out a tinkling sound).

On his abdomen there are three folds of the skin (*udara traya rēkhā*), and the navel is deep in its contours (*nābhi gabhīra*)², looking so excellent that only those who have seen it can understand its magnificence (*jāna jēhim dēkhā*). (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 13.

According to traditions, it is believed that there were a total of 48 signs on the two soles of Lord Ram, with each sole having 24 signs. Out of these, Tulsidas cites only three at present in the current verse we are reading, and the fourth, a lotus flower, is mentioned in the above-referred verse of Uttar Kand.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 147.]

भुज बिसाल भूषण जुत भूरी । हियँ हरि नख अति सोभा रूरी ॥ ५ ॥
उर मनहार पदिक की सोभा । बिप्र चरन देखत मन लोभा ॥ ६ ॥

bhuja bisāla bhūṣana juta bhūrī. hiyaṁ hari nakha ati sōbhā rūrī. 5.
ura manihāra padika kī sōbhā. bipra carana dēkhata mana lōbhā. 6.

His (Ram's) arms were long (*bhuja bisāla*)¹ and adorned with beautiful ornaments (*bhūṣana juta bhūrī*).

A tiger's claw (nail) that hung around his chest in the fashion of a pendant (hiyam^ṃ hari nakha) appeared very attractive (ati sōbhā rūri). (5)

The charm of the Lord's chest that was adorned by a magnificent garland made of gems that also has a large pendant of diamond dangling from it (ura manihāra padika kī sōbhā), as well as the sight of the footprint of a sage (Bhrigu) that is marked on the Lord's broad chest (bipra carana) looked very elegant, and together this view captivates the heart of the beholder of this wonderful sight (dēkhata mana lōbhā)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 147.

By saying 'long arms' it is meant that the Lord goes out of his way and has a long reach in order to help and provide succour to his devotees. This view is endorsed specifically in Kavitali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 52.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 147.

The story behind the footprint of sage Bhrigu being marked on the chest of Lord Ram, whose primary form was Lord Vishnu, is as follows:

Once all the sages had collected and decided to judge which of the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder, is the greatest. Sage Bhrigu was appointed to find it out. Bhrigu first went to Brahma and did not show any respect to him. This enraged Brahma, but somehow he managed to control himself. Then Bhrigu went to meet Shiva. Shiva came forward but Bhrigu did not want to meet him, accusing the Lord of following inauspicious way of life. This enraged Shiva who lifted his trident to kill Bhrigu. Then Parvati, the consort of Shiva, intervened and pacified him.

Finally, Bhrigu went to Vishnu who was reclining in his divine abode known as Vaikuntha. Bhrigu got annoyed that Vishnu did not get up to welcome him, and so he kicked the Lord on his chest. Lord Vishnu woke up from his sleep, and instead of becoming angry at Bhrigu asked for his forgiveness as he was unaware that the Brahmin has arrived as he was asleep. Further, Vishnu showed Bhrigu great respect and said that instead of feeling insulted on being kicked on the chest, he is feeling honoured that a great sage had blessed him by touching his body with his august feet. This stunned Bhrigu; he was dumbfounded at the gracious and forgiving nature of Vishnu. But Vishnu's consort Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, was extremely peeved, and she cursed the Brahmin that henceforth the entire Brahmin race will have to suffer because of lack of wealth and would be forced to beg for their sustenance.

Lord Vishnu wears the mark made by the sage's footprint on his chest as a token of respect that he has for learned Brahmins.

Bhrigu came back and narrated the entire thing to the assembly of sages. They decided that indeed it was Lord Vishnu who was the greatest because he had conquered anger, the worst of all the negative qualities and the cause of all strife and destruction. Anger was to become the greatest of evils and vices in this world, and forgiveness as the greatest of virtues.

This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwad Mahapurān, Skandha 10, Chapter 89.]

कंबु कंठ अति चिबुक सुहाई । आनन अमित मदन छबि छाई ॥ ७ ॥
दुइ दुइ दसन अधर अरुनारे । नासा तिलक को बरनै पारे ॥ ८ ॥

kambu kaṅṭha ati cibuka suhāī. ānana amita madana chabi chāī. 7.
du'i du'i dasana adhara arunārē. nāsā tilaka kō baranai pārē. 8.

His (child Lord Ram's) neck was well formed and rounded like a conch-shell (kambu kaṅṭha), and his chin looked exceedingly charming (ati cibuka suhāī)¹.

The Lord's face (ānana) embodied the magnificence and beauty of countless Kamdeos (Cupid; the patron god of beauty and charm) (amita madana chabi chāī)². (7)

His mouth had only two pairs of teeth, one on the front upper jaw and the other on the corresponding lower jaw (du'i du'i dasana). [To wit, when the Lord opened his mouth to smile or say something, one could see two pairs of small teeth behind his lips, one pair above and the other below it in the mouth.]

His lips were reddish (or pink) in colour (adhara arunārē).

Who can describe (i.e. no one can describe—"kō baranai pārē") the charm and the beauty of the Lord's nostrils (nāsā) and the small Tilak mark put on his forehead (tilaka)³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 243.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 244 (where we read that Lord Ram's image or form was like countless Kamdeos, and so exceptionally beautiful and charming from toe to head that those who saw him remained standing, staring at him in profound admiration).

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 147 where the charm of the face of Lord Vishnu has been described, and which is similar to that of Lord Ram, because the latter is a manifestation of the former.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 207 where we read that when sage Vishwamitra saw Lord Ram for the first time, he was dazed by the beauty of the Lord's image.]

सुंदर श्रवन सुचारु कपोला । अति प्रिय मधुर तोतरे बोला ॥ ९ ॥
चिक्कन कच कुंचित गभुआरे । बहु प्रकार रचि मातु सँवारे ॥ १० ॥

sundara śravana sucāru kapōlā. ati priya madhura tōtarē bōlā. 9.
cikkana kaca kuñcita gabhu'ārē. bahu prakāra raci mātu samvārē. 10.

His (Ram's) ears and cheeks were well formed and lovely to behold (*sundara śravana sucāru kapōlā*) (like the rest of his body). The child Ram spoke endearing with a lisp in his voice (*ati priya madhura tōtarē bōlā*). (9)

His hairs were curly and smooth as they had never been trimmed since birth (*cikkana kaca kuñcita gabhu'ārē*), and the mother had taken special care to adorn them in various ways (*bahu prakāra raci mātu samvārē*) (such as sticking some gem-studded hair-pin in the cluster of curls, or forming small plaits or tufts tied together with silken strings to which pearls etc. were attached as hangings). (10)

पीत झगुलिआ तनु पहिराई । जानु पानि बिचरनि मोहि भाई ॥ ११ ॥
रूप सकहिं नहिं कहि श्रुति सेषा । सो जानइ सपनेहुँ जेहिं देखा ॥ १२ ॥

pīta jhaguli'ā tanu pahirā'ī. jānu pāni bicarani mōhi bhā'ī. 11.
rūpa sakahim nahim kahi śruti sēṣā. sō jāna'i sapanēhum' jēhim dēkhā. 12.

The child was attired in a yellow loose-fitting frock (*pīta jhaguli'ā tanu pahirā'ī*).

He moved or crawled on all fours (like a small child would normally do when he crawls forward using his arms and legs) (*jānu pāni bicarani*). Oh brother (*bhā'ī*)! This sight is very dear to me (*mōhi bhā'ī*)¹. (11)

Verily indeed, forsooth and without gainsay, the most lovely and enchanting sight of Lord Ram's image as a child (that has been described in these verses) cannot be sufficiently described (*rūpa sakahim nahim*) even by the Vedas (which are experts in language, grammar and vocabulary, and have the ability to narrate even the most complex of things which seem to be incomprehensible for others) and Lord Sheshnath (who has thousands of mouths) (*kahi śruti sēṣā*).

To wit, only those who have seen it and witnessed the sight first-hand, even if it was in their dreams, can imagine how unique, singularly wondrous and stunningly fascinating it was (*sō jāna'i sapanēhum' jēhim dēkhā*)². (12)

[Note—¹A remarkable play of words is to be marked here. The poet Tulsidas is referring to himself when he says “*mōhi*”, while the word “*bhā'ī*” has two connotations here—one meaning ‘a brother’, and the meaning ‘to like something’.

The poet obviously addresses his readers when he uses the words “*mōhi bhā'ī*” to mean ‘my brother’, and at the same time he also means that the beautiful sight of Lord Ram crawling on all fours is liked by him (Tulsidas) very much and he is fascinated by it.

²The idea is simple and straightforward: it refers to those who have meditated on Lord Ram, for they may have experienced the revelation of the Lord in a subtle world of existence. In higher stages of meditation, a state of Samadhi, a trance-like state of consciousness, is reached when the person rises above the grossness of the physical world and is transported to live in a subtle world of the Spirit, the world where cosmic Consciousness exists. It is akin to one dreaming, because it is a subtle world with no physical boundaries, and where everything is possible.

Till the dream lasts the person seems to fully live in that subtle world, and act in the same way as he would have done if he was living in the physical gross world. While he has to face many limitations inherent to life in the physical material world of grossness where the creature has a physical body, no such barriers exist in the subtle world of the Spirit which is a transcendental form of existence of the Consciousness. In this latter subtle world of transcendental existence of the Consciousness, the creature can go anywhere in his Spirit form, and time-space-distance become irrelevant for him.

It is this state to which the learned poet Tulsidas is referring here when he says that “only those who have seen or witnessed this view of Lord Ram in their dreams can fully understand how beautiful it is, because words we use to describe things of the gross world are incapable to describe it”.

Since this world of dream has no physical boundaries, and since Consciousness is an eternal entity that would know everything of the past and the present, so it is very easy for a highly attained individuals to actually witness the happenings that actually occurred during those days when Lord Ram was born, for such persons would have risen above life in this gross world and live in the subtle world of transcendental existence of the Consciousness.

Though it seems far-fetched an idea and something imaginary and incredulous, but it is because it is very difficult for a common man to reach that state of transcendental existence where such things can be actually experienced and witnessed. So what happens is that people find it is easy and convenient to reject and ridicule something simply because they themselves can't attain or realize it, for it would rather be nice to please the world by saying something that conforms to what the ignorant world would like hear, for the fear of otherwise being scorned for endorsing such esoteric ideas that the ignorant world would like to treat as heresy and paranormal or abstract phenomenon, though it is not the case in reality.]

दो०. सुख संदोह मोहपर ग्यान गिरा गोतीत ।
दंपति परम प्रेम बस कर सिसुचरित पुनीत ॥ १९९ ॥

dōhā.

sukha sandōha mōhapara gyāna girā gōtīta.
dampati parama prēma basa kara sisucarita punīta. 199.

The Lord (i.e. Ram) who is an embodiment of the virtues of joy, beatitude and bliss, who is beyond the reach of delusions and its attendant illusions, who is out of the reach of Gyan (knowledge; i.e. who can't be truly and entirely known and understood by application of mind and intellect), as well as is beyond the reach of speech (because he cannot be described) and the sense organs (because he cannot be perceived)—that same transcendental Lord became a child and did child-like deeds out of love and affection of the pious couple¹. (Doha no. 199)

[Note—¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 198 and a note appended to it herein above where a similar idea has been expressed.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि राम जगत पितु माता । कोसलपुर बासिन्ह सुखदाता ॥ १ ॥

जिन्ह रघुनाथ चरन रति मानी । तिन्ह की यह गति प्रगट भवानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi rāma jagata pitu mātā. kōsalapura bāsinha sukhadātā. 1.
jinha raghunātha carana rati mānī. tinha kī yaha gati pragaṭa bhavānī. 2.

[Bringing to a conclusion the description of the events that led to the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers in Ayodhya, and the celebrations that followed, Lord Shiva then continued with his narration of the story of Lord Ram when he told Parvati as follows—] ‘In this aforesaid way, Lord Ram, who is the Parent (Father and Mother; “pitu mātā”) of this entire creation, had manifested himself in Ayodhya, known also as ‘Kaushal Pur’ (i.e. the capital city of the kingdom of Kaushal), to give its inhabitants immense joy, happiness and beatitude. (1)

Oh Bhavani¹! Those who are devoted to Lord Ram (also called “Raghnath”, the Lord of the legendary line of illustrious kings descending from the ancient king named Raghu) and have deep love and affection for the holy feet of the Lord, they would feel the same way even today as the residents of Ayodhya had felt during those auspicious days when the Lord was personally present in their midst². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Shiva is known as ‘Bhava’, and therefore his consort, goddess Parvati is known as Bhavani—“bhavānī”, the wife of Bhava.

²To wit, Shiva has a wonderful prescription in this verse for all of us, whereby we too can enjoy the same sort of spiritual happiness, bliss and beatitude in our present lives that the citizens of Ayodhya had been fortunate to experience very long ago when Lord Ram lived with them personally. And, the magic of the prescription is that it so simple and straightforward—i.e. to have devotion, love and affection for the Lord, for these are the only qualifications the Lord desires from a creature to show his grace upon the latter.

This basic idea has been elaborately dealt with and expounded upon in Ram Charit Manas with several examples to illustrate the point. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 24—to Doha no. 25. It is to be remarked here that though this discourse is focused on the importance and the glory of the holy name of Lord Ram, yet it stresses how only a limited number of creatures could benefit by directly coming in contact with the Lord, but countless creatures benefit from invoking the grace of Lord Ram by having devotion for him, by having affection for him and faith in his holy name.

Even Lord Ram has reiterated this in principle in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45.]

रघुपति बिमुख जतन कर कोरी । कवन सकइ भव बंधन छोरी ॥ ३ ॥

जीव चराचर बस कै राखे । सो माया प्रभु सों भय भाखे ॥ ४ ॥

raghupati bimukha jatana kara kōrī. kavana saka'i bhava bandhana chōrī. 3.
jīva carācara basa kai rākhē. sō māyā prabhu sōm bhaya bhākhē. 4.

If a person is averse to (having devotion, affection and faith in) Lord Ram (Raghupati), then no matter what kind of efforts he does, he cannot find freedom from the fetters that shackle him to this gross mundane world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death (i.e. the cycle of transmigration in which the soul of the creature is trapped)¹. (3)

Even Maya (the personified form of the powers of Nature that create delusions in a living being) that has kept the entire world, both its inanimate as well as animate components, under its grip and influence, sparing none, is afraid of Lord Ram, and would consequently not disturb anyone who is devoted to the Lord and has the Lord's blessings upon him². (4)

[Note—¹An exactly similar principle has been endorsed by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45; and (ii) Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede it.

When the Vedas came to pay their obeisance to Lord Ram at the time of the Lord's coronation ceremony in Ayodhya, they had also reiterated this principle as is clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 13.

The saintly crow Kaagbhusund too has reiterated this fundamental spiritual truth in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 78—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 79; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 87 (where Kaagbhusund quotes Lord Ram in this context); (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 117—to Doha no. 119; and (v) Doha no. 122. In all these aforesaid verses, the relationship between Maya and Bhakti, how Maya keeps the creature trapped in its tentacles, and how one can break free from its fetter and find deliverance has been elaborately expounded.

Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Uttar Kand, verse no. 55.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 86—to Doha no. 87; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 89; (iv) Doha and Sortha nos. 90 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede them.]

भृकुटि बिलास नचावड़ ताही । अस प्रभु छाड़ि भजिअ कहु काही ॥ ५ ॥
मन क्रम बचन छाड़ि चतुराई । भजत कृपा करिहहिं रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

bhṛkuṭi bilāsa nacāva'i tāhī. asa prabhu chāḍi bhaji'a kahu kāhī. 5.
mana krama bacana chāḍi caturāī. bhajata kṛpā karihahim raghurāī. 6.

Lord Ram keeps a close watch on the activities of that Maya, and makes it do his bidding and carry out his orders obediently by the mere movement of his eyebrows¹.

This being the case, say whom else should one worship and have devotion for other than such a powerful Lord (who can save a creature from the evil eyes of Maya, because it is only Lord Ram to whom Maya owes its allegiance and is affright of, for it dare not defy the Lord or his devotees)²? (5)

[Now, Shiva answers a pertinent question—which is: How would Lord Ram be pleased with a creature, what should one do or what qualities one should have in order to please the Lord and get his blessings so that Maya does not disturb him? The answer is this—] If one worships Lord Ram with purity in his heart, deeds and words, if one has devotion and affection for the Lord without a trace of deceit, conceit and pretension whatsoever in his heart, actions and thoughts as well as the words he speaks—then Lord Ram (Raghurai) would surely and without any doubt be pleased with such a devotee³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 202; (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Doha no. 71—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 72; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 116.

²To wit, though there may be many different paths and means to attain deliverance from the fetters of this gross world of transmigration, and attain emancipation and salvation, but it would be a tiresome adventure trying to negotiate and overcome the countless difficulties that Maya would nevertheless create for the seeker. So therefore, it would be wiser and prudent to skip all the trouble and waste of time and energy trying to overcome Maya by following the simple trick that takes care of all misfortunes, and it is to have Bhakti, collectively meaning to have devotion, affection, love and total faith in Lord Ram, for then Maya and all its attendants would shy away from creating hurdles in the path of the seeker—because Maya cannot annoy the Lord and those who are protected by him.

³Shiva prescribes a very simple and practical way for a creature to gain Lord Ram's favour: he must have Bhakti for the Lord. 'Bhakti' means simple things as worshipping the Lord, being dedicated to him, having unadulterated devotion, love and affection for the Lord, and to be unconditionally faithful and committed to him.

The path of Bhakti is very easy and simple as explicitly outlined by Lord Ram himself in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 46 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

Purity of heart, mind and deeds is of great importance to please Lord Ram, for he does not like cheats and cunning fellows—Lord Ram has expressly said so in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 44.]

एहि बिधि सिसुबिनोद प्रभु कीन्हा । सकल नगरबासिन्ह सुख दीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

लै उछंग कबहुँक हलरावै । कबहुँ पालनें घालि झुलावै ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi sisubinōda prabhu kīnhā. sakala nagarabāsinha sukha dīnhā. 7.
lai uchaṅga kabahum̐ka halarāvai. kabahum̐ pālanēm ghāli jhulāvai. 8.

In this way (as has been narrated earlier), the Lord played his part as a child perfectly to the great amusement and pleasure of all the (fortunate) residents of the city of Ayodhya. (7)

The mother (Kaushalya)¹ would sometime lift the Lord in her lap and sing a lullaby, and at other times she would put him in a cradle and swing it softly. (8)

[Note—¹The Doha that follows herein below clearly shows who is meant in this verse: it is mother Kaushalya.]

दो०. प्रेम मगन कौसल्या निसि दिन जात न जान ।
सुत सनेह बस माता बालचरित कर गान ॥ २०० ॥
dōhā.

prēma magana kausalyā nisi dina jāta na jāna.
suta sanēha basa mātā bālacarita kara gāna. 200.

Mother Kaushalya remained so lost in the joy and bliss that she got by tending to her dear son Ram and expressing her love for him that the passage of days and nights were not noticed by her.

So overcome was she with love and affection for the Lord that had filled her inner-self with immense ecstasy and happiness that most of the time she would sing about the child-like activities of the Lord as it gave great happiness and pleasure to her¹. (Doha no. 200)

[Note—¹To wit, mother Kaushalya did not seem to have enough of the childhood plays and pranks of Lord Ram; she would enjoy talking endlessly about the Lord's way of crawling on all fours, his laughing and smiling, his lisping banter and childish prattle, his cries of joy at seeing a toy and playing with it, his crying if that toy breaks, and all other such small acts that are so very natural for a little child, and which cause great amount of merriment and amusement for those who witness them.

Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 4-7; and Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 7-46.

Sage Kaagbhusund had also derived a similar bliss and feeling of blessedness when he visited Ayodhya and remained for quite some time in the royal palace, playing with the child Ram and hopping around in the courtyard alongside the Lord. No one suspected who he really was, for he was in the form of a 'crow'. { Who was Kaagbhusund? He was a saintly crow who lived in the higher reaches of the northern Mountains, i.e. in the Himalayas, somewhere near-about Mt. Kailash, the terrestrial abode of Lord Shiva. His abode was called the Neel Giri, the 'blue mountain', with a summit that looked 'golden' in hue due to the sunlight falling on it at an angle due to its astounding height. Establishing his hermitage in that pleasant environ that was conducive to spiritual practice, Kaagbhusund used to preach other birds the story of Lord Ram. Even Lord Shiva had once gone to him incognito, disguised as a swan, and heard him give discourse on the story of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Doha no. 82.}}

चौ०. एक बार जननीं अन्हवाए । करि सिंगार पलनाँ पौढ़ाए ॥ १ ॥
 निज कुल इष्टदेव भगवाना । पूजा हेतु कीन्ह अस्नाना ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

ēka bāra jananiṁ anhavā'ē. kari singāra palanāṁ pauṛhā'ē. 1.
 nija kula iṣṭadēva bhagavānā. pūjā hētu kīnha asnānā. 2.

[The episode we are now going to read herein below in these verses that follow relates to an incident that once happened when mother Kaushalya placed the child Ram on a couch to sleep and then went to her personal worship room to offer prayers to the family deity. After doing the rituals associated with worshipping the deity, she went to the kitchen for some work, and when she returned to her worship room she found the little child Ram eating sweets meant as offerings to the deity. Stunned and unable to understand what she saw, the mother rushed back to the place where she had put the child Ram on the couch to sleep. She found, to her utter astonishment and a baffled mind, that Ram was sleeping peacefully on it. She again rushed to the worship room and saw Ram enjoying the sweets there as well. This was the moment when the Lord of the world revealed his cosmic form of the 'Viraat Purush' to enlighten Kaushalya not to be deluded to think that Ram is her son in the ordinary sense of the meaning of the word as the mortal world understands it, but the Divine Being revealed in his human form.]

One day, the mother (Kaushalya) bathed the child (Ram), dressed him and adorned him with ornaments befitting a child, and then laid him in a couch (i.e. a cradle) so that he could go to sleep¹. (1)

Then she took a bath herself so that she could offer worship to the family deity. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 18, 22, 24.]

करि पूजा नैबेद्य चढ़ावा । आपु गई जहँ पाक बनावा ॥ ३ ॥
 बहुरि मातु तहवाँ चलि आई । भोजन करत देख सुत जाई ॥ ४ ॥
 गै जननी सिसु पहिँ भयभीता । देखा बाल तहाँ पुनि सूता ॥ ५ ॥
 बहुरि आइ देखा सुत सोई । हृदयँ कंप मन धीर न होई ॥ ६ ॥

kari pūjā naibēdya carhāvā. āpu ga'i jaham'pāka banāvā. 3.
 bahuri mātu tahavāṁ'cali ā'ī. bhōjana karata dēkha suta jā'ī. 4.
 gai janani sisu pahim'bhayabhītā. dēkhā bāla tahām'puni sūtā. 5.
 bahuri ā'i dēkhā suta sō'ī. hr̥dayam'kampā mana dhīra na hō'ī. 6.

After worshipping, she offered some sweet offerings to the deity as part of the worship ritual¹, and then went to the royal kitchen. (3)

Then she came back to the room where the deity was worshipped. To her utter amazement and shock, she saw that her son (i.e. Lord Ram) was eating the offerings that she had just a while ago made to the deity! (4)

Stunned and sore affright (as it seemed to be some evil sort of a magic charm cast around the child that gave an impression of an apparition appearing in his likeness), she rushed to the room where she had, a little while ago, placed the child in the cradle to sleep. And lo and behold; what did she see? To her dazed mind overcome with astonishment, she found the child (Lord Ram) peacefully sleeping in the cradle, the same way she had place him on the bed! (5)

She dashed back to the worship room, and found the child enjoying the food offerings. The sight shook her to the core; her heart trembled in fear, and she was not able to come to terms with what she saw (for she thought she was seeing a nightmare in broad daylight, something that may be a bad omen, indicating that some Spirit has entered the palace and had an evil eye on the helpless child)². (6)

[Note—¹The offerings made during worship of a deity usually consist of some sweets, fruits, dry as well as fresh, sugar, clarified butter (known as Ghee), curd, cooked rice etc.

²It is a belief in tradition-bound Hindu homes that evil spirits usually attack infants. This erroneous belief leads to many customs, such as wearing of a tiger claw around the neck of a child, or making a black mark of a dot or a crescent moon on his forehead by using a paste made of black soot of an oil lamp that is mixed with its oil, or hanging some kind of charm, such as green lemon, chilly, garlic and onion, and sometimes even a sun-like small disc, tied to a string and hung from the cradle stand or the doorway of the child's room.

So, when Kaushalya saw her son Ram at two places at the same time, one sleeping in the cradle and the other enjoying the food offerings to the family deity, her hairs stood on their edges, fearing that something was amiss and seriously ominous. So her heart shook with the thought of something bad happening.]

इहाँ उहाँ दुइ बालक देखा । मतिभ्रम मोर कि आन बिसेषा ॥ ७ ॥
देखि राम जननी अकुलानी । प्रभु हँसि दीन्ह मधुर मुसुकानी ॥ ८ ॥

ihām' uhām' du'i bālaka dēkhā. matibhrama mōra ki āna bisēṣā. 7.
dēkhi rāma janānī akulānī. prabhu haṁṣi dīnha madhura musukānī. 8.

When she saw the child simultaneously at two places, she was confused and overcome with consternation, wondering: 'Am I deluded; I see two images in the exact likeness of my son, which of the two is my son? Or has someone else's son disguised as my son come here to befool me, or has some evil spirit come in the form of this apparition to cause some grave mischief?' (7)

However, when Lord Ram observed that the mother was exceedingly disturbed and trembling with fear, the Lord smiled sweetly (to indicate to her that all was fine, that she need not get so upset as it was a mischief done by himself to have some fun with her)¹. (8)

[Note—¹We must not forget who Lord Ram was, like probably mother Kaushalya did, which obliged the Lord to remind her of his true identity: i.e. that though he acted like an ordinary human child, he was actually the Supreme Being come in that form. Lord Ram wished to remind Kaushalya to remember that moment when he had appeared to her in a Holy Spirit form just prior to assuming a human form. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-15 that precede Doha no. 192 earlier.}]

The Lord used this opportunity, when there was no third person present there, to privately warn Kaushalya not to be deluded and carried away by his worldly activities as a human being, but rather remain focused on his divine form if she wishes to reap any spiritual rewards by having the rarest or rare opportunity to be so close to the Supreme Being as to lift him onto her lap and shower her motherly love on him at a very personal level to fulfill the desire of her previous life when this is what she had exactly sought from the Lord. Otherwise, she would be lost in the maze caused by Maya (delusions). She must display the same level of maturity and wisdom that she had shown at the time of asking the Lord to become her son earlier. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 150—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 151; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 187.}]

This fact, of Lord Ram alerting Kaushalya not to be deluded by his human form, and to remember who he actually was, and Kaushalya suddenly realizing that she was on the verge of falling into the trap of delusions when she erroneously thought that the Father of creation was her child, is very clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 202 herein below. Here we shall also read that the Lord has expressly asked her to keep this event secret, between the two of them.

It is to be remarked here that when Sati, i.e. goddess Parvati in her previous life, had gone to test the authenticity and divinity of Lord Ram, she had tried a trick upon the Lord by assuming a perfect image of Sita, Lord Ram's wife, to see if he could recognize who she actually was. To her amazement and consternation, Lord Ram not only recognized who she really was when he asked her how her husband Shiva fared, but created a magical sight whereby Sati could see Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman in all the directions around her, and all the gods and goddesses serving the Lord everywhere she could see*, a sight almost similar to the event now when mother Kaushalya sees two images of Lord Ram simultaneously, doing two different things—eating and sleeping at the same time in two separate rooms. {*Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 52—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 55.}]

दो०. देखरावा मातहि निज अद्भुत रूप अखंड ।

रोम रोम प्रति लागे कोटि कोटि ब्रह्मंड ॥ २०१ ॥

dōhā.

dēkharāvā mātahi nija adbhuta rūpa akhaṇḍa.
rōma rōma prati lāgē kōṭi kōṭi brahmaṇḍa. 201.

The Lord (Ram) showed the mother his original, wonderful and mysterious cosmic form that encompassed the entire creation within its ambit, and was infinite and undivided.

Not only one universe or world, but countless universes and worlds (known as ‘Brahmaands’) were embedded in each of the hairs of this all-encompassing, all-inclusive, vast and colossus form of the Supreme Lord, for the entire cosmos, the entire creation, is his cosmic form, forming his body¹. (Doha no. 201)

[Note—¹In the context of this cosmic form of Lord Ram, we should also refer to what Sati had seen earlier^a, what saint Kaagbhusund would describe to Garud later on^b, and what Mandodari, the wife of the demon king Ravana, had described while trying to dissuade her husband from unnecessarily creating hostility with Lord Ram^c.

Refer: ^aRam Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 55 (the episode related to Sati).

^bRam Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 80—to Doha no. 82-a (the episode related to Kaagbhusund).

^cRam Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 (the episode related to Mandodari).]

चौ०. अगनित रबि ससि सिव चतुरानन । बहु गिरि सरित सिंधु महि कानन ॥ १ ॥

काल कर्म गुन ग्यान सुभाऊ । सोड देखा जो सुना न काऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aganita rabi sasi siva caturānana. bahu giri sarita sindhu mahi kānana. 1.
kāla karma guna gyāna subhā'ū. sō'u dēkhā jō sunā na kā'ū. 2.

[Now we shall read what an astonishingly wondrous form of Lord Ram, whom Kaushalya thought was her son, she saw before her eyes.]

She saw a marvelous sight of uncountable suns, moons, Shivas and Brahmas (“caturānana”) (in the sky of these universes), along with innumerable earths (mortal worlds) with as many mountains, rivers, oceans and forests on it. (1)

Similarly, she saw countless Kaals (phases of time; periods, eras and epochs), Karma (deeds done by living beings), Gunas (qualities and virtues that exist in the world, and which combine in countless permutations and combinations to determine the kaleidoscopic nature of the character of this mysterious world), Gyan (knowledge which so infinite that the more one seems to learn the more he has yet to know), Swabhaav (a creature’s nature, instincts and inclinations)—the sight she saw was so mysterious and magical like no one has ever seen it or heard of it anywhere anytime. (2)

देखी माया सब बिधि गाढ़ी । अति सभित जोरें कर ठाढ़ी ॥ ३ ॥

देखा जीव नचावड़ जाही । देखी भगति जो छोरड़ ताही ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhī māyā saba bidhi gāṛhī. ati sabhīta jōrēm kara ṭhāṛhī. 3.
dēkhā jīva nacāva'i jāhī. dēkhī bhagati jō chōra'i tāhī. 4.

She saw that ‘Maya’ (the personified form of the Supreme Being’s Shakti or powers that create delusions)—which assumes a grave and uncompromising attitude in its dealings with the world, is fearless and reckless in her demeanours, and is an undeniably invincible force to reckon with in this creation (because it is directly empowered by the Supreme Being, because it has direct access to the Lord, and is so powerful and effective that it keeps even the most able gods and the wisest of living beings such as great sages, seers and hermits held captive in its vice-like grip of delusions)—was standing before the Lord obediently and humbly with joined hands (as a token of submissiveness and ready to take orders from the Lord). (3)

She saw that countless ‘Jivas’ (living beings) are being made to dance to the tune of (i.e. obey the dictates of) this Maya. Only those Jivas who have ‘Bhakti’ in them (i.e. have devotion for the Lord God in their hearts; here obviously referring to those who have Bhakti for Lord Ram as he is a personified form of the Supreme Being whose Viraat or cosmic form is being described here) are spared by this Maya. [To wit, though the entire living world is under the spell of Maya, those who have devotion for the Lord God are free from its grip.] (4)

तन पुलकित मुख बचन न आवा । नयन मूदि चरननि सिरु नावा ॥ ५ ॥
बिसमयवंत देखि महतारी । भए बहुरि सिसुरूप खरारी ॥ ६ ॥

tana pulakita mukha bacana na āvā. nayana mūdi caranani siru nāvā. 5.
bisamayavanta dēkhi mahatārī. bha'ē bahuri sisurūpa kharārī. 6.

When Kaushalya saw this magical and marvelous sight, her body was thrilled, and she was completely dumbfounded, being unable to utter a single word. So dazed was she that she closed her eyes and bowed her head before this divine cosmic form of the Supreme Lord¹. (5)

When the Lord, who is known as ‘kharārī’ (a reference to Lord Ram vanquishing the demon named Khar)², saw that the mother was sore affright and utterly perplexed, he withdrew his magical charm and reverted to his former form as a child³. (6)

[Note—¹When Sati had seen a similar sight, she too was so dazed and out of her wits that she sat down on the ground, dizzy in her head as she swooned and things seemed to go around in circles for her, making her feel as if she was suffering from a bout of severe vertigo or hallucination—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 55.

²Lord Ram had slayed the demon Khar in the forest. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20-a.

³Later on in the story we shall witness a similar incident when Lord Ram has shown Kaagbhusund his cosmic form. When the purpose was served, the Lord reverted to his form as a child playing with the crow named Kaagbhusund—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 82 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.]

अस्तुति करि न जाइ भय माना । जगत पिता मैं सुत करि जाना ॥ ७ ॥
हरि जननी बहुबिधि समुझाई । यह जनि कतहुँ कहसि सुनु माई ॥ ८ ॥

astuti kari na jā'i bhaya mānā. jagata pitā maim suta kari jānā. 7.
hari janani bahubidhi samujhāī. yaha jani katahum kahasi sunu māī. 8.

The mother (Kaushalya) was so dazed and terrified that she could not even gather her wits to pray to the Lord (even after she realized who her son Ram actually was)—because she was numbed with regret to have been so foolish as to imagine that that ‘the Father of this creation was her child’¹! (7)

Meanwhile, seeing the dilemma of Kaushalya and her fears, Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram, for he was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, one of whose names is ‘Hari’) explained to the mother everything (assuring her that there was nothing to worry or fear, that everything was fine, that he had willingly done this small trick to alert her, and nothing more is to be made out of it).

Then the Lord requested her to keep this incident secret, between the two of them; he told her: ‘Oh mother, please keep this under wraps, and don’t tell anybody about it.’² (8)

[Note—¹We ought to recall that it is the same thought that had confounded Satrupa when she was asking the Supreme Being to bless her with a boon that he would become her son—the question ‘how can the Father of this creation become her son?’ {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 150.}

²Why did the Lord want to keep this magical event, when he had revealed his true cosmic form to Kaushalya, a secret? Well, if the demons came to know that the Supreme Being has come down personally in the form of Lord Ram to eliminate them, it was sure they would go hide somewhere to avoid him, and the result would be that the whole exercise of the Lord taking the trouble to come down to earth to get rid of the demons would be made void. We shall read later on that Ravana has some doubts in this matter of the Supreme Being taking the form of Lord Ram, and he was determined to find it out the hard way—by waging a war with the Lord. For he concluded that if Lord Ram was indeed the Supreme Being as it seems to be the case to him, then it would be a great honour to die fighting with the Lord as this death would grant him (Ravana) deliverance and emancipation, and in case Ram was an ordinary human being, so far and good, Ravana would vanquish him and keep his wife Sita as his concubine. This is absolutely clearly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.

Hence, it was absolutely necessary and prudent to keep the Lord’s identity a top secret.]

दो०. बार बार कौसल्या बिनय करइ कर जोरि ।
अब जनि कबहुँ व्यापै प्रभु मोहि माया तोरि ॥ २०२ ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra kausalyā binaya kara'i kara jōri.
aba jani kabahamū byāpai prabhu mōhi māyā tōri. 202.

However, finally Kaushalya got her with together and prayed to the Lord by joining the palms of her hands in a submissive way, saying: ‘Oh my Lord, please grant me leave that your powerful Maya (delusions) never casts its shadow on me in future.’¹ (Doha no. 202)

[Note—¹Kaushalya puts the ball in the court of Lord Ram by asking him to instruct his Maya not to disturb her again in future. Kaushalya was very wise in this respect, because she knew how powerful Maya was, and it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fend off its tricks if she depends on her own abilities to do so, so it she decided that it would be far better for her to give the responsibility of protection from Maya’s evil influence to the Lord of the Maya himself, i.e. Lord Ram, now that she had realized that the Lord was not her son but the Supreme Being himself.

This would free her mind from a lot of problems and worries, and she meanwhile would be able to enjoy the blessing she had so fortunately got to shower her motherly affection and love on the Lord, without any strings attached or the fear of falling into some new trap of delusions in the future.]

चौ०. बालचरित हरि बहुबिधि कीन्हा । अति अनंद दासन्ह कहँ दीन्हा ॥ १ ॥
कछुक काल बीतेँ सब भाई । बड़े भए परिजन सुखदाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bālacarita hari bahubidhi kīnhā. ati ananda dāsanha kaham' dīnhā. 1.
kachuka kāla bītēṁ saba bhā'ī. baṛē bha'e parijana sukhadā'ī. 2.

The many kinds of playful acts and lovable behaviour of Lord Hari (i.e. Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, one of whose many names is ‘Hari’) that he indulged in as a child provided immense delight to his servants.

[To wit, Lord Ram performed many enjoyable and cheerful deeds as a child playing around with his usual pranks which gave immense joy and happiness to the servants of the royal palace; they thoroughly enjoyed the playful activities of the child Ram.]¹ (1)

Some pleasant time passed in this manner while the four brothers grew up, all the while providing cheer and happiness to all those who were around them, such as their relatives (parents and other family members), as well as other members of the royal household². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 200.

²Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 25-26, 30-33, 36.

Lord Ram’s childhood plays that enthralled the heart of his devotees can also be judged by sage Kaagbhusund’s personal experiences as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 77 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it;

(ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 79; (iii) Doha no. 88 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

चूड़ाकरन कीन्ह गुरु जाई । बिप्रन्ह पुनि दछिना बहु पाई ॥ ३ ॥
परम मनोहर चरित अपारा । करत फिरत चारिउ सुकुमारा ॥ ४ ॥

cūṛākarana kīnha guru jā'ī. bipranha puni dachinā bahu pā'ī. 3.
parama manōhara carita apārā. karata phirata cāri'u sukumārā. 4.

When the appropriate time came, the family priest and guru (i.e. sage Vasistha) went to perform the ritual of shaving the hairs on the head of the four princes, a ritual called 'cūṛākarana'¹. On that occasion, Brahmins got a lot of donation as charity. (3)

The four young princes went around doing many kinds of charming deeds that were very pleasant and captivating to behold by all those who witnessed them as these activities gladdened their hearts.

[To wit, the four princes roamed about doing many enchanting deeds that spread cheer and happiness all around.] (4)

[Note—¹The "cūṛākarana" is a Hindu ritual whereby a child's head is shaved for the first time after birth; this shaving can be complete by shearing off all the hairs on the scalp, leaving only a short tuft on the back, or many times done in a symbolic manner by just pruning the long curly strands of hairs and reducing them to a short crop on the scalp.

This rite is usually done when the child is between 3-5 years of age.

Earlier we have read (in Doha no. 195, and verse no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 197) that the festivities associated with the birth of the four princes seemed to last for one full month. During this period, the rituals associated with naming of the new-born as well as his shaving-of-the-hair were performed by the royal priest, sage Vasistha. On the occasion of the 'naming ceremony', king Dasrath had sent a messenger to summon the sage (verse no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 197), but here we read that the sage had taken the initiative to visit the palace to perform the second rite of shaving of the hair of the children. The probable reason is that king Dasrath had all but forgotten about observing formalities and performing rites, so much submerged he was in the ocean of joy and happiness that overwhelmed him with the birth of four divine sons in his household. Hence, his royal priest decided to step in, as it was his moral duty to ensure that the king, his patron, does not deviate from standard practices as ordained by the scriptures, for if the priest hesitated and did not carry out his responsibilities as required of him conscientiously and faithfully, he would be deemed to have committed an irresponsible act which would make him guilty of misconduct and unrighteousness, as well as give him a bad name of being negligent and careless.]

मन क्रम बचन अगोचर जोई । दसरथ अजिर बिचर प्रभु सोई ॥ ५ ॥
भोजन करत बोल जब राजा । नहिं आवत तजि बाल समाजा ॥ ६ ॥
कौसल्या जब बोलन जाई । ठुमुकु ठुमुकु प्रभु चलहिं पराई ॥ ७ ॥

mana krama bacana agōcara jōī. dasaratha ajira bicara prabhu sōī. 5.
 bhōjana karata bōla jaba rājā. nahim āvata taji bāla samājā. 6.
 kausalyā jaba bōlana jāī. ṭhumuku ṭhumuku prabhu calahim parāī. 7.

That Lord (i.e. the Supreme Being) who is beyond the reach of the mind, who cannot be accessed by making physical efforts, who cannot be described by the means of speech and words, and who cannot be perceived by the sense organs of perception of a creature—that same transcendental Lord moves around the courtyard of king Dasrath (as the Lord feels obliged to fulfill the desire of his devotee, even if it means to assume a gross body such as that of a human being as the Lord did in the present case when he became a son of king Dasrath)¹. (5)

When his father, king Dasrath, sat down for his meals and called him (i.e. Lord Ram) to come and eat something, the Lord would not come because he was enjoying the company of his friends. (6)

When his mother Kaushalya would go to fetch him, the Lord would run away as fast as he could, toddling and stumbling, trying to avoid her². (7)

[Note—¹Refer also to the following verses that explicitly address this point: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 108; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 110; (iii) Doha no. 116 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 118—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 119; (v) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 121; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 150; and (vii) Doha no. 192 along with Chanda line nos. 5-16 that precede it.

²This enthralling scene that captivates the mind would be best enjoyed if we just close our eyes and see it unfold on the canvass of our imagination.

When king Dasrath sat down for his meals, he would call out to child Ram to come near and eat some morsel of food according to his liking. But Ram would not come as he was engaged in playing some game with his brothers and other friends. So, Dasrath would ask queen Kaushalya to go and fetch the child. When Lord Ram saw his mother coming hither to catch him, he would give a shrill cry to indicate that he does not want to leave the game and his companions, but finding that the mother was determined to take him to his father, the naughty boy would suddenly make a dash to run away from her as fast as his little legs would carry him, laughing loudly and giving out a loud yell of mirth, even as he toddled, stumbled and fell down in an attempt to escape, only to get up quickly and make a fresh attempt to avoid the clutch of his mother who was pursuing him from close behind, and then they would run around the courtyard for sometime before the mother finally overtook him and lifted him in her arms, to the immense amusement and joy of king Dasrath and all others who were in attendance at the time and watched this enchanting scene being enacted.]

The fascinating sight of the little child Ram playing around in the courtyard, toddling and stumbling in an attempt to walk, with pleasant sound emanating from the tiny bells tied to the anklets and bracelets that he wore around his ankles and wrists, the astounding beauty of his form attired in charming clothes and adorned with magnificent ornaments, and how lovely he looked as he sat on the lap of his father

Dasrath—this has been beautifully described in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 33-34.]

निगम नेति सिव अंत न पावा । ताहि धरै जननी हठि धावा ॥ ८ ॥
धूसर धूरि भरें तनु आए । भूपति बिहसि गोद बैठाए ॥ ९ ॥

nigama nēti siva anta na pāvā. tāhi dharai janani haṭhi dhāvā. 8.
dhūsara dhūri bharēm tanu ā'ē. bhūpati bihasi gōda baiṭhā'ē. 9.

Verily indeed, it is such an enchanting sight to behold that the Lord whom the Vedas fail to describe fully, and so they simply say 'Neti-Neti' about him¹, and even Lord Shiva has acknowledged that he does not know the end of (the story of) the Lord as the Lord is infinite²—the mother (Kaushalya) rushes forward to catch hold of the same Lord (i.e. Ram, a manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Being, who has become a child)! (8)

Finally, when the mother managed to catch hold of child Ram and bring him to king Dasrath, the Lord's body was covered in dust (as he had been playing with his friends). However, king Dasrath lifted the child and sat him affectionately on his lap. (9)

[Note—¹The Vedas, which are not only repositories of all knowledge but also experts in grammar and language which gives them the ability to expound upon even the most complex and esoteric of concepts and philosophies pertaining to creation and its varied mysteries, as well as on the subject of metaphysics, theology and spiritualism, have however failed to describe the Supreme Being in entirety. So after countless attempts and many ways to try to present a comprehensive picture of the Lord and describe who he is, they finally surrendered by acknowledging their limitations in this regard by declaring "Neti-Neti", meaning literally 'not this-not this'. To wit, the Vedas say that the many things they have proposed and expounded upon with respect to understanding the nature and form and character and qualities and virtues of the Supreme Being are all only a fraction of the Great Truth, but while they are correct and true within their limited sphere of meaning, yet they do not mean to be an exhaustive, exclusive and comprehensive narration of the nature of the Lord, for much is left to be said and known which is beyond our ability.

In the context of the concept of the phrase 'Neti-Neti', refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 341; (b) Ayodhya Kand, (iv) Chaupai line nos. 708 that precede Doha no. 93; (v) Sortha no. 126; (c) Aranya Kand, (vi) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 27; (d) Kishkindha Kand, (vii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10; (e) Lanka Kand, (viii) Doha no. 117-a; (f) Uttar Kand, (ix) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 124; and (x) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 216.

In the Upanishads we come across many instances of the use of the phrase 'Neti-Neti' with reference to Brahm—viz. (a) Shukla Yajur Veda's Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 2/3/6, 4/2/4, 4/4/32. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda's Tejobindu Upanishad, Cantos 4-5, and verse nos. 1-29 of Canto 6; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 68.

In the context of Lord Ram being eternal, without a beginning and an end, and whose glory and divinity is being sung by the Vedas, Lord Shiva, Seshnath and goddess Saraswati, because he is Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, personified, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 108; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 109; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114; (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-6, 8 that precede Doha no. 116; (vi) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 118; (vii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119; (viii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 120; (ix) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 121; (b) Uttar Kand, (x) Chanda line no. 21 that precedes Doha no. 13; (xi) Doha no. 85-a.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 114; and (ii) Doha no. 118 along with Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede it where Lord Shiva has himself acknowledged it.]

दो०. भोजन करत चपल चित इत उत अवसरु पाइ ।
भाजि चले किलकत मुख दधि ओदन लपटाइ ॥ २०३ ॥

dōhā.

bhōjana karata capala cita ita uta avasaru pā'i.
bhāji calē kilakata mukha dadhi ōdana lapaṭā'i. 203.

Even while eating, child Ram's mind would be restless (as children usually have this habit), and as soon as he got a chance he would run away, with a scream of delight, his mouth smeared with rice and curd (from the unfinished meal that he was having with his father, king Dasrath). (Doha no. 203)

चौ०. बालचरित अति सरल सुहाए । सारद सेष संभु श्रुति गाए ॥ १ ॥
जिन्ह कर मन इन्ह सन नहिं राता । ते जन बंचित किए बिधाता ॥ २ ॥

caupā'i.

bālacarita ati sarala suhā'ē. sārada sēṣa sambhu śruti gā'ē. 1.
jinha kara mana inha sana nahim rātā. tē jana bañcita ki'ē bidhātā. 2.

The childhood activities of the Lord (Sri Ram) were very simple and unpretentious (sarala), as well as sweet, charming and pleasant ("suhā'ē"; so much that they enthralled the mind and captivated the heart of one and all who witnessed them)¹.

These acts of the Lord have been sung (gā'ē) by goddess Saraswati (sārada), Lord Seshnath ("sēṣa"; the celestial serpent with a thousand tongues), Lord Shiva (sambhu), and the Vedas (śruti). (1)

Say, those whose Mana (mind and heart) is not captivated and enthralled by this enchanting image of the Lord, verily indeed the Creator has made them very unfortunate by depriving them of this opportunity of being able to enjoy the happiness and delight that comes with it².

[To wit, those whose hearts and minds are enthralled and captivated by the remembrance of the childhood acts of Lord Ram, a personified form of the Supreme Being, are indeed very fortunate and blessed, for otherwise they would have missed a great opportunity to enjoy the nectar of bliss and a feeling of beatitude that naturally comes with it.] (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (i) Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 4; and (ii) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 40, 43-44.

²Refer to: (i) Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 6; and (ii) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 45, line no. 14—where a similar idea has been reiterated.]

भए कुमार जबहिं सब भ्राता । दीन्ह जनेऊ गुरु पितु माता ॥ ३ ॥
गुरुगृहँ गए पढ़न रघुराई । अल्प काल बिद्या सब आई ॥ ४ ॥
जाकी सहज स्वास श्रुति चारी । सो हरि पढ़ यह कौतुक भारी ॥ ५ ॥

bha'e kumāra jabahim saba bhrātā. dīnha janē'ū guru pitu mātā. 3.
guragrham' ga'e padhana raghurā'ī. alapa kāla bidyā saba ā'ī. 4.
jākī sahaja svāsa śruti cārī. sō hari paṛha yaha kautuka bhārī. 5.

When all the four brothers attained boyhood, they were given the 'Sacred Thread' by their teacher (sage Vasistha) and their parents (3).

Thereafter, they went to sage Vasistha's hermitage for education, and in a short time they mastered all knowledge.

[To wit, after their initiation ceremony when the four princes were given the sacred thread by their guru, the royal priest sage Vasistha, they went to study at his hermitage. The princes quickly learnt all that was taught to them; they became experts sooner than expected.]¹ (4).

What a wonder it is that Sri Hari (a term used for Lord Vishnu who had manifested as Lord Ram), whose breath is the reservoir of all the four Vedas, should study like an ordinary child!² (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 26 where a similar idea is expressed.

²Lord Vishnu is regarded in the Purans as the Supreme Being. Lord Ram is an incarnation of Vishnu. The Vedas are the primary scriptures and a repository of all available knowledge in existence. Being the Supreme Lord of creation, Vishnu is obviously the one who must have created even the Vedas. These scriptures are called his 'breath' because originally the Vedas used to be chanted and transmitted orally—hence the reference to the 'breath', because speaking is also done through the same windpipe by which one breathes, and also because only a man who breathes can speak, and therefore recite and teach the Vedas. 'Breath' is metaphor for life. Since Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Tulsidas expresses his astonishment that the

Lord had to pass through the normal process of education and learning the Vedas though he is the one who had created these scriptures.

Some confusion may arise here as according to traditional belief, the Vedas were created by Brahma, the creator of the world and the first god of the Trinity. But then it must also not be forgotten that this Brahma had himself emerged sitting atop a lotus flower that sprouted from the navel of Lord Vishnu as he reclined on the coiled body of the celestial serpent known as Seshnath who floated on the surface of Kshirsagar, the primordial ocean of milk. Obviously it means that Vishnu had created Brahma. So, who was Vishnu? When Brahm, the Supreme Being representing the cosmic Consciousness, decided to initiate the process of creation, he thought over the issues that he faced and the gigantic nature of the task he was about to undertake. Contemplating seriously on the matter, Brahm concluded that the best way was to divide the entire work into three parts—creation, sustenance, and conclusion. This methodology would make it easier for him to control the wheel he was about to set rolling.

Besides that, there was another problem. Brahm, representing cosmic Consciousness, had no form, was without attributes, was invisible, subtle and all-pervading, whereas the world he envisioned to create would have to have visibility, a form and a character. That would in turn entail putting into place a mechanism to tackle the nitty-gritty affairs of what was to come.

Hence, Brahm decided to first lay the foundation of the structure he planned to raise—and therefore created the three gods of the Trinity by transforming himself into Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva, the concluder of creation. This was the first instance of the principle of ‘delegation of authority’ with clear-cut areas of function marked for these three Authorities of creation. This would ensure smooth running of the affairs of creation, without overlapping and confusion that may later on get so tangled up that a colossal mess and hotchpotch would result.

So, though it is said that the Vedas were created by Brahma, the first of the Trinity gods, the reality is that they were actually created by the Supreme Being known as Brahm who had assumed three roles as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva at the beginning of creation, with Brahm himself assuming the central controlling authority in the entire setup by becoming Lord Vishnu.

Now, Lord Ram was a manifestation of Brahm as is repeatedly affirmed in Ram Charit Manas, and Brahm, in his role as Brahma, had created the Vedas. Hence, it is correct to say that “the Vedas are Lord Ram’s breath” in as much as he was the creator of these scriptures like the rest of creation in his primary form as Brahm.]

बिद्या बिनय निपुन गुन सीला । खेलहिं खेल सकल नृपलीला ॥ ६ ॥

करतल बान धनुष अति सोहा । देखत रूप चराचर मोहा ॥ ७ ॥

जिन्ह बीथिन्ह बिहरहिं सब भाई । थकित होहिं सब लोग लुगाई ॥ ८ ॥

bidyā binaya nipuna guna sīlā. khēlahim khēla sakala nṛpalilā. 6.

karatala bāna dhanuṣa ati sōhā. dēkhata rūpa carācara mōhā. 7.

jinha bīthinha biharahim saba bhāī. thakita hōhim saba lōga lugāī. 8.

The four brothers (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) were well versed in all forms of knowledge one was expected to acquire, were endowed with the noble

qualities of politeness, courteousness and decorum, and were epitomes of all auspicious virtues and characters.

They proficiently played games befitting young princes who would learn in this playful way the different arts and skills (such as martial arts, diplomacy and administrative skills, justice and compassion, all going hand in hand), and all such manners of things, that would prepare them to be great king in the future.

[To wit, the four princes played ‘princely games’, and not ordinary games like other boys of their age would play. This was an established method to train young princes for their future role as kings which they would have to assume one day.]¹ (6)

In their hands bows and arrows looked magnificent. Their charming and enchanting image captivated and enthralled the entire world consisting of animate beings and inanimate things². (7)

In whichever street or lane of the city the four brothers went to roam about, the common citizens were held in thrall by their august presence in their midst. To wit, the people were so delighted at the sight that they stood still and gazed at the four lovable boys as their sight mesmerized them and filled their hearts with excess of joy³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 45-46.

²Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 43-46; and Kavitali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 6-7. A full-blown English version of these two books has been written by this humble author, and they are available online on the same platform from which the esteemed reader has accessed the present book Ram Charit Manas.

³We would soon witness a similar event when we read about Lord Ram and Laxman accompanying sage Vishwamitra to the city of Janakpur. When the two brothers went for sight-seeing in the city, and as soon as the news spread about their visit, the whole city poured out onto the streets. Men and children flocked them, surrounding them from all sides, and the women filled the balconies and terraces of their homes to have a glimpse of the two divine brothers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 225.

Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 41-42.]

दो०. कोसलपुर बासी नर नारि बृद्ध अरु बाल ।
प्राणहु ते प्रिय लागत सब कहँ राम कृपाल ॥ २०४ ॥

dōhā.

kōsalapura bāsī nara nāri bṛd'dha aru bāla.
prānahu tē priya lāgata saba kahum̐ rāma kṛpāla. 204.

The merciful, compassionate and gracious Lord Ram (rāma kṛpāla) was treated very dearly by all the citizens of Ayodhya, the males and the females, the old and the young—for all of them held the Lord as dear to them as their own lives¹. (Doha no. 204)

[Note—¹We witness a similar event when king Janak meets Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217.

And later on we shall read that all those whom Lord Ram met on his way to the forest were equally overjoyed by meeting the Lord, so much so that while the Lord stayed and conversed with them they were ecstatic with joy, and when he had gone away then those whom he met would remember him most affectionately for all times to come—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 109—to Doha no. 122.

In the last chapter of Ram Charit Manas there are many instances where we read that the citizens of Ayodhya loved their king very dearly for they were all happy and contented under his rule, and the city was prosperous and beautiful—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 25; (ii) Doha no. 26; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iv) Doha no. 47 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.

It is an obvious fact that when the subjects are fully contented and taken care of by a king, it is but natural for them to not only love but also be absolutely devoted and loyal to that particular king. This was the case with the relationship that existed between Lord Ram and the citizens of Ayodhya.]

चौ०. बंधु सखा सँग लेहिं बोलाई । बन मृगया नित खेलहिं जाई ॥ १ ॥
पावन मृग मारहिं जियँ जानी । दिन प्रति नृपहि देखावहिं आनी ॥ २ ॥
जे मृग राम बान के मारे । ते तनु तजि सुरलोक सिधारे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bandhu sakhā samṅa lēhim bōlāī. bana mṛgayā nita khēlahim jāī. 1.
pāvana mṛga mārahim jiyam̃ jānī. dina prati nr̥pahi dēkhāvahim ānī. 2.
jē mṛga rāma bāna kē mārē. tē tanu taji suralōka sidhārē. 3.

Lord Ram would call his brothers and friends, and accompanied by them he would go to the royal forest almost daily to play the game of hunting¹. (1)

The Lord shot only those animals whom he perceived to be pure in their souls (explained below in the next verse)², and he brought them back home to show to the king (to show his father that he is a skilled archer and a good shooter who would aim perfectly while riding a horse at full gallop, because these skills were needed in a king of the era when horse-riding, archery and perfect aim with a bow and an arrow while on a galloping horse were the essential ingredients for success in wars). (2)

Those animals who were killed by Lord Ram (during hunting) would find emancipation and salvation when their Atma (soul) left their gross body upon being killed, whereby finding liberation from the trap of the gross body in which the Atma was caught, and this granted that individual animal the spiritual reward of deliverance from the gross world and the cycle of transmigration³. (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 39.]

²Lord Ram would not kill at random just for the pleasure of killing wild animals during hunting courses. The Lord selected only those creatures who were pious and holy from inside, but due to some unfortunate events in their previous life they had to become an animal. Such creatures yearned for liberation and deliverance from the body of an animal so that their pure ‘self’, i.e. their Atma or soul, could find eternal peace.

When the news spread that the Supreme Being has come down to earth as Lord Ram with the main purpose of granting deliverance to those who were unnecessarily trapped in a sinful body, these animals migrated from far away places to come and live in the forests around Ayodhya in the hope that they would be granted liberation from their animal-body by Lord Ram by killing them during his hunting trips, so that they can find deliverance from the horrors of life as an animal.

The idea expressed herein above finds support when we examine the story of Ravana, the demon king. We have already read that in his previous life he was a noble king named Pratapbhanu, but unfortunately the latter was cursed to become a demon for no fault of his. As the demon king Ravana, the soul of Pratapbhanu surely yearned for deliverance, and this could only be realized when that demon-body would die. Since this was only possible if the Supreme Being himself killed him, so Lord Ram had to travel all the way to Lanka to deliver Ravan’s soul from the trap of a demonic body.

To wit, this “killing” was a blessing in disguise for such creatures, for it granted them instant deliverance, emancipation and salvation for which they would have to wait for a long time till death would make it possible for them, and during this long waiting time they would have to suffer all the ills and pains and fears that are inherent to life in this gross physical world. There were fair chances also that during this long interval they might commit some kind of sin, even inadvertently, but that would prevent their deliverance at the time of natural death. All these uncertainties were taken care of when their souls were granted liberation from their gross body of an animal by getting killed at the hands of Lord Ram.

³During the war of Lanka too, all the demons who died while fighting Lord Ram got liberation and deliverance—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 115.

Even the demon king Ravana and his brother Kumbhakaran found emancipation and salvation for themselves and deliverance of their respective souls when they were killed by Lord Ram in battles—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 71 (Kumbhakaran); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-9 that precede Doha no. 103 (Ravana).]

अनुज सखा सँग भोजन करहीं । मातु पिता अग्या अनुसरहीं ॥ ४ ॥
जेहि बिधि सुखी होहिं पुर लोगा । करहिं कृपानिधि सोइ संजोगा ॥ ५ ॥
बेद पुरान सुनिहिं मन लाई । आपु कहहिं अनुजन्ह समुझाई ॥ ६ ॥

anuja sakhā samṅga bhōjana karahīm. mātu pitā agyā anusarahīm. 4.
jēhi bidhi sukhī hōhim pura lōgā. karahīm kṛpānidhi sō'i sanjōgā. 5.

bēda purāna sunahim mana lā'i. āpu kahahim anujanha samujhā'i. 6.

After returning home from playing outside with his brothers and friends¹, Lord Ram would take his meals in their company².

He (Lord Ram) would always be obedient to his parents; he did what they instructed him to do, and requested their permission before doing anything on his own initiative. (4)

In whatever manner the citizens of the city (of Ayodhya) would get joy and happiness, the Lord would always devise ways or contrive means to make things happen that way³. (5)

He would listen attentively to the discourses on scriptures such as the Vedas and the Purans, and then explain their meanings and intricacies to his younger brothers⁴. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 204 herein above; and (b) Uttar Kand, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 26 later on when Lord Ram ascended the throne of Ayodhya as its King-Emperor.

The same idea is expressed in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 46.

²Lord would invite all his brothers and friends to join him for meals. This shows how friendly and affable he was, having no trace of pride or ego or harbouring any sense of superiority complex that he was the senior-most prince and must keep a respectable distance with others junior to him. This was the primary reason why Lord had endeared himself to the masses, both in his own country as well as all those whom he met during his long journey through the forest.

³Later on in our reading of the story, when we come to its last chapter, we shall read that there was all-round happiness and prosperity in Ayodhya after Lord Ram returned from the forest and ascended the throne to become a King-Emperor. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23.

⁴Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 4-7 that precede Doha no. 26; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 42; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 47.

In all these instances we find that Lord Ram would regularly discourse on matters of importance with respect to proper conduct, morality, ethics, righteousness, spiritualism, metaphysics, religion, and all other such matters that would serve as guidelines for his brothers and the subjects of his kingdom, helping them to improve the quality of their lives and become excellent human beings.

To wit, for all practical purposes, Lord Ram was not merely a king for them, but their teacher, guide and preceptor too.]

प्रातकाल उठि कै रघुनाथा । मातु पिता गुरु नावहिं माथा ॥ ७ ॥

आयसु मागि करहिं पुर काजा । देखि चरित हरषइ मन राजा ॥ ८ ॥

prātakāla uṭhi kai raghunāthā. mātu pitā guru nāvahim māthā. 7.
āyasu māgi karahim pura kājā. dēkhi carita haraṣa'i mana rājā. 8.

[Setting an example of excellent character for others—] He (Lord Ram) would get up early in the morning and bowed his head to his parents (father Dasrath and mother Kaushalya) as well as to his guru (sage Vasistha) to offer his respects to them the first thing in the morning. (7)

Then, the Lord would seek their permission and instructions to carry out his royal duties as a prince of the kingdom (on behalf of the king, his father Dasrath)¹.

This ideal and dutiful conduct, the disciplined and righteous behaviour, and the diligence and fastidiousness of the Lord mightily pleased them (i.e. his parents and guru). (8)

[Note—¹It was but natural that when the princes became adult, the king would gradually hand over the routine affairs of the kingdom, such as administration, justice, diplomacy, army, and the rest, to them. He would assign different tasks to them on a rotational basis so that they are trained in a practical manner and gain a first-hand experience in all the different spheres of the affairs of the kingdom.

Both the parents as well as the guru of Lord Ram were pleased and satisfied to find that he was living up to their expectation.]

दो०. व्यापक अकल अनीह अज निर्गुन नाम न रूप ।

भगत हेतु नाना बिधि करत चरित्र अनूप ॥ २०५ ॥

dōhā.

byāpaka akala anīha aja nirguna nāma na rūpa.

bhagata hētu nānā bidhi karata caritra anūpa. 205.

The Lord (Ram) who is all-pervading and immanent in this creation (byāpaka), who is invisible and imperceptible (akala), who has no desires (anīha), who has no birth or death as he is eternal and infinite (aja), who has no specific attributes that can define him (nirguna), and who is without any form and name (nāma na rūpa)—that same Supreme Being had assumed a human form to do so many pleasant deeds for the pleasure of his devotees¹. (Doha no. 205)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 13; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 51; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 150; (b) Kishkindha Kand, (iv) Doha no. 26.]

{Now we shall move onto the second half of this first Chapter of Ram Charit Manas called the 'Baal Kand'; it narrates the next phase of this magnificent story of Lord Ram. There was a great sage named Vishwamitra. Demons used to defile his fire sacrifice. So the sage decided to come and take Lord Ram and his younger brother

Laxman to his hermitage in order to prevent the demons from creating nuisance for him. From here starts the journey for which the Supreme Being had come down to earth as Lord Ram—because the slaying of the demons would start immediately after the sage left Ayodhya with the two brothers and was attacked by a female demon named Tadka. A little while later, the huge army of demons, led by Marich and Subahu, which comes to destroy the fire sacrifice of the sage, was eliminated by Lord Ram. While Subahu was killed, Marich was flung off to a far-away island in the middle of the ocean.

Then we shall read in detail about all the interesting developments that took place—including the breaking of the mighty Bow by Lord Ram which entitled him to marry Sita, the princess of Janakpur, and the subsequent angry intervention by sage Parashuram, who was mightily annoyed by the breaking of the Bow as it belonged to Lord Shiva, his revered deity, and so he came rushing in to punish the person who had broken that Bow, and the way he vented his ire on Lord Ram and Laxman before calming down and going back crestfallen when he realized that all his efforts to punish the Lord for breaking the Bow was in vain because he was not an ordinary human prince but Lord Vishnu himself in that form, as well as the fact that the sage's revered deity, Lord Shiva, too worshipped Lord Ram.

Lord Ram's other three brothers too got married at the same venue, and to the sisters and cousins of Sita. There were a lot of festivities in Janakpur during that auspicious occasion, and we read in detail everything about how the marriage was solemnized on a grand scale.

The Chapter ends with the grooms' party returning to Ayodhya from Janakpur with the four brides, a brief description of rituals and celebrations in the city, and the departure of sage Vishwamitra to go back to his hermitage.

All these events are narrated from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Doha no. 361.

This part of the story has also been described in Tulsidas' "Geetawali Ramayan", Baal Kand, verse nos. 47—110.}

चौ०. यह सब चरित कहा मैं गाई । आगिलि कथा सुनहु मन लाई ॥ १ ॥
बिस्वामित्र महामुनि ग्यानी । बसहिं बिपिन सुभ आश्रम जानी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

yaha saba carita kahā mair̥m gā'ī. āgili kathā sunahu mana lā'ī. 1.
bisvāmitra mahāmuni gyānī. basahim bipina subha āśrama jānī. 2.

The story of Lord Ram from his birth till the time he grew up to reach the age of adolescence has been narrated (sung) by me till now. Whatever happened next will be narrated by me now. Please pay attention to it¹. (1)

There was a great learned sage named Vishwamitra. He lived in a hermitage in the forest as that place was auspicious, peaceful, serene and generally compatible for his spiritual pursuits². (2)

[Note—¹The primary narrator of Lord Ram's story is Lord Shiva, and he is telling the story to his consort Parvati when she expressed her eagerness to hear the Lord's divine story from beginning to end. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from

Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 107—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 110.

The episodes relating to the arrival of the learned sage Vishwamitra to take Lord Ram and his brother Laxman with him to the forest to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by demons, and the subsequent events when the sage took the two brothers to Janakpur, the city of king Janak, the father of Sita, the breaking of the strong bow of Shiva by Lord Ram that culminated in the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, and also of his other three brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan with Sita's sister and cousins, and the final celebrations at Ayodhya, the capital of Lord Ram and his father Dasrath, constitute the second part of the narration. It is in answer to the Parvati's fourth query—'please tell me how Janki (Sita) was married to Lord Ram.' Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 1st half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 110.

Tulsidas has stressed that one should listen to the divine story 'with attention'. Obviously, if one does not pay attention one would not enjoy the nectar that it contains. For instance, when one enjoys the taste and smell of the food served, the body digests is better than when one eats with disgust and forcefully just to fill his stomach. Tulsidas has said that "those who sing the episode of Lord Ram's marriage with due devotion, affection and attention will always have auspiciousness and joy in their lives—because the glory of Lord Ram is inherently a provider of happiness and bliss as well as the best of spiritual virtues one can expect to possess." Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 361.

Arrival of sage Vishwamitra to take Lord Ram and Laxman with him to his hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice has been narrated beautifully in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 47-56.

²Sage Vasistha, the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, had himself praised the glories of sage Vishwamitra in full court in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 359.

Vishwamitra was a great sage and a leader of other sages who lived in the forest. He was a 'great sage' as well as a 'Gyani' as he had learnt to practice self control over his senses; he had conquered anger and desires; any kind of sorrow or misery never disturbed his peace of mind and heart, nor did the sage had any wish for worldly pleasures and comforts.

The word 'Gyani' means one knows; who is self-realised and knows the truth of everything. He is a man of wisdom and erudition. People look towards him for guidance and example. He had done severe Tapa (austerity and penance) which entitled him to attain the stature of a learned Brahmin though he was born as a Kshatriya, the warrior class.

His name is very remarkable. "Vishwaa-mitra' has two connotations. One is that he is a friend of the whole world (Mitra = friend; Vishwa = the world). Another meaning is that his communion makes a man dispassionate and detached towards the world and its material charms (Vishwa = world; A-mitra = to be unfriendly towards). A person who keeps his company realises the futility of this mortal world and its transient and perishable nature, and therefore develops detachment from it.

His hermitage was an oasis of peace and had a divine aura about it. The area was known as 'Siddha-shram'—the place where mystics and hermits lived. It was located in the geographical area known as Buxar in Magadh that falls in modern-day Bihar state of India. It was here that Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant form of Lord Vishnu had once lived. Sages and hermits always lived in those parts of forests that

were compatible for their spiritual pursuit. These places were usually away from the hustle and bustle of city life, but at the same time were well endowed with the basic necessities of life such as water in the form of rivers or lakes, abundant fruit trees, greenery and rich vegetation.

Regarding his lineage, the sage has himself told Lord Ram when the latter enquired about his family line that “there was a great king named Kush who was the son of Brahma, the creator. He had four sons. The second son was named Kushnaabha. He had done a fire sacrifice to get a son. This produced a famous son by the name of Gaadhi. He was a very religious man. Vishwamitra was his son. Since the sage was born in the clan of king Kush, he is also known by the name of Kaushik.” Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/33/3; 1/34/1, 5, 6.

Vishwamitra further told Lord Ram “my elder sister was named Satyawati, and she was married to sage Richeek. She went (ascended) to heaven with the physical body. A great river is named after her; it is called Kaushiki. My natural habitat is in the valley of the Himalayas, but I came to this particular place for doing the fire sacrifice.” Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/34/12.

Earlier his name was Vishwarath, but when he had attained the exalted stature of Brahm-rishi, i.e. the level that is equivalent to Brahma, he began to be known as Vishwamitra.

There is an interesting story regarding his birth as narrated in Bhagwat, 9/15/8-9, and Vishnu Puran, 4/7. The story in brief is as follows—

Once, Satyawati and her mother approached sage Richeek with a request to provide them a herbal concoction that will help them get sons. Richeek sanctified two helpings of porridge with son-begetting Mantras, and gave each of them one helping with clear instructions that they should eat the one given to them, and not mix things up. Then the sage went away to take his bath. The jealous mother thought that the sample of porridge that the sage gave to Satyawati was better and more powerful, she prevailed upon her daughter to swap the samples with the argument “Daughter, everyone likes that his own son be better, and no one is interested in the brother of the wife. So, take my sample and give me yours, because my son will have to look after the whole world as he would be a Kshatriya king, while you are the wife of a sage (Richeek) and so your son will not require the powers and majesty that are needed to take care of the world. As a sage’s son, he will be contented with leading an austere life of Tapa and Yoga.”

So, the mother and daughter swapped the porridge. When Richeek came to know of this, he was very upset and accosted his wife Satyawati, telling her that she has done a very inappropriate thing. Now, her son would be a great warrior, and her brother (her mother’s son) would be a renowned sage of the stature of Brahma-rishi. When Satyawati pleaded with him to forgive her, the sage told her that now it cannot be rectified. However, though her son would be a brave warrior, the grandson would be great sage. Meanwhile, her mother’s son (her brother) became a great sage though he was born as a Kshatriya because his father was Gaadhi.

Vishwamitra was an angry man; he used to curse fluently. He had a hundred sons. It was he who had tested king Harishchandra’s steadfastness for truth and vows. He had great mystical powers so much so that he was able to attain the exalted stature of a Brahma-rishi though he was born a Kshatriya. This story is as follows—

Once he gathered a huge army and went to the forest to hunt. There, he stayed in the hermitage of sage Vasistha who had a magical cow known as ‘Kamdhenu’ which had the mystical power to give anything one wishes. Vasistha fed the entire army and made arrangements for their comfort on the strength of this cow.

Vishwamitra eyed the cow because he thought that she was more useful for a king than a hermit or a sage. When Vasistha refused to give her, Vishwamitra tried force, but was utterly defeated. All his sons were killed except one. Vishwamitra handed over the charge of the kingdom to him and went to do Tapa to acquire powers so that he can get the Kamdhenu from Vasistha. As a result of the Tapa he acquired great weapons from Lord Shiva, but again failed to snatch the Kamdhenu from Vasistha. Ashamed, he did severe Tapa once again to attain the exalted stature of a Brahma-rishi, a stature that Vasistha already possessed. To wreck vengeance upon Vasistha, he had cursed the latter's sons and reduced them to ashes. Later on, however, the two sages became friends when one day Vasistha heard that Vishwamitra has great respect for his Brahmin-hood and spiritual powers. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Sarga 51—65.

He is the Rishi (the wise and enlightened sage or seer who conceptualized and preached) of the entire 3rd Mandal of the Rig Veda. 501 Richas (hymns) of this Mandal are directly attributed to him, and the rest to his disciples.

Along with sages Vasistha and Valmiki, he is the most famous sage who played a pivotal role in the life of Lord Ram. It was Vishwamitra who had taken Lord Ram and Laxman to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. It was when Lord Ram went with him that he first encountered the demons, and had killed the demoness Tadka and the demon Subhahu while flinging the demon Marich far away into the middle of the ocean. Sage Gautam's wife Ahilya was also liberated by the Lord during this trip with Vishwamitra. The sage took the Lord and Laxman to the marriage ceremony of Sita where the Lord had broken the sturdy bow of Lord Shiva and married her. All the four brothers were married on the occasion.

There is a famous story in Nadishukta (Rig Veda, 3/33) that he once prayed to rivers Vipaata and Shutudri (the modern rivers Beas and Sutlej of Punjab state of India) to part and give him a way when robbers were pursuing him.

He has been mentioned as a great sage in a number of Vedic literature—e.g. Aitareya Aaranyaka, 2/2/1; Taittiriya Samhita, 2/2/1/2; Kaushitaki Brahman, 15/1; Panchavinsha Brahman, 14/3/12.

In Rig Veda 1/24 there appears a story of Shunashshepa who was saved by sage Vishwamitra when he was about to be sacrificed in a Vedic sacrifice ritual. The sage adopted him as his son.

He is said to be Kshatriya king as mentioned in Nirukta 2/24, and Panchavinsha Brahman 21/12/2. He is believed to have been the son of king Gaadhi of Chandravansha. His earlier name was Vishwarath.

The story of sage Vishwamitra is narrated by sage Satanand to Lord Ram in the famous epic "Valmiki Ramayan", in its Baal Kand, Canto 51, verse no. 17—to Canto 65, verse no. 29. Many interesting stories related to him are narrated, and one such story is that he had created a heaven for his patron king Trishanku, and his conflict with sage Vasistha and his ultimate elevation to the status of a Brahma-rishi, i.e. a sage who has acquired the highest stature which makes him equivalent to the stature of Brahm, the Supreme Being personified.

He is counted amongst the seven great celestial Rishis or sages. The greatest contribution of sage Vishwamitra was his creating the famous Gayatri Mantra dedicated to the Sun God. It is regarded as the greatest Mantra ever conceptualized and preached in the entire pantheon of Mantras.

He is the patron sage of the great Mantra known as 'Brahm-Gayatri'.]

जहँ जप जग्य जोग मुनि करहीं । अति मारीच सुबाहुहि डरहीं ॥ ३ ॥

देखत जग्य निसाचर धावहिं । करहिं उपद्रव मुनि दुख पावहिं ॥ ४ ॥

jaham̐ japa jagya jōga muni karahīm. ati mārīca subāhuhi ḍarahīm. 3.
dēkhata jagya nisācara dhāvahim̐. karahim̐ upadrava muni dukha pāvahim̐. 4.

At that place (i.e. in the Sidhashram), sages and hermits used to pursue spiritual and religious way of life by doing Japa (repetition of the holy Mantras), Jagya (fire sacrifices) and Yoga (meditation). This scared the demons led by Marich and Subahu*¹.

[*There is another way of interpreting this part of the verse. It may also mean—“The sages and hermits were immensely scared of the demons Marich and Subahu.”

By naming Marich first, the sage indicated that he was the elder brother, and Subahu was his younger sibling.] (3)

As soon as the demons saw the fire sacrifices being done, they rushed forward. They created all sorts of mischief and nuisance, which cause a lot of grief and misery for the sages². (4)

[Note—¹What was the reason for the demons being afraid of the sages performing fire sacrifices or doing Japa and Yoga? Well, they knew that if these sages succeeded in completing their spiritual practices then they would acquire great mystical powers which they would then use to eliminate the demons. The king of demons, Ravana of Lanka, has clearly instructed his chief commanders to ensure that these sages did not do fire sacrifices as the offering made during such exercises provide nourishment to the Gods who were eternal enemies of the demon race. So if the fire and other sacrifices were not allowed to take place, the Gods will be starved and become weak and emaciated. The weakened Gods would no longer pose any challenge to the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 181 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

Marich and Subahu were given the charge of the area where sage Vishwamitra and others did sacrifices. So, as soon as the demons saw smoke rising into the sky by the burning of the sacred fire and offerings made into it, they rushed and destroyed it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 207; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 210.

And why were the sages afraid of the demons? It was because these nasty demons did not allow them to pursue their spiritual and religious activity though the sages meant no harm to them.

²Three religious activities are mentioned in verse no. 3—viz. Japa, Yagya and Yoga. While Japa and Yoga are done silently, the Yagya cannot be hidden. This is because as soon as the sacred fire was lit while doing Yagya, smoke rose in the sky, and this alerted the demons. So, the sages were not so much afraid of the demons while doing either Japa or Yoga as when doing Yagya.

What was the mischief the demons do? They threw meat, faecal matter, blood etc. over the sacred fire, thereby defiling it.

The next question is why did the sages not curse the demons? The answer to this is that while undertaking religious activities they used to take a vow of practicing self-control over all their instincts and evil qualities. Becoming angry and cursing would be a sin while the fire sacrifice was being undertaken. So they did not curse the

demons. However, this goodness of the sages had a negative impact on the senseless demons—they thought that the sages were afraid of them and that is why they did not curse.

Another reason is that if they did curse one or two of them, the rest of the demons would take revenge and attack them mercilessly, killing all of them.]

गाधितनय मन चिंता ब्यापी । हरि बिनु मरहिं न निसिचर पापी ॥ ५ ॥
तब मुनिबर मन कीन्ह बिचारा । प्रभु अवतरेउ हरन महि भारा ॥ ६ ॥

gādhitanaya mana cintā byāpī. hari binu marahim na niscara pāpī. 5.
taba munibara mana kīnha bicārā. prabhu avatarē'u harana mahi bhārā. 6.

The son of Gaadhi (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) was overcome with worries. He decided that it is not possible that the sinful demons would ever be killed without the help (intervention) of Lord Hari (Vishnu)¹. (5)

Then the sage thought to himself that the Lord (Vishnu) has already taken birth to remove the burden of the earth². [This was in the form of Lord Ram who was born in Ayodhya as a son to king Dasrath and his wife Kaushalya.] (6)

[Note—¹As has been said above, Vishwamitra, the chief of the sages, was worried because he could not kill the demons by simply cursing them. If the sage cursed the demons, it will be sinful on his part. If he prayed to them not to disturb the sages, it is impossible that the demons will oblige. Therefore, there was only one solution—and it was to get Lord Vishnu to kill them. It will have to benefit—one, it will help rid the tyranny of the demons, and two, they will be liberated from their cursed body of a demon and their souls will find liberation and deliverance. This will prevent them from taking re-birth as a demon once again and continuing the horrors they perpetrate. It was not too difficult because the sage knew that Vishnu had taken birth as Lord Ram precisely for this purpose—to eliminate the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

See verse no. 6 below.

²When the demons had unleashed their reign of terror, mother Earth and other Gods led by the creator Brahma had prayed to Lord Vishnu to eliminate the demons and restore peace. The Lord had promised them that he will come down to earth as Lord Ram and take birth in the household of king Dasrath. This is because the Lord had to oblige him as he had done severe Tapa in his earlier life as Manu and had requested Lord Vishnu to become his son. So, this way, Lord Vishnu will be killing two birds with a single stone—the word given to Manu will be fulfilled and the prayers of the Gods will be answered. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

A very interesting observation can be made here. The demons had been defiling the fire sacrifices and tormenting the sages for a long time, then why is it that Vishwamitra now thought of inviting Lord Hari (Ram) to kill and eliminate the demons? Well, the obvious answer is that things are to be done at the proper time; one must not rush things along as it will be more harmful than producing any beneficial results. Though Lord Vishnu had taken birth as Lord Ram but it took him say 14-16

years to grow up to become an adolescent. After all, Lord Ram was in a human form and was obliged to follow all the norms set by the creator for the human race. The Lord could not perform miracles as it would alert the demons that Vishnu has finally arrived to get rid of them. Then, the demons would have taken remedial action—they would either go and hide somewhere, or even fall at the feet of Lord Ram begging for forgiveness. In this latter scenario, the Lord would be obliged to forgive them as it is his vow that if anyone comes and seeks his refuge the Lord must oblige him no matter how sinful that person is. This is clearly stated by Lord Ram himself when Ravana's brother Vibhishan came to seek the Lord's refuge after being kicked out by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 43 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 44.

So the learned sage had to wait for the opportune time. Now Lord Ram had grown up and used to move out of the royal palace to go hunting, and used to participate in the administrative work of the kingdom to help his father Dasrath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.]

एहूँ मिस देखौँ पद जाई । करि बिनती आनों दोउ भाई ॥ ७ ॥

ग्यान बिराग सकल गुन अयना । सो प्रभु मैं देखब भरि नयना ॥ ८ ॥

ēhūṁṁ misa dēkhaum̄ pada jā'ī. kari binatī ānaum̄ dō'u bhā'ī. 7.

gyāna birāga sakala guna ayanā. sō prabhu maim̄ dēkhaba bhari nayanā. 8.

The sage thought that on the pretext of getting the demons killed, he will get the rare and golden opportunity of having a divine vision or sight of the holy feet of Lord Hari. He would then pray (request) and bring the two brothers along¹. (7)

The learned sage felt excited and exhilarated at the thought that “Now, I will have an opportunity to have my fill of seeing the Lord who is a treasury of Gyan (enlightenment and knowledge), Viraag (or Vairagya; renunciation, detachment and dispassion), and all the auspicious and noble Gunas (virtues and qualities)². (8)

[Note—¹To whom would the sage request? It's not mentioned here. Hence, we have two meanings—one, he would request the Lord himself, and two, he would request his worldly father, king Dasrath, to send Lord Ram with him to the forest to kill the demons.

The sage thought to himself that ever since Lord Vishnu took birth as Lord Ram, he had not gone to have a 'Darshan' (divine viewing) of the Lord. So, now he has got an excuse. The sage was an enlightened one, so he felt that he is very fortunate that he will have a divine vision of the holy Lord and his divine feet with the additional bonus of being able to help the Lord fulfill the purpose of his incarnation by being instrumental in bringing him to the forest and initiating the process of elimination of the demons one by one. This helped him to achieve a double reward—one was the chance to see the Lord at close quarters and act as his guardian in the forest, and second was being instrumental in removing the burden of the earth caused by the demons, a duty that great sages were supposed to perform.

The sage wished to keep the identity of the Lord secret lest it would have alerted the demons as noted in the note appended to verse no. 6 above, though all the

great sages were privy to the news of Lord Vishnu having taken birth on the earth as Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 48 Ka.]

²Had the sage gone earlier at the time of birth of the Lord or anytime later on, he would be welcomed and shown the Lord and his brothers to seek his blessings. Lord Ram would be summoned by his parents and ordered to bow before the sage who would then bless them. This is the routine way the things happen—when some sage or hermit arrives in a household, the parents call their son and request the guest sage to bless him. In this scenario, the guest sage is not able to spend much of a time with the child. It is a formal interaction that barely lasts for a few minutes. But now Vishwamitra is very excited as he will be able to spend a lot of time with Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being. This is because he will bring the Lord along with him; the Lord will live and eat at his hermitage. The Lord will stay with him for a long time. The sage imagined the fun it would be when he would be coming back to his hermitage with the two brothers at his side. It will be a moment in his life which none of the sages, big or small, ever had. The beauty of the sight of Vishwamitra walking on the path with Lord Ram and Laxman is very wonderfully described by Tulsidas in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 52—56.

There is an interesting interpretation to the three divine virtues Vishwamitra mentions in Lord Ram—viz. Gyan, Viraag and auspicious Gunas. The sage himself was highly self-realised and enlightened; he was full of renunciation, detachment and dispassion; and he had all the virtuous qualities one can imagine of. So he stressed these qualities in his beloved Lord. It is these qualities that attract wise men to others; a great sage is not attracted to a prince for his fame or strength, but for his good virtues. Vishwamitra did not see a ‘prince warrior’ in Lord Ram, but the grand virtues of Gyan, Vairagya and Gunas that he possessed.]

दो०. बहुबिधि करत मनोरथ जात लागि नहिं बार ।
करि मज्जन सरऊ जल गए भूप दरबार ॥ २०६ ॥

dōhā.

bahubidhi karata manōratha jāta lāgi nahim bāra.
kari majjana sara'ū jala ga'e bhūpa darabāra. 206.

The sage remained submerged in divine thoughts and auspicious expectations as he hurried to meet the Lord. It did not take the sage much before he reached and took a bath in the river Saryu (on the banks of which was established the great city of Ayodhya). Then he went to the royal court of the king (Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram). (Doha no. 206)

[Note—It ought to be noted that the place where Vishwamitra used to stay, the place known as Siddha-shram, was very far away from the city of Ayodhya. So this Doha implies that the sage did not waste time by staying anywhere on the way. He went straight to Ayodhya.

The way Vishwamitra was engrossed in divine thoughts and the prospect of meeting Lord Ram is finely described in Tulsidas' book Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 48.

When one is lost in thoughts one does not feel the burden of a tiring and long-haul journey. Though the sage was sure that his request for Ram would not be turned down by Ram's father king Dasrath, but still it was uncertain because he has had no previous assurance from either the Lord or the king. A similar dilemma was faced by Vibhishan when he was on his way to meet Lord Ram after being kicked out of Lanka by his own brother Ravana. Vibhishan kept on imagining and wondering as he crossed the mighty ocean to reach Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.]

चौ०. मुनि आगमन सुना जब राजा । मिलन गयउ लै बिप्र समाजा ॥ १ ॥
करि दंडवत मुनिहि सनमानी । निज आसन बैठारेन्हि आनी ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

muni āgamana sunā jaba rājā. milana gaya'u lai bipra samājā. 1.
kari daṇḍavata munihi sanamānī. nija āsana baiṭhārēnhi ānī. 2.

When the king (Dasrath) heard that the sage has arrived (to meet him), he went forward to receive and welcome him. The king was accompanied by members of the Brahmin class of his kingdom¹. (1)

The king prostrated before the sage to pay his respects to him. After that, he brought the sage inside the palace and made him sit on his own throne (again as a mark of great respect)². (2)

[Note—¹Brahmins are respected in the society. So when some important guest arrived, it was customary for the host king to go to receive and welcome the guest along with noble members of the society. This was specially the case when some great sage or seer came. The king took Brahmins with him to show that he holds Vishwamitra in high esteem. Usually the king does not leave his palace, but since in this case the guest was not an ordinary one but a renowned sage of the stature of a Brahma-rishi, it was obligatory on the part of Dasrath to go and meet him outside the door as a gesture of great respect.

Under normal circumstances, the royal guards would not allow any mendicant to enter the palace grounds. So when Dasrath himself went to receive Vishwamitra it was a signal to all the members of the royal household to become alert as some special guest has arrived.

Later on we shall read that when sage Vishwamitra went with Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur to attend the bow-breaking ceremony that would culminate in the marriage of Sita with the victorious competitor, king Janak of Janakpur also came out with a large group of Brahmins to meet and welcome the sage at the gates of the city. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214.

²King Dasrath seated sage Vishwamitra on his own seat to indicate to the sage that he holds him in high regard, and that being a great sage he is much more competent than him to take care of the welfare of the kingdom as well as the royal household. The king also implied that now onwards, the welfare of the kingdom is a moral responsibility of the great sage.]

चरन पखारि कीन्हि अति पूजा । मो सम आजु धन्य नहिं दूजा ॥ ३ ॥
बिबिध भाँति भोजन करवावा । मुनिबर हृदयँ हरष अति पावा ॥ ४ ॥

carana pakhāri kīnhi ati pūjā. mō sama āju dhan'ya nahim dūjā. 3.
bibidha bhām̐ti bhōjana karavāvā. munibara hr̥dayam̐ haraṣa ati pāvā. 4.

The king (Dasrath) worshipped the sage and washed his feet reverentially. He lauded his good fortune that he was honoured to have sage Vishwamitra as his guest. The king said, 'There is no one as lucky, fortunate and privileged as me today.'¹ (3)

The king then entertained (served) the sage well by offering him food of different varieties (i.e. the king laid out a sumptuous meal containing a variety of dishes for him). This (respect and honour) immensely pleased and delighted the sage's heart; he felt contented and happy². (4)

[Note—¹Sage Vishwamitra was born a Kshatriya, but he had done severe form of Tapa (austerity and penance) to attain the stature of a Brahma-rishi, a great sage who has a stature that is equivalent to Lord Brahma, the creator. Besides this, he was a perfect example of renunciation and detachment. He did not yearn for any worldly pleasures or comforts. So there was no need for him to go to kings and beg for alms or charity, or seek the patronage of any king to meet his worldly needs of money and wealth. He never did in fact. Sage Vishwamitra never wanted his Atma, his soul, to be obliged to anyone.

So it was indeed remarkable that the sage of his exalted stature would come on his own, uninvited, to meet king Dasrath. Therefore, the king thought that it was a very lucky day for him that a great sage has come to bless him on his own. Ever since Dasrath became a king, all the other sages and seers had come to him on one occasion or the other, but Vishwamitra never came. In fact, Vishwamitra rarely ventured out of the forest; if any king wished to meet him he would go to his hermitage.

By telling the sage that today he feels highly honoured and privileged to have him as his guest the king meant that it is very rare to have a great sage of the exalted stature of Vishwamitra as one's guest, giving the householder a rare opportunity to serve him and seek his blessings. The occasion is all the more rare because of the fact that Vishwamitra never goes to the place of any householder unlike other sages who roam around in this world. Even the celestial sage Narad, who is said to be the son of the creator Brahma, is habituated to roam around in the entire creation, paying visits to countless households. Therefore obviously it is a rare and great moment for the king.

²After formal welcome and showing of respect, the king fed the sage with a sumptuous meal that consists of a variety of delectable dishes. The sage was pleased not so much because he ate delicious food but because he had been shown the greatest respect possible and was welcome warmly.

Another reason for the sage feeling happy was that he deduced that since the king holds him in high esteem, chances are very bright that he would concede to his requests to send his two sons, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman, with the sage so that

the demons could be slayed. As it transpired, after initial dithering the king did accede to the sage's requests and sent the two brothers with him.]

पुनि चरननि मेले सुत चारी । राम देखि मुनि देह बिसारी ॥ ५ ॥
भए मगन देखत मुख सोभा । जनु चकोर पूरन ससि लोभा ॥ ६ ॥

puni caranani mēlē suta cārī. rāma dēkhi muni dēha bisārī. 5.
bha'e magana dēkhata mukha sōbhā. janu cakōra pūrana sasi lōbhā. 6.

The king then summoned his four sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) and placed them at the feet of the sage. [That is, the king called his sons and asked them to pay their respect to the sage by touching his feet and bowing before him.]

When the sage saw Lord Ram he lost awareness of his body; he became so exhilarated that he forgot about everything else so much that his attention was riveted on the Lord¹. (5)

The sage was beguiled by the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram's face which resembled the sight of a full moon. The sage's mental condition was like that of the Chakor bird (the Indian red-legged partridge) which gazes at the full moon unblinkingly². (6)

[Note—¹When the four brothers came and touched the sage's feet it is natural that their father, king Dasrath, introduced them to the sage and told him their names. When the sage learnt who Lord Ram was, whom he knew to be a personified form of the Supreme Being, it is no wonder that he became stunned and ecstatic as he was now watching the Lord—who is the object of so much adoration by the scriptures, who is inaccessible to even the greatest of ascetics and hermits who spent an entire lifetime searching the Lord in vain, who can rarely be reached by doing even the severest forms of spiritual and religious exercises, and who is so merciful and compassionate that he would reveal himself in an instant if one has the proper level of love and devotion for him—so closely, and first hand.

The sage just could not believe his eyes when he saw the Supreme Being standing before him in a personified form as Lord Ram. The sage immediately attained the transcendental state of utter bliss that comes in the highest stage of Samadhi, the transcendental state of existence of the Consciousness when nothing of the gross world is relevant.

The sage was so stunned at the sight of Lord Ram and his bewitching beauty that he forgot about observing formalities such as blessing the princes and thanking the king.

By saying that the sage forgot about the awareness of the existence of his body it is also implied that he did not remember for some moments who he was and why he had come here.

²The bird known as 'Chakor' is reputed to be so enamoured of the moon that on the full moon night it continuously stares at the moon and turns its head gradually as the moon traverses across the sky during the night.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 47 it is affirmed that "the divine story of Lord Ram is like the beautiful and charming

rays of the full moon, while saints, holy and pious people are like the bird Chakor that is so enamoured of the moon and its beauty that it keeps its gaze fixed on the latter”.

In other words, such holy people keep their mind and attention fixed on the divine story and auspicious glories of Lord Sri Ram, who is a personified form of the Supreme Being.

Again, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 115 the metaphor of Chakor is used to describe that the people of the villages who met Lord Ram while he was on his way to the forest were so charmed at this magnificent sight that they gazed at the Lord’s face just like the Chakor stares at the full moon.

Another instance is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 321. Here the occasion is of Lord Ram’s marriage. Lord Ram, along with his father king Dasrath and the rest of the guest, is sitting in the marriage pavilion. The Lord was the center of attraction; he was the cynosure of the eyes of all those present on that occasion so much so that they gazed at the Lord unblinkingly like the bird Chakor gazes at the full moon.]

तब मन हरषि बचन कह राऊ । मुनि अस कृपा न कीन्हिहु काऊ ॥ ७ ॥
केहि कारन आगमन तुझारा । कहहु सो करत न लावउँ बारा ॥ ८ ॥

taba mana haraṣi bacana kaha rā’ū. muni asa kṛpā na kīnhihu kā’ū. 7.
kēhi kārana āgamana tumhārā. kahahu sō karata na lāva’um̃ bārā. 8.

Then the king was greatly pleased in his heart and he said to the sage—‘Oh revered sage! You had never been so kind and graceful upon me previously. [7] Say, what is the reason of your coming here. Tell me, and I will do my best to carry out your orders without delay.’ [8] (7-8)

[Note—One does not ask his regular guest, who comes too often, why he has come. The host presumes that the guest has come in a routine way, and there is nothing special about it. But in the case of someone who never comes, especially if the guest is someone very exalted and honoured in the world, the host naturally wonders what brings him to his house. Surely there must be a special reason.

The guest was not an ordinary sage, but a Brahma-rishi, a sage of a stature that is equivalent to Brahma the creator, which made him as honourable as the king’s own royal priest Vasistha. So the king felt he would be highly privileged and honoured to fulfill the desires of Vishwamitra—especially because this sage is not in the habit of asking anything from anybody.

Hence, if the sage asks for something and the king is able to fulfill his needs then it will help spread the king’s fame and glory throughout the world; it is not always that sage Vishwamitra asks for anything.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 49, line nos. 1-2.]

असुर समूह सतावहिं मोही । मैं जाचन आयउँ नृप तोही ॥ ९ ॥
अनुज समेत देहु रघुनाथा । निसिचर बध मैं होब सनाथा ॥ १० ॥

asura samūha satāvahiṃ mōhī. mairṃ jācana āya'um̃ nṛpa tōhī. 9.
 anuja samēta dēhu raghunāthā. niscara badha mairṃ hōba sanāthā. 10.

Sage Vishwamitra finally disclosed the reason for his coming to Ayodhya. He told king Dasrath—‘Hordes of demons torment me. I have come to request something from you¹. [9] Give Lord Ram along with his younger brother (Laxman) to me (i.e. send the two brothers with me) so that these demons can be killed and eliminated. I will feel secure and happy; I will be obliged.² [10] (9-10)*#

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “Jaachan” which also means ‘to test’. Hence, if we take this meaning, the verse changes as follows: ‘I have come to test you.’

What did Vishwamitra wish to test? Well, king Dasrath was renowned for his magnanimous, gracious and helpful nature; he had always obliged the sages and gods, and he had always fought on their behalf. After all, the Supreme Being will not take birth as a son of any ordinary man. So the sage wished to test this quality in Dasrath. He also wanted to test the level of enlightenment of Dasrath—which unfortunately the king lacked. This is proved immediately as soon as the sage had expressed his desire because the king, upon learning what the sage wanted, flatly declined to oblige him. The king forgot that he is committing some grave mistakes—one, by refusing to accede to the sage’s request after having promised him that he will fulfill his desires immediately, the king was going back on his own words which is a very bad character and is a punishable offence; two, this was like playing with fire because the sage could curse him for his refusal, inviting horrible consequences; and three, that Lord Ram was not a man’s son but the Supreme Being who had simply obliged him by becoming his son because the king had done severe Tapa with this request, and that the Lord has other much more important duties and obligations in this creation than to grow up and rule an ordinary worldly kingdom known as Ayodhya like so many other kings in the dynasty.

The question now arises, why was Dasrath so ignorant of the facts? Well, herein lies the wonderful play of the Lord’s ‘Maya’. The ‘Maya’ is the Supreme Beings dynamic cosmic powers that create delusions; it holds the entire creation in its sway; there is no creature or god who escapes its snare. It is this Maya that cast its magical spell of delusions on Dasrath, eclipsing his wisdom and propelling him into an intellectual void that made him forget the reality about who Ram was. Refer Doha no. 207 below.

Another interesting point to note is that the cruel demons who so relentlessly and ruthlessly tormented the sages and ruined their fire sacrifices did not dare to disturb the fire sacrifice done by Dasrath for getting sons, as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 189 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8. Well, what can be the reason? The answer is this: Dasrath was a very brave and invincible king with an equally brave and invincible army. Evil creatures of a pervert mind do not dare to irritate those who are strong and capable of taking revenge; they torment the humble and the weak because they know that the latter would not harm them. Remember: the demons were like modern-day terrorists who attack the weak and the defenseless, and not the powerful and the resourceful because they know that if they attack the latter they would suffer immensely, for these sinful people know inside their hearts that what they are doing is wrong and unrighteous, and wrongfulness and unrighteousness saps their moral courage and spiritual strength, replacing it with inherent fear and cowardice.

The demons knew that if they dared to disturb the fire sacrifice of the mighty king Dasrath, then the king would put his entire army and employ all his strength to punish them, and then they will have no place to hide. Their king, the demon Ravana of Lanka, feared complete destruction of his golden city of Lanka should he annoy Dasrath. They also feared the wrath of Vasistha whom they knew to be a powerful sage as he was the son of the Creator (Brahma) himself (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8).

On the other hand, they had less fear from the numerous sages and hermits whom they attacked and whose fire sacrifices they ruined because these demons knew that these sages don't have the backing of a powerful army, and that they will not curse them because while doing a fire sacrifice they took a vow to overcome anger and refrain from cursing anyone.

Besides this, the sages, seers and hermits lived alone in isolated hermitages in remote far-flung areas of the earth, places that were not protected by armies, while cities and towns were well protected by walls and guards. When Dasrath performed the fire sacrifice to beget a son, his whole army was on alert with its entire array of formidable arsenal kept ready to ward-off any attack by inimical forces. When the sages and hermits did the fire sacrifice, they had no protection whatsoever.

The demons therefore thought it wise to let Dasrath alone, and they abstained from unnecessarily provoking him into a war that would be destructive for them.

²Sage Vishwamitra was a Brahmin by his spiritual actions, and king Dasrath was a Kshatriya. The Kshatriya is duty-bound to protect the Brahmins and their religious activities; this the former had been doing since the dawn of civilization. So, the sage said that he has come to ask Dasrath to help him by killing the demons who are defiling his fire sacrifice. By directly asking for Lord Ram, the sage clearly implied that Dasrath's great army will not be helpful in this case.

Another important point is that the sage said that Lord Ram's 'younger brother' should be sent with him; he did not specifically mentioned 'Laxman' or any one of the others, viz. Bharat or Shatrughan. But Laxman was always so close and dear to Lord Ram that whenever Ram's 'younger brother' was mentioned it was deemed to mean Laxman. Hence, Vishwamitra had no doubt in his mind that the king would know whom the sage means by saying 'the younger brother of Ram'.

There is a reason for asking for Laxman. Laxman was a personified form of Seshnath, the thousand-hooded coiled serpent on which Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean known as Kshir Sagar. Seshnath is also the one who is believed to hold the earth on his hood. This Seshnath manifested himself as Laxman to help Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram to remove the burden of the earth, the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17.

*Sage Vishwamitra told Dasrath—"Oh great king. Cruel savages who live beyond the boundaries of your realm have been constantly intruding into your territory, plundering and pillaging at random and with ease. They have found far-flung, outlying remote areas of your extended kingdom easy ground to prey upon because these places are not as robustly protected as the towns and cities, with their walls and ramparts, that are well guarded by your army. These areas are generally inhabited by sages and seers who prefer to live away from the hustle and bustle of crowded places, and have established their hermitages there. Forest-dwelling tribes and simple harmless folks are the ones who live there. Since such subjects of your kingdom are

humble and defenseless against the merciless intruders, these cruel savages whom I would call ‘demons’ because of their blood-thirsty, sinful and evil nature, prey on them and torment them endlessly, without any rhyme or reason. We, the sages and seers who lead a reclusive life in hermitages and spend our time in religious activities and meditation or teaching and studying the scriptures, are seen by these demon-like savages as their natural enemies though we pose no threat to them, and so they target us ruthlessly.

We are not even able to do our daily chores and offer oblations without fear, and there is a nagging dread of either getting harmed in physical terms or at least being disrupted in our practices and rituals.

Since I (Vishwamitra) am the most senior amongst all the sages, seers and hermits living in that area, I decided that it was my moral duty and responsibility to do something on behalf of the entire community of holy men. You can say that I have come as a representative of all the sages and seers who are suffering gravely under the constant threat of these savages. Many of the sages and seers feared a backlash from the savages if they dared to come to you, the king of the realm, and seek your help, because they were sure that though you will certainly help them by sending your invincible army to face these savages, but the problem is that these rascals won’t attack as long as the army is there. And since it is not practically feasible for the army to stay indefinitely at remote places, once it leaves the savages would strike us with greater viciousness and renewed ferocity in order to take revenge upon us. So the majority of the sages preferred not to annoy the cruel blood-thirsty savages, the ‘demons’ who are evil and sinful and cruel to the extreme.

Now, if you can help me in the plan I have devised to get rid of these savages, great good and fame would come to you. You will not only accumulate points of religious merit but history will also honour you as the great and honourable king who lived upto his reputation of not dithering in doing his duties without a second thought and of protecting the subjects of his kingdom well even it meant putting his own self-interest at peril.

Listen therefore: As I have pointed it out to you, sending a huge army is not the solution as it would alert our enemies, the cruel savages (the ‘demons’) and it would back-fire. They will go into hiding and never face your army, so no purpose will be served. So I have carefully devised an alternative plan. You should send your two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, with me. This will not cause any suspicion in the mind of the demons (the savages), and so they will attack us in the routine manner when we set out to do our daily religious practices. It is then that these two powerful brothers—who are like the splendorous sun as far as the removal of the darkness of the night symbolized by these evil savages is concerned, or are like the flame which attracts the fly and then burns it—would then effortlessly get rid of the cruel demons as easily as the sun overcoming the darkness of the night by merely rising in the horizon or the flame burning the flies by just remaining lighted.

And my dear king, if you are worried about the safety of your two sons, then perish the thought. Don’t you know about my reputation? I am not an ordinary sage, but one who possesses such mystical powers that I could have myself demolished the mightiest of the demon army (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 in this context). But I can’t do that because I have taken a vow as part of my religious austerity not to take revenge, not to show anger, not to curse and not to show how strong and powerful I am. But that does not mean I am weak and unable. Remember: your two sons are safer with me than they are with you. You don’t have that mystical ability that I as a sage have. I don’t speak a lie

because sages, seers and hermits who lead an austere life of total renunciation in forests, remaining involved in nothing but religious pursuits, are not accustomed to doing so (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 210). So don't worry about the safety of your two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman.

Besides this, I do not accept debts and obligations of any kind whatsoever. So be sure that I will compensate them as well as you for your magnanimity and graciousness if you let Lord Ram and Laxman go with me. They, and you, will be more-than-fully rewarded. You will get the blessings of countless sages and seers who would be freed from this constant horror of savages, and these blessings in themselves would be the strongest shield for you and your sons in future.

Therefore, oh great and noble king, please send Lord Ram and Laxman with me. God bless you!

#The wise sages, seers and hermits had called a meeting to discuss the problem of the demons tormenting them and ruining their fire sacrifices. They decided that they will have to act diplomatically and wisely if they want to get rid of this terror. If they went to king Dasrath and asked for help, he would surely do so, but obviously he would send in his army to fight the demons, kill them or chase them away. But that would not be the solution—because the demons will hide and keep low till the army is there, and once the army goes back to its barracks, the demons would wreak havoc.

So, what should be done? The congregation of sages and hermits decided to act secretly and appointed their senior-most member, sage Vishwamitra, for the covert mission. He was to go to Ayodhya like any other sage going out on his routine visit to kings. He would not request for the army, but would bring Lord Ram and Laxman, the two empowered sons of king Dasrath, to the forest instead. Even if the demons discovered about the visit they would think that Vishwamitra was invited by the king to teach his two sons the scriptures or secrets of some martial arts and secret weapons that Vishwamitra was known to possess. This will not arouse suspicion in the minds of the demons about the real intention of Vishwamitra's visit.

The sages knew who Lord Ram was; they knew that he was as powerful, potent, dynamic, pure, divine, holy, and of course as scorching as the Fire God himself. Remember that Lord Ram and his three brothers had their origin in the sweet pudding presented to Dasrath by the Fire God himself. In other words, they had the powerful and dynamic genes of the Fire God in them, rather than that of Dasrath who was after all a mere human king in spite of him being very strong and powerful. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 189 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Like the flame of a candle that first attracts the insect and then burns it, the sages knew that Lord Ram would attract the demons in droves and then get rid of them by killing them. This is exactly what had happened. On the way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra, the demoness Tadka had attacked Lord Ram, Laxman and the sage. We shall read shortly that she was instantly killed by the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 209.

Another pertinent question now arises—what attracted Tadka to Lord Ram and Laxman? Later on in the story we shall read that another demoness named as Supernakha was also attracted to Lord Ram. What attracted her? She was enchanted by the 'astounding beauty, the matchless aura of glamour surrounding the Lord, and the Lord's fascinating charm'—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 17.

Even her cousin brothers, the demons Khar and Dushan, whom she summoned to take revenge upon Lord Ram when he spurned her overtures and got her nose and ears cut-off to punish her for being pervert and promiscuous, were mesmerized at the beauty of the Lord's physical form as clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 19.

Even sage Vishwamitra was struck by the beautiful images of Lord Ram and Laxman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 209.

Coming back to our present discussion regarding Tadka, she had been attracted by the Lord's beauty like the fly is attracted by the charm of the flame. And like the flame burning the fly to death, Lord Ram had slayed Tadka too as referred to herein above.

See the following Doha no. 207 which carries on this conversation.]

दो०. देहु भूप मन हरषित तजहु मोह अग्यान ।
धर्म सुजस प्रभु तुह कौं इन्ह कहँ अति कल्यान ॥ २०७ ॥

dōhā.

dēhu bhūpa mana haraṣita tajahu mōha agyāna.
dharma sujasa prabhu tumha kaur̄n inha kaham̄'ati kalyāna. 207.

The sage requested the king—‘Oh king! Give cheerfully what I request, and discard delusions and ignorance¹. Don't have doubts; don't dither, because oh king this will be an auspicious act on your part that would conform to the laws of Dharma and give you religious merit, which will enhance your fame in the world (and invite blessings from countless pleased sages and seers who will feel obliged to shower their blessing and praises upon you).

Not only this, they (Ram and Laxman) would be blessed with great glories and acquire renown by the great achievements that would come their way.² (Doha no. 207)

[Note—¹See note appended to Chaupai line nos. 9-10 herein above.

²A King's religious duty is to protect his subjects from enemies or those who torment them. Vishwamitra was being tormented by demons, so it is a moral duty of king Dasrath to help him. It would obviously be a meritorious work. Just imagine the consequences of refusal—the king would be denounced and ridiculed and scorned at as being sinful for not standing up to protect the fire sacrifice of a sage.

Obeying the requests of selfless sages and hermits was obligatory, as was to honour one's word given to them. The king has already promised to help Vishwamitra and fulfill his desires, so to rescind on his words now by refusing to send Ram and Laxman with the sage would be an unforgivable sin.

Vishwamitra was an enlightened sage; he knew what was in store for Lord Ram if he accompanied him. It was during this trip that the Lord's marriage with Sita would be formalized. This would be a cause of celebration and establish Lord Ram as a prince of matchless strength and prowess—because this marriage was centered on a strict competition in which anyone who lifted and stringed the formidably strong bow of Lord Shiva, that was kept in the custody of Sita's father, king Janak, was to marry

her. All the great kings and princes of the time would be invited, and all of them would fail to move the bow. It would be then that Lord Ram, on the instructions of Vishwamitra, would lift, string and break this bow, thereby establishing his identity as the greatest prince on earth. Where else would one get this golden chance to establish himself and gain fame throughout the world except in an assembly where all the great kings and princes have gathered together under one roof?

Then, Lord Ram and Laxman would be killing ferocious demons from whom even the Gods ran away in terror. This would be another reason for establishing the brothers' fame and glories.

A third development was waiting to happen. Sage Gautam's wife Ahilya was turned into a stone by a curse. When Lord Ram would touch her with his feet, she would regain her original form and be freed from this curse. This incident would establish that Lord Ram had supernatural mystical powers, that he was not an ordinary mortal. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 210 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 11-12—to Doha no. 211.

Which father would not like his son to achieve these successes? Dasrath did not know all this. This is precisely why Vishwamitra advised him to discard his ignorance and delusions. The king must realise that the prince whom he treats as his 'son' is not a human being like the king himself, but the Supreme Being in a personified form. So, the sage told him to wake up from his day-dreaming and become realistic.

A very interesting interpretation can be made of the sage telling Dasrath that 'they will also be blessed'. The sage did not specify who he means by 'they'. The king had four sons, so the sage meant that the two brothers who would accompany him would indeed be blessed, but this blessing would extend to cover the other two, Bharat and Shatrughan, also. This is because all the four brothers would be married simultaneously at Janakpur. This prospect should be sufficient to excite the father, king Dasrath, so thought the sage. But we will now read that the opposite happened. The deluded and ignorant king did not understand the import of the sage's words, and flatly refused to oblige him.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 50.]

चौ०. सुनि राजा अति अप्रिय बानी । हृदय कंप मुख दुति कुमुलानी ॥ १ ॥

चौथेंपन पायउँ सुत चारी । बिप्र बचन नहिं कहेहु बिचारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suni rājā ati apriya bānī. hṛdaya kampa mukha duti kumulānī. 1.

cauthēpana pāya'um̃ suta cārī. bipra bacana nahim̃ kahēhu bicārī. 2.

When the king heard these most unwelcome words (request) of the sage, his heart shivered (shook) with shock and the brightness of his face faded¹. (1)

The king said, 'Oh sage! I have got four sons during my old age. You did not think over the matter before speaking and making this demand from me². (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 51, line no. 1.

The king was shocked and dismayed beyond imagination, and he was dumbfounded. He had never expected the sage to make such a demand which no

father will like to hear. His face that sported a smile earlier suddenly became sullen and gloomy. His heart quivered at the thought of sending his beloved sons to the forest with a hermit to face ferocious demons. Which father would love to hear it?

²The king had become very old, and according to the Purans he was sixty thousand years old when he was blessed with the four sons. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 20, Sloka no. 10.

After ruling the kingdom for such a long time he was worried that he had no heirs. So he had summoned sage Sringi who performed a son-begetting fire sacrifice which resulted in the Fire God manifesting himself and offering some sweet porridge sanctified by Mantras to Dasrath with the instructions that the latter should make his three chief queens eat it. The king followed the instructions, and in due course of time the four sons were born to his queens. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 189—to Doha no. 192.

A son is a source of great comfort, solace and support for a father, especially during his old age. Dasrath was a king, and he was preparing to anoint Lord Ram, his eldest son, on the throne. At this juncture sage Vishwamitra came and demanded that Ram and his brother Laxman be sent to the forest to fight demons. The king was extremely worried; demons are not human enemies who could be easily defeated and killed. They were known to be very fierce and cruel, and would perform magical feats during the heat of battle which stun even veteran warriors. Ram and Laxman had no experience of entering into such a battle; in fact they had yet not been trained in the art of warfare. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 20, Sloka no. 7.

Pitting young, delicate and inexperienced princes who have never witnessed hardships of any kind in their lives against ruthlessly cruel demons will be an absurd proposition and would be tantamount to throwing them willingly to a pack of hungry wolves. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 208.

Besides this, Lord Ram had not even reached sixteen years of age. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 20, Sloka no. 2.

The king's worries were compounded because the sage wished to take only the two boys, Ram and Laxman, and did not request that the army accompany them. This was like throwing the two young inexperienced princes to hungry wolves to tackle them alone. This very idea sent shivers through the spine of Dasrath.

So he remarked that the sage had not given due thought and was not being practical before making the request.]

मागहु भूमि धेनु धन कोसा । सर्बस देउँ आजु सहरोसा ॥ ३ ॥

देह प्रान तेँ प्रिय कछु नाहीँ । सोउ मुनि देउँ निमिष एक माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

māgahu bhūmi dhēnu dhana kōsā. sarbasa dē'um' āju saharōsā. 3.

dēha prāna tēm priya kachu nāhīm. sō'u muni dē'um' nimīṣa ēka māhīm. 4.

‘Ask me for land, cows, wealth and anything else—I will be glad to give you cheerfully whatever you demand. In fact, I will willingly give to you all that I have.’¹

(3)

One's own body as well as the Pran is the dearest possession one has. I will willingly give both of them to you in an instant if you so want.² (4)

[Note—¹The king had earlier promised the sage that he will give the latter whatever he asks for. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 207.

So the king offered everything he had—his wealth, his possessions, his entire kingdom by way of land—lest the sage would accuse him of being a liar and rescinding on his words of honour. He was even willing to die for the sake of the sage—i.e. he was willing to accompany the sage to fight the demons himself, or if the sage curses him to die he was willing to accept it. But the king pleaded, 'don't force me to part with my beloved son Ram and his brother Laxman; I can't cope with this demand.'

Remember: the king was under the spell of the Lord's Maya (powers of creating delusions and imposing ignorance which eclipses all wisdom and intelligence). The learned sage was well aware of this face—as he had asked the king to overcome these negative influences. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 207. But the Maya of the Lord is so powerful that no matter how much one teaches someone who is under its spell, such advice will have no effect on him.

The king was acting like an ordinary father and a worldly man. For he had forgotten who Ram actually was, and why the Lord had become his son.

When he asked the sage to request for cows, wealth, land etc. he meant to tell the sage that this is normally what alms seekers and Brahmins demand. No one asks the host to give his two sons to him like what Vishwamitra has demanded. It's absurd to ask someone to part with his sons; no one should expect anyone to meet such a demand.

²The word 'Pran' means one's life. So the king offered himself to the sage—he offered to accompany the sage and fight the demons himself. He did not fear being killed for the sake of the sage and protecting his fire sacrifice. This was in answer to the sage's suggestion that if the king fulfills his needs—which was to help him complete the fire sacrifice which was interrupted by the demons—then he, the king, would get immense fame as one who contributes willingly for an auspicious act. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 207.

In the eventuality that he might be killed while fighting the demons on behalf of the sage, he still would have no worries in his mind because Lord Ram and his other brothers would automatically take up the responsibility of taking care of the kingdom. Besides this, the king would go down in history as having laid his life for a noble cause, and especially fighting for the cause of a renowned Brahma-rishi of the exalted stature of sage Vishwamitra.

'But just imagine what would happen to him in the unfortunate moment if something wrong goes and Ram is mortally wounded', the king implicitly asked the sage. 'Say sage', the king implied, 'what would happen to an old father whose dearest and eldest son is harmed and seriously wounded in battle? How will he comfort himself in his last days? Oh sage, please be kind to place thyself in my position and then thee would realize my reluctance to part with Ram who is so dear to my soul that I would hardly survive if he is taken away from me, just like the case of a person rarely surviving if the Pran is removed from his body.'

सब सुत प्रिय मोहि प्राण कि नाई । राम देत नहिं बनइ गोसाई ॥ ५ ॥
कहँ निसिचर अति घोर कठोरा । कहँ सुंदर सुत परम किसोरा ॥ ६ ॥

saba suta priya mōhi prāna ki nā'īrṁ. rāma dēta nahirṁ bana'i gōsā'īrṁ. 5.
kaham̃ nisicara ati ghōra kaṭhōrā. kaham̃ sundara suta parama kisōrā. 6.

‘All the sons are equally dear to me; they are as dear to me as my own Pran—my own life. So, oh revered sage, it is not possible for me to part with Ram.¹ (5)

On the one hand are the ruthlessly cruel demons, and on the other hand are these beautiful and delicate princes who have neither attained adulthood nor have ever experienced any sort of hardship and cruelty anytime in life; therefore they are no match for such demons.² (6)

[Note—¹The king was apprehensive that after his reluctance and refusal to part with Lord Ram because he loved him so much and also because he was the eldest son who is the heir to the throne, the sage might make another demand—that if the king finds it difficult to send Ram with him, then he can send one of the other three sons.

After all, the king has four sons. Had he only one son, the sage would have been morally forced to accede to his arguments that it is impossible for a father to part with his only son. But since he has three other sons besides Ram, it would be well nigh impossible to refuse the sage’s demand if he asks the king to send any one of them as per his own choice.

So to pre-empt this eventuality the king told the sage that all his sons are equally dear to him. That is, ‘Please do not ask me to send a replacement for Ram.’ Earlier the king has offered his own body as well as the ‘Pran’ to help sage Vishwamitra. Now he says that the sons are dear to him like his own ‘Pran’, and he cannot part with them. On the surface these two statements seem contradictory. They aren’t. What the king meant is this—‘Sage, for a man his sons are both a part of his body as well as his Pran. This is because the sons are produced through the medium of the body of the father, they are like an image of the father, and as a proof they carry the physical features of the father. The son carries the genes of the father, and in symbolic terms the father transfers his life forces into the body of the son at the time of the latter’s conception.

So here Dasrath clearly means that when he accompanies sage Vishwamitra himself, it will be equivalent to all the four sons going with the sage!

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 49, stanza no. 2.

²The two princes had not even attained sixteen years of age. They had never seen demons in life. Demons were no ordinary opponents or enemies. They were fearsome to look at; they were not only simply cruel but were ruthlessly blood-thirsty and man-eaters. To make young inexperienced princes face such creatures would be tantamount to willingly throwing them to hungry pack of wolves, into the jaws of certain death. The two princes would be scared to death by the mere sight of ferocious demons with a colossus body and horrifying countenance.]

सुनि नृप गिरा प्रेम रस सानी । हृदयँ हरष माना मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ७ ॥

तब बसिष्ठ बहुबिधि समुझावा । नृप संदेह नास कहँ पावा ॥ ८ ॥

sunī nr̥pa girā prēma rasa s̄anī. hr̥dayam̄ haraṣa mānā muni gyānī. 7.
taba basiṣṭa bahubidhi samujhāvā. nr̥pa sandēha nāsa kaham̄ pāvā. 8.

When the learned sage heard the king's words soaked in love and affection, he felt happy in his heart (i.e. was pleased internally)¹. (7)

Then sage Vasistha, the royal priest, intervened and he pleaded with the king (on behalf of sage Vishwamitra), explaining the things to him in various ways (i.e. from different angles, making him aware of the reality and enlightening him about the pros and cons of sending Lord Ram with Vishwamitra along with the consequences of stubborn refusal). This advice removed all doubts that the king had². (8)

[Note—¹Why was the sage 'happy' instead of getting annoyed and angry at the king for his refusal to give Lord Ram? Well, the sage was delighted because he agreed that one should indeed have this kind of love for the Lord, a love in which one prefers to die and suffer the horrible consequences of inviting curses and punishments but not yielding an inch as far as the object of his adoration is concerned. No matter what pressure is exerted on a true lover and devotee of the Lord, he would not abandon his commitment of dedication, love and devotion for his beloved Lord. A true devotee of Lord Ram will willingly face the wrath and ridicule of the world for his faith and devotion and love for the Lord. So the learned sage was pleased internally; he expected this sort of response from the king.

The sage knew the level of devotion and love the king had for the Lord because when he had done severe Tapa in his previous life as king Manu, he had spurned all offers of all sorts of boons for being success in the Tapa. Instead, he had asked Lord Vishnu that he wishes to have him as his son so that he can shower his love and affection on him in the best and the closest form ever possible. Only when the Lord becomes his physical son would Manu be able to play with him while the Lord frolics around him, lift the Lord on his lap and kiss him affectionately to his heart's content, eat with him and feed him with his own hands, and watch the Lord till his eyes were full of this divine sight. None of this is possible in a formal atmosphere of a man interacting with a God; it is possible only when the Lord becomes his physical son because all formalities and decorum are now erased. Now the devotee can love his Lord as much and in a way he wants just like a doting father loves and pampers his dearest son.

The wise sage empathized with the king and knew how difficult it is for a father to part with his beloved young sons, especially when he knows that they would have to face cruel savages and blood-thirsty enemies. Vishwamitra was also a father before he renounced his family life, and therefore he understood the pain, and hence the fear and reluctance, in the heart of Dasrath. Therefore he did not get angry on Dasrath for his refusal to allow the two brothers to accompany Vishwamitra.

At this point of time, sage Vasistha intervened. He explained the pros and the cons to king Dasrath, and managed to bring him around to the idea of agreeing to Vishwamitra's proposal.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 51, line nos. 1-4 also.

Sage Vasistha was not an ordinary priest; he was the son of Brahma the creator. He was highly respected, and when he intervened on behalf of sage

Vishwamitra, pleading with the king to accede to the sage's requests and send Lord Ram and Laxman with him as demanded by him, the king thought things over and decided that he must obey. This is because he had great faith in Vasistha and knew that the latter would never advise him anything that was detrimental for his welfare.

Further, if the king still refused then he would have crossed the red-line of indiscipline because he would have disobeyed two great sages. The king realised that he was about to commit the greatest mistake of his life by being irrationally stubborn, and the consequences will be disastrous. No one would protect him should the two sages become angry. The king realised that the anger of the two sages would be more ruinous than the wrath of all the demons taken together—for the simple reason that while he would have the protection of two powerful sages against the wrath of the demons if he agreed to their requests and pleased them, he would lose this protective shield if he remains stubborn. This would have horrendous consequences for the entire kingdom because his enemies would get the wind of this development and they would seize the opportunity to attack him from all sides. This is what exactly happened earlier in the case of another great king by the name of Pratapbhanu. He was an emperor and had all the kings subdued by force. But once, due to certain developments, the Brahmins had cursed him that his entire family would be ruined along with the kingdom. When the conquered kings got the wind of this development, they got a chance to attack Pratapbhanu because they knew that under this curse he is most certain to be defeated, and they would be victorious. As it happened, Pratapbhanu's kingdom was destroyed and he died in ignominy as a defeated and fallen emperor. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 153—to Doha no. 175. The curse and the destruction of Pratapbhanu's kingdom is specifically narrated in (i) Doha no. 173; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 174; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precedes Doha no. 175.

So, when Dasrath remembered this story—or rather we can safely presume that sage Vasistha must have reminded him of it because we read that he explained the things to the king in a variety of ways from different angles—he must have become terrified of the consequences of refusing to send Ram with Vishwamitra.

Vasistha must have also told him many other facts that the king had forgotten under the influence of Maya—(i) that in his previous life he was king Manu who had done Tapa to have Lord Vishnu as his son, and that therefore Ram was Lord Vishnu personified; (ii) that Vishnu had promised the Gods and the Earth that he will take birth in the household of the king of Ayodhya because he has already promised him to do so, and then he would eliminate the demons who had been tormenting them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 152; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187 respectively.

It must be noted that Vasistha must have taken the king to some private place to discuss the matter with him; he surely must not have done it in open court. It is a standard practice that a senior Authority consults his advisors in private, and not in full public view. Vasistha must have done it to avoid any unpleasant development should there be an argument between him and the king, and to avoid the chance of the assembly become aware of what he told the king; it was supposed to be a secret meeting between the king and his senior most advisor, sage Vasistha.

The sage would have also told him the good things that beckon Lord Ram if he goes to the forest with Vishwamitra—such as the sure chance of Vishwamitra

teaching Ram and Laxman the great secrets and the art of warfare. This would be a rare opportunity for the two brothers because Vishwamitra was the greatest expert of his time in this field. Besides this, great fame and praises awaited Ram and Laxman as they are sure to eliminate the demons because they have the protection of a renowned sage of the stature of Vishwamitra who was an invincible Kshatriya king before he attained the exalted stature of Brahmin-hood. This would help to establish Ram and Laxman as the greatest warriors of all times.

During this discussion sage Vasistha must have surely told king Dasrath—in order to convince him in favour of obeying Vishwamitra and to allay his fears about the safety of his two sons Ram and Laxman while they are in the custody of the sage—about the stupendous glory and the astounding mystical powers that Vishwamitra possessed.

Sage Vasistha saw suppressed anger in the eyes of Vishwamitra, though externally the latter kept his calm. So the former sage feared for the worst; he knew about the sort of anger that Vishwamitra had, and no one can be sure that he won't curse the king. Vasistha had not forgotten that it is the same Vishwamitra who had killed all his hundred sons in the fight for the Kaamdhenu cow without having any kind of regret. Therefore it was his moral duty as the royal priest to bring his patron king to his senses before disaster struck. Hence, Vasistha decided to talk with the king in private and explain to him the pros and cons of the situation.

Among other things, sage Vasistha reminded the king that his family is famous for its charitable nature and its reputation of honouring the word given to others. This time the king has promised a renowned sage that he will fulfill his desires, and now to go back on his own words of honour will boomerang upon him with full force of ignominy as well as the unforgivable sin of telling a lie to a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra.

Even if Vishwamitra excuses him, the laws of Dharma (i.e. the natural laws of righteous and proper conduct) will not spare him from punishment. The king is bound to suffer if he refuses to oblige sage Vishwamitra by sending Ram and Laxman with him.

Vishwamitra was a Brahma-rishi and not an ordinary hermit. If he is pleased, then great boons and blessings are in store for the king, his sons and the kingdom. On the other hand, if his displeased horrendous consequences loom on the horizon.

Vasistha must have told Dasrath—'Look king. You have become old; how long do you think you will protect your sons? Vishwamitra is a Brahm-rishi who will live for thousands and thousands of years. You are simply a king, and there are numerous kings like you on this earth, no matter how high and powerful you may think yourself to be. Your strength, powers and authority are no match for Vishwamitra. If he is pleased and extends his patronage and protection to your sons and the kingdom, take it from me oh king that you will be sure that no enemy, howsoever strong and powerful he may be, will ever dare to raise his eyes against you, your kingdom and your sons. On the contrary, if Vishwamitra is antagonized, and your enemies get the wind of it, then no power on earth would be able to shield you. And by the way remember this: don't expect much from me either for I am no match for Vishwamitra. I have myself lost a hundred sons in confrontation with him earlier. So beware of your actions. You will have no time to regret later on. Don't be foolish to let this opportunity slip your hand: Vishwamitra does not come requesting often at the drop of a hat like other Brahmins, he rarely ventures out of his hermitage. So this is a golden chance for you to get his blessings and come under his protection.

For the sake of your own good and welfare, don't lose this chance. Refusal to oblige the sage will invite horrible aftermath for you, I warn you; don't blame me later on.

And remember oh king the age-old wisdom: It is said that if a minister, a doctor and a guru (teacher, guide, advisor and moral preceptor) speaks to please his king, patient and disciple or follower respectively because of their powerful position and fear of retribution by annoying them if they don't like the advise given to them, then most certainly the latter would come to ruin (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 37). In other words, I must not become your 'yes man', but tell you what is good for you. You have appointed me as your royal priest and moral advisor, and I must do my duty by giving you a sane and wise advice, not something that you will like to hear but something I think is good for you. And in the present context, the best of your interests would be served by honouring the wishes of the great sage Vishwamitra.'

All these arguments made Dasrath change his mind. He realised his folly, and immediately rectified his wrong-doing by summoning Ram and Laxman and handing them over to sage Vishwamitra.]

अति आदर दोउ तनय बोलाए । हृदयँ लाइ बहु भाँति सिखाए ॥ ९ ॥
मेरे प्रान नाथ सुत दोऊ । तुहू मुनि पिता आन नहिं कोऊ ॥ १० ॥

ati ādara dō'u tanaya bōlā'ē. hṛdayam' lā'i bahu bhāmṭi sikhā'ē. 9.
mērē prāna nātha suta dō'ū. tumha muni pitā āna nahim kō'ū. 10.

The king then called¹ the two sons (Ram and Laxman) and affectionately clasped them to his bosom. Then he advised them in many ways² (like a loving father is expected to give guidance to his beloved sons before he sends them with someone else to an unknown place). (9)

The king told sage Vishwamitra—‘These two sons are like my Pran (i.e. they are extremely dear to me just like a man loves his life). Oh sage, you are no one else but their own father. They do not have anyone else to protect them (in the forest, away from the kingdom) except you (just like they have no one else to protect them except me while they are in the kingdom). [So, please take special care of them; give them the love a father gives his sons. They are now in your custody and guardianship. It's your responsibility to protect them and take care of their well-being.]’³ (10)

[Note—¹An interesting thing has happened here. The two princes were “called” by Dasrath. One calls someone if he is not present at the site. This is obviously not the case because when Vishwamitra had come the king had summoned all the four brothers to bow before the sage to pay respect to him. It would be extremely impolite if the brothers had gone away while Vishwamitra was still sitting in the royal court. So they stood in attendance near their father. If this is indeed the case, then where is the question of “calling” the two brothers?

The answer lies in the fact that Vasistha had taken king Dasrath aside into a private chamber to discuss the matter of his outright rejection of Vishwamitra's request for sending Lord Ram and Laxman with him as explained in a note to verse no. 8 above. When Vasistha was successful in convincing Dasrath that it will be proper to accept sage Vishwamitra's requests and send Ram and Laxman with him,

the king then “called” the two sons in that antechamber to confide with them his decision.

Remember: just a short time ago the king had flatly refused to send his two sons with Vishwamitra, and all the sons were witness to this refusal. Now suddenly the king has changed track; he is now willing to send them. So it was necessary to “call” the two sons aside in a private chamber to take them into confidence and to explain to them the reasons and circumstances of the change. It could not be done openly in public; it would make the king look ridiculous.

²Like sage Vasistha explaining to Dasrath the pros and cons of accepting the request of Vishwamitra, the king too explained the situation to his two sons in detail to convince them why he had changed his decision as well as to emphasize to them that this change is for their own good and welfare. This is what any other father would also do. After all, Ram and Laxman were not spoon-fed children; they had grown up and needed to be taken into confidence.

All the reservations and doubts that Lord Ram and Laxman might have had needed to be addressed and they be assured of protection and well-being when they were told to go with an unknown sage to an unknown place. This had to be done in private to maintain decorum of open court; everything cannot be discussed in public.

What might the king have told or advised them? Well, there may have been many things one can think of—he told his sons about the stupendous mystical powers of sage Vishwamitra, he advised them to treat the sage with the greatest of respect, to treat him like their own father, to obey his commands without second thoughts or questions, that they must think that they are going out on an excursion under the protection of a powerful guardian, sage Vishwamitra, and therefore they must enjoy every moment of it, that they will come back soon and so there is no need to feel homesick, and so on and so forth.

It was a moment of parting, so it is obvious and natural that at that moment the loving father would affectionately embrace his dear sons.

Then after all this, what happened next? All of them—i.e. Dasrath, Vasistha, Ram and Laxman—came out of the king’s private chambers back into the open court where Vishwamitra and others were waiting for them. This is obvious in the next line.

³Here, the wise king made Vishwamitra obliged to protect Lord Ram and Laxman by telling him that he is their father. Vishwamitra has already seen how much Dasrath loves them, so Dasrath implied that he expects the same love and affection from him for Ram and Laxman. A special bond was created now; a special responsibility befell on the shoulders of the great wise sage Vishwamitra.

Remember: It was not Dasrath coming to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra with a request to keep his sons with him to train them on the scriptures or to teach them the art and skill of warfare for which the sage was famous. It was the other way round—it was Vishwamitra coming to Dasrath with the request to send his two sons with him.

Therefore, Vishwamitra was morally bound to accept certain conditions which Dasrath made before he handed over his two precious sons to him. And this condition was so sublime, free from any deceit or conceit, as well as heart-touching that even if the sage had wanted he would not have been able to gather the moral and ethical courage to refuse—“to act like a father for two innocent, inexperienced princes, who had yet not seen or witnessed the harsh realities of life, while they were in his custody in a far away alien land and culture”.

Surely, Vishwamitra's heart must have boiled-over with surging waves of love and affection for the two brothers as soon as he heard the word "father" being used for himself. Not only this, whatever hidden annoyance he might have had for Dasrath for his initial reluctance also vanished in thin air.

A very interesting thing can be deduced on the sidelines of the text. There are ten (10) lines in this set of Chaupais—i.e. there are ten lines between Doha nos. 207 and 208. The significance is this: Lord Ram is the Supreme Being in a personified form; he is the cosmic Consciousness known as Brahm in the Upanishads. Without this Consciousness there is nothing in this creation; sans the Consciousness the creation is a lifeless void. That is, without Lord Ram the world is equivalent to 'zero'. Lord Ram is the only 'one' entity, as the cosmic Consciousness, that lends meaning and essence to this entire existence just like the case of the digit 'one' lending a ten-fold value to 'zero' when it is added to the latter. Otherwise, the 'zero' means nothing. Hence, from the metaphysical and spiritual angle these ten lines indicate that Lord Ram is the 'Pran' of this creation, he is the 'very life-force and essence' of this creation. If we look now about what Dasrath says for Ram, the meaning would become clear. The body of a man is useless if there is no life—or Pran—in it; so the world is also useless if one removes the Lord from it. And on the other hand, with the same logic, the world assumes manifold meaning and use for someone who sees the Lord everywhere just like the case of the digit 'one' being used to add value to the 'zero'.]

दो०. सौंपे भूप रिषिहि सुत बहुबिधि देइ असीस ।

जननी भवन गए प्रभु चले नाइ पद सीस ॥ २०८ (क) ॥

dōhā.

saumpē bhūpa riṣihi suta bahubidhi dē'i asīsa.

jananī bhavana ga'ē prabhu calē nā'i pada sīsa. 208 (a).

The king liberally blessed the sons (Lord Ram and Laxman) in various ways, and then handed over their charge (guardianship) to the sage (Vishwamitra). The Lord went to his mother's palace, bowed his head before her to seek her blessing and permission, and then started on his journey (with sage Vishwamitra). (Doha no. 208 Ka)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 51, line nos. 3-4 also.

The king invoked many Gods and blessed his two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman profusely with their Mantras. He silently prayed to all the Gods to look after the welfare of his two beloved sons whom he is parting with for the first time in his life.

The king had told sage Vishwamitra that now onwards he is their father. So in essence the king held the hands of Lord Ram and Laxman and handed over them to their 'foster-father'. It is a normal custom that when one hands someone who is very dear to him to another person, he blesses him all the best of wishes. It's a courteous way of parting with someone.

Lord Ram, and of course Laxman also though he is not specifically mentioned here, went to take formal permission of their respective mothers, Kaushalya and Sumitra respectively. Laxman is understood by default because the sage had asked for both the brothers.

The Lord hurried through his meeting with the mother lest she would ask him a lot of uncomfortable questions—such as where was he going, what was the purpose of the journey, etc. In such a case the Lord would be in a fix—he could not lie, and if he disclosed the truth that he is going out of the kingdom on foot with a sage to help him protect his fire sacrifice against ruthless demons, then there was all probability that the mother would throw tantrums and try to stop him, creating another scene much more theatrical than how the father behaved.

Another reason is that the Lord did not want to give the impression that he was unwilling to go with the sage and could not say ‘no’ to his father in open court, so he has gone to hide behind his mother, pleading with her to do something to prevent him from going. Delay would mean that some kind of brief or detailed discussion transpired between the son and the mother wherein the mother somehow reassured her son and encouraged him not to be afraid but be brave and go ahead.

So, the Lord wasted no time in the mother’s palace.

A question arises—why was the mother not reluctant to allow Lord Ram to go with sage Vishwamitra? When the sage arrived and expressed the reason for his visit it was done openly, and not secretly. So it is not possible that the queens had no knowledge of what the sage wanted. The answer lies in verse no. 17, stanza no. 5 of Baal Kand of Geetwali, another wonderful book written by Tulsidas. It is said there that once a soothsayer had come to visit Ayodhya. The queen mother asked him to tell her about the future of her son, the child Ram. The wise man had foretold her that one day sage Vishwamitra would come and take him away on the pretext of protecting his fire sacrifice, but that later on Ram will be married with Sita during the same visit. So the mother was in the know of the good things that were to happen. Therefore she was more than willing to give her permission.

Besides this, the mother had some idea of the mystical nature of her son, Lord Ram. Two specific incidents point to this fact. At the time of birth of Lord Ram, the mother had a clear vision of Lord Vishnu manifesting himself with all the dazzle and splendour of thousands of suns before her. She had been blinded, and had prayed to Lord Vishnu to discard this superhuman form and become an ordinary human child. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda that precedes Doha no. 192.

Another incident occurred when the Lord was still a child. One day the mother put him to bed in his crib and went to her deity’s worship room to offer prayers. She found that Ram was enjoying the food meant as offering for the deity. She rushed back to the crib and found him sleeping peacefully. The mother felt dazed; she rushed to and fro and could not believe her eyes or her self at the magical sight she saw. It was then that the Lord had shown her his true cosmic, all-pervading form of the ‘Viraat Purush’. Mother Kaushalya fell at the feet of Lord Ram and pleaded with him never to show these wonders to her as she feels terrified and would die of shock or would faint. In other words, mother Kaushalya knew who Ram actually was. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201—to Doha no. 202.

In contrast, Dasrath had no such divine experience. This is the fundamental reason why Dasrath was reluctant but the mother wasn’t to let Lord Ram accompany sage Vishwamitra.]

सो०. पुरुषसिंह दोड बीर हरषि चले मुनि भय हरन ।

कृपासिंधु मतिधीर अखिल बिस्व कारन करन ॥ २०८ (ख) ॥

sōraṭhā.

puruṣasiṁha dō'u bīra haraṣi calē muni bhaya harana.
krpāsindhu matidhīra akhila bisva kārana karana. 208 (b).

The two brave warriors (Ram and Laxman) were like lions among men. They cheerfully went with the sage to remove the cause of his fears.¹ *

The Lord (Sri Ram) is an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace. He is of a steady and resolute mind and determination. And he is the fundamental cause of the being (existence) of the whole world.² (Sortha no. 208 Kha)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 52, line nos. 1-2 also.

The Lord was about to face a huge army of ferocious demons. He was cheerful when he started on the journey with sage Vishwamitra though he knew fully well that he is not going on a picnic. This is why he is compared to a 'lion'. The lion is the king of the jungle; he is not terrified at the sight of a horde of wild elephants. A single lion can enter the horde of wild elephants fearlessly, jump on their back, and kill them one by one by tearing at their heads.

Likewise, Lord Ram was not scared at the prospect of having to face the demons. Hence, he is compared to the lion.

It is clearly said that there are 'two brave warriors who were like lions among men'. Hence, both Lord Ram as well as Laxman were equally strong and powerful.

²Three adjectives have been used here to qualify Lord Ram—(i) he is an ocean of mercy and compassionate, (ii) he is steadfast and resolute, and (iii) he is the cause of the coming into being of the world. All of them have relevance here.

The Lord will kill the demons not because he loves bloodshed or war, but he, being the Supreme Lord of this creation, has to ensure that all other creatures who are being endlessly and without rhyme or reason tormented and harassed by the cruel demons must be protected and allowed to live in peace. The demons won't mend their ways, so the Lord has no choice. But at the same time he will ensure that none of the demons killed by him go to hell because of their evil deeds. In other words, all the demons who Lord Ram killed got liberation and deliverance for their souls—that is, their souls were freed from the evil body of a demon and found emancipation and salvation. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 114.

The same idea is expressed in another context—when Lord Ram used to hunt, the deer or any other animals that were shot by the Lord left their gross mortal bodies and went to the heaven where the Gods live. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 205.

Lord Vishnu had come down to earth to eliminate the burden of demons, and the Lord will leave no stone unturned to accomplish his mission. He had declared this in no uncertain terms that "I raise my hands and declare that I will make the earth free from the tyranny of demons". Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9.

By emphasizing the Lord's cosmic form as the Supreme Being and Creator of the entire universe, it is stressed that the reader must mentally prepare himself to understand the hidden meaning and draw subtler inferences from the miraculous events that were about to unfold. Let the reader be warned that he must see the

incidents in the context of the fact that the protagonist is not an ordinary human being but the Supreme Being himself, for otherwise he would become highly skeptical about the authenticity and the truth of the magical events that will now happen in one after another.

*It ought to be noted here that king Dasrath did not send his army or even helpers with his sons whom he loved so much and for whom he was so much worried inspite of being fully aware that they are going to fight demons. Well, when sage Vasistha enlightened him about the astounding potentials and powers of sage Vishwamitra, the king became reassured about the security of his two sons. If he had proposed to send army troops with Ram and Laxman it would mean that he had no confidence on sage Vishwamitra's ability to protect the two princes. That would be highly offensive and insulting for the mighty sage. It would have had disastrous consequences: Vishwamitra, who was already smarting by the king's initial refusal to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him, would have been further angered and his emotions ruffled the wrong way. It would have inflamed his annoyance with the king, and it would have been tantamount to publicly undermining the sage's powers, strength and abilities. Therefore, the king was wise enough to keep quiet and not inflame things further by proposing to send troops or attendants with Ram and Laxman.

Another reason is that no warning should be given to the demons who were tormenting sage Vishwamitra that they are about to be killed. This was sure to happen if a huge army assembled at the hermitage of the sage. The demons would be forewarned, and they wouldn't come to attack. So how would they be destroyed? It was therefore prudent to keep a low profile so that they are trapped. With only two young boys guarding the fire sacrifice, the demons would have no suspicion of what was in store for them as compared to the sight of a huge army doing the job.

Though no dates are mentioned here, it is believed in tradition that sage Vishwamitra had arrived at Ayodhya on the 9th day of the dark lunar fortnight of the Hindu month of Aashwin which is the 7th month that commences when the sun enters the constellation of Virgo that corresponds to mid of September, and departed with the two brothers on 12th day of the month. In other words, he stayed at Ayodhya for 3 days.]

चौ०. अरुन नयन उर बाहु बिसाला । नील जलज तनु स्याम तमाला ॥ १ ॥

कटि पट पीत कसें बर भाथा । रुचिर चाप सायक दुहुँ हाथा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

aruna nayana ura bāhu bisālā. nīla jalaja tanu syāma tamālā. 1.

kaṭi paṭa pīta kasēm bara bhāthā. rucira cāpa sāyaka duhum' hāthā. 2.

[The wonderful beauty and the bewitching charm of the Supreme Lord's physical form are being described now.]

The Lord (Sri Ram) had bewitching red-coloured eyes. His chest was broad and his arms were long and muscular. His body and countenance were dark blue like the colour of the dark rain-bearing clouds (or even the blue-coloured lotus flower) as well as the Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant). (1)

He (Lord Ram) had the Pitambar and a quiver wrapped around his waist. [The ‘Pitambar’ is a yellow silk seamless cloth that is wrapped around the body, especially the lower half around the waist and downwards. The quiver filled with arrows was tied to the Lord’s waist.] He held a beautiful bow and arrows in his hands. (2)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 52, stanza nos. 2-3; verse no. 53, stanza nos. 1-2; and verse no. 54, stanza nos. 1-2 also.

The Lord’s eyes are red because he is angry that some kind of misery has befallen sage Vishwamitra that had forced the otherwise calm and dispassionate sage to come and ask for help and succour. The Lord was angry at the demons.

Lord Ram is a personified form of Lord Vishnu who in turn is the ‘Viraat Purush’, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being whose countenance is likened to the colour of the sky when it is filled with rain-bearing clouds. This is an important metaphor and a significant symbolism. It means that Lord Vishnu is as vast as the sky, being all-pervading and all-encompassing. Nothing exists beyond the limit of the sky, and so nothing exists outside the Lord. The sky is inherently dark in the cosmic background; we see it as blue because of the physical phenomenon of scattering of light of the sun in the atmosphere of the earth. So, since Lord Vishnu has appeared on earth as Lord Ram though the Lord has a cosmic existence, both the colours—‘dark’ and ‘blue’ are used to describe the colour of the Lord’s complexion in his manifestation as Lord Ram.

Comparison to the ‘rain-bearing cloud’ is made to emphasize that like this cloud which pours the life-sustaining rain upon the earth which would parch and all its creatures would die if there was no rain, Lord Vishnu too sustains and protects all forms of life in this creation.

The Tamaal tree (black catechu plant) is about 15-20 arms length in height. It grows on mountains as well as on the banks of river Yamuna. Its flowers are red in colour, and leaves dark green.

His chest and arms are well-formed and muscular; they are broad and long respectively indicating that he is a great warrior who can extend help beyond the scope of ordinary human beings. The ‘long arms’ of the Lord are especially indicative of this—that his reach is long and beyond measurement. The ‘broad chest’ is indicative of the fact that the Lord is very forgiving and compassionate; he welcomes all and accepts them, whether a friend or foe, with equal warmth but with one condition—and it is that the other person must surrender before the Lord with complete humility and dispassion.

Remember: The same Lord Ram who killed so many demons including their king Ravana had welcomed and accepted Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, as a member of his group when he had come to seek the Lord’s refuge and to surrender himself before him. At that time, Lord Ram had clearly declared that even if a creature had committed great sins, but if he comes to surrender himself and seek forgiveness from the Lord, he is most welcome and assured of the Lord’s patronage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42—to Doha no. 44.

The presence of the quiver, bow and arrow indicate that Lord Ram is ready for battle with the demons. The Pitambar is symbolic of the fact that he is none else but Lord Vishnu as this cloth is the trademark apparel of the latter.

The three armaments of Lord Ram are his bow, arrow and the quiver. They are said to be ‘beautiful’. What is the beauty of them? The beauty or the glory or the

special quality of the ‘bow’ is that it never gets broken, of the ‘arrow’ is that it never fails to hit the target, and of the ‘quiver’ is that it is never empty of arrows.]

स्याम गौर सुंदर दोड भाई । बिस्वामित्र महानिधि पाई ॥ ३ ॥

प्रभु ब्रह्मन्त्यदेव मैं जाना । मोहि निति पिता तजेउ भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

syāma gaura sundara dō'u bhā'ī. bisvāmitra mahānidhi pā'ī. 3.

prabhu brahman'yadēva mairm jānā. mōhi niti pitā tajē'u bhagavānā. 4.

Sage Vishwamitra got a matchless (spiritual and divine) treasure in the form of the two beautiful (handsome, enchanting, captivating and wonderful) brothers (Ram and Laxman) who were respectively of a dark and fair complexion¹. (3)

The sage told Lord Ram—‘Oh Lord, I have realised that you are a ‘Brahmanya-deva’ (‘prabhu brahman'yadēva’)—i.e. you are the Lord who is worshipped and adored by the learned Brahmins. In other words, you are a personified form of ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness of this creation. Oh Lord, you have left your father for my sake.

[So, I just can't find words to express my gratitude and thanks to you. I am extremely obliged and feel exemplarily happy and blissful. Thank you for giving me this honour!] (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 53, stanza no. 1, and verse no. 54, stanza no. 2 also.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and Laxman is an epitome of Bhakti (devotion) for the Lord. In the entire story of the Ramayan, Laxman has stood by the side of the Lord like a man's shadow follows him wherever he goes. Laxman symbolizes that spiritual character which stands for complete and unquestioned dedication and submission for the Lord no matter what happens. That is why Laxman is as beautiful as the Lord himself. Lord Ram held Laxman dearest to his heart, he could not live without him to give us a message that the only character that pleases the Lord is to have devotion for him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precedes Doha no. 61 in which Lord Ram clearly declares that his life is useless without Laxman just like a serpent is without his Mani (the gem-like effervescent sac present on the hood of a special category of serpents without which they can't see), and a bird is without its wings.

Lord Ram is the cosmic Consciousness known as the ‘Pran’ or the vital life sustaining force of creation. Without Pran and Consciousness there can be no life in this creation. What good is a dead world without life in it? What good is a granary without eatable grains in it; what good is a treasury without saleable and cashable assets in it which can be sold and cashed to meet the owner's financial needs in cases of emergencies?

Hence, both Lord Ram and Laxman are ‘beautiful’ and ‘like great treasury’ for the lucky sage Vishwamitra.

The two colours ‘dark’ and ‘fair’ represent Lord Vishnu and his divine conch. Vishnu has the dark colour of the sky, and his conch is of a white colour. The cosmic sound of OM is said to have its origin in this conch. The conch, known as a ‘Shankha’ in Sanskrit, is a priceless gem produced by the ocean at the time of its churning by the

demons and the gods in search of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity and bliss. The entire creation is said to have originated by the dynamic sound energy generated when this divine conch was sounded by Vishnu in his primary form as the Viraat Purush. In other words, while Lord Ram represents this Viraat Purush, Laxman represents the latter's conch which heralded the arrival of the Lord and the existence of his dynamic energy that would not only create but also sustain and protect the creation that was about to be created.

The word used in the text is 'Maha-Nidhi'. 'Nidhi' means an asset, and the prefix 'Maha' means 'great'. Hence, Lord Ram and Laxman are not merely assets for sage Vishwamitra, they are his 'great asset'. A man will never lose something that has immense value for him; sage Vishwamitra therefore decided that he has got the reward of all his Tapa in the form of the two brothers and he will protect them with his life. This is in answer to the king's request to take care of them like he was their own father.

Remember: King Dasrath had told the sage that he is willing to give him anything he wants—his whole treasury, his kingdom, cows etc., he even offered himself to the sage. But the king was unwilling to part with Ram and Laxman. True, because no one would willingly like to part with a 'Maha-Nidhi' that he values more than the rest of the assets he possesses. This 'Maha-Nidhi' which Dasrath held close to his heart has now been transferred to sage Vishwamitra. Hence it is apt to say that the great sage got the 'Maha-Nidhi' in the form of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman.

The very next verse tells us why Vishwamitra treated Lord Ram as a 'Maha-Nidhi'

²How did the wise sage realise that Ram was no ordinary prince but the Supreme Lord himself? Well, the hints are obvious. When the sage had disclosed that he wishes to take Lord Ram to fight ferocious demons who no one else dare face, an ordinary prince would have been scared out of his wits and tried all possible excuses to avoid going with the sage to willingly fall in this trap. It was no so with Ram; he cheerfully and excitedly accompanied the sage as if he was going out to play some game. The prospect of having to face blood-thirst demons did not terrify him a bit. This is clearly because Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, knew that this was the very purpose why he had come down to earth, and so he was rather itching for this opportunity rather than running away from it.

Say, what could the sage have done if Ram himself had expressed his incompetence at fighting the demons—which under no imagination was an easy job? But the Lord willingly and cheerfully joined the sage with great confidence, not even asking him how big the demon and his army was, or what would other support he can expect in the battle, or whether the sage would help in the battle, and so on. This filled the sage not only with great admiration and gratitude for Lord Ram but also signaled to him that what he had thought before coming to Ayodhya was indeed true—i.e. Lord Vishnu had come in the form of Lord Ram to destroy the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 206.

This subtle hint was not lost on the enlightened sage Vishwamitra. He immediately realised the secret truth behind the external façade of Lord Ram's appearance as an ordinary human prince. The Lord had some great job to do, and he could not afford to waste time to respect the lovable emotions of his father Dasrath who has had sufficient time to enjoy the bliss and ecstasy of being near to the Lord as he had desired in his previous life as king Manu who had done Tapa to have the Lord

as his son. The wheel of time waits for none; so Lord Ram cannot go on indefinitely playing the role of a child just to please the king when more important work was pending. Things had to be prioritized.]

चले जात मुनि दीन्हि देखाई । सुनि ताड़का क्रोध करि धाई ॥ ५ ॥
एकहिं बान प्रान हरि लीन्हा । दीन जानि तेहि निज पद दीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥

calē jāta muni dīnhi dēkhā'ī. suni tāṛakā krōdha kari dhā'ī. 5.
ēkahim̐ bāna prāna hari līnhā. dīna jāni tēhi nija pada dīnhā. 6.

While they were on the way to the sage's hermitage, the sage saw the demoness named Tadaaka. He showed her (pointed her out) to the Lord. As soon as Tadaaka heard the voice of the sage (pointed her out to Lord Ram), she attacked angrily.¹ (5)

The Lord (Sri Ram) took her life with a single arrow. Realizing that she was miserable and deserved mercy and compassion, the gracious Lord provided her soul the exalted stature of his own divine state—i.e. she was graced with liberation and deliverance, and her soul found emancipation and salvation.² (6)*

[Note—*Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/52, stanza no. 6; and verse no. 1/55, stanza no. 6.

¹The three—sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman—were talking with each other as they walked on the forest path. Their voices alerted Tadaaka who lunged forward to attack. As soon as she was within sight, the sage pointed her out to Lord Ram who wasted no time to shoot her down with a single arrow.

Remember: There was no time to procrastinate and shoot another arrow. So the Lord hit directly at her, killing her instantly.

²All the male and female demons had become such because of some curse they incurred due to their mischief or because of the evil deeds they had been doing in many of their previous lives. But their evil and sinful body harboured a soul, known as the Atma, which is inherently pure and which yearned to break free from this cage-like evil body of a demon. The Atma could not succeed in it because the body continued to perpetrate its evil deeds which resulted in continued accumulation of punishment in the form of continuity of the evil body of a demon. Had any one of these demons mended their way and shunned doing evil deeds, their souls would have found automatic liberation as per the laws of Nature. But unfortunately it was not to be so.

To prove this point that if the demons had had the wisdom to mend their ways in spite of living in the body of a demon they would have found auspiciousness and welfare for their souls, we have a sterling example in the Ramayan itself—he is Vibhishan, the demon brother of Ravana, the king of the demon race. Vibhishan abhorred the life of a demon; he lived a life of a religious man. He worshipped Lord Vishnu and repeated the great Mantra “Ram” as prescribed in the Upanishads. This word “Ram” is said to be a ‘Tarak Mantra’—i.e. it is a spiritual formula which helps the soul to attain freedom from the body and the world, and find emancipation and salvation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 6.

The result was that he did find succour in the holy feet of Lord Ram, and the eternal kingdom of Lanka after the sinful demons were eliminated. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 42—to Doha no. 49.

So, when Lord Ram killed the demoness Tadakaa, it was actually feeling her soul that was trapped in the evil body of a female demon. It was the physical gross body that was hit by the arrow, and not the subtle body which harbours the Atma. Once the gross body of Tadakaa, which is like a shell over the soft kernel, was ruptured by the Lord's arrow, the soft inner-self spilled out, and the soul living inside it found its liberation.]

तब रिषि निज नाथहि जियँ चीन्ही । बिद्यानिधि कहँ बिद्या दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
जाते लाग न छुधा पिपासा । अतुलित बल तनु तेज प्रकासा ॥ ८ ॥

taba riṣi nija nāthahi jiyam' cīnhī. bidyānidhi kahum' bidyā dīnhī. 7.
jātē lāga na chudhā pipāsā. atulita bala tanu tēja prakāsā. 8.

Then the great sage recognized who his Lord actually was¹.

Once this awareness dawned upon the sage, he gave (taught) all the knowledge that he had to the 'Lord of knowledge', the Lord who was himself a treasury of knowledge (bidyānidhi)². (7)

This divine eclectic knowledge that the sage imparted to Lord Ram incorporated, inter alia, such mystical abilities as being able to overcome thirst and hunger, and it empowered the possessor of the knowledge with stupendous strength, astounding valour and super-human powers so much so that his glory and dynamism effused from him like a halo that lent his body a divine glow³. (8)

[Note—¹The sage has already told Lord Ram that he has realised who he was a little while ago in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 209 above. So, what happened that he had to say that he recognized the Lord again for the second time? Well, this is the mysterious way Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers) acts. This Maya had the greatest of wise men held in its snare.

The sage had for some time forgotten the reality of who Lord Ram and Laxman were because of the fun, frolicking and child-like pranks that the two bothers had been playing with each other and with the sage while they were walking on the path to his hermitage. The sage's hermitage was far away from the kingdom of Ayodhya.

Remember: the place where they saw Tadakaa was beyond the boundary of Ayodhya—for the simple reason that its king Dasrath would not have allowed her, or for that matter any other demon, to survive within his realm. Sage Vishwamitra's hermitage was in Magadh, a great distance from the kingdom of Ayodhya. So the three—i.e. the sage and the two brother—had been walking together for quite some time. During this journey, the Lord and his brother had acted like ordinary children of their age to provide the great sage the benefit of a lifetime—the same benefit, the same happiness and the same bliss that the Supreme Lord had given Dasrath by becoming his son and playing around in his household.

Dasrath had told the sage that now onwards he is like their ‘father’. So, the sage too wanted to taste and enjoy the divine bliss that Dasrath may have got by acting as the ‘father’ of the Supreme Lord. Hence, the Lord decided to oblige the sage by casting his Maya upon the sage’s intellect and wisdom, eclipsing them. The fun and frolic and enjoyments of the journey have been very vividly described in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 53—56. Refer specifically to stanza no. 5 of verse no. 52 which says— “On the way, the two brothers would sometimes rush into a pond, or climb on a boulder to watch transfixed at the beauty of the forest dwelling birds, animals and trees. The sage got scared for their safety at this behaviour, and he would urgently call them back.”

Again, in stanza nos. 3-4 of verse no. 54 it is said that “The two boys make a lot of fun and do strange things as they walked along with the sage on the path. They pluck flowers and leaves from trees, and lotus along the banks of rivers and lakes on the way. Then they would drink cool water from these rivers and lakes and stand there relaxing for quite some time. They sit down on some boulders under the shade of some tree, adoring the scene, the shade and the soft breeze. The peacocks begin to dance when they watch the two brothers, and the birds such as the parrot and the cuckoo as well as the bumble bees sing merrily when they see the brothers.”

All these things mesmerized the sage so much so that for many days he forgot who Ram was just like Dasrath who forgot who his son Ram actually was.

Then the reality struck upon Vishwamitra like lightening when Tadaaka came howling for his blood. He was shaken out of his dream. That is why he ‘realised or recognized who Lord Ram was for the second time’.

It must be kept in mind that in order to understand the story of the Ramayan, we have to distil available information and peep behind the curtain to be able to visualize what actually must have been happening behind the scene. Though the outline of the story in all the versions of the Ramayan is similar, they differ in finer details.

²Sage Vishwamitra was an expert in the knowledge of warfare. He was a great warrior before becoming a sage. So, when he woke up from his day-dreaming he gladly initiated Lord Ram and taught him the intricacies of the science of warfare. This included the ability to overcome thirst and hunger because it was necessary for the future when Lord Ram and Laxman would have to spend long time wandering in the deep recesses of the forest during their exile and the journey that would culminate in the epic battle of Lanka where all the evil demons would be killed and eliminated.

Remember: This knowledge was transmitted to both Lord Ram as well as Laxman. The all-knowing sage was aware of the fact that Laxman would have to share the responsibility of eliminating the demons along with Lord Ram, so both had to be prepared for the job.

Since Lord Ram is the Supreme Being himself personified, it is said that he is the ‘treasury of knowledge’. But now the Lord had to act normally like a human being, and so some formality of giving and accepting knowledge had to be fulfilled.

Earlier, when Lord had grown up and reached the age when a boy is sent to a teacher for his education, the Lord was sent to the hermitage of sage Vasistha in a routine manner for his education. The Lord acquired knowledge rapidly in very short time. Really it is a wonder that the Lord whose breath constitutes the four Vedas, the primary scriptures that contain all the knowledge that exist in this creation, should learn and acquire knowledge from someone else, in this case his teacher sage

Vasistha. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 204.

³Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 55, stanza no. 6 also.]

दो०. आयुध सर्व समर्पि कै प्रभु निज आश्रम आनि ।
कंद मूल फल भोजन दीन्ह भगति हित जानि ॥ २०९ ॥
dōhā.

āyudha sarba samarpi kai prabhu nija āśrama āni.
kanda mūla phala bhōjana dīnha bhagati hita jāni. 209.

The sage submitted all his mystical weapons and the knowledge pertaining to their skillful use to the Lord¹, and then reverentially brought him to his hermitage².

At the hermitage, he offered edible roots and stems as well as fruits to the Lord with great devotion because he (the sage) had realised that the Lord is the best well-wisher of his devotees³. (Doha no. 209)

[Note—¹Here it means that the sage, who was renowned for his knowledge of the science and art of weapons and warfare, transferred that knowledge to Lord Ram and Laxman. It means that he taught them all that he knew in connection with the science and art of weapons, and how to invoke their Mantras and use them during warfare.

When Lord Ram had shot the ferocious female demon Tadaaka effortlessly with a single shot of an arrow, Vishwamitra was stunned and awe-struck. At that time he realised that Lord Ram was no ordinary warrior, for Tadaaka was a colossus demoness who resembled a flying serpent with thousands of hissing hoods.

This on the one hand filled the sage with great satisfaction that he was correct in thinking that Lord Ram would indeed be able to destroy the demons, but on the other hand he was humbled. Previously he had thought that there was no one on this earth who was more expert in archery and other forms of weaponry than he. But now it was like the case of a camel, which was proud of its tall frame, standing below a tall coconut tree or a lofty mountain whose summit kisses the sky. It was also like the case of a perennial river, which was proud of its endless content of water, seeing the mighty ocean.

The sage thought to himself that he be shamed. He calls himself a ‘sage’, but is so selfishly guarding the secret knowledge of weapons which ought to be used for the general good of the world by putting them into effect in the process of the elimination of the demons that would help to restore peace upon the earth. After all he knew that he won’t use them anytime because he had taken a vow to be calm and serene and never to be angry and hurt anyone. This was the vow that prevented him from destroying the demons who had been tormenting him and defiling his fire sacrifices.

The sage has explained the reason himself in Valmiki’s Ramayana where he said that he could not kill the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice because he had taken a vow of observing self-restraint, maintain mental calmness and serenity, and not being angry or wrathful on anyone while the sacrifice was in progress. If he punished the demons by cursing them, then it would violate this vow, and the whole exercise would be spoilt.

Refer: (i) Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 19, verse nos. 7-20; and (ii) Tulsidas' Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 47, stanza nos. 1-2, and verse no. 66, stanza no. 2.

Now therefore, sage Vishwamitra thought that it would be highly improper and selfish for him not to divulge this secret knowledge of weapons to Lord Ram and Laxman who he himself have selected to destroy the demon race. So he willingly taught the two brothers the secret of all the mystical weapons which could be immediately summoned and used at the opportune moment when they were required to be employed.

These weapons were not physical weapons, but mystical ones that relied on invocation of respective Mantras, which were magical formulas that helped the concerned weapon to present its self when the Mantra relevant to it was invoked.

Details of these weapons have been narrated in Valmiki's Ramayan, 1/27/4-21, and 1/28/4-12. These weapons could be invoked by their respective Mantras. Similarly, they could also be neutralized by Mantras which are outlined in Valmiki's Ramayan, 1/28/4-12.

A brief list of these weapons is as follows—Danda-chakra, Dharma-chakra, Kaal-chakra, Vishnu-chakra, Ayendra-chakra, Vajraastra, Lord Shiva's Shul, Brahma-shir, Ayeshik, Brahmaastra, the two maces named Modaki and Shikhari, Kaal-paash, Dharma-paash, Varun-paash, the two Ashanis named Shushka and Aadra, Shiva-astra, Narayan-aastra, Shikhar the weapon of the Fire God, Vaayabya, Hayashir, Kroncha, the two Shaktis, Kankaal, Mushal, Kapaal, Kinkini, Nandan, the weapon of the Gandharvas known as Moha-naastra, Praswaapan, Prashman, Varshan, Shoshan, Santaapan and Vilaapan weapons of Kamdeo, Durgharsha Maadan Maanav, Mohan, Taamas, Sauman, Samvarta, Mausala, Satya, Mayamaye, the Tej (energy) of the Sun God, Prabhu-astra, the weapon of the Moon God named Shishir, the ferocious Twaashtra, and Shiteshu.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 56, stanza no. 6 also.

³Sage Vishwamitra realised that Lord Vishnu had agreed to take so much trouble to come down to earth and walk all the distance to his hermitage just because he wishes to oblige his devotees. This was all the more evident to the sage when Lord Ram and Laxman had acted like innocent young boys, playing around and making fun as they wend their way from Ayodhya to the hermitage of the sage. The Lord did all this to satisfy the sage's desire to taste the happiness that a father gets playing with his sons. Hence, he offered great respect to the Lord because the Lord is a well-wisher of his devotees.

Refer note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 209 herein above.]

चौ०. प्रात कहा मुनि सन रघुराई । निर्भय जग्य करहु तुह जाई ॥ १ ॥
होम करन लागे मुनि झारी । आपु रहे मख कीं रखवारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

prāta kahā muni sana raghurāī. nirbhaya jagya karahu tumha jāī. 1.
hōma karana lāgē muni jhārī. āpu rahē makha kīm rakhavārī. 2.

At dawn, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty, Lord Ram, told the sage—‘Oh sage, go and do your fire sacrifice without having any fear whatsoever.’¹ (1)

All the sages collected together and immediately started making offerings to the sacred fire (i.e. they did ‘Homa’). Meanwhile, Lord Ram himself (of course, with Laxman by his side) stood at attention to guard the fire sacrifice². (2)

[Note—¹The sages of the hermitage were so terrified of the demons that they had suspended the fire sacrifices ever since their chief Vishwamitra had gone to fetch Lord Ram. So, the Lord told them to resume their religious observances and perform the fire sacrifice. Lord Ram’s confidence is self-evident.

One outstanding point to note here is that the Lord has virtually commanded the sages to go ahead with the fire sacrifice. He did not seek Vishwamitra’s orders or permission for this. Wonderful indeed! The Lord indicated that now he is in charge; that the rest of the sages are now in his safe-keeping; that he is the one who will decide what to do and what not to do like a true Lord and Master!

Well, the Supreme Lord was in his true form and mettle at that moment. He did not need anyone’s permission to fulfill the divine mandate for which he has taken birth as a human being. Rather, he is the one who would regulate how things would take shape now. The wise sages did not take this as an affront at all; rather they welcomed this confidence of Lord Ram and were reassured that they indeed were safe in his hands. This self-confident and robust attitude of the Lord instilled faith and confidence in the heart of even those sages who may have been skeptical in the beginning when they had first seen the two young princes who sage Vishwamitra brought from such great distance.

²The fire sacrifice is an elaborate affair, but making offerings to the fire is the main part of the sacrifice as this offering is received directly by the Fire God and other Gods who find sustenance from it.

Other preliminaries such as doing Japa (repetition of Mantras) and different incantations did not cause much problem for the sages because they could do it silently without alerting the demons. But whenever they offered anything to the fire, fumes arose in the sky, and this obviously signaled to the demons that the fire sacrifice was in progress. They immediately attacked. So this time, the sages came out in the open and offered the Homa to the sacred fire.

The word in the text is “Jhaari” which means to pour liquid from a pitcher with an elongated neck and a spout at its end. This indicates that they were in a great hurry as they were quickly making the offerings, almost pouring them as fast as they could into the fire pit, to be able to complete it before the demons arrived.

The sages were performing the fire sacrifice at the designated place, while the two brothers stood guard outside, ready for battle with their bows and arrows in hand.]

सुनि मारीच निसाचर क्रोही । लै सहाय धावा मुनिद्रोही ॥ ३ ॥

बिनु फर बान राम तेहि मारा । सत जोजन गा सागर पारा ॥ ४ ॥

पावक सर सुबाहु पुनि मारा । अनुज निसाचर कटकु सँघारा ॥ ५ ॥

sunī mārīca nisācara krōhī. lai sahāya dhāvā munidrōhī. 3.
 binu phara bāna rāma tēhi mārā. sata jōjana gā sāgara pārā. 4.
 pāvaka sara subāhu puni mārā. anuja nisācara kaṭaku samḡhārā. 5.

As soon as the demon chief named Marich (mārīca)—who was an enemy of the sages and harboured animosity towards them—heard this news, he collected his companions and attacked¹. (3)

Lord Ram shot at Marich with an arrow's shaft (i.e. an arrow that did not have its pointed tip). The thrust of the shaft flung him (Marich) a hundred Yujans away across into the ocean. [1 Yojan = roughly 8 miles on an average. There are different scales of measurements according to which 1 Yojan means 4, 8 or 16 miles.]² (4)

Then the Lord hit and killed Subahu with a fire-tipped arrow which burnt him to ashes³. Meanwhile, all the rest of the attacking demon army was killed and immediately eliminated by the Lord's younger brother (Laxman). (5)

[Note—¹Marich is said to have 'heard' and not 'seen' the sages doing the fire sacrifice. What does this mean? He was the chief commander of the demons who was appointed by their king Ravana of Lanka to prevent the sages of the area under his command from doing any religious activity. Being the chief commander, it is natural that he must have appointed demon guards and watches in different areas under his command to keep an eye on the developments and report to him at his command head-quarters should they observe any religious activity. So, as soon as the sages started offering Homa to the fire and fumes rose up into the sky, the demons who were appointed to watch these sages saw these fumes and immediately reported the matter to their chief, Marich. This is why Marich is said to have 'heard' and not personally 'seen' the sages doing the fire sacrifice.

So he collected his demon army and summoned his brother named Subahu (pronounced as Su-baa-hoo) to launch an attack.

²Lord Ram could have killed Marich with an arrow with a pointed tip. But the Lord needed him later on to accomplish the task of killing the chief of the demon race, their king Ravana. So he spared his life and merely flung him into the ocean.

When we read the story of the Ramayan we see that Ravana had approached Marich to force him to assume the form of a golden deer so that he can steal Sita from the forest. This would lead Lord Ram to Lanka in search of her, and will culminate in the epic war that would help the Lord to kill Ravana and the rest of the evil demon race.

Had Lord Ram killed Marich at this moment, the greater plan of the Lord would have suffered. If Marich survived, he is sure to inform his lord Ravana about the developments. If the entire demon army was killed there would be no one left to inform Ravana and hint him that his nemesis has arrived. Marich was the chief demon appointed by Ravana, so he had direct access to him. Therefore it was prudent for Lord Ram to spare him so that a direct message of challenge could be conveyed to Ravana, the demon king, that the days of his tyranny are over and that the sages would soon be able to perform religious duties without fear.

³Meanwhile it is significant that he killed Subahu by 'burning him'. In Hinduism, when a person dies his body is cremated in the fire, and it is reduced to ashes. This is

believed to free the soul permanently from the snare of having to enter the gross body once again. Cremation is performing the last rite of the dead with great respect. Usually, the son performs the cremation of his father.

Thus, by ‘burning’ the gross body of Subahu instead of simply killing him, the merciful Lord Ram had symbolically done his last rites by ‘cremating’ him himself. How wonderful! How fortunate was Subahu that his soul was liberated after being freed from the snare of the gross body of a demon when Lord Ram killed him with his arrow, and the gross body itself was ‘cremated’ by getting burnt at the hands of none else but the Supreme Lord himself.

Remember: Laxman is Lord Vishnu’s Shakti in a personified form. So, while the main job was done by the Lord himself, his Shakti finished the rest of the job for him. Hence it is said that the rest of the demons were killed by Laxman.

There is another reason why Laxman killed the demon army. Lord Ram wished to give the message that no one should under-estimate Laxman and his powers in their enthusiasm for honouring and praising Lord Ram. Laxman deserves equal praise and equal honour as the Lord himself.]

मारि असुर द्विज निर्भयकारी । अस्तुति करहिं देव मुनि झारी ॥ ६ ॥
तहँ पुनि कछुक दिवस रघुराया । रहे कीन्हि बिप्रन्ह पर दाया ॥ ७ ॥
भगति हेतु बहु कथा पुराना । कहे बिप्र जद्यपि प्रभु जाना ॥ ८ ॥

māri asura dvija nirbhayakārī. astuti karahim dēva muni jhārī. 6.
tahaṁ puni kachuka divasa raghurāyā. rahē kīnhi bipranha para dāyā. 7.
bhagati hētu bahu kathā purānā. kahē bipra jadyapi prabhu jānā. 8.

After the demons were killed, all the Gods and the sages who were involved in doing fire sacrifices (that were being constantly defiled by the demons) got together to offer their prayers to the Lord who is committed to make the Brahmins free from fear¹. (6)

The Lord of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram) stayed there for some more days to show grace upon the Brahmins and make them feel fortunate². (7)

During the time the Lord stayed there at the hermitage, the sages (Brahmins; ‘Bipra’) entertained him by narrating many devotional stories* from the Purans (ancient history of the Hindus) though the all-knowing Lord knew them³.

[This line can be interpreted in another way as follows—‘Out of their devotion and love for the Lord, the sages (Brahmins; ‘Bipra’) narrated many glorious stories from the Purans to him to entertain him though the Lord knew all of them.’] (8)

[Note—¹The Gods came first to offer their obeisance and prayers to Lord Ram, and they were followed by the sages who did the fire sacrifices. This is because the Gods were exceptionally happy as it was after a very long time that they could find nourishment by way of successful offerings that were made to the sacred fire by the sages. The offerings that are made to the sacred fire of the sacrifice give sustenance to the Gods. The Gods were eternal enemies of the demons. This was one main reason why the demons defiled the fire sacrifices so that the Gods would be starved of food and become weak and unable to oppose them.

The sages became enemies of the demons because they performed fire sacrifices in which they offered food to the Gods, something which the demons wanted to stop. These facts are clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 181 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

Lord Vishnu had earlier promised the Gods, the sages, and Mother Earth that he would take birth as Lord Ram to give protection to them as well as the Brahmins who were being endlessly tormented by the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

Hence, both the Gods and the sages performing fire sacrifices assembled to say their thanks to Lord Ram and Laxman after the demons were eliminated.

²The Lord stayed for some more days to ensure that no new attacks from the demons are made. He wished to secure the area. The sages harboured doubt that though Marich and Subahu were killed, there was all probability that their king Ravana would order stronger demon force to attack and kill them the next time. So, they must have requested the Lord to stay for some more days to protect them and guard the fire sacrifices.

Now, the question arises: why did the demon king Ravana not order an attack on the hermitage again? Well, there are many possibilities. One is that all the commanders whom Ravana may have asked to go and take revenge must have pleaded that they be excused because all of them were terrified about their own safety after having learnt the fate of Marich, Subahu and their army. When Ravana apprehended a virtual mutiny or revolt in the ranks of the demon forces if he insisted and threatened them much, he decided to keep quiet and wait for an opportunity to take revenge himself later on. Another reason may have been that no one might have gathered enough courage to go and inform him directly about the elimination of the demon army at sage Vishwamitra's hermitage for fear of his own life because the angry Ravana might have killed the informer in a fit of rage. So everyone avoided him. That is why no one came to attack the sages again.

According to Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Lord Ram and Laxman stayed at the hermitage for three more days. On the fourth day, sage Vishwamitra asked Lord Ram to accompany him to witness the bow breaking ceremony at Janakpur. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 11-12.

By staying for some more days instead of immediately returning to Ayodhya after having successfully finished the work for which he was brought to the hermitage by sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram seemed to oblige the sages present there who were very eager to have the Lord in their midst for some more days in order to enjoy his divine and auspicious company. It would have been highly selfish and un-courteous for the sages to have allowed Lord Ram and Laxman to go back from their hermitage immediately after their objective of having the demons killed was accomplished. No good host would do that; it's against the principles of hospitality.

Besides this, the sages had by now realised that Lord Ram was no ordinary prince but some Divine Being, though they might not have been aware of the Lord's true identity as much as Vishwamitra was. So therefore, they must have requested him to give them the privilege of his company for some more days because no one knows that such a chance would ever come again in their lives or not.

³Some way had to be found to pass time away in a positive manner, and so instead of idling it away and gossiping unnecessarily, the sages decided to narrate many interesting stories from ancient history that laid stress on devotion, love and

submission for the Lord God as it helped in their spiritual pursuit as well as passing time constructively. The sages would always talk about things that had some spiritual quotient in it; they would not waste time in worthless chatter or gossip.

Lord Ram had obliged the sages by coming all the way from Ayodhya to their hermitage to protect their fire sacrifice. So, now these sages felt that they must do something for him to show their gratitude and thanks to the Lord. For sages and seers the only way to do this is to give a discourse on the scriptures. They selected devotional stories instead of hard-core philosophy because they thought that stories are much more entertaining than philosophy. They had started treating Lord Ram and Laxman as their sons, like the case of sage Vishwamitra.

It is said in Adhyatma Ramayan that during this period sage Vishwamitra had affectionately fed Lord Ram sweet fruits and entertained him with stories from the Purans. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 11.

Though the Lord knew these stories he still listened to them patiently and politely to oblige the sages and keep them happy. A similar thing has happened when sage Vasistha narrated stories from the Purans and the Vedas. The Lord listened silently and attentively though he knew all of them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 26.

The actual intent of the sages in telling these stories to the Lord was to express their own devotion and submission for him through the medium of these stories. This is the reason why the Lord heard them politely to indicate to these aged sages that he has got the hint.

*Remember: Lord Ram has himself declared that out of the many forms that Bhakti (devotion) takes, the first is to have company or communion with pious people and saints, and the second it to have deep interest in hearing and telling devotional stories related to me. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35.

Both these conditions are met here—there is a community of sages who pious people, and there is narration and listening of devotional stories. This is why the word “Bhakti” is used first in this verse.]

तब मुनि सादर कहा बुझाई । चरित एक प्रभु देखिअ जाई ॥ ९ ॥

धनुषजग्य मुनि रघुकुल नाथा । हरषि चले मुनिबर के साथ ॥ १० ॥

taba muni sādara kahā bujhā'ī. carita ēka prabhu dēkhi'a jā'ī. 9.
dhanuṣajagya suni raghukula nāthā. haraṣi calē munibara kē sāthā. 10.

Then the sage (Vishwamitra) respectfully explained to the Lord (Sri Ram) that a wonderful and rare event is taking place (at Janakpur), and so let us go and see it. (9)

When the Lord of the Raghu's clan (i.e. Lord Ram) heard of the ‘Dhanush Yagya’ (the bow-breaking ceremony), he gladly accepted the offer to accompany the sage there. (10)

[Note—The Lord had stayed in the hermitage for three days, and when he was sure that there was no more threat from the demons, he sought permission from sage Vishwamitra to go back home. It was ‘then’ that the sage told him about the rare

competitive event taking place at Janakpur where Lord Shiva's bow is to be lifted, strung and broken to determine who is the greatest warrior of that time in the world. It was to be like a modern-day Olympics. All the great kings and princes of the earth would assemble, and each of them would try his strength on the bow.

Surely there must be some great trophy reserved for the winner. In all probability the sage did not disclose that this 'trophy' would be the marriage of the winner with king Janak's daughter Sita. Why? Because if Lord Ram would have agreed to accompany the sage upon learning this, it would have meant that the Lord secretly wished to participate in the bow breaking ceremony and took chance at marrying Sita. Or that the Lord accepted to go to Janakpur to attend the ceremony because he secretly wished to see Sita and explore the chances of his marrying her by taking part in the bow-breaking ceremony. The wise sage did not wish the skeptical and suspicious world to get a wrong signal, to unnecessarily interpret things wrongly and doubt the immaculate and impeccable noble character of Lord Ram and Laxman.

The question arises, how did sage Vishwamitra come to know of the bow-breaking competition at Janakpur? Well, the answer is that when king Janak decided to host the bow-breaking ceremony, he had sent invitation to all the famous people of that time. The hermitage of sage Vishwamitra was not very far from Janakpur, and he was the most famous Kshatriya-turned-Brahmin sage of his time. So it is natural that the king's messengers must have arrived to invite the sage to the bow ceremony. The sage would never have gone there uninvited.

Further, the sage had the mystical power to see future events and developments. He knew that Lord Ram and his other brothers were destined to marry at Janakpur. So instead of making a polite excuse to the invitation of Janak, he accepted it and persuaded Lord Ram to come with him.

Ayodhya was far away, and the sage did not think it proper to allow the two young boys to go back unescorted. Suppose we do not take into consideration the fact that Vishwamitra had foresight to see the future course of developments at Janakpur where Lord Ram would break the bow and marry Sita as well as establish himself as an all-time great warrior, then it is logical to assume that he might have guessed that king Janak must have surely invited king Dasrath to the ceremony since he has invited all the great king for the ceremony. In that case, the sage planned, he will hand over Ram and Laxman to their father Dasrath there. Well, this is a possibility.

Then he might have motivated Lord Ram to accompany him to Janakpur by telling him that he will be seeing many new fascinating places, and that he would have the chance to witness a wonderful spectacle like the one he had never seen before—the breaking of a formidably strong bow. Like any other young prince of his age, the Lord readily agreed. He also agreed because he felt naturally excited about having a chance to witness a stiff competition, news that would automatically enthuse a brave warrior. The breaking of a huge bow was not an ordinary event, so the Lord enthusiastically agreed to accompany the sage to the venue.

All these things must have come into play simultaneously in a greater or lesser degree when sage Vishwamitra 'explained' to Lord Ram to come with him to attend the bow-breaking ceremony.

How do we know that it was a bow 'breaking' ceremony? Well, in ancient times when a great event took place that was attended by rituals and ceremony, and attended by a large number of invited guests, it was called a 'Yagya'. A special name was assigned to a particular type of Yagya—e.g. the 'Ashwamedha Yagya' meant the horse sacrifice where a horse was sacrificed at the end of the ceremonies. So, when this ceremony is called a 'Dhansuha Yagya' it clearly implies a ceremony where a

bow is to be sacrificed. [‘Dhanusha = a bow; ‘Yagya = sacrifice.] And a bow can only be sacrificed by ‘breaking it into two’ because it would be tantamount to killing it.

Another reason for calling this particular ceremony a ‘sacrifice’ is that Janak’s daughter Sita was to be married to the successful contender. Giving away one’s daughter in marriage to the groom is regarded in Hinduism as a ‘Daan’ or a self-less gift. It is called ‘Kanya Daan’. [‘Kanaya’ = a virgin girl; ‘Daan’ = selfless gift or donation.]

In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, sage Vishwamitra has told Lord Ram in clear terms that Lord Shiva’s big and wonderful bow is kept with king Janak, and the king would welcome the Lord warmly and show great respect to him. So he must come along with him. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 13-15; Canto 6, verse no. 1.

The sage then told Lord Ram that after watching this fascinating event at Janakpur, he can return to Ayodhya straight from there. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 2.

In this Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas it is clear that only sage Vishwamitra had gone to Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman; there is no mention of any other sage accompanying them. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 212. This is also evident here in the present Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 210 which we are currently reading.

Later on also when they arrive at Janakpur, all narration of the subsequent events there refer only to sage Vishwamitra. Refer for instance, Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 214; Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 239.

But in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas as well as Valmiki’s Ramayan it is said that a group of sages had accompanied Vishwamitra when he went to Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 14; and (ii) Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 31, verse no. 14.]

आश्रम एक दीख मग माहीं । खग मृग जीव जंतु तहँ नाहीं ॥ ११ ॥

पूछा मुनिहि सिला प्रभु देखी । सकल कथा मुनि कहा बिसेषी ॥ १२ ॥

āśrama ēka dīkha maga māhīrī. khaga mṛga jīva jantu taham̃ nāhīrī. 11.
pūchā munihi silā prabhu dēkhī. sakala kathā muni kahā bisēṣī. 12.

On the way, they saw a lonely and unkempt hermitage that appeared to have been abandoned long ago. It had no animals, no birds, no insects, or any other sign of life in it.¹ (11)

The Lord (Sri Ram) saw a boulder or a slab of stone there, and out of curiosity, he asked the sage (Vishwamitra) about it. The sage narrated to him the entire story related to this stone boulder or slab.² (12)

[Note—¹The surrounding area was full of vibrant forest life—greenery, plants, birds, animals, insects etc. In this pleasant surrounding was this particular forlorn, decrepit and untended place which looked like it was a hermitage long ago.

As to the location of this hermitage, Adhyatma Ramayan says it was located on the banks of river Ganges. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 14.

According to Valmiki's Ramayan, it was located within the realm of the king of Janakpur. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 48, verse no. 11.

²The presence of a slab or a boulder in the center aroused the curiosity of Lord Ram because it had a certain aura of divinity or holiness about it that attracted his attention. Perhaps it was shaped like some figurine representing some person who had been turned into a stone. Amidst the ruins, this figurine was unexpected. So the Lord was naturally curious to know about its origin.

When he asked sage Vishwamitra, the learned and compassionate sage told him the whole pathetic story of how Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, had been turned into a stone by a curse. This story is narrated in (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-34; and (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33.

When Lord Ram heard the story, he was full of sympathy for Ahilya because she was not at fault, and whatever sin or error she committed was out of ignorance of the truth and unawareness of the reality. But she had already suffered for her follies more than enough and has done enough of penance to repent for her sins. So therefore she deserves pardon and reprieve. Lord Ram is an epitome of mercy and compassion; he just could not turn his head away and walk on, leaving the poor Ahilya suffer any longer.

So naturally he sought to know from the sage how can she be redeemed. The wise sage then told him that when sage Gautam realised that Ahilya was not at fault after learning the truth of how the events unfolded, he had told her that though once the curse is made it cannot be taken back, but however he blesses her that she will find liberation from her cursed stone-like form when she would be touched by the holy dust of the feet of Lord Ram. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 31-32.

So the Lord decided to put his holy and divine feet on the stone so that Ahilya is freed from her curse. This is narrated below in Doha no. 210 and the following Chanda. It ought to be noted that it was out of his merciful nature that Lord Ram decided to put his foot on the stone—refer Doha no. 211 below.

The Lord must have contemplated whether it would be proper and right to touch Ahilya with his foot. Normally this would be improper because she was the wife of a great sage, Gautam. But then the Lord realised that if he acted in a too formal way and tried to make excuses by saying that he cannot put his foot on a sage's wife, it would be against his vows of providing liberation and deliverance to those who suffer and are waiting for his mercy.

There were so many stones on the path on which the Lord walked; did he not touch them? So how does it matter if he touched one other stone if this act helped to provide immense relief to a suffering soul?

Then there were other factors in favour of his decision of touching that boulder of stone with his foot. For one, this is what sage Gautam had himself wanted—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 31-32; Valmiki's Ramayan, Canto 48, verse nos. 30-32. For another, sage Vishwamitra too wants him to touch the stone to liberate Ahilya—refer: (i) Doha no. 210 below. (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 35-36; (iii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Canto 49, verse nos. 11-18.

The story of Ahilya in brief is as follows—She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world known about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.

The story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated by Goswami Tulsidas in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60; (c) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 39-40; (d) Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 19-61; and (e) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, from Sarga/Canto 48, verse nos. 14-33—to Sarga/Canto 49, verse nos. 1-21.]

दो०. गौतम नारि श्राप बस उपल देह धरि धीर ।

चरन कमल रज चाहति कृपा करहु रघुबीर ॥ २१० ॥

dōhā.

gautama nāri śrāpa basa upala dēha dhari dhīra.
carana kamala raja cāhati kṛpā karahu raghubīra. 210.

The sage advised Lord Ram—'Oh Raghubir (the brave warrior of king Raghu's dynasty)! The wife of sage Gautam has lived here patiently in the form of a stone due to a curse cast upon her, expecting that one day she will be freed from this curse when the dust of your holy feet will touch her. So she deserves the holy dust of your feet, and so please be merciful upon her and remove the curse from which she has been suffering for so long. (Doha no. 210)

[Note—Refer to the detailed note appended to Chaupai line nos. 11-12 herein above.

Liberation of Ahilya has been beautifully narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57—59.]

छं०. परसत पद पावन सोक नसावन प्रगट भई तपपुंज सही । १ ॥
देखत रघुनायक जन सुखदायक सनमुख होइ कर जोरि रही ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

parasata pada pāvana sōka nasāvana pragaṭa bha'ī tapapunja sahi. 1.
dēkhata raghunāyaka jana sukhadāyaka sanamukha hō'i kara jōri rahī. 2.

As soon as Lord Ram's holy and divine feet, which are all-purifying and destroyer of all sorrows and miseries, touched the stone, she (Ahilya) revealed herself in her true glorious form that was like a glowing image of Tapa (austerity and penance). (1)

When she observed that Raghunayak (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty) was standing in front, she immediately stood up and folded her hands reverentially. (2)

[Note—The touch of the holy feet of Lord Ram removed the stubborn effects of the curse that had turned Ahilya into a lifeless stone. They sort of washed off the curse that had covered Ahilya and made her a lifeless being. They purified her soul and freed it from the miserable condition in which it had got trapped and remained so since thousand of years.

The vow of chastity of Ahilya had been violated by Indra without her knowledge. This had made her 'impure'. So when she was touched by Lord Ram's feet which have the power to purify the most impure, she was now 'purified'.

She had been miserable and suffered horribly as a stone. So when Lord Ram touched her with his feet, this misery and suffering also vanished.

As soon as the curse was removed, Ahilya could see and feel. It was like she had been in an unconscious state for so long, and had suddenly regained consciousness. Life sprung back into her gross body. Then she slowly opened her eyes and saw a marvelous sight—her redeemer Lord Ram was standing right in front, smiling cheerfully down at her. Overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, she stood up and brought her two hands together, with palms touching each other, as a gesture of extreme reverence and submission for the Lord.

Sage Valmiki has described in his Ramayan that inspite of turning into a stone, Ahilya was deemed to be doing a form of Tapa which was so severe that her form glowed like a fire. Perhaps this is the reason which attracted Lord Ram's attention to her. Refer: Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 49, verse nos. 13-16. She looked like the flame of a fire that is covered with smoke; or like the moon that is obscured by the cloud or fog; or like the sun that is seen in murky water.

Therefore, as soon as this curse-like smoke was removed, the flame leapt back to life; as soon as the cloud was removed the moon appeared with all its beauty; and as soon as the sun was seen in clear water, its reflection turned splendidous as the sun in the sky.

In Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60, Tulsidas has wonderfully described the restoration of Ahilya into her original divine form of unmatched beauty and radiance by the touch of Lord Ram's holy feet.]

अति प्रेम अधीरा पुलक सरीरा मुख नहिं आवड़ बचन कही । ३ ॥
अतिसय बड़भागी चरनन्हि लागी जुगल नयन जलधार बही ॥ ४ ॥

ati prēma adhīrā pulaka sarīrā mukha nahim āva'i bacana kahī. 3.
atisaya baṛabhāgī carananhi lāgī jugala nayana jaladhāra bahī. 4.

She was so overwhelmed with love, devotion and gratitude for the Lord that her entire body was thrilled beyond measure, covering it with goose-flesh. She was so dumbfounded and stunned that she could not utter a word. (3)

She regarded herself as being extremely fortunate and lucky. She fell at the holy feet of Lord Ram with tears streaming down from both her eyes. (4)

[Note—It was the most happy moment in the life of Ahilya. The Supreme Lord was standing right before her eyes, her curse of ages was wiped clean, her torments and miseries vanished, and she was restored to her original radiant divine form as a great sage's wife. What more could she want or expect.

She was overjoyed and ecstatic. She fell at the Lord's feet to thank him. Tears gushed out of her eyes in sheer joy and happiness. It was a spontaneous emotional reaction which she could not hide.

She wanted to thank the Lord, but her throat was choked and she could not speak anything. She was shaking with emotion and her knees buckled, so she fell at the Lord's feet to express her surrender and seek the Lord's blessing as well as forgiveness for all her past mistakes. She also fell at his feet to indicate that she is not able to use words to pray to him or thank him, and is hugely obliged to him.

Falling at someone's feet is a sign of greatest respect and absolute surrender.]

धीरजु मन कीन्हा प्रभु कहँ चीन्हा रघुपति कृपाँ भगति पाई । ५ ॥
अति निर्मल बानीं अस्तुति ठानी ग्यानगञ्ज जय रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

dhīraju mana kīnhā prabhu kahum' cīnhā raghupati kṛpām' bhagati pā'ī. 5.
ati nirmala bānīm astuti ṭhānī gyānagamya jaya raghurā'ī. 6.

Ahilya recovered her poise, became calm, and gathered courage in her heart. She recognized the Lord, and by his grace Bhakti (devotion) sprouted in her.¹ (5)

She decided to offer prayers to the Lord in a very sweet voice that lacked any kind of pretensions and deceit. She said—'Oh Lord of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram). Glory to you! You are accessible only through spiritual knowledge². (6)

[Note—¹In the initial phases she was absolutely shocked and dumbfounded. What had happened was beyond her imagination. This is because after having lived as a stone for thousands of years and remaining submerged in deep meditation during this long time, all her senses had become numb. She was completely unaware of her surroundings. Then suddenly she gained consciousness as if person who had been in coma for a long time suddenly regains his awareness of the world and retrieves his

senses and begins to see, feel, hear and move. She was too stunned to react. This is clear from reading line nos. 3-4.

But after some time when the first moments of shock and disbelief passed over, she was able to regain her senses and poise. She thought to herself that she must at least offer her thanks to her redeemer and saviour, the Lord whom, she recollected, her husband Gautam had told her about. Gautam had told her that Lord would one day come and touch her stone-like form with the dust of his holy feet, and that then she would be freed from her curse. Refer: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 30-32; and (ii) Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 48, verse nos. 30-32. So since this has actually happened, Ahilya deduced that the person standing before her must surely be Lord Ram. This is how she ‘recognized’ the Lord.

And when a devotee recognizes his beloved Lord, what happens? A huge wave of devotion, love and submission sweeps the person off his or her feet. So, as soon as Ahilya realised that Lord Ram, the Supreme Lord, is standing before her, she was blessed by devotion and love for the Lord in her heart.

²It is significant to say that the Lord is known by spiritual knowledge. Ahilya is referring to the teaching of the Upanishads that stress that in order to have knowledge of Brahm one must have knowledge of the Absolute Truth and Reality through self-knowledge and realisation of the Atma, the soul, which is pure Consciousness residing in one’s own heart, in one’s own inner-self. This knowledge is the true knowledge of Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness and the only Absolute Truth and Reality in creation.

Hence, the idea is that the real ‘Ram’, the real Supreme Being who is the redeemer and saviour of the devotee’s soul, the entity that is worthy of adoration and worship is the pure conscious supreme Soul that resides in the physical gross body that was visible to the world in the form of a prince of Ayodhya known as Lord Ram.

The ‘physical Ram’ known as the prince of Ayodhya, the son of king Dasrath and a great warrior of the Raghu dynasty, acted like any other human being, so one must not be misled by his worldly deeds and actions to get confused and harbour doubts about the Lord’s divinity and holiness. The ‘actual Ram’ lived hidden behind the external façade of the gross body in the form of an invisible, subtle and sublime entity known as the Supreme Atma, the Supreme Being, who is the redeemer and saviour of the world. This ‘real Ram’ is nothing but pure cosmic Consciousness in a personified form, whom the Upanishads and the Vedas and other scriptures refer to as ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being.]

मैं नारि अपावन प्रभु जग पावन रावन रिपु जन सुखदाई । ७ ॥

राजीव बिलोचन भव भय मोचन पाहि पाहि सरनहिं आई ॥ ८ ॥

mairṁ nāri apāvana prabhu jaga pāvana rāvana ripu jana sukhadāī. 7.

rājīva bilōcana bhava bhaya mōcana pāhi pāhi saranahim āī. 8.

Ahilya prayed—‘I am an impure woman, and oh Lord you are the purifier of the whole world.¹ You are an enemy of Ravana² (the demon king) but a friend of all other creatures who are your devotees. (7)

Oh Lord with a lotus-like eyes, and a remover of the formidable fear arising from this horrifying world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death with their attendant horrors³. I have come to seek refuge at your holy feet. Please save me; please protect me. (8)

[Note—¹As soon as Ahilya recollected her poise, she remembered the events of her past life. This is, as we have seen above in the note appended to line no. 5, the reason why she could recognize Lord Ram. Therefore, she also recollected why she was cursed in the first place; her chastity had been violated. This is the reason why she accepts that she is an impure woman. But immediately she says two things—one, that Lord Ram is the purifier of the world, and two, that she is seeking humble refuge in his feet.

To wit, she pleaded with Lord Ram that though it is undeniable that she is impure, but that is the thing of the past. Now since she has come seeking surrender and refuge, the Lord being the purifier of the world is morally bound to wash her clean of her past sins and accept her as his devotee and grant her his fellowship.

Remember: This is Lord Ram's own declaration and vow that no matter how sinful a person is, if he comes to surrender before the Lord with a true heart then the Lord will willingly accept him and forgive all his misdemeanours. The Lord had made this clear in the context of Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, when the former came to seek refuge with the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 43—44.

²In all probability the fact that Lord Ram would kill Ravana when he goes to the forest to fulfill all the works of the Gods, and once this is accomplished, all the creatures would be able to live in peace wherever they lived was known to her. This is because all the great sages of the time knew of these developments—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precedes Doha no. 285 where it is said that all these future developments had been predicted by sage Yagyawalkya and learned sage's words cannot go in vain. So Ahilya's husband, sage Gautam, must surely have known it, and he must have told her this sometimes during their interaction.

³Lord Ram is the supreme Brahm himself personified. As such, he is indeed the supreme liberator of all the creatures from the endless cycle of birth and death.]

मुनि श्राप जो दीन्हा अति भल कीन्हा परम अनुग्रह मैं माना । ९ ॥

देखेउँ भरि लोचन हरि भवमोचन इहइ लाभ संकर जाना ॥ १० ॥

muni śrāpa jō dīnhā ati bhala kīnhā parama anugraha maim mānā. 9.
dēkhē'um̃ bhari lōcana hari bhavamōcana iha'i lābha saṅkara jānā. 10.

The sage (Gautam) had done a great favour upon me by cursing me, because it is due to that curse that I am able to have your divine communion and vision today. (9)

[Otherwise, where was it ever possible?] It is due to that curse that today I feel myself so fortunate that I can see Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu)¹ till my eyes are completely filled with this divine sight. Even Lord Shiva (who is considered as the most enlightened God) has regarded this (vision of Lord Vishnu in the personified form as Lord Ram) the greatest good fortune and the most precious gift for the eye². (10)

[Note—¹This shows that Ahilya had realised that Lord Ram is no one else but Lord Vishnu himself personified. Lord Vishnu is the cosmic invisible form of the Supreme Being, and in that form Vishnu is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the colossal, the all-encompassing, the all-pervading cosmic invisible form of the Supreme Being, the form that whose head is the heaven, the body is the sky, and the foot is the earth, the form in which each hair represents a world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 192; and (ii) Doha no. 201—to Chaupai line no. 2 which precedes Doha no. 202.

Mother Kaushalya had the divine vision of Lord Vishnu in all his splendourous form at the time of the Lord’s revelation as Lord Ram—refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto no. 3, verse nos. 16-18.

²Lord Shiva enshrines Lord Ram in his heart. Shiva eternally meditates upon the divine form and holy name “RAM” of the Lord. In fact, out of the thousands of holy names, Lord Shiva had selected this name as the only spiritual formula that cures all spiritual problems for the creature—including giving him liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death. This is the reason why Lord Shiva utters the holy name of Lord Ram into the ears of a dying creature on the banks of river Ganges at Kashi so that the dying can find liberation and deliverance. Shiva’s devotion and love for Lord Ram surpasses all, and therefore the Lord has himself said that if someone wants to have devotion for him and wishes to attain him, then he must first offer his obeisance to Lord Shiva and please him. Even the story of the Ramayan was first conceived or revealed in the heart and mind of Lord Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (iii) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 46; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 246; Lanka Kand—(vi) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3.

There is a wonderful Upanishad named ‘Ram Utttar Tapini Upanishad’ in which the same thing about Lord Shiva’s devotion and faith in Lord Ram is reiterated; this Upanishad is a part of the Atharva Veda. Refer also to Tripura Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 5 where it is said that Lord Shiva provides liberation and deliverance to the soul of a dying man on the banks of river Ganges by uttering Lord Ram’s holy name in his ears.]

बिनती प्रभु मोरी मैं मति भोरी नाथ न मागउँ बर आना । ११ ॥

पद कमल परागा रस अनुरागा मम मन मधुप करै पाना ॥ १२ ॥

binatī prabhu mōrī mair̄m mati bhōrī nātha na māga'um̄' bara ānā. 11.

pada kamala parāgā rasa anurāgā mama mana madhupa karai pānā. 12.

Oh Lord! I am not erudite or wise (like the great sages and seers), and so I don’t know what to ask you, except for making one request.¹ (11)

And it is that ‘let my Mana (mind and heart) become a bee that continuously enjoys the divine bliss that comes by sucking at the nectar that effuses from your lotus-like holy feet.’² (12)

[Note—¹Ahilya told the Lord that she is not much educated and does not know how to offer elaborate worship or prayers to him. She is of a low wisdom and intellect—for had it not been so then why would she have allowed herself to be so easily cheated by Indra in her earlier life which led to her being cursed to become a stone?

This logic made Lord Ram speechless!

²Then she continued—‘Oh Lord. In this situation, don’t expect much from me. I can’t recite the hymns of the scriptures to pray to you. But in simple language, what I want is this: let me be your absolute devotee so much so that let my mind and heart remains submerged in your thoughts, and let me lose awareness of everything else in the bliss that I get by fixing my mind and heart in remembering your holy and divine feet which are like lotus. Just like the bee forgets everything else when it sights the open lotus flower and hovers over it and remains oblivious of the world while it sucks the flower’s nectar, let my existence be like this bee—lost in the thoughts of your holy feet and remain blissful in it. I don’t want anything other than this.’

It is to be noted here that normally when someone offered worship to the Lord, he requests what he wants only when the Lord asks him to do so. This is the norm. For instance, when Manu and Satrupa had done Tapa for having a divine vision of Lord Hari, it was only after Lord Vishnu requesting them to ask for something that they expressed their desire to have the Lord as their son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 149.

But in the case of Ahilya, she has asked Lord Ram what she wants even before the Lord asked her to do so. That is why she says that she is not wise and intelligent, and therefore the Lord must forgive her for being unable to observe formalities!

She comes straight to the point, without wasting any time, lest some more mischief is created by someone. She is very apprehensive after her bad past experience where her innocence was exploited by Indra.]

जेहिं पद सुरसरिता परम पुनीता प्रगट भई सिव सीस धरी । १३ ॥

सोई पद पंकज जेहि पूजत अज मम सिर धरेउ कृपाल हरी ॥ १४ ॥

jēhim pada surasaritā parama punītā pragata bhaī siva sīsa dhari. 13.
sōī pada paṅkaja jēhi pūjata aja mama sira dharē'u kṛpāla hari. 14.

The holy feet (of Lord Vishnu) from which the holiest of all the rivers known as ‘the River of Gods’ (‘surasaritā parama punītā’; river ‘Gangaa’ or river Ganges) had emerged, and which was accepted by Lord Shiva with great respect when he decided to honour it by giving it a place on his head,¹ (13) ---

--- I am so privileged and honoured today to have the same divine feet that is also worshipped by Brahma (the creator of the world) being placed on my own head.

Oh the most merciful Lord, you have been exceptionally kind, merciful and gracious upon me today.’ (14)

[Note—¹The story of the origin of the holy river Ganges is narrated in a note of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 212 that we shall soon read herein below.]

एहि भाँति सिधारी गौतम नारी बार बार हरि चरन परी । १५ ॥
जो अति मन भावा सो बरु पावा गै पतिलोक अनंद भरी ॥ १६ ॥

ēhi bhām̐ti sidhārī gautama nārī bāra bāra hari carana parī. 15.
jō ati mana bhāvā sō baru pāvā gai patilōka ananda bhārī. 16.

In this way, the wife of sage Gautam fell at the feet of Lord Hari (Ram) repeatedly.
(15)

After having received the blessings that she had cherished (and thereby feeling fully contented), she then cheerfully went back to the hermitage of her husband, sage Gautam. (16)

[Note—What did she want? She wanted eternal devotion for Lord Ram and love for the Lord’s holy feet; she wanted her mind and heart to remain engrossed in the memory and thoughts of the Lord’s holy feet. Refer line no. 12.

Then she fearlessly went back to her husband, sage Gautam, because he had also personally told her that after her curse is removed by the touch of Lord Ram’s holy feet she could come back to him.

Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 48, verse no. 32; and Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 5, verse no. 32.]

दो०. अस प्रभु दीनबंधु हरि कारन रहित दयाल ।
तुलसिदास सठ तेहि भजु छाड़ि कपट जंजाल ॥ २११ ॥

dōhā.

asa prabhu dīnabandhu hari kārana rahita dayāla.
tulasidāsa saṭha tēhi bhaju chāḍi kapaṭa janjāla. 211.

Lord (Ram) is such a merciful and compassionate one that he shows grace and kindness selflessly, without expecting any thing or any service or any sort of obligation in return. [Lord Ram shows mercy, compassion and grace to others just for the sake of it, and not that he expects the beneficiary to feel obliged to the Lord in any way whatsoever. It is of course another matter that the creature who is benefited by the benevolence and magnanimity of the munificent Lord should, and must, feel exceedingly obliged and thankful to him.]

Tulsidas addresses his himself and says—‘Oh my foolish and stubborn self (which is a reference to the ‘Mana’, the mind and the heart)¹! You must abandon all sorts of pretensions, conceit and deceit as well delusions and worldly entanglements, and instead inculcate steady and profound love and devotion for Lord Ram who is so kind, magnanimous, benevolent, gracious and merciful.’ (Doha no. 211)

[Note—¹There are several instances in Ram Charit Manas where Tulsidas addresses his own self and calls his Mana stupid and stubborn because it would take interest in the mortal and perishable world which never gives peace, instead of focusing its

attention on Lord Ram and developing devotion for the Lord as it would give it eternal peace and bliss. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Sundar Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 60; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 130.

Oftentimes he has also called himself stupid because he does not develop strong devotion for Lord Ram who is eager to fulfill all his wishes—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 28 Ka.]

[PAUSE 5 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. चले राम लछिमन मुनि संगे । गए जहाँ जग पावनि गंगा ॥ १ ॥
गाधिसूनु सब कथा सुनाई । जेहि प्रकार सुरसरि महि आई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

calē rāma lachimana muni saṅgā. ga'ē jahāṁ' jaga pāvani gaṅgā. 1.
gādhisūnu saba kathā sunāī. jēhi prakāra surasari mahi āī. 2.

Lord Ram moved ahead from there with Laxman and the sage (Vishwamitra) accompanying him. He went to the place where there was river Ganga (Ganges)* which is a purifier of the whole world¹. (1)

Gaadhi's son (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) narrated to Lord Ram (and Laxman) as to how the river of Gods, 'Sursari', descended upon earth². (2)

[Note—¹There are three important points to note in this line as follows—

(i) The first important point to note here is that it was sage Vishwamitra who was in the lead, walking in the front with the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman following him when he brought them from Ayodhya to his hermitage. But now Lord Ram is leading them. This is significant. Till now the sage thought that the Lord was a child, a young boy after all. But now, after so many developments such as the killing of Taadaka, Subahu and the army of Marich, the flinging of Marich away from the hermitage, and now the magical conversion of a lifeless stone into a living woman convinced the sage that Lord Ram is not a child but the Supreme Lord himself. So he must be allowed to lead. Besides this, the sage had already given Lord Ram all the weapons he had (refer: Doha no. 209), so the sage permitted the Lord to walk ahead of him so that if any demon attacked them on the way, the leading man, Lord Ram, would be there to take care.

(ii) The second important point is this: At the time of Lord Ram's departure from Ayodhya with the sage, it is said that he "cheerfully accompanied the sage to remove his fears" (refer: line no. 1 of Doha no. 208 Ka), but now no such enthusiasm is observed. He simply "moved ahead". So why is it so? Well, Lord Ram had some regrets in his mind that he had to touch a woman, especially a sage's Brahmin wife (Ahilya), with his foot. This is not a good thing on the face of it, though the intention was noble and the result was also noble. But then the Lord comforted himself with the argument that if he had refrained from doing so it would have not been the right thing either—because that would have meant that Ayilya would remain as a stone for the rest of the time and continue to suffer. It would have gone against

the Lord's own vows that he would take birth upon the earth to provide liberation and deliverance to the suffering creatures.

Then he was instructed by sage Vishwamitra to touch Ahilya with his foot (refer: Doha no. 210), and the Lord could not disobey the sage. So it was alright. Yet the Lord was not very happy at this event. That is why he moved ahead without showing any cheer this time.

(iii) The third important point is this—The Lord felt guilty of having to touch Ahilya with his feet. So he wanted to wash them. Nearby was the holy river Ganges. So he decided to proceed there to take a bath and clean himself of the wrong that he was forced to do. River Ganges is the purifier of the world, so it is fully competent to clean the taint that has got stuck on the otherwise holy feet of Lord Ram.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 55, stanza no. 7 also.

Obviously, Lord Ram had asked sage Vishwamitra to tell him the story of river Ganges. So the sage narrated the whole story to him.

A remarkable thing here is that instead of addressing Vishwamitra as a 'sage', he is called 'the son of Gaadhi'. Well, the plausible reason is that Gaadhi was a great king, and therefore he must have known about all the wonderful deeds done by great ancient kings. The kings were supposed to gather information about other kings for the purpose of knowledge, and also to remain updated about what other kings were doing for the purpose of security and mutual dealings as well. So his descendent, Vishwamitra, was, in all likelihood, most competent to tell the story of king Sagar and how his great grandson Bhagirath was able to bring the holy river Ganges to earth.

*The story of the origin of the holy river Ganges is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Skandha 5, Canto 17, verse nos. 1-10.

It was contained in the Kamandalu (water pot) of Brahma, the creator. This is said in Srimad Bhagwat Mahapuran, Skandha 8, Canto 21, verse no. 4.

Then, its acceptance on the head of Lord Shiva where it was locked in the mat of thick hairs on the Lord's head is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 42, verse nos. 23-25, and Canto 43, verse no. 1.

The story of why Bhagirath did Tapa to bring Ganges upon the earth is narrated in detail in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 38—44.

Briefly, the story of the holy river Ganges is this: When Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Lord Vaaman, the dwarf mendicant, to crush the haughtiness of king Bali and prevent him from declaring himself the emperor of the entire universe, the Lord had expended his left foot so much that its toe nail had ruptured the outer shell of the galaxy, creating a hole. The inter-galactic river flowing outside the known galaxy gushed in through this hole to fill the whole space. When this celestial river touched the feet of Lord Vishnu, it turned reddish due to the colour of the Lord's feet which are like the red or pink lotus. Because it had its origin from the foot of Lord Vishnu, the primary name of river Ganges was 'Bhawatpadi'. ['Bhagwat' = Lord Vishnu; 'Padi' = from foot.]

After the passage of thousands of Yugas (eras), it established itself in the northern edge of the heaven where the Polar Star is situated. This area is known as 'Vishnu-pad'. It is here that the Lord's great devotee Dhruv accepts the water of this holy river as sanctified water, and the seven celestial sages known as the Sapta-rishis hold it in the lock of hairs on their head. Meanwhile, when the celestial water poured in from the hole in the galaxy, the creator Brahma was alarmed because he realised

that its fierce currents would sweep everything away, both in the heaven as well as on the earth where it descended to wash the feet of Lord Vaaman immediately after its entrance in the habitable galaxy. So Brahma used his Kamandalu, the water pot, to contain river Ganges within it.

From the summit of the heaven, i.e. from its northern fringes, Ganges cascaded down to the abode of the Moon God, went past it and fell on the summit of Mt. Meru (the golden mountain where the Gods live, including their king Indra) which is situated within the realm of Brahma, the creator.

From there it divides into four branches—named Sita, Alaknanda, Chakchu and Bhadra. Out of these, Sita descends from Brahma-puri to the summit of Mt. Kesaraachal, then goes further down and falls upon the summit of Mt. Gandhamaadan, and from there flows through the area known as Bhadraa-shwa-varsha to finally fall into the salty ocean in the east.

The second branch Alkananda falls to the south of Brahma-puri, goes past countless summits of mountains to finally arrive at the summit of Mt. Hemkut. From there, it cascades down with tremendous speed and force down upon the plains of India (known as Bharat-varsha). Then it traverses the length of the land to fall and merge with the ocean in the south.

Chakchu, the third branch, reaches the summit of Mt. Malyawaan, and from there it flows through the area known as Ketumal-varsha, heading in the western direction to finally fall in the sour ocean in the west.

The fourth branch, Bhadra, falls from the summit of Mt Meru and descends to its north. Falling from one mountain upon another, it reaches the summit of Mt. Sringa-waan. From there it flows through the area of the land known as Kuru-desh to finally fall in the northern ocean.

This river is known as the River of Gods or river Gangaa. This is the origin of the river in its celestial form. Refer: Smd. Bhagwat, 5/17/1-9.

When Lord Vaaman's feet were being washed as part of the ritual to honour the guest Brahmin by king Vaaman, Brahma the creator had collected this water in his Kamandalu (water pot) because it was very holy. Refer. Smd. Bhagwat, 8/21/4.

Later on, when king Bhagirath had done severe Tapa (penance) to bring this holy river on the earth so that his ancestors who lay dead due to the curse of sage Kapil could be revived, Brahma told him that he must first prepare Lord Shiva to accept river Ganges on his head because when the river descends from heaven upon earth, it will do so with such tremendous force that the earth would not be able to bear it and would split into two. So Bhagirath did Tapa to please Lord Shiva who agreed to accept the cascading river on the lock of hairs on his head. Then he will gradually allow to let it down upon the plains is a stream that lacks the force by which the river falls thousands of miles from heaven. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, 1/42/23-25, and 1/43/1.

The story of why Bhagirath did Tapa to bring Ganges upon the earth is narrated in detail in Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 38—44.

Briefly this part of the story is as follows: King Sagar had done a great horse sacrifice known as 'Ashwamedh Yagya'. This sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of Gods who was renowned for his mischief and jealous nature, in the guise of a demon. The reason was that king Sagar had already done 99 such sacrifices, and if he successfully completed this 100th sacrifice, he would have become eligible for the stature of Indra. This Indra could not tolerate.

Now, king Sagar ordered his sixty thousand sons to go and find the horse. They dug up the entire earth in search of the horse, pursuing Indra relentlessly. During

the process all the creatures who lived on the earth suffered immensely because their homes were demolished and they were uprooted from their natural habitats. This was what Indra wanted—to instigate Sagar to commit some sort of blunder that would invite the wrath of the creatures and the Brahmins, thereby inviting his own ruin. The Gods rushed to their patriarch Brahma, complaining about the developments. Brahma comforted them that they should not worry because Lord Vishnu who is responsible for the welfare of the creation would certainly do something to rectify the damage and punish the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, even after searching the earth the sons could not find the sacrificial horse. When they reported this to their father, king Sagar, he strongly rebuked them and ordered them to go back and search once again. This time around, they dug up the subterranean world. Ultimately, they reached the hermitage of sage Kapil on the shore of the eastern ocean. The mischievous Indra had hidden the horse there, but sage Kapil had no idea that it was a stolen sacrificial horse. So, when Sagar's sons saw the horse there, they concluded that it was stolen by the sage, and they haughtily challenged him. The sage was very angry, and he cursed them, reducing them to ashes.

When these sixty thousand sons did not return even after a long time, king Sagar ordered his grandson Anshumaan to go and find out what had happened. Anshumaan followed the path taken by his uncles, and finally reached the place where he saw their ashes in a huge mound. Lamenting and grieving, he wanted to perform their last rites. He also found the horse grazing nearby. For doing the last rites he needed water. Just at that time, Lord Garuda (the mount of Lord Vishnu), who was the maternal uncle of his own uncles, came there and told Anshumaan that ordinary water won't liberate his uncles because they were reduced to ashes by the curse of a great sage named Kapil. For this, the water of the holy river Ganges is needed. So he must go and make an effort to bring Ganges to earth so that its water can flow over the ashes and provide your uncles deliverance. Meanwhile, he should take the sacrificial horse and go home to his grandfather.

King Sagar completed his sacrifice and returned to his capital. He did not know how to bring the celestial river of Gods to earth, and he died without accomplishing the task. After his death, Anshumaan ascended the throne. His son was king Dilip. Anshumaan abdicated the throne in favour of his son and went to the Himalayas to do severe Tapa, and died there.

King Dilip had a son named Bhagirath. Dilip did many sacrifices in order to bring river Ganges to earth so that his ancestor's souls could find deliverance, but failed. Worried and frustrated he fell sick and died.

Meanwhile, Bhagirath had no sons, but he still was determined to bring Ganges to earth and fulfill the long cherished desire of his father, grandfather and great grandfather. So he handed over the reins of the kingdom to his wise ministers and went to do the severest form of Tapa one can imagine of. His determination and noble resolve pleased Brahma, the creator, who revealed himself before him and asked him to request for a boon. Bhagirath replied that if Brahma really wants to grant him something then he should bless him that he be able to bring Ganges to earth and wash his ancestors with its holy water so that they can find deliverance. Brahma advised him that he must please Lord Shiva and request him to accept the river on his head prior to its reaching the surface of the earth—because if the river fell directly upon the earth it would split the latter into two with its tremendous force.

So, Bhagirath prayed to Shiva who was more than willing to accept Ganges on his head because the Lord knew that the river had its origin in the foot of Lord

Vishnu. As soon as Shiva gave his consent to bear the river on his head, Brahma let his Kamandalu tilt and thus the mighty river Ganges came cascading down with a thunderous force to land upon the matted hairs of Lord Shiva. Ganges was very proud of its own origin and powers, so it thought that it will push Shiva to the under-world by its sheer force. Shiva wanted to teach Ganges a lesson not to be haughty, so the Lord contained the might of the swirling waters of the haughty Ganges in the lock of hairs on his head so much so that the river almost got lost amidst its huge crevices.

Bhagirath was confounded: after all the efforts made by him, the river still failed to reach the ground. So he did Tapa again to please Lord Shiva and ask him to allow Ganges to fall down to earth. Pleased with his sincerity and devotion, Lord Shiva allowed a thin stream of Ganges to escape from his head and fall in the 'Bindu-sarovar (lake)'. Immediately upon reaching this lake, Ganges branched off into seven streams. The seventh stream followed king Bhagirath who lead its path on a chariot to the spot where the ashes of his ancestors lay. As soon as the holy water of the Ganges touched the ashes, the souls of the sixty thousand sons of king Sagar found liberation and deliverance.

At that time, Brahma appeared and blessed Bhagirath that henceforth Ganges would be deemed to be his daughter and bear his name. It would be known by three names—viz. 'Tripatha-gaa', 'Dibyaa' and 'Bhagirathi'. Hence, the holy river Ganges also came to be known as 'Bhagirathi', the daughter of Bhagirath. Since it flows in the whole of the three worlds, the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world, it is known as 'Tripatha-gaa'—that which flows on three paths. And since it is a holy and divine river, it is known as 'Dibya'—the divine and holy one.

There is another version narrated in Padma Puran, Sristhi Khand. Here, sage Veda Vyas, who was narrating the Puran to Brahmin audience, told the story of the origin and descent upon the earth of the holy river Ganges in detail when they asked him about it. Briefly this story is as follows:

Veda Vyas said—'In some ancient time, when sage Narad asked Brahma how creation came into being, Brahma told him that at the time of creation, he had requested the Paraa-Prakriti, the primary-primordial Mother Nature, to become the primary cause of creation. Brahma told her that he would use her to create everything.

Hearing this, the Paraa-Prakriti divided herself into seven forms. These seven forms are the following—(i) Gayatri (from which were produced all the Vedas, Swasti, Swaha, Swadha, and Diksha—i.e. all things related to the fire sacrifice), (ii) Vaag-devi or Saraswati, the goddess of speech and knowledge, through whom knowledge and scriptures spread, (iii) Laxmi (the goddess of wealth and prosperity that was needed to sustain and take care of the needs of the creation), (iv) Uma (the consort of Lord Shiva and said to be Mother Goddess from whom all other Gods and Goddesses originated; she is also the one who became instrumental in spread of knowledge), (v) Shakti-beeja (cosmic dynamic energy that gives all the Mantras their inherent mystical powers and is responsible for injecting vitality, energy and force into this creation), (vi) Tapaswini (the patron goddess or the cosmic force overlooking Tapa—austerity and penances), (vii) and Dharma-dravaa (the inherent powers of Dharma—everything that is in accordance to the laws of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality).

Brahma thought that the last form, i.e. 'Dharma-dravaa', was the best of the seven forms, and since it was in a liquid form ('Dravaa' = liquid), he stored it into his Kamandalu (water pot).

Now, during the Lord's incarnation as Vaaman (the dwarf mendicant) when he had spread his left foot to measure the entire universe during the sacrifice of king Bali, this foot ruptured the sky and the heaven and appeared before Brahma. It was then that he washed the Lord's holy foot with the water that he had stored in his Kamandalu at the time of creation.

After the Lord's holy foot had been washed, this water fell on Mt. Hemkut. From there this water reached Lord Shiva who immediately placed it on his head because he realised it to be sanctified and holy as it had been used to wash the foot of Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Vaaman. So, this water now was established on the thick lock of hairs on the head of Lord Shiva.

Later on when king Bhagirath had done severe Tapa with the intention of bringing this holy river on earth so that his dead ancestors could be revived and their souls could find peace, he had prayed to Lord Shiva to let the Ganges come down upon the earth. The Lord allowed its stream to descend upon the earth and follow Bhagirath across the land to the place where his ancestors lay dead. This is how the holy river descended upon earth and traversed eastwards following Bhagirath to finally merge into the ocean.]

तब प्रभु रिषिन्ह समेत नहाए । बिबिध दान महिदेवन्हि पाए ॥ ३ ॥
हरषि चले मुनि बृंद सहाया । बेगि बिदेह नगर निअराया ॥ ४ ॥

taba prabhu riṣinha samēta nahā'ē. bibidha dāna mahidēvanhi pā'ē. 3.
haraṣi calē muni bṛnda sahayā. bēgi bidēha nagara ni'arāyā. 4.

Then the Lord took bath (in the holy river Ganges) along with the sages¹.

The Brahmins (who were present on the banks of the river Ganges) got alms (donations, gifts) of various kinds². (3)

After that, the Lord who is a helper of the sages³, cheerfully⁴ proceeded from there, moving swiftly ahead to approach the city of Videha⁵. (4)

[Note—¹The word 'Rishi-nha' means 'in the company of or along with other sages', and it obviously refers to more than one sage. There are many reasons for use of the plural common noun here.

The fame and glory of Lord Ram had already spread far and wide. The story of sage Vishwamitra going to Ayodhya to bring Lord Ram and Laxman to his hermitage, killing of Tadaaka, Subahu and the rest of the demon army, and the magical feat of converting a stone into a lady, i.e. the liberation of Ahilya from her curse, was no longer a secret. This news must have spread like wild fire by word of mouth. The sages, hermits and other holy men of that part of the land were awe-struck and realised that the two princes were no ordinary humans, but surely they possessed some super-human divine powers.

So, as soon as the word spread that the great sage Vishwamitra is headed towards Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman, a lot many holy men who lived along the route or even in areas from where they could manage to reach them, hurried to have a holy glimpse of the two divine brothers as well as sage Vishwamitra. Some of them met the trio on the way, some decided to assemble on the banks of river Ganges where they were sure that the three would come on their way to Janakpur. This is

because it is a normal practice that when one goes somewhere and his path passes near some holy river or a pilgrim place, the traveler makes it a point to visit these places, pay his obeisance, take a bath in the river, and then move on with his journey.

So a huge throng of sages and other holy men had either joined them on the way or had assembled on the banks of river Ganges by the time Lord Ram, Laxman and Vishwamitra arrived there.

Besides being eager to see Lord Ram because of his glorious and most magical deeds, the Lord's astounding charm and beauty was also instrumental in motivating the holy men to have a rare glimpse of the brothers. The holy men decided that they were no ordinary princes because they had seen so many of them, and they had also seen many great kings performing marvelous feats, but the divine aura that surrounded these brothers was unique and set them apart from the rest. The sages concluded therefore that they surely are the Supreme Being in a human form as predicted earlier by the scriptures. Otherwise, it is not a joke to kill the ferocious demons and liberate Ahilya so easily.

To add to this incentive was the privilege of meeting a great sage, Vishwamitra. Even today when some renowned holy men visit some place, huge crowd gathers to see him and take his blessings.

Added to this is another factor. It is observed as a routine affair that on the banks of holy rivers, especially Ganges which is regarded as the holiest, a large number of men, holy and ordinary, are always present to take a bath to purify themselves and perform religious rituals. Since giving donations and gifts and making charities is part of such rituals, a large number of Brahmins collect there in the hope of a regular source of income and benefiting from such religious obligations. This is a daily routine affair that one can observe on the banks of this holy river anywhere in India. The banks are usually crowded by devotees, saints and Brahmins etc. who have come to make their ablutions.

Now, when Lord Ram and Laxman took their purification bath in the holy Ganges, they were accompanied by all these sages, seers, hermits and other holy men. The wise and learned sages and holy men had come to see Lord Ram because they knew that they are viewing a personified form of the Holy Spirit, the Supreme Being, and added to this was the bonus of seeking their divine blessings. Then there was the attraction of meeting sage Vishwamitra, an enlightened sage of immense spiritual powers.

One more remarkable point to note is this: A large number of sages and holy men are said to have done their ablutions in the company of Lord Ram. Then what happened? Did they accompany them onwards to Janakpur? Yes, they did. It is said that when sage Vishwamitra reached the outskirts of Janakpur, he saw a pleasant mango orchard, and asked Lord Ram and Laxman to stay there. They put up their camp at this site "along with the other sages" who were with them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 214.

Remember: Only sages and holy men are said to have joined Lord Ram in taking the bath in the river Ganges. No mention is made of 'any princes or even the Brahmins'. Well, the answer is clear—(a) The princes of the realm had no insight to realise who Lord Ram and Laxman were; for them they were like any other son of a king, and hence worthy of no special attention. This is proved later on at the marriage venue at Janakpur when only some of the wise aged kings could realise the divinity of Lord Ram because they had heard of the Lord's glorious deeds, but the majority of the assembled kings and princes were only interested in breaking the bow and marrying Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precede

Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 246; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 267.

(b) The Brahmins were professional men; they knew how to perform rituals in a mechanical fashion but had no spiritual insight or acumen. They thronged banks of holy rivers and pilgrim places to earn money, and not to seek salvation. This is even true today as it was then, and has been ever since the dawn of civilization. There is vast difference between professional Brahmins who perform rituals and those who are known as true sages, seers and holy men.

²An important point here is that Lord Ram had nothing with him in material terms at that time to donate or gift to the Brahmins. So what did he do? He promised them that after he returns to his home at Ayodhya, he will fulfill his obligations and redeem his promises of gifts made to these Brahmins. This was and is still a routine practice—that if one cannot pay immediately, he gives an understanding that as soon as he reaches home he will send the money to the other person.

Hence, after making ablutions, Lord Ram promised the assembled Brahmins that he will make gifts to them later on when he returns home. This is why it is said that the ‘Brahmins got gifts’ instead of saying ‘Lord Ram made gifts to Brahmins’. These Brahmins ‘got an assurance of gifts from the Lord’ by way of a promise or vow, which was to be redeemed later on.

³The phrase used in the text is “Muni Brinda Sahaayaa’ which means ‘helper of the sages’, or one who comes to aid of the sages in times of need. In other words, the two brothers Ram and Laxman were always available to help the countless sages whenever they needed them.

⁴Here it is said that the Lord moved ahead ‘cheerfully’ after bathing in river Ganges. It is important to observe that while he moved from the place where Ahilya was liberated to the banks of river Ganges in a somber mood, the Lord now becomes cheerful once again.

This is because now he has taken a bath in the holy, all-purifying river Ganges, and has therefore symbolically washed-off his guilt of having had to touch a Brahmin woman, Ahilya, with his feet. He is also cheerful and happy because he has been able to take a bath in the company of so many sages and holy men. Then again, he has been able to make charity to Brahmins. All these things gave him a lot of satisfaction, and he became joyous once again.

Another reason to be cheerful and excited was that now they were very near the great city of Videha, where a great spectacle of the bow-breaking ceremony was awaiting them. Like any boys of their age, it was natural for Lord Ram and Laxman to become excited as they neared the city.

The third reason for their cheerfulness is that after bathing and relaxing on the banks of the Ganges, they felt very refreshed after the tiring journey from the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra.

⁵In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas it is said that Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra crossed the river Ganges on a boat to proceed ahead to Janakpur. Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 2, 5.

This appears very logical because Janakpur is situated in the foothills of the Himalayan mountain range, on the other side of the river Ganges, whereas sage

Vishwamitra's hermitage and Ayodhya both were located on this side of the river's bank.]

पुर रञ्जिता राम जब देखी । हरषे अनुज समेत बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
 बापीं कूप सरित सर नाना । सलिल सुधासम मनि सोपाना ॥ ६ ॥
 गुंजत मंजु मत्त रस भृंगा । कूजत कल बहुबरन बिहंगा ॥ ७ ॥
 बरन बरन बिकसे बन जाता । त्रिबिध समीर सदा सुखदाता ॥ ८ ॥

pura ramyatā rāma jaba dēkhī. haraṣē anuja samēta bisēṣī. 5.
 bāpīm kūpa sarita sara nānā. salila sudhāsama mani sōpānā. 6.
 guṅjata maṅju matta rasa bhṛṅgā. kūjata kala bahubarana bihaṅgā. 7.
 barana barana bikasē bana jātā. tribidha samīra sadā sukhadātā. 8.

When Lord Ram saw the beauty, the magnificence and the grandeur of the city (of king Videha, also known as the city of Janak after its king Janak) as he approached it, he was highly delighted together with his younger brother (Laxman)¹. (5)

[In these following verses, the beauty of the city of Videha or Janakpur, the capital of king Janak, is being described:-]²

There were many large water tanks (or step-wells), wells, rivers and ponds that were filled with water as sweet as nectar. Their steps were studded with precious gems. (6)

Bees which had become intoxicated by drinking nectar to their fill were buzzing everywhere. Beautiful birds of different kinds were hopping, cooing and chirping around merrily. (7)

Lotus flowers of different shades of colours bloomed, and a delightful breeze that was sweet, fragrant and soft constantly blew. (8)

[Note—¹The two brothers were princes of a rich kingdom of Ayodhya. They knew how a great city, the capital of an important kingdom, should look like. When one approaches a capital city of a big country, its ambience and aura of importance begins to be felt from a distance. One gets the feeling that he is fast approaching a great city, a huge metropolis.

The Lord and his brother were excited because when they saw that the approaches to the city of Videha were so beautifully laid out and charming, it is sure that the city proper would naturally be a magnificent one. It is quite natural for and expected from boys of their age to be excited at the prospect of visiting a wonderful city and go sightseeing in it. Hence, both Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman became excited.

²The general scene is that of plenty of verdant greenery and abundance of vibrant plant and animal life that thrived in Janakpur; there was cheerfulness and happiness all around. There were lots of water bodies, birds and insects, flowers and sweet breeze, and all other components that are symbols of Nature which make one's heart jump in joy and ecstasy.

To wit, the city of Janakpur was a veritable paradise on earth; it was a beautiful city with emphasis on greenery and great for respect for protection of Nature as was evident in its expansive cover of verdant forests and colourful gardens, with lots of trees and flowers and fruits that abounded in them, both within the city as well as on its outskirts. Alongside the trees and plants and water bodies that flourished in Janakpur, there was also a rich presence of flora and fauna of all imaginable varieties. The city as a whole thus was a treat for the eyes of all visitors who came there.]

दो०. सुमन बाटिका बाग बन बिपुल बिहंग निवास ।
फूलत फलत सुपल्लवत सोहत पुर चहुँ पास ॥ २१२ ॥

dōhā.

sumana bāṭikā bāga bana bipula bihaṅga nivāsa.
phūlata phalata supallavata sōhata pura cahum̐ pāsa. 212.

Countless flower gardens, parks, orchards, groves and mini-forests that were verdant with greenery and brimming with animal and plant life, where birds of different varieties lived cheerfully, and which were all rich with blossoming trees, blooming flowers, verdant leaves etc., flourished all around the city, and adorned (circled) it from all sides. (Doha no. 212)

[Note—To wit, the sprawling city was rich in greenery and had a vibrant animal and plant life. It wasn't a concrete jungle or an over-crowded city with no green space for parks and gardens which are like lungs for a place.

Till this Doha, the outside of the city of Videha has been described. In other words, Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra have reached the outskirts of the city, but they have not entered the city proper; this is proved by the fact that they had stopped and encamped near a mango orchard outside the city: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 214 which we shall be reading below shortly.

But the whole set of verses next, extending from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214 describe the city of Janakpur proper. How did this happen given the fact that Lord Ram and his group are still in the suburbs?

Well, the answer is that the narrator of this epic Ram Charit Manas, saint Goswami Tulsidas, treats himself as a scribe—and not as a poet or an author—who follows his revered Lord Sri Ram closely from behind, penning down silently for posterity whatever he heard and saw. This fact that Tulsidas does not regard himself as a great scholar or poet, but is writing this story merely to clean and purify his mind and pen, is clearly asserted by him in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 9 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 8, 11; (ii) Doha no. 10 and its Chaupai line nos. 7 as well as Chanda line nos. 1-2; (iii) Doha no. 13 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-10; and finally (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14.

Now therefore, why does he describe the inner part of the city of Janakpur though his Lord Ram is still on its outskirts? The answer to this question is this: It is quite possible that when Lord Ram and other sages who were accompanying him were walking to Janakpur, others travelers who were also going there joined them on

the way. When a group of new visitors who are on their way to a place meet other fellow travelers who are well acquainted with that place, it is quite natural that a conversation starts whereby the old hands tell the newcomers about the city and its wonderful sights. This is what might have happened in this case. Tulsidas is just narrating the events as they happened, so it looks odd that he will add something from his own side before it actually happened. So this eventuality seems most probable—that the fellow travelers had described the city of Janakpur to Lord Ram and Laxman on the way. This description continues in the next three lines.

When Laxman heard about the fascinating city, he desired in his heart to go and see it. This is clear later on in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 218 that we shall be reading below.

Now, the next question arises that when Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra had started on their journey for Janakpur, they were alone; no one had accompanied them at the start of the journey. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 212. Then how did a group form in which there were many sages and holy men who would be telling Lord Ram and Laxman about the city of Janakpur and its delights? The fact that a group had formed after the Lord took a bath in the river Ganges and moved ahead from there, as well as at the time when he reached Janakpur is endorsed in (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 212, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 214 respectively.

So, what may have happened? The fame and glory of Lord Ram had already spread far and wide. The story of sage Vishwamitra going to Ayodhya to bring Lord Ram and Laxman to his hermitage, killing of Tadakaa, Subahu and the rest of the demon army, and the magical feat of converting a stone into a lady, i.e. the liberation of Ahilya from her curse, was no longer a secret. This news must have spread like wild fire by word of mouth. The sages, hermits and other holy men of that part of the land were awe-struck and realised that the two princes were no ordinary humans, but surely they possessed some super-human divine powers. They were all aware of the prophesy that the Supreme Lord would one day come to eliminate the demons and free the earth from their terror. So obviously they deduced that these two boys must be the Lord for the simple reason that killing of Tadakaa, Subahu and the huge demon army by two princes without any other help was unthinkable and impossible. Added to this was the liberation of Ahilya which itself was proof of the divine nature of Lord Ram.

So, as soon as the word spread that the great sage Vishwamitra is headed towards Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman, a lot many holy men who lived along the route or even in areas from where they could manage to reach them, hurried to have a holy glimpse of the two divine brothers as well as sage Vishwamitra. Some of them met the trio on the way, some decided to assemble on the banks of river Ganges where they were sure that the three would come to take a bath on their way to Janakpur.

Eager to remain with the Lord for as long as they practically could, they told him and sage Vishwamitra that they were all headed for Janakpur to attend the bow ceremony. And that like journeymen joining others headed in a common direction, they all formed a group moving to Janakpur. The group must have swelled as more and more sages joined in the hope of having a divine sight of Lord Ram and spending some wonderful days in his company.

So a huge throng of sages and other holy men had formed on the way to Janakpur. All were eager to talk with the two brothers and be close to them. So what

sort of conversation must have been struck? As is normal in the case of tourists and visitors to new cities, when they learnt that the two brothers were going to Janakpur for the first time, they began their narration of the city and its wonderful charms to Lord Ram and Laxman. This is a normal thing amongst travelers; old hands give their advice to newcomers into a city. After all, some excuse had to be found by these sages to talk with Lord Ram and Laxman.

Sage Vishwamitra, meanwhile, kept quiet, for he did not want to prevent these aged and devoted sages and holy men to enjoy the Lord's company for a while; why would he. After all, they too had the right for spiritual bliss and happiness like he has. Tulsidas was mentally following his Lord Sri Ram quietly from behind. He heard this conversation, and like a true scribe, he jotted down the dialogue, and is now telling us what he heard about Janakpur in the following verses.]

चौ०. बनइ न बरनत नगर निकई । जहाँ जाइ मन तहँई लोभाई ॥ १ ॥

चारु बजारु बिचित्र अंबारी । मनिमय बिधि जनु स्वकर सँवारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bana'i na baranata nagara nikāī. jahām' jā'i mana tahamīm' lōbhāī. 1.
cāru bajāru bicitra ambārī. manimaya bidhi janu svakara samvārī. 2.

The charm, beauty and attractiveness of the city (of Janakpur) surpassed all imagination. Wherever one went, one's heart and mind were fascinated and captivated by it (and for all practical purposes it appeared to be a virtual heavenly city on earth)¹.
(1)

The well planned and clean markets (i.e. the shops that lined the two sides of the streets in an orderly manner) and the market places (i.e. the areas designated for shops and other business activities) were well laid out and very magnificent to behold. There were wonderful balconies studded with priceless gems, and looked as if the creator (Brahma) had himself crafted them with his own hands². (2)

[Note—¹Whereas it was possible to describe the general view of the outskirts of the city as narrated in the previous verses, it is not possible to do so for the inside of the city because it is so fascinating and wonderful that wherever one rests his eyes, one is awe-struck by its beauty and charm. One part of the city is so diverse and different from the other that the mind and intellect fail to find words to describe them properly and correctly. So it is better to just outline the main features as narrated in the following verses.

²After having entered the outer limits of the great city, Lord Ram, Laxman and Vishwamitra are moving through its outer market area. There are rows of shops on the ground floor, and the upper floors have balconies. These were probably residential quarters.

Remember: A great capital city has many far-flung areas that we like to call the greater metropolitan areas of the city. The city's municipal boundaries extend for many miles around the city center where the central government offices and other power centers such as the secretariat, the presidential buildings, the prime minister's and other ministers' residences and offices etc. are located. The same thing applies to

countries ruled by monarchs. The king's palace is located usually in the center of a planned city which extends for tens of miles around.

If one enters a large city he will observe that there are numerous market places and residential colonies that are self-sufficient and complete towns in themselves, spreading for miles away from the central hub, the power center, of the main city.

This is exactly what we read here about Janakpur. This will be evident soon when we read that the invited kings and princes pitched their camps near ponds and rivers on the outskirts of the city. And when sage Vishwamitra saw a pleasant site, which was a mango orchard, he decided to stay there with Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 214.

It will be pertinent to compare the magnificence and beauty of Janakpur, as is being described presently, with that of Ayodhya, the capital city of Lord Ram, which is described later on in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 23 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it; and (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 28—to Doha no. 29. We will discover a similarity between the two cities in as far as their grandeur, magnificence, charm and beauty are concerned.]

धनिक बनिक बर धनद समाना । बैठे सकल बस्तु लै नाना ॥ ३ ॥
 चौहट सुंदर गलीं सुहाई । संतत रहहि सुगंध सिंचाई ॥ ४ ॥
 मंगलमय मंदिर सब केरें । चित्रित जनु रतिनाथ चितेरें ॥ ५ ॥

dhanika banika bara dhanada samānā. baiṭhē sakala bastu lai nānā. 3.
 cauhaṭa sundara galīm suhāī. santata rahahim sugandha siñcāī. 4.
 maṅgalamaya mandira saba kērēm. citrita janu ratinātha citērēm. 5.

In the shops, rich merchants who were like personified forms of the patron god of wealth, known as Kuber or “dhanada”, sit with their wares and merchandise of all kinds¹. (3)

The city squares and its lanes and by-lanes were lovely (like its main streets). They were washed, cleaned, spruced up and sprayed with perfumes on a regular basis. (4)

All the buildings (residences, shops, places of worship etc.) had an auspicious aura about them; they were so wonderful to behold that they appeared to be beautiful paintings made by Kamdeo, the husband of Rati and the patron god of the virtues of beauty, charm and magnificence, who appears to have painted them himself². (5)

[Note—¹The shops are well-stocked and the shop-keepers look well-off. This is expected. As soon as the word spread that the king has invited a large number of kings and princes for the marriage of his daughter, all the business families of the city stocked up and piled their goods in anticipation of the huge crowd of visitors, and its consequent opportunity for windfall transactions.

This is a normal practice even in today's modern world: whenever there is a sports meet or some other occasion for huge gatherings such as some religious festival, businesses of shopkeepers' boom.

²Kamdeo is the patron god of things that are characterized by beauty and charm. The buildings of the city were so magnificent and wondrous to look at that they appear to

be picture-post card perfect. Even in our current time, we have so many beautiful cities with so many charming buildings that tourists take away their photos as mementos. Tourist spots are flooded with post-cards of beautiful buildings that are landmarks of a city or characterize it in general terms.

Janakpur had large city squares which were well tended. Its lanes and by-lanes were washed and kept clean; there weren't stinking and full of filth.]

पुर नर नारि सुभग सुचि संता । धरमसील ग्यानी गुनवंता ॥ ६ ॥
 अति अनूप जहँ जनक निवासू । बिथकहिं बिबुध बिलोकि बिलासू ॥ ७ ॥
 होत चकित चित कोट बिलोकी । सकल भुवन सोभा जनु रोकी ॥ ८ ॥

pura nara nāri subhaga suci santā. dharamasīla gyānī gunavantā. 6.
 ati anūpa jaham'janaka nivāsū. bithakahim bibudha bilōki bilāsū. 7.
 hōta cakita cita kōṭa bilōkī. sakala bhuvana sōbhā janu rōkī. 8.

The residents of the city were noble, honest and of a simple nature, being free from pretensions and deceit (subhaga). They were of a clean and pure heart and mind (suci); they were saintly, pious and holy (santā); they were followers of the law of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety, morality and ethics) (dharamasīla); they were wise, intelligent and learned (gyānī); and they possessed good virtues of all kinds (gunavantā)¹. (6)

[Now, the immediate area around the king's palace is being described briefly.]

The place where king Janak's palace was situated was exceptionally marvelous and fabulous, and it stood apart from the rest of the city in its beauty and magnificence. Even the Gods were awe-struck by its splendour and grandeur. (7)

The fortification walls around the palace held the mind enthralled, and it looked that it has enclosed within its walls all the magnificence and beauty of the universe². (8)

[Note—¹No matter how beautiful a city is and how wonderful it is managed, but all this is useless if its inhabitants are unworthy of it. If the citizens of a city are unruly and unethical, if they are utterly selfish and exploitative, if they are cruel and ruthless, if they lack civil sense and do not show respect to each other—then obviously such a city becomes one like Lanka, the golden city of the demons.

Who will like to live with ruffians, scoundrels and thugs as neighbours? Everyone wishes to live in a neighbourhood where the people are friendly, helpful, courteous and law-abiding.

Any city could be artificially decked up for some special occasion, but the nature of its citizens can't be changed.

It's like the case of a human body. What is the good of having a well-built and handsome physical body if the man himself is cruel, selfish and animal-like? Everyone hates him. So is the case with a city. If its residents are nice, others flock to this city. On the other hand, no matter what good prospects city offers, if the guest feels he is unwelcome and is afraid every other moment for his own safety, he will abandon the city forthwith.

²If the city is so exceedingly magnificent and wondrous that wherever one looks he finds it more enchanting than the other places as all the places are uniquely beautiful and charming exceedingly, with their glamour and beauty holding the beholder's mind and heart spell-bound as no where else such a city of equal comparison exists in this world, it is no wonder that the palace of the city's king and the area surrounding it would be special and more striking than the rest of the city.

Some of the capitals of kings were built within the walls of the fort—like the case of Lanka, the capital of the demon kingdom. It was a huge fort surrounded from the outside with a high wall. It had four massive doors or gates at its four corners. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 39.

The same was the design of Ayodhya, the capital city of king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram. It was surrounded by high walls on all its sides. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 27.

But in the case of Janakpur, only the central area around the king's palace was surrounded by a wall, and the rest of the city spilled out far beyond its ramparts for miles on end. The immediate area around the king's palace resembled like a small fortress or castle, while the rest of the city sprawled beyond it.]

दो०. धवल धाम मनि पुरट पट सुघटित नाना भॉति ।
सिय निवास सुंदर सदन सोभा किमि कहि जाति ॥ २१३ ॥

dōhā.

dhavala dhāma mani puraṭa paṭa sughaṭita nānā bhāmṭi.
siya nivāsa sundara sadana sōbhā kimi kahi jāti. 213.

[This Doha describes the palace where Sita, the eldest daughter of king Janak, lived.]

The palace where Sita ("Siya") lived had clean white walls which reflected light to make them appear radiant. The palace had golden doors and windows studded with gems, and over those hanged curtains of different varieties with fine golden embroidery, and embellished with gems and pearls.

How can one describe the opulence, the beauty and the magnificence of the personal residence of Sita? [That is, it is impossible to describe its glamour and beauty in words.] (Doha no. 213)

[Note—Sita was a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu and the patron goddess of material wealth and prosperity. Obviously then, her personal quarters is expected to be marvelous. Its opulence was beyond description.

If the doors were made of gold, the walls cannot be simple brick structures. They were also studded with diamonds and crystal, giving them a shiny, glittering appearance.

Remember: Lord Ram, Laxman and sage Vishwamitra are still on the outskirts of the city; they haven't reached its central area. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 214 which we will be reading shortly.

Hence this description of the king's palace and that of his daughter's must not be construed as being watched by the Lord himself. Actually, Goswami Tulsidas, the author of this epic, is giving us a preview of the city. It's almost like going through a

brochure describing a fascinating capital city. See note appended to Doha no. 212 herein above.]

चौ०. सुभग द्वार सब कुलिस कपाटा । भूप भीर नट मागध भाटा ॥ १ ॥
 बनी बिसाल बाजि गज साला । हय गय रथ संकुल सब काला ॥ २ ॥
 सूर सचिव सेनप बहुतेरे । नृपगृह सरिस सदन सब केरे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

subhaga dvāra saba kulisa kapātā. bhūpa bhīra naṭa māgadha bhātā. 1.
 banī bisāla bāji gaja sālā. haya gaya ratha saṅkula saba kālā. 2.
 sūra saciva sēnapa bahutērē. nrpagṛha sarisa sadana saba kērē. 3.

All the doors were beautiful and were studded with diamonds. [Or it may mean that the outer doors of the palace and the gates of the fortress wall had armour plates on them. These armoured plates were made of diamond.]¹

These doors and gates were always crowded by throngs of feudal princes (junior or subordinate kings) as well as dancers, bards, minstrels and heralds. [They stood there for their turn to be heard by the king.]¹ (1)

There were huge stables for horses and large grounds earmarked for elephants. They were always full with horses, elephants and chariots. (2)

There were many palaces belonging to brave warriors, ministers and army commanders which were similar in beauty and grandeur to the palace of the king.

[The king made it a point to let his ministers and chief army commanders feel important and respected because he was wise enough to understand that he depends upon them for his own survival.]² (3)*

[Note—¹The entire objective of this narration is to highlight the opulence, majesty and grandeur of the king and his capital. This was no ordinary king; he was like an emperor because so many feudal lords were waiting at the door to have an audience with him.

²The king had a huge army consisting of cavalry that had war horses, elephant brigades, as well as infantry made up of strong and brave warriors.

*One very important to note is that Tulsidas has described the cities of Lord Ram and Sita, i.e. Ayodhya and Janakpur respectively, in almost identical terms. This is because both are equally adorable for him; because they are manifestations of Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi respectively. Tulsidas cannot insult one by making it look that the other is superior. Even a cursory reading of how Ayodhya looks and comparing it with the description with Janakpur will clear all doubts in this respect. Both the cities mightily amazed the Gods; both were equally magnificent and wonderful; both defied description.

Whereas Janakpur is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand at the following places—(i) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 224; (iii) from Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 289, the grandeur of Ayodhya is

narrated in the following places—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; (ii) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297; (iv) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 4; (v) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 23; and (vi) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 26—to Doha no. 29.]

पुर बाहेर सर सरित समीपा । उतरे जहँ तहँ बिपुल महीपा ॥ ४ ॥
देखि अनूप एक अँवराई । सब सुपास सब भाँति सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥
कौसिक कहेउ मोर मनु माना । इहाँ रहिअ रघुबीर सुजाना ॥ ६ ॥

pura bāhēra sara sarita samīpā. utarē jaham̃ taham̃ bipula mahīpā. 4.
dēkhi anūpa ēka am̃varāī. saba supāsa saba bhām̃ti suhāī. 5.
kausika kahē'u mōra manu mānā. ihām̃ rahi'a raghubīra sujānā. 6.

[Now, we go back to where Lord Ram and his group of travelers are on the outskirts of the city.]

On the outskirts of the city, countless invited kings and princes had pitched their camps near ponds and rivers and other water bodies. (1)

There was a beautiful mango orchard. It was very comfortable for staying (as all the necessary basic things needed for a comfortable stay were available there—such as water, shade, fruits, a general pleasant environment, and open ground that was clean, even and soft enough to pitch up a camp). (2)

Seeing it, Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) told Lord Ram—‘Oh Raghubir (i.e. the brave Raghu, Lord Ram)! I like this place. Let us stop here for our stay during the course of the bow breaking ceremony.’¹ (3)

[Note—¹The wise sage Vishwamitra did not wish to enter the city right away. Had he been alone he might have thought of going straight to the palace of the king, Janak, as he had done at Ayodhya. When a great sage or seer goes to a king, he does not stay outside the city, waiting for the king to come and invite him. Instead, they go straight to the king who rushes out of the palace as soon as he hears that a sage is standing at his palace door.

But in this case the situation was different. Vishwamitra was not alone; he was accompanied by two princes, Ram and Laxman. They were not ordinary princes, but belonged to another great kingdom of Ayodhya. King Janak had not invited them. This will be very clear later on when the king actually meets Vishwamitra and asks him about these two boys. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

Vishwamitra observed that the invited kings and princes were pitching their camps here and there outside the city. So he decided to stop somewhere nearby to maintain the dignity and respect of Lord Ram and Laxman who their father, king Dasrath, had entrusted him with. It would not be proper and dignified to go to the gate of king Janak with these two noble princes in tow. They were not his junior sages or students, for then it would have been alright for him to go straight to Janak’s palace as great sages were always accompanied by their junior sages or students or followers.

To go to the king direct would be insulting for Lord Ram and Laxman's dignity and self-respect.

Vishwamitra decided therefore to stay outside the city in deference to the self-respect and dignity of two great princes Ram and Laxman, and wait for king Janak to come himself and welcome them.]

भलेहिं नाथ कहि कृपानिकेता । उतरे तहँ मुनिबृंद समेता ॥ ७ ॥
बिस्वामित्र महामुनि आए । समाचार मिथिलापति पाए ॥ ८ ॥

bhalēhiṁ nātha kahi krpānikētā. utarē taham̃ munibr̃nda samētā. 7.
bisvāmitra mahāmuni ā'ē. samācāra mithilāpati pā'ē. 8.

The Lord (Ram), who is like a treasury and abode of grace, mercy and compassion, replied—‘Alright Lord, so be it.’ Then the Lord, along with his brother Laxman and sage Vishwamitra, stopped at the selected place to stay during their visit to Janakpur¹. (7)

Meanwhile, the king of Mithila (king Janak) heard the news that the great sage Vishwamitra has come². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram is described as being merciful and gracious here because he realised that all the sages in the group were tired and wanted to rest. If he insisted to move further ahead in his eagerness to enter the city, they will not find rest. Besides this, sages are accustomed to live in natural surroundings, and not in congested places or guest houses of a city. So even if they moved ahead and actually entered the city to take up lodging in some guest house or inn specially prepared to host visitors coming to attend the bow-ceremony, it will cause great inconvenience to the accompanying sages.

Hence, he readily agreed at once to the suggestion of Vishwamitra to pitch camp in the mango grove. Surely, if it was to the liking of sage Vishwamitra it would also be to the liking of other sages in the group, the Lord deduced.

It is important to note here that the ‘merciful and compassionate’ Lord gave precedence to the convenience of the sages over his own comfort. Personally he would have been more comfortable in a building with all facilities as he was a prince accustomed to material comforts, but the happiness of sages was of priority for him. Therefore instead of suggesting politely that it would be better to enter the city and find accommodation in some inn or lodging place, he agreed to encamp in the open ground.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 61, stanza no. 1 also.

It is obvious here that sage Vishwamitra came to Janakpur without making any fuss; he came in unnoticed and quietly with the two brothers without any prior knowledge of king Janak. Numerous sages, kings and princes were coming to attend the Bow-breaking ceremony, and all the roads leading to Janakpur were filled with numerous entourages of kings who were accompanied by their royal paraphernalia and retinue of attendants and train of courtiers, as well as sages and seers who came with their disciples and juniors. Hence, no one paid any attention to the three visitors. They selected a place for their stay, spread their sitting mats on the ground, and put

down the little provisions that they carried with them for the journey. The wise and learned sage wished to keep a low profile as is the wont of those who are truly elevated in stature, for they don't want to show-off themselves anywhere. But as it is hard for the sun to hide its presence, so it is also hard for such illustrious souls as sage Vishwamitra to remain incognito for a long time, for their glorious reputation and name would almost always make their presence known inspite of their best effort to avoid publicity.

So it happened that king Janak had appointed countless servants and ushers to welcome all visitors and make sure they are well looked after and proper arrangements are made for them in accordance to their status and likings. Some of them approached sage Vishwamitra to enquire who he was; as for Lord Ram and Laxman they deemed them to be the sage's disciples. When they came to know who this sage was, one of them ran to inform the king, that the great sage named Vishwamitra has come. Remember: Vishwamitra was not an ordinary sage; he was well known in the world of that time. Though the servants and ushers may not have recognized him in the beginning as all the sages and seers who had come more or less had the same outwardly appearances, but as soon as they heard his name they immediately recognized him, and wasted no time to rush to inform their king, Janak, of the sage's arrival.]

दो०. संग सचिव सुचि भूरि भट भूसुर बर गुर ग्याति ।

चले मिलन मुनिनायकहि मुदित राउ एहि भाँति ॥ २१४ ॥

dōhā.

saṅga saciva suci bhūri bhaṭa bhūsura bara gura gyāti.
calē milana munināyakahi mudita rā'u ēhi bhāmṭi. 214.

As soon as he (Janak) got this news, the king summoned his senior ministers who were wise and noble-hearted, as well as many senior warriors, army commanders, noble Brahmins, his Guru (royal priest, Shatanand), and other senior members of the royal family and members of the society, and proceeded very cheerfully to meet the great sage (Vishwamitra) who himself was like a king amongst sages. (Doha no. 214)

[Note—It is noteworthy here that Vishwamitra is described as being a 'king amongst sages'. The idea is that one great king (Janak) is going to meet another great king (Vishwamitra), albeit they belonged to two different vocations in life—for one was a sovereign of a kingdom, and the other was a sovereign amongst sages and seers! They were outstanding examples of great, noble, illustrious and accomplished souls in their respective fields.

Remember: King Janak was highly regarded as an enlightened king of his time. He was well versed in metaphysics and was a highly realised soul. This proof lies in the fact that he used to hold regular religious conclaves in a grand scale where not only discourses were given by great seers, sages and scriptural scholars but special sessions for debates and discussions were held where great prizes were announced for the winner. This is evident when we study the Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda where one such episode is narrated in its Canto 3.

It is also described in the same Upanishad how Janak had discussed profound metaphysical topics with the great sage Yagyawalkya in Canto 4.

Another place where sage Yagyawalkya teaches king Janak is the Brihajjabal Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition. In its Brahman (Canto) 7, verse nos. 1-4, the king is taught on the spiritual importance of the sacred ash known as the Bhasma. Verse no. 5 of this Brahman 7 says that king Janak accompanied sage Pippallaad to the divine abode of Prajapati Brahma, the creator, to learn more about the Bhasma. This shows that Janak was a contemporary of sage Pippallaad.

The level of Janak's learning and erudition is evident from another incident when sage Shukdeo, the enlightened son of sage Veda Vyas who had classified the Vedas, compiled the Upanishads, and written the voluminous Purans, was advised by his learned father to go to king Janak to learn profound principles of metaphysics and spiritualism. Janak had tested Shukdeo's eligibility, aptitude and competence by making him wait for prolonged time before even giving him a hearing. The entire episode along with the profound teachings of Janak forms the subject matter of the text of Canto 2 of the Maho-panishad of the Sam Veda tradition.]

चौ०. कीन्ह प्रनामु चरन धरि माथा । दीन्हि असीस मुदित मुनिनाथा ॥ १ ॥

बिप्रबृन्द सब सादर बंदे । जानि भाग्य बड़ राउ अनंदे ॥ २ ॥

कुसल प्रस्न कहि बारहिं बारा । बिस्वामित्र नृपहि बैठारा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāṭī.

kīnha pranāmu carana dhari māthā. dīnhi asīsa mudita munināthā. 1.

biprabṛnda saba sādara bandē. jāni bhāgya baṛa rā'u anandē. 2.

kusala prasna kahi bārahim bārā. bisvāmitra nṛpahi baiṭhārā. 3.

[As soon as king Janak came to know that the great sage Vishwamitra has come to pay a visit, he made haste to go and receive the sage without any waste of time. It was a matter of great honour for the king that Vishwamitra has come at a time when the Bow-breaking ceremony was to be held, and it would be rare chance that the king would get to receive the great sage's blessings on this auspicious occasion. It would be a matter of great privilege and honour that a great sage of Vishwamitra's stature would attend the ceremony and sit by the side of the king during the course of the ceremony, as it would bestow him immense respect in the community of his peers, the great kings and princes of the world.

The following verses describe the meeting between sage Vishwamitra and king Janak.]¹

The king (Janak) bowed before the sage (Vishwamitra) by putting his head on his feet. The sage on his part cheerfully blessed the king. (1)

The king then paid his respects to all the accompanying sages, and felt very privileged and glad to have the opportunity to pay his obeisance to so many great holy men who have come to visit him. (2)

Then sage Vishwamitra repeatedly asked the king about his welfare and respectfully gave him a seat to sit down near him. (3)

[Note—¹Meeting of Janak and sage Vishwamitra has also been briefly described in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 61.

It is a normal practice that when a group of noble men or holy men arrive at someone's place, the host shows special honours to the chief of the group. In this case, the chief was sage Vishwamitra, so king put his head on his feet to honour him and pay his respects to him. For the rest of the sages he may have simply bowed his head and offered his greetings.

Similarly, sage Vishwamitra reciprocated Janak's gesture by giving him special blessings and asking about his welfare. This does not mean that he neglected others in the king's company—there were senior ministers, army commanders, Brahmins, members of the royal family and even the royal priest. All of them were shown due respect, but special attention was paid to their king, Janak.

A very significant point is to be noted here. When sage Vishwamitra met king Dasrath, he did not either bless him or asked for his welfare, whereas here he is doing it with respect to Janak. [Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 207 with respect to the sage's meeting with Dasrath.]

The reason is that in the case of Dasrath, the sage was under great mental tension as he was unsure whether or not the king would accept his request to send Ram and Laxman with him. The sage wanted to maintain his dignified posture and the external appearance of not being too submissive before the king to hint him that he is serious on the matter for which he has come, and would not tolerate dithering and fooling around. The sage willingly created a stern atmosphere about himself so that Dasrath would think thrice before denying. But the sage learnt a bitter lesson there. He discovered to his horror that the king did not fear him at all, and he straight away refused to send Ram and Laxman with him.

Then the sage must have realised that had he been courteous and shown due respect to the king, there were greater chances of him accepting his request. The sage deduced that the king was afraid of the sage's stern manners, and that he did not wish to send his beloved sons with such a stern-looking sage who did not even know how to smile. The king feared that his sons would be treated roughly and without the basic respect they deserved as princes if he did send them with Vishwamitra who does not know how to properly treat kings and their family members.

So this time when he met Janak he acted courteously and showed due respect to the king. Then again, on this occasion he had no mental tension, and was in a cheerful mood. There was no element of uncertainty this time around, as he knew the forthcoming developments due to his foresight.

Another factor was that this time he had Lord Ram and Laxman with him, and he had already discovered their potentials and might. So he was very certain that he would not go empty-handed from the bow-breaking ceremony. The very fact that Janak was the father of Sita, the personified form of goddess Laxmi and the divine consort of Lord Ram was one other factor for the sage showing so much respect to him.

But the most important factor which made Vishwamitra show so much respect to him as compared to Dasrath was the fact that the sage knew about the level of Janak's spiritual enlightenment, his erudition and sagacity, his knowledge of metaphysical principles and scriptures. So Janak deserved this respect. Refer to note of Doha no. 214 above. Unfortunately, though Lord Vishnu became a son of Dasrath in the form of Lord Ram, the king was no match with Janak in this respect. And this is the reason why Vishwamitra desisted in showing great respect to Dasrath other than mere formalities.]

तेहि अवसर आए दोउ भाई । गए रहे देखन फुलवाई ॥ ४ ॥
 स्याम गौर मृदु बयस किसोरा । लोचन सुखद बिस्व चित चोरा ॥ ५ ॥
 उठे सकल जब रघुपति आए । बिस्वामित्र निकट बैठाए ॥ ६ ॥

tēhi avasara ā'ē dō'u bhā'ī. ga'ē rahē dēkhana phulavā'ī. 4.
 syāma gaura mṛdu bayasa kisōrā. lōcana sukhada bisva cita cōrā. 5.
 uṭhē sakala jaba raghupati ā'ē. bisvāmitra nikaṭa baiṭhā'ē. 6.

At that moment, the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) arrived there. They had gone away to see the flower garden¹. (4)

They had dark and fair complexions respectively, were of a young age, delicate in countenance, and presented a sight that provided bliss to the eyes of the beholder. There is no wonder in it because their charm was so astounding that it held the entire world enthralled and captivated. (5)

When the Lord of the Raghu's dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram) came, everyone stood up. [Wonderful! It was a spontaneous response. The two brothers had such a dynamic personality, an air of elegance, authority and dignity around them that all the assembled people were instantly impressed and concluded that some great prince has walked in. This is what Vishwamitra had really wanted—that the brothers' should make a dramatic presence before king Janak and his courtiers when they had finished their formal exchange of pleasantries with the guest sage so that their undivided attention could be focused on Lord Ram and Laxman.]²

Sage Vishwamitra affectionately seated them beside him³. (6)

[Note—¹When Janak came, Lord Ram and Laxman were out visiting some garden. They arrived at the scene when all were seated. As soon as they came, all eyes turned towards them, and all those present were dumb-struck by their charm and bewitching beauty. Their eyes seemed to be riveted at Lord Ram and Laxman.

Perhaps the two brothers had gone to fetch flowers for sage Vishwamitra so that he can do his worship rituals. Or perhaps they had gone out of curiosity to see the nearby garden while the sages did their daily worship rituals and rested.

Sage Vishwamitra had purposely sent them the garden to avoid their presence at the time Janak arrives. This is because the wise sage correctly thought that at the moment the king arrives, the latter's attention would be focused on the sage, wishing him and paying his obeisance to him. This would mean that Ram and Laxman, who were not only great princes but ones with astounding potentials and divine powers to whom special treatment should be normally given, would be neglected. There were many other sages in the group, and the king would not pay equal attention to each of them; it is practically not possible. The king would naturally think that these two boys were some students of Vishwamitra who have accompanied him to Janakpur like so many other sages in the group.

Vishwamitra would not like this to happen. He planned things in such a way that when Lord Ram and Laxman are first seen by the king and his retinue, all attention is focused on these two brothers. So he told them to go to the garden to bring

flowers for his worship formalities, timing their coming back so that the king would have completed his welcoming formalities and would be in a relaxed mind.

²As has been noted above in the note of verse no. 5, Vishwamitra's tactic worked extremely well. When Lord Ram and Laxman arrived, all those present were stunned by their dynamic personality. It was obvious to them that they were not ordinary princes but some exalted and highly acclaimed personalities who deserve respect and honour. This is proved by all of them standing up spontaneously.

³Vishwamitra wanted to be sure that the assembled persons understood that these two boys are very special. So he called them and gave them a seat close to himself—indicating that he loves them and they are very dear and close to him.

The assembly, which was already wonderstruck by the two princes, was more awed when they saw that the great sage Vishwamitra was showing such love and affection to them, treating them with respect himself by calling them near and giving them a seat near his own. That means, they obviously deduced, that these two princes were very special.

Once Lord Ram and Laxman were seated, all the rest also took their respective seats and sat down before the sage.]

भए सब सुखी देखि दोउ भ्राता । बारि बिलोचन पुलकित गाता ॥ ७ ॥
मूरति मधुर मनोहर देखी । भयउ बिदेहु बिदेहु बिसेषी ॥ ८ ॥

bha'e saba sukhī dēkhi dō'u bhrātā. bāri bilōcana pulakita gātā. 7.
mūrati madhura manōhara dēkhī. bhaya'u bidēhu bidēhu bisēṣī. 8.

When the assembled people (i.e. king Janak, his courtiers, ministers, the royal priest and the Brahmains who had accompanied the king to welcome the sage) saw the two brothers, all of them felt extremely glad and exhilarated so much so that tears of ecstasy gushed out of their eyes and their bodies become thrilled. (7)

King Janak was known as 'Videha' (literally one who has no awareness of his gross physical body because he is enlightened and remains submerged in the thoughts of the Atma, the pure conscious soul, by being virtually in a state of perpetual Samadhi, a trance-like state of transcendental existence). When he (Videha) saw the extremely sweet, bewitchingly beautiful and very enchanting image (form) of the Lord, he was so ecstatic that he lost whatever awareness he had of himself and his surroundings. That is, he truly became a 'Videha'—one who has no awareness or consciousness of the existence of the physical body and his surroundings.

[Lord Ram's enigmatic beauty and magnetic charm that were of an esoteric and enigmatic nature had completely bowled-over Janak, and for once he forgot that he is supposed to be immune to physical charms and attractions, a virtue that has given him the name of 'Videha'—i.e. one who is not aware of his physical body and the senses of perception that make this body aware of the gross outside world and become attracted to or attached with it, for it is supposed that Janak was a highly self-realised soul who was a true ascetic from the within, while acting the role of a king from the without.] (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 61, stanza no. 3 also.

We see with our eyes; the perception of beauty is the subject matter of the eye. So when the assembly saw Lord Ram and Laxman's beautiful forms, their eyes responded with tears of joy. The august assembly became ecstatic and emotional upon seeing them. It was a natural surge of love and affection that heaved in their hearts, forcing tears to well-up and stream out of their eyes spontaneously in response.

King Janak too was ecstatic, but his condition was far more emotional than the rest of assembled people. This is because he was highly self-realised and always remained engrossed in perpetual meditation. The Atma, a person's soul, is pure consciousness, and it is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Consciousness. This cosmic Consciousness is represented by Lord Ram as he is a personified form of the Supreme Being.

Just like the case of the mighty ocean heaving at the sight of the full moon, causing high tides, the blissful state of Janak reached a new high of ecstasy when he saw Lord Ram. His individual Atma heaved and surged forward when it came near the supreme Atma, the 'Parmatma' represented by Lord Ram, attempting to extend its reach to subtly touch it and draw in from the eternal fountain of supreme bliss.

This situation can be understood by another example. When a very powerful and huge piece of magnet is brought near smaller pieces of magnets, it is the latter that are attracted to the former, and not the other way round. So, when the cosmic Consciousness, the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma, was so near, the fraction of it that lived in the body of Janak as his individual Atma was instantly attracted to it like the smaller magnet getting pulled towards the large magnet.

The condition of Janak can be compared to the bird known as Chakor. When this bird sees the full moon, it forgets about everything else and fixes its gaze on it. When the moon travels across the sky, the Chakor too follows its path, bending its head and slowly turning it to follow the moon.

Janak was stunned and amazed beyond measure; he became speechless and immobile. This condition of his is being so immobilised and speechless is summarized here by saying that 'he truly became a Videha'—one who has lost complete awareness of his physical body and its surroundings; one who loses all consciousness of the presence of his body.

We shall read later on that the wise king Janak had once again forgot about his reputation as a wise and enlightened king who is detached from the world and neutral towards all its attractions when he had become emotional at the time of Sita's departure with Lord Ram for Ayodhya after their marriage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 338. At that time also, the erudite poet-bard Tulsidas has used the word "Videha" to drive home the point that in spite of being detached and dispassionate towards this gross world, Janak had for once lost all self-control out of his love for Sita and Lord Ram.]

दो०. प्रेम मगन मनु जानि नृपु करि बिबेकु धरि धीर ।

बोलेउ मुनि पद नाइ सिरु गदगद गिरा गभीर ॥ २१५ ॥

dōhā.

prēma magana manu jāni nṛpu kari bibēku dhari dhīra.
bōlē'u muni pada nā'i siru gadagada girā gabhīra. 215.

When the king realised that his Mana (mind and heart) have become overwhelmed with surging waves of love and affections, he used his wisdom and prudence to regain his poise and recover his senses.

He bowed at the feet of the sage (Vishwamitra), and, recollecting himself, said the following words in a voice soaked in emotions and with a throat that was choked. (Doha no. 215)

[Note—Janak was not a child. For some moments he was so overcome with spiritual bliss and emotions that came to him on coming into contact with Lord Ram that he couldn't control himself, and inspite of being aware that there were so many people watching him closely, Janak fell into a trance like state that comes with attainment of spiritual bliss and ecstasy when one reaches a higher state of transcendental existence in meditation, which are called Turiya and Turiyateet.

From the perspective of the mortal world, it was like the case of tired man coming under the cool shade of a tree where a soft breeze blows and the fragrance of its flowers pervades the surrounding area; this tired and weary person cannot remain uninfluenced or unaffected or unimpressed by this rejuvenating and reinvigorating atmosphere. He is bound to soak in it, and forget about everything else in the world.

So it was with Janak, but nevertheless he soon recovered his poise for he remembered that so many things have to be done at that moment, and it was not the right time to enter into trance like state of spiritual bliss and ecstasy. He became practical, and waking up from his dream-like state of ecstasy and bliss by breaking free from its overwhelming spell after a short while, he gathered himself sufficiently to speak to sage Vishwamitra.

The following verses narrate what Janak told Vishwamitra, and what the sage replied.]

चौ०. कहहु नाथ सुंदर दोउ बालक । मुनिकुल तिलक कि नृप कुल पालक ॥१ ॥
ब्रह्म जो निगम नेति कहि गावा । उभय बेष धरि की सोइ आवा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu nātha sundara dō'u bālaka. munikula tilaka ki nṛpa kula pālaka. 1.
brahma jō nigama nēti kahi gāvā. ubhaya bēṣa dhari kī sō'i āvā. 2.

King Janak asked sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh Lord, tell me who these two charming, pretty boys are. Are they the exalted sons of some sage’s family, or are they the princes of some great king?’¹ (1)

Or is it that Brahm, the Supreme Being whom the Vedas describe as being ‘Neti-Neti’ (not that; not this)², have himself taken two physical forms (as these two princes)³? (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 64—65 also.

The king had observed that sage Vishwamitra had lovingly called and seated the two brothers close to him. Refer Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 215. So he thought that they may be the sons of some great sage.

But then he changed his view because the two boys had the appearance of princes—they had bows and arrows in their hands, and a quiver tied to the waist.

Their demeanours and attitudes were like dignified princes of some noble dynasty. So he asked the sage whether they belonged to some kingly family.

²But again he thought the matter over and changed his view. The way his heart and mind felt instant ecstasy when he saw them made him sure that they can't be ordinary human beings. Remember: Janak was not an ordinary king; he was exceptionally wise and highly enlightened. So it was not possible that his mind and heart would jump with joy as they did for ordinary mortals. The king deduced that the Atma residing in the body of these two princes was very powerful, strong enough to attract his own Atma. For a self-realised and enlightened man, this is only possible if he comes in contact with a superior Being. So the king deduced that in all probability, these two boys were personified forms of Brahm.

The word 'Neti' is used universally by the scriptures to describe Brahm. The word means 'not this not that'. In other words, the scriptures try their best to explain who or what this mysterious cosmic entity known as 'Brahm' is by giving examples and citing instances from the visible world as well as the subtle world beyond vision. But all their attempts to fully describe Brahm fail miserably.

To understand this phenomenon we can take a well-known example. A blind man wants to learn what an elephant looks like. He touches the elephant's leg and then its tail and then its trunk. To him, all feel alike. He asks another man who can see if what he touches is the 'elephant'. The answer is yes and no. Similarly, since everything that exists is a manifestation of Brahm, it represents a minute fraction of the cosmic form of Brahm. But the knowledge of this fractional entity of Brahm does not mean that the person who is acquainted with it is also acquainted with Brahm in its entirety, in its vast, all-encompassing cosmic form. That is why the scriptures ultimately declare that whatever they have said about the Supreme Being does not describe him in entirety. In other words, Brahm is what is visible, understandable and perceptible, as well as that which is invisible, that which is incomprehensible, and that which is imperceptible. It is therefore neither this nor that; it cannot be confined to some criterion and measurable unit. Brahm is present as the life-force in a single-celled organism as he is present in the huge elephant and the most complex of animals, the human race. He is revealed as a stone as much as in the form of air, water, sky and fire.

The existence of Brahm is said to be at two levels: one that is macrocosmic, and the other that is microcosmic. Brahm is invisible like air, as well as visible in the form of the visible world. Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness, that is a subtle entity that uniformly pervades throughout this creation, and at the same time it is also known as the individual creature with an independent Atma which is also pure consciousness that resides in his physical gross body. This simply means that Brahm has a dual existence.

This is what Janak means here. He wonders if the supreme Atma known as Parmatma or Brahm has revealed himself in the body of these two princes. There is an interesting interpretation here. If it is true that Brahm has indeed revealed himself in a physical form, Janak's words assume special meaning: if that is the case, then Lord Ram represents Brahm and Laxman represents his image, like the case of the creature being an image of the Viraat Purush, the cosmic form of Brahm.

An image is a virtual reflection of the principal object; it is like the case of an object's reflection in a mirror. The reflection follows the principal object; if the latter moves then the image or the reflection also moves. This is absolutely true and applicable with Laxman vis-à-vis Lord Ram. Laxman is like the shadow of Lord Ram;

he never leaves the Lord even for a moment. Even when Lord Ram had to go to the forest to kill the demons, Laxman followed him like his shadow.

³Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and Laxman represents Prakriti, Nature. ‘Brahm, who is the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness, is an invisible entity, but ‘Prakriti’ or Nature is the visible aspect of this Brahm. Both these two entities—Brahm and Prakriti—are infinite and beyond the limited viewing field of a creature’s gross body consisting of the organ of perceiving the sights of the world that is known as the eye, as well as his subtle organ known as the mind and intellect that can see and understand things not seen and perceived by any of the physical organs of the body besides the eye.

So, Janak means that his wisdom tells him that in all probability the same Brahm and Prakriti have manifested themselves in the body of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively.]

सहज बिरागरूप मनु मोरा । थकित होत जिमि चंद चकोरा ॥ ३ ॥
ताते प्रभु पूछुँ सतिभाऊ । कहहु नाथ जनि करहु दुराऊ ॥ ४ ॥
इन्हि बिलोकत अति अनुरागा । बरबस ब्रह्मसुखहि मन त्यागा ॥ ५ ॥

sahaja birāgarūpa manu mōrā. thakita hōta jimi canda cakōrā. 3.
tātē prabhu pūcha'um̐ satibhā'ū. kahahu nātha jani karahu durā'ū. 4.
inhahi bilōkata ati anurāgā. barabasa brahmasukhahi mana tyāgā. 5.

[Janak continued—] ‘My mind and heart (Mana) are completely dispassionate towards and detached from this world, but suddenly I find them so extremely enchanted and captivated by them (Ram and Laxman) as if the Chakor bird is watching the full moon. [Chakor, the Indian red-legged partridge) is so enamoured of the moon that it fixes its sight on the latter when it rises in the east, and turns its head to maintain its gaze on the moon till it sets in the west. Janak means that like this bird, he is also unable to move his attention away from Lord Ram and Laxman.] (3)

That is why, oh Lord, I am asking you this question. Please be kind to enlighten me, and do not conceal anything from me. (4)

I have developed immense affection for them as soon as I saw them. Their divine vision has forced my mind and heart to leave the bliss that they obtain by remaining submerged in the thoughts of Brahm (by meditating and remaining in a perpetual state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of blissful existence), and instead focus their attention on them.

[This is quite uncharacteristic for me. This has made me perplexed as to why it has come to happen at all. This is the reason why I am asking you to tell me truthfully who these two boys are.]’ (5)

[Note—King Janak effectively told sage Vishwamitra that—“Oh sage, I remain submerged in a virtual state of Samadhi, a transcendental state of existence when a person goes about his normal duties in this physical world but remains engrossed in meditating upon his ‘self’, the pure conscious Atma. Hence, it is not easily that I am disturbed. But I am astonished that in the case of these two brothers, once I looked at

them I feel that I have been rewarded for my meditation. This can only happen when my Atma witnesses the presence of the Parmatma, the supreme Atma. This is why I am confused and want to know from you who they are.”

Being self-realised and spiritually enlightened, it is not possible for Janak to be enchanted by anything pertaining to this mortal world. The very fact that it did happen, the very fact that his mind and heart have become so enchanted by the sight of Ram and Laxman, is a sufficient proof that these two princes are not ordinary humans. They are sure to be divine Spirit in a human body.

King Janak was aware that sage Vishwamitra might question his assumption that these two brothers are a personified form of Brahm. So the wise king himself pre-empted this by telling the reason for this assumption of his—he says that he is a dispassionate person who has no attractions for the world, and therefore he is not charmed by the physical features of the two brothers. There must certainly be some hidden cause that has attracted his mind and heart to them.]

कह मुनि बिहसि कहेहु नृप नीका । बचन तुझार न होइ अलीका ॥ ६ ॥
 ए प्रिय सबहि जहाँ लागि प्रानी । मन मुसुकाहिं रामु सुनि बानी ॥ ७ ॥
 रघुकुल मनि दसरथ के जाए । मम हित लागि नरेस पठाए ॥ ८ ॥

kaha muni bihasi kahēhu nr̥pa nīkā. bacana tumhāra na hō'i alīkā. 6.
 ē priya sabahi jahām̐ lagi prānī. mana musukāhiṁ rāmu suni bānī. 7.
 raghukula mani dasaratha kē jā'ē. mama hita lāgi narēsa paṭhā'ē. 8.

The sage smiled politely and replied to the king—‘Oh king! What you have said cannot be wrong (because you are wise and enlightened). You have said the correct thing¹. (6)

(The sage continued) ‘They are dear to all the creatures; they are loved by all living beings.²

When Lord Ram heard this, he smiled softly to himself.² (7)

The sage then told king Janak—‘These two boys are like gems of king Raghu’s dynasty, and are the sons of king Dasrath. The king has sent them for my cause, to help me.³’ (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 66—67 also.

This is a remarkable reply of the sage. In a single sentence he has endorsed what the wise king had said about Ram—that is, Lord Ram is sure to be a visible manifestation of Brahm, and Laxman is another form of Brahm. This subtly endorses the theory of ‘duality’ that Janak was referring to. That is, the sage agreed that the formless supreme Brahm has indeed come down to reveal himself in a physical form. At the same time the sage remained silent about openly endorsing that Lord Ram was indeed Brahm personified. It was essential to keep the true identity of Lord Ram a secret because the main purpose of Lord Vishnu coming down to earth was to kill the cruel and sinful demons, and if his true identity was revealed then the whole planning would go for a toss. The demons would run away and hide somewhere, or they would come and surrender before the Lord, bidding for their time when Lord Ram would

wind up his earthly sojourn and ascend to the heaven when they would once again surface with renewed vigour and resume their tyranny.

Besides this, the Lord had to perform many acts as an ordinary human to set an example for other human beings to follow in their daily lives. The Lord had planned to act as a living example of the principles of Dharma (laws of auspicious living, laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, ethics and morality) so that other people could emulate him in their own lives when they faced similar situation. Indeed, the entire story of the Ramayan is pregnant with instances of Dharma being practiced in daily life, as well as of the different opposing situations that confront a man in this world and leave him confused as to what is right and what is wrong. In such vexing circumstances, the life and times of Lord Ram stand him in good stead and act like a lighthouse for the boat trapped in the choppy ocean of the world.

This noble objective would have been defeated if the Lord's cosmic supreme form had been revealed. It is left for the future generation to bask in the divinity and sublimity of the Lord's glory just like the case of Lord Jesus Christ whose divinity was known only to a selected few while he was alive, but his glory, his fame and his message became immortal after his physical death on the cross.

The sage hinted to the wise king that after having known who Lord Ram truly is, he too must keep quiet and retain this revelation within his heart, without disclosing it to anyone else. The king got this hint, because all future events show that he acted normally and treated Ram and Laxman like normal princes.

²This is a marvelous statement of sage Vishwamitra, completely removing Janak's doubts and firmly endorsing his view that Lord Ram is Brahm personified.

It clearly refers to the 'Atma' which is the pure conscious soul and the life-giving entity of any living being. All the scriptures universally say that a creature's Atma is a fraction of the supreme Atma known as the Parmatma. Only those who are self-realised and enlightened know this fact, and this is why they remain submerged in meditating upon this Atma because it gives them the bliss of Brahm-realisation.

The gross body of a living being is of no use either to him or the rest of the world if this body has no 'life or consciousness' in it; it would be dead and decay rapidly. Every single living being loves his own life, called his 'Pran'. This Pran is dear to all. The word 'Pran' however, also means the vital life-sustaining winds that live inside the body of the creature. But one word has many connotations and cannot be restricted to mean only one particular thing. Hence, Pran means life as well as anything which is extremely dear to someone.

Therefore, the 'Atma', the pure consciousness, is also the 'Pran', the dearest thing for any living being, because the body cannot survive without the Atma.

²When Lord Ram heard this, he smiled—for one he hinted to both sage Vishwamitra and to king Janak that it is indeed so, and second, he was embarrassed that he is being praised on his face. When Janak got this stamp of endorsement from the learned sage, his gaze upon Ram became more intense and penetrating. This was one more cause for Lord Ram to smile and subtly acknowledge Janak's respect and love for him.

The Lord subtly told Janak that "Wait, like my father Dasrath all your wisdom will soon vanish in thin air. Soon you will forget who I am, and you will start treating me as a prince and later on as your son-in-law. Wait and watch my maverick Maya cast its net upon your wisdom."

³The sage had previously told Janak that his words can't be wrong. Janak and Vishwamitra were both enlightened souls. So the first thing that mattered to them was the fact that Lord Ram was Brahm personified. In all probability, the sage disclosed this fact to Janak in a confidential tone. This was actually possible because they were sitting close by, and when two chiefs are having some confidential discussion, their attendants are not supposed to poke their ears to listen what is being discussed or said. The attendants stand at a respectable distance and let the two chiefs talk.

So, no one else, either the accompanying sages of Vishwamitra, or the king's ministers, officials and Brahmins who accompanied him in his entourage, knew what answer sage Vishwamitra gave in relation to Janak's question "are these brothers Brahm personified".

This fact settled, they then came to more practical things. Yes, the sage told the king, these two boys were princes belonging to a noble and reputed lineage of kings of the Raghu dynasty.

The first question of the king "are they some great sage's son" is also answered subtly here. Remember: when Dasrath had handed Ram and Laxman to sage Vishwamitra, he had told him that now onwards, the sage is like their father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208 above. Hence, for all practical purposes, the sage is the father of Lord Ram and Laxman at present.

This also solves the mystery why the sage had affectionately called the two brothers near him and gave him a seat beside him. The exalted sage is like their 'father' at the moment. And like a loving father, he lovingly seated the two brothers near him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 215 above.

Thus we see that all the three things that Janak had said were true—i.e. that Lord Ram and Laxman were like the sons of a great sage Vishwamitra, they were also the sons of a great king Dasrath, and they were personified forms of the Supreme Being known as Brahm.]

दो०. रामु लखनु दोउ बंधुबर रूप सील बल धाम ।

मख राखेउ सबु साखि जगु जिते असुर संग्राम ॥ २१६ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu lakhanu dō'u bandhubara rūpa sīla bala dhāma.

makha rākhē'u sabu sākhi jagu jitē asura saṅgrāma. 216.

The sage concluded introducing the two brothers to king Janak by saying—"Their names are Ram and Laxman, and they are brothers. They are like a treasury of politeness and humbleness, as well as of strength and valour.

The whole world is witness to the fact that they have protected my fire sacrifice by defeating and conquering the demons who had been defiling it.' (Doha no. 216)

[Note—In order to impress upon king Janak that the two brothers are not merely princes of a great kingdom, but they deserve special mention as they have protected his fire sacrifice by killing fierce demons, the sage concluded their introduction with this final comment.

Kings honour warriors; great warriors are respected and honoured everywhere. When a king comes to learn that the person standing in front of him is a renowned warrior of great strength and valour, and he has done certain valorous deeds no one has yet dared to do, he develops special respect for that person. The sage also wanted to hint that this is one of the many reasons why he loves Lord Ram and Laxman so much as if they were like his own sons.

This last statement of introduction by the sage immediately inspired great respect for the two brothers in members of the king's entourage.

The sage knew very well that the king had organized the bow-breaking ceremony to select a warrior for his daughter Sita. Only someone of exceptional strength and power would be able to lift the bow which was anyhow not an ordinary one but one that belonged to Lord Shiva. Lifting it, stringing it and then breaking it was no child's play. Janak was in search for a strong prince as groom for his daughter, for otherwise he would have made some other condition. So one purpose of sage Vishwamitra telling Janak about these marvelous feats of Lord Ram (protecting his fire sacrifice and killing the fierce demons) was to make him aware that his search for a brave warrior has ended, though the sage knew that Janak is very steadfast in his vows and would not so easily go back on his own declaration.

But at the same time it must not be forgotten that sage Vishwamitra was said to 'Trikaalagya'—one who knew about the past, the present and the future. So in effect he was hinting to king Janak that he need not worry if no other prince is able to break the bow and marry Sita according to his vows. His wishes would be fulfilled as Lord Ram is there to step in at the correct time. Unfortunately, king Janak could not decipher this message of the sage as is proved by subsequent developments during the actual bow-breaking ceremony. When no one was able to lift the bow, the king was confounded and heart-broken. He angrily chided all of them and went to the extent of calling them impotent. He had forgotten about this subtle hint of Vishwamitra at that time—that the greatest warrior of the land, Lord Ram, is sitting in their midst and the Lord has not been given a chance yet before Janak started fretting so much about no one being able to move the bow even by a fraction of a millimeter. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.

This goes to confirm the view that Lord Ram smiled at Janak when sage Vishwamitra agreed with him that Lord Ram is indeed the Supreme Being himself in a human form. The Lord's smile was mischievous—he smiled because he knew that soon all this wisdom and realisation would vanish in thin air, and under the influence of his stupendous Maya, the same king who knows that he is the Supreme Being, and who will be told in express terms about his worldly valour of having killed formidable demons, would wail and lament that the earth is devoid of warriors who would lift Shiva's bow! Refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216 above.

This is also the primary reason why Laxman became very angry and strongly admonished king Janak in open court when the latter lamented and said that he is dismayed to find that the earth is void of warriors. Laxman was astonished that Janak—who only the previous day when he had come to meet and welcome them at their camp on the outskirts of the city, seemed to be so wise and enlightened that he said that he knows who Lord Ram actually was, and sage Vishwamitra had also endorsed his views, and added to this was the sage's telling him about the fantastic deed of killing the demon army by the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman—should now make such an insinuating remark that the earth is devoid of true warrior. Refer:

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—
to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254.]

चौ०. मुनि तव चरन देखि कह राऊ । कहि न सकउँ निज पुन्य प्रभाऊ ॥ १ ॥
सुंदर स्याम गौर दोउ भ्राता । आनँदहू के आनँद दाता ॥ २ ॥
इन्ह कै प्रीति परसपर पावनि । कहि न जाइ मन भाव सुहावनि ॥ ३ ॥
सुनहु नाथ कह मुदित बिदेहू । ब्रह्म जीव इव सहज सनेहू ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

muni tava carana dēkhi kaha rā'ū. kahi na saka'um' nija pun'ya prabhā'ū. 1.
sundara syāma gaura dō'u bhrātā. ānam'dahū kē ānam'da dātā. 2.
inha kai prīti parasapara pāvani. kahi na jā'i mana bhāva suhāvani. 3.
sunahu nātha kaha mudita bidēhū. brahma jīva iva sahaja sanēhū. 4.

The king (Janak) thanked his good luck and told sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh sage! When I have seen your holy feet I feel so honoured and privileged that I am unable to say what good deeds I had done in my previous life that has rewarded me with this good fortune.’¹ (1)

‘The sight of these two lovely (pretty) brothers, who are of a dark and fair complexion respectively, immensely add to the intensity of delight and happiness that one has. [This verse can be read as follows as well—“These two beautiful brothers of a dark and fair complexion respectively add glory, depth and immensity to the emotions of delight and happiness that exist anywhere in this world.”]² (2)

The mutual love and affection that these two brothers have for each other is indeed exemplary. Their brotherly attitude is extremely pleasant to experience and so remarkable that I (Janak) cannot describe it in words.’ (3)

The king further said very cheerfully, ‘Listen Lord (sage Vishwamitra). Their mutual affection for each other is like what the Jiva has for Brahm.’² (4)

[Note—¹When one does some meritorious deed, reward becomes due to him. Janak thanks his past good deeds that have entitled him to have the rare spiritual reward of having the privilege of meeting not only sage Vishwamitra but also Lord Ram and Laxman whom the king himself recognized as personified forms of the Supreme Being. What more can any living being expect for his meritorious deeds?

Without some auspicious deed no spiritual reward accumulates, and without it it’s not possible to meet a saint and holy man. Company of saints, sages and pious men is a harbinger of all good fortunes. It’s a sort of a chain reaction—one does good deeds and becomes entitled for rewards, then he meets saints, and their auspicious company acts as a catalyst for more good deeds. This results in exponentially increasing the spiritual rewards that become due to the person.

King Janak also considers himself lucky because he had met a great sage and saint of the stature of Vishwamitra which is not possible without the blessing and the wish of the Lord God. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 7.

It is only when one meets that he is blessed with Bhakti (devotion for Lord God). This is exactly what has happened here. The king has first met sage Vishwamitra and got his profuse blessings, and then only was he able to meet Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer to the sequence of events as narrated above in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 215.

Communion with saints and sages leads to wisdom, and both of these are not possible without the grace of Lord Ram. Company of saints and sages is the root of all auspiciousness and good fortunes, and it opens the gates for acquisition of many mystical and spiritual achievements. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 3.

Without accumulation of auspicious effects of ritheous and meritorious deeds, it is not possible to meet saints, and without them no delusions regarding this existential world can be eliminated. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45.

So it is clear now that king Janak thanks his immense good luck that first he was able to meet the great sage Vishwamitra, and as a result of this auspicious meeting he was able not only to meet Lord Ram and Laxman but was fortunate enough to recognize them as personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 216.

So, in effect, Janak told sage Vishwamitra—“Oh sage, I have had the privilege of seeing your holy feet as a reward of some great good deeds that I have done in the past of which I myself am unaware of. Then, as a result of seeing your holy feet I was further blessed to be able to see the two pretty boys, Lord Ram and Laxman, who my heart says are no one other than Brahm personified. How lucky I am!”

²In this line, the virtues of delight and happiness have been personified. Hence it means that if ‘delight’ and ‘happiness’ were persons, then they themselves would be delighted and happy to see and meet Lord Ram who has a dark complexion, and Laxman who has a fair complexion.

The king has already acknowledged that his Mana (mind and heart) are captivated and enchanted at the sight of the two brothers. So here he reiterates this once again. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 215 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8, as well as Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 216.

²This is a very remarkable observation of the enlightened king Janak. When Janak realised that Lord Ram was Brahm personified, and when he watched the love between him and Laxman, he became contemplative and pensive. For all this time, Janak had been watching Ram and Laxman very closely. He had observed that the two brothers stayed very close to each other, every now and then glanced at each other and smiled. Laxman’s demeanours showed that he was eager to do anything if Lord Ram as much as hinted him with a slight gesture of the eye or hand, even without actually telling him to do it. The affable nature and brotherly attitude of the two brothers was infectious.

While Lord Ram represented Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Parmatma, the supreme Atma, Laxman represented the Jiva, the creature, the living being. The Jiva cannot live without the Parmatma because the Jiva’s Atma, his soul and very existence, is directly related to the Parmatma, the supreme Atma as it is the latter that lives in a fractional form as the individual Atma of the Jiva.

The Parmatma loves the Jiva just like the father loves his offspring. The Jiva loves the Parmatma as his only means of life and sustenance, as the only one who selflessly cares for him and looks for his welfare in a world surrounded by selfishness

and vested interests. It is like the case of the sun and the moon. The moon, the Jiva, derives its glory and shine because of the sun, and the sun gets its importance as a brilliant source of light when it is compared to the moon which also shines but lacks the brilliance of the sun and its energy.

The question ‘who is a Jiva’ and ‘what is the relationship between the Jiva and Brahm’ is a subject discussed at length in the Upanishads.

“Who is a Jiva” (a living being) has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Pashupat Brahm Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 3; Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13. (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Saraswati Upanishad, verse nos. 47-48; Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Shaarirako-panishad, verse no. 15; Skand Upanishad, verse nos. 6-7. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda’s Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2.

The “relation between a Jiva and Brahm/Ishwar/Parmatma” has been explained in the following Upanishads—(i) Atharva Veda = Narad Parivrajak Upanishad, Canto 6, verse no. 4 (difference between Jiva and Parmatma); Canto 9, verse no. 10 (difference between Jiva and Prakriti); Tripadvibhut Maha-Narayan Upanishad, Canto 4, paragraph no. 9, 11-13; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 5, verse no. 77; Par Brahm Upanishad, verse nos. 2, 5 (Jiva and Brahm are one). (ii) Krishna Yajur Veda = Rudra Hridaya Upanishad, verse nos. 41-45; Skanda Upanishad, verse no. 5; Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 52-53, 70, 73. (iii) Shukla Yajur Veda = Paingal Upanishad, Canto 1, verse no. 12, and the whole of Canto 2 (subject of Jiva vis-à-vis Brahm).

Srimad Bhagvat Mahapurān, 4/9/6 describes this concept of a “Jiva being a reflection of the Supreme Brahm” as follows—‘My salutations to the Supreme Being who is almighty and all-powerful. The Lord has entered my heart, enlivens my vital Pran (breath), my limbs and my sense organs, and also empowers my faculty of speech—all of which would otherwise have remained dormant and ineffective.’]

पुनि पुनि प्रभुहि चितव नरनाहू । पुलक गात उर अधिक उछाहू ॥ ५ ॥
 मुनिहि प्रसंसि नाइ पद सीसू । चलेउ लवाइ नगर अवनीसू ॥ ६ ॥
 सुंदर सदन सुखद सब काला । तहाँ बासु लै दीन्ह भुआला ॥ ७ ॥
 करि पूजा सब बिधि सेवकाई । गयउ राउ गृह बिदा कराई ॥ ८ ॥

puni puni prabhuhi citava naranāhū. pulaka gāta ura adhika uchāhū. 5.
 munihi prasansi nā'i pada sīsū. calē'u lavā'i nagara avanīsū. 6.
 sundara sadanu sukhada saba kālā. tahām' bāsu lai dīnha bhū'ālā. 7.
 kari pūjā saba bidhi sēvakā'ī. gaya'u rā'u gr̥ha bidā karā'ī. 8.

The king was completely held enthralled by the sight of Lord Ram and Laxman. He could not move his eyes away from Lord Ram, and glanced at him repeatedly. All the while his body was thrilled, and his heart overflowed with emotions and was ecstatic¹.
 (5)

The king praised the sage and knelt down to touch his feet with his head. Then he escorted the sage (and of course Lord Ram and Laxman with him) to the city. (6)

There, in the city, the king lodged him at a place that was comfortable at all times². (7)

After paying his obeisance to the sage and arranging for his service in all possible ways, the king took his leave (permission) and went back to his palace. (8)

[Note—¹The condition of Janak was like a Jiva, a living being, who has found the objective of all his spiritual pursuit. Janak has already accepted that it is not easy to captivate his mind as he is a dispassionate person who has no attractions for the charms of the material, physical world. But in the case of Lord Ram he does not understand why he is unable to control himself, he wonders, and says this to sage Vishwamitra clearly. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

In reply the sage told him that his suspicion that Lord Ram is Brahm personified is indeed true. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 216.

So it was confirmed now that Janak's mind and heart was captivated not by the physical beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman but because they were personified forms of Brahm. If this is the case it is natural for Janak to keep glancing at Lord Ram repeatedly because he is getting the reward of his lifetime of spiritual practices and metaphysical discussions.

The more he sees Lord Ram, the more intense his devotion and love for the Supreme Being sitting right in his front becomes. The fire of devotion and love for the Lord is kindled with renewed intensity each time the king glances at Lord Ram and tries to force his eyes and mind away from him.

But this could not continue indefinitely—because a big ceremony was to be held the next day, invited kings and princes were coming in in a steady stream, and a lot of administrative nitty-gritty had to be taken care of. So, the king finally brought himself together and extricated his mind from the spiritual reverie it was submerged in till now.

The king therefore sighed and got up to take his leave from the sage. Now, let us read what happened next.

²We have already observed earlier that sage Vishwamitra was not alone. For one, he was accompanied by Lord Ram and Laxman, and secondly, a lot many other sages and holy men may have also come along with them while they were on their way to Janakpur from the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra. Some of these sages may have joined them at river Ganges where the three had stopped to take a bath, and many others joined them on the road leading up to Janakpur. It is a normal feature with travelers that when different groups meet on the highway to the same destination, they join hands to travel together; it helps them all in many ways.

So therefore, it is obvious that the king took the entire group along to give them a suitable and comfortable lodging place in the city, in all probability close to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony.

At the time of taking his leave, the king once again worshipped the sage, offered his respects to him, and appointed attendants to look after the needs of the sage, the two brothers, as well as other member-sages of the group.]

दो०. रिषय संग रघुबंस मनि करि भोजनु बिश्रामु।

बैठे प्रभु भ्राता सहित दिवसु रहा भरि जामु ॥ २१७ ॥

dōhā.

riṣaya saṅga raghubansa mani kari bhōjanu biśrāmu.
bait̥hē prabhu bhrātā sahita divasu rahā bhari jāmu. 217.

Lord Ram, who was like a gem in the dynasty of king Raghu, ate his meals together with the accompanying sages (and of course with Laxman), and then took some rest.

After that, the Lord (Ram) sat down with his brother (Laxman) during the late afternoon hours when a quarter of the day was still left. (Doha no. 217)

[Note—This means clearly that the king had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra in the early hours of the day, brought him in the city before noon so that the sage and other members of his group could take their lunch and rest, and then Lord Ram and Laxman sat down together around 4 O'clock in the late afternoon hours.

This also means that the two brothers wanted to have some private time together to talk with each other, away from the sages. By all indications which will be clear from the very next line that follows below, Laxman had quietly told Lord Ram that he wanted to have some thing to request him, so will he please come aside. Laxman wanted to see the sights of the city, which we will read now.

Obviously therefore, the two brothers had gone sight-seeing in the city during the early evening hours when the sun was in the west and the atmosphere was cool and pleasant.]

चौ०. लखन हृदयँ लालसा बिसेषी । जाइ जनकपुर आइअ देखी ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु भय बहुरि मुनिहि सकुचाहीं । प्रगट न कहहिं मनहिं मुसुकाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

lakhana hṛdayam̐ lālasā bisēṣī. jā'i janakapura ā'i'a dēkhī. 1.
prabhu bhaya bahuri munihi sakucāhīṁ. pragata na kahahīṁ manahīṁ musukāhīṁ. 2.

Laxman had a great desire to go and see the city and its sights. (1)

But he was afraid of Lord Ram and hesitated to speak before the sage for the fear of annoying them. [That is why he quietly took the Lord away from the place where they were resting with the other sages.]

Laxman could not gather enough courage to express his desire to Lord Ram openly, so smiled shyly (to indicate that he wants something but is hesitant to speak) (2)

[Note—We have already read the description of the wonderful city earlier from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214, and have also analysed how Lord Ram and Laxman had seen the beauty of the suburban areas but have only heard about the fabulous city's inner majesty. So it was natural that Laxman wanted to see it.

But he was too shy to tell his elder brother Ram because he was afraid that the latter would get annoyed at his childishness. They had just arrived in the city, and

were in the group of great sages. It would not be dignified for them to wander alone, unguided and unescorted, in the city like ordinary tourists.

Remember: King Janak had not assigned anyone to take them around the city, and being princes of a great kingdom it would be under their dignity to roam around like laymen. Laxman thought that this might annoy the sage also. The sage had never let them alone ever since they accompanied him from Ayodhya, and so he might not approve of the idea of the two brothers roaming alone in an alien city. What if something goes wrong and they are either lost or hurt?

This was the reason why Laxman was hesitant to speak of his desire before the sage. So he took his elder brother aside and hinted to him that he wants to see the city. They won't have another chance tomorrow because the bow-breaking ceremony is to be held on that day, and in all probability it will last the entire day. On the following day it will be time to leave. Even if they stayed for one more day at the request of Janak, it would be highly shameful and undignified for them to go around the city when some other warrior had won the bow-breaking competition and all attention in the city would be focused on him. They would be completely neglected. Therefore, the only time slot that was available for the sight-seeing was now, thought Laxman.

Another reason for Laxman's hesitation was that Lord Ram may admonish him for his childishness because the sages would gather in the evening hours to have religious discourses or discussions, and to go to enjoy the city sights while neglecting this attendance might anger sage Vishwamitra.

There are numerous instances where Laxman has maintained great respect for his elder brother by not speaking without his permission. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 252; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 276.]

राम अनुज मन की गति जानी । भगत बछलता हियँ हुलसानी ॥ ३ ॥
 परम बिनीत सकुचि मुसुकाई । बोले गुर अनुसासन पाई ॥ ४ ॥
 नाथ लखनु पुरु देखन चहहीं । प्रभु सकोच डर प्रगट न कहहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 जौँ राउर आयसु मैं पावौँ । नगर देखाइ तुरत लै आवौँ ॥ ६ ॥

rāma anuja mana kī gati jānī. bhagata bachalatā hiyaṁṁ hulasānī. 3.

parama binīta sakuci musukā'ī. bōlē gura anusāsana pā'ī. 4.

nātha lakhānu puru dēkhana cahahīm. prabhu sakōca ḍara pragaṭa na kahahīm. 5.

jauṁṁ rā'ura āyasu maiṁṁ pāvauṁṁ. nagara dēkhā'i turata lai āvauṁṁ. 6.

Lord Ram understood what was in the mind of Laxman. Love for his devotee was inherent to the character of the Lord who could understand their inner feelings (because the Lord is the Parmatma, the cosmic Consciousness that lives in the heart of all living beings as their own Atma, and as such the subtle and sublime form of the Lord knew all that the Jiva thought and felt; nothing is hidden from him).

Therefore, the Lord immediately realised what Laxman was thinking (even without his expressing his desires in clear terms)¹. (30)

Lord Ram approached sage Vishwamitra very politely, and smiled hesitantly. The wise sage realised that he wants to say something, so he gave his permission to the Lord to speak about what he wants. Then, upon receiving the Guru's permission², the Lord said—(4)

‘Oh Lord! Laxman wishes to see the city. He does not express this clearly as he is hesitant because it might annoy you. [So, Laxman has approached me to seek your permission on his behalf so that he could go and visit the city to see its sights.] (5)

If I get your kind permission, then I will go with him, take him around the city quickly, and then come back to you soon.’³ (6)

[Note—¹It's a wonderful verse of immense spiritual import. Laxman had merely smiled and the Lord knew what he wants. Earlier we have read that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being, the Parmatma, and Laxman represents the Jiva, the living being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 217.

The Parmatma definitely knows what the Jiva wants because the former lives in the inner-self of the latter in the form of his Atma. We have a great message here—it is that the Lord knows about the inner feelings of his devotees, the Lord knows what goes inside their mind and what they think. Therefore, it is not possible to cheat on the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 314, and line no. 1 of Doha no. 256 where Bharat has told the Lord that he knows what is in the heart of all living beings. This is also asserted in Vinai Patrika of Tulsidas, verse no. 107, line no. 2 of stanza no. 5 which says “He (Lord Ram) is the Lord of all, lives in the inner-self of all living beings, and knows the inner-feeling of all”.

Besides this, another important point is that a true devotee need not tell the Lord that he needs this or that. Does he not realise that the Lord knows about his wants? Another important message is this—prayers come from within the heart, they do not require words to be understood by the Lord; prayer is not something to be chanting like a parrot from some printed texts of some book!

So, Lord Ram could immediately realise what was going on in the mind of Laxman without his saying anything.

²It is to be noted that sage Vishwamitra has been called a ‘Guru’, a teacher. It is apt to address him with this title because he had earlier taught the two brothers many things, including the art and science of warfare and weapons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 7.

The Lord has approached the sage very politely because he has great respect for him and also because he had to take permission from him to go and see the city. If one asks for some favour politely, there are better chances of it being accepted.

The Lord smiled, indicating to the sage that he wants to say something. The Lord waited for the sage's permission before speaking. This gives us a message how to treat elders and seniors. One should be polite and smiling when one approaches them, and not speak out of turn.

³This entire episode of Laxman silently smiling, Lord Ram understanding what he wants, and then the Lord approaching sage Vishwamitra on Laxman's behalf to seek

his permission to go and see the city has great implication and conveys a great message.

It implies that a true devotee totally depends upon his chosen deity for all his spiritual and worldly needs. He does not go from door to door to beg or plead with others to help him or fulfill his needs. He leaves all things upon his Lord. When the Lord finds that this devotee is completely dependent upon him, the Lord takes proper care of him, and acts as his representative, advocate and council. This frees the devotee of so much hassle and problems, as well as embarrassments.

We see that in Ram Charit Manas, as opposed to other versions of the story of Lord Ram that is universally known as the “Ramayana”, countless spiritual messages are subtly weaved into its fabric, only to be unraveled and understood in the correct light.

A very interesting development has occurred here. While Lord Ram could understand the meaning of the ‘smile’ of Laxman, sage Vishwamitra, though he was so wise and enlightened, on the other hand could not understand the meaning of the ‘smile’ of Lord Ram. The sage had to be told in specific terms by the Lord what he wants to say.

This incident points out the difference between the Parmatma and the Jiva. While the Parmatma knows what the living being wants, the living being is unable to know what the Parmatma wants. The meaning of the smile of Laxman was understood by Lord Ram, but the sage, being a Jiva no matter how exalted and enlightened he may have been, could not understand the meaning of the smile on Lord Ram’s face.

If we recall, Lord Ram had smiled earlier when king Janak was talking with sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 216. There that smile had a different meaning as discussed in the note appended to that verse.]

सुनि मुनीसु कह बचन सप्रीती । कस न राम तुह राखहु नीती ॥ ७ ॥
धरम सेतु पालक तुह ताता । प्रेम बिबस सेवक सुखदाता ॥ ८ ॥

suni munīsu kaha bacana saprītī. kasa na rāma tumha rākhahu nītī. 7.
dharama sētu pālaka tumha tātā. prēma bibasa sēvaka sukhadātā. 8.

When the sage heard the Lord’s request, he replied most affectionately—‘Oh Ram, it is no wonder that you obey the laws of right behaviour, good manners and principles of exemplary etiquette (by politely asking my permission to go to the city with Laxman). (7)

You are the protector of the Bridge of Dharma. [To wit, you always uphold righteousness, proper conduct, propriety, morality and ethics in every sphere of life. Indeed, you always act in the proper way, never violating even for once the codes set for good manners and etiquette.]¹

You become influenced by love and devotion, and you give joy and happiness to your devotees.² (8)

[Note—¹The sage is referring to Lord Ram politely seeking his permission to go with Laxman to see the city of Janakpur. Lord Ram has always ensured that all his actions and words are in accordance to the laws of Dharma. While giving a discourse to the citizens of Ayodhya after his coronation, he has told them that if they find him saying

anything that is violative of the laws of Dharma then they should fearlessly point it out to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 43.

There are many other instances where it is stressed that Lord Ram was an expert in the laws of Dharma. Some of the references in Ram Charit Manas are the following: (i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 6; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323.

²Lord Ram respects no other relations except love and devotion. It is the only way to influence the Lord. And the Lord is ever eager to honour the wishes of his devotees. Those who are completely devoted to the Lord and know no one else except the him, the Lord always protects them and honours their wish. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram tells this fact to Sabari, (iii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 43 where it is reiterated to sage Narad, and (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-9 that precede Doha no. 86, as well as Doha no. 87 Ka, where Lord Ram tells the crow sage Kaagbhusund the same thing.]

दो०. जाइ देखि आवहु नगरु सुख निधान दोउ भाइ ।
करहु सुफल सब के नयन सुंदर बदन देखाइ ॥ २१८ ॥

dōhā.

jā'i dēkhi āvahu nagaru sukha nidhāna dō'u bhā'i.
karahu suphala saba kē nayana sundara badana dēkhā'i. 218.

The sage gave them his clear permission by saying—‘You two brothers are like an abode of bliss, comfort, happiness and joy. Go to the city and come back soon after seeing it.

Bless all the citizens of the city by giving them an opportunity to enjoy their faculty of sight by showing them your charming countenance and enchanting form.’ (Doha no. 218)

[Note—The sage understood that the two brothers want to go to the city to enable its citizens to derive immense pleasure by beholding their divine form. Going there for sight-seeing was merely an excuse for this. The wise sage thought to himself that he has no moral right to obstruct the Lord in this divine mission. Every single Jiva had an equal right to have a divine glimpse of the Supreme Being in a visible form living in their midst, and the sage should not come in the way.

Remember: Sage Vishwamitra was aware of who Lord Ram was; that he was Brahm personified. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 209; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3, and 7 that precede Doha no. 216.

Lord Ram and Laxman are personified forms of bliss and happiness; by seeing them one gets the bliss of Brahm-realisation. Refer King Janak’s declaration in this respect in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 216.

The sight of the Lord purifies the eyes and makes the person who behold them feel very privileged as if he has got the reward of all his auspicious and meritorious deeds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10 in relation with sage Sutikshan; (ii) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 26 in relation with Marich; and (iii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 42 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 in relations with Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king.

This fact has been reiterated again in the very next line that we shall be reading now.]

चौ०. मुनि पद कमल बंदि दोउ भ्राता । चले लोक लोचन सुख दाता ॥ १ ॥

बालक बृंद देखि अति सोभा । लगे संग लोचन मनु लोभा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

muni pada kamala bandi dō'u bhrātā. calē lōka lōcana sukha dātā. 1.

bālaka br̄nda dēkhi ati sōbhā. lagē saṅga lōcana manu lōbhā. 2.

Paying their obeisance to the lotus-like feet of the sage (i.e. after touching the holy feet of sage Vishwamitra to show their thanks to him for granting his permission), the two brothers who provide joy and bliss to the eyes of the world (i.e. all those who see them), went to visit the city for sightseeing¹. (1)

In the city, big groups of children of all ages were attracted by their (Lord Ram and Laxman's) beauty and charm. So, these children rushed towards them (Lord Ram and Laxman) to join them, following them and talking animatedly with them. The mind and the heart (Mana) of these groups of children were captivated by the two brothers². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman observed the principles of etiquette by touching the feet of their guardian and Guru, sage Vishwamitra, and thanking him for giving them permission to go and see the sights of the city. We will see that when they come back they again touch his feet to say that they have come back.

The sage had commented (in Doha no. 218) that they should go to please the eyes of the citizens of the city. So they moved out to fulfill his wishes or obey his orders.

²It is natural for young children to get attracted by anything charming and unusual. They would leave their studies, rush out of their homes, and even abandon their plays if they happen to glance at some unusual spectacle that is interesting. So, when groups of children in the city of Janakpur saw that two lovely dignified princes of approximate their own age and dressed in fine royal livery were walking down the streets majestically, they were awed. The charm of the two brothers was so magnetic that their naturally pulled the children towards them.

Remember: The city was thronged by other dignitaries; great princes had come to attend the bow ceremony, and in all probability the city was chock-a-block with them and their attendants and guards. The same children of the city watched them from a distance, gawking at them and marveling at the spectacular sight of so many different kinds of people from so many far-off places, representing so many

societies and cultures of the sort they had never seen or heard of in their lifetimes. They were in awe of these visiting kings and princes, but did not dare go close to them as they were put off by their royal demeanours and over-jealous attendants who would behave as if their masters were the greatest majesties on earth, with each retinue trying to outdo the other.

Against this background, these city children saw two pretty princes walking normally like ordinary boys of their age, without any sort of ‘airs’ about them, but who stood out in the crowd by their excellent dignity and superb charm, like the ones the citizens had never heard of or seen ever before. These two princes were alone; they were pleasantly smiling at each other and at anyone with whom they made eye contact. There was no air of haughtiness or pride with them. They appeared very friendly and welcoming. So the children of the city rushed towards Lord Ram and Laxman when they saw them walking down the streets of Janakpur.

Instead of acting with indifference or pretentiously that they are someone special and therefore want to maintain a distance with the laity, not wanting to mix with ordinary people because they were ‘princes’ and shooing the city children away, the two brothers cheerfully welcomed these children, smiled at them, perhaps held the hands of some in a playful manner, asking them their names and where they lived, and in general making small talk with these children like they themselves were ordinary boys like them.

Thus, Lord Ram and Laxman immediately established a rapport with the children of the city. Other children who were initially reluctant to come near and watched them from a distance like other guests too overcame their hesitation when they saw that their friends were cheerfully talking with these two guest princes and all of them were enjoying each other’s company.

So as the Lord progressed on his sight-seeing tour of the city, by and by a huge crowd of excited children gathered around him and followed the two brothers everywhere. When Lord Ram and Laxman had moved out of their lodging place they were alone, with no escorts, but by the time they reached the city center it appeared that a huge army of local ‘escorts’ of giggling and electrified children had surrounded them. These boy ‘escorts’ took the two brothers around the city, pointing out the landmarks to them and showing them the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony. After the tour of the city was completed, Lord Ram saw that it was getting too late and that they must now return to their lodging place. So he politely took his leave from the children accompanying him and Laxman by sweetly thanking them, and then returned to where they were lodged with sage Vishwamitra. This is not a mere conjecture; it is exactly what is said in the text of the Ram Charit Manas itself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 220; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 224—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 225.]

पीत बसन परिकर कटि भाथा । चारु चाप सर सोहत हाथा ॥ ३ ॥

तन अनुहरत सुचंदन खोरी । स्यामल गौर मनोहर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

pīta basana parikara kaṭi bhāthā. cāru cāpa sara sōhata hāthā. 3.
tana anuharata sucandana khōrī. syāmala gaura manōhara jōrī. 4.

[Verse/Chaupai line nos. 3-8 describe the beauty of Lord Ram and Laxman's form when they went out for sight-seeing in the city of Janakpur. Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 62, stanza nos. 1-2; verse no. 63, stanza nos. 2-3; verse no. 64, stanza no. 1.]

They (Ram and Laxman) wore a yellow silk cloth, known as the 'Pitambar', around their waists, with quiver also tied around it (and over the Pitambar). They each held a beautiful bow and a matching arrow in their hands. [To wit, in one hand, the left, they held a bow which was slung loosely around the shoulder, and in the other hand, the right, an arrow was held.] (3)

To match the beauty and countenance of their forms, which were of a dark and fair hue respectively, they had the paste of sandalwood smeared (rubbed) all over their bodies in a fine shade. This sandalwood was also applied on their forehead in the form of a thin coating of its paste. (4)

[Note—The children and other citizens of the city were spell-bound and amazed by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman walking down the streets. Now, in these verses, from Chaupai line no. 3 to 8, we read what the brothers looked like. They presented a divine sight that was not only fabulous and beautiful but had a heavenly divine aura about it. This sight charmed the city's children who were drawn towards the two brothers like iron is towards a magnet, thronging and jostling around them in their enthusiasm to be as close to them as was possible. In fact, the whole city of Janakpur was so much bewitched and mesmerized by the pretty sight of the two brothers that people from all walks of life and vocations, the men and the women, the young and the elderly, the noble and the laity, came rushing out to have a glimpse of Lord Ram and Laxman walking side by side and almost drowned in the sea of excited children who crowded around and virtually swamped them from all the sides.

In this way, the procession, with Lord Ram and Laxman in the middle, moved slowly through the streets and avenues of the city, towards the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 224.}

In ancient times, and in traditional homes even today, noble men wear a silk cloth around their waist that covers the lower part of the body. It is the attire of Lord Vishnu, and all Vaishnavites follow this tradition.

The quiver was tied with a golden string around the waist.

This distinguishing attire of the Lord has been referred to repeatedly in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 209; (ii) Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 233; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 244; (iv) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 316; (v) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 7 that precede Doha no. 327; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.]

केहरि कंधर बाहु बिसाला । उर अति रुचिर नागमनि माला ॥ ५ ॥

सुभग सोन सरसीरुह लोचन । बदन मयंक तापत्रय मोचन ॥ ६ ॥

kēhari kandhara bāhu bisālā. ura ati rucira nāgamani mālā. 5.
subhaga sōna sarasīruha lōcana. badana mayaṅka tāpatraya mōcana. 6.

*Their shoulders were like that of a lion (i.e. muscular, well-formed, powerful and strong). Their arms were long and well-built¹. Equisite garlands of ‘Naag-mani’² adorned their chests. (5)

Their eyes were bewitchingly beautiful like the red (pink) lotus flower. Their faces were like the full moon, and they removed all sorts of torments arising from the three types of existential fears³. (5)

[Note—*It is a usual practice with all of Tulsidas’ books, including Ram Charit Manas, that he concentrates his attention on his revered Lord Sri Ram, and though at many a times he refers to Laxman as well, as is clear from Chaupai line no. 4 immediately above where he clearly refers to the two brothers by citing their complexions which are dark and fair for Lord Ram and Laxman respectively, he switches to focusing his attention to Lord Ram in this as well as the following verses.

However, I have preferred to use the pleural number and pleural pronouns such as the word “their” to mean both Lord Ram and Laxman, instead of the singular number and singular pronoun “he” to mean only Lord Ram, to imply that Tulsidas’ real intention was to describe the fabulous divine beauty of both the brothers, and not only of Lord Ram. This is absolutely clear just after a few lines in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220 where Tulsidas says that the citizens of the city of Janakup found immense happiness and bliss by watching the ‘two brothers’—and not only Lord Ram.

By neglecting Laxman it would sound insulting for him, and we must remember this—that the Lord loves his devotees more than he loves himself. Brahma, the creator, had told this in clear terms to Indra, the king of Gods, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 218. He said—“Listen Indra. Lord Ram does not get angry if someone insults him or offends him, but the Lord never tolerates such treatment to his devotees. Should anyone offend any of his devotees, the offender is burnt by the wrath of Lord Ram. This is well known fact in this world; it is well established in the Itihaas and Purans; it is well known to sage Durbasa.”

The Lord has clearly stated this fact that the only relation he gives importance to and respects is that of ‘Bhakti’ or devotion, love and submission for him for which Laxman is an exemplary example. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram tells Sabari exactly this thing.

Laxman’s unflinching and single-minded devotion for Lord Ram is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 71—to Doha no. 72.

Hence, I have used the pleural number “their” to include both Lord Ram and Laxman while describing their beauteous physical form.

¹Their arms were long, robust, muscular and well-built like an elephant’s trunk. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chand stanza no. 2, line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 12; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 77.

The same thing is reiterated in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Sarga 1, verse no. 9—but here it refers only to Lord Ram.

The strength of Lord Ram’s arms is as immeasurable as the vast ocean. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 260.

Refer also to Tulsidas' following books in this context—(i) Geetawali, Uttar Kand, verse nos. 13-14; (ii) Kavitawali, Uttar Kand, verse no. 115; and (iii) Vinai Patrika, verse no. 138.

An elephant's trunk is the most powerful part of its body. The elephant uses its trunk to uproot huge trees and fling its enemies by wrapping it around them and then throwing them away like a football. The spiritual significance of this allusion is that the devotee need not worry about his well-being as the Lord is always there to extend his helping hand to him. And the Lord's hand is not weak; it is the best 'arm' a person can hope to find in this world which would give him a rock-solid support at all times.

²The 'Naag-mani' is a secretion from the hood of a special category of serpents that forms a lumniscient sac. It is of a shape and size of a piece of pearl. Its rarity makes it priceless, more costly than actual pearl. The word 'Naag' means a snake; and 'Mani' means a gem.

³The three torments that create misery for all living beings are called 'Trai-taap'. They have been outlined in (i) Rig Veda's Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 2; and (ii) Atharva Veda's Sharva Upanishad, verse no. 17.

The Mudgal Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 2 expressly enumerates them as follows—The 3 'Traitaps' mentioned above are the following— (i) Adhyatmik, (ii) Adhibhautik and (iii) Adhidaivik.

The word 'Trividhum' also refers to the distinction between the three independent entities— (a) The doer, the act and the action, (b) Gyan (knowledge; gnosis), the one who knows and the object of that knowledge, and (c) the sufferer or enjoyer, the suffering or enjoyment and the object which causes the suffering or is the source of that enjoyment. Though each entity in a particular group appears to be indistinguishable or inseparable from the other, in fact they are quite distinct from each other (2).

{(i) 'Adhyatmik' problems are those that the creature faces in his spiritual pursuits, (ii) 'Adhibhautik' problems are created by terrestrial creatures like enemies, wild animals, cruel kings, thieves, bodily afflictions such as old age and diseases etc., (iii) 'Adhidaivik' are the problems created by unfavourable Gods and malignant stars. (iv) The 'doer' is quite distinct from the 'work to be done' and the 'physical actions of doing that work' though all appear to be interlinked. The doer suffers misery if he gets involved in the actions, but he remains peaceful if he does the deed without any emotional attachment to it or its results. (v) Similarly, 'knowledge' links the 'seeker of knowledge' to the 'object of knowledge'. The seeker remains dissatisfied and agitated only till the time he does not realise his objective of acquiring full knowledge that he and Brahma are one. This knowledge removes all agitations and restlessness, and makes him peaceful and calm. (vi) In the same vein, a person suffers or enjoys only till he is attracted or affected by any circumstance or any object of the world which is the cause of his sufferings or enjoyments. As soon as he detaches himself from them, there is neither any misery nor any enjoyment for him.}

According to the Sharva Upanishad of Atharva Veda, verse no. 17, the three sufferings also refer to the pains of birth, death and old age.

Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and like the full moon that soothes the heat caused by the scorching sun, a creature finds bliss and comfort by meditating upon the Lord and remembering his smiling face that silently assures him that he need not worry as the Lord is there to protect him.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 63 where Kumbhakaran, the brother of Ravana, feels glad that he would be able to see Lord Ram with a dark complexion whose auspicious vision provides liberation from the three Taaps—which are the three forms of sufferings that a creature goes through in his life in this mortal world.]

कानन्हि कनक फूल छबि देहीं । चितवत चितहि चोरि जनु लेहीं ॥ ७ ॥
चितवनि चारु भृकुटि बर बाँकी । तिलक रेख सोभा जनु चाँकी ॥ ८ ॥

kānanhi kanaka phūla chabi dēhīm. citavata citahi cōri janu lēhīm. 7.
citavani cāru bhṛkuṭi bara bām̐kī. tilaka rēkha sōbhā janu cām̐kī. 8.

The ears were decorated by golden ear-rings designed like flowers. They were so charming that they immediately stole (captured, snatched away) the attention of the beholder. [In other words, when anyone watches the ear-rings on the Lord's face, his mind gets hooked to them and stops wandering.] (7)

Their glances were bewitching and captivated the mind and the heart of those on whom they fell¹, and their eyebrows were beautifully arched (like the curves of a majestic bow). The lines of the 'Tilak Mark'² on their foreheads shined like the dazzle of lightening (whenever they moved their heads). (8)

[Note—¹The bewitching glances of the Lord: Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 243.

²The 'Tilak Mark' is a sign made by Hindus on their forehead. It consists of three parallel lines, either vertical or horizontal. Usually, followers of Lord Vishnu mark these three lines in a vertical format, while those of Lord Shiva in a horizontal form. These three lines represent the Trinity Gods, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of creation. They also stand for the three phases in the life of a creature—the birth, the rest of the life span, and death, as well as the three phases of time—the past, the present, and the future.]

दो०. रुचिर चौतनीं सुभग सिर मेचक कुंचित केस ।
नख सिख सुंदर बंधु दोउ सोभा सकल सुदेस ॥ २१९ ॥
dōhā.

rucira cautanīm subhaga sira mēcaka kuñcita kēsa.
nakha sikha sundara bandhu dō'u sōbhā sakala sudēsa. 219.

The head was adorned by a magnificent rectangular cap which was placed on the lock of curly black hairs.

The beauty and charm of the two brothers are not restricted to any particular part of their bodies, but apply to their entire form—from the head to the toe-nail. Each part has the charm and attractiveness befitting it. (Doha no. 219)

[Note—It ought to be noted that the fabulous divine charm of Lord Ram has been described at various places in Ram Charit Manas. A sampling is as follows: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 233; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 244; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 316; (iv) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 327; (v) Uttar Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 12; and (vi) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 77.

This is in addition to the present narration in Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

By saying that ‘each part of the body has a charm befitting it’ it is meant that all of them possess respective virtues most suitable to them. For instance, the beauty of the head is ighlighted by the curly black lock of hairs and the decorated cap on it; the ears find their beauty with the golden ear-ring moulded to resemble a flower; the eyebrows are majestically curved like the arch of the bow; the arms find their glory if they are muscular and well-built; the chest is adorned with wonderful garlands; and so on and so forth.

Tulsidas’ book “Geetawali Ramayan” has countless verses describing the fabulous beauty and charm of Lord Ram. Some of the instances are the following:

Geetawali Ramayan—(i) Baal Kand, verse nos. 52-54, 56, 62-63, 73-77, 82, 108; and (ii) Uttar Kand, verse nos. 2-17.

Besides these, sage Valmiki’s famous epic Ramayana also describes the Lord’s beauteous form in its Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 1, verse nos. 8-12.]

चौ०. देखन नगरु भूपसुत आए । समाचार पुरबासिन्ह पाए ॥ १ ॥

धाए धाम काम सब त्यागी । मनहुँ रंक निधि लूटन लागी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhana nagaru bhūpasuta ā'ē. samācāra purabāsinha pā'ē. 1.

dhā'ē dhāma kāma saba tyāgī. manahum̃ raṅka nidhi lūṭana lāgī. 2.

#When the residents of the city heard that the two princes (‘bhūpasuta’ = sons of a king) have come to see the city [1], they rushed out of their homes, leaving aside whatever they were doing at that moment¹ as if a pauper has been given a free-hand to loot a vast treasury². [2] (1-2)

[Note—#The euphoria and the sense of extreme wonderment that swept through the city of Janakpur was of such an extent that as soon as the word went out that Lord Ram and Laxman are visiting the city, every single individual rushed out to have their glimpse. The excitement was very marked as the citizens had known by then that some very special guests have come whom their king Janak had personally gone to welcome and escort back to the city, and then he had lodged them in his palace that is reserved for state guests. Then the marvelous and fantastic deeds of the two brothers, such as their eliminating ferocious demoness Tadka and the entire demon army led by their chief commanders Marich and Subahu, and the liberation of Ahilya, had already reached the ears of the citizens. To this news, which in itself was no less wondrous, was added the information about the stupendous beauty and charm of the two princes. So everyone was highly eager and excited to see who these two princes were.

The awe and charm of Lord Ram and Laxman, and the spell they cast on all and sundry, have been beautifully described in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/62—1/63.

¹When the city's children poured out of their homes and ran towards Lord Ram and Laxman, some of them ran back home excitedly to their parents to inform them that two wonderful princes have come to visit the city, and they tugged and pulled at their parents to come out and see the spectacle themselves and be convinced of what they had said.

Earlier, when king Janak had gone to welcome sage Vishwamitra on the outskirts of the city, he was accompanied by many noble people of the city besides attendants, guards and others. He brought the sage and the rest of the group, including the two brothers, and lodged them at some palace inside the city. Since they were royal guests, the king must have appointed guards at the door for their security and as a mark of honour.

Meanwhile, all those who had accompanied Janak came back and spread the word inside the city that two princes of excellent charm have come to attend the bow ceremony. Though the citizens would have liked to see these two princes, but the presence of the royal guards at the door of the lodging place must have kept the crowd at bay. So, when the citizens learnt that the two brothers have ventured out for sight-seeing, it is natural that they rushed to have a glimpse.

Obviously there was a big crowd eager to have the Lord's 'Darshan'—a divine glimpse. So those who heard first rushed out to avoid the jostling of the surging crowd. Another reason for their rushing out of their houses and leaving aside the work they were currently engaged in was that Lord Ram and Laxman were walking briskly ahead because they had to see the city and return to the sage before sun-set; they could not afford a leisurely stroll. So the people thought that if they wasted time, they would miss the opportunity.

This is a normal course the way things happen even today. If some important dignitary is visiting any town or city, the citizens keep on hold their personal work and line up on the roadside to see him.

It is said later that if one likes his homestead at the cost of having love and devotion for Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita then surely the creator has turned away from such a man and has corrupted his intellect—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 280.

We also find that when Lord Ram is moving towards the forest from Ayodhya, all the people who lived in the villages and hamlets on the way rushed out to have the Lord's divine glimpse. All of them wanted to be near the Lord, talk with him and serve him in the best possible they can. There were instances when someone could not reach in time, then he would ask others in which direction the Lord and his brother Laxman and the Lord's consort Sita had gone, and then they would try to rush there to see the three of them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 110; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 111—to Doha no. 122.

The love and affection as well as the eagerness with which the citizens of Janakpur rushed out to see and meet Lord Ram and Laxman is similar to the scene witnessed while the Lord passed through the villages on his way to the forest as cited in the above references.

It is to be noted that in both the instances, that of the citizens of Janakpur and the villagers living alongside the path of Lord Ram to the forest, the people have rushed out to see the Lord leaving aside the work they were engaged at that moment.

Compare: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 220 with respect to the citizens of Janakpur, and Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 221 with respect to the people who lived along the Lord's forest route. The similarity is absolutely striking.

The message that we get from this discussion is that having devotion and love for the Supreme Being should take precedence over all affairs of this mundane world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 23; (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 46; (iii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no.73; and (iv) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 104 Ka.

²Now, the condition of the citizens is compared to lifelong paupers who suddenly find the doors of a great treasury open for a limited time when they are allowed to loot as much as they can. There would be a huge crowd, pushing, shoving, jostling, elbowing and even tramping over each other in order to get in, fill their bags and pockets as fast as they can, and rush out to call in their friends who may have missed out.

So, the citizens pushed and shoved each other to come up front to view Lord Ram and Laxman at close quarters, to be as close to the two charming brothers as was practically possible, and to strike a pleasant conversation with them—such as saying a mere 'hello' or asking them from where they have come, their names, and so on. There was a great deal of bonhomie and friendly bonding between the two brothers and the people of Janakpur, and this affection took such a deep root amongst the masses that everyone rooted for Lord Ram as the only one who was suited to become a groom for their princess Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Doha no. 223.}

निरखि सहज सुंदर दोउ भाई । होहिं सुखी लोचन फल पाई ॥ ३ ॥
जुबतीं भवन झरोखन्हि लागीं । निरखहिं राम रूप अनुरागीं ॥ ४ ॥

nirakhi sahaja sundara dō'u bhā'ī. hōhim sukhi lōcana phala pā'ī. 3.
jubatīm bhavana jharōkhanhi lāgīm. nirakhahim rāma rūpa anurāgīm. 4.

The citizens of Janakpur derive immense happiness, pleasure and joy by considering themselves exceptionally fortunate that they have been able to see the naturally pretty form of the two brothers which was like getting the reward of their eyes.¹ (3)

The women-folk of the city flocked the balconies and windows of their homes, and watched fascinated and awe-struck at the enchanting beauty of Lord Ram's glorious form². (4)

[Note—¹The eyes are the organs by which one sees this world. A person sees so many things, both pleasant as well as unpleasant. His eyes feel happy and enjoy looking at pleasant things, and would avoid looing at unpleasant sights, wincing at them. So, when the citizens watched the divine form of Lord Ram and Laxman, they felt that their eyes have been fully rewarded today because they have never seen such a wonderful form earlier and would never see any such form in the future.

In other words, the divine sight of the two brothers captivated the mind and the heart of the citizens of Janakpur. They were enamoured of Lord Ram and Laxman's beautiful form, and were completely enchanted and enthralled by the sight. The two brothers are in their normal day-to-day attire. They do not wear anything flashy or pretentious. The importance of this line is to highlight the natural beauty and charm of Lord Ram and Laxman. This charm is free from any artificiality.

Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and Laxman represents Prakriti, Nature. The significance of this verse is that the Lord's visible creation that is known as 'Nature' is naturally and inherently most beautiful and fabulously wonderful. The towering mountains, rolling hills, verdant forests and green valleys, cascading waterfalls, absolutely fascinating variety of colourful flowers, fruits and trees, the astounding number of various forms of flora and fauna that decorate the earth, and the wonders we see in the visible sky and beyond it in its invisible parts—are all the creations of Brahm, and all of them are beautiful beyond description.

This is Lord's 'natural' form, a form that is 'naturally beautiful'. It also means that Brahm is beautiful because whatever exists in the form of Nature, or 'Prakriti', is a manifested form of Brahm himself.

²Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 62, stanza no. 1.

The women-folk of the city were exceedingly enamoured by the Lord's pretty form and, as we shall see right below in the next verses (from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223) chatted animatedly amongst themselves about him. They were excited and electrified by the bewitching charm of Lord Ram.

One important point to note is this: While the city's children and men-folk were overjoyed by looking at both Lord Ram and Laxman (refer: Chaupai no. 3 immediately above, as well as Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 241 later on below), the women-folk were more focused on Lord Ram alone (refer also to Doha no. 241 below).

There is subtle reason behind it. A woman represents the Lord's Maya—his mystical powers that entangle a creature in worldly affairs and incites passion and desires in him. Maya is compared to a 'female dancer', and not a male dancer. She dances to the tune of her master and lord, Sri Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 116.

A woman is compared to Maya, the delusion creating powers of Brahm that keeps a person entangled in this web-like world, and is the most ferocious and powerful tormentor. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Aranya Kand, from Doha no. 43—to Doha no. 44 where Lord Ram tells Narad why he did not allow him to get married; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 99 where sage Kaagbhusund is describing the deluding affects of Kali-Yug.

Now the obvious question is "why were they not attracted to Laxman"? Well, the answer lies in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 116 Ka and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8. In brief they say that both 'Bhakti' and 'Maya' come under the category of being a female. Their lord is Brahm, who in this case has manifested himself as Lord Ram. Now, Bhakti is very dear to Lord Ram, and Maya is like a maid. The Maya, being a 'maid', is always afraid to annoy 'Bhakti', the Lord's favourite. Laxman represents 'Bhakti', and therefore the women-folk, who represent 'Maya' are afraid to raise their eyes towards him for the fear of annoying Lord Ram. So they let Laxman be alone.

One female is not attracted to another female as much as she is to a male. This is the universal law of Nature. Since Laxman represents Bhakti, a symbolic female,

while the women-folk represent Maya, another symbolic female, the latter weren't attracted to Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 116.

These observations must not be misconstrued on any count, for we shall be soon reading that these women-folk also refer to the two brothers though the main focus of their attention is Lord Ram. In this context, please see note appended to Doha no. 220 herein below.]

कहहिं परसपर बचन सप्रीती । सखि इन्ह कोटि काम छबि जीती ॥ ५ ॥
सुर नर असुर नाग मुनि माहीं । सोभा असि कहूँ सुनिअति नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kahahim parasapara bacana saprīti. sakhi inha kōṭi kāma chabi jīti. 5.
sura nara asura nāga muni māhīm. sōbhā asi kahum' suni'ati nāhīm. 6.

[The following narration tells us about the excitement amongst the women-folk of the city of Janakpur as they saw Lord Ram and Laxman walking down the streets. While the children and the males had poured on the streets to have a close interaction with the two brothers, the women remained in their homes and looked from balconies, windows, terraces etc. Being enthralled at the fabulous sight of the two pretty princes walking majestically, with a huge crowd of children and adults following them and talking with them, smiling and gesturing affectionately, the women too got electrified and wondered if king Janak would still stick to his vows of marrying Sita to someone who broke the bow or would cancel the event and marry her directly to the elder of the two princes. These ladies had never seen such a wonderful sight in their lives or even imagined that they would be lucky to ever see it any time in their lives. The divine sight of Lord Ram and Laxman completely left them spell-bound and dumb-founded.]

These women-folk talk with each other affectionately and animatedly—‘Oh friend! They (Ram and Laxman) appear to have overtaken (surpassed) the beauty of many thousand Kamdeos (cupids) taken together. It appears that they have defeated all of them and taken over their charm and beauty for themselves.’¹ (5)

We have not heard² of such divine beauty and charm anywhere in this creation—not even amongst the gods, the human beings, the demons, the serpents (subterranean creatures) and the sages and seers. [Here, all senior classes of living beings whose members have a form that may have attractive physical features have been cited.]² (6)

[Note—¹The women open up their hearts and have no inhibitions in expressing their feelings. All of them had developed instant ‘affection’ for Lord Ram, implying that their Atma (i.e. their soul) immediately got attracted to the Parmatma (the Supreme Atma) who was before them. This is also what happened with king Janak when he first saw Lord Ram and Laxman at the time of his going to welcome sage Vishwamitra. The king too was bowled over by the divine charm of the two brothers, and he too could not resist himself to ask the sage if they were personified forms of Brahm. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 216.

If this can happen to the enlightened king Janak, what is the wonder if the ordinary women are also overwhelmed by the pretty sight and the divine halo effusing out of the Lord like rays from the sun or the soothing light of the moon?

There is a wild chatter; everyone seems to have an opinion and everyone seems to share her views with great excitement.

‘Kamdeo’ is the most handsome of all the gods. So he has been cited to indicate that Lord Ram’s beauty is thousands of time more than this god. In other words, Lord Ram is extremely beautiful, and the Lord’s beauty and charm are so bewitching and fabulous that they surpass anything imaginable and known in the entire creation consisting of the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 119; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327; (iii) Baal Kand, Doha no. 220; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76; (v) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91.

A same idea is expressed in—(i) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 68, line no. 2 of stanza no. 10; and (ii) Janki Mangal, verse no. 50, line no. 2.

This is the first lady who is speaking. As we progress through the discussion between these enchanted ladies of Janakpur, we will discover that there are eight who have expressed their opinions. These eight represent all the women-folk of Janakpur; they are like their spokespersons. These eight women symbolize the eight forms that the subtle aspect of Nature has taken to praise their Lord, the cosmic Supreme Being known as the Viraat Purush. This would be the metaphysical interpretation of the chief eight spokeswomen who speak on the behalf of the entire creation.

Remember: In metaphysics, Nature, or ‘Prakriti’, has been visualized as a female, and the Viraat Purush is their male counterpart. Together, by their union, they caused the coming into being of this creation.

The eight subtle aspects of Nature are the following—earth, water, fire, air, sky, Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), and Ahankar (ego). These are called the ‘eight Tattwas’ or the eight fundamental elements of creation.

They are represented by their eight manifested forms called ‘Sakhi’ or a female friend. Their names appear in a book titled “Janki Rahasya”, in its Canto 8. The name of these eight female ‘friends’ are the following—Laxmana, Shubhrashila, Bhadra, Maanwati, Leela, Shyaama, Shaanta, and Sushila. Laxmana was also known as Chaarushila.

The first amongst them to speak is Laxmana. She represents the first of the eight Tattwas starting from the subtlest one, i.e. the ‘Ahankar element’.

Out of them, only the following three were believed to be married, and the rest were still unmarried. The three married Sakhis and their husbands are the following—(i) Chaarushila or Laxmana was married to Virsen; (ii) Shubhrashila to Subhadra; and (iii) Shaanta to Virmani.

²It is to be noted here that the women use the word ‘heard’ when expressing about their knowledge of persons of exceptional physical charm, instead of using the word ‘seen’. This is significant because these women maintained the dignity of their families and respect for tradition of the time when women of cultured families abstained from venturing out into the public, and never roamed around gaping at other men. They had only ‘heard’ about the charming appearances of gods, kings, princes, demons, sages and seers, as well as the legendary serpents who are said to have ruled the subterranean world from tales and stories told down the generations.

Compare this to other women of loose moral character, such as the female demon named Supernakha, the sister of Ravana who was also enamoured of the beauty of Lord Ram when she saw the Lord in the forest so much so that she had the temerity to propose to marry him. At that time she had told Lord Ram that she had been wondering all over the world but has never found someone suitable for her so that she can marry him. Now, the word ‘found’ implies that she had been ‘closely looking’ at each eligible person whom she would propose, but even after searching and roaming the whole world she did not ‘see’ anyone that suited her heart. But now she said that she is very fascinated by Lord Ram’s beautiful form, and has decided that he is most suitable to married by her. So she proposed to the Lord. Supernakha hasn’t ‘heard’, but actually roamed around the world searching for a suitable groom for herself. It simply means that she had been ‘gazing’ at men, looking them up closely, scrutinizing their physical features, and therefore had ‘seen’ all the handsome men in the world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. that precedes Doha no. 327.

It was expected of Supernakha as she was a female demon who lacked all moral scruples, but it cannot be ever expected from women of a cultured society.

³By citing gods, humans, demons, serpents and sages, the women-folk mean the ‘entire creation’. The heaven is represented by the gods, the earth is represented by the humans, the demons and the sages, and the subterranean world by the serpents. Refer also—Ram Charit Manas—(i) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 80.]

बिष्णु चारि भुज बिधि मुख चारी । बिकट बेष मुख पंच पुरारी ॥ ७ ॥
अपर देउ अस कोउ न आही । यह छबि सखी पटतरिअ जाही ॥ ८ ॥

biṣṇu cāri bhuja bidhi mukha cārī. bikaṭa bēṣa mukha pañca purārī. 7.
apara dē'u asa kō'u na āhī. yaha chabi sakhī paṭatari'a jāhī. 8.

Lord Vishnu has four hands, the creator Brahma has four heads, and Lord Shiva, the slayer of the demon Tripura, has five mouths (faces) and attire that is most odd and horrfying.¹ (7)

There are no Gods senior to these three, and there are none with whom this astounding beauty and charm (of Lord Ram) can be compared. (8)

[Note—¹These three Gods constitute the Trinity. They are the senior-most Gods. All of them have unconventional forms—e.g. Lord Vishnu, the sustainer, has four arms; the creator Brahma has four heads; and Lord Shiva is the oddest of the three. Shiva not only has five faces but remains almost naked, has elephant hide and serpents wrapped around his body, wears a garland of skulls, has ash smeared all over his body, and lives like a recluse hermit.

If this is the situation with the senior Gods, no one can expect their juniors to be better than them. So the women-folk reject them as criterion or standards with which the beauty of Lord Ram can be judged or compared.

The most handsome of the Gods, i.e. Kamdeo (cupid), automatically comes within the purview of this comparison as he is a junior God.

What to talk of Lord Ram, these Gods are no match for the charm that ordinary citizens of Janakpur have—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 314.]

दो०. बय किसोर सुषमा सदन स्याम गौर सुख धाम ।
अंग अंग पर वारिअहिं कोटि कोटि सत काम ॥ २२० ॥

dōhā.

baya kisōra suṣamā sadana syāma gaura sukha dhāma.
aṅga aṅga para vāri'ahim kōṭi kōṭi sata kāma. 220.

The two princes, one of a dark complexion and the other of a fair complexion¹, are young and in their adolescence (i.e. in their teens), and are not only treasuries of fabulous beauty and divine charm but also providers of immense bliss, joy and happiness.

Their beauty is so stupendous, so bewitching and profound that millions of Kamdeos (cupids) appear to have been sacrificed on each of their limbs². (Doha no. 220)

[Note—¹Earlier in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes this Doha no. 220 we have read that the women-folk were focused on Lord Ram alone. But now in this Doha and a little later on in Chaupai line nos. 3, 5-8 that precede Doha no. 221 below we read that the women refer to both the brothers, Lord Ram as well as Laxman in clear terms.

It means simply that while Lord Ram was their main focus of attention but they were also watching Laxman; they weren't neglecting him. Tulsidas is very clever indeed. At first he writes that their attention was focused on Lord Ram to indicate how these women representing the 'Maya' aspect of creation were shying away from their female counterpart 'Bhakti' represented by Laxman. But then if Laxman was totally neglected, thought Tulsidas, it would not be proper on three counts—one, it would be tantamount to sidelining Bhakti, two, his narration would be wrong in its authenticity and detail because when two gentlemen are walking together, and they happen to be equally charming and attractive, it will look very odd and untruthful to say that those who had assembled to look at them saw only one and turned a blind eye to the other, and three, it would be undermining the importance, the divinity and the charm of Laxman which would be intolerable for Lord Ram.

So, the narration oscillates between the women focusing their sight on Lord Ram at one instance, and seeing both the brothers at another instant.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327; (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76; (iv) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 91.]

चौ०. कहहु सखी अस को तनुधारी । जो न मोह यह रूप निहारी ॥ १ ॥
कोउ सप्रेम बोली मृदु बानी । जो मैं सुना सो सुनहु सयानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu sakhī asa kō tanudhārī. jō na mōha yaha rūpa nihārī. 1.
kō'u saprēma bōlī mṛdu bānī. jō mairṁ sunā sō sunahu sayānī. 2.

This first lady¹ concluded her observations by saying to all her companions who were listening attentively—‘Say friend, who amongst those who have a body (referring not only to the humans but even to other living beings who belong to the zoological kingdom) will not be enchanted, enthralled, captivated and overwhelmed by watching this wonderfully beautiful form (of the two brothers)?’² (1)

Replying to her observation, someone else³ said in a sweet voice—‘Oh wise one! Listen to what I have heard about them. (2)

[Note—¹This lady is the first of the eight ‘Sakhis’. Refer note of verse no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220 above.

²It ought to be noted here that though this lady refers to only members of the animate members of the living creation, such as for example the human beings, but elsewhere it is clearly said that the charm of the two brothers was so divine that the entire world consisting of the animate as well as the inanimate forms of living beings got enthralled by it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 204.

Does it mean that the gods were not charmed by this magnificent sight of Lord Ram and Laxman? No, it is not so by any means; they too were equally enthralled by the beautiful view of the two brothers. There are countless instances of this. Refer an elaborate note appended to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223 herein below.

³This is the second ‘Sakhi’ or female friend. Her name is Laxmana (pronounced as “Laxmanaa”). She represents the next Tattwa or element of creation, i.e. the ‘sky’ element. This is because she says that she will now ‘tell’ them whatever she has heard about the two princes. ‘Hearing’ is one of the functions of the sky element because sound waves travel in space.

Laxmana’s mother was Vidagdha, and father was Yashshaali. She used to sit with her friends and gossip. So it believed that she had heard of the two brothers from one betel-seller’s daughter who had married someone of Ayodhya.]

ए दोऊ दसरथ के ढोटा । बाल मरालन्हि के कल जोटा ॥ ३ ॥
मुनि कौसिक मख के रखवारे । जिन्ह रन अजिर निसाचर मारे ॥ ४ ॥

ē dō'ū dasaratha kē ḍhōṭā. bāla marālanhi kē kala jōṭā. 3.
muni kausika makha kē rakhavārē. jinha rana ajira nisācara mārē. 4.

These two boys are sons of king Dasrath¹. They look as beautiful as a pair of divine Swans². (3)

They have protected the fire sacrifice of sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) where they have killed fierce demons.³ (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath was famous, so this lady did not elaborate further regarding who the father of the two princes was, and it sufficed for her to say that the two brothers were ‘sons of king Dasrath of Ayodhya’.

Now, a question arises as to how did the citizens come to know that Lord Ram and Laxman were the ‘sons of king Dasrath of Ayodhya’? Well, when Janak enquired of sage Vishwamitra about the two brothers and who they were at the time of his welcoming the sage upon his arrival at Janakpur, the sage had clearly told them that the two brothers were sons of Dasrath and their names were Ram and Laxman. {Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; and (ii) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 66, stanza no. 2; verse no. 67, stanza no. 1; and verse no. 68, stanza no. 1.

²A Swan is regarded as a majestic bird of dignity and beauty. Hence, the two brothers are compared to this bird.

³This clearly means that the news of the valiant deeds of Lord Ram and Laxman have already reached Janakpur.

When sage Vishwamitra had introduced Lord Ram and Laxman to Janak, all those accompanying the king had heard about them, and when they returned to the city this news spread like wildfire. Numerous great kings and princes had also come, but it was only sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers who were shown special attention by king Janak so much so that he personally went to receive them and then escorted them back to the city and then lodged them in his personal guest house reserved for state guests—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 217. So obviously the two brothers acquired a special status in the city, becoming endeared to each individual citizen, and their arrival was the talk of the town. Countless great princes and kings had come to Janakpur to attend the marriage ceremony of Sita, but once Lord Ram and Laxman arrived and went around the city, all the rest were virtually eclipsed from the reckoning of the citizens of Janakpur.]

स्याम गात कल कंज बिलोचन । जो मारीच सुभुज मदु मोचन ॥ ५ ॥
कौसल्या सुत सो सुख खानी । नामु रामु धनु सायक पानी ॥ ६ ॥

syāma gāta kala kaṅja bilōcana. jō mārica subhuja madu mōcana. 5.
kausalyā suta sō sukha khānī. nāmu rāmu dhanu sāyaka pānī. 6.

[These two verses describe Lord Ram.]

He who has a dark-complexioned body and eyes that resemble a beautiful lotus is the one who had trounced and crushed the pride and arrogance of the demons Marich and Subahu. (5)

He is the son of Kaushalya, and is like a mine of blissfulness, joy and happiness. His name is ‘Ram’ and he holds a bow and an arrow in his hands. (6)

[Note—We are now talking about the women-folk who are discussing the beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman as they walk through the streets of Janakpur surrounded by an excited crowd of children and adults. So this particular lady points

out the special distinguishing features of Lord Ram, such as his ‘dark complexioned body’, to clearly indicate about whom she is talking. Then she says that his mother is Kaushalya and that he had vanquished the pride and arrogance of Marich and Subahu.

She wanted to make sure that others who were hearing her attentively would be able to know which of the two brothers she was talking about so as not to leave any scope for confusion. Since Marich was not killed but flung away into the far-off ocean, his pride and arrogance have been said to be trounced and crushed by Lord Ram. Again, this ‘crushing of the pride and arrogance’ of Marich and Subahu implies killing of Subahu as well because these demons had started treating themselves as invincible and unable to be killed by anyone, let alone two lonely princes.]

गौर किसोर बेषु बर काछें । कर सर चाप राम के पाछें ॥ ७ ॥

लछिमनु नामु राम लघु भ्राता । सुनु सखि तासु सुमित्रा माता ॥ ८ ॥

gaura kisōra bēṣu bara kāchēm̄. kara sara cāpa rāma kē pāchēm̄. 7.
lachimanu nāmu rāma laghu bhrātā. sunu sakhi tāsū sumitrā mātā. 8.

[Now this wise and enchanted lady points out Laxman to her companions and says—]

The fair complexioned pretty young boy who has beautiful attire and charming demeanours (walking) behind him (Lord Ram), who holds a bow and an arrow in his hands [7] is ‘Laxman’. He is the younger brother of Ram. Listen friend, his mother is Sumitra [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Laxman always walks behind Lord Ram as a mark of respect for the Lord, as well as to act as his guard. Later on, when they are on their way to the forest during the Lord’s exile, this same pattern of walking is observed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 123.

Laxman has his bow and arrow at the ready, prepared to protect Lord Ram should the need arise.

Now, once again, a pertinent question comes to the mind: Sage Vishwamitra had not told anyone while introducing the two brothers about the names of their mothers. Then how did this lady come to know their names?

Well, the answer is that king Dasrath was very famous, and his kingdom bordered that of Janakpur. Hence almost everyone in Janakpur, especially those who were highly placed in the hierarchy of the society, was acquainted about Dasrath’s queens. When Lord Ram and his other brothers were born, the news of which queen gave birth to which son must have spread.

Another traditional story is that one betel-seller’s daughter named Vasisthaa was married to someone from Ayodhya, and it was she who had spread this news.]

दो०. बिप्रकाजु करि बंधु दोउ मग मुनिबधू उधारि ।

आए देखन चापमख सुनि हरषी सब नारि ॥ २२१ ॥

dōhā.

biprakāju kari bandhu dō'u maga munibadhū udhāri.
ā'ē dēkhana cāpamakha suni haraṣīm saba nāri. 221.

After having finished the work of the 'Vipra' (literally a Brahmin, but here referring to the protection of sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice), the two brothers have come to see the bow-breaking ceremony. On the way here they had provided liberation to the wife of a sage (this refers to the liberation of Ahilya).'

When the ladies, who were assembled there, heard this, all of them felt very glad. (Doha no. 221)

[Note—The ladies were glad on two counts. First was the information that these two boys would attend the bow-ceremony when these women would have another chance to watch Lord Ram and Laxman for a long time uninterrupted. This is proved when later on we shall read that the venue was bursting at its seams at the time the ceremony was held. All the citizens had rushed to occupy a vantage point, and the royal heralds and attendants had a tough time controlling the crowd and seating them all. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 240 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.

And second reason for the happiness of these ladies was that they are noble-hearted and gracious princes who have liberated a sinful lady known as Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam. This second bit of information was very well received and filled these women-folk with great hope and expectation. They hoped that these two princes would help them to overcome any sins they might themselves have committed in life.

This news of Ahilya's liberation was of exceptional importance for the citizens of Janakpur—because the royal priest of king Janak, named Sataanand, was the son of sage Gautam and his wife Ahilya. So naturally and obviously the entire population of Janakpur felt highly obliged to Lord Ram when they learnt that he had liberated Ahilya from her curse.

Another reason for the women-folk feeling happy after learning about the noble and exalted background of Lord Ram was that they felt that he is a suitable groom for Sita, the daughter of king Janak for whose marriage the bow-breaking ceremony was being organized.

King Janak was searching for a brave and strong groom for his daughter Sita, so when the ladies learnt about the killing of the demons by Lord Ram to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, they felt all the more happy that there are more than average chance now that the king would somehow circumvent his declaration of marrying Sita to the person who breaks the bow, and instead marry her to Lord Ram. See verse nos. 1-2 below.

Even if Janak did not break his vows, they guessed, then at least Lord Ram would be allowed to lift the bow like other competitors, and now it is sure that he will break it. Both ways, they felt, Sita would be married to this prince. And then they will have a lifelong opportunity to see their beloved Lord whenever he comes to pay a visit to his in-law's place.]

चौ०. देखि राम छबि कोउ एक कहई । जोगु जानकिहि यह बरु अहई ॥ १ ॥

जौं सखि इन्हि देख नरनाहू । पन परिहरि हठि करइ बिबाहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi rāma chabi kō'u ēka kaha'ī. jōgu jānakihi yaha baru aha'ī. 1.
jauṁ sakhi inhahi dēkha naranāhū. pana parihari haṭhi kara'i bibāhū. 2.

Watching the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram's form, someone amongst the ladies¹ asserted—'This prince is worthy of becoming a groom for princess Janki (Sita). (1)

Oh friend, if the king (Janak, the father of Sita) sees him (even once), it is sure that he will discard his vows and insist on their marriage.'² (2)

[Note—¹This is the third 'Sakhi' or female friend who speaks. According to tradition, her name was Hema. Her mother was Subhadra, and father was Arimardan. She represents the 'Tej' or the fire element. She endorses the statement of her friends who had made previous comments.

²These verses indicate that not everyone in the city is aware of the fact that Janak has already met the Lord while receiving sage Vishwamitra, and that the king has brought them to the city and has himself lodged them at some palace. Many great kings and princes have come, but no one was shown special privilege by king Janak.

Women are fond of discussing the worthiness or otherwise of a particular boy as a groom for a girl. So, after being over-awed by the wonderful sight of the two brothers and their physical charm, the ladies start debating the worthiness of the elder of the two brothers as a groom for princess Sita, and come to the conclusion that Lord Ram is the most suitable candidate to be selected as a groom for Sita.

There is another important implication here. Lord Ram's physical form and features are delicate and tender, and so is his age. He does not look overbearing like a body-builder or an athlete, and is still in his early teens. Other kings and princes who have collected at Janakpur to try their hands on the bow are apparently physically more strong, muscular and well-built, and higher in age as compared to Lord Ram. So this kind lady means that once king Janak sees Lord Ram, it is natural that he would mentally decide to marry off his daughter Sita to this noble prince without insisting on first testing Lord Ram's strength by letting him to try lift the bow and breaking it before marrying him to his daughter Sita, because the Lord is too tender for the bow and Janak would not take this risk. Instead, the king would find some excuse to cancel the ceremony, and marry Sita directly with Lord Ram.

In the previous Doha no. 221, the lady who was speaking then had referred to 'both the brothers'. So our present lady interjects to say in effect that the elder of the two brothers, i.e. Lord Ram, is the suitable groom for Sita. This is in accordance with established social norms that the elder brother gets married first. Her view is endorsed by another friend in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 223 below when she says that "the creator who has created Sita had thoughtfully created the dark-complexioned groom (i.e. Lord Ram)".

One examines two things to determine whether a boy is suitable as a groom. These are—(i) his family background, and (ii) his personal qualities. Lord Ram fits the bill perfectly—he belongs to a famous and reputed dynasty, the Raghu Dynasty of Ayodhya, and his matchless personal qualities, divine virtues, mystical powers and glories have already spread in the world as is clear from what these ladies had themselves acknowledged in Doha no. 220 and 221 along with their intervening Chaupais. So, Lord Ram definitely fits the bill as the most suitable groom for Sita.

In Tulsidas' book "Janaki Mangal", Chanda no. 7, the women pray to Lord Shiva that the prince with the dark complexion (i.e. Lord Ram) should be the groom

of Sita, and they (the city's women-folk) should be given an opportunity to sing auspicious songs befitting this occasion.]

कोउ कह ए भूपति पहिचाने । मुनि समेत सादर सनमाने ॥ ३ ॥
सखि परंतु पनु राउ न तजई । बिधि बस हठि अबिबेकहि भजई ॥ ४ ॥

kō'u kaha ē bhūpati pahicānē. muni samēta sādara sanamānē. 3.
sakhi parantu panu rā'u na tajaī. bidhi basa haṭhi abibēkahi bhajaī. 4.

Yet another lady¹ commented wryly and poignantly, 'But dear friend, the king has already come to know them. He has welcomed them along with sage Vishwamitra. (3)

But oh friend, inspite of recognizing him (Lord Ram) and being aware of his virtues and glories, the king remains adamant. He does not want to go back on his vows (for fear of ignominy and social rebuke) and refuses to abandon his stubbornness (regarding marrying Sita to anyone whoso breaks the old Bow of Lord Shiva).² (4)

[Note—¹This is the fourth Sakhi or female friend. Her name was Kshemaa. Her mother was Shobhaawati, and father was Riputaapan. She represents the 'earth element' as she talks about the king going physically to meet sage Vishwamitra and then bringing him along with the two princes to lodge them in the city.

²When the previous lady said that if the king sees Lord Ram then he is sure to change his views and decide to marry his daughter Sita with the Lord in some way, her friend corrected her by saying that it is not the case as the king knows who the two brothers are, as well as Lord Ram's astounding glories. He has welcomed them along with sage Vishwamitra, and the sage had himself told him, in front of his courtiers, about Lord Ram and Laxman. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217.}

But unfortunately, till now the king has given no hint that he has changed his mind, or that he is canceling the bow ceremony. The king is reputed to be steadfast in his vows, no matter what happens. So it is extremely unlikely that he will change his track now and somehow declare his intention of marrying Sita with Lord Ram. The chances of this happening are almost nil.

Later on we shall read that even Sita laments at the stubborn attitude of her father who does not understand or realise the consequences of his decisions on her fate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 258.

The reason for Janak not abandoning his vows is clarified by the king himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, the 1st half of Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 252 where he laments that "if I abandon my vows or go back on my words, all my good reputation and glories would crumble".

Refer also to: (i) Janki Mangal, verse nos. 66, 69 and 70 which say that a king finds his glories if he is steadfast in his vows and true to his words; that had the king seen Lord Ram before he made the vow of marrying Sita to anyone who broke the bow he would certainly not have made this condition for her marriage in the first place; and that after making this vow and inviting all the kings it will be highly

ridiculous, shameful and ignominious for him to rescind on his words now in the front of the society at this late hour.

(ii) In Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 1 it is said that “king Janak’s vows (words) are as strong and unbendable, i.e. inviolable and stern, as the Vajra (Indra’s weapon made of the strongest material in existence) and an elephant’s tusk”.]

कोउ कह जौं भल अहइ बिधाता । सब कहँ सुनिअ उचित फलदाता ॥ ५ ॥
तौ जानकिहि मिलिहि बरु एहू । नाहिन आलि इहाँ संदेहू ॥ ६ ॥

kō'u kaha jaum̐ bhala aha'i bidhātā. saba kaham̐ suni'a ucita phaladātā. 5.
tau jānakihi milihi baru ēhū. nāhina āli ihām̐ sandēhū. 6.

One of their friends¹ had a very positive and sprightly attitude as she tried to inject hope and expectation to the discussions which had resulted in creating an atmosphere of despair and gloom till now.

She said spiritedly—‘If what we have heard of the Creator that he is benevolent and gracious, and that he gives suitable rewards to his subjects, is correct and true [5], then be assured that Janki (Sita) will get this prince as her groom. Oh friend, there is no doubt in this [6].’² (5-6)

[Note—¹This is the fifth Sakhi. Her name is Baraarooha. Her mother was Modini, and her father was Mahimangal. She represents the ‘water element’. She seems to be eager about having perpetual opportunities to have ‘Darshan’ or divine viewing of Lord Ram. this will be clear in the following Chaupais and Doha no. 222. She is sentimental, and when one becomes emotional tears well up in his or her eyes. Hence, she symbolizes the water element.

²This lady is wise and bases her assertion on solid reasoning which she explains to her companions in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 223 which we shall be reading below. When the other ladies heard her logical arguments, all of them were reassured that it is indeed true that Sita would be married to Lord Ram—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 223.

Besides the logics presented by the wise lady, there is another very important factor why Sita would definitely be married to Lord Ram. It so happened that the two brothers had gone to the royal garden to pluck flowers for sage Vishwamitra’s worship rituals. At that time, Sita had also gone to offer her prayers to Parvati, the Mother Goddess and the divine consort of Lord Shiva to whom the bow—which was at the focal point of the marriage ceremony—belonged. As if by providence, the two—Lord Ram and Sita—chanced to see each other. Instantly Sita resolved that Lord Ram would be her groom. She prayed to Parvati and silently expressed her desire to the Goddess who answered back to tell Sita in clear terms that her wishes would be fulfilled. So, how can it be otherwise? This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Sortha no. 236.]

जौं बिधि बस अस बनै सँजोगू । तौ कृतकृत्य होइ सब लोगू ॥ ७ ॥
सखि हमरें आरति अति तातें । कबहुँक ए आवहिं एहि नातें ॥ ८ ॥

jauṁ bidhi basa asa banai saṁjōgū. tau kṛtakṛtya hō'i saba lōgū. 7.
sakhi hamarēm ārati ati tātēm. kabahumka ē āvahim ēhi nātēm. 8.

When the assembled women heard this assertion of their wise friend, all of them felt very happy and said in almost unison—‘If the Creator indeed makes this happen (i.e. if it really turns out by providence and a stroke of good luck that Lord Ram is indeed married to Sita), then all of us would become fulfilled and all our desires would be deemed to be realised. (7)

Oh friend! We are very eager and impatiently waiting to learn when he (Lord Ram) will be tied in this alliance (of marriage with Sita) so that he will be often visiting this place (Janakpur). (8)

[Note—Verse no. 8 clearly tells us why these women-folk are so eager that Lord Ram marries Sita. Once this happens, Lord Ram would be visiting Janakpur because the city would become his in-law’s place. When this happens, these ladies, who have literally lost their hearts to Lord Ram, will have repeated opportunity to see their beloved Lord again and again in their lives.

Remember: This is a devotional form of love, a soul-touching and purest form of love between a Jiva (living being) and the Parmatma (the Supreme Being, the Lord God), and there is no trace of a negativity in it at all.

A true devotee looks for an excuse—any excuse—to be with his chosen deity, his Lord as much as possible. In this case, the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram is the ‘excuse’ that the women-folk are relying on to get an opportunity to see their Lord again in life!

The following Doha no. 222 clarifies this point further.]

दो०. नाहिं त हम कहूँ सुनहु सखि इन्ह कर दरसनु दूरि ।
यह संघटु तब होइ जब पुन्य पुराकृत भूरि ॥ २२२ ॥

dōhā.

nāhim ta hama kahum sunahu sakhi inha kara darasanu dūri.
yaha saṅghaṭu taba hō'i jaba pun'ya purākṛta bhūri. 222.

Otherwise oh friend, having the rare chance to see their (Lord Ram and Laxman’s) divine and holy form is very remote and almost impossible for us.¹

This² can happen only when we have a huge stock of good and meritorious deeds done in our past lives (so that we can cite them while praying to our repective deities to prevail upon them to heed our requests that Lord Ram marries Sita by breaking the Bow, for then the Creator and the deities whom we worship regularly would be obliged to heed our prayers as it is said that one is always entitled to be rewarded for any good deed done by him or her in life as is equally true for the punishment for any bad or evil deeds done).’* (Doha no. 222)

[Note—¹This is because once the ceremony is over and Sita gets married to someone else, Lord Ram and Laxman will never come back again. They have come at present to witness the bow-ceremony at the behest of sage Vishwamitra. When they go back home, there is no reason why they should come again.

The ladies say that the chances of their seeing Lord Ram again are ‘very remote and almost impossible’ if he does not marry Sita, but they do not ‘completely rule out this possibility—howsoever remote it may be’. Why is it so? Well, the kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur are not very far away, and some sort of interaction between the citizens of the two kingdoms was in vogue. It may have been in the form of trading or marital relationships, or just plain tourism. But no vast oceans had to be crossed, and neither were the two kingdoms at war which would have prohibited the citizens of any kingdom from visiting the other.

So, in case someone was extremely desirous of meeting someone from the other kingdom, all he or she had to do was travel to that place. So the meaning is very clear now—if any one of the ladies desired to see Lord Ram sometime later on in her life, then she could do so but only if she traveled to Ayodhya. For men such travel would not be as much a big deal as it would be for the women—for the simple reason that in traditional societies women were not expected to move out of their homes except under special circumstances. Hence, such a visit to Ayodhya to merely see their beloved Lord Ram would be ‘rare and almost impossible’ if not ‘outright impossible’, or ‘completely out of the question’ or ‘absolutely unimaginable’.

²The women say that to have a ‘Darshan’ of the Lord—i.e. to have a divine view of the holy form of Lord Ram, it is necessary that one has accumulated spiritual rewards that come with doing auspicious and meritorious deeds. Because if one has been sinful in his past life, then such a privilege of having a divine sight of the Lord and being close to him is not possible.

*This emotion that without having done good and meritorious deeds it was impossible to have a chance to see the divine form of Lord Ram is reiterated later on by the citizens when they rush out to meet the Lord and his brothers at the time of the departure of the marriage party back for Ayodhya after the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 335.]

चौ०. बोली अपर कहेहु सखि नीका । एहिं बिआह अति हित सबही का ॥ १ ॥

कोउ कह संकर चाप कठोरा । ए स्यामल मृदुगात किसोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bōlī apara kahēhu sakhi nīkā. ēhim bi'āha ati hita sabahī kā. 1.

kō'u kaha saṅkara cāpa kaṭhōrā. ē syāmala mṛdugāta kisōrā. 2.

One of the ladies¹ agreed with her (i.e. with her friend who had said that she is certain that the Creator would make it so happen that Sita will marry Lord Ram—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precedes Doha no. 222). She said—‘Oh friend, you have spoken well. Everyone’s best interests will be served with this marriage.’² (1)

Yet another lady³ expressed her doubts and reservations when she said—‘Lord Shiva’s Bow is stern and strong, while this dark-complexioned prince has a tender body and a delicate frame, and is still too young of age for such a formidable task.’⁴
(2)

[Note—¹This is the sixth Sakhi or female friend. Her name was Padma-gandha. Her mother was Sobhnaangi, and father was Balaakar. She represents the ‘air’ element. This is because like the air element which injects life in the entire creation, she injects hope of a happy life in everyone.

²This lady meant that not only the close family members of Sita and Lord Ram will derive pleasure and happiness with this union, but it will also give the same degree of cheer to the citizens of Janakpur as well as of Ayodhya, along with making the gods and sages happy too. Hence, this marriage will serve the ‘best interests of all’; it will make everyone happy—both in this world as well as in the heaven.

It will make Sita happy because she herself wants to marry Lord Ram—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 229, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234—to Sortha no. 236.

It will make Lord Ram happy because he too was enthralled by the sight of Sita when they first met in the royal garden when the Lord had gone there to bring flowers for sage Vishwamitra so much that even after returning to their lodging place Lord Ram was lost in the thoughts of Sita—refer: Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239.

In the case of Sita, Goddess Parvati had assured her that her desires would be fulfilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chanda, and in the case of Lord Ram it was sage Vishwamitra who had assured the Lord the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 237. In this context, refer also Baal Kand, Doha no. 326.

Janak was already charmed by Lord Ram, and internally he would surely have wished that the Lord should be the groom for his daughter Sita. Refer—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217; and (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 222 respectively. Janak’s joys and exhilaration when Lord Ram had broken the bow and made it sure that now no hurdle stood for his marriage with Sita too proves the point—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 286.

Lord Ram’s father, king Dasrath, was obviously delighted when the news of the Lord’s marriage with Sita arrived at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 290; (ii) Doha no. 325.

Lord Ram’s brothers Bharat and Shatrughan were equally delighted as were the queens—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 291.

As for Laxman, he was like a shadow of Lord Ram, and during the moments just before the bow was actually broken, Laxman had cheerfully and delightedly alerted all the guardians of the earth to be ready for the jolt and thunder that would accompany the breaking of the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 259—Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260.

The mother of Lord Ram (Kaushalya), as well as of Sita (Sunayana), and all other members of the royal household and the city were obviously ecstatic.

For happiness in Ayodhya, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 293—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304.

For happiness in Janakpur, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precede Doha no. 263; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 286; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287—Doha no. 289.

As for the Gods' happiness, there are countless instances. However, we shall cite some of them here for reference: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 265; (iv) Doha no. 285; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309; (vi) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314—to Doha no. 315; (vii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 317; (viii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323.

³This is our seventh Sakhi. Her name was Sulochana. Her mother was Vilaksha, and father was Tejastha. She stands for the 'Mana' element. This is because she uses logical thinking to challenge the views of others, and harbours doubts in her mind which is characteristic of the functioning of the mind. By her logics she has all but deflated the sense of hope and expectations formed by the positive opinions of her predecessors.

⁴Elsewhere also such doubts are expressed. For instance—(i) Sita herself was perplexed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 258; (ii) Sita's mother Sunayana too expressed her strong reservations in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 255. In Janki Mangal she expresses her confoundedness to her friends in verse no. 73.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan where the citizens of Janakpur too show their doubts if Lord Ram would be able to lift and break the strong bow of Shiva. The instances in Baal Kand of Geetawali Ramayan are the following: (i) verse no. 68, stanza no. 8.

The same reservation is narrated in Kavitalawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 10 where it is said that Lord Shiva's bow is harder than the shell of a tortoise, and therefore next to impossible to break.]

सबु असमंजस अहइ सयानी । यह सुनि अपर कहइ मृदु बानी ॥ ३ ॥
सखि इन्ह कहँ कोउ कोउ अस कहहीं । बड़ प्रभाउ देखत लघु अहहीं ॥४ ॥

sabu asamanjasa aha'i sayānī. yaha suni apara kaha'i mṛdu bānī. 3.
sakhi inha kham' kō'u kō'u asa kahahīm. baṛa prabhā'u dēkhata laghu
ahahīm. 4.

All the lady friends had their own views about the outcome of the present situation; some had serious doubts but others were confident that things would go the right way as they wish. When the wisest among them¹ heard all her friends making their own conclusions and assumptions, she decided to intervene and put all debates to rest with her solid reasoning supported by logic and proof. So she said sweetly—(3)

‘Oh Friend! Contrary to all you have said, let me tell you one thing. It is said that he (Lord Ram) only looks simple and delicate in physical terms, but his abilities, his prowess and strength are immense and bellies the impression one gets by merely seeing his tender body and young age.² (4)

[Note—¹This is our eighth Sakhi. Her name is Subhaga, her mother was Vineeta and father was Mahaavirya. She represents the ‘Buddhi’ or intellect element. She is the most wise and intelligent in the group as she uses proof and sound logic to support an argument that Lord Ram is sure to break the bow irrespective of how strong or unbendable it is.

²She goes on to outline her points of logic to support her contention that Lord Ram will be the winner in the bow-breaking competition. Though not expressly stated here, she must have told the gathering about the slaying of the demons Tadakaa and Subahu as well as the whole demon army. She must have told them about how Marich was flung across the ocean by a single arrow. She also must have told them about sage Vishwamitra personally selecting Lord Ram and Laxman to kill the demons over countless other options that the sage surely must have thought over and rejected, and how the two brothers had cheerfully protected the sage’s fire sacrifice without the least effort. All these things are deemed to have been outlined by her in the assertions she made.]

परसि जासु पद पंकज धूरी । तरी अहल्या कृत अघ भूरी ॥ ५ ॥
सो कि रहिहि बिनु सिवधनु तोरें । यह प्रतीति परिहरिअ न भोरें ॥ ६ ॥

parasi jāsu pada pañkaja dhūrī. tarī ahalyā kṛta agha bhūrī. 5.
sō ki rahihī binu sivadhanu tōrēm̄. yaha pratīti parihari'a na bhōrēm̄. 6.

By touching the dust of whose holy feet the most sinful Ahilya found her liberation and deliverance from the curse [5], will that same prince not be able to break the bow of Lord Shiva? Don’t neglect this aspect (or logic, proof) and have confidence that our affections will bear fruits [6]. (5-6)

[Note—Ahilya had been turned into a stone. If she could be liberated from this form and transformed into a divine lady who regained her original form as the wife of sage Gautam, is it difficult, by any stretch of imagination, that a prince who possesses such stupendous super-human mystical powers would not break the stubborn resistance that our fate might create in fulfillment of our desires that he marry Sita and become permanently related to all of us as citizens of Sita’s kingdom so that we may have repeated opportunities to see his divine form and derive the pleasure of our lives?

And by the same logic, would he not break the jinx that surrounds Sita’s own fate, should there be any, by breaking the bow and removing the last barrier that separates her future happiness from the perplexities and mental agonies of uncertainty that she must be facing at present?

If Lord Ram can clean Ahilya of her sins, then will he not clean us and Sita of our sins if we have any? Why do you all harbour senseless doubts that don’t stand the test of logic? So, come on. Have faith like Ahilya had that one day Lord Ram will

liberate her and break her jinxed fate. Rely upon your affection for the Lord and be assured that all our desires will be fulfilled.]

जेहिं बिरंचि रचि सीय सँवारी । तेहिं स्यामल बरु रचेउ बिचारी ॥ ७ ॥
तासु बचन सुनि सब हरषानीं । ऐसेइ होउ कहहिं मृदु बानीं ॥ ८ ॥

jēhiṁ biran̄ci raci sīya sam̄vārī. tēhiṁ syāmala baru racē'u bicārī. 7.
tāsu bacana suni saba haraṣānīm. aisē'i hō'u kahahiṁ mṛdu bānīm. 8.

The Creator who has created Sita and bestowed her with all the beauty she possesses is the same Creator who has also painstakingly created the dark-complexioned prince to match her (beauty and charm).¹ (7)

Everyone attentively heard her council, and felt reassured and exhilarated. They exclaimed cheerfully in unison with sweet voices—‘Let it be so; let it happen as you say!’² (8)

[Note—¹This wise lady seems to tell her companions—“So why do you worry? The Creator is not a child; he is a master-craftsman. He thinks carefully before creating each unit of creation, and takes into consideration all angles before actually giving this unit its final form. When he created Sita he thought things over and then went ahead to create her companion with great care so that the trouble he had taken in painstakingly moulding her charming form does not go in vain by uniting her with a companion who would not suit her. Sita was the Creator’s special unit; he has put in all his creating skills while moulding her form and then deciding her destiny. So he must have taken special care while creating her companion, and by the way it looks the dark-complexioned prince, i.e. Lord Ram, is the match the Creator had crafted for Sita. So why shall we worry when the Creator has already decided Sita’s destiny?

Remember, the Creator has created this world with two sides, each complimenting the other. The male and the female are the two facets of his creation just like a coin which has two sides that perfectly fit and match with each other to make the coin have its value and usefulness. A deformed coin or one in which one of the faces is defaced is useless and without any value. What is the use this coin has for the king; which king would make a coin that defaces his own face and makes him an object of ridicule in this world? Similarly, what is the use of a mismatched creation for its creator? Hence, if the Creator took so much trouble to carefully mould Sita’s form as well as Lord Ram’s form then surely he must have had some grand plan in his mind. He surely must have crafted them to match each other to perfection. This translates into a certainty of Sita and Lord Ram being united.”

This lady’s assertion reiterates what someone else had already said in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 222 herein above.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 67, stanza no. 3.]

²Since her arguments and logics were irrefutable, everyone readily agreed with her. All of them sort of blessed her and hoped that her words would turn out to be a reality. Everyone was now certain that Lord Ram will indeed marry Sita.

There is a spiritual message in this friend’s statements. She has highlighted only Ahilya’s liberation. And this single example had convinced all her friends that

Lord Ram will surely fulfill their desires. In other words, stress is laid on devotion and unflinching faith in Lord Ram and his divinity. If a devotee is absolutely sure that if he takes refuge in the Lord all his wishes would be fulfilled, it is going to be that way. On the other hand, if one goes on doubting and debating, he will never find peace and mental rest like the case of the ladies before this last one cited the case of Ahilya.]

दो०. हियँ हरषहिं बरषहिं सुमन सुमुखि सुलोचनि बृंद ।
जाहिं जहाँ जहँ बंधु दोउ तहँ तहँ परमानंद ॥ २२३ ॥

dōhā.

hiyam̃ haraṣahim̃ baraṣahim̃ sumana sumukhi sulōcani bṛnda.
jāhim̃ jahām̃ jaham̃ bandhu dō'u taham̃ taham̃ paramānanda. 223.

The women-folk who had pretty faces and charming eyes were extremely exhilarated in their hearts, and they enthusiastically showered flowers upon the two brothers (from their perch in the balconies and roof-tops) wherever they went. (Doha no. 223)

[Note—Lord Ram and Laxman were walking down the streets of Janakpur for sight-seeing. Children and men accompanied them and followed them round the city, but the women stayed in their homes and showered flowers on the two brothers from their perches on the balconies and roof-tops. They also extended their hands through the windows to throw flowers on the two brothers.

This is the first instance of flowers being rained upon Lord Ram and Laxman at Janakpur. Later on we shall read that the Gods too have showered flowers from the sky—but that happens after the bow is broken and Sita has put the victory garland around Lord Ram's neck—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 285; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314.

A similar situation of bliss, happiness and joy spreading everywhere wherever Lord Ram goes is seen later on during his forest exile. As he passed through the villages and hamlets on the way, all their residents felt very happy and excited. This happiness and bliss prevailed everywhere, in each village and hamlet through which the Lord passed on his onward journey to the deep forest. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 122.]

चौ०. पुर पूरब दिसि गे दोउ भाई । जहँ धनुमख हित भूमि बनाई ॥ १ ॥
अति बिस्तार चारु गच ढारी । बिमल बेदिका रुचिर सँवारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pura pūraba disī gē dō'u bhā'ī. jaham̃ dhanumakha hita bhūmi banā'ī. 1.
ati bistāra cāru gaca ḍhārī. bimala bēdikā rucira samvārī. 2.

The two brothers (Ram and Laxman) went to the east of the city where the arena for the bow-breaking ceremony was located¹. (1)

At the center of the venue was a beautiful and spacious paved area that was large in area and plastered with lime and mortar ('Gaca'). A gentle slope from this ground led up to an elevated area where the altar ('bēdikā'—a raised platform) was situated at its middle. This altar was wonderfully decorated and clean (as Lord celebrated Bow was to be kept on it)². (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman's main purpose of coming to Janakpur was to witness the bow-breaking ceremony. So it is natural that they would like to see the arena. Even in modern times, when some great domestic or international game or other form of competition is organised in a big city and someone visits the city during this period, he would naturally like to see the stadium or the venue of the event.

All roads leading to the site were specially decorated, and it aroused natural curiosity in one's heart.

The two brothers had come from the western side of the city. This is because the river Ganges near where Ahilya was liberated lies on the west of Janakpur. The bow-breaking venue was on the city's eastern fringe. This clearly means that they had crossed the city and had seen all the important sites along the way.

²The word "Gaca" refers to a slanted slope leading up to a platform. Today we have steps, but in some temples in the south of India this tradition still survives, where large stone slabs are used to pave the way from the lower surrounding area up to the main platform of the temple.

The word also implies that it was paved with glass pieces instead of ordinary stone slabs.

The main altar was decorated even more beautifully with gems and priceless stones. It is the marriage ceremony of a great king's daughter where all the renowned kings and princes of the time had been invited. It is obvious that in these circumstances all the resources of king Janak would have been mobilized to impress the guests.

Even today when foreign dignitaries arrive or international competitions are held in a country, all plugs are pulled to leave an upfront good impression upon the guests.]

चहुँ दिसि कंचन मंच बिसाला । रचे जहाँ बैठहिं महिपाला ॥ ३ ॥

तेहि पाछें समीप चहुँ पासा । अपर मंच मंडली बिलासा ॥ ४ ॥

कछुक ऊँचि सब भाँति सुहाई । बैठहिं नगर लोग जहँ जाई ॥ ५ ॥

cahum̐ disi kañcana mañca bisālā. racē jahām̐ baiṭhahim̐ mahipālā. 3.

tēhi pāchēm̐ samīpa cahum̐ pāsā. apara mañca maṇḍalī bilāsā. 4.

kachuka ūm̐ci saba bhām̐ti suhāī. baiṭhahim̐ nagara lōga jaham̐ jāī. 5.

Behind this main platform, on all the four sides of it, were erected elevated seats made of gold where the invited kings and princes would sit. (3)

Still behind this ring were the seats meant for the male citizens of Janakpur. These seats were arranged on a higher sloping or terraced ground (so that everyone could have a clear view of the platform where the bow-breaking was to take place). (4-5)

[Note—The layout and construction of the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony was like we have in modern stadiums. At the center was the altar where the bow would be placed. It was on a high platform. Surrounding it were rows after rows of seats. Some of the front seats meant for dignitaries and invitees were closer to the main altar and formed the inner ring of seats. The ground was tapered so that the person sitting in the front row did not obstruct the view of the person behind him. The common people were to be seated in the back row and on erected balconies.]

तिन्ह के निकट बिसाल सुहाए । धवल धाम बहुबरन बनाए ॥ ६ ॥
 जहँ बैठें देखहिं सब नारी । जथा जोगु निज कुल अनुहारी ॥ ७ ॥
 पुर बालक कहि कहि मृदु बचना । सादर प्रभुहि देखावहिं रचना ॥ ८ ॥

tinha kē nikāṭa bisāla suhā'ē. dhavala dhāma bahubarana banā'ē. 6.
 jaham̃ baiṭhēm dēkhaḥim̃ saba nārī. jathā jōgu nija kula anuhārī. 7.
 pura bālaka kahi kahi mṛdu bacanā. sādara prabhuhi dēkhāvahim̃ racanā. 8.

Near and behind the back row of seats were made the balconies designed like small cabins or rooms which were fully decorated and colourful, looking wonderful like homes of nobility. They were decorated with crystals (“Dhawal” means white and glittering). (6)

The women-folk of the city were to sit here according to their caste, clan or place in the social hierarchy, and watch the events from there¹. (7)

The boys of the city (who had followed the two brothers from the time they first stepped out to go sight-seeing) cheerfully and enthusiastically pointed out the salient features of the venue with sweet and pleasant voices. They took the Lord (Sri Ram, and his brother Laxman) around the site and showed him everything with due respect and honour². (8)

[Note—¹Women and men would be seated in separate enclosures to conform to the traditions of the society of those times. Whereas men were to be seated on open seats, the women were to remain in special covered enclosures that resembled large balconies and windows of homes.

²This verse summarises the description of the venue. It also means that the excited children went round the venue with Lord Ram and Laxman, joyfully pointing out everything to them—where the bow would be kept, where the kings would be seated, where the men-folk would be seated, and where the women are to be seated.

When we read further we will notice that these children have become very friendly with Lord Ram and have struck a cordial relationship with the two brothers. Some of the children are holding the Lord’s hands, some are tugging at his clothes, some are trying to speak loudly so that the Lord’s attention is drawn towards them, some are running ahead while some are by the side of the Lord, and a large group follows from behind. These electrified children are having the most enjoyable time of their lives—giggling, smiling, running, hopping, skipping, tottering and stumbling in the melee and getting up to dust their clothes, huffing and panting, sneering at each other in trying to shout others down so that they can draw the attention of the two

brothers and be heard by them, and in general creating a fascinating sight that enthralls the mind of the beholder.

The children were aware that the ground of the bow-breaking ceremony was consecrated as Lord Shiva's bow was to be kept there. So when they were moving around the altar and other close-by places, they showed the greatest respect to the place.

Another important interpretation is this: Though it is true that the city children were so excited by meeting Lord Ram and Laxman—especially when they found that these brothers did not have any sort of 'airs' about them and were freely mixing with them like they were their fast and old friends, the children overcame all initial hesitations and inhibitions that the children usually have when they meet strangers for the first time. As time passed they become very informal with Lord Ram and Laxman—touching them and pulling them here and there. But this should not be construed to mean that they were being rude to the two brothers. These children showed the greatest respect and honour to both Lord Ram and his brother Laxman.

The Lord understood this—and this is why he did not mind at all about their childish pranks and behaviour. This is abundantly clear in the following verses.]

दो०. सब सिसु एहि मिस प्रेमबस परसि मनोहर गात ।
तन पुलकहिं अति हरषु हियँ देखि देखि दोउ भ्रात ॥ २२४ ॥

dōhā.

saba sisu ēhi misa prēmabasa parasi manōhara gāta.
tana pulakahim̐ ati haraṣu hiyaṁ dēkhi dēkhi dō'u bhrāta. 224.

On this wise and with the pretext of showing the two brothers around the city and the venue, the children touched the Lord's divine body, making their own bodies thrilled and ecstatic by this touch (as it was an electrifying experience for them). Their hearts were overwhelmed with joy and happiness (on seeing the two brothers from up so close and interacting with them in a friendly and intimate manner). (Doha no. 224)

[Note—These children are so very fortunate indeed. The Lord for whose divine glimpse great hermits, ascetics, sages and seers spend their entire lives doing Tapa and other forms of spiritual efforts but still are unable to have his vision is now mobbed by ordinary children who touch him, tug at his clothes, talk with him and hold his fingers and hands as they excitedly take Lord Ram and his brother Laxman round the city and the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony.]

चौ०. सिसु सब राम प्रेमबस जाने । प्रीति समेत निकेत बखाने ॥ १ ॥
निज निज रुचि सब लेहिं बोलाई । सहित सनेह जाहिं दोउ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sisu saba rāma prēmabasa jānē. prīti samēta nikēta bakhānē. 1.
nija nija ruci saba lēhim̐ bōlāī. sahita sanēha jāhim̐ dō'u bhāī. 2.

[Now, Lord Ram and Laxman have come out of the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony and are on their back to the place where they have been edged with sage Vishwamitra. The children show them their own homes, and the Lord praises them.]

Lord Ram had realised that the children had become overwhelmed with affection and love for him. So when these children came near their own homes, they lovingly pointed them out to the Lord who in his turn praised them (i.e. the Lord admired their homes and said that they were all so beautiful, large, colourful and attractive to make these children happy)¹. (1)

The children called the two brothers with names according to their own liking, and to places they wanted them to see and visit. Overcome with the affection and love shown by these innocent children towards them, the two brothers responded positively and lovingly, gladly going to wherever they were called by the children.² (2)*

[Note—¹Lord Ram is a noble prince with a friendly disposition and amiable nature. He had never behaved in a chivalrous manner, showing arrogance and ego by unnecessarily creating an artificial aura of majesty and nobility when it was not needed. But inspite of this he ensured that basic codes of decent behaviour were adhered to.

Even when he was a child himself and went to play with other boys of his age at Ayodhya he was invariably friendly with them, and these boys maintained discipline and decorum because they knew that he was their prince and future king. So even when playing together they still maintained dignity and kept an honourable distance from Lord Ram and his brothers. The boys of Ayodhya did not mob him, did not tug and pull at him, and did not touch him or his clothes like the children of Janakpur. The reason is simple—while the children of Ayodhya were afraid to do anything that might annoy Ram or his brothers, or even their father, king Dasrath, which would invite strong punishment, no such inhibitions were applicable to the children of Janakpur. For them, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were simply their ‘friends’. These excited children had developed a very strong bond of friendship and cordiality with the two brother, even calling them with whatever names they felt like, and may have even invited them into their homes for a short visit or for snacks (refer next verse no. 2).

*This entire description of children flocking around Lord Ram and Laxman, touching the Lord, catching hold of his hands and fingers, pulling him here and there, tugging at his clothes, calling him by different names, and jumping all around him with excitement, and the Lord reciprocating their gestures and emotions with equal love and affection has a big message for us.

The message is sharp and clear: If we wish to come so close to the Supreme Lord that we can actually touch him and feel him, if we want to be so close to him that all formalities are done away with, if we wish to remove all barriers between ourselves and the Lord of our devotion, if we want that the Lord is at our beck and call—then we must turn ourselves to become as innocent and lovable as a child.

Remember: The Lord was followed by children as well as by adults. But only the children felt free to touch him, tug at him, pull him here and there, call him in any direction, and address him by any name they fancied for him, while the adults maintained a respectful distance and could not muster enough courage to act like their own children. Had they done so, they would be rebuked and called mad. Hence, it is much, much easier to attain the Lord if we are like these innocent children who

observed no formalities, who did not even know the meaning of the word prince or a guest-of-honour with whom one must act with dignity and respect, as compared to knowledgeable adults who observed formalities because they knew how to treat someone who is a guest-of-honour of their king, who is by all counts a great prince of a great kingdom because their own king, Janak, has shown them such special favour by personally going to receive them and then escorting them to the city to lodge them at a special palace.

For the children, Lord Ram was a dear friend and playmate; for the adult citizens he was their king's special guest, a prince of high stature. That made the difference.

Thus, the greater is the innocence of our heart, the more intense is our devotion for the Lord God, the greater is our affinity for him, the more intense is the Lord's response, and the more closer he comes to us.

²If we visualize the scene in our mind we can easily imagine what might be happening. As has been noted in the note appended to verse no. 1 above, besides showing Lord Ram and Laxman the sights of the city, the children excitedly pointed out their own homes to them on their way back to the lodging place where they were staying with sage Vishwamitra. Sure enough some of these children would call them by their names or by any nickname they had devised for Lord Ram and Laxman, or simply as brothers, pals, friends etc. Some of the children bade them goodbye on the street, some invited them in their homes for a visit or for meeting their parents or for some rest and refreshment. Still others pulled them away to show them some other landmarks or sights that were out of the way, and still others pointed out their schools and playgrounds. The Lord obliged them all smilingly, with cheer and equal measure of enthusiasm so as not to make the children unhappy and feel that the Lord is not paying attention to them.

Remember: Lord Ram is not an ordinary human prince, though his physical body and appearance is such. He is a personified form of the Supreme Being, the Lord of the entire creation. It is no wonder that the same Lord could make his presence felt at the same instant at different places to oblige all the children. The proof of this actually happening will come indirectly later on in a different context at two places.

These are the following:--(i) When Bharat had gone to the forest to try bring Lord Ram to Ayodhya, he was accompanied by a large party of the citizens of Ayodhya. When they met Lord Ram in the forest at a place called Chitrakoot, all of them were eager to meet the Lord. So Lord Ram obliged them all and met them in the way they all liked to meet him. This means, some met him as their beloved prince, some treated him as their friend, some as their Lord, some elder citizens had treated him like their sons, and so on and so forth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 244.

(ii) When the Lord returned to Ayodhya after his forest exile, every citizen of Ayodhya was eager to meet and welcome the Lord individually. From practical point of view this was impossible. So what did the Lord do? He assumed countless forms, as many as there were number of citizens. And then he met each one of them individually, embracing them without consideration of caste or sect of society. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 6 which are absolutely explicit on this point.

The Lord did not get annoyed when the children insisted that he come here and then there; rather he went there cheerfully and gladly. This is because Lord Ram had realised that the children are overwhelmed with affection and love for him, and

the Lord wanted to honour each of their wishes because the Lord honours only one quality in this world, and it is having love for him. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.]

राम देखावहिं अनुजहि रचना । कहि मृदु मधुर मनोहर बचना ॥ ३ ॥
 लव निमेष महुं भुवन निकाया । रचइ जासु अनुसासन माया ॥ ४ ॥
 भगति हेतु सोइ दीनदयाला । चितवत चकित धनुष मखसाला ॥ ५ ॥

rāma dēkhāvahim̐ anujahi racanā. kahi mṛdu madhura manōhara bacanā. 3.
 lava nimēṣa mahum̐ bhuvana nikāyā. raca'i jāsu anusāsana māyā. 4.
 bhagati hētu sō'i dīnadayālā. citavata cakita dhanuṣa makhasālā. 5.

Lord Ram showed his younger brother (Laxman) the design and general layout of the city as well as of the venue (of the bow ceremony), explaining to him in sweet and pleasant words their special features, their outstanding beauty and charming construction¹. (3)

The Almighty Lord whose cosmic dynamic powers known as Maya is so powerful that it can create the entire universe in a fraction of a second that it takes one to blink as soon as the Lord wishes that to happen² [4], the same merciful and kind Lord is so gracious that he looks at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony with awe and stunning astonishment just to please his devotees (the children and the men who are accompanying him round the city)³ [5]. (4-5)

[Note—¹Originally it was Laxman who was eager to see the city. As the two brothers moved around, Lord Ram discovered that he was the center of attraction, and felt that Laxman might feel neglected and ill-at-ease. So, the Lord affectionately described the city to Laxman as they passed by important places. In effect, the Lord repeated to Laxman what the excited children were giving a virtual running-commentary about.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 21 where Hanuman tells Ravana about Lord Ram's mystical powers that prove he is the supreme Lord of creation.

The same idea that the entire creation is merely a hair on the body of the Viraat Purush is reiterate in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 192 when mother Kaushalya offers her prayers to the Lord at the time of his birth.

Once again, it is said that the cosmic form of the Lord is like a huge tree from which countless universes emerge like its fruits—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 13 where sage Kumbhaj has prayed to Lord Ram.

³These two verses are included to remove any trace of doubt one might have in his mind about the incompatibility of two things—one, that Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being who is supposed to know everything, and two, as the way he feigns ignorance and eagerly sees all the sites of the city like ordinary tourists, at the way Lord Ram seems enchanted with the beauty of the city, the way he has to be

told about the different places by the children and adults as if he does not know about them, and the way he goes here and there when called by the excited children.

Well, Lord Ram is doing all this to please and oblige the ordinary people of the land, whether they are children or adults, who do not have the mental ability to reach the transcendental state of spiritual existence attained by great ascetics and sages who have become self-realised and enlightened to realise the Supreme Being and understand the Lord's existence in the form of the 'Atma', the pure conscious soul. For ordinary creatures who cannot digest and fathom the intricacies of metaphysics and theology, the easiest way to attain the Lord is the sacred path of 'Bhakti' (devotion and love for the Lord).

The entire objective of this narration of the Lord going out to sight-see the city of Janakpur is precisely this—to provide an opportunity to ordinary people to have the divine experience of having the Lord in their midst. The Lord was not there amongst the ordinary citizens to boast of his super-natural powers to impress them, by saying for instance 'I know this and I know that; or this is not perfect and that is faulty because of this and that reason'. So even if there were imperfections in the constructions and designing and decorations etc. the Lord still greatly praised them and those who erected these structures so that everyone felt happy and pleased.

The Lord acts in a way and does everything that pleases his devotees. He behaves as if he is bound to the ways of the world as well as the physical body that he adopted to become a human, but actually he is independent of all obligations and free from all fetters—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 73; (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 114; (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 101; and (iv) Lord Shiva's words asserting this fact in Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 39.

The Lord had come on earth to spread love, happiness and joy, and not to criticize and find faults. Does not the Lord know what faults his creation has; does he need to be snobbish and haughty and pretentious to make himself appear high and mighty and exalted in front of ordinary mortals who would be awed at the presence of a super-human amongst them?]

कौतुक देखि चले गुरु पाहीं । जानि बिलंबु त्रास मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥
जासु त्रास डर कहूँ डर होई । भजन प्रभाउ देखावत सोई ॥ ७ ॥
कहि बातें मृदु मधुर सुहाई । किए बिदा बालक बरिआई ॥ ८ ॥

kautuka dēkhi calē guru pāhīm. jāni bilambu trāsa mana māhīm. 6.
jāsu trāsa ḍara kahūṅ ḍara hō'ī. bhajana prabhā'u dēkhāvata sō'ī. 7.
kahi bātēm mṛdu madhura suhā'īm. ki'ē bidā bālaka bari'ā'īm. 8.

After having watched the novelty of the mighty fine and spectacular sights of the city that held the mind and the imagination of the beholder in thrall, and the wonderful way it was decked up for the bow-breaking ceremony, as well as having experienced the emotional way the citizens had warmly welcomed the two brothers, the Lord hurried to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra). They were worried that it was already too late. (6)

He by whom even the God of Terror is frightened (i.e. the latter does not have courage to defy Lord Ram and gainsay the Lord)—is the same Lord who is showing the mystical powers of Bhakti (the grand virtues of devotion and love) by feeling scared at annoying the sage for being late¹. (7)

When Lord Ram realised that he is getting late, he politely took his leave from the boys who were accompanying them. Using pleasant and sweet words, he had to forcibly bid good-bye to the boys². (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had promised sage Vishwamitra that he will go and come back ‘immediately’ or ‘soon’ after showing the city to Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 218. And now the sun has set and it was dark, and they have been wondering in the city late. Sure enough, the sage would be worried and would get angry at them for being late in returning.

Lord Ram is affright that he is getting late to return to sage Vishwamitra. The Supreme Lord who instills fear even in the heart of the Terror God because the latter dare not disobey him, is feeling worried that the sage would get annoyed and angry at him for being late. The Lord indirectly gives the message that if one has ‘Bhakti’ for him, the Lord cannot gather courage to offend such a person or not do according to his wishes. Vishwamitra had ordered them

Sage Vishwamitra loved Lord Ram like his son; the sage for once had forgotten that these two princes are none but manifestations of the Supreme Being, the Lord of the entire creation, but out of intensity of love and affection for Lord Ram and Laxman he had started to treat them as his ‘ward’.

The sage must have got worried that it was getting dark, and the two boys have yet not returned. What has happened to them—have they got lost in the big city? So, Lord Ram thought, that the sage will take him to task for being late and making him restless about his security and well-being.

Well, had the sage’s Mana (heart and mind) not been overwhelmed with love and affection for the two brothers and had lived in the transcendental plane of existence where it knew that Lord Ram is Brahm personified, then there was no question of the sage getting worried about the safety of the two brothers. Well, he was not in the beginning—as proved by the fact he determined that they would fearlessly face and kill the demons without any doubt. When he let Lord Ram and Laxman stand guard during his fire sacrifice, he did not worry about their safety. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 210.

But then the merciful Lord had to show the dispassionate sage what joy and happiness lies in having a heart of a devotee who loves his Lord more than anything in existence. The Lord had to show the renunciate hermit what sweet nectar there is in the virtues of love and affection as opposed to dry metaphysical knowledge and theological doctrines. So he invoked these virtues in the dry-as-nut Mana of the enlightened sage.

For a detailed note on how the sage forgot for once that the two princes accompanying him are not ordinary princes but Brahm in a personified form, please see elaborate notes appended to Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 209 which we have read earlier.

The assertion that even ‘Terror’ is afraid to annoy his Lord is reiterated elsewhere also where it is said that “even ‘Kaal’, the God of death, is scared to annoy the Lord”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 13.

²This verse and its preceding one are wonderful verses. Chaupai line no. 7 says that the Lord was afraid of the sage as he was getting late, and the reason is that the Lord wants to show the mystical effects of the power of Bhakti. The sage had great Bhakti for him, and the Lord had promised him that he will come back soon after a quick round of the city with Laxman.

And it so happened that in the city he met others who also had Bhakti for him—the citizens, the adult men and women, and the children. As has been pointed out earlier, the children represent purest form Bhakti as they have started loving their dear friend Ram and do not want to part with him. But the Lord was in a dilemma. Both the sage as well as the children had Bhakti, but the Lord had earlier promised the sage that he will come back soon. So, the Lord must honour the word given by him to his first devotee, the sage—which was that he will come back to him soon. Had he not given this word, the Lord would have stayed for a long time in the city, obliging the children by being with them, say till midnight.

The point is very clear. Therefore Lord Ram had no option but to bid good-bye to the children and return hastily to sage Vishwamitra.

There is one stark point staring at our faces here. The Lord took his leave from the ‘children’ and not from the ‘adults’ who also may have been following him round the city. But the difference is this: the adults may have gone for some distance from their homes or workplaces, and returned to resume the work they were doing. The children, on the other hand, followed the Lord wherever he went. On his way back, when these children reached their respective homes, they cheerfully asked the Lord to come in, or simply showed the Lord their homes, saying “Oh friend, I live here’, and so on. Refer: Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 225.

No one wanted to leave the Lord as he swiftly moved in the direction of his lodging place—because he was getting late.

So, finally, the Lord had to persuade the hordes of children thronging him to go back to their homes even against their wills, using sweet and endearing parting words. This is the way of the world, and the Lord had to ensure that it is observed because he had assumed a human body that is subjected to, and is expected to obey these laws.

The presence of Lord Ram in their middle had the same effect on the children that a magnet has on iron pieces. The same dramatic scene is witnessed later on in this story of the Ramayan when Lord Ram had gone out of Ayodhya on his forest sojourn for 14 years. The grieving citizens of Ayodhya had followed the Lord from behind, deciding that their best of good and welfare lies in the company of the Lord they loved so much, even in the forest, and not without him in the city of Ayodhya. Lord Ram had tried all means and arguments to motivate them to return after the huge crowd following him had gone very far behind him. But the citizens refused to return. So, the Lord was forced—indeed with a heavy heart of the extreme kind—to use a trick to sneak out during the night when they were all asleep. The citizens grieved and wept like abandoned children, but they had no choice but to return to Ayodhya and wait patiently for the Lord to return at the end of the exile period. This heart-wrenching episode that rocks even the sternest of minds is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 86.]

दो०. सभय सप्रेम बिनीत अति सकुच सहित दोउ भाइ ।
गुर पद पंकज नाइ सिर बैठे आयसु पाइ ॥ २२५ ॥

dōhā.

bhaya saprēma binīta ati sakuca sahita dō'u bhā'i.
gura pada paṅkaja nā'i sira baiṭhē āyasu pā'i. 225.

The two brothers reached the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) hesitantly, meekly and submissively, bowed before him affectionately, and then sat down after getting permission from him. (Doha no. 225)

[Note—Realising that they had been late in coming back, the two brothers approached the sage hesitantly and meekly as they feared that he would be angry at them. They politely bowed their heads before him as a mark of great respect and subtly requesting him to forgive them for being late.

The sage was a wise man. He had himself told Lord Ram that he should go and let the citizens of Janakpur enjoy the reward of having eyes by letting them have a divine view of the Lord's holy form. Refer: Doha no. 218.

So the sage was not at all annoyed for the two brothers being late; rather he understood the reason for it even without them saying it in clear words. So the sage asked them to sit down. Had the sage been angry, he would have politely admonished them or at least not told them to sit down.]

चौ०. निसि प्रबेस मुनि आयसु दीन्हा । सबहीं संध्याबंदनु कीन्हा ॥ १ ॥
कहत कथा इतिहास पुरानी । रुचिर रजनि जुग जाम सिरानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nisi prabēsa muni āyasu dīnhā. sabahīm sandhyābandanu kīnhā. 1.
kahata kathā itihāsa purānī. rucira rajani juga jāma sirānī. 2.

At dusk (nisi prabēsa; literally meaning the time of the day when night is about to make entry), the sage (Vishwamitra) ordered everyone to do the religious observance known as 'Sandhya-bandan' (sandhyābandan¹)—prayers offered to the Sun-God as a visible manifestation of Brahm, the Supreme Being, by using the famous 'Gayatri Mantra'². (1)

After completing the Sandhya-bandan ritual, the sages gathered together to say and listen to religious discourses ('Kathaa') based on ancient religious histories, known as the 'Itihaas'³, till about the middle of the night⁴. This time was spent pleasantly⁵. (2)

[Note—¹From the metaphysical and spiritual point of view, the union of Brahm, the Supreme Being, and the Jiva, the living being, is symbolised by the 'Sandhya'—meaning the point where two entities are joined.

The word 'Bandan' simply means to 'offer respects to', or 'to offer prayers to'.

To wit, 'Sandhya-bandan' is a religious observance that symbolizes the union of the Jiva with Brahm. It is done regularly to remind the Jiva, at least three times of the day, that he must strive to establish a union between himself and Brahm.

Sandhya-bandan is a religious observance done three times a day—at dawn, at noon, and dusk. It is usually done near a water-body, such as a pond or river. The Gayatri Mantra is the standard Mantra used for this sacramental observance. It is usually done near a water-body, such as a pond or river. Pranayam, a meditative process when the breath is controlled by a set of postures, is part of the ritual.

Sandhya-bandan consists of two basic stages—the first step is offering of prayers using the Gayatri Mantra and doing Pranayam, and the second step is offering of oblations to the Sun-God.

During the evening Sandhya-bandan, the first step is completed facing the east, and the second step is done facing the west.

During the morning Sandhya-bandan, the reverse process is followed—viz. the first step is done facing the west, and the second step is completed facing the east. At noon, the process is done in such a way that first half of the sacrament is done according to the morning Sandhya-bandan, and the second half is done according to the evening process.

Now, it is classified into three types depending upon the time when it is done. For instance, the Sandhya-bandan that is done in the evening are of the following three types—(i) the best type of Sandhya-bandan is done at a time when sun has reached the western horizon but has yet not disappeared from sight, (ii) the medium is that which is done after the sun has set beyond the horizon but the stars are still not visible, and (iii) the lowest category of this sacrament is when it is done after the stars start appearing in the sky.

The reverse process is applicable to the one that is done in the morning. That means, the Sandhya-bandan that is done while the stars are still visible is the best, the one that is done after the stars vanish from sight but before the sun becomes visible in the eastern sky is medium, and the one done after sunrise is of the lowest type.

For the one that is done at noon, the best is that which is done in such a way that half of the process falls just before exact noon time, and half after it.

Refer also Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 327 below.

²The Gayatri Mantra is the following—"OM Bhurbhuvaha Swaha, Tatsaviurvarenyam, Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi, Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayat". This is known as the full Brahm Gayatri as it is dedicated to OM, the word which is used as a synonym for Brahm. It means 'OM is the supreme, transcendental Brahm. He is the lord of creation of the terrestrial (Bhu), the celestial (Bhuvaha) and heavenly worlds (Suwaha). I offer my oblations to you. That Brahm is luminous like the Sun. He is excellent, the best, the most exalted, a destroyer of sins, and a divine entity. May he imbibe, infuse and inspire our intellect with wisdom and enlightenment so that we are purified and move on the righteous and noble path'. The four phrases of the Gayatri Mantra are clearly marked by small numerals in this Mantra. This Mantra appears in the Rig Veda (3/62/10), the Sam Veda (1462), and Yajur Veda (3/35, 22/9, 30/2, 36/6).

³Since sage Vishwamitra was the senior-most sage of the group, he was the one who told these stories from the Purans, and the others, including Lord Ram and Laxman, heard them attentively. Vishwamitra was a sage having a very long life, and he was

highly learned and had a phenomenal memory. So every time an opportunity arrived to keep others occupied or entertained, as in the present case, they selected him to tell them something interesting from the past. Then the sage would quote some interesting anecdote from the ancient texts, known as the Purans and Itihaas that conveyed some form of religious messages. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 210; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 278.

⁴The time spent in telling such interesting stories was ‘Jug-jaam’ meaning ‘two Pahar’—which means 2 (‘Jug’ = 2) x 3 hours (‘Jaam’) = approximately 6 hours from sunset. This takes us to around midnight.

⁵The time of the night was ‘spent pleasantly’ because, one, the stories that the sage told the gathering were very interesting, and two, they had a devotional quotient which made them very attractive and pleasant to hear for the sages as well as the two brothers.]

मुनिबर सयन कीन्हि तब जाई । लगे चरन चापन दोउ भाई ॥ ३ ॥
जिन्ह के चरन सरोरुह लागी । करत बिबिध जप जोग बिरागी ॥ ४ ॥
तेइ दोउ बंधु प्रेम जनु जीते । गुर पद कमल पलोटत प्रीते ॥ ५ ॥

munibara sayana kīnhi taba jā'ī. lagē carana cāpana dō'u bhā'ī. 3.
jinha kē carana sarōruha lāgī. karata bibidha japa jōga birāgī. 4.
tē'i dō'u bandhu prēma janu jītē. gura pada kamala palōṭata prītē. 5.

After that (i.e. just after midnight), the sage retired to sleep. The two brothers began to softly massage and gently knead his legs (to give the sage comfort and provide relief from tired muscles and weary feet)¹. (3)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) whose holy feet are reverentially sought to be attained by renunciate and dispassionate hermits and ascetics by doing so many different kinds of Japa (repetition of holy Names of the Lord God as well as the Mantras which are spiritual formulas) and Yoga (meditation) [4], the same brothers seemed to be conquered (overwhelmed) by the Guru's (sage Vishwamitra's) love and affection for them so much so that they dutifully and respectfully message his legs and softly knead their tired muscles [5]². (4-5)

[Note—¹The point to note here is that the two brothers did not deem fit to ask for the sage's permission to serve him by messaging his tired feet, whereas on all other occasions they have sought it. Well, the answer is that when a disciple serves his teacher personally, no formal permission is required, but for all other things it is needed.

Another reason was to serve the sage and make him pleased so that he gives them his blessings for the events that were to unfold the next day—at the bow-breaking ceremony.

The third possible reason is to silently ask the sage to forgive the two brothers for any mistakes that they might have made till now. One such possible mistake was coming late after the tour of the city of Lanka.

The fourth reason is that this is the first opportunity that sage Vishwamitra has got to properly rest without any worries for what has to be done the next day since the time he left his hermitage to bring Lord Ram and Laxman from Ayodhya. First he went to Ayodhya, then he came back to his hermitage with the two brothers and got engaged in the arrangement and completion of the fire sacrifice, then he was kept busy by the regular administrative affairs of his hermitage, and then started on the journey for Janakpur. This was the first time he could sleep peacefully without any worries to be handled the next day.

It is a matter of practical experience that when one has a lot of work to do and his mind is occupied with it then though he might sleep daily for a few hours in the night yet he becomes tired. Only when the work is finished and his mind is free from the accompanying tension does he experience tiredness and fatigue overtaking him. It is then that he needs some real sleep and body massage or gentle kneading of the tired muscles to relax them and help him feel rejuvenated the next day.

²Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Being, and Laxman is his devoted follower; Lord Ram has Laxman always by his side. When one wishes to please the Lord it is equally important to please the Lord's devoted follower, his devotee. Nothing pleases the Lord more than pleasing his close devotee. That is why both the brothers are referred to in these verses.

Now, the way to reach the Lord is through various spiritual practices, such as doing Japa and Yoga. Many ascetics and hermits attempt to attain the holy feet of the Supreme Being by taking recourse to these methods, but they are only a few who succeed. In other words, attainment of the Lord is a tough task. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 32.

But the same Lord is easily attainable by un-adulterated devotion, love and affection. Sage Vishwamitra has developed fatherly love for them, and a father's love for his children is pure, simple and sincere. At the time of handing the two brothers to him, king Dasrath had clearly asked the sage that henceforth he is their father—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.

The spiritual message here is clear: If we wish to have closeness with our Lord, then the easiest and most convenient way is to have undiluted and truest form of devotion for him, to love him from the deepest recesses of our hearts. If we do it, the Lord will not think twice before reciprocating our love for him, and he will be at our beck and call.

The Supreme Being is unconquerable, but the only thing that makes him subdued is love, affection and devotion. The Lord feels so obliged by the sage's love and affection for him that he messaged the latter's feet to give him comfort. Messaging or rubbing the feet of someone while he sleeps is regarded as an excellent form of personal service.

The importance of having love for Lord Ram as a means to please the Lord more than anything else has been asserted by Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 117-b.]

बार बार मुनि अग्या दीन्ही । रघुबर जाइ सयन तब कीन्ही ॥ ६ ॥
चापत चरन लखनु उर लाँ । सभय सप्रेम परम सचु पाँ ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि पुनि प्रभु कह सोवहु ताता । पौढ़े धरि उर पद जलजाता ॥ ८ ॥

bāra bāra muni agyā dīnhī. raghubara jā'i sayana taba kīnhī. 6.
cāpata carana lakhanu ura lā'ēm̃. sabhaya saprēma parama sacu pā'ēm̃. 7.
puni puni prabhu kaha sōvahu tātā. paurhē dhari ura pada jalajātā. 8.

Raghubar (Lord Ram) went to sleep himself only after the sage (Vishwamitra) repeatedly asked him to do so¹. (6)

When Lord Ram went to sleep, Laxman hesitantly held his legs close to his own bosom (“ura lā'ēm̃.”), caressing and messaging (“cāpata carana”) them most affectionately (“saprēma parama”) but with due care not to press them hard because he was afraid that it may cause discomfort to the Lord (“sabhaya sacu pā'ēm̃”).² (7)

The Lord repeatedly asked him (Laxman) to go and sleep (like sage Vishwamitra had done a while ago). Then Laxman lied down, still holding the Lord's holy feet and keeping them on his chest as he lay on the ground. (8)

[Note—¹Normally, Lord Ram would obey what the sage told him even once, but this time he had to be told repeatedly to go and sleep, and the sage took no offence at this disobedience.

This is remarkable. It is because the sage realised that the two brothers were showing their greatest of respect to him by serving him personally, with great affection and with the greatest devotion.

Remember—the two brothers were princes of a great empire, and as such they were not ordinarily expected to serve a humble sage by messaging his legs like ordinary servants. The wise sage realised this, and felt overwhelmed with love for the two brothers instead of getting annoyed at them.

Not stopping to message his legs at the first request does not mean that Lord Ram or Laxman are being disobedient to him, the sage understood, but it only shows that they want to serve him more and ensure that he gets more comfort and feels more relaxed by the soft rubbing they are doing to his tired legs. They have all walked so long a distance, and the two brothers felt that the old sage must be very tired. Only a very devoted and faithful son or disciple or servant will have this sort of concern for his parent or teacher or master like the two brothers are now showing for the sage. They want to give him as much comfort as is possible for them even at the cost of their own weariness.

Remember: All of them had walked the same distance—right from Ayodhya to the sage's hermitage at Siddha-shram, and from there to Jankpur. If the sage was tired, so were the two brothers. Being princes who are accustomed to all sorts of physical comfort, the compassionate sage felt that if he does not tell Lord Ram to stop, and allows the brothers to continue messaging his legs, then they will not stop for the rest of the night in their enthusiasm for giving him maximum comfort and relaxation, and in the process they will not get any rest for themselves.

So, after sometime the sage asked them to go and retire for the night. But Lord Ram and Laxman wished to continue doing service to their Guru* and foster-father# as a token of their great respect and thanks for him. It was a noble gesture, having a noble intention, and meant to express the two brothers' gratitude and affection for the sage. So the sage loved this attitude and felt extremely obliged to them. {*The sage taught them the knowledge of weapons and warfare: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8. #King Dasrath had told sage Vishwamitra that henceforth he was the 'father' of the two brothers at the time of

handing over them to the sage at Ayodhya: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.}

Since the wise sage realised their intentions, he did not become angry at them that inspite of his telling them to go and sleep so many times, they continued to massage his legs and did not obey him. The wise sage understood that the two brothers are affectionately messaging his legs as a means to serve him with great devotion and sincerity, and to give him personal comfort as much as it possible for them. He also realised that they are expressing their thanfulness and gratitude to him for the love, affection and devotion that he has extended to them just like they would have expected from their own father, king Dasrath, and not letting them feel for a second that they are with some unknown stranger.

Besides this, the sage understood that Lord Ram and Laxman are revering him as their Guru (teacher) because he had imparted to them the knowledge of weapons and warfare while they were on their way from Ayodhya to the hermitage of the sage, and as a devoted disciple they wish to express their thanks to him for teaching them the intricacies of warfare and the skills required in the use of weapons of all kinds, a knowledge that was very essential for princes and which they had not acquired till then.

Any master whom his servant serves with eagerness and sincerity will understand that the former is doing it because he is motivated by his emotions, faithfulness and call of duty befitting a true server who wishes to serve his lord or master to the best of his ability, ensuring that his master gets the best of service and comfort from him, and that no effort is left to please the lord or master. So he will never get annoyed if he finds that the servant is defying his orders while serving him personally.

The message in this incident is clear and sharp: While serving one's Guru or father (parent), there is no harm in doing some extra service even when it is not wanted or asked for, and that if one continues to personally serve the Guru or the father even when the latter asks him to stop and take rest or relax then there is no harm or wrong in continuing the service. This is because the intention is noble and good, and in such a situation the demerit of not obeying the Guru's or father's orders is offset by the immense merit that accumulates by devotedly serving them even beyond the call of formal duty and obligations.

There is one more point to note: When a son or disciple serves his father or Guru, as the case may be, beyond the call of his regular and formal duty, and with the greatest of sincerity and devotion, the father and the Guru feels emotionally overwhelmed by this service and silently blesses the son or the disciple respectively. This blessing is spontaneous and intense; it comes from the deepest recesses of the heart, and therefore its effect is very profound. It stands in sharp contrast to the blessing that is merely formal and more perfunctory in nature.

Indeed, the benefits that the two brothers would reap by this selfless and devoted service to the enlightened great sage who also happened to have become their Guru will be evident soon, the next day itself when Lord Ram will be rewarded by a world-wide fame when he breaks the bow in an assembly attended by all the great kings and princes of the time, especially when all who tried to lift it had failed to move it a fraction of an inch. Not only this, the Lord will get the hand of Sita in marriage, the prize which all the kings and princes of the world had longed for when they came to attend the bow-breaking ceremony.

The icing of the cake would be the marriage of all the brothers of Lord Ram at Janakpur. It will be a token of the sage's thanksgiving and showing his blessings not

only for Lord Ram and Laxman alone who had personally served him but also for the whole family of king Dasrath—because for an old father like Dasrath, there is no greater happiness in his old age than seeing his four sons married with four beautiful brides from a family as reputed as his own.

²The attitude of Laxman exemplifies the highest level of devotion and love that a devotee must have for his Lord God. His gesture of holding Lord Ram's feet close to his heart indicates how much devotion and love and respect he has for them. A person clutches something close to his heart only if it very dear to him; it's a gesture of great affection for and emotional attachment with that thing.

Remember: It has been observed earlier that Laxman represents a Jiva, a living being, while Lord Ram symbolizes the Supreme Being. Hence, the message here is clear: a Jiva must have the greatest of reverence and devotion for the holy feet of the Supreme Being, and even while the Jiva sleeps he must hold the Lord's holy feet close to his heart.

Another point to note is that Laxman did not actually 'sleep' but only lied down for the rest of the night, and even then he kept the Lord's holy feet on his bosom. He was always vigilant to serve Lord Ram, and remained ever alert should the Lord want something or if some harm comes to him.

When the Lord noticed that Laxman is awake and has not fallen asleep—because though he lay on the ground he still clasped the Lord's feet and did not let them off, the Lord repeatedly asked him to let go of his legs, relax himself, and go to sleep. When one falls asleep, it is not practically possible for him to keep clasping something to his bosom with the same grip and vigilance as one does while he is awake. This alerted Lord Ram that Laxman has not gone to sleep because he continued to clasp the Lord's feet to his heart.

This dedication of Laxman for Lord Ram and the Lord's love for him is proved at many places in the story. For instance—(i) At the time of Lord Ram's going to exile, Laxman had clearly told him that as far as he is concerned, all relationships are centered on the Lord, and if the Lord decides to go to the forest for exile there is no reason why he (Laxman) should remain behind at Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Doha no. 71—to Doha no. 70. (ii) The mutual love between the two brothers is stunning and exemplary. The relationship between Laxman and Lord Ram was like that of the eye and the eyelid. For the body, eye is the most important organ because without it the world is dark; and for the eye the eyelid is the most important part because the latter is constantly alert to protect at all times. For Laxman, Lord Ram was like the 'eye', and Lord Ram cared for Laxman like the 'eyelid' cares for the eye. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142. (iii) Laxman served Lord Ram most indulgently like a worldly man is eager to serve his gross body and gratify its urges. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142. (iv) During the Great War at Lanka when Laxman fell unconscious by being hit with an arrow shot by Meghnad, Lord Ram had lamented gravely, saying that without him he will not like to live. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-10 that precedes Doha no. 61.(v) Even during the bow ceremony, when king Janak showed his exasperation by saying that the world has become empty of warriors when no one could break the bow, Laxman became very angry because this meant an insult for Lord Ram. He challenged Janak how he dared to say such a thing in the presence of the Lord, and vowed to turn the earth upside down where his kingdom stood. Refer:

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.

During the forest exile, when Lord Ram retired for the night, Laxman used to massage and knead his tired legs to give them comfort. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 89.

When Lord Ram and his consort Sita used to go to sleep, Laxman would spend the whole night standing guard to protect them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252

Laxman's affection for Lord Ram's holy feet has been lauded by Bharat—the third brother of the Lord who is depicted as a true and exemplary devotee who refused to accept the crown, and instead decided to spend the entire period of the Lord's forest exile living like a reclusive hermit himself away from the city of Ayodhya—in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 91.

Laxman kept vigil with an arrow and bow to protect Lord Ram at all times throughout his forest sojourn. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 11.]

दो०. उठे लखनु निसि बिगत सुनि अरुनसिखा धुनि कान ।
गुर तेँ पहिलेहिं जगतपति जागे रामु सुजान ॥ २२६ ॥

dōhā.

uṭhē lakhanu nisi bigata suni arunasikhā dhuni kāna.
gura tēm pahilēhim jagatapati jāgē rāmu sujāna. 226.

Early in the morning, even before sunrise, Laxman got up when he heard the cock crow¹. Lord Ram, the Lord of the world (“Jagat-pati”) and a thorough gentleman who was very wise, knowledgeable and intelligent (“Sujaan”), however woke up a little later but before the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) himself woke up². (Doha no. 226)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 358 which endorses this point that the Lord woke up at dawn when the cock crowed.

²The sage had retired past midnight, and Lord Ram and Laxman still later because they had been serving the sage by messaging his feet. Then the two brothers got up very early; the sage got up before sunrise.

The sage was the first to go to sleep, and the last to wake up. Laxman was the last person to retire and the first to get up. And Lord Ram was the second person to go to sleep and also the second person to wake up.

The sequence tells us ordinary mortals the way we should lead our lives. The senior-most person retires first, while the most junior is the last one to touch bed. This apparently hierarchical structure where the senior-most person not only takes rest before others but is also served by his juniors till he gives them orders to retire is an exemplary example of a well-disciplined society where the elders are given their due respect and honourable place.

This is the law of Dharma—the proper way of treating elders. The teacher and elder should be allowed to take rest first and before his disciple or younger companion. And when the teacher or the elder is given his due share of respect, it is

natural that his heart would brim with happiness which will translate into spontaneous blessing for the junior.

Remember: The crowing of the cock clearly indicates that the sage and his group were lodged somewhere in the city itself, because had it been somewhere outside at some place specially earmarked for the incoming guests the chances of the crow being heard at such remote place are almost nil. It will be noted just a little ahead from now that the two brothers had gone to the royal garden of king Janak to fetch flowers for sage Vishwamitra's worship rituals. This clearly means that the place where they were lodged was very near the royal palace.

Cocks are pet birds, and in ancient times when there were no alarm-clocks they were reared by people to act as Nature's living alarm-bells to tell them that dawn is fast approaching and it is time to get up and be ready for the day.

Cocks were present in inhabited areas such as villages, towns or cities. So therefore, this is the first time Laxman has heard it crow since he left Ayodhya with sage Valmiki.]

चौ०. सकल सौच करि जाइ नहाए । नित्य निबाहि मुनिहि सिर नाए ॥ १ ॥

समय जानि गुर आयसु पाई । लेन प्रसून चले दोउ भाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakala sauca kari jā'i nahā'ē. nitya nibāhi munihi sira nā'ē. 1.

samaya jāni gura āyasu pāī. lēna prasūna calē dō'u bhāī. 2.

After having attended to the routine call of Nature and undertaking all traditional acts of purification, they (Lord Ram and Laxman) took their baths. Then, after finishing their daily routine of offering prayers and formal worship etc. they went to the sage and bowed their heads before him with reverence¹. (1)

[The sage needed flowers for his worship rituals. So—] When the time was right, the two brothers got permission from their Guru and took his leave to go out to fetch flowers (so that the sage can do his worship rituals)². (2)

[Note—¹The daily morning routine of purification and worship involves ablutions and bath, offering of oblations, prayers and a bit of meditation.

Lord Ram always followed all the norms of Dharma. Even when he was a child or had grown up to reach the adolescent age, he used to go and bow respectfully to his parents after waking up every morning when he was at Ayodhya. After that, the Lord would seek his father's permission and attend to the affairs of the kingdom. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

Following the same noble way of starting his day, he finished his routine personal chores and went to give his respects to sage Vishwamitra who for all practical purposes was his 'father' as well as a 'Guru'.

Later on in the story we shall read that at Chitrakoot, where Bharat had gone in an attempt to persuade Lord Ram to return to Ayodhya from the forest, a similar routine was followed—i.e. the entire assembly did their morning purification rituals and worshipped their respective gods, then Lord Ram went to meet his guru, sage

Vasistha. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 290.

²Lord Ram and Laxman's trip to the royal garden where Sita had also gone to offer worship to the family deity, goddess Parvati, to seek her blessing for a groom most suitable for her, and the subsequent eye-to-eye contact between Sita and Lord Ram which led to the two developing mutual love for each other has also been beautifully described in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 71—72.

On the face of it this is a simple, straightforward affair—when the sage was ready for his worship formalities, he signaled to the two brothers to go and fetch some flowers. But the phrase “when the time was right” has another mystical connotation to it.

It was the time when all those who do worship require flowers for offering to their deities. Sure enough, it is also the time when Sita would be going to the royal garden to offer her own worship in the royal temple situated there, and would naturally be plucking flowers to be offered to the deity. So, the hint is clear: Lord Ram—“the Lord of the world who was very intelligent and wise” (refer: line no. 2 of Doha no. 226 above)—knew that this is the correct and opportune time to give his divine Darshan (divine glimpse) to Sita to tell her that he has arrived.

Remember: Ram and Sita are not ordinary prince and princess, but Lord Vishnu and his divine consort Laxmi respectively. As we proceed with the story we will read that all the invited kings and princes had failed to move the bow a fraction of an inch, what to talk of lifting and breaking it. This means that Sita's future was doomed as she was to marry someone who could lift, string, and break the bow; this was the condition that her father, king Janak, had set for her marriage. When no one could do it, Janak lamented and said that it is written in Sita's destiny that she will remain unmarried throughout her life. Imagine the intensity of grief, dismay, depression and frustration that would have struck her like a bolt of lightening with this doomed dark fate.

Her only hope lay with Lord Ram—because she had learnt earlier from her friends that the Lord had killed many invincible demons and had provided liberation to Ahilya (sage Gautam's wife). Luckily for her, Lord Ram had yet not approached the bow. So Sita pinned her hope on the Lord.

Therefore, in this context, Lord Ram showing himself to Sita in the royal garden on the pretext of plucking flowers for the sage was a pre-planned affair of the “Lord of the world who was wise, knowledgeable and intelligent” to hint to Sita that she need not worry when everything would seem lost and doomed. The Lord who is famed as the remover of worries of his devotees is here, and if she really and sincerely develops ‘devotion, love, submission’ for him, if she ‘surrenders herself’ to him—then let her be carefree and assured that happiness is all of hers.

This is exactly what had happened. When Sita was submerged in an ocean of misery and gloom, touching the lowest point in her life, she had surrendered herself at the holy feet of Lord Ram and prayed fervently to the Lord, from the deepest recesses of her heart, to save her from a doomed destiny. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.

It was when the Lord realised that Sita's surrender was absolute and complete, and a slight delay would agonise her further, Lord Ram had instantly lifted and broken the bow with a thunderous roar. It was like a lightening from the sky that ruptured through the dark foreboding cloud of doom, dejection and despair that not

only surrounded Sita like a thick fog but also the citizens of Janakpur as well as her parents. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262 (Lord Ram saw Sita’s consternation and extreme sense of misery and urgency, so he breaks the bow, and the people of Janakpur felt very happy); (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263 (Janak feels happy and all his grief vanished); (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 263 (Sita’s extreme sense of relief and joy); (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 265 (the jubilation amongst the Gods).

Remember: There are two planes at which we can interpret this story of Ram Charit Manas—one is the gross level of the visible world of matter, senses and material things, and the other plane is the invisible world having a spiritual and devotional dimension. The latter is possible only when we look deep into the hidden meaning of this story with an analytical mind and a penetrating intellect, when we peer behind the curtain as it were, to interpret and understand its profound subtle spiritual and devotional messages. It is the latter approach that will give real joy and contentedness in reading this book, for otherwise it will be rendered without its soul. If we do not see the spiritual and devotional quotient in Ram Charit Manas, and merely interpret events from the physical perspective, then we have missed the nectar and have just read another story like so many other versions of this epic known the world over as simply “Ramayana”. It would be like being contented by merely enjoying the sight of the beauty and diversity of colourful flowers in a garden, but not being like the bee that actually drinks their nectar and derives nourishment as well as intense pleasure from these same flowers.

So, the worldly view of what happens next is straight and simple—a prince visits a garden where the princess has also come to pluck flowers. They see each other. It is love at first sight. They long for each other, but are frustrated by the girl’s father’s vows. Then fate smiles upon them, and eventually they are united in marriage. It’s a fairy-tale ending.

On the other hand, the spiritual view is narrated above in the foregoing paragraphs of this note.]

भूप बागु बर देखेउ जाई । जहँ बसंत रितु रही लोभाई ॥ ३ ॥
 लागे बिटप मनोहर नाना । बरन बरन बर बेलि बिताना ॥ ४ ॥
 नव पल्लव फल सुमन सुहाए । निज संपति सुर रूख लजाए ॥ ५ ॥
 चातक कोकिल कीर चकोरा । कूजत बिहग नटत कल मोरा ॥ ६ ॥

bhūpa bāgu bara dēkhē'u jā'ī. jaham̃ basanta ritu rahī lōbhā'ī. 3.
 lāgē biṭapa manōhara nānā. barana barana bara bēli bitānā. 4.
 nava pallava phala sumana suhā'ē. nija sampati sura rūkha lajā'ē. 5.
 cātaka kōkila kīra cakōrā. kūjata bihaga naṭata kala mōrā. 6.

They (Lord Ram and Laxman) went to see the royal garden which was in full bloom and most enchanting as if the spring season was there in its full glory¹. (3)

[The following lines describe the garden and its beauty.]

There were many varieties of beautiful trees in the garden. Creepers of different colours and types hung over them in plentiful, forming thick canopies and sheltered areas. (4)

The trees were adorned with fresh leaves, fruits and flowers. Together they put to shame the grandeur and magnificence of the Tree of Gods. (5)

Birds such as Chatak (a special species of cuckoo that drinks only rain water), Cuckoo, Parrot and Chakor (Indian red-legged partridge) were chirping merrily everywhere, while the peacock danced happily². (6)

[Note—¹When they went in search of flowers it is natural that they would go to a garden. Being princes it was also natural that they will visit a royal garden, a big garden. By this time every single citizen of Janakpur had come to recognize them. So the royal guards at the garden did not prevent them from entering.

We can also think in the terms of large public gardens which were maintained by state funds. But in this case it was the king's royal garden—because we shall see shortly that Sita, the daughter of king Janak, too comes here to pluck flowers and offer her worship in the royal shrine dedicated to the deity worshipped by the royal family.

It would obviously be out of bounds for ordinary people, but the guards were aware that Lord Ram and Laxman were special guests of the king because king Janak had personally gone and escorted sage Vishwamitra and his group into the city and lodged them near the royal palace. So they allowed the two brothers access to it.

Since it was a royal garden in the first place, and in the second place hundreds of visitors were expected to come to attend the bow ceremony—so obviously the garden was a matter of prestige for the king, and therefore it was taken special care of and excellently kept.

²Earlier it has already been said that it was as if the spring season was in its full glory in the garden.

The branches of the tree were bending under the weight of the creepers, fruits and flowers. The creepers were so dense and climbed from one tree to another that they formed a cover over the land beneath. There was greenery all round, and to add charm to the beauty of the garden there were birds of different species and families frolicking around.]

मध्य बाग सरु सोह सुहावा । मनि सोपान बिचित्र बनावा ॥ ७ ॥

बिमल सलिलु सरसिज बहुरंगा । जलखग कूजत गुंजत भृंगा ॥ ८ ॥

madhya bāga saru sōha suhāvā. mani sōpāna bicitra banāvā. 7.

bimala salilu sarasija bahuraṅgā. jalakhaga kūjata guṅjata bhṅgā. 8.

In the middle of the garden there was a wonderful pond whose steps were studded with gems and precious stones giving it a fabulous look. (7)

Its water was crystal clean with an abundance of lotus flowers of different colours. Water-birds were happily chirping loudly, and black-bees were buzzing around (the lotus flowers). (8)

[Note—A garden is incomplete without a central water-body. Here it was a pond with steps studded with precious stones. If there land birds in the garden then is naturally expected that there would be water birds in the pond. The water was clean, and the lotus flower is invariably regarded as a jewel of the pond. Wherever there is lotus there would be bees hovering over it in search of nectar. Though the water-birds are not mentioned here but we can visualize a host of such birds—ducks, swans, cranes etc.]

दो०. बागु तड़ागु बिलोकि प्रभु हरषे बंधु समेत ।
परम रज्ज आरामु यहु जो रामहि सुख देत ॥ २२७ ॥

dōhā.

bāgu tarāgu bilōki prabhu haraṣē bandhu samēta.
parama ramya ārāmu yahu jō rāmahi sukha dēta. 227.

Watching the royal garden, Lord Ram felt exhilarated along with his brother. A garden that gives happiness and delight to Lord Ram must have indeed been exceptionally beautiful and charming as well as really worthy of praise and honour as a place that is immensely comfortable and pleasant (because it is not easy to charm the Lord of the world). (Doha no. 227)

[Note—There are a number of instances when we come across places which are regarded as exceptionally beautiful and charming so much so that they give contentedness to the mind and heart to the beholder. For instance—(i) the city of Janakpur had also enchanted Lord Ram and he had felt exhilarated at its beautiful sights—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212; (ii) the site where Lord Ram had consecrated a Shiva's lingam before crossing the ocean to reach Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2; (iii) the hermitage of the great sage Bharadwaj on the banks of river Ganges at Prayag—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 44; and (iv) Mt. Kailash which is the abode of Lord Shiva is also most charming and beautiful—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 105.]

चौ०. चहुँ दिसि चितइ पूँछि मालीगन । लगे लेन दल फूल मुदित मन ॥ १ ॥
तेहि अवसर सीता तहँ आई । गिरिजा पूजन जननि पठाई ॥ २ ॥
संग सखीं सब सुभग सयानीं । गावहिं गीत मनोहर बानीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

cahum̐ disi cita'i pūm̐chi māligana. lagē lēna dala phūla mudita mana. 1.
tēhi avasara sītā taham̐ ā'ī. girijā pūjana janani paṭhā'ī. 2.

saṅga sakhīm saba subhaga sayānīm. gāvahīm gīta manōhara bānīm. 3.

(Since they were visiting the royal garden for the first time—) They (Lord Ram and Laxman) looked in all the directions to have a general view of the fascinating garden. Then they took consent of the gardeners and began plucking leaves and flowers with a cheerful mind¹. (1)

At that time (when Lord Ram and Laxman were roaming in the garden, searching flowers of their choice, and plucking them), Sita came inside the garden. She was sent by her mother (Sunayina) to go and offer her worship to Girija* (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva).² (2)

She was accompanied by female friends (companions)# of her age who were pretty and intelligent. They were singing melodious songs suitable for the occasion.³ [That is, they were singing devotional songs centered on the theme of requesting goddess Parvati to select a suitable groom for Sita and ensure her future welfare.] (3)

[Note—¹When anyone enters a new place it is natural for him to look in every direction and take in the general view of the scene. Besides this, the two brothers looked everywhere to decide from where to pluck the flowers which would suit sage Vishwamitra's purpose. After this decision, they searched out the gardeners and sought their permission, explaining to them that they need some flowers and leaves for the purpose of their Guru's worship rituals. Then the two brothers moved in a particular direction where the trees bore flowers of their liking.

It is not good to enter anybody's garden and haughtily start plucking this and that without as much as seeking a formal permission. So the Lord, in spite of being king Janak's special guest, observed etiquette and norms of decency by first requesting permission from the gardeners and then touching any tree.

The brothers felt cheerful because after leaving Ayodhya it was the first time that they have entered a royal garden. The beauty of the garden and its verdant scenery charmed their hearts. Another reason for them feeling happy was that on the excuse of plucking flowers of their choice they would get a chance to see the whole garden, because only after touring it fully can they know which flowers to choose. This will also give them an opportunity to go close to the royal shrine where king Janak's daughter Sita was about to arrive.

The question now arises: How could they guess that Sita would be coming for her worship rituals? Well, they were princes, and they knew the daily routine followed by royal families. Janak was a religious and pious man, and so his daughter is sure to have been taught to offer morning prayers to the family deity. She may be a bit late on other days, but today was a special day as the bow ceremony was scheduled during the day. She had to prepare for it, and clearly she could not afford to be late.

Another reason for the certainty of her coming today for worship in the garden-shrine of the royal family was that she must be very worried about her fate that would be decided today during the bow-breaking ceremony, and therefore would naturally seek the family deity's blessing for good to happen.

*The use of the word "Girija" for goddess Parvati is very remarkable here. Girija literally means 'the daughter of the Mountains'. Parvati was the daughter of the King of Mountains. Mountains, along with saints, trees, rivers and earth, are regarded as the

ones who are dedicated to serving others, are always ready to suffer themselves so that others are happy, and are always eager to see that no one suffers because of them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 125.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 71, stanza nos. 3-4 also.

Prayers and worship are always done at a certain hour in the morning that is fixed for this purpose in the scriptures. That is why Lord Ram and Laxman were very sure that it is the best opportunity to see Sita and silently assure her that her saviour has arrived. In this context, please see note appended to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227, as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha and is just above the present two verses.

Sita used to worship goddess Parvati daily at this time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 234 where her companions tell her that she must hurry with her worship as they are getting late, and if she wants to spend some more time in the garden then she can do it the next day (i.e. ‘tomorrow’) when they will come here at the same time, obviously for worship of goddess Parvati.

In order to keep any kind of unwarranted, mischievous and scandalous gossip at bay, it is made clear here that it was Sita’s mother who had sent her to the garden to offer worship to Parvati at that hour. So no gossip-monger can now spread the scandalous word that Sita had been alerted by her personal spies that the two princes had gone to the garden, and therefore she actually went there to see the two brothers in private, and that offering of worship to the goddess was just an alibi.

³It is customary to offer special worship to goddess Parvati to seek her blessings by girls who are about to be married. Ordinarily, Sita’s companions would not have sung songs when she came to the shrine for routine worship rituals, but today was special—as today her fate was to be decided. So they were all singing devotional prayers dedicated to Parvati for Sita’s bright and happy future.

On this occasion the would-be bride requests goddess Parvati to bless her with a groom most suitable for her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 228.

It was very important to pray to Parvati to please her and keep her in good humour—because the bow which was to be broken in the day was Lord Shiva’s, and thus no wrong signal should be sent out that the royal family of Janak was insulting Shiva. When Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva, is taken into confidence, and when the bride herself submits her future before the goddess and requests her to ensure her happiness in the best way the goddess thinks, then any chance of wrong interpretation of events is eliminated.

Mother Goddess Parvati is always very kind, generous and benevolent, and she herself being a female had experienced the fear of an uncertain future and its accompanying agony and worry that usually overwhelms an unmarried girl. So she is sure to empathise with Sita and understand her problems well. Therefore, Parvati would surely go out of her way to help the bride-to-be in the best possible way, even if that meant breaking of an old rusty bow of her husband Lord Shiva. After all, this bow had no practical use, and if its breaking can make Sita happy then Parvati was all for it. She would tackle her husband, Lord Shiva, if he shows any sign of annoyance at the breaking of his bow. This is one more reason why Sita was sent by her mother to offer prayers and please goddess Parvati.

#Sita had eight main companions who were her close friends as well. Their names have been given in Agastya Sanhita, Canto 49, verse nos. 5-28. They are the following—Chaarushila, Laxmana, Hema, Kshema, Varaaroha, Padmagandha, Sulochana, and Subhag.]

सर समीप गिरिजा गृह सोहा । बरनि न जाइ देखि मनु मोहा ॥ ४ ॥
 मज्जनु करि सर सखिन्ह समेता । गई मुदित मन गौरि निकेता ॥ ५ ॥
 पूजा कीन्हि अधिक अनुरागा । निज अनुरूप सुभग बरु मागा ॥ ६ ॥

sara samīpa girijā gr̥ha sōhā. barani na jā'i dēkhi manu mōhā. 4.
 majjanu kari sara sakhinha samētā. ga'ī mudita mana gauri nikētā. 5.
 pūjā kīnhi adhika anurāgā. nija anurūpa subhaga baru māgā. 6.

Close to the grand pond in the garden was the shrine dedicated to goddess Girijā (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva). It was so fabulous that it is not possible to describe its beauty and grandeur; it enchanted the mind and the heart of all those who looked at it¹. (4)

She (Sita) bathed in the pond along with her female companions. After that, she went cheerfully to the abode (shrine) of Gauri (Goddess Parvati). (5)

She offered worship and prayers to the goddess with great faith, reverence and devotion, asking her to bless her with a handsome and nice groom who is most suitable for her². (6)

[Note—¹A shrine is usually located near a water-body. It helps the worshipper to wash him or her self and complete other purifications rituals necessary for formal forms of worship that is offered to a temple deity. There are a number of instances in the Ram Charit Manas itself where this is reiterated—that a shrine is located near a pond or some sort of big water-body. References: (i) Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 24 which says that when Lord Ram had sent the monkeys in all the directions in search of Sita, the group led by Angad that also included Hanuman, Lord Ram's trusted messenger, came to a garden where a hermitress was meditating in a shrine located on the bank of a beautiful pond. (ii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 29 where it is said that all along the banks of river Saryu that flowed on the north of Ayodhya, there were many temples, and around them were beautiful gardens.

The deity that was established in the garden where Sita had gone to offer worship was Goddess Parvati, also known as 'Girija' because she is the daughter of the king of mountains. She is the divine consort of Lord Shiva, and the Mother Goddess of creation. This goddess is worshipped by all unmarried girls because it is believed that her blessings help her to secure a sound and happy future.

It is held in tradition that this temple was named 'Chintaamani'—one that removes worries. Sita was very worried about her future because it was tied to Lord Shiva's bow. Her father, king Janak, had declared that she would be married to anyone who would lift, string and break the bow. Now this meant that Sita had no say in choosing her life-partner; anyone who would break the bow would marry her, whether she liked it or not. This filled her with consternation and insecurity about her future and happiness.

²It is very important to worship any god or goddess with great devotion and faith if one expects his or her wishes are to be fulfilled. Sita's entire future was to be decided today during the bow ceremony. So she offered the best form of worship and the sincerest form of prayers to Goddess Parvati, requesting her to be pleased with her and bless her with a suitable and compatible groom. Sita had been regularly offering her worship and prayers in this temple for a long time ever since her childhood days, but today was special.

'Bathing' in the context of offering worship in the shrine does not mean either actually pouring water over the whole body as one does during regular bath, or taking a dip in the water of the pond. Bathing before entering a shrine to offer worship and prayer is simply an ablutionary process meant to formally clean oneself in a formal way. It is merely a formality that is observed by sprinkling water on the head and other parts of the body. Sita must have taken her regular bath inside the palace, so taking a 'bath' here before entering the shrine is merely a formal cleaning process done by just sprinkling a little amount of water on her self.

By 'taking a bath' it is implied external purification of the body, and entering the shrine 'cheerfully' implies internal cleansing because only when one is happy internally will he or she be cheerful.

Sita offered her worship and prayers to Goddess Parvati with great devotion, faith and reverence—and that is why, as we shall soon see, the goddess was pleased with her, blessing her that all her wishes would be fulfilled in the way she wants. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 as well as the Chanda that precede Doha no. 236 where the goddess has explicitly told Sita that she honours her wishes, and that she will get the groom she wants as foretold earlier by the celestial sage Narad whose words can never go in vain.

As we progress with our reading we will see that Sita and Lord Ram have seen each other in the garden in the intervening period of Sita completing her purification rituals and her actually entering the building of the temple to offer worship to the goddess. Both of them were enamoured with each other. The Lord's charm was of such an astounding dimension that Sita was swept off her feet, and she longed in her heart that she be married to Lord Ram. With this secret desire in her heart she offered her prayers to Goddess Parvati. Hence, the goddess' assurance that "she will get the groom she desires" assumes significance here—it clearly assured Sita that in spite of some difficult phase in the beginning, she will be finally married to Lord Ram.]

एक सखी सिय संगु बिहाई । गई रही देखन फुलवाई ॥ ७ ॥
तेहिं दोउ बंधु बिलोके जाई । प्रेम बिबस सीता पहिं आई ॥ ८ ॥

ēka sakhī siya saṅgu bihā'ī. ga'ī rahī dēkhana phulavā'ī. 7.
tēhiṁ dō'u bandhu bilōkē jā'ī. prēma bibasa sitā pahīṁ ā'ī. 8.

One of Sita's companions had left her while she was going to the goddess' shrine, and had instead gone in another direction to have a look at the royal garden. (7)

There somewhere close-by she chanced to see the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman who were in the garden plucking flowers for sage Vishwamitra's worship

rituals). She eventually returned back to join Sita, but was overwhelmed with affection and love for the two brothers. (8)

[Note—As is common with young girls, one of Sita’s companions had strayed away to have a quick look at the beautiful garden. Perhaps she was not a frequent visitor to the garden like Sita’s other friends, so she wanted to make the most of the opportunity and quickly see the fascinating sight of a royal garden while Sita and others performed the worship. All other companions stayed with Sita. Since there were many of them, her absence was not noticed.

As luck would have it, she went in the direction where Lord Ram and Laxman were roaming around plucking flowers and leaves for the sage. This leads us to an intelligent guess—which is: that she was somehow aware that the two brothers were in the garden, and so silently slipped away to have a close glimpse of them. The sight she beheld was stunning—she saw the two beautiful princes walking majestically alone in the garden, smiling and talking with each other in hushed tones, plucking flowers, peering here and there to select the best ones. The sight she saw was a dream-come-true for her; every unmarried adolescent girl of her age would be swept off her feet if she happens to be in her place!

She then rushed back to join her other friends lest any delay would rouse suspicion. After all, Sita was a princess, and if someone complained to her mother, the queen, that such and such girl had been careless and had not attended Sita properly, then the consequences would not be pleasant for her. But the sight of Lord Ram and Laxman had done its magic nonetheless. Though she tried her best to hide her emotional condition, it was impossible for her to do so. Her nervous demeanours, a shy smile, and the thrill that her body experienced betrayed her mind that she was a smitten girl overcome with love and charm for an extremely handsome boy. This will be clear in the next Doha no. 228.]

दो०. तासु दसा देखी सखिन्ह पुलक गात जलु नैन ।
कहु कारनु निज हरष कर पूछहिं सब मृदु बैन ॥ २२८ ॥

dōhā.

tāsu dasā dēkhī sakhinḥa pulaka gāta jalu naina.
kahu kāranu nija haraṣa kara pūchahim̐ saba mṛdu baina. 228.

All the companions of Sita saw her peculiar condition—she was extremely excited, her body was thrilled, and her eyes were welling-up with tears (of joy).

So, all of them surrounded her, asking her politely, using pleasant words and speaking in a low tone that she tell them the reason for her excitement. (Doha no. 228)

[Note—See note appended to verse nos. 7-8 herein above.

We will observe here that her excited condition was noticed by Sita’s companions, and not by Sita herself. Well, Sita was too occupied with her mental prayers and worrying about her future to pay attention to which of her friends was doing what. She was concentrating upon her worship and meditating upon Goddess Parvati, muttering silent prayers.

Her companions, on the other hand, weren’t so much worried. While Sita was involved in silent prayers, they were standing guard and generally enjoying

themselves. They were happy that they would be witnessing a great ceremony today. So, when they found that one of them had come from a different part of the garden, suddenly becoming so overly excited, showing clear signs of someone falling head-over-heels in love, then it is natural that they would want to know the reason. They may have winked mischievously, wickedly smiling at each other, causing this fortunate girl, who had had a divine glimpse of Lord Ram, feel very embarrassed and abashed.

The friends spoke to this girl softly in a low tone so as not to disturb Sita. They were polite and used pleasant words so that this girl would open up; otherwise she could have even clammed shut.]

चौ०. देखन बागु कुअँर दुइ आए । बय किसोर सब भाँति सुहाए ॥ १ ॥
स्याम गौर किमि कहौँ बखानी । गिरा अनयन नयन बिनु बानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhana bāgu ku'amīra du'i ā'ē. baya kisōra saba bhāmīti suhā'ē. 1.
syāma gaura kimi kahauṁ bakhānī. girā anayana nayana binu bānī. 2.

This girl reported—‘Two young princes have come to see the garden. They are of a young age, and pleasant in every possible manner. (1)

One of them is dark complexioned, and other is fair. How can I describe their charm and beauty properly—for the eyes which have seen them can't speak, and voice does not have eyes?’

[That is, the instrument of the body that has actually seen those two wonderful boys, i.e. the eye, can't speak, and the instrument that can actually speak and describe the sight of the two brothers, i.e. the voice, has not actually seen them. So both of them are not competent to describe correctly what I have witnessed.] (2)

[Note—This girl is very clever. She says that the two princes have come to ‘see the garden’ instead of saying that they have ‘come to pluck flowers’. A prince does not go around plucking flowers in some other's garden; hence this statement would have undermined the greatness and the glory of the two brothers. A prince visits a garden to have a causal morning walk in it; not to do such menial job as plucking flowers.

It is also possible that at the time when she saw the two brothers, they were not plucking flowers but merely taking a stroll through the garden. So this girl reported what she saw—‘two princes have come to visit the garden to see it’.

By saying that she cannot describe how bewitchingly beautiful the two brothers looked because the eyes can't speak and the voice can't see, she aroused great curiosity in the heart of others, including Sita, to go and see for themselves a sight that is so fascinating that it cannot be described.]

सुनि हरषीं सब सखीं सयानी । सिय हियँ अति उतकंठा जानी ॥ ३ ॥
एक कहइ नृपसुत तेइ आली । सुने जे मुनि सँग आए काली ॥ ४ ॥
जिन्ह निज रूप मोहनी डारी । कीन्हे स्वबस नगर नर नारी ॥ ५ ॥

बरनत छबि जहँ तहँ सब लोगू । अवसि देखिअहिं देखन जोगू ॥ ६ ॥

suni haraṣīm saba sakhīm sayānī. siya hiyam̐ ati utakaṇṭhā jānī. 3.
 ēka kaha'i nrpasuta tē'i ālī. sunē jē muni sam̐ga ā'ē kālī. 4.
 jinha nija rūpa mōhanī ḍārī. kīnhē svabasa nagara nara nārī. 5.
 baranata chabi jaham̐ taham̐ saba lōgū. avasi dēkhi'ahim̐ dēkhana jōgū. 6.

All the clever companions (of Sita) felt exhilarated upon hearing what this girl said. They perceived that this information created an intense longing in the heart of Sita (to see the two wonderful princes described by their friend).

[There is another way of interpreting this Chaupai as follows—“The clever companions of Sita heard the news that one of their friends had brought, and felt exhilarated when they observed that this news has also created an intense longing in the heart of Sita to see the two brothers herself.”]¹ (3)

(When Sita politely enquired about who these two princes were—) One of the companions said—‘Oh dear! They must be the two young princes about whom I have heard² that they have come yesterday with the sage (Vishwamitra). (4)

They have enchanted and captivated the heart and mind of all the citizens of the city, both the men as well as the women, by casting the net of their wonderful charm and magnetic personality on them. (5)

Indeed, all the men and women folk are talking here and there, everywhere, about the magnificence of their beautiful forms, and hence we must see them as they are worthy of seeing.³ (6)

[Note—¹The companions of Sita are called ‘clever’ because they were intelligent enough to perceive even the subtle changes in the mood of the princess. They could observe her behaviour and correctly deduce what she wanted or was thinking about. They weren’t duds and so stupid that they wouldn’t understand emotional signs even if they were obvious. Sita’s parents had selected her companions carefully, and ensured that all of them were intelligent and witty.

So, when the girl who had ventured alone to have a quick look at the garden came back to describe the beauty of two princes and was herself wonderstruck by the sight she saw, it aroused natural curiosity in Sita to go and have a look herself. This is a natural thing with teen-aged boys and girls—when they hear that some handsome and attractive person has come, they would want to see him or her.

Besides this, Sita and others had already heard of the two princes—because when the two brothers went to see Janakpur the previous evening, the news of their fabulous magnetic personality and bewitching beauty had spread like wildfire in the city. So, when Sita heard that they have arrived in the garden, she longed to see them as she had missed the opportunity to see them earlier when they had gone to sight-see the city. This is because Sita’s movements, she being a princess, were restricted to the royal palace, while Lord Ram and Laxman had roamed in the city like commoners, never entering the precincts of the palace. She was eager to see them since yesterday evening, but couldn’t get a chance. Here was a wonderful opportunity, so she was excited about it.

If the news that there are two wonderful boys roaming in the garden had annoyed Sita for some reason, such as her getting angry at the gardeners as to why

they had allowed outsiders to enter the royal garden when she was there when all outsiders were strictly prohibited, her companions would have behaved differently. They would have hushed the girl who brought the news, and would have escorted Sita quickly inside the temple building so that she did not actually see the two princes if by chance the latter came wandering in that direction. But as it happened, Sita's companions found that she was herself eager to see the two princes. This made them excited—because, for one, they would themselves get to see Lord Ram and Laxman at close quarters, and second, the girl who had strayed away from the group as well as the attendants of the garden would not be punished when the matter was reported by Sita to her mother, the queen.

If Sita hadn't taken this bit of information about the two unknown princes wandering in her garden, she could have severely punished the gardeners. She could have also punished the girl for leaving her attendance and going elsewhere when she was supposed to stay with her.

²The word 'heard' is significant here. It means that the friend of Sita who is speaking has not seen Lord Ram and Laxman personally when the two brothers had gone out to see the city of Janakpur the previous evening. This is because the group of girls who had accompanied Sita to the royal garden consisted of her close attendants who used to stay with Sita all the time in the palace. They didn't have the chance to see the two brothers like other women-folk of the city.

But nevertheless they all had heard of the two wonderful boys. So when one of them who had sneaked away surreptitiously to see if she can see them somewhere in the garden, because somehow the news had leaked that the princes had gone to the royal garden to pluck flowers, and was dumbstruck and smitten when she actually saw Lord Ram and Laxman roaming there, that when she returned to join her companions her demeanours convinced others in the group that the two boys about whom she was talking must surely be the ones about whom the entire city was abuzz. Her excitement and exhilaration were clinching evidence that Lord Ram and Laxman were indeed in the vicinity.

³Sita hadn't expressed her desire to see the two brothers in explicit terms, but the more intelligent among her companions had realised that secretly she does want to see the two young princes. To ascertain whether Sita had correctly guessed who the two princes were whom she wants to see, this wise friend cleared all doubts by saying that they were the ones who had come with sage Vishwamitra the previous day.

To remove any hesitation in the mind of Sita as to whether or not she should go and see them, this friend went a step ahead to comment that the entire city was talking of their charm and magnificence, and hence it is worthwhile to see them.

By saying that the charm of the two brothers have captivated the mind and heart of all the citizens of Janakpur, this clever friend also subtly defends her companion by implying that if the entire city is enthralled by the sight of the two princes than it is no wonder that this girl was also wonderstruck and swept off her feet when she saw the two brothers. It is not her fault, and therefore she should be excused.

Whatever doubts Sita may have had in her mind were removed by this positive assertion of her senior friends. Sita also realised that not only she but all her other companions too were very eager to have a glimpse of the princes. Therefore she was sure that the chances of anyone disclosing this secret encounter to the queen or any other member of the royal household were nil.

Everyone in the city has seen the two brothers, so there is no harm in their seeing them. This means that even if this secret viewing is reported to the queen, the companions would defend Sita together by asserting that they too had wanted to see the two princes, and that Sita was not alone when she saw them. In fact, they would say that it was on their insistence that Sita went to have a quick glimpse of the two brothers.]

तासु बचन अति सियहि सोहाने । दरस लागि लोचन अकुलाने ॥ ७ ॥
चली अग्र करि प्रिय सखि सोई । प्रीति पुरातन लखइ न कोई ॥ ८ ॥

tāsu bacana ati siyahi sōhānē. darasa lāgi lōcana akulānē. 7.
calī agra kari priya sakhi sō'ī. prīti purātana lakha'i na kō'ī. 8.

Sita liked her words very much (as she was herself interested and eager to view the two brothers). Her eyes became eager to have a 'Darshan' (a divine viewing) of the two brothers¹. (7)

She made the friend (who had brought the news of the two brothers roaming in the garden) lead them². No one could perceive or discern the eternal bond of affection and love that existed subtly between Sita and Lord Ram since time immemorial³. (8)

[Note—¹The word "Darshan" has a divine and pure connotation. It means a holy viewing, a view of someone immaculate and divine. For instance we say we go to a temple to have a 'Darshan' of the deity installed there, or to have a 'Darshan' of some holy man. The use of the word precludes any kind of negative meaning or interpretation in viewing something or someone. Hence, Sita and her other companions had no pervert intention in feeling eager to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram and Laxman. It was a call of the heart; it was the purest form of desire with no perversion and negativity attached to it as the world of today might take it to be because it is driven by a corrupt mind that is always inclined to see things in the wrong light.

The purity of Sita's desire to see Lord Ram will be clear in the paragraphs that follow.

²Obviously, the girl who had brought the news of Lord Ram and Laxman knew where they were in the garden and so she was told to lead others to that spot.

From the spiritual perspective we can say that someone who has witnessed the Lord or has experienced his presence is the only one who is competent to show the way to the Lord to the rest of the society. This is the importance of a true Guru (spiritual preceptor and guide) and the role that he plays.

³The world saw Sita as a princess of Janakpur, and Lord Ram as the prince of Ayodhya. The world—except the few enlightened sages and seers—did not realise that Lord Ram was Vishnu, the Supreme Being, incarnated, and Sita was Vishnu's divine consort known as Laxmi. At a higher and subtler level, Vishnu was none else but Brahm, the cosmic Consciousness, and Laxmi was his Shakti, his dynamic energy that looks after this creation and ensures its well-being and comfort.

Since Lord Vishnu had to come down to this mortal world to fulfill the desire of the Gods and eliminate the demons, some worldly way had to be devised to unite the Lord with his cosmic Shakti, i.e. with Laxmi who was now in the form of Sita. Hence, it was so planned and devised by the Creator that the two would meet and unite by way of marriage, the method prescribed for a life-time union between two individuals by the Creator himself. By adopting this method of union, the laws of creation as laid down by the Creator would be followed. Lord Vishnu is an upholder of the laws of Dharma, and therefore he must follow them himself in order to ask others in this world to obey them.

This eternal bond between Lord Vishnu and Laxmi is what is cited here when it is asserted that “no one could perceive or discern the eternal bond of affection and love that existed subtly between Sita and Lord Ram since time immemorial”.]

दो०. सुमिरि सीय नारद बचन उपजी प्रीति पुनीत ।

चकित बिलोकति सकल दिसि जनु सिसु मृगी सभित ॥ २२९ ॥

dōhā.

sumiri siya nārada bacana upajī prīti punīta.

cakita bilōkati sakala disi janu sisu mgī sabhīta. 229.

Sita recalled the words of Narad (the celestial sage), and this inspired love of the purest and the most innocent kind in her heart (for her eternal Lord Vishnu who had manifested in the form of Sri Ram). She began to look here and there in a stunned manner like a startled fawn. (Doha no. 229)

[Note—Sita suddenly realised that her eternal Lord Vishnu has come to meet her. She recalled the words of sage Narad when he had prophesised during her early childhood days that she will be meeting her future husband in the garden where the shrine of Goddess Parvati is located. So when one of her friends brought the news of Lord Ram and Laxman paying a visit to the garden on the eve of her marriage, Sita suddenly remembered Narad’s words and was convinced that the prince whom she is destined to marry is here in the garden—because Narad’s words can’t go in vain. She decided to see who he is.

She was stunned like a fawn because ever since she had entered the garden she was secretly but eagerly looking in every direction to have a glimpse of someone about whom sage Narad had foretold her, but couldn’t see anyone around. When her friend told her that the two wonderful princes were inside the garden, Sita was wonderstruck and looked carefully again if she had missed seeing them. She was understandably nervous and emotional, and her eyes and ears both stood on the edge to catch the slightest hint of the two princes’ presence nearby.

Her condition at that time is compared to a nervous fawn whose ears stand erect and eyes look anxiously here and there for the slightest sound or movement in the bushes or amongst the trees for an unexpected stranger who may be seeing it secretly. The similarity has an important parallel: like the fawn who is afraid of a hunter who might kill it secretly, Sita was anxious because the sight of Lord Ram would compel her to fall in love with the Lord and wish that she marry him but the stern vows of her father—that she would be married to anyone who breaks the bow—would kill her desires and future happiness.

Narad's words are never false—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 68; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 236. So, when Sita remembered Narad's words she was convinced that her future husband is here in the garden, and this bit of prophesy motivated her to have a sneak view of who he is!]

चौ०. कंकन किंकिनि नूपुर धुनि सुनि । कहत लखन सन रामु हृदयँ गुनि ॥ १ ॥
मानहुँ मदन दुंदुभी दीन्ही । मनसा बिस्व बिजय कहँ कीन्ही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaṅkana kiṅkini nūpura dhuni suni. kahata lakhana sana rāmu hdayam' guni.
1.
mānahum' madana dundubhī dīnhī. manasā bisva bijaya kaham' kīnhī. 2.

Hearing the tinkling and chiming of small bells attached to the wrist-bands ('kaṅkana'; bangles), the waist-bands (kiṅkini) and the anklets (nūpura) worn by the maidens, Lord Ram thought over the matter in his heart and then said to Laxman—(1) 'It appears to me that Kamdeo (pronounced as "Kaamdeo"; also known as "madana"; Cupid: the god of love and passions) has sounded his kettle-drum (to announce to the world that love has made a firm presence in the heart of Lord Ram and Sita). He seems intent to conquer the world.' (2)

[Note—Earlier there was complete silence in the garden at the place where the two brothers were plucking flowers and leaves. Lord Ram and Laxman were concentrating upon picking flowers for their Guru's worship ritual. Suddenly this silence was disrupted by the chiming sound of small bells tied to the ornaments worn by Sita and her companions when they arrived at the site.

Lord Ram is of an adolescent age, and so when he heard this sound he immediately guessed that some young girls are near-by, because, being a prince, he was well aware of such sounds. He had been hearing such tinkling and chiming of small bells attached to bangles, waist-bands and anklets of female attendants of the royal palace at Ayodhya; the sound was not new to him. So he immediately correctly deduced that some young girls were in the vicinity.

When a group of love-struck young girls of an adolescent age go to secretly peep at two young and handsome boys roaming freely in a garden, it is natural that they would be excited, giggling, chuckling and chattering along in hushed tones. The general atmosphere that is being created here by this narration, especially with the background of a wonderful garden where young girls meet young boys, is that of love and passion. This is confirmed by the statement that Lord Ram told Laxman that it appears that Kamdeo / cupid, the God of love, passion, longing and attraction, has sounded the bugle to conquer the world.

Why 'conquer the world'? It is because Lord Ram is not an ordinary human prince but a human form of the Supreme Being himself. By endeavouring to conquer the heart of Lord Ram, Kamdeo is intent on conquering the world because the Sri Ram is the supreme Lord of the world. When a king gets ready for battle, his army sounds its war trumpet or bugle. Here, the sound of the tiny bells attached to the ornaments of Sita and her companions is compared to this war trumpet or bugle. Sita is the sovereign and is likened to Kamdeo cupid, and her army consists of the maidens

who accompany her. They have set out to conquer the heart of the Lord of the world, i.e. Lord Ram. Hence, it is said that “Kamdeo / cupid has sounded the bugle to conquer the world”.

In spite of his reluctance to enter into any confrontation with Kamdeo / cupid, Lord Ram is forced to face the latter and his powerful forces as he is now alone in the garden, is yet to complete the task of collecting flowers for his Guru, and therefore can't leave the garden in a hurry to escape Kamdeo's assault. This is why it is said that “he thought over the matter in his heart”. The Lord was contemplating what to do.

Remember: the emotions of love, passions, longing and attraction, and the sentimentality attached to them, have their seat in the ‘heart’ and not the ‘mind’ where logic, wisdom and intellect have their seat.

This interaction between Lord Ram and Sita highlights the natural phenomena of development of love and passion in young persons. It's a part of Nature; it's an integral aspect of the process of creation. It helps the Creator to maintain the momentum of the cycle creation and development that he has set rolling.

Lord Ram's heart is as pure and incorruptible as the lotus flower. No amount of passionate enticements or worldly allurements can make him feel aroused or think perversely in any manner whatsoever. This is proved when he tells his younger brother Laxman what he thought of upon hearing the sound of the bells attached to the ornaments of the girls. Normally an elder brother would not discuss such emotional matters of the heart with his younger sibling; it is against norms of proper conduct and ethics. After all, Laxman was not Lord Ram's friend with whom such things can be shared.

The incorruptible nature of Lord Ram's character will be proved once again and settled once and for all a little later when he goes back to sage Vishwamitra and tells him everything that happened in the garden. Now well, can anyone imagine a young boy telling his elderly Guru that he has met some pretty young girls secretly in a secluded place in a garden, and that he was bitten by the love-bug? That Lord Ram did this establishes beyond doubt that the Lord was above and beyond such lowly thoughts, that his character could not be sullied by worldly muck, and that he was merely acting out his role as a human being though internally his mind and heart were neutral as they were expected to be from the Supreme Being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 237.

It ought to be noted here that the god of love and passion, Kamdeo or cupid, is known as ‘Madan’ as his seat is in the Mana, the heart, of a creature, which also is the seat of his emotions and sentiments.]

अस कहि फिरि चितए तेहि ओरा । सिय मुख ससि भए नयन चकोरा ॥ ३ ॥
भए बिलोचन चारु अचंचल । मनहुँ सकुचि निमि तजे दिगंचल ॥ ४ ॥

asa kahi phiri cita'e tēhi ōrā. siya mukha sasi bha'e nayana cakōrā. 3.
bha'e bilōcana cāru acañcala. manahum̐ sakuci nimi tajē digañcala. 4.

Saying this (to Laxman), he (Lord Ram) looked in the direction from where the sound of tinkling came. As soon as he saw the face of Sita, his eyes behaved like the famous bird known as Chakor that gazes at the full moon without blinking¹. (3)

His enchanted eyes became immobile (i.e. they were fixed on the face of Sita) as if Nimi (the god who controls blinking of the eyelids) has left the eyelids out of shyness². (4)*

[Note—¹Here, Sita's beautiful face is compared to the full moon, and Lord Ram's eyes to the bird Chakor, the Indian red-legged partridge. This bird is famous for its love for the moon. As soon as the full moon rises on the horizon, the Chakor starts staring at it unblinkingly. It fixes its gaze on the moon's disc with such concentration that as the moon travels across the sky the bird also tilts its head accordingly so as to ensure that it continues to gaze at the moon.

A Chakor looks at the moon, and not vice versa. It means that it was Lord Ram who was staring at Sita's face, and not the other way round. This is in accordance to the norms of proper conduct and ethical behaviour in society whereby a girl is not expected to stare at the face of boys or any male for that matter, even if he is related to her, during their first meeting. Sita would glance at Sri Ram's face, but it would be a quick look and not a stare. A little later, however, she would gather enough courage to have a full view of the handsome face of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 232; and (ii) Doha no. 234 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 3.

²A person's eyelids have a natural tendency to blink at regular intervals, but when one is highly astonished at a sight his eyes stop blinking; he begins to stare at the object. When Lord Ram saw the beautiful face of Sita, his eyes were so fixed on it that for a few moments they did not blink. This is a poetic way of saying that the Lord was struck by the bewitching beauty of Sita's face and momentarily he forgot about everything else. He was dazed and dumbstruck, becoming immobile and speechless. The same thing has happened with Sita a little later. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 232.

*A very important thing is to be observed during this interaction between Lord Ram and Sita in the garden. When the Lord looks at Sita, she is not looking back at him directly in the eye, and when she looks at the Lord he is not staring back at her in the eye. They look at each other's faces, but not directly in the eye. This implies that principles of good manners and proper conduct are being observed by them: a girl and a boy who are strangers are not expected to stare each other in the eye and make direct eye contact. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231 which describe how Lord Ram conducted himself, and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Doha no. 234 which describe Sita's conduct.

It is only after they are married that they look directly at each other—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 3 of Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323.]

देखि सीय सोभा सुखु पावा । हृदयँ सराहत बचनु न आवा ॥ ५ ॥
जनु बिरंचि सब निज निपुनाई । बिरचि बिस्व कहँ प्रगटि देखाई ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhi sīya sōbhā sukhu pāvā. hdayam̃ sarāhata bacanu na āvā. 5.
janu biran̄ci saba nija nipunāṅī. biraci bisva kham̃ pragaṅi dēkhāṅī. 6.

He (Lord Ram) felt contented and happy when he saw the magnificent beauty of Sita. He praised it silently in his heart but was so dumbfounded that he could not find words to express his wonder and describe it or praise it in specific terms. (5)

It appeared that the creator Brahma has moulded the fabulous image of Sita to show the world his entire expertise at craftsmanship, of how beautifully and expertly he can create. (6)

[Note—Lord Ram’s only companion here is Laxman. So though the Lord wants to say something to him about Sita’s beauty, he is so stunned that words elude him and he could not speak for some moments.

Brahma is the creator of the world as well as Nature with its fascinating array of beautiful and awe-inspiring wonderful sights. Sita looks so fabulously beautiful that it appears that the Creator has taken great trouble and time to give shape to her beautiful form as a sample of his expertise as an expert artisan or craftsman. Brahma has demonstrated to the world how wonderfully he can create, and has put on display his skillful art of creation of beautiful forms at their best.

It has already been said that Lord Ram’s eyes have transformed themselves into a Chakor, and Sita’s face is like the full moon. Just like the Chakor deriving immense satisfaction by looking at the disc of the full moon, Sri Ram too derived immense satisfaction by looking at the face of Sita.]

सुंदरता कहूँ सुंदर करई । छबिगृहँ दीपसिखा जनु बरई ॥ ७ ॥
सब उपमा कबि रहे जुठारी । केहिं पटतरौं बिदेहकुमारी ॥ ८ ॥

sundaratā kahum̃ sundara karaṅī. chabigṛham̃ dīpasikhā janu baraṅī. 7.
saba upamā kabi rahē juṭhārī. kēhiṁ paṭatarauṁ bidēhakumārī. 8.

She (Sita) lends the virtue of ‘beauty’ its inherent quality of being beautiful. It is like the case of the flame of wonderful lamp lighting the house of magnificence and beauty. (7)

The similes that the poets usually use to describe such virtues as beauty, magnificence and glamour have become stale and outdated. So say with what should I compare the daughter of Videha (i.e. Sita) with? (8)

[Note—A lamp looks beautiful when its flame burns brightly without giving any smoke or depositing any soot. Sita’s face is spotless and radiant like this lamp and its brilliant light. ‘Beauty’ is a subtle quality that makes things look ‘beautiful’ by the virtue of its presence in them. Sita’s ‘beauty’ is this quality that is pure and wholesome. Whatever comes in contact with Sita, whatever is associated with Sita would become ‘beautiful’.

Sita is surrounded by many girls of her age and beauty. She is in the center of the group. Hence, the metaphor of the flame lighting the house of beauty is used to describe this scene: the beautiful companions surrounding Sita are likened to the walls

of a magnificent house, while Sita herself is compared to the brilliant flame of a magnificent lamp burning in the center of this house. It is the lighted lamp that gives light to the otherwise dark walls of the house. If the lamp was not lighted and there was darkness, no one would be able to see how beautiful the house is. The credit of making the house look beautiful goes to the light of the lamp. The centrally placed lamp cannot miss attention even if one does not pay careful attention to finer details of the house. So is the case with Sita here: she stands out amongst all the girls in the group because of her unique charm and beauty though all of the girls accompanying her are beautiful in their own right.

Since all metaphors and similes have already been used by poets and bards on one or the other occasion they are deemed to be stale and outdated. Tulsidas says that even Lord Ram failed to find something new with which to compare the beauty of Sita with. A similar idea is expressed a little later in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 247 when an attempt is being made to give an idea of how wonderful Sita looks as she comes to the venue of the marriage ceremony to get married to Lord Ram.]

दो०. सिय सोभा हियँ बरनि प्रभु आपनि दसा बिचारि ।
बोले सुचि मन अनुज सन बचन समय अनुहारि ॥ २३० ॥

dōhā.

siya sōbhā hiyam̐ barani prabhu āpani dasā bicāri.
bōlē suci mana anuja sana bacana samaya anuhāri. 230.

Describing to himself the prettiness of Sita and reflecting on his own condition, Lord Ram spoke to his younger brother (Laxman) words that were appropriate to the occasion, and were spoken with an innocent heart that was free from any sort of impure thoughts. (Doha no. 230)

[Note—This Doha is significant in the sense that it removes, in one stroke, any chance of the reader harbouring any sort of doubt about Lord Ram’s character and innocence because the situation is such that it may breed reservations about the immaculate nature of the character of both the brothers. It is a lovely garden; a young boy meets a young girl, and both are smitten by each other. But this attraction is not of a worldly plain but of a divine nature. There is no pervert thought in the mind of any of the characters—neither of Sita nor of Lord Ram.

Remember: True love is always free from passions and lust; it is pure nectar effusing from the lotus-like heart, and is not a fermented liquid that produces hallucinations and delusions. It’s a vibration of the heart, and two souls get attracted towards each other only when this vibration matches, and not otherwise. To draw a parallel with ordinary life as we know it, a radio receiver can tune into a particular broadcasting station only when it is tuned correctly to it, and not otherwise. Hence, when two souls whose frequency match each other meet, they are said to fall in love with each other, which in simple terms mean that the vibrations of their heart have matched. We meet thousands of people in our lives, but do we truly fall in love with them in an honest manner?

Lord Ram is not an ordinary mortal but Lord Vishnu, and Sita is his eternal divine consort, Goddess Laxmi.

Lord Ram's innocence is proved by his sharing his thoughts with his younger brother. Think of this: would he have done so had some evil element crept in his mind and heart? One does not share one's vile and evil thoughts with his younger brother.

Lord Ram could have kept quiet and hidden everything from Laxman. But that would have given the naughty world ever on the lookout for some opportunity to cast aspersions on other people's character a chance to murmur doubts that the Lord is harbouring some wrong thoughts in his heart and mind. So he decided to come clean and divulge his thoughts directly to Laxman to keep the gossip-mongers at bay.

We shall read below in the following Chaupais that Lord Ram has himself confided to Laxman his emotional condition after he has seen Sita's transcendental beauty. The Lord wonders why it is so, for he himself does not know how his heart, which is supposed to be calm and neutral and dispassionate and unmoving, has suddenly become so nervous and agitated. The answer lies in the explanations given in the foregoing paragraphs of this note.]

चौ०. तात जनकतनया यह सोई । धनुषजग्य जेहि कारन होई ॥ १ ॥
 पूजन गौरि सखीं लै आई । करत प्रकासु फिरइ फुलवाई ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

tāta janakatanayā yaha sōī. dhanuṣajagya jēhi kārana hōī. 1.
 pūjana gauri sakhīm lai āīm. karata prakāsu phira'i phulavāīm. 2.

Lord Ram told Laxman—'Dear brother, this is the daughter of king Janak. It is because of her that the bow-breaking ceremony is being held. (1)

Her female friends have brought her to offer worship to Goddess Gauri (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva)^{1*}. She# is moving in the garden, illuminating² it with her presence. (2)

[Verse no. 2 can be read as follows also: *She (Sita) has come here to offer worship to Goddess Gauri, and she has brought along her female friends with her. #They are roaming in the garden, illuminating it with their charm and beauty.]

[Note—Earlier we have read in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 229 that Sita was told of the presence of the two brothers by her friends. Now, it is Sri Ram telling Laxman about her.

A remarkable point is to be noted here: One of the friends of Sita had told her that she has heard about the two princes who have come with sage Vishwamitra and who have charmed the entire city of Janakpur by their presence. There were thousands of invited kings and princes who had assembled at Janakpur to participate in the bow ceremony, but none of them could catch the attention of the people of Janakpur, let alone captivate their hearts and minds as Lord Ram and Laxman had done. So they were special. Now, Sita's beauty is so unique and matchless that it has caught the imagination of Lord Ram, and she stands out in the group of young girls of her age who are all beautiful. It is a royal garden, and a princess is not an ordinary girl of the city. It was a royal garden, and the shrine of the Goddess was the royal family's personal place of worship. To this was added the aura of royalty, majesty and

grandeur surrounding Sita that marked her out distinctively, and it was not difficult for Lord Ram to correctly guess who she is.

Ram had roamed in the city and had seen the venue of the bow ceremony himself. He must also have heard the echo of the people talking with each other that he is the proper groom for Sita, and that they all hoped that this union is made. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 223. Therefore it is obvious for Lord Ram that the girl who is the center of attention is no one else but princess Sita.

¹The place of meeting is in the vicinity of the temple of the Goddess. It is customary that a girl worships Goddess Parvati on the eve of her marriage, praying to the goddess for a groom who is most suitable for her. Sita and her companions were holding in their hands all things necessary for offering worship in a temple, so it was not difficult for Lord Ram to guess that Sita has come to the temple to worship Parvati, especially in the background of the forthcoming bow-breaking ceremony which was to be held soon.

²“Illuminating the garden with her presence”—It has been said earlier (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 230) that Sita was like a flame that illuminates the house of beauty. So this statement of Lord Ram sort of endorses it. The royal garden is beautiful in its own right, but Sita’s presence added glamour and magnificence to it.]

जासु बिलोकि अलौकिक सोभा । सहज पुनीत मोर मनु छोभा ॥ ३ ॥
सो सबु कारन जान बिधाता । फरकहिं सुभद अंग सुनु भ्राता ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu bilōki alaukika sōbhā. sahaja punīta mōra manu chōbhā. 3.
sō sabu kārana jāna bidhātā. pharakahim subhada aṅga sunu bhrātā. 4.

By seeing her transcendental beauty¹, my Mana (heart and mind), which is always calm, pure and incorruptible, has become restless. (3)

Oh brother, listen²! Only God can know the reason, but my right limbs are fluttering, and this portends some good in the future³. (4)

[Note—¹Sita’s beauty is not ordinary. Had it been so it would not have had any effect on Lord Ram who is the transcendental Lord of creation in a manifested form. Surely therefore Sita’s beauty must also have a transcendental dimension to it in order to move the Mana (mind and heart) of the Lord of creation. A weak magnet cannot pull a stronger magnet to itself; both Ram and Sita are equally powerful because whereas Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, Sita is a manifested form of Laxmi, Vishnu’s divine consort.

Who can match Laxmi in physical beauty as it is she who has also revealed herself in the form of Mother Nature which is so fantastically pretty, grand and fabulous that poets and artists have been attempting to depict Nature’s magnificence and stupendous beauty ever since the dawn of civilization but have yet to find a satisfactory description.

²Laxman kept quiet without showing any reaction while Lord Ram was telling him how he felt. So the Lord wondered whether or not he was paying attention to him. So he said “listen brother; pay attention to me”.

³It is traditionally believed that if the organs of a man’s right side of the body, such as his eyelids, hands and legs, begin to flutter then it is a sign of some good future for him. In the case of a woman, it is the opposite side of the body, i.e. her left side that bears the same meaning. It is an omen.

So, inspite of Lord Ram’s heart becoming restless, the fluttering of the right side of his body indicated to him that something good is about to happen in the near future. When we put two and two together, like Ram’s heart and mind being enamoured and beguiled at the first sight of Sita and he being attracted to her, his Mana becoming restless and his right organs fluttering at the same time, the omen becomes clear: that the chances of Ram and Sita coming together permanently are quite good.

He also means that worldly beauty that is only superficial in nature would have no effect on him. But the beauty of Sita has a transcendental dimension; it goes deeper than merely being exterior. Lord Ram’s Mana, which is inherently and eternally neutral and calm, does not get easily disturbed, and if it has got restless then there must be something sublime and subtle, something serious to make this happen. That his Mana has become restless by the mere sight of Sita signifies that there is more to it than what meets the eye because Lord Ram has full control over his Mana, and is strong willed. This translates to the conclusion that Sita’s relationship with Lord Ram is eternal, existing since time immemorial, and it has a sublime and transcendental dimension to it. Hitherto it was concealed, but now it has come out in the open. It is like the case of a seed concealing a giant tree within its own self, and when the time comes the tree sprouts and grows to make itself visible to the world.]

रघुबंसिन्ह कर सहज सुभाऊ । मनु कुपंथ पगु धरइ न काऊ ॥ ५ ॥
मोहि अतिसय प्रतीति मन केरी । जेहिं सपनेहुँ परनारि न हेरी ॥ ६ ॥

raghubansinha kara sahaja subhā'ū. manu kupantha pagu dhara'i na kā'ū. 5.
mōhi atisaya pratīti mana kēri. jēhim sapanēhum^ṃ paranāri na hēri. 6.

It is a natural noble trait of all the members of king Raghu’s dynasty that they never allow their Mana (heart and mind) to step on any evil path (i.e. they never allow wrong and impure thoughts to enter and pollute their mind and heart)¹. (5)

As far as I am concerned, I am so confident about my Mana that it has never allowed itself to ever set its eye on or think about someone else’s wife². (6)

[Note—¹To think of another woman who is not related to one in any manner is deemed a wrong thought for the mind, and it is a worse thing to get attracted to her, praise her beauty and feel emotionally upset at her sight. It is not a good character in a man. This is why Ram is giving this clarification to remove any doubts in the mind of Laxman that his elder brother is transgressing limits of proper conduct.

Members of king Raghu's race are so careful so as not to even think of a wrong path, let alone walking on it. So it is out of the question that Ram, who also belongs to this noble race of kings, would ever imagine of doing it.

²Sri Ram goes further to assert that he is especially very diligent in exercising control over his Mana. And therefore there surely must be something very serious and beyond explanation, something that is hidden from view and is transcendental that has made him restless and loose control over his Mana. That is why he has said earlier that "only God knows the reason" because he is unable to find any plausible reason for his emotional condition.

Sri Ram had to make this clear because just now he has told Laxman that his heart and mind seem to be upset and agitated at the sight of Sita, and if he did not clarify and elaborate it would be easy to cast aspersions on his immaculate character and pure heart.

Sita's future husband is yet not decided, and for all practical purposes she is like a complete stranger for Ram at this moment. Eyeing a woman who may be married to someone else during the day is obviously a wrong thing to do. Lord Ram belongs to a noble race of kings who were very careful in their thoughts and conduct. So it is unimaginable for him to allow pervert thoughts to enter his mind. That is why he wonders why this is happening; why he is so attracted to Sita.]

जिन्ह कै लहहिं न रिपु रन पीठी । नहिं पावहिं परतिय मनु डीठी ॥ ७ ॥
मंगन लहहिं न जिन्ह कै नाहीं । ते नरबर थोरे जग माहीं ॥ ८ ॥

jinha kai lahairim na ripu rana pīṭhī. nahim pāvahirim paratiya manu ḍīṭhī. 7.
maṅgana lahairim na jinha kai nāhīm. tē narabara thōrē jaga māhīm. 8.

It is rare to find a noble man in this world who would never turn his back on the enemy during a battle (and run away from the battle-field), who never gives his heart to another woman who is not his wife, or even cast any sort of amorous glances at her or harbour any lust for her, and from whom no beggar (or alms seeker) gets a rebuke (and turned away without getting anything).⁷ (7-8)

[Note—It ought to be noted while reading this book titled "Ram Charit Manas" that besides telling the story of Lord Ram, his time and the deeds done by him, this book incorporates in its texture great principles of noble conduct, polity, behavioural science, spirituality, metaphysics, theology and the like.

In these two lines we see three outstanding characters of noble men: (i) They are brave and full of courage and valour; they would not show cowardice in the face of the enemy by running away from the battle-field. This is a prime character of a warrior. (ii) They will not develop extra-marital relationships; this ensures maintenance of ethics and morality in the society. If the parent is pervert and lustful, the children of the society can't be expected to lead a moral life. (iii) They will always ensure that if anyone comes to them seeking help and alms then they will do their best to help the seeker. Setting aside some part of one's income for charitable purposes and helping those who are less fortunate is a moral duty ordained by all religions.

Now, what Ram means here is this: He belongs to a highly respected noble race of kings, known as the Raghu Dynasty. Their characteristic has already been

mentioned—that they never step on a wrong path and they never harbour any amorous designs on other women. So how it is ever possible that he (Ram) would violate this well honoured and hoary tradition of his ancestors?

In spite of these restrictions, he has developed some sort of attraction for Sita. Why is it so? This tricky question is answered in a very interesting way in these two lines. Let us now examine how.

Lord Ram says that such noble men do not run away from the enemy, and they do not turn away someone who begs something from them. Now, here is the interesting part:--

(i) Firstly, Kamdeo (cupid) has arrived in the form of Sita to attack Lord Ram, to overcome his control over his self, so the Lord simply can't run away from this assault! That would be ignoble for him. So he decided to face Kamdeo cupid. That is why he did not turn away from Sita and went back to sage Vishwamitra as long as she was in the garden in his vicinity. Not facing Sita boldly and trying to avoid her would be tantamount to being defeated by Kamdeo (cupid), the patron God of love, passion, longing, desire and attraction. How can Lord Ram allow himself to be defeated by the onslaught of Kamdeo (cupid) in such a silly manner?

(ii) Secondly, Kamdeo (cupid) may have come to beg with the Lord to spare Sita the agony and misery of an uncertain future with a man she may not like. So, should the Lord deny Kamdeo (cupid) this request? Well, this is also unacceptable for a noble man of his stature; he can't turn away Kamdeo (cupid) without fulfilling his desires. So what options does the Lord have now? Obviously none—except to silently assure Kamdeo (cupid) that the Lord would be obliging him soon irrespective of whether it may cast some taint on his otherwise immaculate character. When one faces a piquant situation where both the options are bad, he must choose the better of the two. In this case it is better to accept some mischievous gossip about his character than to face the ignominy of having turned down the request of an alms-seeker in the form of Kamdeo (cupid).

This is the reason why Lord Ram apparently allows himself to get attracted to Sita at a subtle plain though he himself says that he wonders why this is happening at the grosser level of physical interaction in this world.

The three noble characters listed here pertain to the three higher sections or communities in the society—viz. the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas. Not to have lust for other's woman is a noble character of a Brahmin; not to run away from an enemy is the noble character of a Kshatriya (the warrior class); and to give charity and never turn away alms-seekers are a noble character of a Vaishya (the member of the trading community).]

दो०. करत बतकही अनुज सन मन सिय रूप लोभान ।

मुख सरोज मकरंद छबि करइ मधुप इव पान ॥ २३१ ॥

dōhā.

karata batakahī anuja sana mana siya rūpa lōbhāna.

mukha sarōja makaranda chabi kara'i madhupa iva pāna. 231.

While Lord Ram was talking in this manner with his younger brother, his mind however was enamoured and beguiled by the beauty of Sita as it literally drank the nectar of her beauty just like a bee. (Doha no. 231)

[Note—A bee’s attention is fixed on obtaining the nectar of the flower though it may hover over the flower and also wander around it for quite some time before actually alighting on it and sucking the nectar. Similarly here, though Sri Ram is talking to Laxman, his mind is fixed on Sita. This Doha concludes what has been said in the preceding verses.

However, it is remarkable that during this entire narration we find that Laxman has not uttered a single word; he has silently heard whatever his elder brother has said. Laxman did not wish to disturb Ram’s emotional enjoyment and the sentimental reverie he was in. Laxman was wise enough to understand this and the practical thing that everyone should be given his personal space. A true friend and companion is one who gives a person full freedom to express his inner thoughts without fear of betrayal and being misunderstood. Laxman passed this test in flying colours.

In the next set of verses we shall be reading about Sita’s condition and responses.]

चौ०. चितवति चकित चहूँ दिसि सीता । कहँ गए नृपकिसोर मनु चिंता ॥ १ ॥
जहँ बिलोकमृग सावकनैनी । जनु तहँ बरिस कमल सित श्रेनी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

citavati cakita cahūṁṁ disi sītā. khamṁ ga'e nṛpakisōra manu cintā. 1.
jahamṁ bilōka mga sāvaka nainī. janu tahamṁ barisa kamala sita śrēnī. 2.

Sita looked with amazement in every direction, for she could not see the two princes anywhere. Her Mana (mind and heart) was at a loss as to where they have gone¹. (1)

Wherever Sita, whose eyes were like that of a fawn, cast her glances it appeared that a stream of white lotus flowers² is flowing in that direction. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman had kept on walking in the garden because their primary job was to pluck flowers for the worshipping rituals that their Guru, sage Vishwamitra, was to perform. So it happened that they went behind a thick cover of foliage and creepers where Sita could not view them from where she stood. So she peered here and there, in every direction anxiously, but could not have a glimpse of the princes. This made her uneasy. She wondered that they could not so quickly vanish from sight, so where have they gone? That is why she was amazed.

²There are three primary Gunas (qualities) in this creation: viz. (i) the Sata Guna which is the best of the three, is noble and virtuous, is marked by purity of mind and heart, and has white as its dominant colour; (ii) the Raja Guna which is the second quality, is concerned with creation and its upkeep and all the necessary characters needed to fulfill this obligation, and has red as its characteristic colour; and (iii) the Tama Guna which is the lowest and the meanest of the three, leads to moral degradation, decay and destruction, and is therefore dominated by the black colour, the colour of darkness and delusions.

By saying that wherever Sita glanced it appeared that “white lotus flowers are flowing”, it is implied that her mind was not corrupt, and that there was no trace of

lust or amorous intentions in her glances. As has been noted earlier in our discussion, the sense of mutual attraction between Ram and Sita had a divine connotation and a transcendental dimension to it. It is just like the case of an eager disciple being attracted to a true Guru (moral preceptor); when they meet they are mutually attracted to each other.

Why is it said that a “stream” of white lotus flowers is flowing instead of citing a single lotus? The reason is that when Sita looks in a particular direction, all her companions also begin to look there. So it’s not one but many girls looking in a particular direction like a stream flowing in that way. And since all of them have a pure heart, the looking is also symbolized by the metaphor of white lotus flowers which stand for purity of thought and intention.

Further, the conjunctiva of the eye is white in colour, so when all the maidens were looking in the same direction, the poet imagines that a stream of white lotus flowers is flowing that way.]

लता ओट तब सखिन्ह लखाए । स्यामल गौर किसोर सुहाए ॥ ३ ॥
देखि रूप लोचन ललचाने । हरषे जनु निज निधि पहिचाने ॥ ४ ॥

latā oṭa taba sakhinha lakhā'ē. syāmala gaura kisōra suhā'ē. 3.
dēkhi rūpa lōcana lalacānē. haraṣē janu nija nidhi pahicānē. 4.

Her (Sita’s) companions then pointed out to her the two brothers, one of a dark and the other of a fair complexion, standing behind a thick bevy of creepers. (3)

Seeing the wonderful sight (of the two princes), her eyes looked at them so eagerly and longingly as if she has found her wealth, that is dearest to her heart, lying nearby. (4)

[Note—Tulsidas, the poet-author who has penned this immortal epic “Ram Charit Manas” is at his best, in his finest writing mettle and poetic form while describing this scene in the garden where Sita meets Lord Ram. Aside of the devotional and spiritual quotient, this narration also incorporates the ‘love angle’ of the epic story.

Here we have two souls destined to be each other’s partner for life meeting one another for the first time before their partnership is formalized. The world would like to call them as being bitten by the ‘love bug’, but it is the pull of the divine Spirit living inside their bosom, the compatibility of the vibrations of their individual hearts that begins to resonate in such a way that makes it appear that the two individuals are mutually attracted to each other. If this vibration does not match, mere physical closeness would not produce true love and abiding affection.

It was Sita’s companion who first spotted the two princes behind the curtain of creepers. Sita was very nervous, so she could not see them herself. Here we observe that Lord Ram did not stand in the open space of the garden but was seen behind creepers. This shows that he did not want to violate laws of moral conduct and royal etiquette by standing shamelessly in front of a princess. Had he done so, it would have been in bad taste.

Further, the Lord wished to ascertain whether Sita was really eager to have his Darshan (divine viewing), or would turn away after a casual look around. By being behind the creepers, he also maintained a sort of decorum whereby Sita was given an

opportunity to have a look at the two brothers as if she was viewing them from behind a virtual curtain. It would be decent and look civilized.

The relationship between Lord Ram and Sita is of an eternal nature and most ancient. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 229.

Ever since Lord Vishnu took birth as Lord Ram, his divine consort Laxmi in the physical form of Sita was forced to remain away from him. That is why it is said that “she recognized her Lord like a person recognizing his long-lost wealth that is very dear to him”. Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 248.]

थके नयन रघुपति छबि देखें । पलकन्हिहूँ परिहरीं निमेषें ॥ ५ ॥

अधिक सनेहँ देह भै भोरी । सरद ससिहि जनु चितव चकोरी ॥ ६ ॥

thakē nayana raghupati chabi dēkhēm. palakanhihūṁ pariharīm nimēṣēm. 5.
adhika sanēhamṁ dēha bhai bhōrī. sarada sasihi janu citava cakōrī. 6.

The eyes of Sita became motionless, as if transfixed, as she watched the bewitching beauty of the image of Raghupati (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty). For quite some time her eyelids forgot to blink. (5)

Due to a surge of great affection that overwhelmed her entire being, she lost consciousness of her body just like the bird Chakor loses awareness of its physical existence when it starts gazing at the beauty of the full moon’s disc during an autumn night. (6)

[Note—Sita is overwhelmed by the divine and transcendental beauty of Lord Ram’s face. Her condition is compared to the Chakor, the Indian red-legged partridge, which is renowned for its love of the full moon. Chakor gazes at the moon’s disc without blinking, and it goes on tilting its head so that its eyes remain focused on the moon as it traverses across the sky. It is believed that the moon looks its best during the whole year in the first full-moon night of autumn.

Sita was virtually dazed by the Lord’s charming image, and for some time her mind lost awareness of its surroundings. This is a natural phenomenon, a natural reaction of the body when one is absolutely stunned by the sight one sees.

Earlier, this condition was applicable for Lord Ram: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 230.

Sita’s eyes became “motionless as if tired” because it could not cope with the profundity of the beauty of Lord Ram’s image. Her eyes continued to look at the Lord without blinking, making them tired and droop. Sita did not wish to miss even a fraction of a second without watching this beautiful image for the fear of losing it the moment her eyes take rest to blink. This continuous staring tired her eyes so much so that they drooped and looked heavy.

There is an interesting interpretation of this line. Sita’s attention was transfixed on the face of Lord Ram, and she was so dazed by its magnificent beauty that she did not look at any other part of his body. The moon always shines during the night; Lord Ram’s complexion is also dark but radiant like the night that is drenched in the light of the moon during an autumnal night. The whole environment is

sentimentally charged during such full-moon nights, but a person looks up at the moon rather than the surrounding sky if he wishes to enjoy the beauty of the night and the moon-light. While looking at the full moon, a person will not look at any other heavenly body no matter how interesting or attractive it is. So is the case with Sita—she is focused on Lord Ram’s face which is glorious and splendorous like the full moon during the night of autumn, and has no inclination to bother either to look at any other part of the Lord’s body or even at Laxman.

Lord Ram had praised the beauty of Sita in his heart but hadn’t found words to express how beautiful her image was: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 230. This emotion is reciprocated here by Sita who was “so thrilled by the sight of Lord Ram’s image that her body lost awareness of its self”.

Lord Ram was closely observing Sita’s behaviour. Later on we shall read in Sundar Kand that the Lord has conveyed to Sita when she was a captive in Lanka that his Mana (mind and heart) is also with her, and this is sufficient to explain the depth of his love and affection for her: refer—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 15; and (ii) Valmiki Ramayan, 1/77/26-27.

Again, after the war for liberation of Sita from Ravana’s captivity ended and Sita was asked to undergo the fire-test to prove her loyalty, she has once again reiterated that “if her mind, heart, words and deeds (‘Mana’, ‘Vachan’, and ‘Karma’) are dedicated to no one else except Lord Ram, then let the raging fire become cool like the ‘Srikhand’ (liquefied sandalwood; a liquid preparation of curd and sugar) for her”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 109.]

लोचन मग रामहि उर आनी । दीन्हे पलक कपाट सयानी ॥ ७ ॥

जब सिय सखिन्ह प्रेमबस जानी । कहि न सकहिं कछु मन सकुचानी ॥ ८ ॥

lōcana maga rāmahī ura ānī. dīnhē palaka kapāṭa sayānī. 7.

jaba siya sakhinha prēmabasa jānī. kahi na sakahim kachu mana sakucānī. 8.

Sita symbolically brought in and enshrined Lord Ram in her heart, and then closed the eyelids as if closing the doors of a shrine¹. (7)

When Sita’s companions found that she was overcome with intense love (for Lord Ram), all of them felt abashed, and could not utter a word out of hesitation². (8)

[Note—¹Fantastic imagery, indeed. Sita must have sighed silently and etched the image of Lord Ram on the canvas of her mind and sub-conscious. It’s like taking the picture of one’s beloved and keeping it close to one’s heart because one does not know whether one will be able to see the beloved again in life. One has no control over one’s destiny and one cannot openly join one’s beloved and be close to him in physical terms, but one is free to hold his memory in one’s heart and mind for the rest of life.

The heart is a pure abode: it is here that the soul, the Atma, lives; it is here that the Supreme Being known as the Parmatma lives in the form of one’s individual Atma. That is why purest form of ‘love’ is said to have its abode in the heart. The heart is therefore like a shrine, a citadel, a holy place of the Lord God, the Parmatma.

This metaphysical perspective is deployed here to describe how Sita brought in the image of her beloved Lord, Sri Ram, quietly to enshrine it or enthrone it in the secret chambers of her heart. It is the chamber where no one else would discover the Lord, and it is here that she will have an unrestricted access to him. This is how a true lover behaves; this is where Sita hoped to worship her Lord for all times to come in the future.

She closed her eyes to ensure that the picture of Lord Ram that she has etched on the mind's canvas does not get tainted or damaged by any other image superimposing itself on it. She wanted to retain its clarity and make it permanent and everlasting.

Now, a question arises as to why have I compared Sita's heart to a 'shrine' or a 'temple'. Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 131 where sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram, while describing the places where the Lord should live like they were his own home, that "the Lord should always live in the Mana (mind and heart) of a person who does not want anything whatsoever in this world, but has selfless and purest kind of affection for the Lord as if the Mana of this person was the Lord's own abode or shrine".

²Why the hesitation? It is because it is they who had inspired Sita to come and have a look at the two princes. Now, what can they say; how will they explain to Sita's mother, the queen, her emotional condition if she is not able to conceal it wisely. It's a very piquant and sticky situation. When one falls in love, no amount of reasoning and cajoling will pull him or her out of it. The girls feared Sita because after all she was a princess and their mistress; if she gets annoyed then she can get them severely punished and even imprisoned or banished from the city. It's not wise and prudent to disturb a lovelorn princess; it's very dangerous.

This fear extended to Sita's mother: no one could predict her reaction when she comes to know that these attendant girls, who were after all maid servants of the royal household, had incited her daughter to meet a stranger in the garden. The queen-mother could give them the severest form of punishment. Not only these girls, but the entire guard of the royal garden could be thrown into the prison.

Another reason for their reluctance to say something to Sita was that she had her eyes closed. No one could be sure what was going on in her mind: she might as well be meditating upon goddess Parvati or saying some silent prayers. It would also not be proper to disturb her if this was true—because it is a sinful act to disturb someone when he or she is meditating upon God.

Initially it was only one of the attendant girls who had brought the news of the two brothers to Sita, and had the rest of them kept quiet they would have escaped punishment if anything went wrong; only this girl would suffer. But now they all were neck-deep in trouble; it was like being in a quagmire—if they kept quiet, Sita would continue to stand there gazing at the place where Lord Ram stood, and it was getting inordinately late for worship in the temple and returning to the palace, and if they said something that annoyed the princess then also severe punishment was sure to come.]

दो०. लताभवन तें प्रगट भे तेहि अवसर दोउ भाइ ।

निकसे जनु जुग बिमल बिधु जलद पटल बिलगाइ ॥ २३२ ॥

dōhā.

latābhavana tēm pragaṭa bhē tēhi avasara dō'u bhā'i.
nikasē janu juga bimala bidhu jalada paṭala bilagā'i. 232.

Just at that instant (when Sita stood motionless with eyes closed, and her companions were in a fix not knowing what to do and say), the two brothers emerged from behind the shade of the creepers as if two spotlessly shining moons have broken through the veil of clouds. (Doha no. 232)

[Note—This is Lord Ram's nature—he first keeps himself invisible from the sight of his devotee, but as soon as he is sure that the devotee is fully surrendered to him and has true and sincere affection and devotion for him, the Lord manifests himself before his devotee. That manifestation is like the emergence of the brilliant moon from behind the curtain of dark clouds in the sky. When the cloud covers the face of the moon, the sky and the world appear dark, but as soon as the moon appears the whole world suddenly lights up in the moon's beautiful rays.

As long as the Lord was not sure whether or not Sita sincerely longed for him and if she was not watching something else in the garden in the guise of looking at him, he kept himself behind the curtain formed by the bevy of creepers. But as soon as he realised that she has become motionless and has shut her eyes to indicate that she will not move anywhere but remain grounded at the place like a lifeless statue, the Lord came in view.

He had also observed the consternation and alarm on the faces of Sita's companions. This development has a spiritual message—that the Lord would not allow someone who has shown his devotee the path to the Lord to feel regret and afraid of punishment. If something went wrong, such as Sita getting late in offering her worship and returning to the palace in time, her mother, the queen, is sure to get angry at Sita as well as her attendants. This thing Lord Ram did not want to allow happening. So he did not want to waste any more time, and appeared before Sita and her group, thereby giving the companions of Sita a chance and an excuse to interfere in her emotional reverie.

A pertinent question arises: why is it said that that the two brothers emerged from behind the creepers as if “two moons” have broken from behind the curtain of clouds when there is only ‘one moon’ in the sky, and ‘not two’? Well, this observation is very significant and interesting. We can draw the following meaning from it:--

(i) At the instant the two brothers emerged from behind the shade of the creepers, Sita's eyes were closed, and it was her many girl companions who were looking nervously here and there. Whereas Sita's attention was focused entirely and exclusively on Lord Ram, the others distracted, as they glanced here and there, surely to see if any of the gardeners were spying on them and watching them on the sly. It implies that if one is not focused on the Lord, he or she will start hallucinating, because seeing ‘two moons’ is a metaphoric way of saying someone is under great delusions and is hallucinating. Therefore, if one wishes to attain the Lord God, he must behave like Sita and not like her companions. Sita had seen only ‘one moon’ in the form of Lord Ram (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 232), whereas her companions see ‘two moons’ here (Doha no. 232)!

(ii) These companions of Sita had known where the Lord stood, they were the ones who had shown Sita the way to the Lord, but unfortunately they had themselves failed to drink the nectar that Sita had drunk. So it is in this world: we come across countless people who would wisely tell us the path of spirituality, but rarely do they

walk on it themselves. It is often also observed that a sincere and eager disciple attains the spiritual goal that his Guru had advised him, while the Guru himself remains embroiled and entangled in the nightmare of this deluding world. It's indeed a great irony.

(iii) As soon as the moon appears from behind the dark veil of the clouds, the darkness of the night vanishes. Similarly, as soon as the Lord God makes his appearance in the firmament of the devotee's heart, all his spiritual delusions and fears disappear. His inner self is brilliantly illuminated and ghosts and phantoms run away.

(iv) The moon shines because it reflects the light of the sun. Lord Ram is like the sun of the Raghu dynasty as well as the one who illuminates the inner being of the creature in the form of the Atma, the pure consciousness that lives in his heart. Out of the two brothers, Lord Ram is of a dark complexion while Laxman is fair. So a tricky situation arises—Lord Ram, the real 'sun', is dark, while Laxman who is like his shadow, or like a 'moon' that shines or obtains its glory in the light of the sun, is fair. This Doha conveys the message that both Lord Ram and Laxman complement each other; no one should be taken as being junior or senior to the other. Both of them have equal importance in this creation if we were to look at them from the cosmic perspective of creation.

It is on the coiled body of Seshnath that Vishnu reclines on the surface of the cosmic ocean of milk, known as the Kshir-sagar. It is Laxman in his cosmic role of Seshnath who supports the world—so assiduously looked after and cared for by Lord Vishnu—on his thousand hoods. If Lord Vishnu sustains this world, it is Laxman in his cosmic form as Seshnath who gives support to Vishnu's endeavour. Just imagine what would happen to this world so lovingly cared for by Vishnu if Seshnath would not support it; it would sink in the cosmic void to god knows where.

Therefore, this Doha seeks to put to rest any misunderstanding in the mind of the reader that Laxman is being side-tracked or his glory undermined anywhere in the narrative.

In fact, this Doha stresses that the two brothers enhance each other's glory like the appearance of two moons simultaneously in the sky would obviously increase the brightness of the night at least by two times.

There is one more reason of the two brothers emerging from behind the curtain of creepers while Sita had her eyes closed. This is explained in a note to verse nos. 1-2 that follow below.]

चौ०. सोभा सीवँ सुभग दोउ बीरा । नील पीत जलजाभ सरीरा ॥ १ ॥
मोरपंख सिर सोहत नीके । गुच्छ बीच बिच कुसुम कली के ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sōbhā sīvam' subhaga dō'u bīrā. nīla pīta jalajābha sarīrā. 1.
mōrapaṅkha sira sōhata nīkē. gucca bīca bīca kusuma kalī kē. 2.

'The two warriors are images of perfect beauty. [That is, there cannot be anyone more beautiful and charming than them; they were virtually beauty and charm in a personified form.]

The complexion of their bodies resembles the hue of a blue and a yellow lotus flower respectively. [Lord Ram had a dark complexion like a blue-tinged or pink lotus, while Laxman was fair like a lotus with a yellow hue.] (1)

Beautiful peacock feathers adorn their heads which also has bunches of flower buds imbedded here and there in the thick lock of hairs. (2)

[Note—We have read above that at the time the two brothers emerged from behind the curtain of creepers to make themselves visible to Sita and her companions, Sita had her eyes closed, and therefore this image of Lord Ram and Laxman was seen by her companions. Sita continued to meditate, with closed eyes, upon the image of Lord Ram she had last seen. We shall read below that one of her companions woke her up from her reverie, or as she herself puts it “from her meditative posture”, to see this wonderful image. It was then that Sita opened her eyes to behold the stunning image of beauty standing right in her front. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 234.

Meanwhile, in these lines we read about the fabulous beauty of the two brothers that was enjoyed by Sita’s companions. Lord Ram wished to give these girls an opportunity to enjoy the wonderful sight of his fascinating image; he did not want to deprive them of this privilege. This is also one of the reasons why he emerged from behind the creepers while Sita had her eyes closed—because this gave her maids an unhindered chance to look at the two brothers without any obstruction or hesitation, or annoying their mistress, princess Sita, who may not like them to stare at a stranger young prince in her presence as it would be indecent and violate norms of ethical conduct which requires that unmarried girls should not look at strangers, especially if they are young boys of their age, alone.

Once again we note that while Sita’s mind registered only the beauty and presence of Lord Ram (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232), her companions saw ‘both the brothers’ (Doha no. 232). This explains the metaphor of “two beautiful moons emerging from behind the veil of clouds” as said in Doha no. 232.

In Tulsidas’ book called ‘Geetawali Ramayan’, in its Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 10 it is reiterated that “the creator has established millions of moons and Kamdeos on each part of the body of these two princes”. Refer also: Geetawali Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 17, stanza no. 1.

The condition of these girls is like a flock of Chakor birds gazing at the full moon—refer: Geetawali’s Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 14, stanza no. 3.

But in order to remove any doubt that since these two princes are so delicate, tender and beautiful they must have been brought up in a much pampered manner in a privileged background and never allowed to face hardships of life, it is said that they are “warriors” (‘Biraa’—the 5th word of verse no. 1). Warriors may be handsome, attractive and exceptionally charming, but are surely never weak, meek, or wanting in physical strength and valour.

This said, the physical features of both the brothers are being described. The narration starts from the head and goes down the body. It makes the reader look at the fascinating image of the two brothers from the awe-struck eyes of the friends of Sita as they watched Lord Ram and Laxman.

Their heads were decorated with peacock feathers, as well as flowers and buds tucked in-between the lock of hairs. When the two brothers had gone to see the city of Janakpur the previous evening, they were formally dressed like princes: they wore

caps on their heads because it was a formal outing and so they were attired like noble princes (refer: line no. 1 of Doha no. 219).

But now when they are in the garden plucking flowers for the worship ritual of their Guru, it is morning. Hence, they were informally attired in a causal manner. This meant in practical terms that they weren't wearing royal clothes befitting princes making a public appearance. So, as is the tradition, they were wearing informal apparel consisting of a long piece of seamless body-wrapping silk cloth known as a 'Pitambar' if it is yellow in colour, or a 'Dhoti' if it is white or of some other shade of colour. This also meant that the upper parts of their bodies, waist-upwards, were exposed—and this is the reason why the companions of Sita could make out the complexion of the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman as being dark and fair respectively.]

भाल तिलक श्रमबिंदु सुहाए । श्रवन सुभग भूषण छबि छाए ॥ ३ ॥
बिकट भृकुटि कच घूँघरवारे । नव सरोज लोचन रतनारे ॥ ४ ॥

bhāla tilaka śramabindu suhā'ē. śravana subhaga bhūṣana chabi chā'ē. 3.
bikaṭa bhkuṭi kaca ghūṅgharavārē. nava sarōja lōcana ratanārē. 4.

A 'Tilak-Mark' and beads of perspiration (resembling pearls) look wonderful on their foreheads. The beautifully carved ears reflect the luster of shiny ear-rings. (3)

Their eyebrows are arched (like the curve of a bow); their hairs are curly; and their pink eyes are fresh like a newly-opened lotus flower of a red-hue. (4)

[Note—The 'Tilak mark' is worn by Hindus on their forehead. It consists of three parallel lines drawn vertically in the center of the forehead just above the root of the nose and extending upto the hairline. This mark is made after one takes a bath in the morning. Therefore this means that the two brothers have already taken their morning bath.

The presence of beads of perspiration on the foreheads of Lord Ram and Laxman indicate the following things:

(i) Though it is morning hours, it is hot in the garden and no breeze is blowing;

(ii) They had gone behind the cluster of thick creepers where it must have been very suffocative, causing sweat to break out on their foreheads; this also explains why they came out of the alcove of creepers to get some fresh air;

(iii) They had been walking in the garden for some time, plucking flowers and leaves, and hence must have felt hot due to this exertion because, being princes, they weren't accustomed to such effort; they would simply order their servants and gardeners to bring flowers and never go out personally to search the entire garden for them;

(iv) And that they were nervous at the sight of so many girls staring at them unblinkingly and talking animatedly about them.

Other features of the face are curly hairs and ears adorned with ear-rings. It means that the two brothers were very conscious that the love-struck girls were watching them very closely and exhaustively. This made them excessively nervous and fidgety, causing them to perspire.]

चारु चिबुक नासिका कपोला । हास बिलास लेत मनु मोला ॥ ५ ॥
 मुखछबि कहि न जाइ मोहि पाहीं । जो बिलोकि बहु काम लजाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

cāru cibuka nāsikā kapōlā. hāsa bilāsa lēta manu mōlā. 5.
 mukhachabi kahi na jā'i mōhi pāhīr̄m. jō bilōki bahu kāma lajāhīr̄m. 6.

They have lovely chins, noses and cheeks. Their smile as well as pleasant gestures and demeanours are so bewitching and compelling with their fascinating charm that it seems the Mana (mind and heart) has been held captive and enslaved by them. [That is, when one watches the smile of Lord Ram and Laxman and their charming demeanours, one is inclined to willingly lose his heart to them and focus his mind on them.]¹ (5)

It is not possible for me² to describe the fabulous beauty of their faces which put to shame the pride of countless Kamdeos (or cupids—the god who is regarded as the patron deity of beauty and charm, and of everything that is wonderful to behold).³ (6)

[Note—¹This line that says Lord Ram and Laxman were smiling and making pleasant gestures imply that like the girls who accompanied Sita, the two brothers were also talking with each other softly in hushed tones. They must have been naturally talking about the way the group of girls was awe-struck by their presence, feeling fidgety and squirming and giggling nervously.

²The word ‘me’ clearly implies that one of the girls in the group that accompanied Sita was loudly speaking about the charming view of the two brothers as they stood in sight. Others in the group were already watching the two brothers, so why was she speaking aloud? Well, the answer is interesting: As we have read, Sita had her eyes closed as if meditating, and the maids were too scared to wake her up (refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 232). So the chief maiden in the group was searching for an excuse to bring Sita back to her senses. And this was the perfect excuse—the two brothers were standing right in front, and by describing their beauty aloud she expected to wake Sita from her trance.

But as it happened, she failed. Sita was so deeply submerged in meditating upon the image of her Lord Ram, which she had brought in and enshrined in her heart, that she did not hear and pay attention to what was being said. This is clear when we read Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 234. In the first instance it is said that “Sita brought the image of Lord Ram inside her heart and closed its doors by shutting her eyes”, and in the second instance it is said that “one of her companions gathered enough courage to tell Sita to meditate upon Goddess Parvati later on, and instead she should first see the beautiful sight of the prince (Lord Ram) before it vanishes or he moves away from sight”.

³There are countless instances where the beauty of Lord Ram is highlighted by saying that numerous Kamdeos (cupids) are no match for the Lord’s charm. Refer, for instance, Geetawali Ramayan—(i) Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 10; (ii)

Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 15, stanza no. 4; verse no. 17, stanza no. 1; verse no. 26, stanza no. 2 etc.]

उर मनि माल कंबु कल गीवा । काम कलभ कर भुज बलसींवा ॥ ७ ॥
सुमन समेत बाम कर दोना । सावँर कुअँर सखी सुठि लोना ॥ ८ ॥

ura mani māla kambu kala gīvā. kāma kalabha kara bhuja balasīnvā. 7.
sumana samēta bāma kara dōnā. sāvamṛa ku'amṛa sakhī suṭhi lōnā. 8.

They have a garland of gems resting upon their chests. Their necks are as beautiful as a conch-shell with its rounded and spiral contours. Their long and muscular arms are as attractive and strong as the trunk of young elephants. (7)

Oh dear friend! With a cup made of leaves that is full of flowers, the dark-complexioned prince is indeed exceptionally charming.' (8)

[Note—When Sita did not pay any attention to all that was said earlier, this chief companion concluded that it was because she has been describing the ‘two brothers’ instead of Lord Ram alone. Sita was struck by Lord Ram’s charm, and once she fell in love with the Lord she is not bothered about anyone else. So this wise and clever girl concluded her description by stressing that out of the two princes, it is Ram who draws attention with his unmatched charm. Both the brothers are charming, but Ram is more so.

Perhaps she thought that when she will refer to Lord Ram specifically it would wake Sita up from her trance-like state. But unfortunately it did not happen. Sita was deep in meditation and unbothered about her surroundings. She has to be woken up purposely—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 234 herein below.]

दो०. केहरि कटि पट पीत धर सुषमा सील निधान ।
देखि भानुकुलभूषनहि बिसरा सखिन्ह अपान ॥ २३३ ॥

dōhā.

kēhari kaṭi paṭa pīta dhara suṣamā sīla nidhāna.
dēkhi bhānukulabhūṣanahi bisarā sakhinha apāna. 233.

He (Lord Ram) has a slim waist like that of a lion¹, and is wearing a Pitambar². He is an embodiment of beauty and decency³.

Seeing this most fascinating and bewitching sight of the Lord of the solar race, the friends of Sita lost awareness of themselves.⁴ (Doha no. 233)

[Note—¹A lion has a very strong and muscular body, but its waist area is slim. This metaphor is used to stress that Lord Ram may be delicate and tender in his appearance but he is as strong as a lion. Besides this, the lion is the king of the forest. Hence, it means that Lord Ram is the king of this world.

²The ‘Pitambar’ is a yellow coloured seamless single piece of silk cloth wrapped around the body. It is usually wrapped around the lower half of the body, round the waist and below it to cover the legs. A length of it is swung loosely across the shoulders to drape the upper part of the body as well. But in the case of warriors, the upper part of the body is usually left undraped and the Pitambar is worn only on the lower part from the waist down.

³Lord Ram and Laxman have maintained full decency and etiquette during this interaction in the garden. It will be noted that when Sita appeared on the scene and the two brothers noticed that she is looking at them, they quietly moved away from sight and went behind a thick curtain formed by dense creepers. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 232. This was to uphold laws of decent behaviour whereby strangers ought not to allow themselves to be stared at by unmarried girls. Besides this, Lord Ram was a prince himself and he was well aware of royal manners and etiquette: female members of the royal household were not expected to directly see males not related to them. No lewd remarks or gestures were passed or exchanged. Though the atmosphere was charged with love and mutual attraction, but there was no trace of vulgarity and indecency of any kind whatsoever.

⁴We have read earlier that Sita was overwhelmed by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram. Now it is emphasized that even her companions are swept off their feet by the Lord’s charm.]

चौ० धरि धीरजु एक आलि सयानी । सीता सन बोली गहि पानी ॥ १ ॥
बहुरि गौरि कर ध्यान करेहू । भूपकिसोर देखि किन लेहू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dhari dhīraju ēka āli sayānī. sītā sana bōlī gahi pānī. 1.
bahuri gauri kara dhyāna karēhū. bhūpakisōra dēkhi kina lēhū. 2.

One of Sita’s clever friends gathered courage to break Sita’s trance-like state of reverie. She held Sita’s hands and told her—[1] ‘Dear, you can meditate upon Gauri (goddess Parvati) later on. Why don’t you presently have a good look at the young prince of the king (‘Bhup-kishore’—i.e. Lord Ram). [2]’ (1-2)

[Note—Not only Sita but all of her companions were held enthralled by the magnificent view of Lord Ram and Laxman; all of them were spell-bound and transfixed at the sight. But one of them decided that enough was enough, and that it was getting late to return to the palace after performing worship of goddess Parvati at the garden temple, which was the main purpose of the group’s visit to the garden. She is called ‘clever’ because she was expert in maintaining protocol as she pretended that Sita was meditating upon the goddess instead of being stunned by the beauty of Lord Ram so much so that she couldn’t move a bit. The fact that Sita was overwhelmed by the sight of Lord Ram’s enchanting view and had preferred to hurry to see the two brothers instead of sticking to her original plan of performing worship at the temple and returning home is abundantly clear by reading (i) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that

precede Doha no. 228, (ii) Doha no. 229 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8, and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 232.

She was after all a maid, and therefore she had to gather courage to interfere with her mistress' thought process because there was always the fear of annoying Sita who was a princess, and inviting her wrath. This friend observed that Sita was so much lost in the thoughts of Lord Ram that inspite of the girls chattering away and loudly describing the glamorous sight of the two brothers as they emerged from behind the curtain of creepers, Sita's trance did not break. So this girl had to be extra careful—and this is why she told Sita to “meditate upon goddess Parvati later on”, because it ensured that Sita would not accuse her of casting a taint on her character by implying that she was besotted by an unknown stranger prince, something that would put Sita in the docks and besmirch her reputation.

This girl was the chief maid because only someone with a responsibility and position would have the guts to hold the hands of a princess and wake her up from day-dreaming. She in all probability had squeezed Sita's hands to wake her up from her trance as she realized that other methods, such as orally alerting her, would not look nice as the two brothers, Ram and Laxman, were closely observing her activities. The garden was a quiet place, and trying to wake Sita by verbal methods was sure to be heard by the two brothers, and this would give a wrong impression to the two princes regarding the character of Sita. After all, they too were of royal blood and understood well the decorum and protocols of royal behaviour—which stipulates, inter alia, that a princess should not step beyond the red-line by getting enamored of and enthralled by complete strangers.

Therefore, this ‘clever’ friend thought of holding, squeezing and shaking Sita's hands to wake her up from her day-dreaming instead of doing so verbally.

There is yet another way of interpreting these two lines. This chief maid knew well that Sita was thinking of Lord Ram, so she sort of alerted her that instead of meditating upon the image of Lord Ram why doesn't she open her eyes and have a direct look at the same image while it is still there in the front. Later on she can always close her eyes and recollect that image, but she should not miss this golden opportunity of having a direct look at the two brothers while they are still within sight. She was clever to convey this message while observing the rules of etiquette and protocol by saying that “Sita should first look at the princes now, and then meditate upon the goddess later on”.]

सकुचि सीयँ तब नयन उघारे । सनमुख दोउ रघुसिंघ निहारे ॥ ३ ॥

नख सिख देखि राम कै सोभा । सुमिरि पिता पनु मनु अति छोभा ॥ ४ ॥

sakuci sīyam̐ taba nayana ughārē. sanamukha dō'u raghusīṅgha nihārē. 3.
nakha sikha dēkhi rāma kai sōbhā. sumiri pitā panu manu ati chōbhā. 4.

Sita felt bashful and fidgety as she hesitatingly opened her eyes to behold the two lions of Raghu dynasty standing opposite her (near the alcove of creepers)¹. (3)

Sita was enthralled as she watched the wonderful image of Lord Ram, from the toe nails right upto his head. Then she felt very perturbed as she remembered the stern vow of her father (which declared that anyone who would break Lord Shiva's strong

bow would be married to Sita irrespective of whether she likes it or not, and ignoring her personal views and preferences)². (4)

[Note—¹Sita felt ‘bashful and fidgety’ because she realized that her friends have become aware that she is besotted by the beauty of two stranger princes. Since this was indeed the case, she ‘hesitatingly’ opened her eyes because she would be facing the two princes face to face. Sita had previously closed her eyes out of feeling of bashfulness when she saw that the two princes were staring at her from behind the curtain of creepers. Now her friend tells her to open her eyes and look at the two princes directly. Surely this was a very embarrassing situation.

Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman are compared to a lion of the Raghu dynasty because this metaphor is most suitable for them. A lion is the king of the animals and the forest, and it has a very strong and muscular body. Similarly, the two brothers were kings in their own right, and had a magnificent personality with a well-built body with a muscular frame.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 71, stanza no. 3 also.

When Sita opened her eyes, her sight first fell on the feet of Lord Ram, and slowly and bashfully she raised her eyes to see his face. This meant that now she was having a full view of the beautifully enchanting image of the Lord. She longed to have Ram as her groom, but her father’s stern vows came in the way. How unfortunate it was that she had no say in her own future and its happiness. Out of hesitation and requirements of royal protocol she did not have the courage to even tell her father what she wished because it would immediately invite scorn, rebuke and punishment.

Besides this now it was too late because all the princes and kings had already arrived to participate in the bow ceremony. Forcing her father to go back on his declaration would mean an eternal ignominy on the whole family that would cause irreparable damage to its reputation.

So Sita was extremely perturbed and depressed because though she had mentally decided to pick Lord Ram as her life companion and would like to spend her entire life with him, it seemed that her wishes would remain unrequited because of the vows of her father that stipulated that anyone who broke Shiva’s bow would marry her.]

परबस सखिन्ह लखी जब सीता । भयउ गहरु सब कहहिं सभीता ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि आउब एहि बेरिआँ काली । अस कहि मन बिहसी एक आली ॥ ६ ॥

parabasa sakhinha lakhī jaba sītā. bhaya'u gaharu saba kahahim sabhītā. 5.
puni ā'uba ēhi bēri'ām' kālī. asa kahi mana bihasī ēka ālī. 6.

When Sita’s companions observed that she was under the spell of a stranger (i.e. Lord Ram), they felt very embarrassed themselves. Afraid of being inordinately late (in performing worship of goddess Parvati and returning to the palace, which would certainly invite enquiry and stern admonishment from the queen mother), they told Sita—‘We are getting late. So please hurry up. (5)

We will come to this place tomorrow again at the same hour (when you will have more opportunity to see the two princes who are also expected to come to pluck flowers for their Guru, sage Vishwamitra).’

Saying this, one of Sita’s companions smiled within herself (because she, being a close friend of Sita, was passing this comment to tease her, making Sita feel more bashful and embarrassed). (6)

[Note—Again, this girl was the head maid. Sita’s companions were afraid because they were getting unduly late in completing the worship and returning to the palace. If the queen mother comes to learn what happened in the garden, she would certainly take all of them to task. The queen had sent them to guard Sita’s privacy and ensure that no outsider is able to violate royal protocol and come within viewing distance of the princess. If the queen comes to know that outside gentlemen had entered the garden against royal orders and had come too close to the princess, it would mean strong punishment for all of them as well as the guards and gardeners of the royal garden for their laxity and allowing this to happen.

What answer would they give when asked why did they dare to take Sita at the place where outsiders were present, and the friend who had actually brought the news of the presence of the two brothers would be singled out for the sternest form of punishment. This is why they were all afraid of getting late to return because it is sure to arouse suspicion.

When this friend warned Sita that they were getting too late, she also felt afraid because of her mother wondering at the cause of this delay—refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 234 below.

The most jovial amongst the companions teased Sita in a friendly way by telling her that if she is so enamoured of the princes then they all would come here tomorrow again so that she can have more fun. She said this in audibly loud so that the two brothers would also hear it and would find some excuse to come there at the same time the next day.

She laughed at herself because she knew that what she had just said—that they would come here tomorrow and then Sita would be able to watch the two princes more—was virtually impossible to implement as the next day would be extremely busy because the bow ceremony was scheduled for that day. Today they were relaxed, but tomorrow the entire household would be on its toes, getting ready for the bow ceremony from early morning. Even if they did manage to come to the garden temple, it would be a hurried affair.

Besides this, all the invited guests would be preparing to attend the ceremony, and there was little or no chance that the two brothers would come again and be in a relaxed mood as they are today.

This friend’s advice caused a lot of embarrassment for Sita because it clearly implied that she has fallen in love with a stranger, and for a young unmarried girl this is a reason for feeling shy and abashed.]

गूढ गिरा सुनि सिय सकुचानी । भयउ बिलंबु मातु भय मानी ॥ ७ ॥
धरि बड़ि धीर रामु उर आने । फिरी अपनपउ पितुबस जाने ॥ ८ ॥

gūṛha girā suni siya sakucānī. bhaya'u bilambu mātu bhaya mānī. 7.
dhari baḍidhīra rāmu ura ānē. phirī apanapa'u pitubasa jānē. 8.

Hearing these serious words that had a double-edged meaning to them as they were meant to tease Sita, she felt highly embarrassed and bashful even as she blushed exceedingly. At the same time she became afraid of being punished by her mother for getting too late to return to the palace¹. (7)

Sita gathered her wits around with a lot of patience and courage, and she resolutely brought in the image of Lord Ram and enshrined it inside her heart. She then reluctantly turned back, realizing the practicality of the situation that she was dependent on her father and was not independent to decide anything herself about her future². (8)

[Note—¹Sita realized that it was futile for her to harbour any thoughts of Lord Ram in her heart because her future was tied to the vows of her father. When her companion told her that they would come here the next day when she would be able to see more of the two princes, Sita realized that she was being teased as it was a very remote possibility to see the two brothers again after today's encounter in the garden because in all probability they will go away the next day once the bow ceremony was over and she was betrothed to some great king or prince.

The two princes, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, were strangers, and no one can ever be certain of a stranger; no one can say for sure whether one would meet a stranger again in life or not. Perhaps their Guru, sage Vishwamitra, would get informed that the two brothers had been roaming in the garden looking at girls. In all probability, the sage would not allow them to repeat it again for fear of a scandal and a taint on their immaculate reputation which was not ordinary, for the two brothers belonged to a famous family of king Raghu which is famed for being extremely upright and moral in conduct and thought.

After the bow ceremony is over, there would be little chance of the two princes coming to the garden again the second or the third day because all the guests would be preparing to leave, and even if they did come the chances of Sita visiting the place was most remote as she would have no excuse to come to offer worship to goddess Parvati to seek her blessings for a suitable husband because this issue would be decided by the next day when the bow ceremony would be held.

Sita was also afraid that if she was inordinately late to return, it would cause her mother to become suspicious of her activities and ask her so many uncomfortable questions. She was already tormented, and did not want to aggravate her condition more by having to answer irritating questions. So she felt 'afraid' at getting late.

²Sita faced a piquant situation. Personally she wished to marry Lord Ram, but the ground reality was that she had no say in deciding who her husband would be as this was tied to the breaking of the bow as decided by her father. It was such a painful situation where a girl had no say about her future happiness, and what she wanted or not wanted. She wanted to stay a bit longer to view the enchanting image of her beloved, but then it was getting late and she was afraid of her mother. Further, her companions had started teasing her and poking fun at her, something that irritated her more at this point of time as it was not the time for such pranks and making fun. Her heart was heavy as lead, she was under great emotional and mental stress, and at this juncture instead of empathising with her these maids were taunting her with sarcastic comments. She felt ruined. But she had no choice.

So Sita courageously took a deep breath and glanced at Lord Ram for the last time so as to etch his image so firmly in her heart that though she may never be able

to see her beloved again in life, his image would be eternally enshrined in her temple-like heart where she would continue to adore him for the rest of her life!

Sita was so thoroughly enchanted and enamoured by the bewitching image of Lord Ram and decided in the heart of her inner-self that if there is anyone whom she would ever adore and love in life it would be Lord Ram. So, given the uncertainties she faced due to the condition laid down by her father whereby her future was hinged to the bow, she decided to play it safe by bringing in Lord Ram and giving him a permanent abode in her heart, a place where she would be able to keep the Lord secretly locked-in for the rest of her life even if she was not able to marry him, and it was such a secure sanctuary because no one else except her own self would know about the Lord's abode there. A paper portrait or any other token means of remembrance could be snatched away from her if it was discovered in her possession, but an image that is etched on the walls of her heart and the canvas of her thoughts cannot be detected and deleted by anyone no matter how hard he or she had been spying on Sita and trying to convince others of her behaviour in the royal garden that had made her a target of the arrows of Kamdeo / cupid.]

दो०. देखन मिस मृग बिहग तरु फिरइ बहोरि बहोरि ।
निरखि निरखि रघुबीर छबि बाढ़इ प्रीति न थोरि ॥ २३४ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhana misa mga bihaga taru phira'i bahōri bahōri.
nirakhi nirakhi raghubīra chabi bārha'i prīti na thōri. 234.

As Sita went back (towards the temple of goddess Parvati), she repeatedly glanced back on the pretext of seeing some wonderful deer, birds and trees. Each time she looked back she had a beautiful vision of Raghuvir (Lord Ram, the brave warrior of the Raghu dynasty), and each sight further stoked her love and affection for the Lord; the more she saw of Lord Ram the more besotted and enamoured she became. (Doha no. 234)

[Note—Sita found a ruse to look back and glance at her beloved Lord for the last time. If she had turned back and looked directly in the direction where the two brothers were standing, it would have given her friends more chance to tease her; it would have created a sort of scandal. So she found an excuse—there were a large number of wonderful deer, birds and trees in the garden; all were very fascinating. Sita cheerfully looked here and there pretending to watch them on her way back to the temple. But her real intention was to glance back at the place where Lord Ram and Laxman were standing.

She moved a little ahead and then retraced her steps to see this deer, or that bird or tree. From the corners of her eyes she kept on looking at Lord Ram; her maids had no idea where she was actually looking at. So this saved Sita from more embarrassment.]

चौ०. जानि कठिन सिवचाप बिसूरति । चली राखि उर स्यामल मूरति ॥ १ ॥
प्रभु जब जात जानकी जानी । सुख सनेह सोभा गुन खानी ॥ २ ॥

परम प्रेममय मृदु मसि कीन्ही । चारु चित्त भीतीं लिखि लीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jāni kaṭhina siva-cāpa bisūrati. calī rākhi ura syāmala mūrati. 1.
prabhu jaba jāta jānakī jānī. sukha sanēha sōbhā guna khānī. 2.
parama prēmamaya mṛdu masi kīnhī. cāru cinā bhītīm likhi līnhī. 3.

Feeling depressed that the bow of Lord Shiva is exceptionally heavy to lift and hard to break, she (Sita) went away with a heavy heart, enshrining the lovely dark-coloured image (of Lord Ram) in her (temple-like) heart¹. (1)

When Lord Ram saw that Janki, the daughter of king Janak (i.e. Sita) who was an image of bliss, affection, beauty and virtues, was going back [2], he painted her marvelous image on the wall (canvas) of his heart by using the soft ink of immense love for her [3]². (2-3)

[Note—¹Sita knew that her fate is irrevocably tied to Lord Shiva's bow—anyone who lifts, strings and breaks it would marry her. But this bow was very difficult to tackle—it was heavy, hard—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250.

It was mystical as well in the sense that unless Lord Shiva wants it to move or break no power on earth would be able to do so—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 258.

Countless strong and powerful warriors had assembled to try their luck at tackling this bow. As compared to them Lord Ram was very delicate and tender, not only in age but also in physical features. So Sita guessed that if anyone of these warriors weren't able to break the bow then it is impossible to imagine that Lord Ram would ever be able to do it. Consequentially, the chances of her ever marrying Ram were next to nil—except of course if Lord Shiva so wants, and if some miracle happens by a stroke of good luck favouring her.

So she decided to request goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, to be specially kind, gracious and considerate on this occasion and interceded on her behalf to persuade her husband, Shiva, to make things happen in such a way that the impossible can happen—i.e. no one should be able to move the bow, and then, as a last resort, her father may ask Lord Ram to make an attempt, at which the bow would voluntarily break because Lord Shiva would order it to do so. Sita's prayers to goddess Parvati that follow below clearly indicate this. Refer: (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 236. Her earnest prayers were heard by the goddess, and she expressly assured Sita that her wishes would be fulfilled—refer: Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chanda along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8. (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 257.

Parvati had undergone this emotional trauma in her personal life as well. She had to do severe Tapa (penance and austerity) and undergo most difficult tests to obtain the hands of Lord Shiva in marriage. Her parents did not like the union in the beginning because Shiva was a renunciate ascetic who lived a life of dispassion and without any worldly comfort worth the name with him. No parent would like to marry their daughter to such a person. So, Parvati could empathise with Sita more than anyone else. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 101 which

elaborately describe the marriage of Shiva with Parvati and the trauma she has to bear to fulfill her wish to marry Shiva.

²Sita too had done the same thing—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234, and (iii) finally once again in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 235.

So we observe that both Lord Ram and Sita had fallen deeply in love with each other. At the time of the actual breaking of the bow, while Sita was fervently praying to gods and goddesses as well as the bow itself, Lord Ram had first looked directly at Sita and then decided to make the final resolute move to lift and break the bow—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 261.

An important observance can be made here. Sita had “enshrined the image of Lord Ram by bringing it inside her heart and closing shut its doors” (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 232), while Lord Ram has “used the ink of love to make a protrait of Sita on the walls of his heart” (refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 235). Now, one may forget about something that one has brought in the house and kept it safely somewhere, but one will remember it if he has written about it in his personal diary.

This is exactly what is meant here and had actually happened. During the period just before the actual breaking of the bow, Sita was nervous and had forgotten what goddess Parvati had assured her in the temple—that her wishes would be fulfilled and she will get the groom of her choice (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and Chanda that precede Doha no. 236). Sita had prayed fervently to this god and that goddess (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257), losing confidence in the power of true love by the virtue of which she had so meticulously brought in the image of Lord Ram in her heart and had shut the door earlier.

On the other hand, Lord Ram maintained his cool and poise because he was certain of the inherent formidable power that the good-old virtue of true love possesses, a power that no force in world can ever resist and neutralise. Refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261.]

गई भवानी भवन बहोरी । बंदि चरन बोली कर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

जय जय गिरिबराज किसोरी । जय महेस मुख चंद चकोरी ॥ ५ ॥

जय गजबदन षडानन माता । जगत जननि दामिनि दुति गाता ॥ ६ ॥

gaī bhavānī bhavana bahōrī. bandi carana bōlī kara jōrī. 4.

jaya jaya giribararāja kisōrī. jaya mahēsa mukha canda cakōrī. 5.

jaya gajabadana ṣaḍānana mātā. jagata janani dāmini duti gātā. 6.

Meanwhile, Sita went to the temple of Bhavani (goddess Parvati), knelt down before the goddess and offered her obeisance at the goddess’ feet. Then she held her hands together and prayed to the goddess¹. (4)

Sita prayed—‘Glory to you oh goddess Girija, the daughter of the king of the mountains (i.e. goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva)!¹²

Glory to you who has the privilege of constantly looking at the enchanting face of Lord Shiva much like the female bird ‘Chakori’ (Indian red-legged partridge) who intently watches the full moon with intense love for it in her heart.³ (5)

Glory to you who are the mother of gods Ganesh (‘Gajbadan’) and Kartikeya (‘Shadaan’)!⁴ You are the Mother Goddess of this world⁵, and your body is splendid and radiant with a divine glow. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/72 also.

Sita had fallen at the feet of the goddess as a gesture of earnest and urgent request as well as of total surrender. When one falls down or kneels down before an Authority, the latter is morally obliged to listen to the prayer or petition of the person who has submitted himself to this Authority. So when Sita knelt before goddess Parvati to place her petition before her—which was to ask the goddess to ensure that she marries the prince she has begun to love and whose image she has enshrined in her heart, leaving no place for anyone else—the goddess was obliged to kindly consider her pleas favourably.

²By reminding Parvati about her past when she was born as a daughter in the household of the king of mountains, had determined to marry Lord Shiva when sage Narad had told her parents that she was destined to be the consort of the Lord, and had to do undergo the severest form of Tapa and physical sufferings in order to fulfill her wishes that she is eternally dedicated to Lord Shiva and no one else, Sita intended to implore upon the goddess to help her as she was facing the same dilemma and piquant situation in her life as the goddess had faced in her own life earlier*. This would naturally make the goddess sympathetic to her situation and help her in all possible ways so that she is finally able to have the hands of Lord Ram in marriage and be the Lord’s partner in life. {*This episode is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 66—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 75.}

³The bird Chakor is famed for its love for the moon. By citing this example Sita wished to convey to the goddess that like the case of her own self when she finds eternal happiness and bliss by constantly watching the face of her beloved husband Lord Shiva, she (Sita) also wished to spend the rest of her life watching the beautiful face of Lord Ram. So, will goddess Parvati please help her? Since she loves Lord Shiva so much, is it not possible for her to prevail upon her husband, Shiva, to kindly pay attention to the emotional torments faced by Sita and help her by making it so happen that the bow is broken by no one else but Lord Ram? Surely goddess Parvati can do this if she is pleased.

⁴Lords Ganesh and Kartikeya are the two sons of Lord Shiva and Parvati. Ganesh is called ‘Gajanan’ because he has the head of an elephant, and Kartikeya is called ‘Shadaan’ because he has six mouths. Ganesh is regarded as the chief amongst Gods, and is offered first worship during rituals. He is said to be very wise and erudite. Kartikeya is the chief of the army of Gods. A detailed note on Ganesh has been appended below to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 257.

By placing Ganesh ahead of Kartikeya, Sita showed her wisdom—that she was well aware that he was God who is always worshipped before others, and that he

is the fulfiller of all wishes. So, goddess Parvati being the mother of Lord Ganesh, she is all the more obliged and competent to fulfill Sita's wishes.

Kartikeya is the chief of the army of Shiva as well as of the Gods in general. So by invoking him Sita implied that if goddess Parvati wants she can instruct her son Kartikeya to ward off all evil spirits and opposing stars that might play spoil-sport and ruin Sita's future happiness by not allowing her to be married to Lord Ram. Kartikeya and Ganesh should work together so that Sita's future is auspicious, her wishes are fulfilled, and Lord Ram can obtain victory in the fierce battle that would rage for her in the arena of the bow-breaking ceremony.

⁵Goddess Parvati is also known as 'Maha-devi', the Great Goddess. She is the 'Mother' of this world because Lord Shiva, her divine husband, is the 'Maha-deva', the Great God who is regarded as the Father of creation.]

नहिं तव आदि मध्य अवसाना । अमित प्रभाउ बेदु नहिं जाना ॥ ७ ॥

भव भव बिभव पराभव कारिनि । बिस्व बिमोहनि स्वबस बिहारिनि ॥ ८ ॥

nahim tava ādi madhya avasānā. amita prabhā'u bēdu nahim jānā. 7.

bhava bhava bibhava parābhava kārini. bisva bimōhani svabasa bihārini. 8.

There is no beginning, middle or an end of your divine form. Your influence and powers are immeasurable and infinite; even the Vedas are unable to fathom them and describe them. (7)

You are the one who creates, sustains and concludes this creation. You are the one who casts her veil of delusions over this world and keep it enthralled. You are independent in all respects, and move in this world freely as you wish. (8)

[Note—This is a perfect portrait of the Supreme Being known in the scriptures as the 'Viraat Purush', the all-pervading, all-encompassing, invisible and cosmic form of the Lord. Mother Goddess is this Viraat Purush's 'Shakti' or dynamic aspect. The Lord uses his 'Shakti' to carry out all his cosmic functions—creation, sustenance and conclusion. This Shakti is also known as 'Maya' or the delusion creating power of Brahm, the Supreme Being. It is this Maya that keeps the world spinning like a wheel endlessly.

Brahm's cosmic Shakti is as infinite as the sky. Its powers and energy are endless. It represents the dynamism and energy of Brahm that acts like an invisible dynamo that powers all activity in this creation.

Now, Sita invokes all these qualities of goddess Parvati to inspire her to become active, realise her immense potentials, and utilise her cosmic abilities to fulfill her small wish—which is to make Lord Ram her partner for life. If she wants, Parvati, being the Supreme Goddess, can very conveniently and easily do it; it is within her capabilities. She can for instance cast her deluding veil on all the competing warriors so that none of them would be able to lift and break the bow; she can make the bow heavy when others begin lifting it and make it feather-light when Lord Ram tries his hand on it. She can turn the mind of her father so that he may ask Sita for her views, and then tamper with his vows and tweak them to somehow accommodate her.

By telling the goddess that “she is independent in her moves in the world” Sita indicated to her that she (the goddess) too had independently decided to marry Lord Shiva inspite of advice given to the contrary by the seven celestial sages known as the Saptarishis—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand (i) from Doha no. 77—to Doha no. 81, and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 89—to Doha no. 90.

Therefore, she must also help her (Sita) because she also wants to chart an independent path for her self much against the wishes of her father.

There is another way of interpreting this statement—it may mean that Sita requests goddess Parvati that like her, she (Sita) too should be granted permission to move freely in life with the partner of her choice. If Parvati had chosen Shiva then, let Sita choose Lord Ram now!]

दो०. पतिदेवता सुतीय महँ मातु प्रथम तव रेख ।

महिमा अमित न सकहिं कहि सहस सारदा सेष ॥ २३५ ॥

dōhā.

patidēvatā sutīya mahum̃ mātu prathama tava rēkha.

mahimā amita na sakahim̃ kahi sahasa sārādā sēṣa. 235.

Oh Mother! Among all the virtuous women who regard their husbands as a personified form of God (and give them due respect befitting this stature), you are counted first—i.e. you head this list, you are the best amongst such women. Thousands of Saraswatis (the goddess of speech and knowledge) and the legendary serpent with thousands of heads (and therefore thousands of tongues and mouths), known as Seshnath, are unable (or rather ‘would be unable’) to sing and praise your immense and infinite glories and virtues¹. (Doha no. 235)

[Note—In Hinduism, the husband is a woman’s most precious and adorable asset in this life. She is expected to show him the greatest of respect as she would show to a revered God. Sage Atri’s wife named Anusuiya has also outlined the duties of a good woman when Sita met her in the sage’s hermitage where Lord Ram had gone during his 14-year forest exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Sortha no. 5 and the entire length of Chaupais that precede it.

Sita has cited three sources which together can’t sufficiently praise the glories and powers and abilities of goddess Parvati, the cosmic Mother Goddess—the Vedas, goddess Saraswati, and Seshnath, the thousand-hooded serpent who holds the earth aloft. This is to stress the immensity and profundity of the goddess’ glories. The ‘Vedas’ pertain to the wisdom of the terrestrial world, the earth; goddess Saraswati represents the heavenly Gods, and Seshnath stands for the wise ones who live in the subterranean world or the nether world. In other words, no one is able to sufficiently praise goddess Parvati’s great glories.

¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 342 that employ the same metaphor to stress on the immensity of Lord Ram’s glories and virtues when king Janak has praised the Lord.]

चौ०. सेवत तोहि सुलभ फल चारी । बरदायनी पुरारि पिआरी ॥ १ ॥

देबि पूजि पद कमल तुहारे । सुर नर मुनि सब होहिं सुखारे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sēvata tōhi sulabha phala cārī. baradāyanī purāri pi'ārī. 1.

dēbi pūji pada kamala tumhārē. sura nara muni saba hōhim sukhārē. 2.

Oh the one who bestows boons and is very dear to Purari (Lord Shiva)! By serving you the server (i.e. your devotee) is blessed with the four legendary rewards of life (which are—‘Artha’ or material prosperity, ‘Dharma’ or religious merit, ‘Kaam’ or fulfillment of desires, and ‘Moksha’ or spiritual liberation). (1)

Oh Goddess! By worshipping your lotus-feet, the Gods, the humans and the great sages find contentment and bliss. (2)

[Note—Sita shows her prudence in the way she prays—first she extols the glories of goddess Parvati, and now she praises her benevolent and magnanimous nature, rounding up the praise by saying that her worship rewards everyone—the gods, the ordinary humans and the learned sages.

This prepares the ground for submitting Sita’s actual wish before the goddess. The prayer is cleverly worded to ensure that the goddess would be compelled to think over the submission many times over before rejecting it if she prefers to neglect it, because if that happens (i.e. if she decides not to concede Sita’s requests) then it will go against the very virtues for which this goddess is famed and worshipped. Therefore, the chances of her accepting Sita’s requests are great.

Lord Shiva is known as ‘Purari’ because he had slain the demon named Tripura. To emphasise the fact that the affection and love between Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati is mutual and not one sided, Sita stresses here that “Parvati is very dear to Shiva”. Previously she has already highlighted the immensity of Parvati’s love for Shiva when she had said that “you affectionately look at Shiva’s face just like the Chakori looks at the full moon”—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 235.

The implication is simple and obvious—Sita wishes to convey to the goddess that the love and affection between her self and Lord Ram is mutual just like the case between the goddess and Shiva. This is very evidently borne out by the narration in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 229—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 235. Hence, the goddess must pay heed to Sita’s pleadings and concede to her requests.]

मोर मनोरथु जानहु नीकें । बसहु सदा उर पुर सबही कें ॥ ३ ॥

कीन्हैउँ प्रगट न कारन तेहीं । अस कहि चरन गहे बैदेहीं ॥ ४ ॥

mōra manōrathu jānahu nīkēm. basahu sadā ura pura sabahī kēm. 3.

kīnhē'um' pragaṭa na kārana tēhīm. asa kahi carana gahē baidēhīm. 4.

You are well aware of the wishes of my heart—because you dwell in the heart of all living beings and no thoughts are secret from you. (3)

This is the reason why I have not expressed my wish clearly and have refrained from disclosing it openly in public.’

Saying this, Sita (‘baidēhīm’) caught hold of the divine feet of the goddess Parvati (as an emotional gesture of abject surrender and earnest request that one makes to an Authority in emergency situations of life and death). (4)

[Note—Sita was very desperate and vexed. It was a last chance for her to plead with and please the goddess to intercede on her behalf and fulfill her wishes of marrying Lord Ram, because later in the day and the day following her fate would be sealed for all times to come. If something was to be done by the goddess, then it must be done today before it is too late. This answers the urgency in her pleas and demeanours.

The goddess is supposed to be all-knowing and omniscient. Being so, it would be superfluous and irrelevant to tell her in articulate terms what was in Sita’s mind and heart. The lesson we draw from this particular event is that one must pray to one’s Lord God silently, with lips closed because the Lord God knows very well what his devotee wants. Then, everything else should be left in the hands of the Lord God, giving the latter a free hand to decide what is good for his devoted worshipper. The odds are stacked high in favour of a positive decision by the Lord, a decision that would be for the long-term good of the worshipper.

So, after saying her prayers, Sita clasped the holy feet of the goddess to surrender completely to the goddess’ wish. Now it was up to the deity to listen to and answer the prayers and pleadings of her devotee. This happens quickly as we shall read below. This is another lesson that we learn: if our prayers are sincere and from the inner depth of the heart, then not only we do not need to say our wishes to the Lord God in clear words as if the latter does not know them but we must be sure that our prayers are being heard, considered and answered by the Lord God with a positive attitude.

Sita did not articulate her wish to marry Lord Ram out of shyness. Remember that her companions were closely watching her. If the goddess is all-knowing and all-pervading, she is bound to know what Sita thinks and feels.

By citing the instance of gods, humans and great sages finding bliss and happiness by worshipping the holy feet of the goddess (refer: Chaupai line no. 2 above), Sita implies that since she too has worshipped the goddess’ feet and has surrendered herself at the feet, the goddess must honour her reputation by making her blissful and happy too.]

बिनय प्रेम बस भई भवानी । खसी माल मूरति मुसुकानी ॥ ५ ॥

सादर सियँ प्रसादु सिर धरेऊ । बोली गौरि हरषु हियँ भरेऊ ॥ ६ ॥

binaya prēma basa bha’ī bhavānī. khasī māla mūrati musukānī. 5.

sādara siyam’ prasādu sira dharē’ū. bōlī gauri haraṣu hiyam’ bharē’ū. 6.

Goddess Bhavani (Parvati; the divine consort of Bhava, Lord Shiva’s another name) was extremely pleased by the humble and polite prayers of Sita as well as the love and affection that she showed towards the goddess¹.

The garland around her image slid down (as a token of the goddess offering it as ‘Prasad’ or divine blessing to Sita who was lying at her feet)². And the image of the goddess smiled benevolently³. (5)

Sita devotedly and with a lot of reverence picked up this Prasad (the blessing of the goddess in a token form of the garland) and put it on her head as a mark of the greatest respect towards the goddess, as well as a welcoming sign that the goddess is pleased with her.

Then, Gauri (goddess Parvati) spoke with a cheerful heart. (6)

[Note—¹Three forms of devotion and worship ('Bhakti') are depicted here in the incident of Sita praying to goddess Parvati—(i) physical worship by Sita falling at the feet of the goddess and clasping them reverentially; (ii) worship by speech that Sita does when she offers oral prayers; and (iii) subtle form of devotion that manifested in the way of Sita having great affection for the goddess and her praying to her silently without actually expressing her desires.

²An image does not move in physical terms. But a consecrated image of a deity is supposed to harbour life in a very subtle and sublime form. Though the consecrated image of a revered god or goddess is made of worldly material things such as a stone or wood or metal, but it is not lifeless and gross like the sample kept in a museum. This image in a temple has the relevant deity's divine qualities present in it in a very subtle and atomic form. Even as the actual deity is invisible to the eye, these qualities in the consecrated image are also invisible to the lay person's eyes, and under the veil of delusions he begins to see this image as being as lifeless and gross as the sample in a museum. But for devotees, for the wise and learned ones, this image is a manifested form of the revered deity—and if the devotee's devotion, faith, belief and conviction is firm and unwavering, then this very idol begins to exhibit all signs of divinity that the original deity does.

Hence, since Sita had the greatest faith in goddess Parvati and saw her presence in the image or the idol in the temple, this image rewarded her faith and conviction by exhibiting signs of life—giving Sita the garland, and beginning to speak.

There is a remarkable point to note here: the goddess' words were heard by Sita as well as by her companions—refer: Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 236 below. It was Sita who had prayed, and none of her companions. But when the goddess spoke everyone heard it. This proves that Sita was not hallucinating; she was not hearing imaginary voices under delusions.

The physical incident of falling of the garland was interpreted by Sita correctly as a blessing by the goddess and a sign that the latter is pleased with her. For the rest of her companions it must have been a mere coincidence that the garland snapped and fell down at the instant when Sita was lying at the feet of the goddess, though it was an auspicious sign.

³The same logic applies here. The image of the goddess was crafted in a way that it had a perpetual smile on her face. But for Sita, this smile assumed a significant contour and delivered a special message—something her companions could not decipher. So while Sita could actually see the goddess smile, the rest of the maids did not see anything significant.

Later on in the story we shall read that when Sita prayed to the holy river Ganges for the well-being of her self, Lord Ram and Laxman while they were on their way to the forest, the deity of the river replied to her and blessed her. Refer: Ram

Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 103—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 104.

In Tulsidas' book "Geetawali Ramayan" also we read that Parvati has blessed Sita in passionate term, telling her that all her wishes would be fulfilled. Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 72, stanza nos. 2-3.]

सुनु सिय सत्य असीस हमारी । पूजिहि मन कामना तुझारी ॥ ७ ॥
नारद बचन सदा सुचि साचा । सो बरु मिलिहि जाहिं मनु राचा ॥ ८ ॥

sunu siya satya asisa hamārī. pūjīhi mana kāmanā tumhārī. 7.
nārada bacana sadā suci sācā. sō baru milihi jāhiṁ manu rācā. 8.

The Goddess said—'Listen Sita to my blessings. I honour your wishes. (7)

Sage Narad's words are always true (and I have experience of it)¹. Hence, be certain that you will get the groom whom you wish in your heart². (8)

[Note—¹Parvati was told by Narad that Shiva is destined to be her husband, and inspite of all odds stacked high against this prophesy, it turned out to be true. This entire episode is narrated in Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 66—to Doha no. 98.

Therefore, goddess Parvati has had a first hand experience of how Narad's words come true. In the case of Sita, Narad had also foretold that she would be married to Lord Ram, and hence it can't go wrong. Sita was aware of this prophesy of Narad—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 229.

One thing worth noting here is that goddess Parvati is blessing Sita to reassure her that she need not worry at all because notwithstanding the goddess' blessings, her wishes of being betrothed to Lord Ram is bound to come true as it has already been prophesised by Narad, and the words of this sage never go in vain because he always speaks the truth.

²Remember: Sita had not expressed her wishes in articulate words before the goddess, and therefore goddess reciprocated her sentiments by also not disclosing what she has accepted, except to say that she (the goddess) honours Sita's wishes. This was a privileged communication between the devotee and her deity.]

छं०. मनु जाहिं राचेउ मिलिहि सो बरु सहज सुंदर साँवरो । १ ।
करुना निधान सुजान सीलु सनेहु जानत रावरो ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

manu jāhiṁ rācē'u milihi sō baru sahaja sundara sāṁvarō. 1.
karunā nidhāna sujāna sīlu sanēhu jānata rāvarō. 2.

Be sure and rest assured that you will get the groom of your choice; the prince who is naturally handsome and dark-complexioned with whom your heart has found

fondness, with whom you are enamoured, is sure to be your groom. (Chanda line no. 1)

He (the groom, Lord Ram) is an ocean of grace and mercy, and is indeed wise and a thorough gentleman. He is well aware of your unstinted love and affection for him, as well as your virtuous qualities.’ (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—Sita had prayed to goddess Parvati and had said that “the goddess is all-knowing as she resides in the heart of all living beings, and therefore Sita does not wish to tell her desire to the goddess in articulate words”. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 above that precede this Chanda.

Since the goddess lives in the heart, she has become aware that Sita has already enshrined the marvelous dark-complexioned image of Lord Ram in her temple-like heart, and has shut its doors so that no one can steal this image from her and also to ensure that no other image can come in to replace Lord Ram’s image. This is why the goddess has clearly said that “Sita will get the dark-complexioned prince, whose image she has so lovingly installed in her heart, as her groom”.

What was the necessity for the goddess to outline the important qualities of Lord Ram? Well, Sita had fallen head-over-heels in love of Lord Ram, but she had no way to ascertain what sort of a man he was, what character he had, what his hidden qualities were. That means she may have had certain doubts deep inside her mind. Hence, the all-knowing goddess was aware of this too, so she prudently decided to remove them once and for all by expressly telling Sita that her groom was a thorough gentleman, gracious, merciful and wise. He was all-knowing and omniscient as well—because he knew that she (Sita) loved him. This last statement was intended to assure Sita that she can expect reciprocal affection even after marriage.

An interesting thing that we note in the events in the garden is that while Sita has expressed her clear desire to have Lord Ram as her groom, which is clear from goddess Parvati’s assurance to her to this effect in these verses, Lord Ram has neither here nor later said anything of this kind. When the Lord returns to sage Vishwamitra with the flowers that the two brothers had plucked from the garden for his worship rituals, the Lord has simply told the sage everything that happened in the garden, without making any specific request or prayer to the sage to bless him so that the desire of his heart is fulfilled like Sita had prayed to Parvati, though of course it is undeniable that even Lord Ram had wanted to marry Sita. But in spite of the Lord not saying anything expressly, the wise sage could read what was in the Lord’s mind. So, the sage blessed the Lord, saying that his wishes would be fulfilled. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 237.

Here, Sita is like the ‘Jiva’, the living being, and Lord Ram of course is the ‘Parmatma’, the Supreme Being. A time comes in life when the Jiva and the Parmatma are face to face with each other. The Jiva should then recognise his or her Lord; if this chance is lost then it is lost for good. The Parmatma welcomes the Jiva with an open arm, but the Jiva must have a burning desire to meet the Lord and surrender him/herself to him for the rest of his/her life. In other words, it is the Jiva who has to step forward to express a sincere desire to attain the Lord, and while the Lord is welcoming he must make sure that this desire is honest and truthful.

In the case of Sita, Lord Ram had tested her will and sincerity before actually accepting her by breaking the bow. First in the garden itself the Lord observed her trance-like state as soon as they met, then he observed how she was looking back over her shoulders to have a last glimpse of the Lord, then the way she begged goddess

Parvati to bless her. Later on, at the time of the actual breaking of the bow, the Lord had waited for some time to closely observe the emotions of Sita and her facial expressions, and when he determined that she was on the verge of collapse if he delayed a little longer, he grabbed the bow and broke it in an instant—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261 that wonderfully describe those delicate moments of make-or-break.

What conclusion do we draw from this? Well, the inference is clear: If the creature, the living being, is sincere in his heart to attain the Lord, he should be rest assured that his desires would be fulfilled. But at the same time he should be prepared to pass a tough test. It's not possible to cheat upon the Supreme Lord like the way one cheats the world by external pretensions and use of clever words.]

एहि भँति गौरि असीस सुनि सिय सहित हियँ हरषीं अली । ३ ।
तुलसी भवानिहि पूजि पुनि पुनि मुदित मन मंदिर चली ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi bhām̐ti gauri asīsa suni siya sahita hiyam̐ haraṣīm alī. 3.
tulasī bhavānihi pūji puni puni mudita mana mandira calī. 4.

Hearing this blessing of Gauri (i.e. goddess Parvati), Sita and her friends felt very glad in their hearts (because it was now certain that their cherished wish would be surely be fulfilled). (Chanda line no. 3)

Tulsidas says Sita worshipped and paid her obeisance to the goddess repeatedly, and after that she headed back to her palace with a lot of cheer and bliss in her heart. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Tulsidas was a very clever, sagacious and erudite author. He was expert with words, and crafted his narration in such a way that at many places one can interpret a stanza in different ways.

For instance, line no. 2 of this stanza has the word “Tulsidas” so strategically placed that besides the meaning given above this line may also mean—“Tulsidas joins Sita in repeatedly thanking and worshipping goddess Parvati, and pleading with her that Sita gets the dark-complexioned groom. After the prayers, Sita headed for her palace with a cheerful heart”.]

सो०. जानि गौरि अनुकूल सिय हिय हरषु न जाइ कहि ।
मंजुल मंगल मूल बाम अंग फरकन लगे ॥ २३६ ॥
sōraṭhā.

jāni gauri anukūla siya hiya haraṣu na jā'i kahi.
mañjula maṅgala mūla bāma aṅga pharakana lagē. 236.

Realizing that goddess Gauri (Parvati) is favourable towards her, the happiness, the contentedness and bliss in Sita's heart was so immense that it cannot be described or spoken of in words.

As a sign of auspicious future, the organs on the left side of her body began fluttering. (Sortha/Doha no. 236)

[Note—This Sortha, which is a sort of Doha, concludes the narration of Sita coming to the garden to offer worship to goddess Parvati to request the latter to grant her a suitable groom, and returning home with a bag-full of fulfilled wishes by way of an assurance from the goddess that she will get a husband whom she desires.

What a wonderful way of winding up the worship ritual—a devotee coming to his or her deity with an empty bag of hopes and expectations, and returning with this bag filled according to his or her wishes!]

चौ०. हृदयं सराहत सीय लोनाई । गुर समीप गवने दोउ भाई ॥ १ ॥
राम कहा सबु कौसिक पाहीं । सरल सुभाउ छुअत छल नाहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hdayam̐ sarāhata siya lōnāī. gura samīpa gavanē dō'u bhāī. 1.
rāma kahā sabu kausika pāhīm. sarala subhā'u chu'ata chala nāhīm. 2.

Lauding and extolling the bewitching beauty and the extraordinary charm of Sita in their hearts, the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) returned to their Guru (sage Vishwamitra). (1)

Lord Ram did not hide anything from Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra), and narrated everything as it happened to him. This is because Ram had no guilt in his conscience and was free from any mental taints. (2)

[Note—These two lines are very important for removing any doubts in the mind of the reader about the character of the two brothers. For a modern man who knows only the grosser aspects of creation, the incident of the garden is like a fairy-tale romance between a prince and a princess wherein both fall in love with each other. Though it is undeniable that it did happen, but there wasn't an element of physical passion and lust in it. It was a divine love—it was an eternal love between two souls that were separated by the physical world; it was a reiteration of an eternal bond between two individuals that had existed earlier also, and that went beyond the present life. This is proved by the fact that sage Narad had already predicted that Sita would be betrothed to Lord Ram—refer: (i) Doha no. 229, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 236.

Sita had known this, but what about Lord Ram? By telling everything to sage Vishwamitra the Lord came out clean; he had nothing to hide; there was no deceit. Only when a man's heart is free of moral corruption will he gather courage to tell his elders about such personal experiences as witnessed by the Lord in the garden which, on the face of it, smacks of worldly grossness and passion. Ordinarily a boy would make all sorts of attempts to hide such an incident, but the two brothers had no taint in their pure heart, and therefore disclosed everything to the sage voluntarily.

There is another important reason for telling the Guru whatever happened in the garden. Lord Ram had subtly wanted to inform the sage that he is enamoured with Sita and would prefer if things turn favourable and he is given a chance to marry her. This message was important because it would give the sage a free hand to find a chance where he would order Lord Ram to break the bow and marry Sita. This was a

very sensitive matter of the heart, and a personal thing as well. The Lord did not expect the sage to openly ask him if he would like to marry Sita; that would look very indecent and improper. The Lord also knew about the sage's immense mystical powers—so by subtly informing him that he has fallen in love with Sita and would welcome a chance to marry her, the Lord gave a clear signal to the sage to employ his mystical powers to maneuver things in his favour.

We have already read how Sita had prayed to Parvati to make it possible for her to marry Lord Ram. Sita knew about the great powers that the goddess possessed, besides the fact that she was the divine consort of Lord Shiva whose bow was to be broken. Thus, if Parvati wished she can turn things to favour Sita. This is exactly what Lord Ram might have thought while disclosing his experience to sage Vishwamitra—he knew that the sage had mighty powers and if he wanted he can make things happen in such a way that Sita is married to the Lord.

The sage was very wise and prudent. We will read soon that during the bow breaking event, when nobody could as much as move the bow an inch, sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to get up and break the bow. This helped to maintain decorum and dignity of the Lord; it showed to the assembly that Lord Ram had broken the bow only on the instructions of the great sage Vishwamitra, and that otherwise he wasn't eying to marry Sita. This sequence of events pre-empted all tongues from wagging and spreading a scandal. After all, once the sage had given the order, Lord Ram had no choice but to obey it. The Lord could not say 'no', for it would be utter disobedience of the sage and something unthinkable. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254.]

सुमन पाइ मुनि पूजा कीन्ही । पुनि असीस दुहु भाइन्ह दीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥

सुफल मनोरथ होहुँ तुज्जारे । रामु लखनु सुनि भए सुखारे ॥ ४ ॥

sumana pā'i muni pūjā kīnhī. puni asīsa duhu bhā'inha dīnhī. 3.

suphala manōratha hōhum' tumhārē. rāmu lakhanu suni bha'ē sukhārē. 4.

When the sage received the flowers brought by the two brothers, he performed his worship ritual. After that he blessed the two brothers. (3)

The sage blessed them by saying 'let your hopes be fulfilled'. Hearing these words of the sage, Lord Ram and Laxman felt very happy and contented. (4)

[Note—The two brothers had gone to the royal garden to bring flowers for the sage. So when they returned, the sage completed his worship.

At the time of his worship the sage requested the deity he worshipped to fulfill the wishes of the two brothers because he was very obliged to them. The reason was that they had helped the sage complete his fire sacrifice by eliminating the demons who were constantly defiling it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210. So the sage wished to reward them, and what greater reward can he give them than fulfilling their wish.

Now, an interesting development has occurred here. The sage has blessed both the brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled. Of course we know that the wish of Lord Ram was to marry Sita; but what about Laxman? Well, Laxman was Lord Ram's younger brother, and he always respected Ram and his wishes. So there is no

question of Laxman having any secret thoughts about Sita. All he wished was that his elder brother Ram could marry Sita so that he will also have a chance to see her and keep company with them for the rest of his life.

But it is also possible that Laxman had harboured an inner desire to marry along with Lord Ram. Though it was impossible for Laxman to marry Sita because his elder brother Lord Ram should be married first, there was all possibility that Laxman could be married to one of Sita's sisters. Laxman guessed, and guessed correctly, that if Sita is so beautiful then her sister would be also equally beautiful. As we shall see later on, this is exactly what happened: Laxman was married to Sita's sister named Urmila—refer: Baal Kand, line no. 1-2 of Chanda stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 325.

Like goddess Parvati blessing Sita that her wishes would be fulfilled, sage Vishwamitra also blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled. Is this not a remarkable play of Providence and Fate that both Sita and the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, are blessed almost simultaneously that their wishes would be fulfilled?]

करि भोजनु मुनिबर बिग्यानी । लगे कहन कछु कथा पुरानी ॥ ५ ॥
बिगत दिवसु गुरु आयसु पाई । संध्या करन चले दोउ भाई ॥ ६ ॥

kari bhōjanu munibara bigyānī. lagē kahana kachu kathā purānī. 5.
bigata divasu guru āyasu pā'ī. sandhyā karana calē dō'u bhā'ī. 6.

After taking their meals, the learned sage began to tell some story from the Purans (ancient mythological history of the Hindus) to pass time¹. (5)

At the end of the day, when twilight came, the two brothers took the Guru's permission and went out to perform their evening worship called 'Sandhya'. (6)

[Note—¹This was a standard practice with sages. After performing worship and taking their meals, they used to take rest for a while, and then in the afternoon hours they used to preach and listen to discourses revolving around ancient scriptures. This session continued till the time of sunset when they would perform their evening worship.]

प्राची दिसि ससि उयउ सुहावा । सिय मुख सरिस देखि सुखु पावा ॥ ७ ॥
बहुरि बिचारु कीन्ह मन माहीं । सीय बदन सम हिमकर नाही ॥ ८ ॥

prācī disī sasi uya'u suhāvā. siya mukha sarisa dēkhi sukhu pāvā. 7.
bahuri bicāru kīnha mana māhīm. sīya badana sama himakara nāhīm. 8.

At that time a beautiful moon rose in the eastern direction (on the horizon in the eastern sky). Seeing that it resembled the face of Sita in its charm and beauty, Lord Ram felt happy and cheerful. (7)

But he had second thoughts in his heart: the ‘Himkar’ (the moon) was no match for Sita’s face (or Sita’s body—‘*sīya badana*’; ‘*Siya*’ = Sita’s, and ‘*Badan*’ = body, meaning here her full form). (8)

[Note—The moon had a full disc, and hence it was a full-moon night. The disc of a full moon has been traditionally used as a metaphor for beauty and bliss. So when Lord Ram first saw the moon he remembered Sita’s face and likened it with her. But he immediately changed his thoughts when he started analyzing and comparing them. Though apparently the moon looked astoundingly beautiful, but it had some negative qualities in it, and therefore it would be inappropriate to compare it with the immaculacy of Sita.

What are some of the inherent defects with the moon? They are enumerated in the verses following below.

It should be carefully noted here that only the face of a woman of a noble family is visible to the onlooker as she is expected to keep the remaining part covered by her wearing apparel. This is a sign of modesty and good behaviour. So was the case with Sita; only her face was visible. When the poet says ‘body’ he means the face, and if the face is beautiful one deduces that the rest of her form would also be in the likeness of the face—because the ‘face is the mirror of the person’.]

दो०. जनमु सिंधु पुनि बंधु बिषु दिन मलीन सकलंक ।
सिय मुख समता पाव किमि चंदु बापुरो रंक ॥ २३७ ॥

dōhā.

janamu sindhu puni bandhu biṣu dina malīna sakalaṅka.
siya mukha samatā pāva kimi candu bāpurō raṅka. 237.

‘The moon has its birth from the ocean; it has poison as his sibling; its shine dims and vanishes from sight during the daytime; and its disc is marred by dark spots which are tantamount to some form of scar on its reputation.

Say, how can this poor and wretched moon ever be compared with the perfectly immaculate face of Sita? (Doha no. 237)

[Note—Legend has it that the moon was born when the celestial ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal life. One of the things that were produced by this churning was a pot of severe poison known as Halaahal. Therefore, the moon has this poison as his sibling.

Though wonderful during the darkness of the night, its glory fades during the day under the more brilliant shine of the sun. This is not a fit comparison with Sita because she would stand out in a crowd as the finest lady on earth. No other lady would be able to eclipse Sita’s beauty and charm with her own.

The face of the moon has dark spots whereas Sita’s face is perfectly clean and spotless, and shining radiantly.

Hence, to compare the fullness of the beauty of Sita’s face with the disc of the moon would be wrong and faulty. In the verses following herein below, some of the inherent faults with the moon are given, which would show why the comparison is inappropriate.]

चौ०. घटइ बढइ बिरहिनि दुखदाई । ग्रसइ राहु निज संधिहिं पाई ॥ १ ॥
कोक सोकप्रद पंकज द्रोही । अवगुन बहुत चंद्रमा तोही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ghaṭa'i baṛha'i birahini dukhadāī. grasa'i rāhu nija sandhihim pāī. 1.
kōka sōkaprada paṅkaja drōhī. avaguna bahuta candramā tōhī. 2.

The moon waxes and wanes throughout its life¹, its appearance gives a lot of emotional pain (torment) to those who are love-struck and separated from their beloved², and is devoured by the demon named Rahu when it crosses its path³. (1)

It torments the 'Koka' (or 'Chakravaak', the ruddy goose)⁴, and it is inimical to the lotus because the latter shrivels and withers on appearance of the moon⁵.

Therefore, oh Moon, you have a lot of defects or shortcomings⁶. (2)

[Note—¹The face of the moon does not constantly remain rounded—except for one night, it waxes and wanes for the rest of the month. It means that its beauty is unsteady and it goes on becoming lesser each night till it is completely surrounded by darkness on the dark-moon night. When the moon is personalised, this is used to indicate that its beauty and shine are reduced as it grows older, and finally its glories vanish on the dark-moon night. Nothing of the sort happens with Sita—the radiance and youthfulness of her face is ever so constant and brilliant.

There is an ancient story in the Purans about the face of the moon waxing and waning. It is narrated in Mahabharat, Shalya Parva, in the conversation between Vaishmpaayan and Janmanjaye.

It is briefly as follows—Twenty-seven daughters of Prajaapti Daksha were married to the Moon God. They were called 'Nakshatra' or stars that shine around the moon. Out of them, Rohini was the most beautiful. That is why the Moon God spent the most of his time with her. The rest of the wives complained to their father, Daksha, about this partisan attitude of the Moon God who was expected to treat all of them equally.

Daksha summoned the Moon and requested him to treat all the wives equally and spend equal time with all of them. But the Moon did not pay heed, and so the other wives complained to their father Daksha once again that the Moon God is not obeying his instructions. Daksha once again summoned Moon and finally ordered him to treat all his wives equally, otherwise Daksha would curse him. But the Moon God still did not pay heed.

Angry, Daksha then created 'Yakshma' or the disease known as Tuberculosis. Yakshma entered the body of Moon. This disease began to eat into the innards of the Moon God, and over time the latter's glory and radiance began to fade. Since the Moon God was also responsible for nourishing herbs and medicinal plants, the latter's growth was stunted. Those which managed to germinate somehow had no taste or curative powers.

The Gods were alarmed as this would lead to annihilation of creation as no diseases would be cured, and people and animals would die like in the plague. So they approached Daksha and pleaded with him to neutralize the effects of his curse on the Moon God, for otherwise all the medicinal herbs would be destroyed.

Daksha replied—‘If the Moon begins to treat all his wives, the Nakshatras, equally, and takes a bath in the river Saraswati on an auspicious occasion as a token of repentance, then his curse would be nullified and he would regain his lost health and glory. But my curse cannot be permanently eliminated, so the Moon would be subjected to decrease in his radiance for half the month and increase for the next half. This will also help to keep him reminded about his duty towards all his wives, the Nakshatras.

Let him (Moon God) go to the shores of the western ocean where river Saraswati meets the ocean, and worship Lord Shiva there. This is the only way he will regain his lost glory and radiance.’

The Moon God, also known as ‘Som’, went to the designated pilgrim site known as Prabhaas Kshetra on the night of Amaawasya (dark moon night), and performed penance as advised by the Gods. Then he began to gradually regain his radiance till it reached its zenith on the full moon night known as Purnima.

When the moon attains its full health and vigour on the full moon night, the Gods begin to draw Amrit or the elixir of life that is stored in the body of the moon. This is why from the next day the moon begins to be reduced in shine and glory till everything stored is exhausted and it becomes dark. Once again, due to Lord Shiva’s blessings, the moon begins to regain its glory till it reaches full on the full moon night.

This is a continuous cycle of creation and destruction as envisioned in the Purans in a symbolic manner. This also explains why the moon waxes and wanes constantly.

²Whereas the moon provides emotional support to love-struck couples who are together, it torments those who are separated. Hence, its value as an enhancer of love, provider of bliss and happiness, and an intensifier of emotions is doubtful. On the other hand, Sita always gives bliss and happiness to all when she is around; her presence is equally welcomed by those who are happy as well as those who are tormented.

³The moon is eclipsed when it is devoured by the mythical demon named Rahu. But no one dare eclipse the glory and the radiance of Sita.

The story of the moon being devoured by Rahu is briefly as follows— The legend has it that Rahu was the eldest son of the demon Viprachitti and his wife Shinghikaa. His younger brothers were Ilvala, Vaataapi, Narak amongst others. When Lord Vishnu, disguised as the beautiful Mohini, was distributing the ambrosia of eternity called Amrit to the Gods during the episode of the churning of the ocean as told in the Purans, Rahu assumed the form of a God and surreptitiously entered the lines of the Gods to take this Amrit. When his cheating was discovered, Vishnu cut off his head with his weapon called the Chakra Sudarshan (a circular saw-like discus). But it so happened that before the head was severed Rahu had already drunk some Amrit, and so did not die. His head and torso became two independent entities. The former was called ‘Rahu’ and the latter ‘Ketu’.

Since the Moon God and the Sun God had betrayed him, Rahu takes revenge by devouring them periodically to satisfy his hunger. He devours them when they are in their full glory—viz. he devours the Moon God during the full moon night, and the Sun God only during the day time, either when the sun rises or during its journey across the sky, but never at sunset when the sun is already losing its radiance and is on the decline.

Again, since the head of Rahu was severed from the neck, hence both the Moon God and the Sun God re-emerge from the lower end of the head after they have been devoured by the mouth of Rahu. This is why the moon and the sun appear to be getting gradually cut-off from view from one end of their discs, symbolizing their gradually entering the mouth of Rahu as the latter begins to devour them. Then for some time they remain dark or obstructed from view symbolizing the period when they remain inside the mouth of Rahu. Finally, they gradually regain their original shape symbolizing their ejection from the lower end of Rahu's neck where it was severed from the trunk.

The story of Rahu appears in Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran, Chapter 8, Canto 9.

Actually however, the phenomenon of the lunar eclipse is due to the earth's shadow falling on the moon's surface when it comes in the path of this shadow during its revolution around the earth. This scientific fact was known to the great Rishis (sages and seers) who had preached the Upanishads, and it is clearly mentioned in Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 74 of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition which says "When the moon is said to be devoured by the demon Rahu (the severed head of a demon) during the lunar eclipse, people start offering worship, making sacrifices, doing penances, taking purifying baths, giving alms and making charities, observing austerities etc. so that the Moon God is freed from the demon's curse, but all their deeds are a waste of effort and done in utter ignorance because there is no such event, and the darkness on the moon's disc is actually a shadow of the earth falling upon it. This shadow would go away on its own when the time comes even if no such hue and cry is raised by worried worshippers. So it is a height of stupidity and profound ignorance to even think that the Moon God has been cursed or is being devoured, and by doing so many religious deeds it can be freed from its torments."

Similarly, the solar eclipse is caused when the moon comes in between the shiny surface of the sun and the view from earth, thereby blocking the former's view from the latter's surface.

The elongated torso of Rahu came to known as 'Ketu' and it is recognized as the comet in modern science. That is why sighting of the comet is regarded as a bad omen.

Both Rahu and Ketu are placed amongst the nine planets. They represent the two nodal points where the celestial equator cuts the ecliptic.

In iconography, Rahu is depicted as just a head or even as a snake's hood.

⁴The male and female birds known as 'Chakravaak' or the ruddy goose stay together in the day, but as soon as night appears they separate from one another. They are not disturbed by the scorching sun during the daytime, but the wretched moon, though reputed to be cool and calm, is so unbearable for this bird that as soon as the moon appears in the sky they separate from one another. In other words, instead of creating an environment wherein two lovers come together, this fellow moon is a creator of nuisance so much so that its mere appearance terrifies the Chakravaak and the couple separate in the fear that their union would be disrupted by the moon as it may harm one of them and cause the partner's death. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 29.

⁵The moon also acts as a nuisance for the lotus. The lotus opens its petals at day-break and blooms, but as soon as night appears and the moon rises on the horizon the lotus closes. In other words, the lotus does not like to see the moon; it hates the moon.

How ironical it is! The harmless bird Chakravaak is tormented by the moon forcing the couple (the male and the female birds) to separate, and the lotus flower which is loved by all is also sneered at by the moon, forcing it to shut down its petals.

⁶There are three types of creatures in this world: those who live on land, those who live in the sky, and those who live in water. The moon does not refrain from tormenting all of them. It torments lovers who are separated—an instance of its hate for those who live on land. It torments the bird Chakravaak—an instance of its hate for those who live in the sky. It torments the lotus—an instance of its hate for those who live in water.

The moon, therefore, is a source of grief and pain to all sorts of living beings. This is not true with Sita—whose mere presence spreads cheer, happiness, joy and bliss. So, it is absolutely wrong and incredulous to even think of drawing a parallel between the two, Sita and the moon.]

बैदेही मुख पटतर दीन्हे । होइ दोषु बड़ अनुचित कीन्हे ॥ ३ ॥

सिय मुख छबि बिधु ब्याज बखानी । गुर पहिं चले निसा बड़ि जानी ॥ ४ ॥

baidēhī mukha paṭatara dīnhē. hō'i dōṣu baṛa anucita kīnhē. 3.

siya mukha chabi bidhu byāja bakhānī. gura pahim calē nisā baḍi jānī. 4.

Comparing the moon with the face of Vaidehi (Sita) would therefore be very wrong and highly inappropriate. One would not like to be blamed for such foolishness (and surely I, Ram, would not commit this mistake).’ (3)

Thus, finding in the moon a pretext for lauding the magnificent charm and beauty of Sita’s face or countenance, and holding that she is far better than the Moon God himself, Lord Ram returned to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) because it was getting late in the night. (4)

[Note—To whom was Lord Ram speaking? Well, he was speaking to his younger brother Laxman. Remember: the two brothers had nothing to hide from each other. This is proved on two earlier occasions—(i) when Lord Ram first saw Sita in the garden, he told Laxman briefly about her: Refer:- from Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231 which clearly endorse this point; and (ii) when the two brothers together told sage Vishwamitra everything about their meeting with Sita: Refer:- Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237.

Again, Lord Ram tells his inner thoughts to Laxman in Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 238. We shall be reading it below. We shall discover that on this occasion, Laxman has answered to his brother’s emotional outpourings.

Laxman had kept quiet on the earlier occasion in the garden and had let Ram do the talking. Similarly here too Laxman quietly listened to the emotional outbursts of his elder brother.

Verse no. 4 says that “it was late in the night”—this shows that Lord Ram has spent quite a bit of time gazing at the moon and thinking of Sita, so love-struck was he.

Another reason for being late in the night was that first the two brothers had performed the evening worship known as ‘Sandhya’ which is best done after sunset. It

must have taken some time. Then they sat down and begin to gaze at the full moon, so wonderful it looked in the sky. It was then that Lord Ram begins to think of Sita, and must have been so lost in his thoughts that he forgot how time passed.]

करि मुनि चरन सरोज प्रनामा । आयसु पाइ कीन्ह बिश्रामा ॥ ५ ॥
 बिगत निसा रघुनायक जागे । बंधु बिलोकि कहन अस लागे ॥ ६ ॥
 उयउ अरुन अवलोकहु ताता । पंकज कोक लोक सुखदाता ॥ ७ ॥
 बोले लखनु जोरि जुग पानी । प्रभु प्रभाउ सूचक मृदु बानी ॥ ८ ॥

kari muni carana sarōja pranāmā. āyasu pā'i kīnha biśrāmā. 5.
 bigata nisā raghunāyaka jāgē. bandhu bilōki kahana asa lāgē. 6.
 uya'u aruna avalōkahu tātā. paṅkaja kōka lōka sukhadātā. 7.
 bōlē lakhanu jōri juga pānī. prabhu prabhā'u sūcaka mṛdu bānī. 8.

After returning to their Guru's place, the brothers bowed at the lotus-like feet of the sage. When the sage ordered them, they retired for the night¹. (5)
 At the end of the night, Raghunaayak (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty) woke up. When he saw his brother Laxman, he began to speak as follows—(6)

--- 'Oh dear brother! Look, the sun has risen. It is a provider of cheer and happiness to the 'Koka' (the bird Chakravaak) as well as to the lotus². (7)

Laxman joined the palms of his hands as a token gesture of respect and said politely—'Oh Lord! They (the bird Chakravaak and the lotus) stand for your glory and potentials³. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman had wished to massage the feet of their guru, sage Vishwamitra, as a token of their service for the guru which is a standard practice for disciples. They had done this earlier also—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 226. But on that occasion it was not late in the night as it is on this present occasion. So the Guru ordered them to go to take rest immediately.

²Refer explanation appended above to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Ram has not forgotten the two instances he had cited the previous night—the Chakravaak and the lotus. So he repeats it again. This shows that during the night he was thinking of Sita all the time.

But this time, Laxman cut him short; he interjected and used these two examples as metaphors to say how they stand for Lord Ram's own glory and portend victory over adversaries in the battle of the bow to gain success in obtaining the hands of Sita in marriage. Let us read on and find out what Laxman says.

³It's very interesting. Laxman feared that if he did not interject and cut his lovelorn elder brother short then he would launch into another lecture on some subject related to the sun, and compare its brilliance and stunning dazzle with Sita. So, despite cutting Lord Ram's anticipated long-drawn lecture short, Laxman did not want to offend his elder brother whom he loved and respected highly. Therefore, he wisely found an excuse to politely turn the conversation away from another emotional

outburst of Ram to something that would sound encouraging to him and motivate him to keep his spirits and hopes high as his wish of marrying Sita would surely be fulfilled.

We shall now read below how Laxman has compared the rising sun and its effect on the Chakravaak as well as the lotus with the rising glory of Lord Ram and the effect his presence has or would have on his devotees. Refer: Doha no. 238—to Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 239 herein below.]

दो०. अरुनोदयं सकुचे कुमुद उडगन जोति मलीन ।
जिमि तुह्यार आगमन सुनि भए नृपति बलहीन ॥ २३८ ॥

dōhā.

arunōdayam' sakucē kumuda uḍagana jōti malīna.
jimi tumhāra āgamana suni bha'e nṛpati balahīna. 238.

With sun-rise, the lily has faded (i.e. it has closed its petals indicating lose of its vigour and glory), and the brightness of the stars have also dimmed and begun to gradually vanish altogether.

It is just like the case of your arrival (at the bow-breaking venue) that would make the assembled kings and princes shrivel up or shrink and lose their strength, valour, radiance and glory, reducing them to a lack-lusture assembly of defeated and dejected persons. (Doha no. 238)

[Note—Here, Laxman compares Lord Ram with the splendid Sun. The sun's rising in the horizon is like Lord Ram's arrival at the venue of the bow ceremony. The shriveling of the lily is like the kings and princes drooping when they see Lord Ram walking in majestically at the venue. And the fading of the stars is equivalent to decimation of the glory of all the kings and princes who would assemble at the venue.

In this assembly, Lord Ram would be like the sun which sits majestically in the sky and shines alone, eclipsing all other heavenly bodies, including the stars as well as the moon. In other words, small as well as big kings and princes, all would be decimated and trounced in the competition to break the bow. Once they see Lord Ram in their midst, they would be dejected and ashamed of themselves. The Lord's handsome personality and overbearing presence would make all of them lose confidence in themselves and be overwhelmed by an inferiority complex. Their morale would go for a toss, and even if they attempt to break the bow they would do it half-heartedly because the fear of defeat would be constantly nagging at their minds, reducing their abilities and confidence.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 241, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245 that also express the same idea.]

चौ०. नृप सब नखत करहिं उजिआरी । टारि न सकहिं चाप तम भारी ॥ १ ॥
कमल कोक मधुकर खग नाना । हरषे सकल निसा अवसाना ॥ २ ॥
ऐसेहिं प्रभु सब भगत तुह्यारे । होइहहिं टूटें धनुष सुखारे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

nṛpa saba nakhata karahim̐ uji'ārī. ṭāri na sakahim̐ cāpa tama bhārī. 1.
kamala kōka madhukara khaga nānā. haraṣē sakala nisā avasānā. 2.
aisēhim̐ prabhu saba bhagata tumhārē. hō'ihahim̐ ṭūṭēm̐ dhanuṣa sukhārē. 3.

All the assembled kings and princes are twinkling like stars. Their inconsequential light would not be able to remove the darkness symbolised by the heaviness of the bow¹. (1)

Just like the case of the lotus, the Chakravaak (ruddy goose), the honey-bees and the countless birds have become happy that the night has ended (and the sun has risen) [2], Oh Lord, all your devotees and followers would also feel extremely exhilarated and blissful when the bow is broken by you [3]². (2-3)

[Note—¹In this verse, Laxman has compared all the kings and princes who have assembled to break the bow to countless stars twinkling with feeble light in the dark night, and the darkness of the night is compared to the heaviness of the bow. These thousands of stars aren't able to remove even a bit of the darkness of the night. Similarly, even if all the princes and kings would try their hands simultaneously at lifting the bow, they would fail to move it even a fraction of an inch because the bow would prove too heavy for them. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245.

Then who or what removes the darkness of the night? The irony is that the moon is also not able to remove the darkness of the night even though it is the brightest body in the night sky. Then what removes this darkness? The obvious answer is—'it is the sun'.

Now, from this we make some interesting deductions. At the bow breaking venue, besides the kings and princes who were like the twinkling stars, there was Sita who is compared to the 'moon' by none other than Lord Ram himself. But we shall find when we reach the point of the story which describes the actual breaking of the bow that inspite of Sita's presence the 'gloom or depression represented by the darkness caused by the heaviness of the bow remained intact'. That is, her presence at the venue could do nothing to remove the cause of uncertainty of her future by making the bow light. Even as Lord Ram approaches the bow, Sita has prayed fervently to so many gods and goddesses to make the bow light, and had at last took the refuge of the mighty bow itself to plead with it to become light so that Lord Ram can lift and break it. In other words, this 'moon' could not remove the darkness represented by the heaviness of the bow.

Then we shall read that as soon as Lord Ram neared the bow and stood close to it, the bow suddenly became light as a feather. It was easily lifted by him, pulled and broken. This removed the gloom that had cast its dark shadow on Sita and the rest of her family as well as the entire city of Janakpur. So what does it signify? Well, as soon as the 'sun' represented by Lord Ram neared the darkness of the night symbolized by the bow, the darkness vanished and the bow became light as a feather. What did this 'darkness' imply? It implied gloom and depression because the stubborn heaviness of the bow would prevent anyone from breaking it and it would result in Sita remaining unmarried for life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252.

This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 240—to Doha no. 261.

Now let us examine the effect that Lord Ram's presence had on the bow. We have already read that the Lord is compared to the sun. There are three stages in the relationship between the sun and the night. (i) Everyone knows that even during the night the sun is present in the heavens, but it is present on the other side of the earth. This is the first stage in this relationship—which shows that in spite of its presence near the earth, the sun does not remove the darkness of the night. (ii) The second and third stages are closely related to each other and the latter follows the former quickly. The second stage is when the sun is below the horizon as it approaches to remove the darkness of the night. During this stage only the eastern sky is illuminated while the rest of the sky and the western horizon still remain dark. The night has not gone altogether; it still lingers on. (iii) Then we reach the third and final stage when the sun actually rises up the line of the horizon and makes its presence clear to the night sky. The darkness of the night now leaves the sky immediately, from corner to corner. Before the sun actually rises above the horizon, we can't say that the night has ended.

A similar thing has happened in the case of Lord Ram and the bow losing its heaviness when he came close to it. While the Lord was sitting on his chair amongst other guests in the assembly, it was similar to the first stage when the sun is near the earth but unable to remove its veil of darkness. Remember: The bow was placed on a raised platform specially erected for the purpose of the bow ceremony. Steps led to it. The guests sat at a distance in a circle around this special raised platform. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 240 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8, and Doha no. 244.

When sage Vishwamitra ordered him to go and break the bow and remove the darkness of gloom that had fallen on the assembly like a thick blanket of fog, Lord Ram rose from his seat. This was tantamount to the sun coming near the horizon to prepare to remove the darkness of the night. But the Lord was still below the platform where the bow was kept—like the sun still remaining below the horizon in the early hours of dawn before sunrise. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254.

Then the Lord actually stepped on the platform and came close to the bow. This was like the sun actually stepping up from below the line of the horizon and making its majestic presence visible in the sky. As soon as this happened—i.e. as soon as Lord Ram stepped up the platform and came close to the bow—it lost its heaviness. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 254; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 260; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 261.

²All the entities listed here become active as soon as the sun rises. The lotus opens, the Chakravaak couples unite, the bees start buzzing and hovering over flowers in search of nectar, and the birds start chirping and hopping as soon as the day breaks. Here, Laxman has compared them to the devotees and followers of Lord Ram. All of them would be excited and happy.

Now, who are the followers who will be glad and feel rewarded? Well, all the citizens of Janakpur had yearned that Sita be married to Lord Ram. This is abundantly clear in the narration that is described at the following places—

(i) when the two brothers had gone to visit Janakpur for the purpose of sight-seeing: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223; and

(ii) during the bow breaking ceremony itself: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240; Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that

precede Doha no. 249; Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precedes Doha no. 255; Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that precede Doha no. 262; Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 286 (that says that besides the citizens, king Janak and Sita too found extreme happiness when Lord Ram broke the bow); and Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 263 as well as Doha no. 318 (that say that the queen mother and her companions were happy too).

Not only them, but the rest of the world, including the gods in the heaven were also very happy—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 240; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 265; (iv) Doha no. 285; (v) Doha no. 324.]

उयउ भानु बिनु श्रम तम नासा । दुरे नखत जग तेजु प्रकासा ॥ ४ ॥

रबि निज उदय ब्याज रघुराया । प्रभु प्रतापु सब नृपन्ह दिखाया ॥ ५ ॥

uya'u bhānu binu śrama tama nāsā. durē nakhata jaga tēju prakāsā. 4.
rabi nija udaya byāja raghurāyā. prabhu pratāpu saba nrpanha dikhāyā. 5.

The sun, as soon as it rises, removes the darkness of the night without making any effort; it is spontaneous and natural. The stars have gone into hiding, and light (of happiness and cheer) has spread throughout the world. (4)

The splendid sun has used its rising as a sign to reveal to all the kings and princes about your brilliant glories and excellent virtues. (5)

[Note—These observations of Laxman have been endorsed later on in the narration when the assembly gathered at the venue of the bow breaking ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245 which says that “when the assembled kings saw Lord Ram in their midst, all of them felt defeated in their hearts just like the stars lose their shine as soon as the sun rises”.

The glory and potentials of Lord Ram have been consistently compared with the sun in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer—(i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 31; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

तव भुज बल महिमा उदघाटी । प्रगटी धनु बिघटन परिपाटी ॥ ६ ॥

बंधु बचन सुनि प्रभु मुसुकाने । होइ सुचि सहज पुनीत नहाने ॥ ७ ॥

नित्यक्रिया करि गुरु पहिं आए । चरन सरोज सुभग सिर नाए ॥ ८ ॥

tava bhuja bala mahimā udaghāṭī. pragaṭī dhanu bigrhaṭana paripāṭī. 6.
bandhu bacana suni prabhu musukānē. hō'i suci sahaja punīta nahānē. 7.
nityakriyā kari guru pahim ā'ē. carana sarōja subhaga sira nā'ē. 8.

The incident of the bow-breaking ceremony has been designed by the creator as a valley from which the sun representing your valour, strength of arms and glory would rise up to illuminate the rest of the world. In other words, the creator has devised this simple means to highlight and introduce to the world the might of the strength of your

arms, your splendid glory and your majestic personality, as well as to establish you as the mightiest warrior on earth.¹ (6)

Lord Ram smiled upon hearing the words of his brother². Then he performed his ablution to clean himself though he is always clean and without any (mental, emotional and physical) corruption. (7)

After finishing his daily routine, Lord Ram (and Laxman) came back to their Guru and bowed their graceful heads at the lotus-like feet of their Guru (as a token of showing respect to him). (8)

[Note—¹Everything that happens in this mortal world is determined by the creator. He wished to tell the world about Lord Ram's arrival to eliminate the formidable demons. So he devised a clever ruse of the bow-breaking ceremony. This would make it possible to bring together under one roof all the great warriors and kings and princes of the world of that time. Even the gods and demons had come there to participate or just to witness the bow ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 251.

If Lord Ram achieves some miraculous success in this assembly then there would be no need to devise other elaborate methods to establish him and his glory on earth.

According to legend, even the king of demons, Ravana of Lanka, had come there. But he did not attempt to approach the bow but had surreptitiously sneaked out and went home.]

²Lord Ram smiled at the clever way in which Laxman had interpreted the things, and how he has subtly encouraged the Lord to cheer up as he is sure to break the bow and marry Sita. What made Laxman so certain that this would really happen?

Well, earlier, sage Vishwamitra had blessed them that their wishes would be fulfilled—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 237 above. Laxman knew what his brother's wish was, and he used this opportunity to encourage him to cheer up and remain confident.

In the story of the Ramayana we find that like a true friend and companion, Laxman has consistently helped Ram when he is passing through a depressing and uncertain moment. Refer Ram Charit Manas—(i) Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 73 which narrate how Laxman decided to accompany the Lord when he was sent to 14 years of forest exile; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30 which says that at the moment when Lord Ram was crestfallen and extremely dejected when he found that Sita has been abducted, it was Laxman who lent gave him immense moral support and encouraged the Lord not to lose hope and make efforts to find and retrieve her.

Another reason for the Lord smiling is this: Normally Laxman did not interject when his elder brother was speaking. But in this case he immediately began to speak as soon as Lord Ram opened his mouth and said something about the sun. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 238. This was an improper conduct for Laxman. But he had managed not to offend his elder brother by giving such a positive spin to his interjection that though he had cut short his love-struck elder brother's anticipated long-drawn emotional outpourings like the one witnessed on two previous occasions—the first one was in the garden when he had first seen Sita (refer: Chaupai

line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 231), and the second one was during the evening prayers when he had seen the rising moon (refer: from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 238)—he only caused Lord Ram to feel amused. The Lord realized that Laxman wished to keep him shut, and was so wise and clever that he managed to do without offending the Lord by praising his glories and comparing him to the sun.]

सतानंदु तब जनक बोलाए । कौसिक मुनि पहिं तुरत पठाए ॥ ९ ॥
जनक बिनय तिन्ह आइ सुनाई । हरषे बोलि लिए दोउ भाई ॥ १० ॥

satānandu taba janaka bōlā'ē. kausika muni pahim turata paṭhā'ē. 9.
janaka binaya tinha ā'i sunā'ī. haraṣē bōli li'ē dō'u bhā'ī. 10.

King Janak then (i.e. at approximately the time when Lord Ram had returned to his Guru after completing his morning routine chores) summoned Satanand (Janak's royal priest; pronounced "satānanda") and immediately sent him to sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra). (9)

He (Satanand) came to sage Vishwamitra and told him about the request of Janak (i.e. he invited the sage to the bow-breaking ceremony). Vishwamitra became glad and he cheerfully called the two brothers. (10)

[Note— Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 2 also.

Other invited guests, the countless king and princes, had already started arriving at the venue and occupying their seats. All of them were anxious and eager to take a vantage point so that they do not miss the excitement of the rare event even a bit. It was getting late. But the king had to wait before he could allow the ceremony to start because sage Vishwamitra had to arrive at the site first. The sage was a special invitee, and he was the only great sage who was personally invited by the king; the king had shown special respect to him and had gone personally to meet him when the sage, along with Lord Ram and Laxman, had come to Janakpur, and after paying his due respects to him the king had escorted him inside the city and lodged him at a palace close to the royal residence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217.

Other guests had arrived early at the venue and were scrambling for seats, but the sage maintained his dignity and waited patiently for a formal invitation from the king. Remember: The king had posted attendants at the place where the sage and the two brothers were lodged. They were assigned the duty to take care of the sage's needs. They gave the king feedback about who had entered and left the place. This is a normal treatment given to special invitees of a host. So it was only when they informed the king that the two brothers had returned back after their morning prayers and bathing rituals, and the sage had finished his worship formalities that the king summoned his priest Satanand and hurriedly sent him to invite the sage and the two brothers because it was getting late and the crowd was getting restive.

It is to be noted that the two brothers were not present when Satanand met sage Vishwamitra. The brothers always maintained decorum and dignity by not unnecessarily staying too close with the Guru and not disturbing his privacy. Of

course they would immediately come as soon as the Guru called them as they stayed close by. They did not want to be an irritating element when the Guru meets someone privately and have some talk with the guest, for it may happen that their presence might not be liked by any one of them, the Guru or the guest, and they did not want to give them a chance to tell them to move out of the place. This had happened earlier also: when king Janak had come to meet sage Vishwamitra outside the city, the two brothers were not present at that moment. They had arrived a little later. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 215.

Again we find that still earlier when sage Vishwamitra had arrived in the court of king Dasrath, the father of the brothers, at Ayodhya, all the four brothers had paid their respects and had moved away, leaving the sage and their father to converse in private. That is why the king had ‘called the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman’ once again to send them with the sage to the latter’s hermitage to protect the fire sacrifice. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 207; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 208 respectively.

Sage Vishwamitra was waiting for this moment because he had brought Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur precisely to attend the bow breaking ceremony. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210. That is why when Satanand came to invite him, he felt glad and called in the two brothers cheerfully.]

दो०. सतानंद पद बंदि प्रभु बैठे गुर पहिं जाइ ।

चलहु तात मुनि कहेउ तब पठवा जनक बोलाइ ॥ २३९ ॥

dōhā.

satānanda pada bandi prabhu baiṭhē gura pahim jā'i.

calahu tāta muni kahē'u taba paṭhavā janaka bōlā'i. 239.

The Lord (Sri Ram) paid his obeisance at the feet of Satanand and then went and sat down near his Guru (sage Vishwamitra). The sage then told him—‘King Janak has sent in his invitation (for us to attend the bow-breaking ceremony). So come dear son, let us go there. (Doha no. 239)

[Note—How could Lord Ram recognise Satanand? The Lord had seen him earlier with Janak when the latter had come to welcome them earlier upon their arrival outside the city. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215.

Besides this, Satanand was the royal priest of Janakpur, and obviously he had the naturally majestic aura and demeanours of a man who occupies this exalted stature. His priestly cloak and other paraphernalia distinguished him from rest of the Brahmins of the place.

Not only this, since he was seated close to sage Vishwamitra and the latter had welcomed him and was talking with him proved beyond doubt that the guest was an honoured personality. Therefore he must be shown respect. And so the Lord and his younger brother bowed before Satanand to pay their respects to him.

It will be noticed upon close examination that on the earlier occasion when Lord Ram had seen Satanand in the company of Janak when the latter had arrived to welcome sage Vishwamitra, the Lord and his brother had not bowed before him, but went straight to their Guru, sage Vishwamitra, and sat down near him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 214. But here they came in and first bowed before Satanand and then sat down near their Guru. The reason is that earlier they had not known the head priest as he was accompanying others who came with king Janak. But now in the present instance he was acquainted with him, and therefore it was obligatory to pay respects.]

[PAUSE 2 FOR A NINE-DAY RECITATION]

[PAUSE 8 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. सीय स्वयंबरु देखिअ जाई । ईसु काहि धौं देइ बड़ाई ॥ १ ॥
लखन कहा जस भाजनु सोई । नाथ कृपा तव जापर होई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sīya svayambaru dēkhi'a jā'ī. īsu kāhi dhaum̐ dē'i baṛā'ī. 1.
lakhana kahā jasa bhājanu sō'ī. nātha kṛpā tava jāpara hō'ī. 2.

Let us go and see the marriage ceremony of Sita. Let us see whom Isha (literally the 'Lord'; but traditionally the word is used to mean Lord Shiva as Shiva is the "Lord of the world", and he is also called 'Mahadeva', the 'Great God') bestows the privilege of victory and fame (by breaking the bow and accepting the hands of Sita in marriage).¹ (1)

Laxman said, 'Oh Lord! The person upon whom you (sage Vishwamitra) are pleased would get this privilege and fame of breaking the bow.' (2)

[Note—¹After all, this was the very reason why sage Vishwamitra had come to Janakpur. He had told the two brothers after they had protected his fire sacrifice that he wished to take them along to witness the bow-breaking event that Janak was organizing. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210.

Now, it was Lord Shiva's bow, and it could be broken only if Shiva wants. So sage Vishwamitra made this observation. Earlier when Lord Ram and Laxman had narrated to the sage the events of the garden and about the Lord developing a soft corner in his heart for Sita, the sage had blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled. Now, Laxman is hinting to this blessing. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 237.

Remember: Laxman had himself prophesied the victory of Lord Ram in the bow-breaking competition relying on the blessings of the sage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 238—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239. Hence, Laxman is merely reiterating what is destined to happen. Further, he is subtly reminding the Guru about his blessings, and stresses that if he wants than Lord Ram would be victorious.

Laxman was aware of the fact that Vishwamitra was no ordinary sage. He was known to be a ‘Trikaalagya’, one who knows the events of the three phases of time—viz. the past, the present and the future. So, if the sage had blessed them their wishes would be fulfilled upon learning about their experiences in the garden, then it is sure that Lord Ram would marry Sita. And this can happen only if the Lord breaks the bow.

Sage Vishwamitra’s deity was also Lord Shiva, and the sage had prayed to the Lord before blessing the two brothers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 237. How do we know that Shiva was the deity whom the sage worshipped? Well, all great sages, seers and hermits adore and worship Lord Shiva as their favourite God because Shiva is known as ‘Maha-deva’, the Great God. Besides this fact, a person always invokes his favoured god or goddess when he faces an uncertain future. Sage Vishwamitra has explicitly invoked Lord Shiva in line no. 1 by saying “Isha”, which is one of the many famous names of Lord Shiva. This proves that the deity whom he worshipped was none else but Shiva.]

हरषे मुनि सब सुनि बर बानी । दीन्हि असीस सबहिं सुखु मानी ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि मुनिबृन्द समेत कृपाला । देखन चले धनुषमख साला ॥ ४ ॥

haraṣē muni saba suni bara bānī. dīnhi asīsa sabahim sukhu mānī. 3.
puni munibrnda samēta kṛpālā. dēkhana calē dhanuṣamakha sālā. 4.

The entire company of sages (who had accompanied Vishwamitra as well as Satanand) felt very delighted when their heard the prudent, clever and wise words of Laxman, and all of them collectively blessed him (that his words would come true)¹. (3)

After that, the merciful Lord (Ram) accompanied all the sages and went to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony to see it (and witness the event)². (4)

[Note—¹Both sage Vishwamitra and priest Satanand occupied a high stature in society. Even today we observe that when some great or renowned seer moves around he is always accompanied by a large number of junior seers. So, Vishwamitra and Satanand were not alone; there must have been many more sages and Brahmins present on the occasion. When they heard what Laxman has said, that “anyone upon whom sage Vishwamitra is pleased would be able to break the bow and marry Sita”, thereby showing the greatest of respect to his Guru sage Vishwamitra, it was natural for them to feel happy and bless Laxman.

We must note how clever Laxman was. Till this moment, the only sage who had blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled was sage Vishwamitra. Now all of them have blessed Laxman. What was Laxman’s wish? Obviously it was that his beloved elder brother should break the bow and fulfill his wish of marrying Sita. This is abundantly clear by reading Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 238—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239 above. Later on we shall read that in the assembly when none of the kings and princes could move the bow and king Janak had expressed his annoyance and dejection, going to the extent of saying that the earth is devoid of strong warriors inspite of being aware that Lord Ram was present in the assembly and had yet not been given a chance to lift

the bow, Laxman becomes extremely angry and had sternly rebuked king Janak against the rules of etiquette and without any fear of consequences. At that time Laxman would warn the king that he (Laxman) can turn the earth upside down if Lord Ram permits; how dare Janak could make such a disparaging remark in the presence of Lord Ram. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.}

Then we find a little later that as soon as Lord Ram was instructed by sage Vishwamitra to go and break the bow, Laxman has warned all the legendary supporters of the world, such as Seshnath, the serpent who supports the earth on its hood, the tortoise named Kamath who supports the earth from sinking into the nether world by keeping it lifted on its back, and the Digpals, the custodians of the directions, to get ready as the Lord was about to break the bow and it would create an unprecedented shock that may turn the whole world upside down. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260.}

So we find that Laxman has played the perfect role of a true friend, a faithful companion and a loving brother who is totally committed to the happiness of his elder sibling.

Here it is said that when the sages and Brahmins heard the “prudent, clever and wise words of Laxman” they collectively blessed him. What was so nice about what Laxman has said? Well, Laxman has praised his Guru sage Vishwamitra, and this is regarded as an excellent character; one should always give his Guru more respect than even the gods. This pleased the sages and they blessed Laxman.

²The verse does not say that Lord Ram has gone to ‘see the bow’, but that he went to ‘see the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony’, the “*dhanuṣamakha sālā*”. [*‘dhanuṣa’* = bow; *‘makha’* = a great ceremony on the lines of fire sacrifices; and *‘sālā’* = the venue, the arena.]

Now, what does this mean? It means that the Lord was not charmed by the bow at all as he knew that it was old, rusty and unattractive. On the other hand, the venue was colourfully decorated and a huge number of kings and princes from all corners of the earth had assembled there. It would be an exceptionally fascinating sight to behold, with kings, princes and their attendants sporting unique attires, exhibiting demeanours, languages and faces from various corners of the earth, and accompanying this would be the wonderful spray of myriad colours and cacophony of sounds representing diverse cultures and societies in this world. Like any other young boy of his age, Lord Ram was eager to enjoy this rare opportunity.]

रंगभूमि आए दोउ भाई । असि सुधि सब पुरबासिन्ह पाई ॥ ५ ॥

चले सकल गृह काज बिसारी । बाल जुबान जरठ नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

raṅgabhūmi ā'ē dō'u bhā'ī. asi sudhi saba purabāsinha pā'ī. 5.
calē sakala gṛha kāja bisārī. bāla jubāna jaraṭha nara nārī. 6.

When the citizens of Janakpur heard that the two brothers have come to the arena of the bow ceremony [5], all of them—the children, the adults and the old, the men and the women—abandoned whatever work they were engaged in and rushed to the venue (giggling and babbling excitedly all the way). (6)

[Note—Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 7; verse nos. 73—80; and verse no. 84, stanza no. 2.

Earlier we have already read how the entire city had poured out into the streets of Janakpur when the two brothers had gone to see the sights. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 225.}

Now, the same thing is repeated. Note that the citizens have shown no interest to leave their jobs and attend the ceremony till the time they heard that Lord Ram and Laxman have come. They weren't interested in seeing the countless kings and princes; they remained engaged in their routine affairs of life. But as soon as the news spread that the two brothers have arrived at the venue, there was a sudden rush of people to see them so much so that king Janak had to send more volunteers to control the surging crowd and get them seated in an orderly manner. This would be clear in the next line below.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Geetawali Ramayan", Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 7 that says exactly the same thing that as soon as the citizens heard that the Lord has come to the venue of the bow ceremony, all of them abandoned whatever they were doing and rushed to the arena.]

देखी जनक भीर भै भारी । सुचि सेवक सब लिए हँकारी ॥ ७ ॥

तुरत सकल लोगन्ह पहिं जाहू । आसन उचित देहु सब काहू ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhī janaka bhīra bhāī. suci sēvaka saba li'ē hamkārī. 7.

turata sakala lōganha pahim jāhū. āsana ucita dēhu saba kāhū. 8.

When king Janak found that there was a sudden huge crowd, he called in clever and competent attendants and volunteers (who could manage the crowd wisely) [7] and ordered them—'Go immediately to the people and give all of them proper seats. [8]'. (7-8)

[Note—This endorses the deduction made above that as soon as Lord Ram and Laxman arrived at the arena, virtually the entire city poured in. There was a sudden burst of commotion as everyone jostled with each other to find a vantage seat in the stadium. To control the surging crowd, the king summoned extra hands.

The king had not expected such a huge crowd because in that case he would have planned for it in advance and would have stationed sufficient guards to control the people. This surge of the crowd was so sudden that it was like a flash flood that virtually swamped the entire arena, and overflowed its seating capacity, so much so that every available inch of space was jam-packed by enthusiastic citizens of Janakpur who stood cramped up, elbow-to-elbow, and jostled with each other to watch the once-in-a-lifetime spectacular ceremony of the breaking of the bow that was to unfold before their eyes very soon.]

दो०. कहि मृदु बचन बिनीत तिन्ह बैठारे नर नारि ।

उत्तम मध्यम नीच लघु निज निज थल अनुहारि ॥ २४० ॥

dōhā.

kahi mṛdu bacana binīta tinha baiṭhārē nara nāri.
unāma madhyama nīca laghu nija nija thala anuhāri. 240.

These attendants and volunteers spoke sweetly, and they politely directed the arriving men and women to take their respective seats keeping into consideration their age and stature in the social hierarchy. (Doha no. 240)

[Note—Usually, the king’s guards are rude to the common man; they push and shove. But king Janak had called in guards who were decent in their behaviour and knew good manners. They politely guided the people to separate enclosures—such as the ones for old, the young, the women, the single men, families, couples, and so on. Then they also took into consideration their social background and financial standing; after all, all were not equal. Then they had to take into view whether the arriving men and women were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Sudras, the four distinct sections of tradition-bound society.]

चौ०. राजकुअँर तेहि अवसर आए । मनहुँ मनोहरता तन छाए ॥ १ ॥
गुन सागर नागर बर बीरा । सुंदर स्यामल गौर सरीरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rājaku'amṛa tēhi avasara ā'ē. manahum' manōharatā tana chā'ē. 1.
guna sāgara nāgara bara bīrā. sundara syāmala gaura sarīrā. 2.

Just at that moment (when the king’s guards were guiding the citizens to their seats) the two princes (Lord Ram and Laxman) arrived at the venue. They were so adorable to look at as if beauty and magnificence had spread themselves like a paste on their handsome bodies. (1)

They were an ocean of virtues, were good mannered and cultured, were wonderful warriors, were handsome to look at, and were of a dark and a fair complexion respectively. (2)

[Note—The dark complexioned prince was Lord Ram, and the fair complexioned one was Laxman.

It ought to be noted here that both of them have same good virtues, are equally wonderful to look at, and are equally handsome, strong and good mannered. This verse is very important in the sense that it, once and for all, removes the doubt in the mind of the reader of this epic story that Lord Ram was more handsome, virtuous, mannered and strong than the rest of the brothers. It is not so, but since Lord Ram is the hero of the story, the narrator, Goswami Tulsidas, has positioned him prominently and has always concentrated on highlighting the Lord’s glories and virtues. But this does not mean that his other brothers, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, lacked in any of these virtues. Being the eldest brother and the hero of the story it is apt to give Lord Ram a special treatment.]

राज समाज बिराजत रूरे । उडगन महँ जनु जुग बिधु पूरे ॥ ३ ॥
जिन्ह केँ रही भावना जैसी । प्रभु मूरति तिन्ह देखी तैसी ॥ ४ ॥

rāja samāja birājata rūrē. uḍagana mahum̐ janu juga bidhu pūrē. 3.
jinha kēm rahī bhāvanā jaisī. prabhu mūrati tinha dēkhī taisī. 4.

They looked outstanding in the galaxy of kings and princes as if two moons were shining brilliantly in the midst of a huge collection of inconsequential twinkling stars in the night sky. (3)

Everyone in the assembly gazed at the Lord and saw his form according to the conception he or she had of him. (4)

[Note—Once again, both the brothers are compared to the moon, removing all distinctions between them. The only way to distinguish between Lord Ram and Laxman was the colour of their complexion—Lord Ram had a dark complexion and Laxman was fair.

Chaupai line no. 4 has a great spiritual message—it essentially says that all living beings have the right to view and approach the Lord in the way they like, and the Lord welcomes all of them by reciprocating their emotions and giving them rewards or blessings which are in consonance with each individual's conception and view of the Lord.

There were hundreds of people in the assembly, and each saw the Lord differently. For those who were friendly inclined saw a friend in him; those who were jealous saw an invincible competitor; those who were inimical to his presence saw a powerful enemy that instills fear in his opponents. The men and the women saw him as the beloved groom of Sita, their beloved guest and someone most dear to their hearts, the children saw him as their fast friend, and Sita saw in him her refuge and succour, her true love and partner in life.

Devotees saw their revered Lord in the form of Ram, and non-devotees saw a handsome prince who would be the future husband of princess Sita.

It must be remembered at this point that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human being like the rest of the people. He was an incarnate Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, who had to come down to earth in a human form to eliminate the demons led by their king Ravana of Lanka. There were other reasons also for Lord Vishnu to become a human being. These are enumerated and narrated in the earlier part of Baal Kand. Hence it was no wonder that the same unchanging form of the Lord could assume various forms to give the visual effect of so many different persons standing there.]

देखहिं रूप महा रनधीरा । मनहुँ बीर रसु धरें सरीरा ॥ ५ ॥
डरे कुटिल नृप प्रभुहि निहारी । मनहुँ भयानक मूरति भारी ॥ ६ ॥
रहे असुर छल छोनिष बेषा । तिन्ह प्रभु प्रगट कालसम देखा ॥ ७ ॥
पुरबासिन्ह देखे दोउ भाई । नरभूषन लोचन सुखदाई ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhaḥiṁ rūpa mahā ranadhīrā. manahum̐ bīra rasu dharēm̐ sarīrā. 5.
 ḍarē kuṭīla nṛpa prabhuhi nihārī. manahum̐ bhayānaka mūrati bhārī. 6.
 rahē asura chala chōnīpa bēṣā. tinha prabhu pragāṭa kālasama dēkhā. 7.
 purabāsinha dēkhē dō'u bhāṭī. narabhūṣana lōcana sukhadāṭī. 8.

[These four lines describe how different people viewed the same form of Lord Ram differently.]

Those who were valiant, strong, fearless and brave warriors saw that the virtues of bravery, courage, strength, fearlessness, resilience and valiance, which are characteristics of warriors, have assumed a physical form and standing before them (in the form of Lord Ram). (5)

Those kings who were wicked and pervert were scared out of their wits, feeling terrified when they saw the horrifying image of the Lord as if terror and horror have personified themselves (to attack and kill them). (6)

Demons ('Asurs') were also present in the assembly in the disguise of kings. They saw the Lord as a living monster who was none other than 'Kaal', the Death God, personified himself. (7)

And the citizens of Janakpur saw the two brothers as jewels of the human race, as the princes whose mere sight gives comfort and happiness to the eyes (of the beholder). (8)

[Note—So we see how the same image or form of Lord Ram and Laxman were perceived and interpreted differently by different people depending upon their attitude, thoughts, outlook and conception.

Though it is not mentioned here, even the gods had come in the form of human kings and princes—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251.]

दो०. नारि बिलोकहिं हरषि हियँ निज निज रुचि अनुरूप ।
 जनु सोहत सिंगार धरि मूरति परम अनूप ॥ २४१ ॥
 dōhā.

nāri bilōkahim̐ haraṣi hiyam̐ nija nija ruci anurūpa.
 janu sōhata siṅgāra dhari mūrati parama anūpa. 241.

Meanwhile, the ladies of the city saw the image of Lord Ram in accordance with the conception they had of the Lord in their hearts. For some the Lord was a most attractive and fabulous personified form of cupid who has enamoured, beguiled, captivated and enthralled their hearts. (Doha no. 241)

[Note—The young damsels of the city fell in love by the handsome form of the Lord. This is a natural phenomenon with young girls of impressionable age. In their hearts they all began to harbour love for Lord Ram. It is believed that the Lord fulfilled the wishes of all of them in his next incarnation as Lord Krishna during whose time these

ladies had taken birth as the countless Gopis (milk maids) with whom Krishna played around during his childhood days.]

चौ०. बिदुषन्ह प्रभु बिराटमय दीसा । बहु मुख कर पग लोचन सीसा ॥ १ ॥
जनक जाति अवलोकहिं कैसें । सजन सगे प्रिय लागहिं जैसें ॥ २ ॥
सहित बिदेह बिलोकहिं रानी । सिसु सम प्रीति न जाति बखानी ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

biduṣanha prabhu birāṭamaya dīsā. bahu mukha kara paga lōcana sīsā. 1.
janaka jāti avalōkahim kaisēm. sajana sagē priya lāgahim jaisēm. 2.
sahita bidēha bilōkahim rānī. sisu sama prīti na jāti bakhānī. 3.

Those who were learned, enlightened and well-versed in the philosophy of metaphysics as envisioned in the scriptures saw the Lord in his ‘Viraat’ form that had many mouths, hands, legs, eyes and heads¹. (1)

The relatives, the kith and kin of king Janak look at Lord Ram and loved him as if he was a dear member of the family. (2)

Similarly, Videha (king Janak) and his wife, the queen, watched the Lord as if the latter was their young son. With this conception, the intensity of love and affection that developed in them cannot be described in words². (3)

[Note—¹The word “Viraat” means vast, colossus, infinite and all-encompassing. This form refers to the cosmic manifestation of the Supreme Lord known as Brahm. It encompasses the entire creation; nothing escapes it. It is all-pervading and endless. Since this creation has countless varieties of creatures, from the single-celled to the most complex, and each unit is a form of this Viraat, it follows that Viraat has as many mouths, hands, legs, eyes and heads as there are number and varieties of creatures in this creation. This form of the Lord has no beginning, middle or end; it is infinite and eternal.

The form of the Viraat Purush has been described in the *Shwetashwatar Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 14-16 as the form which has “thousands of heads, eyes and legs. Since the Lord is all-pervading and immanent, his hands, legs, eyes, head, mouth and ears are present everywhere. He surrounds everything in the universe from all sides, and is established within each unit of it.” This Upanishad belongs to the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition and is its 5th Upanishad.

The *Mundak Upanishad* of Atharva Veda, in its Canto 2, section 1, verse nos. 9-10 clearly affirm that it is the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-pervading gross body of the supreme transcendental Brahm, that resides in the body of all living beings as their Atma. To quote—

“Verse no. 9 = It is this Viraat Purush that lives in all the living beings as their Atma that resides in their inner self (9).

“Verse no. 10 = A wise and enlightened aspirant who knows that this Brahm is established in the subtle heart of all living beings (as their Atma, their pure conscious self) is able to dismantle all the knots of ignorance in this world. [That is, he attains supreme knowledge of the Truth that is absolute and like nectar.] (10).”

In fact, the entire Mundak (Canto) 2, section 1 of the Mundak Upanishad is devoted to the theme of Viraat Purush, and it says that the entire creation has been created as a manifestation of the Viraat Purush.

The *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda, in its Canto 3, verse no. 2, clearly states the supreme Lord resides in this creation as its Atma and Pran. To quote—“We bow and pay our respects to the supreme Lord (Brahm referred to as Lord Ram here because this particular Upanishad is dedicated to Lord Ram) who lives in this world and uniformly pervades in it as its ‘Atma’ and its ‘Pran’—i.e. as the creation’s soul and life, as its essence, its fundamental basis and its core.”

Now let us quote the *Tripadvibhut Maha Narayan Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition that precisely describes the Viraat Purush as follows:—

“Canto 2, paragraph no. 11 = The Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic, all-encompassing and all-pervading form of the Supreme Being, has countless heads, eyes, hands and legs. [This is a symbolic way to highlight the fact that the Viraat is the sum-total of all the gross bodies that live in this creation. The Viraat Purush is a metaphor for the all-inclusive form and all-encompassing nature of the supreme Brahm, as the former represents all living organisms in this creation. According to the theory of Genesis of Creation as outlined in the Upanishads, it is from the Viraat Purush that the whole creation has been moulded; the creation is a manifestation of the Viraat Purush. Since the Viraat is the macrocosmic gross body of Brahm as outlined in the forgoing paragraphs, it follows that the creation moulded out of this Viraat is also a manifestation of the Brahm. Therefore, this creation represents the gross body of Brahm. It is this Viraat Purush who created the creature in his own image. Since there are uncountable forms and varieties of creatures or living beings in this creation, from the single cell organisms to the most complex human, and each individual is an image of the Viraat, it is easy to understand the meaning and import of the statement that the Viraat has thousands of hands, mouths etc. as stated above. Besides this point, another interpretation is that Brahm in the form of the Viraat lives in all the places of this creation at the same time. This is in consonance with the eclectic virtue of Brahm as being omnipresent all-encompassing and all-pervading.]

The Viraat Purush, having countless ears*, surrounds the entire creation from all sides and uniformly pervades in it. He is omnipresent, all-pervading and all-encompassing. [*The phrase ‘having countless ears’ simply means that Brahm, in the form of the Viraat Purush, assumed as many forms as there were creatures who could hear. It also means that Brahm, as the living being’s consciousness, heard or became aware of everything that was happening in this creation. It is a metaphoric way of saying that a wise man who knows the truth of Brahm is also one who is well aware of everything in this creation; nothing is hidden from his knowledge; he is wise, erudite, knowledgeable, enlightened, omniscient and all-knowing. He receives all information and knowledge, but then picks and chooses what is auspicious and righteous. He is not ‘deaf’ to the teaching of the scriptures. It ought to be noted here that the creature, the living being, especially the human being, is said to be replica of the Viraat Purush. Refer Aiteriya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Canto 1, Section 2, verse no. 3.]

He (the Viraat Purush) is both Saguna and Nirguna. [That is, the Lord has revealed himself in numerous forms, thereby becoming ‘Saguna’—or the one with discernible characteristics, definable attributes and specific qualities. At the same time, the Lord has no visible form as his primary nature is formless and without attributes—i.e. he is ‘Nirguna’. This concept has been elaborately described earlier in paragraphs 2-8 of this present Canto 2.]

He (the Viraat Purush) is a personification of the grand virtues of Gyan (knowledge, wisdom, erudition and enlightenment), Bal (strength, valour, vitality and potent), Aishwarya (fame, majesty, grandeur, magnificence, glory), Shakti (power, dynamism, energy, punch and vitality), and Tej (splendour, radiance, glory, energy, magnificence, dynamism, agility and speed).

He (the Viraat Purush) is established in the form of innumerable worlds of diverse varieties and forms.

It is he (the Viraat Purush) who is the supreme Lord of creation known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma or soul of creation. He is an embodiment of eternal and unbound bliss, as well as is endowed with all the noble and auspicious virtues and glories that exist in this creation.

He (the Viraat Purush) is absolutely independent (because he is supreme and not subservient to anything). He is all-knowing and omniscient. He is almighty and all-powerful. He is the ultimate controller of everything in existence. And he is an image of all the most auspicious virtues that ensure all-round well being in this creation.

He (the Viraat Purush) is established in the form of a majestic fount of immense 'Tej' (splendour, radiance, glory, energy, magnificence, dynamism etc.) that cannot be described, is endless, and is most divine.

This Supreme Being having the above grand and magnificent virtues pervades throughout the cosmic Anda created from the Avyakta due to Avidya (as narrated in paragraph no. 9). This Anda or the cosmic egg is the basis of Maha-Maya that has surrounded the Supreme Being (i.e. it is the basis of creation of the great delusion because it is in this form of the cosmic egg that the Supreme Being had allowed himself to assume a form which is not in consonance with his primary nature of being formless).

[As is clear by now, the Supreme Being that is referred to here is the cosmic Consciousness that infuses life in the cosmic egg. The egg has been literally 'fertilised' by Brahm, the Supreme Being, who has passed on to it his 'genes' in the form of 'consciousness' possessing all the virtues enumerated herein above. Therefore, these virtues of Brahm would naturally be passed on to the 'embryo' that developed in this egg, and the subsequent 'creation' that would emerge from this cosmic egg upon its maturity. It follows that this is the evident proof why Brahma known as Hiranyagarbha representing the 'embryo', and Vishnu known as the Viraat Purush representing the 'creation' would be an image or a 'gene-bearer' of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Now, once the 'formless' (or Nirguna and Avyakta) Brahm assumes the 'formed' shape of an egg (becomes Saguna and Vyakta) he is bound to be affected by the characteristics of something that has a 'form', something that is 'Saguna' (one that has various Gunas or qualities) and 'Vyakta' (expressed, revealed). In other words, the Brahm which was without any Maya (delusions) prior to the entire process of creation rolling out has now become surrounded by it, or tainted and affected by it.] Therefore, the 'Maha-Maya' is the gross body created out of delusions of the almighty Lord God known as Brahm who is naturally and inherently almighty, all-powerful, universal, uniform, non-dual, and an embodiment of un-bound bliss and beatitude.

It is in each pore of the macrocosmic form of Brahm known as the Viraat Purush that numerous universes or worlds and their gross things are born or created. Each one of them is a revelation of the same Lord Narayan; they are images of the same Brahm. [It is because, as has been explained above, they carry the genes of their parent known as Brahm. In this context, refer to Canto 3, paragraph nos. 11-12 which will make it clear that the 'Viraat Purush' meant here is not the one which is regarded

as being synonymous with Vishnu, but is the ‘Adi-Viraat Purush’ that precedes Vishnu and from whom even Vishnu, the commonly known form of Viraat, was created. This creation has been visualised as being in different layers like many concentric circles, one higher than its previous one. This concept will be discussed in Canto 6.] (11).”

Tulsidas himself has described the concept of the “Viraat Purush” on many occasions in this epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ at the following places:--

(i) Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 55 where Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, has seen the Virrat form of Lord Ram; (ii) Baal Kand, from Doha no. 201—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 202 where Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram, has seen the Virrat form of the Lord; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 242 where the wise kings allude to this Viraat form of the Lord while advising pervert kings to desist from attempting to break the bow and marrying Sita as it would be a futile exercise; (iv) Lanka Kand, from Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15 where Mandadori, the wife of Ravana, the demon king, has tried to persuade her belligerent husband not to fight Lord Ram as he is not an ordinary human being but the Virrat form himself in the form of Lord Ram; and (v) Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 81 where Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, has seen the Virrat form of Lord Ram.

²These two lines, verse nos. 2-3, describe how the king, the queen and the rest of the royal family looked at Lord Ram and Laxman, the emotions and sentiments that developed in their minds and hearts.

King Janak had a large family. His father Hriswaraam had three queens. Their names were Shubhaa, Sadaa and Sarwadaa. Shubhaa had two sons—Shirdhwaj and Kushdhwaj; Sadaa had four sons—Shatrujeet, Yash-shaali, Arimardan and Riputaapan; and Sarwadaa had four sons—Mahi-mangal, Balaakar, Tejastha and Mahaa-virya. {Total 10 sons.}

The eldest queen’s sons, i.e. Shirdhwaj and Kushdhwaj, had two daughters each. They were Sita and Urmila who were the daughters of the king, Shirdhwaj, and Maandavi and Srutikirti were the daughters of his younger brother Kushdhwaj. Sita was married to Lord Ram, Urmila to Laxman, Maandavi to Bharat, and Srutikirti to Shatrughan.

Shirdhwaj’s other step brothers had one daughter each. All of them accompanied Sita to Ayodhya, her in-law’s place, as her companions.

Hence, the entire family of king Janak perceived Lord Ram and Laxman as a close member of their family.

It is essential to note here that the word “Janak” or “Videha” is a title or surname assigned to the kings of the kingdom of Nimi dynasty, and not the name of an individual.]

जोगिन्ह परम तत्वमय भासा । सांत सुद्ध सम सहज प्रकासा ॥ ४ ॥

हरिभगतन्ह देखे दोउ भ्राता । इष्टदेव इव सब सुख दाता ॥ ५ ॥

jōginha parama tattvamaya bhāsā. sānta sud'dha sama sahaja prakāsā. 4.
haribhagatanha dēkhē dō'u bhrātā. iṣṭadēva iva saba sukha dātā. 5.

Ascetics perceived the Lord as a personified form of the supreme Tattwa (the fundamental Truth and Reality of existence; the Supreme Consciousness). They found the form of the Lord as being an image of peace, tranquility and serenity, an image that was pure and uncorrupt, an image that represented equality and equanimity, an image that was simple, unpretentious and divine, and an image that was self-illuminated, splendid and radiant¹. (4)

Those who were devotees of Hari (Lord Vishnu) could see the two brothers as a personified form of their revered deity, i.e. Lord Hari, who bestows all imaginable bliss, joy and happiness to his devotees². (5)

[Note—¹Since ascetics focus on doing meditation and realizing the truth of the Atma, the pure conscious 'self' that is an image of the supreme Self or cosmic Consciousness that is at the foundation of the entire living world, which is therefore the only and absolute Truth and Reality in this creation, when they watched Lord Ram they could see this essential Truth standing before them in a personified form. In other words, just like the learned and enlightened persons could observe the Viraat Purush in the form of Lord Ram, ascetics could see the supreme Self or the cosmic Consciousness in a personified form in the person of Lord Ram.

²To wit, when the devotees of Lord Vishnu watched Lord Ram and Laxman they found that Lord Vishnu is standing personally before them. This sight granted them immense happiness, joy and spiritual bliss.

This is obviously true because Lord Ram was indeed an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.]

रामहि चितव भायँ जेहि सीया । सो सनेहु सुखु नहिं कथनीया ॥ ६ ॥
उर अनुभवति न कहि सक सोऊ । कवन प्रकार कहै कबि कोऊ ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि रहा जाहि जस भाऊ । तेहिं तस देखेउ कोसलराऊ ॥ ८ ॥

rāmahi citava bhāyam' jēhi siyā. sō sanēhu sukhu nahim kathanīyā. 6.
ura anubhavati na kahi saka sō'ū. kavana prakāra kahai kabi kō'ū. 7.
ēhi bidhi rahā jāhi jasa bhā'ū. tēhim tasa dēkhē'u kōsalarā'ū. 8.

The way Sita perceived Lord Ram, and the intensity of bliss and joy that she derived from this was so mysterious, immense and intense that they cannot be described. (6)

She could feel this emotion heaving inside her heart, she could experience the bliss, the happiness, the ecstasy and the thrill that it created within her bosom, but even she could not express it in words (or would be unable to do it even if she had wanted). Then say, how can another person, such as a poet, ever be able to narrate or describe it¹? (7)

On this wise, every individual saw the Lord of Kaushal (Lord Ram) in different ways in accordance to his likings, preferences, conceptions, sentiments and emotions². (8)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted that none of the observers had expressed their emotions and sentiments vocally. All of them just sat and enjoyed the sight in accordance to the conception they had in their hearts and minds about Lord Ram and Laxman. All of them felt exceedingly delighted and exhilarated.

However, those who were jealous and inimical to the presence of the two brothers were terrified out of their wits at their sight (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 241). Their faces lost radiance, they all felt despaired, and their heads drooped in dejection.

The greatest happiness was that of Sita's; it is obvious. When she left the garden after enshrining Lord Ram in her temple-like heart and closing its doors shut to keep the Lord's image permanently established close to her bosom (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 232; and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234), she had no way to be sure that she will ever see her beloved Lord again in life. Well, she could not be sure for certain that sage Vishwamitra would bring them to the arena. It could be that the sage would come when her father invited him, but there were chances that he could order the two brothers to stay back at the place where they were lodged, or send them on some errand, or the brothers themselves would want to see more of the city of Janakpur and would go out wandering around while the 'bow rituals' were underway as they might have no interest in this mega-circus!

Therefore, when Sita saw the two brothers once again it is natural that she would feel delighted. The chances of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying her brightened when she saw the great sage Vishwamitra, whose mere presence was awe-inspiring and majestic, sitting in the middle of the two brothers on a special seat meant for them. Then she guessed that like the other invited kings and princes who would try to lift the bow, Lord Ram would also be given a chance. With the mighty sage Vishwamitra personally present to bless Lord Ram, the chances of the Lord winning over others were extremely bright. This thought cheered Sita's heart no end.

²The realm of the kingdom of Ayodhya was also known as "Kaushal". This verse sums up the subject introduced in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241.]

दो०. राजत राज समाज महुँ कोसलराज किसोर ।
सुंदर स्यामल गौर तन बिस्व बिलोचन चोर ॥ २४२ ॥

dōhā.

rājata rāja samāja mahum̐ kōsalarāja kisōra.
sundara syāmala gaura tana bisva bilōcana cōra. 242.

Thus were present the two wonderful princes of the king of Kaushal ('kōsalarāja kisōra'; king Dasrath's sons Lord Ram and Laxman) in the middle of the grand assembly of kings and princes.

They were beautiful to behold—being handsome, having a dark and fair complexion respectively, and being so attractive that they stole the attention of the world in the sense that when anyone saw them his eyes become riveted to their magnificent forms. (Doha no. 242)

[Note—This idea is expressed elsewhere also. For instance: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 241 says “the two brothers had beautiful dark and fair complexioned body”; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 says “the people felt very blissful and happy upon seeing them so much so that gazed at them fixedly, and their eyes refused to move away even if they wanted to”; and (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 215 says “the dark and fair complexioned princes were of a tender age and sweet to look at; they provided comfort to the eyes (or their sight soothed the eyes) and were so attractive that they virtually stole the attention of the world which had its eyes fixed on them”.]

चौ०. सहज मनोहर मूरति दोऊ । कोटि काम उपमा लघु सोऊ ॥ १ ॥

सरद चंद निंदक मुख नीके । नीरज नयन भावते जी के ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sahaja manōhara mūrati dō'ū. kōṭi kāma upamā laghu sō'ū. 1.

sarada canda nindaka mukha nīkē. nīraja nayana bhāvatē jī kē. 2.

The two enchanting images (of Lord Ram and Laxman) were inherently, intrinsically and naturally beautiful, charming and magnificent (without any artificiality or pretentiousness with them). Even numerous Kamdeos (cupids) would fade in attractiveness and glamour when compared to them¹. (1)

The beauty and charm of their faces put to shame the glory of the full moon during the winter night (when the moon is supposed to look most glamorous and wonderful). Their lotus-like eyes were pleasing for the heart. (2)

[Note—¹It is a constant refrain in classical literature to compare somebody exceptionally beautiful and attractive to ‘Kamdeo (cupid)’ as he is the patron god of beauty, attraction, love and passion. He is supposed to be the most handsome, charming and attractive god in physical terms.

Another such metaphor universally used for beauty and charm is the ‘moon’. The ‘sun’ is used for radiance and splendour, the ‘lotus’ for purity, and the ‘swan’ for wisdom as well as purity. More such metaphors and similes are cited in the verses that follow below.

So, essentially this verse means that the charm, beauty and attractiveness of the two brothers were incomparable in the entire creation.

In Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 10, the same idea is expressed when it says “the creator had mixed together the virtues of beauty, good manners and affection, and out of this mixture he had created or crafted the fabulous image of Lord Ram and Laxman; many millions of Kamdeos and Moons have been offered to their images so that the essential qualities of the former are transferred to the latter”.]

चितवनि चारु मार मनु हरनी । भावति हृदय जाति नहिं बरनी ॥ ३ ॥

कल कपोल श्रुति कुंडल लोला । चिबुक अधर सुंदर मृदु बोला ॥ ४ ॥

citavani cāru māra manu haranī. bhāvati hdaya jāti nahim baranī. 3.
kala kapōla śruti kuṇḍala lōlā. cibuka adhara sundara mṛḍu bōlā. 4.

Their glances were so bewitching and captivating that they enthralled the Mana (mind and heart) of even Kamdeo (cupid) (so what to talk of ordinary humans). Their glances and their general charm pleased one's heart, but it is not possible to describe how and how much¹. (3)

Their cheeks were beautiful too. The ear-rings or pendants that adorned their ears swung majestically (when they move their heads). Their chins were charming, their lips were glamorous, and their voices were very sweet (i.e. when they chatted, they spoke pleasantly and sweetly). (4)

[Note—¹Since Kamdeo (cupid) is the most handsome god in creation, he finds no attractiveness in any other god or human; he treats all living beings as being inferior to him as far as the virtues of beauty, charm, attractiveness, glamour and other physical attributes are concerned. But when he sees the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, he is transfixed by wonder at their magnificence and charm.

This means that the sight of the two brothers is so compelling that even the patron god of beauty and charm is dumbfounded, beguiled and enchanted by it. If this is the condition of Kamdeo, one can easily understand that ordinary mortals would be simply mesmerized by this sight that was beyond the purview of being described in words, and was so magnificent that words such as 'beauty, loveliness, prettiness' etc. do not do justice to its excellence and fineness and majesty. When the eyes of the two brothers and Kamdeo meet, the latter is mesmerised into a trance; he can't move his eyes away for from Lord Ram and Laxman because in all sooth he hasn't, in all his living days, seen such a fabulous and enchanting sight of exceeding magnificence and beauty in this creation, and he marvels at it, being wonderstruck!]

कुमुदबंधु कर निंदक हाँसा । भृकुटी बिकट मनोहर नासा ॥ ५ ॥
भाल बिसाल तिलक झलकाहीं । कच बिलोकि अलि अवलि लजाहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kumudabandhu kara nindaka hāmsā. bhr̥kuṭī bikaṭa manōhara nāsā. 5.
bhāla bisāla tilaka jhalakāhīm. kaca bilōki ali avalī lajāhīm. 6.

Their laughter and smile were so attractive that it put to shame and ridiculed the light of the moon (known as 'Kumud-Bandhu', the friend of the lily, because the latter blooms as soon as the moon rises)¹. Their eyebrows were perfectly curved in an arch, and their noses were equally crafted in an expert manner. (5)

The 'Tilak Mark' (which is a mark on the forehead made by all of noble birth) on their broad foreheads were visible amid big locks of hairs that dangled from their heads. These locks of hairs were so attractive that they would put to shame a swarm of black bees². (6)

[Note—¹The moonlight is deemed to create an environment of happiness and joy which leads to people feeling exhilarated and rejuvenated. The weariness of the day is replaced with cheer and energy. Young couples laugh and enjoy themselves in the

soothing and inspiring light of the moon. But the smile and laughter of Lord Ram and Laxman creates an atmosphere of cheer and joy that far surpasses the charm created by the moon's light. The moon feels ashamed and ridiculous when its glories and virtues are compared to those of the two brothers.

The moon's pride of being a harbinger of cheer, happiness and joy is nullified and trounced when it is compared to the same virtues exhibited by Lord Ram and Laxman.

²The two brothers had thick and large lock of black hairs which were plaited, and these tresses were carefully combed to make their faces look exceptionally beautiful. The sight resembled the moon's face when thick dark clouds hover just above it!

The Tilak mark consists of three horizontal lines marked on the forehead just above the root of the nose. So it looked as if the Tilak was a pillar that supported the meticulously carved and artistically arranged roof of hairs on their faces. Whenever they shook their heads or turned in any direction, the hairs parted from the center, revealing this fabulous Tilak mark.

The darkness and the density of the hair are compared to a swarm of black bees. These bees are very proud of their handsome black bodies, but when these bees are compared to the brothers' hairs, they fade in beauty and attractiveness.]

पीत चौतनीं सिरन्धि सुहाई । कुसुम कलीं बिच बीच बनाई ॥ ७ ॥
रेखें रुचिर कंबु कल गीवाँ । जनु त्रिभुवन सुषमा की सीवाँ ॥ ८ ॥

pīta cautanīm siranhi suhā'īm. kusuma kalīm bica bīca banā'īm. 7.
rēkhēm rucira kambu kala gīvām. janu tribhuvana suṣamā kī sīvām. 8.

Yellow-coloured elegant caps (or turbans) of rectangular shape (pīta cautanīm)¹, on which were embroidered wonderful patterns resembling flower-buds, adorned their heads. (7)

Their necks were well-built, smooth and well-shaped in contour like a conch-shell, and they also exhibited three semi-circular lines on the surface of the skin (like the lines marked on a conch-shell at its upper end). These lines symbolized the three worlds and stood as epitomes of beauty of these worlds². (8)

[Note—¹A 'turban' looks more dignified and majestic on a prince or king's head than the humble 'cap'. Though it is not certain what the two brothers wore at the time, but in all probability it was a 'cap' rather than a 'turban' because it is said in this verse that the head gear was 'rectangular', and a turban is always wound around the head manually so that it takes up the circular shape of the head.

²The neck is that part of the body that contains the vocal cords through which a wind passes and makes a sound that enables a person to make himself heard, loud and clear. It is likened to the conch because of this reason, for the conch also makes a loud sound when air is blown in it.

The neck had three fine folds in the skin resembling three lines present in the upper end of a conch-shell. Since these lines were parallel and one above the other,

they resembled the three worlds—viz. the lower nether world, the middle terrestrial world, and the upper heavenly world. These three worlds are known as ‘Tribhuvan’.

But all these worlds have some ugly aspect in them as well. So here it is said that this comparison with the three worlds does not mean that the three lines made the neck of the two brothers look ugly in any sense. Rather, they represented all the beautiful and wonderful aspects of this creation.

We can also refer to the beautiful and most enchanting image of Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, as has been described elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas—viz. (a) Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148 (when the Lord appeared before Manu and Satrupa to bless them); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327 (Lord Ram as a groom during the wedding ceremony); and (b) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 77 (the divine form of the Lord that the saintly crow Kaagbhusund saw).]

दो०. कुंजर मनि कंठा कलित उरन्हि तुलसिका माल ।

बृषभ कंध केहरि ठवनि बल निधि बाहु बिसाल ॥ २४३ ॥

dōhā.

kuṅjara mani kaṅṭhā kalita uranhi tulasikā māla.

br̥ṣabha kandha kēhari ṭhavani bala nidhi bāhu bisāla. 243.

#A band made of ‘Gajmukta’ (“the elephant’s gem”, ‘kuṅjara mani’) adorned their necks¹.

Garlands of leaves of the Tulsi (Basil) plant adorned their chests.

Their shoulders were (muscular, rounded, high and broad) like the hump on the back of a healthy bull.

And the way they stood up and gestured resembled the majestic demeanours of a lion (the unquestionable ‘king of the forest’). (Doha no. 243)

[Note—¹The word “kuṅjara” means an elephant, and “mani” means a gem. The phrase refers to pearl-like dried globules of sap effusing from the head of mature elephants, and it is so extremely rare that great kings used them as gems that were embedded in the ornaments they wore just like priceless pearls and other precious jewels.

#Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal” that is exclusively dedicated to the divine marriage of Lord Ram and Sita describes the Lord’s glamour and magnificent sight in its verse nos. 49-54.

After describing the sublime beauty of the two brothers, now other attributes are being enumerated to remove any doubt that with such manicured bodies the two princes had delicate, fragile and weak frames. Of course they were beautiful and handsome, but that does not mean that they had weak bodies. Hence, their bodies are compared to that of a healthy bull and a lion, both of whom are very muscular and strong.]

चौ०. कटि तूनीर पीत पट बाँधें । कर सर धनुष बाम बर काँधें ॥ १ ॥

पीत जग्य उपबीत सुहाए । नख सिख मंजु महाछबि छाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kaṭi tūnīra pīta paṭa bām̐dhēm̐. kara sara dhanuṣa bāma bara kām̐dhēm̐. 1.
pīta jagya upabīta suhā'ē. nakha sikha maṅju mahāchabi chā'ē. 2.

They had the Pitambar¹ wrapped around their waists and quivers tied securely above it. They held arrows in their hands, and bows were slung across their left shoulders. (1)

Yellow-coloured² sacred threads, known as the 'Yagyopavit', adorned their abdomen (because this thread is slung diagonally across the abdomen, going around the left shoulder).

In short, the two princes were exceedingly charming and looked fabulous from foot (or the 'toe nail' = 'Nakha') to head ('Sikh' = top of the skull) as if they were embodiments of the virtue of great beauty and magnificence. (2)

[Note—¹A 'Pitambar' is a length of seamless yellow silk cloth worn around the waist and wrapped around the two legs. It is a standard attire of Lord Vishnu.

²The colour 'yellow' is a favourite with warriors and royalty. This is why this colour has been chosen for the cloth worn by the two brothers as well as for the sacred thread. Though the Pitambar is usually yellow, but other colours such as white are also used under normal circumstances. On the other hand, the sacred is usually white, but yellow coloured thread is preferred on auspicious occasions such a marriage and other religious ceremonies.]

देखि लोग सब भए सुखारे । एकटक लोचन चलत न तारे ॥ ३ ॥

हरषे जनकु देखि दोउ भाई । मुनि पद कमल गहे तब जाई ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi lōga saba bha'ē sukhārē. ēkaṭaka lōcana calata na tārē. 3.
haraṣē janaku dēkhi dō'u bhā'ī. muni pada kamala gahē taba jā'ī. 4.

Watching this magnificent sight of the two brothers, all those present on the occasion felt very delighted and happy. The people gazed at the brothers un-blinkingly, the pupils of their eyes riveted un-movingly on the latter¹. (3)

King Janak felt exhilarated upon seeing the two brothers. Then he came forward and caught hold of the lotus-like feet of the sage (Vishwamitra) (to welcome him at the venue and also to pay his respects to the great sage)². (4)

[Note—¹The entire assembly was closely watching Lord Ram and Laxman. The attention of each single man and woman was fixed on them. Remember: All the citizens had rushed to the venue just to see Lord Ram and Laxman (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240). They were not concerned with and interested in the wonderful spectacle that unfolded by the presence of countless kings and princes from every corner of earth.

²The king holding the feet of sage Vishwamitra has another connotation also. He subtly and silently begged, pleaded and implored with the mighty sage, who had great mystical powers and could turn the course of events if he so wished, to use his spiritual powers to somehow steer the course of developments to favour Lord Ram.

Another reason for Janak holding the feet of sage Vishwamitra was to ask the sage to forgive him for organising a ceremony wherein Lord Shiva's bow would be broken. This was done by the king because the sage was a worshipper of Lord Shiva, and the sage had to be kept in good humour and pleased for fear of punishment and curse at the temerity and the audacity of blatantly summoning all kings to publicly break Lord Shiva's bow. So the king held the sage's feet to pre-empt such an eventuality.

He wished to convey to the sage that he had no intention to insult or undermine Lord Shiva's divinity and supreme stature as the Great God of creation; perish even the thought of it. The only motivating factor was just to find the strongest and the most able husband for his daughter Sita.]

करि बिनती निज कथा सुनाई । रंग अवनि सब मुनिहि देखाई ॥ ५ ॥

जहँ जहँ जाहिं कुअँर बर दोऊ । तहँ तहँ चकित चितव सबु कोऊ ॥ ६ ॥

kari binatī nija kathā sunā'ī. raṅga avani saba munihi dēkhā'ī. 5.

jaham' jaham' jāhim' ku'amra bara dō'ū. taham' taham' cakita citava sabu kō'ū.

6.

The king prayed to the sage most politely and told him his own story (i.e. the reason behind organising the bow-breaking ceremony). Then he took (escorted) the sage around the arena to show him the place and the arrangements¹. (5)

Wherever the two wonderful princes went (along with sage Vishwamitra who was being escorted around the arena by king Janak), everyone there stared at them, fascinated with wonder and awe at their sight². (6)

[Note—¹The king told the sage that he has organised the bow-breaking ceremony to identify the most strong, able and valiant warrior to whom Sita would be married. The bow was not an ordinary one; it was Lord Shiva's bow and therefore it was not a joke to lift it. Only someone who has mighty powers and upon whom Lord Shiva is pleased would be able to achieve success. This ensured that Sita would be in safe and able hands; her security and safety was certain with such a husband.

Now, let us read the story of the great and formidable 'Bow'. It is described in Valmiki's Ramayana, in its Baal Kand, Canto 66, verse nos. 7-13. Briefly the story is as follows—In the dynasty of king Nimi (ancestor of Janak), there was an ancient king named Devraat. This bow was received by him for safe-keeping. The story goes that when Prajapati Daksha had organised a fire sacrifice, he had invited all the gods but neglected Shiva due to some past ill-will. The selfish gods partook of the offerings made during the fire sacrifice without bothering that their chief, Lord Shiva, was not invited.

This enraged Shiva, and he had strung this bow to destroy the fire sacrifice of Daksha as punishment. After that, he scolded the gods and threatened them that he

would cut off their heads with the help of that bow for the insult inflicted upon him by them collectively. They should have refused to participate in the fire sacrifice when Shiva was not invited, and should not have partaken of the offerings.

The terrified gods somehow managed to placate Shiva. Then he gave this bow to them to keep it safely somewhere. The gods then kept the bow with king Devraat for safe-keeping.

This story also appears in the Kurma Puran.

In Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 11-21, the story pertaining to the bow is as follows:--Sage Parashuram had told Lord Ram that Vishwakarma, the craftsman and builder of the gods, had meticulously constructed two bows. Out of them, the gods gave one, the bow that was broken by Lord Ram, to Shiva who used it to slay the demon named Tripuraasur. The other bow was given by the gods to Lord Vishnu.

At that time the gods enquired from Brahma (creator) who was stronger—Vishnu or Shiva. To determine this, Brahma created a situation wherein some misunderstanding was created between Vishnu and Shiva, as a result of which a formidable battle raged between them. Shiva's bow could not match the might and abilities of Vishnu's bow, and Shiva himself was vexed when Vishnu grunted ferociously. The decision was obvious—Vishnu was superior. Since this battle was devised to test them, and the result was obvious now, the gods and sages came to beg with Vishnu and Shiva to calm down. Lord Shiva was frustrated and angry at his bow that it had let him down in the confrontation. So he wanted to discard it. He gave the bow along with its arrow to king Devraat.

In Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 68-70, king Janak has said that after slaying the demon Tripuraasur, Lord Shiva had kept this bow with his grandfather, king Devraat. Since this bow was very destructive and feared by all, Janak decided to get rid of it by getting it broken during the marriage ceremony of his daughter Sita.

Kavitawali of Tulsidas also endorses this story that Lord Shiva had got this bow made with the specific aim of killing the demon Tripuraasur. Refer: Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 10, stanza no. 1.

The same story also appears in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 80.

The fact that this bow was employed to slay Tripuraa has been hinted in the present book Ram Charit Manas also—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 250; and Doha no. 271.

King Janak further told sage Vishwamitra, while narrating his story, that once he was ploughing a field when the tip of his ploughshare got stuck in the ground. Upon investigation it was discovered that it was pot in which infant Sita was found. Janak brought her home and brought her up as his own daughter.

In Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 61-68, it is narrated that one day when king Janak was sitting alone, sage Narad had come to visit him. The sage informed him that Lord Vishnu has come down to this earth in the form of Lord Ram and his three brothers, and that the Lord's cosmic Maya has come to his household as Sita. Lord Ram and Sita have an eternal union. So the sage advised him to devise a way to re-establish this union at the worldly plane because it would provide him great merit and welfare. The king had been thinking of some way to make this happen. Then he realised that Shiva's old and rusty bow should be used as a means to test who among the kings and princes on earth was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu because only he would have the guts and the strength to break Lord Shiva's mighty bow. Hence, the king had organised this ceremony.

There is a traditional story that says that one day Sita's mother was busy in some household work and she asked Sita to clean the platform where the bow was kept. Sita lifted the bow easily in order to clean the platform below it. This was a stunningly miraculous act as the bow was extremely heavy and mighty. So, Sita's parents decided that the correct match for her would be someone who could lift the bow and string it.

²Everyone was equally eager to have a close-up view of Lord Ram and Laxman. So the creator arranged to motivate king Janak to escort sage Vishwamitra around the arena to show him the place and the arrangements which were lavish to the extreme.

Remember: The venue was circular like a huge stadium. At the center of it was the raised platform where the Bow was kept, and all round it were the seats for the invited guest, the competitors, and the citizens. King Janak has made special arrangements for sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman (refer: Doha no. 244 below. So those near this place could have a good view, but those on the opposite side of the stadium could not see them so distinctly.

When Lord Ram and Laxman went around the circular venue, all the assembled people had an equal opportunity to see their beloved Lord up close. So, they craned their necks and gleefully had their eyes-full view of the wonderful sight of the two brothers walking past them majestically. Indeed, all of them must have thanked their good luck as well as king Janak to make their dream come true.

The king was well aware of the overwhelming and warmest of receptions that the two brothers had got when they had gone sight-seeing inside the city of Janakpur the evening of their arrival; the entire city had poured out to see them. Once again, Janak watched in amusement as the entire gentry of the city poured in as soon as the news spread that Lord Ram and Laxman are arriving at the bow-breaking venue. So, being a king, he felt that it was his duty and responsibility towards his subjects that he gives them equal opportunity to see the two brothers. The only way to do it was to take them around the venue, but it would be impolite not to take sage Vishwamitra also for the round. Hence, king Janak escorted all the three—sage Vishwamitra, Lord Ram and Laxman—round the venue.

There was another reason why king Janak took them around the altar where the Bow was kept. It is a well-established tradition that when one wants to pay respect or homage to some revered entity, such as a worshipped deity in a temple, he goes around it in a circle, a process called 'doing Parikrama' or circumambulation of the entity worshipped. This is a standard practice in all temples where a corridor is specially constructed around the sanctum sanctorum where the worshipped deity's idol is installed so that the worshipper can do this circumambulation.

Now, the Bow was Lord Shiva's, and hence it was worthy of greatest respect and honour. Going around it would help to reiterate that Janak has not the remotest intention to dishonour the mighty Bow of Lord Shiva by getting it broken. As we have read in the note to verse no. 5 above, this Bow was despised by all as it was a reminder of destruction unleashed when Shiva used it to vanquish Tripuraasur, his threatening to slay all the gods with it as they had insulted him by participating in Daksha Prajapat's fire sacrifice and accepting offerings when Shiva was neglected by the host, and more importantly as a sad reminder of Shiva's defeat in the confrontation with Lord Vishnu. So, no one liked the Bow; even Lord Shiva had despised it.

Therefore, no one would take offence when it is broken. It was old, decrepit, rusty and ugly to look at, and its reputation was mired by negativity throughout its

existence. But inspite of all this, it was in Lord Shiva's hand once, and therefore it deserved respect. Hence, by going around it on the excuse of showing sage Vishwamitra the whole place, king Janak had indirectly paid his respects to the Bow, and in the process had made the sage, Lord Ram and Laxman pay this respect too. It's so wise of Janak.]

निज निज रुख रामहि सबु देखा । कोउ न जान कछु मरमु बिसेषा ॥ ७ ॥
भलि रचना मुनि नृप सन कहेऊ । राजाँ मुदित महासुख लहेऊ ॥ ८ ॥

nija nija rukha rāmahī sabu dēkhā. kō'u na jāna kachu maramu bisēṣā. 7.
bhali racanā muni nr̥pa sana kahē'ū. rājām̐ mudita mahāsukha lahē'ū. 8.

Everyone saw Lord Ram according to the conception he or she had of him. No one could realize the mystery of this miracle (as to how the same person can appear differently in countless forms to different people)¹. (7)

The sage (Vishwamitra) expressed his satisfaction at the arrangements and appreciation for the king when he told the latter that the arena was indeed really well-planned and constructed. When the king learnt that the sage was pleased, he felt very happy and delighted². (8)

[Note—¹This fact has already been described above from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

Now, as far as the 'miracle of the Lord assuming so many forms simultaneously' is concerned, we shall read later on that when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya from his forest exile after victory in the war of Lanka, all the citizens of Ayodhya were eager to personally embrace and welcome the Lord. There were not only hundreds or thousands of them, but many hundred-thousands of them wanting to express their love and affection to the Lord. At that time the same miracle happened—Lord Ram assumed as many forms as there were people. Each embraced him personally, thinking that he was the only person personally meeting the Lord. No one had realized then also the mystery of this magical phenomenon. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

Well, the mystery is solved when we realize that Lord Ram was no ordinary human being but an incarnation or manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of the world. The Lord has 'Maya', the power to create delusions, as one of his countless powers. And it was this Maya that was employed by the Lord to create the delusion that he is present in countless forms, meeting each individual separately.

The same thing has happened here. Lord Ram had employed his power of Maya to make the people see countless forms of his self according to the way they perceived him.

From the spiritual point of view this means that every devotee and worshipper sees the supreme Lord in the way he likes to see him, and the Lord obliges all of them by making himself available to them in the way they would like to adore and worship him. For instance, some see in him their Lord, others see him as their friend, still others as their Father and Mother or parent, and some as perceive the Lord as their Guru. The Lord obliges them all. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 130 where sage Valmiki lists them as their heart is the habitat of the Lord.

Besides this, Lord Ram is actually the Viraat Purush, the all-encompassing and cosmic form of the Supreme Being. Every single entity of creation, all living beings known as the Jiva, are his form. This cosmic conception of the Lord envisages that he has thousands of hands, legs, heads, eyes and mouths. Refer the note appended to Chaupai line nos. 1 and 4 that precede Doha no. 242. Hence it is no wonder that every onlooker saw the same image of the Lord differently according to his personal preference and conception.

Refer also to “Geetawali Ramayan” of Tulsidas, verse no. 64, stanza no. 4.

²The king felt delighted and happy because the sage had not shown any sort of resentment or anger at Janak for first having the temerity of organizing the breaking of Shiva’s Bow, and then having the audacity to take the sage around the arena to show-off his wealth and pomp. The sage was very wise and a practical man, and so he realized that the king has taken him around the venue as a token of welcome and respect as the host always takes his special guests around the venue of any great ceremony to show him the place personally.

The sage was happy that this walk also informed all those present, the citizens as well as the invited guests and the competing kings and princes that the real hero, Lord Ram, has come. Remember: Sage Vishwamitra was not an inconsequential sage or seer, for his greatness and mystical powers were world-famous. This was one of the other primary reasons for Janak taking the sage around the venue—so that all those present on the occasion could have a ‘Darshan’ or divine view of such a great sage. It would be a rare privilege for everyone present there. This privilege would be raised to new heights when the people would have the golden opportunity to see the two majestic princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, with him, fulfilling their wishes.]

दो०. सब मंचन्ह तें मंचु एक सुंदर बिसद बिसाल ।
मुनि समेत दोउ बंधु तहँ बैठारे महिपाल ॥ २४४ ॥

dōhā.

saba mañcanha tēṁ mañcu ēka sundara bisada bisāla.
muni samēta dō'u bandhu taham̃ baiṭhārē mahipāla. 244.

Of all the elevated seats constructed to seat invited guest, the king and princes along with their family members and ministers, one was specially high and magnificent to look at. The ‘Mahipaal’ (‘Mahi’ = land, earth; ‘Paal’ = its lord or caretaker; i.e. king Janak) seated the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) alongside the sage (Vishwamitra) on this special seat. (Doha no. 244)

[Note—The seats were arranged in tiers, at greater height at the back and lower at the front so that everyone would have a clear view of the Bow. Now, the wise king knew that kings and princes do not come alone but are invariably accompanied by their ministers and courtiers. So, small raised platforms were constructed, each having a number of seats, so that a particular guest’s attendants and friends could sit alongside him.

A special seat was prepared for the sage and the two brothers. After doing the round of the venue, king Janak took them there and respectfully seated them.

Remember: The only exalted sage to attend the ceremony was sage Vishwamitra. So, the king had to show him special treatment to honour his exalted stature.]

चौ०. प्रभुहि देखि सब नृप हियँ हारे । जनु राकेस उदय भएँ तारे ॥ १ ॥
 असि प्रतीति सब के मन माहीं । राम चाप तोरब सक नाहीं ॥ २ ॥
 बिनु भंजेहुँ भव धनुषु बिसाला । मेलिहि सीय राम उर माला ॥ ३ ॥
 अस बिचारि गवनहु घर भाई । जसु प्रतापु बलु तेजु गवाँई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

prabhuhi dēkhi saba nrpa hiyam̐ hārē. janu rākēsa udaya bha'ēm̐ tārē. 1.
 asi pratīti saba kē mana māhīm. rāma cāpa tōraba saka nāhīm. 2.
 binu bhanjēhum̐ bhava dhanuṣu bisālā. mēlihi sīya rāma ura mālā. 3.
 asa bicāri gavanahu ghara bhā'ī. jasu pratāpu balu tēju gavā'ī. 4.

When the kings who had arrived to participate in the competition to lift the Bow saw the Lord (Sri Ram), they lost their enthusiasm, became sad because they lost all hopes of victory, and as a consequence they felt crestfallen and became lack-lustre just like the stars look inconsequential when the full moon rises in the sky¹. (1)

All of them (the competing kings and princes) were convinced in their Mana (heart and mind) that Lord Ram would definitely break the Bow; there is no doubt in it. (2).

But in the eventuality that Lord Ram desists from breaking the Bow (because he may not like to touch it out of reverence as it was Lord Shiva's Bow), then also Sita would put the victory garland around his neck (to declare her clear intentions of choosing him as her groom). (3)

(So they discussed the matter amongst themselves and advised each other, saying—) 'So brothers, it is better to go home (and avoid sure public humiliation) before it is too late and we lose our dignity, prestige and self-respect, before our famed strength, valour and glories are decimated, and we are subjected to immense public embarrassment and humiliation.²' (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 80, stanza no. 5 also. This idea has already been expressed by Laxman earlier in Baal Kand, Doha no. 238, albeit by referring to the sun instead of the full moon.

Again, this same idea is expressed by the narrator Tulsidas in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 241 while describing the scene at the venue when Lord Ram had arrived there. See relevant notes appended to these verses.

²A pall of gloom had descended upon all the the kings and princes who had come to break the bow; they were dejected and hopeless. The aura of mystical powers, authority and invincibility that surrounded Lord Ram together with the fact that he was blessed, protected and patronized by the mighty sage Vishwamitra and was shown special attention by the host, king Janak, convinced all the kings and their

attendants that it is useless and senseless to attempt to break the bow, and it would be wiser and prudent to desist from proving a fool of themselves.

They had already watched how the citizens of Janakpur were bowled-over and enthralled by the two brothers. So they deduced that if Sita wishes to put the garland around Lord Ram's neck to symbolize her decision to marry him, she would not only be supported by her father Janak but also by the entire citizenry of Janakpur. So in that case, if these kings tried to resist and raise an objection, they would be cornered and king Janak may order his huge army to imprison them. Remember: These invited kings and princes had not brought their armies along with them; they had not come prepared for a battle.

So, the wiser ones amongst them advised their friends that it is better to maintain their self-respect and dignity before it is too late to preserve it. It is better to return home and make an excuse, something like saying—‘We have come just to oblige king Janak who had sent us an invitation. We came here to witness this great event when his daughter is to be married. This is a polite and courteous call to thank king Janak for sending us an invitation to attend his daughter's marriage. We had no intention at all to participate in the competition to break the bow. We respect Lord Shiva, and would never imagine of ever attempting to break the Lord's Bow.’

This formula will help them to save their faces from sure disgrace, humiliation and infamy. This is the right time to back-out.

In Tulsidas' book “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 57 it is said that the kings lost hope because they felt that king Janak would break his own vow and choose Lord Ram as the groom for his daughter Sita. In verse no. 58 it is said that the good kings amongst the group said that it would be alright if Janak does so, as Lord Ram is the appropriate groom for Sita.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256 we find that Sita's mother has lamented at the decision of sage Vishwamitra at ordering Lord Ram to go and break the Bow. She tells her companion—“Will anyone advise the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) that it is highly unwise to allow the tender prince to try his hand at the bow because he is still a boy and not a fully grown adult. Why, even the formidable king of demons, Ravana, and another mighty demon named Banasur (pronounced as “Bānāsūr”) had not dared to touch the bow out of fear of certain defeat. All other kings too got defeated even though they had all boasted that they would break it like it was a lotus stem. Why then does the sage allow this boy of a delicate frame (body) to do something that is bound to humiliate him? Can a young swan ever lift the mighty mountain known as Mt. Mandara? What has happened to the wisdom of the king (Janak); has his mind taken leave of him? ”

This means that the queen would have preferred that since no other competitor has been able to lift and break the bow, let Sita be now married to the prince of her choice. After all, no king or prince could raise an objection now because equal opportunity was given to all of them, but they all failed the test. Now, Janak is morally free to marry Sita in the way he thinks fit for her future happiness.

Remember: The citizens have also been thinking on this line already. This fact is stated in Tulsidas' book “Geetawali Ramayan” in its Baal Kand, verse nos. 70.]

बिहसे अपर भूप सुनि बानी । जे अबिबेक अंध अभिमानी ॥ ५ ॥
 तोरेहुँ धनुषु ब्याहु अवगाहा । बिनु तोरें को कुअँरि बिआहा ॥ ६ ॥
 एक बार कालउ किन होऊ । सिय हित समर जितब हम सोऊ ॥ ७ ॥

यह सुनि अवर महिप मुसुकाने । धरमसील हरिभगत सयाने ॥ ८ ॥

bihasē apara bhūpa suni bānī. jē abibēka andha abhimānī. 5.
tōrēhum' dhanuṣu byāhu avagāhā. binu tōrēm kō ku'amri bi'āhā. 6.
ēka bāra kāla'u kina hō'ū. siya hita samara jītaba hama sō'ū. 7.
yaha suni avara mahipa musukānē. dharamasīla haribhagata sayānē. 8.

But not all kings were wise and prudent. Some were exceptionally foolish, being blinded by arrogance and a false sense of pride and ego. They laughed derisively and rebuked those who had advised them to desist from attempting to break the bow. Such haughty kings said arrogantly—(5)

—‘Marriage is a distant dream because first the bow has to be broken. How can anyone even dream of marrying the princess without breaking the bow?’ (6)

Even if Kaal (the god of death) comes to interfere and we have to fight with him, then we will defeat him and obtain victory in order to marry Sita.¹ (7)

Hearing the rant and the arrogant words of irreverent and haughty kings, the wise kings who believed in following the laws of Dharma (probity and propriety; good conduct and thinking; taking any action after duly considering all the pros and cons)*, and who were devotees of Lord Hari (Vishnu), were dismayed even as they smiled sarcastically and wryly at them (at the stupidity of these belligerent and haughty kings, and the way they are voluntarily inviting sure ridicule upon themselves)². (8)

[Note—¹The haughty kings were answering the wise king’s advice. The latter had said that Sita would put the victory garland around Lord Ram’s neck even if he does not break the bow. Refer: Chaupai line no. 3 just above these present Chaupais.

These arrogant kings took this as an affront to their ego and dignity. They decided that if they drew back it would be tantamount to accepting defeat even without a chance to try their might and luck, something which was unpalatable for their inflated ego. They were livid at the suggestion that they should give up their claim, which was like accepting defeat even without a fight.

They declared in one voice that they were ready to fight it out and wage a war if they are prevented from lifting and breaking the bow, and if any attempt is made to marry Sita to Lord Ram by circumventing this condition that she would be married to anyone who breaks the bow then what to talk of human beings, they would defeat the ‘god of death’ known as Kaal himself in a battle that is sure to ensue. In fact, we read a little later that when the kings had failed to move the bow and it was finally broken by Lord Ram, all these envious kings, driven by jealousy and hate, rose up in revolt, threatening to wage a war and capturing the two brothers, and even king Janak if he tried to protect them: Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 266.

These verses show the delicate and sensitive nature of the situation. And this also shows how impractical it was for Janak to marry Sita to Lord Ram at this late juncture. There was full certainty of a revolt by the invited kings and princes, and even if Janak succeeded in subduing them as they were within his realm and lacked the support of a full-fledged army, the repercussions would be horrific. When these kings returned home with a sullen face and angry at being denied an opportunity to break the bow and marry Sita, there were fair chances they all of them would team

together to jointly collect a huge army to attack and plunder Janakpur, inviting unimaginable horrors for its innocent citizens.

Remember: Janakpur was a prosperous kingdom, and it would be laid to waste by attacking armies of angry kings who would be smarting from insult and humiliation meted out to them by Janak if he clandestinely somehow managed to prevent them from making their attempt to break the bow and marry Sita. Hence, in spite of his internal wish to make this union happen, he could not do it.

²The wise kings had guessed that if the two brothers were accompanied by the exalted sage Vishwamitra, who by all accounts was showing extra affection for them, then they are sure to be of noble birth and followers of Dharma, the laws of good conduct and manners.

Then when they saw Sita they observed that she was very young, and not at all suitable for kings or princes much older in age than her. The only candidate that matched her age was Lord Ram. Though Laxman too fit the bill, but these wise kings were intelligent enough to deduce that out of the two brothers, Lord Ram was elder. This is because they observed that Lord Ram was always a step ahead of Laxman who was always behind him as the two brothers accompanied sage Vishwamitra while he was being shown around the venue by king Janak. The law of proper conduct and thinking says that one must not marry a girl too young in age as compared to oneself as this would be a misfit match and unethical. If one insists on this marriage then he is sure to be a lustful, greedy and selfish man as he has no bother to respect the girl's wishes and only wants to satisfy his own passions and gratify his sensual urges.

We have already read earlier that devotees of Lord Hari had seen their Lord in the form of the two brothers—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 242. Some of the invited kings were devotees of Lord Hari. So, amongst the assembled kings there were many who worshipped Lord Hari as their patron deity, and when they observed that they had a vision of Hari in the form of the two brothers the immediately decided that there was some mystery in this vision and it would be best for them to act prudently and avoid taking any step that would directly or indirectly cause offense to their Lord Hari. These were the kings this present verse is referring to.

There is one very important reason to delineate the 'good kings' from the others. These 'good kings' are honoured as being observers of the law of Dharma, while the rest as being reckless, egoist and selfish. We shall read in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 below that when individual kings failed to move the bow, ten thousand kings proceeded to lift the bow together! Imagine the horrible consequences for Sita if they had managed to lift and break the bow. She would have to become a 'wife of ten thousand husbands', an absurd proposition and most ridiculous. These mad kings did not think even twice before deciding to lift the bow together in such huge numbers, violating all norms of decency and ethics. That is why all the kings who attempted to lift the bow and who had arrogantly said that no one can marry Sita without breaking the bow, are deemed to be against the laws of Dharma.

*Let us now examine the qualities of these three groups of kings carefully.

(i) The first group consisted of those kings who preferred to abstain from lifting the bow as they guessed that Janak, the host and the father of Sita, has already decided to marry her to Lord Ram and therefore it is wiser and prudent not to enter into any confrontation on a foreign soil for the sake of a girl. A wise king is one who

knows when to make a strategic retreat and when to fight; he is able to judge the prevailing condition correctly and decide what is good and what is not for his future welfare and self-respect. In other words, such kings are not pretentious, egoist, arrogant, blinded by recklessness and driven by greed.

Further, they had also heard that Sita was of a very young age, much younger than them. So it would be unethical and immoral to marry a girl who was of an age that their daughters would have been.

This group of kings (described in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 245) were the wise kings and dominated by the ‘Raja Guna’ as they could think intelligently and wisely as what to do and what not to. The word ‘king’ translates into ‘Raja’ in Hindi, and the word ‘Guna’ means the inherent qualities of an entity (a person or thing) that is most characteristic of it. Hence, this common noun ‘Raja’ perfectly suits such kings.

(ii) The second group of kings (described in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 245) was driven by negative qualities of ego, pride, arrogance, vanity and haughtiness. These are dark qualities in a man which eclipses his intelligence and wisdom. Such a man becomes blind to realities and is driven by greed and lust. These qualities are known as ‘Tama Guna’ or dark qualities. Hence, those kings who were arrogant and determined to have Sita even if this means blood-shed were Tama Guna dominated kings. Such people always face ignominy and degradation.

(iii) Finally, the third category of kings (described from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246) was one which worshipped Lord Hari, was god-fearing and ethical. The kings of this group decided that it would be extremely immoral to marry a girl who is of an age that their daughters would be, and when they saw Lord Ram as an image of Lord Hari they decided that Sita was none else but the divine consort of the Lord, known as the Mother Goddess or ‘Jagdambika’. They have made this observation abundantly clear below in Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 246.

Hence, this group was both “Dharamsheel” (followers of laws of Dharma) as well as “Hari-bhakta” (devotees of Lord Hari or Lord Vishnu). These kings had the ‘Sata Guna’ as the dominant characteristic.]

सो०. सीय बिआहबि राम गरब दूरि करि नृपन्ह के ।

जीति को सक संग्राम दसरथ के रन बाँकुरे ॥ २४५ ॥

sōraṭhā.

sīya bi'āhabi rāma garaba dūri kari nṛpanha kē.

jīti kō saka saṅgrāma dasaratha kē rana bāṁkurē. 245.

[The wise amongst the assembled kings thought themselves inwardly as follows as they tried their best to persuade the defiant kings and princes so that they can come to their senses and see the light of reason in these words—]

‘Lord Ram would definitely marry Sita and thereby vanquish the haughtiness and arrogance of these (foolish) kings. Say, who can defeat the invincible and valiant sons of king Dasrath in a battle? (Doha no. 245)

[Note—Well, the “battle” here is ‘who manages to break the bow and marry Sita’. All the kings were pitted against each other in this ‘royal battle’; every one of them was

ying to break the bow first and push the competitor behind because the first person to break the bow would be able to marry Sita. If the chance is lost, it is lost for good.

These kings had a false sense of strength and invincibility. So the wise kings decided that their ego and arrogance would be trounced the moment Lord Ram breaks the bow and marries Sita. In this battle for breaking the bow and acquiring Sita as the trophy, who would stand a chance, individually or collectively, against Lord Ram?

Remember: Lord Ram belonged to a family of kings who were so powerful that they provided support to even Indra, the king of gods—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25. Therefore these ordinary kings and princes stood no chance of winning any battle for Sita if the things come to such a pass that a battle has to be actually fought for her. This talk that “we will defeat even Kaal” is merely big-mouthed boast.

There was a very important development round this time which convinced the good and wise kings that it is “certain that Lord Ram would be the one who would finally win and marry Sita”. What was this development, and how did these kings get a clear hint of things to come? Well, a little later we shall read that “the gods who had assembled in the sky to watch the spectacle, and they showered flowers on Lord Ram and Laxman” exclusively in the large gathering of kings and princes. If the gods showered flowers on Lord Ram to the exclusion of others it was a clear signal that they all favoured the Lord over the rest of the competitors. And anyone whom the gods favour is sure to win and succeed in any enterprise. The showering of flowers was very clear to all those present, but only the wise kings could decipher its implications on the outcome of the competition. The showering of the flowers by the gods settled the matter for good—that the victorious competitor would be Lord Ram. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 246 that appears below.]

चौ०. व्यर्थ मरहु जनि गाल बजाई । मन मोदकन्हि कि भूख बुताई ॥ १ ॥
सिख हमारि सुनि परम पुनीता । जगदंबा जानहु जियँ सीता ॥ २ ॥
जगत पिता रघुपतिहि बिचारी । भरि लोचन छबि लेहु निहारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

byartha marahu jani gāla bajāī. mana mōdakanhi ki bhūkha butāī. 1.
sikha hamāri suni parama punītā. jagadambā jānahu jiyam̐ sītā. 2.
jagata pitā raghupatihi bicārī. bhari lōcana chabi lēhu nihārī. 3.

[Presently, the good and reasonable kings spoke to their peers in a last ditch attempt to persuade them to abandon their recklessness and foolish attitude as follows—]

‘Do not unnecessarily brag arrogantly and die (i.e. be defeated, face ignominy and humiliation as well as ridicule) for a cause that makes no sense at all. Say, can anyone’s hunger be satiated with imaginary sweets?’¹ (1)

Listen to our advice (‘sikha’) which is impartial, based on purity of thought and emotions, and is judicious, prudent and uncorrupted by any personal vested interest (‘punītā’). [That is, don’t misunderstand us when we try to dissuade you from trying to lift and break the bow in the belief that we are taking sides with Janak or have been somehow under his influence, or that we have devised some cunning device by which we would first deter you from tackling the bow and then Janak will find some excuse

to let us marry Sita. Perish the evil thought; there is no such cunning and conceit in our mind. What we advise you is in good faith and in all honesty of opinion.]

Regard Sita in your heart as being none else but the Mother of the world ('jagadambā') herself personified. (2)

Similarly, treat Lord Ram as the Father of the world ('jagata pitā'). [In other words, they are divine couples whose union is eternal. They are eternally united with each other as Lord Ram is a manifestation of the Supreme Lord of creation, and Sita is the Lord's divine consort known as Mother Goddess.]

Hence, you must all enjoy this moment and make the most out of this rare and golden opportunity to fill your eyes with this divine and holy sight that is most magnificent and beautiful to behold (instead of being foolish, and not only missing this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity but also proving yourselves stupid and ridiculous by attempting to act smart and interfering with something that is inevitable in the scheme of things predestined by the Creator)². (3)

[Note—¹The honourable and god-fearing kings tried their best to prevail upon the arrogant kings to see reason and not create a piquant situation from which there was no going back without losing dignity and self-respect. By comparing their determination to marry Sita with trying to satisfy one's hunger by eating imaginary sweets these noble and virtuous Sata Guna kings advised their Tama Guna dominated compatriots that they should not be stupid and make a joke of themselves, that they should act wisely as their chances of breaking the bow and marrying Sita was no better than an attempt to fill one's stomach with imaginary food.

This talk that they would fight and kill Kaal (god of death) to marry Sita if he interfered (Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 245) was nothing but mere boast as Kaal does not spare even the gods all of whom would have to die one day at the end of one cycle of creation, though their life-span is huge when compared to the life of ordinary mortals on earth.

Refer also to "Janki Mangal", verse no. 60 wherein the good kings had ridiculed those who were arrogant by saying—"Aren't you all ashamed of yourselves; you fellows don't have the guts to look up directly eye-to-eye at Lord Ram, and inspite of it you boast so much. You already feel so inferior, so why do you plan to subject yourselves to further humiliation and ridicule, inviting shame and proving yourselves utterly stupid?"

²The wise kings reprimanded the pervert kings: "Oh you utter fools! Say, why don't you all enjoy, rejoice in and delight at the wonderful, the most fascinating, the beguiling and appealing sight of the two lovely brothers sitting on either side of the sage, a scene that you will never see again not only in this life but also in thousands of lives in your future? Wouldn't you feel ashamed of yourselves and regret later on if you let this chance slip by from your hands out of pretentious sense of false greatness, majesty and superiority arising out of your ignorance and arrogance."]

सुंदर सुखद सकल गुन रासी । ए दोउ बंधु संभु उर बासी ॥ ४ ॥

सुधा समुद्र समीप बिहाई । मृगजलु निरखि मरहु कत धाई ॥ ५ ॥

sundara sukhada sakala guna rāsī. ē dō'u bandhu sambhu ura bāsī. 4.
sudhā samudra samīpa bihā'ī. mṛgajalu nirakhi marahu kata dhā'ī. 5.

These two handsome and charming brothers are embodiments of magnificent virtues and bestowers of bliss and happiness. They live in the heart of Lord Shiva¹. (4)

Why would anyone (be stupid enough to) discard an ocean of nectar ('Sudhaa Samudra') which is very near, and instead run behind a mirage (seen in the hot desert) in search of water (to quench his thirst)²? (5)

[Note—¹How do we know that they (Lord Ram and Laxman) live in the heart of Shiva? Well, it is Shiva himself who requests the Lord to live in his heart—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda stanza no. 4, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 115. This is the occasion when Lord Shiva has come to offer his prayers to Lord Ram after the victory at Lanka over the demon king Ravana. Lord Shiva requested Lord Ram—“Oh Lord, my request is that you should live in my heart along with your younger brother (Laxman) and Janki (Sita).”

This verse has a profound implication. Since “the two divine brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, live in the heart of Lord Shiva”, it implies that they are very dear to Shiva, and also that they know the internal wish and thoughts of Shiva. This translates into practical terms to mean that Shiva will never oppose Lord Ram's wish to break his bow. Remember: Lord Shiva is also not very happy with this bow as it reminds him of a past incident when it let him (Shiva) down during a confrontation with Vishnu. So, Shiva would want that this constant reminder of his inferiority to Vishnu is destroyed forever, and if this makes his beloved Lord Ram happy and serves the latter's purpose, nothing can be better. Both Lord Shiva and Lord Ram would be equally happy!

Therefore, when Lord Ram decided to go and break the bow he was not, in any way at all, either confronting Shiva or insulting the latter. There was a subtle mutual understanding between them that it should be done. This is also the reason why sage Parashuram, who had come angrily to punish anyone who had dared to break Lord Shiva's bow as the Lord was his patron deity, could not harm Lord Ram inspite of all his jumping around madly, and his angry words threatening to kill the person who had dared to break the bow came to a naught.

²This verse is a sort of rebuke for the unwise kings. Why should they run around trying to find happiness and joy in life in a distant and illusive future when the same happiness and joy is available right now? Do they think that by merely marrying Sita they would get happiness? It is absolutely uncertain, and in fact it proved otherwise for Lord Ram too.

Remember: It was Sita's abduction by Ravana that led to so much misery for Lord Ram in the forest, making him wonder in the dense forest in her search, collecting a motley army of monkeys and bears to launch an assault on her captors which culminated in the destructive war of Lanka and a lot of bloodshed. Even after returning to Ayodhya and being crowned its king, a time came when, due to certain events, the Lord had to abandon Sita himself and be separated from her till the end of his life on earth. Both Sita and Lord Ram had suffered in the end of their lives on this earth, and it was never a story of a happy ending which read something like “---and they lived happily ever after”.

In other words, the view that if these kings managed to marry Sita they would find happiness is just a pipe dream like attempting to quench thirst by pursuing the mirage in search of water. Instead, why don't they enjoy the present?]

करहु जाइ जा कहूँ जोइ भावा । हम तौ आजु जनम फलु पावा ॥ ६ ॥
 अस कहि भले भूप अनुरागे । रूप अनूप बिलोकन लागे ॥ ७ ॥
 देखहिं सुर नभ चढ़े बिमाना । बरषहिं सुमन करहिं कल गाना ॥ ८ ॥

karahu jā'i jā kahum̃ jō'i bhāvā. hama tau āju janama phalu pāvā. 6.
 asa kahi bhalē bhūpa anurāgē. rūpa anūpa bilōkana lāgē. 7.
 dēkhahim̃ sura nabha caṛhē bimānā. baraṣahim̃ sumana karahim̃ kala gānā.
 8.

Do whatever you like. As far as we¹ are concerned, we feel that today we have been given the fruit (reward) of taking birth in this life. [In other words, we feel very glad that we were invited to Janakpur to witness this divine marriage between Lord Ram and Sita in front of our eyes. We would have missed this golden chance otherwise.]²
 (6)

Saying this, the honourable and good kings were filled with affection (for their beloved Lord) and took great pleasure in watching the magnificent beauty of the image of the two brothers (as well as the spectacle that unfolded before their eyes). (7)

The gods rode their air-planes and watched the proceedings from the sky. They showered flowers and sang melodious songs (to celebrate the occasion)³. (8)

[Note—¹The word “we” refers to the third category of honourable and wise kings who are trying to make the unwise and arrogant kings see reason.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 68, stanza no. 12; and verse no. 84, stanza no. 5 also.

³The gods have showered flowers now when Lord Ram and Laxman arrived and took their seats at the venue. The gods would shower flowers once again when Sita arrives at the scene—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 248.

Remember: Showering of flowers is a gesture showing extreme happiness and a warm welcome. Flowers are showered on auspicious occasions. Thus, the gods were exhibiting their happiness at the occasion when their Lord Vishnu, who has assumed the form of a human being as Lord Ram to fulfill their wish to come down to earth and kill their tormentor Ravana, the king of demons, is getting married to goddess Laxmi, the eternal consort of the Lord, who has manifested herself as Sita.

Refer note to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 245 heretofore.]

दो०. जानि सुअवसरु सीय तब पठई जनक बोलाइ ।
 चतुर सखीं सुंदर सकल सादर चलीं लवाइ ॥ २४६ ॥

dōhā.

jāni su'avasaru sīya taba paṭha'ī janaka bōlā'i.
catura sakhīm sundara sakala sādara calīm lavā'i. 246.

Finding that the time was appropriate, Janak sent a message to call Sita to the venue. Sita's friends or companions who were wise and accomplished as well as wonderful to look at escorted her gracefully to the venue. (Doha no. 246)

[Note—The companions of Sita have invariably been depicted as being clever, wise and intelligent as they were mature enough to guide her and give her moral support during this crucial phase of her life. These companions knew how to deal with sticky situations should they arise, and how to guard Sita from any pitfalls in which she might fall or errors she might commit due to nervousness or mere ignorance and lack of experience.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 228 when Sita was brought to the temple of Parvati in the royal garden to offer prayers; and (ii) Doha no. 263 when Sita was escorted by clever companions to the spot where Lord Ram stood after breaking the bow to help Sita put the victory garland around the neck of the Lord.

(b) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 6.

(c) Janaki Mangal, Chanda 10 and verse nos. 81-82.]

चौ०. सिय सोभा नहिं जाइ बखानी । जगदंबिका रूप गुन खानी ॥ १ ॥
उपमा सकल मोहि लघु लागीं । प्राकृत नारि अंग अनुरागीं ॥ २ ॥
सिय बरनिअ तेइ उपमा देई । कुकबि कहाइ अजसु को लेई ॥ ३ ॥

caupā'ī.

siya sōbhā nahim jā'i bakhānī. jagadambikā rūpa guna khānī. 1.
upamā sakala mōhi laghu lāgīm. prākṛta nāri aṅga anurāgīm. 2.
siya barani'a tē'i upamā dē'ī. kukabi kahā'i ajasu kō lē'ī. 3.

[Tulsidas says—] The lovely sight of Sita was so fabulous and enthralling that it cannot be described in words. She was none other than 'Jagdambika', the Mother of the world, and a living embodiment of beauty and charm, as well as all the good virtues and manners that exist¹. (1)

All metaphors and comparisons (that can be employed to describe Sita's divine and sublime beauty) look inapt or unfit to me (and if I dare to do it then it would undermine the dignity and honour of the Mother of the world, and would be tantamount to committing a moral sin).

All such worldly comparisons and metaphors may apply to and suit women of the mortal world (but surely not to Jagdambika, the Mother Goddess of the world). (2)

Say therefore, who will take this grave risk of attempting to employ metaphors and similes to describe Sita's beauty and charm indirectly, and acquiring the ignominy and infamy of being an incompetent poet (or a bad and incompetent narrator of events)?² (3)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 15; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 246 and its accompanying note.

Remember: It is against decency and proper conduct to describe in graphic detail the physical beauty and features of a woman, and if she is a young girl just about to be married and deemed to be a goddess in a personified form than this restriction is all the more important to observe. This is clearly stated by Tulsidas in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 103 where it is said about Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati “Shambhu (Shiva) and Bhavaani (Parvati) are the Father and Mother of this creation (world, universe); I will not say anything (i.e. keep silent) about their physical beauty and attractiveness or the way they dressed and behaved to charm each other”.

But this strict restriction applies only to the physical description of females and not so much to males subject to the condition that certain basic principles of etiquette and decency are maintained. This is the reason why Tulsidas has described the physical beauty of the images of Lord Ram and Laxman as they entered the venue of the bow ceremony in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244.

So Tulsidas suffices by saying that “Sita’s beauty was so great that it is not possible to describe it”. A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100 in the context of goddess Parvati where it is said “the beauty of the Mother of the world was so immense that even with countless bodies (persons) attempting to describe it simultaneously, it would not be possible to do so”.

²These two verses, nos. 2 and 3, answer the possible query that may rise in the mind of the reader that though it’s alright not to directly describe the physical features of a lady, but indirect means such as metaphors and comparisons can be employed to give an idea of how wonderful she looked.

So, Tulsidas answers it: nothing that is known or even imagined in one’s dream is as charming, beautiful and magnificent as the image of Sita. So it would be absolutely wrong and utterly incompetent for an honest narrator to cite similes and metaphors that do not fit in perfectly, or at least close enough with the actual scene. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 238 where even Lord Ram has surmised that it would be incorrect and wrong to compare the beauty of Sita’s face with the moon which is normally and universally used by even established poets as a metaphor for beauty, charm and loveliness.

In the following verses, Tulsidas explains why he has himself desisted from describing Sita’s beauty and charm by using comparison with other known entities.]

जौं पटतरिअ तीय सम सीया । जग असि जुबति कहाँ कमनीया ॥ ४ ॥
गिरा मुखर तन अरध भवानी । रति अति दुखित अतनु पति जानी ॥ ५ ॥

jauṁ paṭatari'a tīya sama sīyā. jaga asi jubati kahām' kamanīyā. 4.
girā mukhara tana aradha bhavānī. rati ati dukhita atanu pati jānī. 5.

If I compare Sita with other women of this mortal world (overlooking for a moment the fact that she is no one else but the Mother of the world known as ‘Jagdambika’), then say, where is a woman who is as beguilingly beautiful, charming and lovely as Sita in this world? [Hence, it would be a wrong comparison, and I don’t want to invite ridicule by doing it.]¹ (4)

Goddess Saraswati speaks too much (as she is the patron goddess of speech and knowledge which needs someone to speak to spread this knowledge). [Comparing Sita with Saraswati would be wrong because Sita keeps quiet most of the time as opposed to Saraswati who is very talkative.]²

Bhavaani (goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) is also not an appropriate comparison as she has only a half-body. [Lord Shiva is depicted in the Purans as being an “Ardha-Narishwar” or half male and half female. In this dual form of the Lord, the right side of the body is that of a male symbolizing Lord Shiva, and the left side is like a female and it represents goddess Parvati.]³

Rati (the wife of Kamdeo or cupid)) remains perpetually in grief as her husband has lost his physical body (“Atanu”) (and had to live in an invisible form as the emotions of love, desires and passions that have their seats in a living being’s heart). [Thus, Rati is deprived of the pleasure and comfort that a married woman gets by in the physical company of her beloved husband.]⁴ (5)

[Note—¹After declaring that it is not possible to compare Sita with any female of the mortal world, Tulsidas now cites some well-known goddesses in the heaven and then concludes that none of them is a proper comparison for Sita because of their shortcomings.

²Goddess Saraswati is the obvious first choice as she is the wisest amongst the gods and the goddesses in heaven. But she has a drawback: being the patron goddess of speech and knowledge she has to speak continuously in myriad languages and uncountable dialects. In this world, someone or the other is always speaking round the clock, and this is attributed to Saraswati because it is she that enables any living being to utter any sound or word.

Though she is the presiding deity for knowledge and wisdom which requires the spoken word to be spread in the world at large and made known to others, but being the goddess of speech she is equally responsible for good words that are spoken as well as for evil and uncouth words, polite words as well as boasts, and so on. So, she is corrupted and not free from taints.

On the contrary, Sita speaks little, politely and softly. She never uses cuss words and never swears or shouts at anyone angrily. Therefore this comparison would be absolutely wrong.

³Parvati and Shiva have been depicted together as “Ardha-Narishwar”, meaning the Lord whose form consists of half male and half female. Metaphysically this refers to the supreme Brahm, the Supreme Being who is deemed the primary Male, and his Shakti, his dynamic cosmic powers that is deemed the primary Female. They are inseparable from one another; one is incomplete without the other. In order to create, Brahm needed his Shakti, his dynamic powers to create, and hence these two aspects of creation—the Creator and his powers to create that are integral to him—are depicted iconographically in the form of the “Ardha-Narishwar”.

In Hinduism, a wife occupies the left side of her husband. Hence, Parvati is the ‘left half’ of Lord Shiva—meaning that: (i) if one were to worship either of them then the other half is deemed included in this worship; (ii) one must not distinguish between Shiva representing Brahm, and Parvati representing Shakti of Brahm; and that (iii) Brahm without his Shakti and vice versa are as meaningless as a body that is sawn from the middle into two halves.

Now, an interesting question arises—when did they separate? Well, when Brahm decided to actually start the process of creation, he had to use his Shakti that was an inseparable and integral part of his own ‘self’. So Brahm conceived of Maya or delusions that would give the impression that Brahm and his creation are separate entities as he wanted to make the forthcoming creation self-sustaining after the initial phase of creation. This means that the world should be given powers to keep itself replicating and moving forward on its own with the thought that ‘it can do this and that on its own’. Hence, ‘Brahm used his power of creating delusions, or ‘Maya’, to give the impression that ‘Shakti’, which is otherwise Brahm’s integral part, is separate from him. It is this ‘Shakti’ of Brahm that acts as the hidden dynamo that powers the world and keeps it rolling perpetually.

So we see clearly that at the point of time in the distant past when the process of creation was first initiated by the Supreme Being, this Shakti appeared to separate itself from Brahm under the influence of Brahm’s own Maya.

Coming to our present context of the mortal world, it is incongruous and ridiculous to even imagine of a person who is half male and half female. Even the gods and goddesses in the developed heaven do not have such an odd and irregular body. Though goddess Parvati as we know her and whose form is worshipped in temples has an independent body, but primarily in her ancient and original form she had a ‘half body’, the other being that of Shiva. But this form is not meant for the viewers of the mortal world who see Lord Shiva and Parvati as separate divine Beings. Sita lives in this world, but her primary form is that of Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu. Laxmi is depicted in the Purans as having a well-built and attractive form as she is the patron goddess of wealth and prosperity.

Therefore, no comparison can be made between Sita whose primary form is goddess Laxmi, and Parvati whose primary form is the left half of Ardha-Narishwar.

⁴The story of how Kamdeo (cupid) lost his physical body, and on the plea of his wife Rati was converted into an invisible form as the emotions of love, passions, desires and lust that lives in the heart of all living beings is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

Briefly it is this: Kamdeo was sent by the gods to disturb the meditation of Lord Shiva so that he can be married to Parvati and beget a son who would kill the demon Taarakaasur. When Kamdeo managed to break Shiva’s meditative trance, the latter opened his third eye located in the center of his forehead. Fire spewed out from it, and in his anger Shiva burnt Kamdeo to ashes for disturbing him. Rati, the wife of Kamdeo, was crestfallen, dismayed and aggrieved as Kamdeo had no personal animosity with Shiva due to which he would disturb the latter, but had done so at the request of the gods. So the punishment of burning him to ashes was misplaced and miscarriage of justice. So she came lamenting and grieving to Shiva and pleaded with the Lord to restore her husband. The merciful Shiva’s anger meanwhile vanished, and he realized that Kamdeo was actually not at fault. So the Lord blessed Rati that henceforth her husband will become eternal in the sense that he will live perpetually

in the heart of all living beings of this creation, and that included not only the mortal creatures but the gods too, in a subtle form in their hearts as 'Kaam' or the virtue of desire, love, passion and wants.

Rati wasn't satisfied. She wished to have the company of her husband in physical form. So Shiva blessed her that in the next era of the celestial cycle, known as the 'Dwapar Yuga', her husband would become the son of Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu that followed that of Lord Ram who was on earth in the previous era known as Treta Yuga, and then she would be married to him to regain her husband once again in physical form.

But our story relates to the 'Treta Yuga', because the 'Dwapar Yuga' was far away in the future. Therefore, at the present point of time Rati was suffering from the agony of separation from her husband Kamdeo (cupid). This is the story that is being referred to in this comparison of Rati with Sita. Sita's husband would have a physical form and live in her close proximity during her life, but Rati has lost physical contact with her husband Kamdeo who lives in an invisible form in the heart as the emotions collectively known as 'Kaam'.

Hence, this comparison is also not apt.]

बिष बारुनी बंधु प्रिय जेही । कहिअ रमासम किमि बैदेही ॥ ६ ॥
जौं छबि सुधा पयोनिधि होई । परम रूपमय कच्छपु सोई ॥ ७ ॥
सोभा रजु मंदरु सिंगारू । मथै पानि पंकज निज मारू ॥ ८ ॥

biṣa bārunī bandhu priya jēhī. kahi'a ramāsama kimi baidēhī. 6.

jaum̐ chabi sudhā payōnidhi hōī. parama rūpamaya kacchapu sōī. 7.

sōbhā raju mandaru siṅgārū. mathai pāni paṅkaja nija mārū. 8.

How can one dare to compare Vaidehi (Sita) with Rama (goddess Laxmi) who loves to have 'Visha' (poison) and 'Baaruni' (wine; an intoxicating drink) as her brothers¹.
(6)

[After having said that 'Rama' or Laxmi who was produced by churning the sour ocean is not an apt comparison with Sita, Tulsidas now goes on to say which 'Rama' would be more suitable for this comparison.

Verse nos. 7-8 and Doha no. 247 that follow them are to be read together to make sense of what is being said here.]

Supposing there is an ocean of nectar in which the virtues of beauty and magnificence are dissolved (instead of salt and other corroding elements in the ocean that was churned by the gods and the demons to produce Rama earlier), and in it is present a tortoise who is a living embodiment of magnificent beauty and charm (instead of the ugly tortoise that supported the Mandrachal from sinking into the nether world in the earlier case when the ocean was churned by the gods and demons).
(7)

The rope used to churn this ocean is made of the virtues of attractiveness, charm, splendour and radiance, and the churning rod itself is the sentiments of love and glamour condensed in the form of a mountain representing Mt. Mandrachal. The churning in this case is done by Kamdeo (cupid), the patron deity of love, beauty and

charm who is the most attractive and bewitching god in this creation (instead of the inferior gods and the ugly demons earlier). (8)

[Note—¹Rama is another name for goddess Laxmi, the patron deity of wealth and material prosperity. Though she has all other good virtues but there is a problem with her—and it is that she has two siblings who are her brothers, and like any sister she loves them. These two brothers are ‘poison’ and ‘wine or any sort of intoxicating drink’. How did this happen?

The story goes that when the gods and the demons had churned the celestial ocean in search of Amrit (nectar of eternity and bliss), many things were produced besides Amrit. The worst thing that was produced was an exceptionally corrosive liquid known as the ‘Halaal’ which was the strongest poison known.

‘Baaruni’, literally the liquid that is like water but is extremely intoxicating like distilled spirit (liquor), was another thing that was produced during the churning.

Amongst the other products that were ‘Dhanwantari’, the medicine man of the gods, the ‘Kaamdheni’ cow, a horse, the conch known as ‘Shankha’, the elephant known as the ‘Gaja’, the gem known as the ‘Mani’, the evergreen tree that gives anything desired and known as the ‘Kalpataru’, the celestial voluptuous nymph named ‘Rambhaa’ who was personified beauty and aroused lust by her mere presence, ‘Rama’ who had the pot of gold and a lotus in her hand who would be the future patron deity of wealth and prosperity, and ‘Amrit’, the elixir of eternity and bliss.

Rama’s association with all, except Amrit, by the virtue of their birth from the same source and at the same time made her tainted in some way or the other. For instance, to have a killer drink known as Halaal poison is not something laudable, as is to be closely related to something that is intoxicating such as Baaruni. These were the worst produce of the ocean, and hence Tulsidas has cited only these two. But if we go a little further we find that none of the siblings of Rama are worthy of praise. Let us see how.

Dhanwantari is the medicine man, and a person needs a doctor only when he is sick. That means, this medicine man brings with him sickness and disease that he will need to cure.

Kaamdheni and Kalpataru oblige all who make a wish, and not all those who make a wish ask for spiritual rewards. Hence, they oblige even those who may be sinful or have sinful intentions. Hence they are also tainted.

The horse never stays calm; it is always moving and fidgety. This means that a person who is compared with a horse is fickle minded and unsteady; he would run as fast as the wind but only to serve others and does not decide his destiny out of his own wisdom.

The conch (Shankha) is hollow inside but makes a lot of loud noise—i.e. it has no substance but is boastful and loud-mouthed.

The elephant (Gaja) is arrogant and reckless, and has an ugly body with a nose that appears to be a fifth leg, eyes disproportionately small as compared to its large rounded head, and teeth that protrudes out of its mouth like horns. It tramples underfoot the lower forms of life such as small creatures and plants; it even uproots huge trees for no fault of theirs.

The Mani (gem) creates a lot of fear of robbers and worry over its security. More often than not it leads to animosity and jealousy. It usually is acquired by wrongful means. Hence, its inherent character is impure.

And the Rambha creates a lot of heartburn for those who cannot have access to her, and may lead to a lot of hatred, jealousy and even strife. She arouses lust and sensuality which cannot be regarded as honourable emotions.

Therefore, none of the so-called siblings of Rama (Laxmi) can be said to be above board, and hence they do not suit for any comparison with Sita.

A very interesting point is to be noted here. Tulidas has cited women from all the three levels of the existing world—the terrestrial world (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 247), the heavenly world (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 247), and the subterranean world (the present Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 247)—to essentially assert that Sita is unique and unmatched; she cannot be and should not be compared with any other female.

The heavenly world is represented by goddess Saraswati, Parvati and Rati, the terrestrial world by ordinary women who live on earth, and the underworld by Rama as she was produced from the bottom of the salty ocean during the latter's churning by the gods and demons using the body of the legendary snake known as Seshnath as the rope, and Mt. Mandrachal as the churning rod.]

दो०. एहि बिधि उपजै लच्छि जब सुंदरता सुख मूल ।
तदपि सकोच समेत कबि कहहिं सीय समतूल ॥ २४७ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi upajai lacchi jaba sundaratā sukha mūla.
tadapi sakōca samēta kabi kahahim̐ sīya samatūla. 247.

[This Doha is in continuation of Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above.] On this wise, even if the best of the virtues of beauty, comeliness, magnificence, glamour and charm (sundaratā), as well as the best of roots of all happiness, joy and cheerfulness (sukha mūla) emerge (upajai) and collect themselves at one place to show themselves to the beholder (lacchi jaba), a wise and erudite poet would still hesitate to compare them with (tadapi sakōca samēta kabi kahahim̐) similar virtues of Sita because the former are no match for the gladness and joy that one gets by beholding the beauty and charm as well as learning of the immensity of the glory and majesty of Sita (sīya samatūla) (Doha no. 247).

[Note—In Chaupai nos. 1-8 that precede this Doha, Tulsidas is describing the beauty and charm of Sita. He essentially says that Sita's comeliness and loveliness, her charm and magnificence, her dignity and glory are beyond compare. Even if all the goodness and majesties of the world are collected and a learned poet is asked to judge them vis-à-vis Sita's virtues, he will unequivocally declare that there is no comparison. Only things that have some semblance of similarity should be compared, but the difference between Sita's virtues and other worldly virtues are like the difference between the earth and the sky.

The poet here is Tulsidas himself. So he says in essence that "I (Tulsidas) would hesitate to compare Sita with even goddess Laxmi, the patron goddess of all worldly charms and joys. I doubt if goddess Laxmi would even come near to any criterion that one would apply in comparing her with Sita. Laxmi isn't qualified enough to be remotely comparable with Sita."

These lines clear any sort of misgivings that may arise when Rama is deemed to be imperfect and therefore an unfit comparison for Sita as described in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 247 herein above.

Tulsidas asserts that even if Rama had all the best of virtues and the best of origin, he would not like to compare Sita with her. Why so? Well, the answer is found in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 246, and in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 247 both of which declare that “Sita is none else but Jagdambika, the Mother of the world, the Mother Goddess”. And therefore she is incomparable to any goddess or any other female who are all junior to her.

Besides this, it will be highly inappropriate to narrate the physical beauty of one’s mother, and if she happens to be the ‘mother of the entire world’, it will be the gravest sin one can ever commit. So, Tulsidas asserts that he won’t dare describe Sita, even indirectly by means of comparison with any known entity.]

चौ०. चलीं संग लै सखीं सयानी । गावत गीत मनोहर बानी ॥ १ ॥
 सोह नवल तनु सुंदर सारी । जगत जननि अतुलित छबि भारी ॥ २ ॥
 भूषन सकल सुदेस सुहाए । अंग अंग रचि सखिन्ह बनाए ॥ ३ ॥
 caupāī.

calīm saṅga lai sakhīm sayānī. gāvata gīta manōhara bānī. 1.
 sōha navala tanu sundara sārī. jagata janani atulita chabi bhārī. 2.
 bhūṣana sakala sudēsa suhā'ē. aṅga aṅga raci sakhinha banā'ē. 3.

Clever friends escorted Sita to the arena (of the bow breaking ceremony). All the while they sang melodious songs befitting the occasion in sweet voices¹. (1)

A beautiful Sari (a long piece of coloured and decorated cloth that is wrapped around so as to cover the whole body of a woman) adorned Sita’s youthful body. The Mother of the world looked most glamorous and presented a sight that was most fabulous and incomparable with anything in this world. (2)

Her friends had decorated every part of her body (such as the head, the ears, the nose, the forehead, the hairs, the neck, the hands, the waist, the legs, the feet etc.) very carefully and most diligently with suitable ornaments befitting that particular part. [For instance, ear-rings for the ear, a tiara for the head, a hair-pin and flowers for the hairs, a nose-ring for the nose, a necklace or garland for the neck, bracelets, armbands and finger-rings for the hands, waist-band for the waist, anklets and toe-rings for the feet, and so on.]² (3)

[Note—¹When Sita had earlier gone to the royal garden to offer her prayers at the temple of goddess Parvati, she was in the lead and walked confidently in the front of the group of her friends because at that time the girls were alone and there were no gazing eyes looking at them, but now she is feeling very shy and bashful as thousands of eyes are riveted on her. Besides this, the earlier occasion was an informal one and she was dressed in a casual manner, but now the situation was different. Now was a formal occasion, and she was heavily bejeweled and attired in glamorous clothes that were thickly embroidered with gems and pearls as well as threads of precious metals such as gold and silver.

Therefore, in the earlier case when Sita had gone to the garden to offer prayers it is said that “the clever friends of hers sang songs as they accompanied her (Sita) to the garden”, i.e. the friends had followed Sita from behind and sideways in an informal way like a group of friends going to a garden, talking amongst themselves and singing songs that were more like prayers instead of songs sung during marriage. They had no tension on their minds, and they were alone with no one paying any attention to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 228.

But now it was a very different condition altogether. Thousands of people were watching each step she took, and so it was natural for her to become nervous and fidgety. She was formally adorned with heavy ornaments and clothes, and had to be exceptionally careful with every step she took in order to maintain decorum, dignity and solemnity of the occasion. Even an ordinary bride is escorted by her friends when she walks down the aisle upto the altar to take her marriage vows. In this case the would-be bride, Sita, was a princess, and therefore it is natural that she would be honourably escorted to the designated place with the greatest of care, decorum and dignity. Sita had her eyes low, and she walked slowly. She was surrounded by her friends who guided her along.

In the garden Sita could look wherever she wished, she was free and informal, but now she had to keep her eyes low and not look beyond, say, a few feet ahead.

Sita’s group of escorts was surely selected carefully by her mother, the queen. These girls were expert in such matters. They knew how to walk with dignity and respect, how to sing melodious songs, and how to tackle emergency or some tricky situation should they arise, such as Sita inadvertently tripping over or slipping due to some unforeseen reason, or she becoming exhausted and wishing to drink some water or take rest while the competition for breaking the bow was underway, or giving her protection should some sort of fight amongst the kings erupted during the ceremony. There were many unforeseen things that had to be handled, and so Sita’s companions had to be intelligent and wise—or ‘clever’— so that they can take proper decisions and act most prudently on their own.

²Great care has been taken by the author, Goswami Tulsidas, while describing the decorations or beauty of the body of Sita.

Remember: He has always treated Sita as the Mother of the world and a divine goddess, and so he is always careful in using words while describing her, in any context whatsoever, that can never be regarded as being vulgar, indecent or undignified.

A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 11 Ka. Here the occasion is Lord Ram’s return to his capital Ayodhya from exile and victory at Lanka. On this occasion, the mothers of Lord Ram had got Sita bathed and decorated with ornaments and royal robes. It is said here that “the mothers-in-law respectfully got Sita to take a bath to clean herself, and then decorated every part of her body with wonderful ornaments and royal robes”.]

रंगभूमि जब सिय पगु धारी । देखि रूप मोहे नर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

हरषि सुरन्ह दुंदुभीं बजाई । बरषि प्रसून अपछरा गाई ॥ ५ ॥

raṅgabhūmi jaba siya pagu dhārī. dēkhi rūpa mōhē nara nārī. 4.
haraṣi suranha dundubhīm̐ bajāīm̐. baraṣi prasūna apacharā gāīm̐. 5.

When Sita set her foot on the ground of the arena, all the men and women who saw her beauty became bewitched and enthralled by it¹. (4)

In the heavens, the gods felt exhilarated; they sounded their musical instruments such as the kettle-drums and showered flowers (upon Sita), while the Apsaras (celestial nymphs) sang songs befitting the occasion². (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 6.

This line sums up the fascinating and enchanting sight of Sita's beauty as hinted in Chaupai line nos. 2-3 above. Sita presented such a marvelous sight of exceptional beauty that all those who saw her in the arena were bewitched by it. She captivated everyone's mind and heart by her beauty and majesty. In that arena, she was the center of all attention and attraction. This is the reason why she had felt shy and bashful as observed in a note of Chaupai line no. 1 above.

An interesting point is to be made here. When Lord Shiva got married to goddess Parvati, it has been said that “the assembled ‘gods’ were enthralled by the couple's majestic beauty and charm”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 100.

But now it is said that ‘the men and women’ were enthralled when they saw Sita's magnificent beauty. Well, the reason is that Shiva's marriage was attended by gods, and Sita's marriage is attended by human beings, such as the citizens of Janakpur. The gods are present here also, but they have stationed themselves in the heaven from where they shower flowers and play their musical instruments to express their joy.

²As we have seen earlier, the gods had showered flowers upon Lord Ram and there was merry singing in the heaven when he had arrived and took his seat at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 246.

Now, the gods have once again showered flowers when Sita arrived. This was a clear sign that the gods showed their happiness and pleasure when Lord Ram and Sita arrived at the venue. This was also a clear sign that they were the favourites of the gods, and this meant that they were to be soon married because the very purpose of this gathering was to find a proper groom for Sita.]

पानि सरोज सोह जयमाला । अवचट चितए सकल भुआला ॥ ६ ॥

सीय चकित चित रामहि चाहा । भए मोहबस सब नरनाहा ॥ ७ ॥

मुनि समीप देखे दोउ भाई । लगे ललकि लोचन निधि पाई ॥ ८ ॥

pāni sarōja sōha jayamālā. avacaṭa cita'e sakala bhū'ālā. 6.

siya cakita cita rāmahi cāhā. bha'e mōhabasa saba naranāhā. 7.

muni samīpa dēkhē dō'u bhāī. lagē lalaki lōcana nidhi pāī. 8.

Sita held a victory garland in her lotus-like hands¹. As soon as she stepped into the ground of the arena with this garland, she cast a quick passing glance at all the kings and princes present there². (6)

Sita wanted to see Lord Ram, and so her eager glances were searching for the Lord in the assembly. Therefore, she looked everywhere in the direction where all the competing kings and princes were seated (to see where Lord Ram was amongst them). But the deluded kings and princes ('naranāhā') were caught in an illusion, thinking that she was looking at them (or for them), and this created a fantasy in their minds that Sita was fascinated with them if her eyes fell on them even for a fraction of a second.³ (7)

When Sita saw that the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) were seated near the sage (Vishwamitra), she fixed her eyes on them and gazed at them with eagerness as if her eyes had found the treasure they were searching for.⁴ (8)

[Note—¹The garland that Sita held was not an ordinary victory garland but one that stood for victory over the world. This is because it would be put around the neck of anyone who broke the bow that was not an ordinary bow, but belonged to Lord Shiva, and was the one with which the Lord had slayed the invincible demon Tripura and had burnt the three formidably well-protected cities over which he ruled. Therefore it implied that only someone who is stronger than or at least equal to Shiva would be able to lift it and break it. And this is not a joke or a child's play.

Hence, breaking this formidable bow of Lord Shiva would clearly and indisputably establish the person who breaks it as the greatest warrior of all times, not only in the terrestrial world but also in the heaven and the nether world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 264.

Here it is not mentioned what sort of a garland it was—whether of gold or silver threads and having pearls and other precious gems as beads, or one that was made of flowers, and if the latter is the case then what flowers were used in it. But usually in such cases the lotus flower is used as it is considered the purest of all the flowers and is used to as an offering to deities.

In the book "Janki Mangal" of Tulsidas which deals exclusively with the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. In its verse no. 109 it is explicitly stated that the garland that Sita put around the neck of Lord Ram was made of 'lotus flowers'.

However, in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, Baal Kand, Sarga no. 6, verse no. 29 it is said that the garland was made of gold. It is also mentioned in this verse that the complexion of Sita was like that of gold.

In Srimad Bhagwat Puran, Skandha (chapter) 8, Canto (section) 8, verse no. 24, a garland of white lotus flowers is mentioned in the hands of Laxmi, the goddess of prosperity and material wealth, when she emerged from the Kshirsagar (the celestial ocean) when it was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternal life and blissfulness. She would subsequently put this garland around the neck of Lord Vishnu to marry her. Since Sita is an incarnation of Laxmi, and she is to soon marry Lord Ram who is a human form of Lord Vishnu, we can certainly guess with confidence that this 'victory garland' was made of lotus flowers.

A similar idea is expressed in the book "Geetawali Ramayan" of Tulsidas. In its Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4 it says that "the victory garland put around the neck of Lord Ram by Sita looked so wonderful and fabulous as if a row of swans (who are white in colour), who have flown out of the lake known as Mansarovar, have

alighted and comfortably settled down on a Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant, referring the dark-complexioned body of Lord Ram)". It is very clear in this metaphor that the garland was made of white lotus flowers because its flowers are likened to the bird 'swan' which is white in colour, and the flower that grows in the Mansarovar lake is 'white lotus'. The 'row of swans' is the chain of lotus flowers that have been threaded together to form the victory garland.

²This was natural and instinctive behaviour for Sita. When she came into the arena, she raised her eyes and quickly looked around. This was the first chance she had got to see the venue, and out of general curiosity she looked around to see the huge assembly that was extremely fascinating.

Everyone had waited eagerly with baited breath for her arrival, and there must have been pin-drop silence at the venue. There was an atmosphere of tense uncertainty and expectation all around—no one knew what would happen that day. Sita was all the more worried and anxious because her entire future life hinged on the events of the next few hours. Internally in her mind and heart though she had surrendered herself to Lord Ram, but that was something personal and secret.

She was already nervous about her future, and when she stepped in the arena she could feel the stiffness of the atmosphere and the hushed tension that prevailed everywhere. She could feel that all eyes were hawkishly looking at her, and it was a very natural and instinctive reaction on her part to raise her eyes and have a quick look around.

Though she had mentally decided that if she was to marry someone then he has to be Lord Ram, and goddess Parvati had already blessed her that it would be so when she had prayed to the goddess in the garden temple (refer—Baal Kand, Chand line nos. 1-2 and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 236 above), yet she instinctively glanced at all the kings and princes who had come to try their luck at marrying her to get an idea of what sort of people they were, the first impression that her mind and heart makes of them, and to see if they fitted in her imagination of who should be her future husband by any remote chance should her dreams of marrying Lord Ram crumble to pieces.

Her condition at that time was almost like a person who has been put on the block for auction, and this person nervously, anxiously, eagerly, but disgustingly, looks around with annoyance to have a quick look at the people who are examining the object of auction for which they have to bid with penetrating eyes, and getting ready to be the first one to grab the auctioned object!

As has been noted above, she had no real desire to see the kings and princes who had gathered there to make a quick assessment of who would suit her as she had already chosen Lord Ram as her groom at the emotional level. So obviously this glance around the arena was in a general sort of way, just to see things in a general way out of curiosity and fascination.

Another reason for Sita looking around is made clear in the next verse nos. 7-8 that follow below. We will observe that the real reason for Sita looking around was to see if Lord Ram is present in the assembly or not, but the deluded kings and princes thought that she was looking at them even if her glance fell on them for a fleeting moment as it moved quickly from one person to another in search of Lord Ram.

We can imagine the pain and anxiety that dominated not only Sita's nervous heart but also of all the citizens of Janakpur who had assembled there to witness the ceremony.

³Refer note appended to verse no. 6 herein above.

Sita had already heard that the two brothers have come with sage Vishwamitra to attend the marriage ceremony. So she was certain that they must be seated somewhere, but was not sure where. She could not ask her friends to point them out for her as it would be very indecent and improper. So she decided to look for them herself. Her roving eyes moved quickly around the circular arena, seeing each king or prince if he was her beloved, Lord Ram. She had seen Lord Ram and Laxman in the garden previously, and so would have no difficulty in recognizing them. But the pervert kings who were eyeing her greedily were so overcome with passions that even if her eyes fell on them for a fraction of a second to see whether a particular was not either of the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman), the concerned king thought that she was searching for him, and had taken a liking for him.

Finally, Sita saw that the two brothers were seated alongside the sage on a specially erected seat. As soon as she saw the two brothers she stopped looking anywhere, so the kings and princes upon whom she had not yet cast her glance became jealous with those who were the fortunate ones whom Sita had quickly seen a while ago. The latter category of kings became excited and this aroused animosity with the kings sitting on the other side. The former group of kings thought that Sita had stopped looking elsewhere because she has selected one of them, and that is why she did not bother to look at others. They became enthusiastic and were literally jumping with joy, while the other group sitting on the other side felt neglected and became angry.

This mutual jealousy and the delusion of acceptance or rejection was so profound that when finally Lord Ram had broken the bow and the victory garland was put around his neck by Sita and she stood calmly before the Lord with lowered eyes, the entire assembly of defeated kings and princes—except of course the ‘good ones’ who had sat quietly and had not participated in the bow-breaking competition—stood up in revolt, and there was all likelihood of an all-out war. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 267.

⁴As soon as Sita saw the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, she became happy as if her eyes had found what they were searching for. She could immediately recognize her beloved Lord. A similar idea is expressed earlier when Sita saw them in the royal garden where she had gone to offer worship to goddess Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 232. But upon close examination we find a fine difference in the two instances of Sita seeing Lord Ram. In the garden where she first saw the Lord it is said that she ‘recognised’ him, and in this current verse it is said that she ‘found’ him.

Well, it’s easy to understand this difference. We must remember that Lord Ram and Sita are respective human forms of Lord Vishnu and his divine consort goddess Laxmi. Ever since Lord Vishnu had to come down to earth as a human being in the body of Lord Ram (for a number of reasons, one of them being to keep his promise made to the gods and mother earth that he would become a human to kill the demons who were tormenting them), he was separated from Laxmi who took birth as Sita. So, as soon as Sita saw the Lord she immediately ‘recognised’ that the prince standing before her eyes was no one else but Lord Vishnu. In this case all she had to do was to decide whether or not this prince was her eternal Lord, Vishnu. And she at once ‘recognized’ him, that he indeed was Vishnu. And that settled the question once and for all.

In the garden, Lord Ram and Laxman were alone, but in the marriage arena however, the situation was different as there were thousands of kings and princes of all demoniations, and all of them were in their finest of royal garbs, robes, ornaments, crowns and other paraphernalia. So Sita (Laxmi) had to search for her beloved Lord, Sri Ram (Vishnu) in this crowd. That is why she rapidly moved her eyes from king to king. And soon she 'found' him in this crowded arena, sitting alongside sage Vishwamitra with his brother Laxman.

Let us take a simple example to understand this. Suppose a husband is separated from his wife in the melee of an overcrowded marketplace. The wife is wise and she maintains her poise, approaches the police station and gives a brief description of her husband's features. The police make an announcement that any person who fits this description should report to them. As soon as the husband arrives and the couple stands fact to face, the police ask her to 'recognise' who this gentleman is. It is obvious that both of them, the wife and the husband, would 'recognise' each other. Any other person who may resemble the description of the lost husband and turns up at the police station on the basis of the announcement would naturally be turned away by the wife as she knows who her husband really is, and can easily recognize that this person is not him. This is what happened in the garden. Laxmi, in her human form as Sita, could immediately 'recognise' her Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram as soon as she saw him.

Now suppose the wife and husband once again get separated, and instead of going to the police station the wife searches for him in the crowd. She will look in all directions, at every male face, and suddenly she sees that her beloved husband is standing in the corner of a shop with his friend, waiting for her. We say she 'found' him in the crowd. Here, she has not so much recognized her husband as being able to 'find' him in the crowd. In the police station however, she had to 'recognise' him. Perhaps all men of roughly the same description who turned up at the police station after the announcement are lined up, and the wife is asked to 'recognise' who among them is her husband.

This is the difference between the two instances when Sita had seen Lord Ram.]

दो०. गुरजन लाज समाजु बड़ देखि सीय सकुचानि ।
लागि बिलोकन सखिन्ह तन रघुबीरहि उर आनि ॥ २४८ ॥

dōhā.

gurajana lāja samāju baṛa dēkhi sīya sakucāni.
lāgi bilōkana sakhinha tana raghubīrahi ura āni. 248.

Sita felt shy and bashful (as she gazed at Lord Ram) because of the presence of elders of the community there, as well as due to the huge crowd whose attention was fixed on every move of hers.

So she calmly brought the image of Lord Ram into her heart (i.e. she enshrined the Lord quietly in her heart, fixing her mind not on the physical form sitting in the arena but on the subtle form that was enthroned inside her heart), turned her eyes away from him, and instead, started looking at her companions (i.e. friends) who were accompanying her. (Doha no. 248)

[Note—A similar thing had happened in the garden where Sita had gone to offer prayers to goddess Parvati earlier. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 232, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 234.

But there is situational difference between Sita seeing Lord Ram in the garden and her looking at him here in the arena. Sita realized in the arena that it is not good and decent for her reputation to look intently at a stranger-prince in a crowded assembly where her entire family, all the elders of the city as well as all the invited guests were present, and all of them had their eyes fixed on her, watching every move and gesture she made. Her looking fixedly at one place or at one individual would ignite a scandal, and give a bad name to her and her family. People would start gossiping that Sita has a loose character.

So prudently she turned her gaze away from Lord Ram, and pretended that she had not seen and recognized him at all, and that, if questioned, she can always say that she had seen in the direction of where Lord Ram was sitting in a causal manner just as she was glancing through the crowd of assembled kings and princes without any particular reason.

The situation in the garden was different. There she was alone with her close friends with whom she could share her internal and private feelings, unlike the situation in the arena which is crowded with eager onlookers scrutinizing each gesture and movement of hers. Some of these spectators are bound to be over-jealous who would jump to scandalous assumptions at the slightest excuse, at the drop of a hat so to say, to spread false gossip about her. So here she had to be extra cautious. In the garden she had been able to spend quite a bit of time looking at the two brothers, and even when she was forced to go away to finish her worship rituals as it was getting late, she managed to look back over her shoulders repeatedly on the excuse of seeing birds, trees and animals so that she can have one more glance of the adorable brothers before they vanished from sight—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 234 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.]

चौ०. राम रूपु अरु सिय छबि देखें । नर नारिन्ह परिहरीं निमेषें ॥ १ ॥
 सोचहिं सकल कहत सकुचाहीं । बिधि सन बिनय करहिं मन माहीं ॥ २ ॥
 हरु बिधि बेगि जनक जड़ताई । मति हमारि असि देहि सुहाई ॥ ३ ॥
 बिनु बिचार पनु तजि नरनाहू । सीय राम कर करै बिबाहू ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

rāma rūpu aru siya chabi dēkhēm. nara nārinha pariharīm nimēṣēm. 1.
 sōcahiṁ sakala kahata sakucāhīm. bidhi sana binaya karahiṁ mana māhīm. 2.
 haru bidhi bēgi janaka jaṛatāī. mati hamāri asi dēhi suhāī. 3.
 binu bicāra panu taji naranāhū. sīya rāma kara karai bibāhū. 4.

The assembled men and women at the venue were so enthralled by the bewitching beauty of Lord Ram and the fabulous charm of Sita's loveliness that their eyes stopped blinking¹. (1)

All of them (men and women) were worried and anxious in their hearts, but were hesitant (reluctant, afraid) to speak out about their feelings openly in public. So they

prayed to the creator Brahma earnestly and with a sense of urgency in their hearts—
(2)

‘Oh Creator (‘bidhi’)! Please quickly remove the stupidity that has eclipsed the wisdom of king Janak’s mind, and has stymied him, and instead give him right understanding like that of ours². (3)

Inspire him so that he discards his senseless vow without any regrets, and marries Sita with Lord Ram without any apology any feeling of wrong-doing, or making any excuses for changing his decision (because Sita is his daughter, and hence he has the right to secure her future to the best of his ability and intellect)³. (4)

[Note—¹When one is stunned by some sight and gazes at it with utter astonishment, the eyes stop blinking as an impulsive and natural reaction to the stupification of the brain.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 which also describes the same scene when the two brothers had entered the arena. It says that the “stunned men and women had their eyes riveted on the Lord and could not move their pupils (i.e. eyes) away from the two brothers even if they had wanted to do so”.

The marvelous charm of Sita and her literally out-of-the-world beauty had not only caught the attention of Lord Ram and Laxman but had captivated the imagination, the mind and the heart of the Lord so much that he had himself accepted this fact. This was the occasion when they had met in the garden where Sita had gone to offer worship to goddess Parvati. Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 230; (ii) Doha no. 231 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 235.

A little earlier, the citizens of Janakpur were enchanted by the charming sight of Lord Ram and Laxman when the two had gone sightseeing in the city. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; and (iii) Doha no. 223.

Remember: The Viraat Purush or the Supreme Being is the Lord who had created everything, including Mother Nature; the latter is another aspect or another half of the Viraat Purush and is therefore an integral part of the cosmic all-embracing form of the Lord. This ‘Mother Nature’ is also known as ‘Prakriti’, and it is astoundingly beautiful. It is so stupendously wonderful, fascinating and charming—and therefore beyond imagination and description by the limited abilities of the human mind—that legions of the greatest of poets and painters ever born on earth who had attempted to depict a fraction of its beauty, had surrendered themselves and had accepted without qualms that what they have presented to the world is just a glimpse of what to expect when one wishes to observe this miraculous creation of the Lord, known as ‘Mother Nature’ or ‘Prakriti’.

Now, it is the same Viraat Purush and Mother Nature, who are also known as Lord Vishnu and Laxmi at the cosmic level of creation, who have manifested themselves as Lord Ram and Sita respectively on earth. The virtues of beauty, magnificence and charm—or anything that is beautiful, magnificent and charming—are an integral part of the divine qualities of Lord Vishnu and goddess Laxmi at the cosmic level of creation, and therefore there is no wonder that their gross human forms as Lord Ram and Sita respectively are bound to reflect these qualities.

For instance, the sandalwood tree has a natural fragrance that is characteristic of it, and if any toy or pot is made out of its wood then the latter would emit a sweet scent reminiscent of their primary form as the ‘sandalwood tree’. They would not smell like articles made from wood of any other tree, such as the mango or the margosa tree. By merely holding an article made from the sandalwood tree one would immediately know about its origin. Similarly, the glorious and matchless divine virtues of Lord Ram and Sita were sufficient to make wise people realise about their divine origin and heritage as someone who were not ordinary human beings but Lord Vishnu and Laxmi themselves personified in their respective forms as Lord Ram and Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.

²To wit, oh Creator, inspire Janak to discard his stubbornness and overcome his imaginary fears of bad name by disregarding his vows of marrying Sita to anyone who breaks the bow of Shiva. If he does remain adamant then it is sure he would have to repent and regret for his foolhardiness for the rest of his life. Oh Creator, please somehow influence his mind so that he becomes reasonable and changes course according to the changed situation. At the time he made his vows he hadn’t known of Lord Ram and so was excusable, but now he has no excuse of bartering the entire future of his own daughter just because he wishes to stick to his archaic vows which have become outdated by now. After all, being a father it is his obligatory moral duty to see what makes Sita happy in life, and at the same time he should take into consideration the views of his subjects as well because Sita is as dear to all of us, the subjects of his kingdom, as she is to him. Can’t he read the writing on the wall? We had always thought that our king was a very thoughtful and wise man, but today we feel that he is acting stupidly and most impractically for he is neglecting many important factors and the changed equation that prevails now.

³The same hope is expressed by the citizens earlier when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to see Janakpur upon their arrival in the city two days back. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

Refer also to (a) “Geetawali Ramayan” of Tulsidas, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 70; (ii) verse no. 77, stanza no. 3; (iii) verse no. 78, stanza no. 3 which is explicit on this subject; and (b) “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 70 as well as Chanda no. 7.

The citizens were afraid to stand up and propose to king Janak that he should cancel the condition that anyone who breaks the bow would marry Sita, and instead go ahead and straight away marry Sita with Lord Ram. But it is easy said than done, for the king had to take into consideration so many factors before taking any impulsive step. For one, this would leave a permanent scar on his immaculate reputation as a king who never breaks his vow no matter what befalls him, and second there was a certainty of revolt by the assembled kings who would fight till death for being called and then insulted. Even if Janak managed to somehow calm them by reasoning or subdue them by force because it was his realm and he had a huge army at his disposal which the invited kings lacked, the repercussions would be horrendous. As soon as these kings and princes returned to their respective kingdoms, they would all join hands and launch an attack on Janakpur. It will lead to bloodshed and absolute destruction and ruin. No sensible king would ever allow this misery to be perpetrated upon his kingdom and its innocent citizens.

The king himself was in a grave dilemma—had he known about these two princes before making his declaration then he would have offered to marry Sita and all her other sisters directly with the four sons of king Dasrath, i.e. Lord Ram and his three brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, which in fact Janak actually did later on when Lord Ram broke the bow and his marriage with Sita was sealed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 325.

The above fact that Janak was so enchanted with Lord Ram that if he had the choice he would have certainly married his daughter Sita with the Lord is reiterated elsewhere also—e.g. in (a) “Geetawali Ramayan”, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 61, stanza nos. 3-4; (ii) verse no. 64-66, and 69 which are very explicit on this aspect; (iii) verse no. 68, stanza no. 5-6, and 9; and in (b) “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 41 and 48, as well as Chanda no. 6.

Another fact is that Janak was extremely enchanted by the two brothers; this is clear when he had first seen them. The occasion was the king’s going to welcome sage Vishwamitra when he had arrived at Janakpur along with Lord Ram and Laxman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217.]

जगु भल कहिहि भाव सब काहू । हठ कीन्हें अंतहुँ उर दाहू ॥ ५ ॥
एहि लालसाँ मगन सब लोगू । बरु साँवरो जानकी जोगू ॥ ६ ॥

jagu bhala kahihī bhāva saba kāhū. haṭha kīnhēm antahum̐ ura dāhū. 5.
ēhīm lālasām̐ magana saba lōgū. baru sām̐varō jānakī jōgū. 6.

The whole world would approve of it (i.e. of Janak deciding to marry Sita with Lord Ram by circumventing the condition of breaking of the bow) because this is what the people want. [There will be no opposition or criticism of this decision of the king.]

On the other hand, being adamant and reluctant to adapt to change situation would only produce internal agony, restlessness and grief in the end.¹ (5)

Everyone was overwhelmed with this desire that Sita should be married with Lord Ram, and they were all convinced with the idea that the dark-complexioned prince (Lord Ram) was the most suitable groom for Janki (daughter of Janak; Sita). [All of them wanted that Sita should be married to Lord Ram.]² (6)

[Note—¹The citizens discussed the matter of Janak’s reluctance to break his vow that Sita would be married to anyone who broke the bow, and instead deciding to marry Sita with Lord Ram directly. They understood that Janak was afraid of a bad name and ignominy that would come to him for breaking his own vow.

So in this line they say that it is wrong to think this way. A good king is one who keeps in mind the views of his subjects when taking any decision. Now since the whole city is in favour of Sita marrying Lord Ram, king Janak must not feel guilty of breaking his vows. Should the need arise, the entire city was ready to back him and stand by his decision.

Remember: It is a king’s own people, the subjects of his kingdom, who are most affected by any of his actions and decisions, and therefore they are the ones who either praise him or criticise him. No one else outside the kingdom is much interested. Therefore, if the citizens want that Sita should be married to Lord Ram and if it

necessitates the king breaking his vows, there should be no problem; the king would be assured of full support from his subjects. If the subjects of a king are happy and contented by his actions and decisions, it bids well for the king himself.

Just the opposite happens if the king takes any decision or action that is not liked by the people. There would be discontent and resistance amongst the masses. In the present case, no one wants that Sita should be married to anyone other than Lord Ram, and if the king goes ahead with his stubborn decision then it is obvious that the citizens would be displeased with him.

Besides the political ramifications it would have on the kingdom, the personal life of Sita would be thrown in a hell-fire of eternal grief and mental suffering because she would be forced into a marriage she does not approve of. This would cause immense grief for the entire royal family in the long run. So the citizens wonder why is the king being not reasonable and understanding; why is he not adopting himself to the changed circumstances.

Now the question arises, “what is this changed situation?” Well, the answer is clear and stark—at the time of making the vow and the declaration that Sita would be married to any warrior who would lift and break the bow, Janak was not aware of or acquainted with Lord Ram; the king had not seen him at that time. But now that he has personally seen Lord Ram and is also personally attracted to the Lord, then he must change his thinking to suit this new development. After all, a wise king is one who adapts himself to changed situations quickly, and adopts a line of action that best suits this new and changed situation. With such a suitable prince—who is obviously the best groom for Sita—being present right in front, it will be highly nonsensical for Janak to stick to some old-fashioned views and ridiculously stubborn vows that would jeopardise the future happiness of his own daughter Sita.

Therefore, the citizens argue, the king must change his way of thinking, abandon his vows and straight away marry Sita with Lord Ram. After all, Sita was his daughter and he had the full moral right to ensure her future happiness and well-being. This was no ordinary competition that was being held just to decide as to who was the greatest warrior in the world, but the future of an innocent girl was at stake. And as a father, it was the moral, social, ethical and religious duty and responsibility of Janak to see that the best option is chosen for her, the best future can be ensured for her, and she should be consulted before any final decision as it directly concerned her personal life.

Remember in this context that not only the citizens but Sita too had wanted to marry Lord Ram. Even her father, king Janak, had wanted in his heart that it would have been so nice if somehow things could be turned in favour of Sita marrying Lord Ram though he could not muster personal courage to supercede or circumvent his vows. Not only this, a big chunk of the invited kings too favoured Sita marrying Lord Ram. Hence, there would be no problem whatsoever if Janak changed his decision and declared that he has decided to marry his daughter Sita with Lord Ram.

²‘Everyone’ here includes the citizens of Jankpur (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 223) as well as the good kings (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246).]

तब बंदीजन जनक बोलाए । बिरिदावली कहत चलि आए ॥ ७ ॥

कह नृपु जाइ कहहु पन मोरा । चले भाट हियँ हरषु न थोरा ॥ ८ ॥

taba bandījana janaka bōlā'ē. biridāvalī kahata cali ā'ē. 7.

kaha nṛpu jā'i kahahu pana mōrā. calē bhāṭa hiyam' haraṣu na thōrā. 8.

[Now, we come to the next phase of the story. After everyone was seated and Sita arrived, king Janak called in his royal heralds and ordered to them to make a formal declaration of his vow—that anyone who is able to break the formidable bow of Lord Shiva would marry Sita. This declaration would kick-start the actual competition.]

Then Janak summoned his royal criers and heralds, and they came in eulogizing his race and singing the praise of his ancestors (biridāvalī)¹. (7)

The king ordered them—‘Go and declare my vow to the assembly.’

The heralds immediately went on stage to do as ordered, and their hearts were very happy and excited². (8)

[Note—¹This was a normal practice with kings in olden days. When some function or celebration was organized, the royal heralds sang long adulatory verses, praising and eulogizing the great deeds done by all the kings of their master's royal lineage.

Refer also to: “Geetawali Ramayan”, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 84, stanza no. 7; (ii) verse no. 89, stanza no. 1-3.

A similar thing—of heralds singing laudatory songs praising the members of the royal family and their great race—has happened later when they have praised the dynasty of the kings of Ayodhya, the family to which Lord Ram belonged, when he along with his brothers, his father king Dasrath and the rest of the royal family members arrived in a ceremonial marriage procession for the actual marriage rituals. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 316.

In Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 105, it is said while describing the greatness of the holy pilgrim site of Prayag (also known as Triveni, the confluence of three holy rivers—the Ganges, the Yamuna and the Saraswati) that “its greatness and holiness, its immaculate virtues and astounding spiritual glories are sung by acclaimed ‘heralds’, the Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures)”. In this case however, the ‘heralds’ are wise men and elders who praise the spiritual benefits that this holy place bestows upon those who pay their respects to it.

Another place where such heralds have been employed as a metaphor for those who sing glories is when Lord Ram and his brother Laxman are wandering in the forest, appreciating its magnificent beauty and praising its lush green environment during the spring time when the entire forest seems to become vibrant, lively and colourful. Here the Lord observes the beauty of Nature at its best, and during the course of praising its fabulous charm he cites its various sounds that enthralled his mind and heart. Amongst these fascinating sounds that were unique to that dense forest was the sound of the bird known as Chatak who was singing away merrily. The Lord says that “this Chatak is like Nature's herald who is praising the magnificent beauty and glories of the place”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.

²King Janak had so many court heralds, but only the expert ones among them were selected to make this presentation and declare the king's vows formally once again as a sign that the bow breaking competition has started.

Therefore, those who were selected for this purpose, those who took the stand at the podium to make this announcement, felt very honoured and privileged. That is why they felt very-very happy. They felt excited because their declaration would start a competition like the one the world had never seen before. At the instant when they stood on the stage to make this declaration, all eyes were upon them, and this made them feel proud and important.]

दो०. बोले बंदी बचन बर सुनहु सकल महिपाल ।
पन बिदेह कर कहहिं हम भुजा उठाइ बिसाल ॥ २४९ ॥

dōhā.

bōlē bandī bacana bara sunahu sakala mahipāla.
pana bidēha kara kahahim̐ hama bhujā uṭhā'i bisāla. 249.

The royal criers and heralds announced the decision of king Janak as follows—‘Listen all the great kings who have assembled here. We raise our arms high to declare the great vow¹ that Videha (king Janak) has made. (Doha no. 249)

[Note—¹The word “bisāla” technically means ‘big, huge, large, long, remarkable. In the present context however it means that the heralds raised their arms high and proclaimed in an unambiguous language the vows of king Janak. They affirmed that what they are saying is of profound importance and irrevocable, and so everyone present there should listen to them carefully. The challenge is formidable, and the reward for the winner is mighty great. This reward is described in forthcoming Chuapai line nos. 1-4 that follow this Doha below.

The word is an adjective, and its placement at the end of the 2nd line of this Doha is very strategic. It refers to the ‘dignified position of the heralds as representative of their king’ as well as to the ‘mighty vow of the king that is irrevocable, unique and remarkable’. So it simultaneously means—(i) that the declaration made by the heralds was done with absolute confidence, and that it was irrevocable and cannot be challenged, and (ii) it also means that the formidable vow which the king has made is also irrevocable and of immense importance. Why is it so? Because it would determine who is the strongest and the bravest warrior in the world. ‘Strongest’—because the bow was exceptionally heavy and stern, and only a person who can have the strength that matches that of Lord Shiva, to whom this bow originally belonged, would be able to lift it.

‘Bravest’—because its breaking meant challenging the might of Shiva, and it is no joke to stand up against the Lord’s wrath should he become angry on the person who dares to break the bow without his (Lord Shiva’s) permission.

And, ‘warrior’—because only someone who is an expert archer and an excellent warrior would know how to raise and string such a heavy and huge bow, and then pull its string so much back that it would snap from the middle. This feat requires astounding strength, courage, valour, skill, expertise and confidence.

Refer also to “Geetawali Ramayan”, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 7.

What would be the ‘unique reward’ for someone fulfilling this ‘unique vow’ of Janak? Well, it would be the hand of Sita, the daughter of Janak and the most beautiful girl of the time, in marriage.

The following Chaupai line nos. 3-4 herein below describe what this ‘great vow’ of king Janak was, as well as its equally ‘great reward’.]

चौ०. नृप भुजबलु बिधु सिवधनु राहू । गरुअ कठोर बिदित सब काहू ॥ १ ॥

रावनु बानु महाभट भारे । देखि सरासन गवँहि सिधारे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nṛpa bhujabalu bidhu sivadhanu rāhū. garu'a kaṭhōra bidita saba kāhū. 1.
rāvanu bānu mahābhaṭa bhārē. dēkhi sarāsana gavam̐hiṁ sidhārē. 2.

[The criers and the heralds continued with their proclamation—] ‘It is well known to everyone that Shiva’s bow was very heavy, sturdy, strong and stern. It was like the planet Rahu as far as the strength of the arms of all the kings and princes was concerned.

[To wit, just like the case of Rahu causing the eclipse of the moon, this bow would vanquish the pride of all the kings that they are very strong, able and powerful, that there is nothing impossible for them, that to break this old and rusty bow is like a child’s play for them. The bow would put all of them to shame. The shine of self-confidence, of majesty and authority, of power and pomp that is now radiating from their faces would be replaced by gloom and dejection. Soon, they would sit down with lowered heads and faces darkened by shame and loss of prestige.]¹ (1)

‘Ravana (pronounced “Raavana”) and Banasur (pronounced “Baanaasur”) are two great and formidable demons. They saw the bow and silently sneaked away (without even touching it)². (2)

[Note—¹Rahu is a legendary mythological demon that devours the full moon once in a while, causing the latter’s eclipse. Refer note that has been appended to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 238 above which tells the story of Rahu and why he devours the moon, causing the latter’s eclipse.

In the context of the present verse this metaphor means that the strongest, the most muscular, the most able and the bravest among the kings, who are proud of their strength and power and invincibility, would fail to lift and break the bow; they would be defeated by the bow. The bow would literally eclipse their glory, their reputation and fame as brave, strong and invincible warriors just like the Rahu who casts its dark shadow on the moon and eclipses the latter’s magnificent brightness, its wonderful beauty and its glories—in short, the Rahu tramples underfoot the pride and vanity of the moon that it is the most attractive, the most charming and brightest object in the night sky, that it is universally used as a metaphor for beauty, charm, magnificence, attractiveness, as well as a fount of bliss, peace and joy by all the poets and bards in this world.

The moon, when it is scared out of its wits by the overbearing presence of Rahu, appears dark and gloomy as if all its glory and charm have been trampled underfoot and crushed to pieces by its nemesis, the demon Rahu.

Similarly, the pride of the assembled kings that they are extremely strong and able, that there is nothing impossible for them, that this rusty and old bow is like a child’s play for them, that it would stand no chance against the might of their muscular arms—all such notions of strength, power, majesty and grandeur would be

decimated and crushed the instant they go near the bow. The formidable bow of Lord Shiva would cast its dark, grim shadow of sternness and invincibility on the pride of the kings and princes, vanquishing their ego, haughtiness and arrogance, and casting a pall of gloom on all of them like the Rahu casting its dark shadow on the full moon, eclipsing it and trouncing the latter's pride of being the most wonderful entity in the whole of the night sky.

In other words, the kings are able to maintain their show of prestige, invincibility, majesty, grandeur and strength only till the time they do not touch the bow, because as soon as they touch it, the bow would suck out all their glories, the bow would crush their pride of being extremely strong and able when they fail to move it even a fraction of an inch. The kings' vanity and false pretensions of glory and majestic powers would crumble into dust. Their faces that are at present shining with pride and radiating with self-confidence would be veiled by a dark pall of gloom and dejection when all their prestige, self-respect and dignity would be crushed under the might of Lord Shiva's bow.

It is very important to note that all the kings have been compared to the 'moon' that is devoured by Rahu to cause the lunar eclipse, and no reference is made of the fact that the Rahu also causes the eclipse of the 'sun' when it devours the latter, or casts its shadow on the sun. The reason for this clever maneuvering with words by Tulsidas is that Lord Ram, who will ultimately break the bow, belongs to the 'solar race', the Sun dynasty.

Hence, no mention is made in this verse of the Rahu eclipsing the sun because the bow, which is compared to Rahu, would not be able to stand against the will and strength of Lord Ram, of the 'solar race', as the Lord would easily break it; the bow would not be able to resist Lord Ram as it did in the case of all other kings.

Unlike the other kings (compared to the 'moon') who were defeated by the bow (compared to 'Rahu') as it refused to be moved by them, Lord Ram (compared to the 'sun') was easily able to defeat the bow by lifting and breaking it. The 'lifting and breaking' of the bow by Lord Ram was tantamount to crushing the pride and ego of the bow that no one can stand against its might and powers.

It was a sort of punishment for the bow that it was being too arrogant and haughty. Through this breaking of the bow, Lord Ram gave a signal to the demons and all the other evil forces in this world that enough was enough, that though they could have their way till now, their evil game was soon going to come to an end as the Lord has arrived to eliminate them and neutralise their evil powers.

Ram was Lord Vishnu himself personified because Lord Shiva did not oppose nor felt angry when the Lord broke his (Shiva's) bow. This is because Shiva had already suffered defeat at the hands of Vishnu on an earlier occasion when both of them fought using their respective bows, Shiva using the bow that was to be broken today, and Vishnu using his famed bow known as Saarang. This fight was orchestrated by the creator Brahma at the behest of the gods who wanted to know which of the two great bows—one held by Vishnu and the other by Shiva—was better and the greatest. Both these bows were created by Vishwakarma, the engineer of the gods. When Shiva was defeated, he got so annoyed and disgusted with his bow that he discarded it as he did not want to have it with him in future, and so he gave it to an ancestor of king Janak. Shiva himself secretly wanted this bow destroyed as it was a symbol of his defeat. But who in this creation would ever gather courage to destroy a bow that was once held in the hands of the greatest of gods, the Great Lord known as Mahadeva or Shiva? This destroyer had to be Lord Vishnu because not only had he actually defeated Shiva during that confrontation and therefore there was no question of his

insulting or undermining Shiva's dignity or greatness by breaking the latter's bow, but also because Lord Shiva himself was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Lord Ram. In fact, Lord Shiva always repeated the holy name of Lord Ram as his chosen Mantra (spiritual formula); Shiva had Lord Ram enshrined in his heart as his dearest Lord.

Hence, Lord Shiva would not feel affronted at all—but would rather feel happy and give his nod—when Lord Ram would break this bow, as it had been forsaken and discarded by Shiva himself. This bow was a constant source of irritation for Lord Shiva as it reminded him of this unfortunate incident when he was instigated to fight with his beloved and revered Lord Vishnu just because the selfish gods wished to determine which of the two bows constructed by Vishwakarma was stronger and better. Shiva wanted to erase this bitter memory, and he wanted to convey a message to Lord Vishnu, albeit in the latter's form as Lord Ram, that the earlier incident when they had fought was not out of Shiva's own wish or volition but due to some mischievous maneuvering by the gods. So, Lord Vishnu must forgive him (Shiva) and bury any kind of misunderstanding that he (Vishnu) might harbour against Shiva.

So we find that Lord Shiva had used this opportunity of breaking of his bow by Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram to reiterate his (Shiva's) eternal love and respect for Lord Vishnu, and to tell the demons that it would be useless for them to seek any help from Shiva against Lord Ram.

Another significant connotation of breaking of this bow of Lord Shiva is this:—The demons were worshippers of Lord Shiva. Their king, Ravana of Lanka, was himself a great devotee of Shiva. In fact, he had offered his heads to the Lord ten times on some earlier occasion, and Shiva had been so pleased with this offering that he had blessed Ravana that all his ten heads would not only be restored but if anyone cuts any of these heads in the future they would grow back on his neck instantly. This is why Lord Ram had been unable to kill Ravana during the epic war at Lanka by merely cutting his heads repeatedly with his arrows. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 25; (ii) Doha no. 28; and (iii) Doha no. 92 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 10-14.

Ravana had also composed a sacred hymn in honour of Shiva, called the Ravana's Shiva-Tandav Stotra, which is said to be the most difficult of all hymns ever composed in honour of the Lord.

The might of Ravana's arms, his dare-devilry and his fearlessness from Lord Shiva can be judged by the fact that once he had effortlessly lifted or 'uprooted' Mt. Kailash, the mountain abode of Lord Shiva in the upper reaches of the Himalayas. This meant that Ravana had the strength and the guts to lift the entire weight of this lofty mountain along with Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati who permanently live there as it is their terrestrial abode. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 292; (b) Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 28.

Both the above facts—i.e. offering of his own heads ten times, and lifting of Mt. Kailash—have been repeated by Ravana often to boast about his strength, fearlessness and powers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 29.

Ravana's exploits are legendary and have been elaborately listed at many places in Ram Charit Manas—e.g. (i) in Baal Kand where the origin and establishment of the demon race is described (refer Baal Kand: from Doha no. 178—to Doha/Sortha no. 183); (ii) in Lanka Kand where Ravana and Angad—whom Lord

Ram had sent in an effort to persuade the demon king Ravana to give Sita back and avoid a ruinous war—had an acrimonious, no-holds-barred bitter verbal duel (refer Lanka Kand: Doha no. 25 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; Doha no. 28 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8); and (iii) in Lanka Kand when Ravana's wife Mandadori tried to persuade her husband to stop being pervert, abandon his stubborn recklessness, and become reasonable so that the demon race escapes annihilation (refer Lanka Kand: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha nos. 8).

But we find that the same mighty and virtually invincible Ravana had not dared to touch Shiva's bow though he was present in the arena. If he had stood up and went up the steps leading to the platform where the bow was kept, all other competing kings would have scrambled for cover to hide themselves as all of them feared this ferocious demon king and would not have certainly not dared to challenge Ravana. Therefore, the decision of Ravana to quietly make his escape and not attempt to break the bow shows that he harboured some secret fear of defeat and humiliation. These facts are mentioned in Ram Charit Manas at a number of places, viz. (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 292; (iii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 256; and (iv) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 37.

The point is this—by breaking Lord Shiva's bow fearlessly and effortlessly, Lord Ram sent a strong signal to the entire demon race, and especially to Ravana, their king, that he (Lord Ram) was not an ordinary person but the Supreme Lord of the world who has come down to earth to control their (demons') cruelty and tyranny. The demons must realize that only someone more divine and powerful than Shiva would dare to break the latter's bow. Ravana must understand that someone who can easily lift and break Lord Shiva's formidable bow, which even he (Ravana) had not dared to touch, must be some Divine Being and not an ordinary human being.

We shall read later on in the story that Ravana—who was very wise and learned—got this hint; he could read this subtle message. This becomes clear at the time when he decides to abduct Sita so that Lord Ram would come to rescue her and kill him in the ensuing war, because he is convinced in his mind that this is the only way his sinful body of a demon can be eliminated, and his soul can find liberation and deliverance from this body's bondage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precedes Doha no. 23.

Again we find that at the time of Sita's abduction, Ravana had first mentally bowed his head at the holy feet of Sita to pay his respects to her, felt exceptionally happy to have this golden opportunity to find a way for his and other demons' liberation, and then took her away—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 28.

²Refer an extensive note appended to Chaupai line no. 1 above.

Refer also to: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 3.

These two demons had come to the place of the bow-breaking ceremony thinking that lifting and breaking an old rusty bow was not even worth thinking twice, and that they would lift and break it effortlessly. The trophy was a girl, Sita, who was considered the most beautiful in this world at that time. But when they actually saw the bow they realized that it was beyond their means to lift it and break it. So there was no sense in inviting ridicule and laughter in an assembly where all the great kings

and princes of the time were present. All of them had heard of Ravana and Banasur, and if these two demon warriors, who were famed for their strength and valour, were unable to move the bow then there would be nothing more shameful and ignominious for them. So they quietly sneaked away to save their faces.

Out of so many famous demons mentioned in the Purans (ancient mythological histories of Hindus) whose might and strength were legendary and who even the gods feared, only Ravana and Banasur are mentioned here. Why is it so? The context here is the ‘lifting’ of a mighty and heavy bow. So, only those demon warriors who had proven track records of being so strong and powerful that they could very easily and effortlessly lift the mightiest of mountains were selected by the heralds to impress upon the assembly that it would be no joke to lift this bow.

‘Banasur’ had lifted Mt. Meru, the abode of gods—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 292; and ‘Ravana’ had lifted Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 292.

These two demons ran away because they realized that this bow was heavier than either of the two mountains, viz. Mt. Sumeru and Mt. Kailash. They did not dare even to touch the bow because they felt sure they won’t be able to move it. In other words, the bow was heavier than these two mighty mountains. Hence, the challenge which the kings faced was of stupendous nature, and therefore they must think many times over before showing-off any dare-devilry.

This warning was very crucial and practical as far as king Janak was concerned. In case no invited king or prince was able to lift the bow, then none of them would be able to accuse the king that he had deliberately wanted to insult all of them by not warning them or disclosing to them in advance the special features and unique characters of the bow, and instead instigating them to go and lift the bow with the bait that they would marry his daughter Sita while being certain throughout that all of them would fail to move the bow, what to talk of lifting and breaking it. That means the kings would surmise that Janak had the intent of humiliating all the great kings and princes of the time, and with this in mind he had organized this bow-breaking ceremony. This would lead to revolt and blood-shed.

Hence, as a precautionary measure it was prudent for Janak to disclose in advance the fact that the bow was exceptionally heavy and strong, and to drive home this point the heralds cited the instance of Ravana and Banasur who could not muster enough strength and courage to even attempt to lift the bow.

If we closely examine verse nos. 2-3 we deduce that Ravana and Banasur had already left the venue at the time the heralds made the announcement. It means that these two great demons had arrived at the arena, saw the bow, perhaps even went near it and consulted each other, and then decided that it was better to go away while still there was time to save face. The spies of king Janak were keeping a close watch on all the visitors, and this bit of information was passed on to the king by them, who then instructed his heralds to mention it.

The fact of Ravana having gone to the bow-breaking ceremony and not having the courage to lift the bow was known to his wife Mandodari as she has mentioned this fact while chiding him for abducting Sita to avenge his humiliation, but inviting a ruinous war on Lanka in the process because Lord Ram and his army had launched an assault to free Sita from his captivity—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 36.

But another question now arises—the demons were well known in this world, and their external features of a ‘demon’ made them stand out from the rest of the

living beings, such as the kings and princes in this case. So, why were the kings not able to recognize them? The answer is found in king Janak's statement in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251 where he says, while rebuking the kings when none of them were able to move the bow, that—"even the gods and demons have also come here in the form of human beings (kings)".

This fact is also endorsed elsewhere. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 241, it is said that—"in that assembly, gods and demons were present in the guise of kings".

Remember: The demons were capable of assuming any form they wished—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, 2nd part of Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 75.

These observations clearly show that these two great demons, Ravana and Banasur, had indeed visited the site of the bow-breaking ceremony though they did not participate, but it was in the form of a king.]

सोइ पुरारि कोदंडु कठोरा । राज समाज आजु जोइ तोरा ॥ ३ ॥
त्रिभुवन जय समेत बैदेही । बिनहिं बिचार बरइ हठि तेही ॥ ४ ॥

sō'i purāri kōdaṇḍu kaṭhōrā. rāja samāja āju jō'i tōrā. 3.

tribhuvana jaya samēta baidēhī. binahim bicāra bara'i haṭhi tēhī. 4.

It is the same bow of Lord Shiva (that scared Ravana and Banasur out of their wits because they felt that their strength would fail in front of this bow, and to escape certain embarrassment and humiliation they simply slithered out of this arena silently!) that is the challenge for you all. In this majestic assembly of great and mighty kings from all corners of the world, anyone who breaks this formidable bow---
(3)

---would not only get the rare honour and an enviable prestige of conquering 'Tribhuvan' (i.e. the entire world consisting of three sections, viz. the heavens, the earth and the nether world or the subterranean world)¹ but would also get the hands of Vaidehi (the daughter of king Videha, Janak, i.e. Sita) in marriage. Vaidehi would marry him without any second thoughts.' (4)

[Note—¹The word "Tribhuvan" has been cleverly used here. Its normal meaning is the world that has three divisions—viz. heaven, earth and nether or subterranean world. But it also indicates the three legendary cities ("Tri" = three; "Bhuvan" = world, habitat, home) of demon Tripura which were destroyed by Lord Shiva, along with the killing of this demon, by using this same bow. Hence, this bow represents the conquest of three invincible cities or worlds.

Therefore, anyone who breaks this bow, which had helped Lord Shiva to conquer Tripura and his three cities, would be deemed as the conqueror of the whole world.]

सुनि पन सकल भूप अभिलाषे । भटमानी अतिसय मन माखे ॥ ५ ॥

परिकर बाँधि उठे अकुलाई । चले इष्टदेवन्ह सिर नाई ॥ ६ ॥

sunī pana sakala bhūpa abhilāṣē. bhaṭamānī atisaya mana mākhē. 5.
parikara bām̐dhi uṭhē akulāī. calē iṣṭadēvanha sira nāī. 6.

Hearing this vow (of king Janak), all the kings became eager or greedy (to break the bow and get acclaim as being the strongest warrior in the whole world, as well as get Sita in marriage as a trophy for this victory). Those among them who were more egoist and proud of themselves became very angry or annoyed (at the words of the heralds that even Ravana and Banasur had not dared to touch the bow, and therefore they should be careful before attempting any misadventure).¹ (5)

They rose from their seats impatiently, girdled up their loin-cloths (i.e. tied the waistbands tightly around their waists to indicate that they are ready to face any challenge), and moved towards the bow eagerly after bowing their heads before their respective deities (gods) whom they worshipped.² (6)

[Note—¹All the kings were waiting for this moment. They could not understand the subtle message which the announcement of the heralds contained—that they must think twice before attempting to lift the bow because even the famous demons Ravana and Banasur, who were well known for the might of their arms, had not dared to touch it, lest they would repent later on and blame their host, king Janak, of scheming to insult them en-masse.

The kings were in a quandary: if they did not rise to the occasion, if they kept sitting in the face of this open challenge, then it would be deemed that they have accepted defeat. No self-respecting king would like this humiliation to be heaped on him in this disrespectful way. After all, they had come to participate in the bow ceremony on their own volition and with the clear knowledge that a bow had to be broken. Now if they keep sitting, what would their subjects and companions think of them? It was a piquant situation for them, and when left with no choice between the devil and the deep sea, they decided to try their luck.

This was a normal reaction for competing kings who were invited for an open competition—it makes no sense for anyone in accepting defeat even without attempting to win. This was the first sort of kings who stood up to try their luck.

However, there were many among them who were full of vanity and excessively haughty, proud and egoist. They became angry and annoyed because the heralds had implied that if Ravana and Banasur could not lift the bow then no one can do it. They must have angrily snorted and said under their breaths—“How dare the heralds say so in our presence? Are they threatening us or challenging our self-respect and dignity? What if Ravana or Banasur did not touch the bow? It does not mean that if these two demons did not touch the bow that no one else would be able to move it or lift it? How dare king Janak challenge our strength and power and insult us in this manner. What nonsense is this? Come what may, we will now show these people (the hosts) that we are strong and powerful, and after breaking this rotten and god forsaken bow we will make Janak beg for forgiveness for making so outrightly an insinuating and taunting remark.”

²All the competing kings were eager to be the first ones to approach the bow and break it. Everyone was sure that he would break it, and therefore all wanted to be the first person to try his luck at the bow, because if anyone else does it before they get a

chance then that person would win the competition, and with it he will get the accompanying fame as the greatest and the strongest king of the world as well as the hands of Sita in marriage.

Hence, all of them rose impatiently from their seats to go to the bow as quickly as possible because there was no time to be lost. In order to ensure victory, they invoked the respective deities they worshipped at home to seek the latter's blessings. As we shall find shortly, all of them failed to move the bow even for a fraction of an inch in spite of their invoking these deities.

What does it indicate in respect to these kings invoking their gods or deities but still failing; why did these deities fail to help their devotees; were these deities helpless or powerless? Well, there is a very important message hidden in this development—and it is this: a person must worship only the Supreme Lord, and not so many gods and goddesses as these kings did. Can a junior king or a knight defy the wishes of the Emperor under whose patronage or tutelage he survives? Can a junior king ever retain his kingdom or domain if he goes against the will of the Emperor?

The 'Emperor' or the 'Supreme Being' here is Lord Ram, as he is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Viraat Purush and the Supreme Lord of the world. Even Lord Shiva, who himself is honoured by the epithet of a Great God, the 'Maha-Deva', could not or did not interfere with Lord Ram breaking the bow. The Mother Goddess, Parvati, had already blessed Sita that her wishes to marry Lord Ram would be fulfilled. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 236 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and the Chanda that follows them.)

All other gods and goddesses are junior to Lord Shiva and Parvati respectively. These kings did not realize that even Lord Shiva himself worships Lord Ram and repeats the holy name of the Lord, i.e. "RAM", as his chosen Mantra (spiritual formula). For instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 52; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 60 etc.

Parvati had herself bowed at the holy feet of Lord Ram on some previous occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 55.

So in this situation, with Lord Ram himself present in the assembly, and that too in the company of the great sage Vishwamitra, it was an exercise in futility for these ignorant kings to boast of their strengths (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 245) and then ask their respective deities to support them in their pretensions (as indicated in the present Chaupai no. 6).]

तमकि ताकि तकि सिवधनु धरहीं । उठइ न कोटि भाँति बलु करहीं ॥ ७ ॥
जिन्ह के कछु बिचारु मन माहीं । चाप समीप महीप न जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

tamaki tāki taki sivadhanu dharahīm. uṭha'i na kōṭi bhāmṭi balu karahīm. 7.
jinha kē kachu bicāru mana māhīm. cāpa samīpa mahīpa na jāhīm. 8.

When the (haughty and adamant) kings approached the bow in a huff, they looked at it contemptuously, grabbed it angrily, grappled with it with all their strength and skill, but still the stubborn bow did not move a bit though they tried and tried repeatedly with all their might, applying the best of tactics that they were aware of¹. (7)

But those kings who had some wisdom and common sense in them sensed that it is better not to make a fool out of themselves, and so they did not even go near the bow to try to move and lift it². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 4 also.

As we have observed in the note of the previous verse, all the kings who decided to break the bow did not waste any time because they wanted to get a first chance to lift it and break it lest someone else beats them to it and is declared victorious. In this situation, there was a virtual rush for the bow. The competing kings pushed and shoved each other, huffing and puffing, not bothering to maintain basic dignity and solemnity of the occasion. They all milled around the bow and jostled with each other.

So, as soon as the kings reached the bow, they grabbed it contemptuously, and when it did not budge from its position they naturally became angry and annoyed. Initially, in their first attempt, they may have thought that it is easy to lift this old and rusted bow. But soon they discovered to their dismay that this wretched bow is quite a bit of challenge for them. So they became alarmed and applied all the tricks of the warrior's profession as well as all the strength they possessed to make this stubborn bow move. No matter how hard and expertly they all tried, first one after another, and then jointly (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 below), the bow did not relent at all; it did not budge a fraction of an inch from its place.

Imagine the scene. There were thousands of kings and princes vying with each other to lift the bow. In the beginning, the more domineering ones amongst the kings elbowed in forcefully and pushed aside their competitors to be the first ones to touch the bow and lift it. When they showed signs of frustration, those who were waiting for their turn must have passed caustic or sarcastic comments at them, further irritating the kings who were at the bow. There must have been howls of cat-calls, smirks and smiles all around.

The kings waiting for their chance were closely observing those kings who were attempting to lift the bow; they observed the different maneuvers and moves the kings were making in their attempt to lift the bow. So, while waiting for their own chance, they must have been thinking of some newer tactics and planning better strategies to tackle the adamant bow. As more and more kings failed dismally and either returned to their seats or stood around planning better strategies, abject despondency was writ large on their faces. They were all crestfallen, had lowered heads heavy with shame, bore a haggard look of defeat and ignominy.

²Meanwhile, those kings who were waiting for their turn watched these defeated kings, creating alarm and fear of certain defeat and humiliation in their own minds. A lot many of the kings must have cursed themselves to come here at all because their confidence collapsed; they felt that they have but little chance to win. But now it was a sticky situation because it was too late to withdraw: to return without trying their hand at the bow would make them a laughing stock in the assembly. So they consulted amongst themselves and took the position that since it is too late to go back now, it's better to try to lift the bow. In case they succeed, well and good; and in case they failed, then also their shame would be less marked as there were hundreds of kings who had failed before them and had walked away with lowered heads. Hence they thought that by the time they return empty-handed, a pall of gloom would already have descended upon the assembly as one after another king returned

defeated. So their own defeat would not attract as much attention as the case of those kings who were defeated in the beginning of the competition.

The first batch of defeated kings faced hooting and cat-calls, but gradually the atmosphere became sombre and grave. The latter round of defeats was expected, and therefore they invited little attention and raised fewer eye-brows as compared to the case with the initial round of defeats because the more strong and powerful amongst the kings were the ones who had pushed themselves ahead of the line to make the first attempt, and all of them had already failed. Therefore, those kings who were in the back of the queue, those who still had to try their luck, could see their fate coming, as did the crowd watching the competition from the stands. Hence, these waiting kings decided to hold fast and try to lift the bow nevertheless, instead of going back to their seats at this late stage, because they had nothing to lose.]

दो०. तमकि धरहिं धनु मूढ नृप उठइ न चलहिं लजाइ ।
मनहुं पाइ भट बाहुबलु अधिकु अधिकु गरुआइ ॥ २५० ॥
dōhā.

tamaki dharahim dhanu mūr̥ha nr̥pa uṭha'i na calahim lajā'i.
manahum̐ pā'i bhaṭa bāhubalu adhiku adhiku garu'ā'i. 250.

The stupid kings indignantly tried to move the bow with all their might, but no matter how hard they strained the bow refused to be lifted. At last, all of them went away in shame, being overcome with a sense of abject despair and despondency.

It appeared that the bow mysteriously absorbed the strength of these kings, becoming heavier with each attempt they made¹. (Doha no. 250)

[Note—¹This is a figure of speech employed by the poet Tulsidas to emphasise that the bow was so heavy that it surpassed the combined strength of all the kings. This fact will be clear when we read the next verse which says that it did not move even when all the kings—numbering ten thousand—applied their combined strength to make it move.

In practical terms the meaning is that the bow was very-very heavy on its own account from the beginning; it was so built. It hadn't actually absorbed any strength from any king; it's impossible for this to happen. But one after another each king thought that his predecessor was not as strong as he, and when he himself failed to move the bow it appeared to all those present that the bow was becoming heavier with each new attempt made by all subsequent kings who tried to move it.]

चौ०. भूप सहस दस एकहि बारा । लगे उठावन टरइ न टारा ॥ १ ॥
डगइ न संभु सरासनु कैसें । कामी बचन सती मनु जैसें ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

bhūpa sahasa dasa ēkahi bārā. lagē uṭhāvana ṭara'i na ṭārā. 1.
daga'i na sambhu sarāsanu kaisēm̐. kāmī bacana satī manu jaisēm̐. 2.

Ten thousand kings tried to move and lift the bow simultaneously, but to their utter dismay the bow did not move even a bit inspite of all their rigorous effort and straining that they made¹. (1)

No matter how hard the kings tried, Lord Shiva's bow would not move even a bit just like the case of a Sati (a chaste and honourable woman who is loyal and faithful to her husband) who remains unmoved and unaffected by passionate and lustful words said by a lascivious and immoral man². (2)

[Note—¹In the beginning the kings tried to move the bow individually. But when all of them failed they threw all caution and principles of morality to the wind by trying to lift the bow together. Did they give a thought that if all of them—ten thousand of them!—succeeded in lifting and breaking the bow then what would be the fate of Sita. It would be a most incredulous development to happen if they indeed succeeded in their attempt—because then Sita would be married to “ten thousand kings”! It is hilarious and incredibly ridiculous to even think of this, what to talk of this actually materialising.

This very thought that one girl would have to share “ten thousand husbands” is exceedingly immoral and against the basic norms of a civilised society; it's against the principles of ‘Dharma’—the principles of probity, propriety, ethics and proper conduct. Did these frustrated kings ever think of it? No—and this is the reason why such kings were called sinful, wicked and pervert, who had become blind in their vanity, passion and ego, in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 245 earlier.

Now, if we read this verse along with its preceding verses we come to the conclusion that after being unable to move the bow individually, either the kings returned to their seats and kept a low profile to avoid further embarrassment, or they stood milling around the bow planning new strategies amongst themselves. Of course all of them were smarting from the insult, so when none could move the bow they made a clarion call: “Come all of you; we will not go back without lifting this wretched bow and allowing this lifeless rusty thing to humiliate us in this abject fashion. So let us all put our combined strength together to trounce this stubborn bow and regain our lost prestige and self-respect. This old and rusty piece of a nuisance, the wretched ‘bow’, won't be able to stand against our combined will and power. So brothers and friends, let us stand together to defeat this enemy that has put all of us to shame. We won't allow this to happen!”

One wonders how so many kings could find place to stand shoulder to shoulder and simultaneously touch the bow in order to move or push it. Well, the most plausible answer is that they must have tied a number of iron chains to the bow and pulled at it together. Or, since the verse says that the bow refused to be “lifted”, it may have been some sort of heavy-duty pulley that they used.

²A “Sati” pays no attention to lustful advances of a lascivious man who tries his best to lure her into having an affair with him.

The comparison of the bow with a Sati is significant. A Sati is devoted to her husband, and no matter how hard a pervert man tries to attract her attention, she neglects him. The Sati has a dominance of ‘Satvic Guna’ (virtuous qualities) in her, while the lascivious man has ‘Tama Guna’ (evil qualities) as his dominant character. Here, the bow is of a ‘Sata Guna’ because it belonged to Lord Shiva, and therefore it is like the Sati and held its ground against the efforts of the greedy kings who were like the lustful man because they had predominance of ‘Tama Guna’ in them. These

kings were boastful as well as sinful as they had not bothered about the fate of innocent Sita should they succeed in breaking the bow in their “thousands”. Hence, the Sata Guna driven bow decided to teach these Tama Guna driven kings by not moving a bit.]

सब नृप भए जोगु उपहासी । जैसें बिनु बिराग संन्यासी ॥ ३ ॥
कीरति बिजय बीरता भारी । चले चाप कर बरबस हारी ॥ ४ ॥

saba nṛpa bha'e jōgu upahāsī. jaisēm binu birāga sann'yāsī. 3.
kīrati bijaya bīratā bhārī. calē cāpa kara barabasa hārī. 4.

All the vain kings made themselves objects of high ridicule, laughter and scorn just like a Sanyasi (a renunciate; a recluse) who lacks Vairagya (renunciation, detachment, dispassion etc.) (3)

All of them helplessly forfeited their claim of fame, glory, victory and bravery at the hands of the bow. (4)

[Note—Everyone laughed at the defeated king, especially those kings who had desisted from making an attempt themselves and had even advised these kings to avoid sure humiliation by not going near the bow because it was certain that Sita would be married to Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4, and 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 246.

But the haughty and impervious kings won't listen, and instead, they boasted that no one can marry Sita without breaking the bow as long as they were present—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 245.

Now such kings had no answer; all their vanity and haughtiness, all their loud-mouthed talk of valour and strength crumbled like ninepins and a house of cards.

The condition of the defeated kings was like a Sanyasi who remains attached to the attractions of the material world and harbours desires in his heart for gratification of the senses inspite of his taking the vows of renunciation and declaring his detachment from everything pertaining to the material world. People laugh at such persons; they are subjected to scorn and ridicule by everyone they meet; they are put to shame and invite ignominy. Then they repent that it would have been wiser and better if they hadn't become a Sanyasi in the first place. Likewise, the defeated kings now regretted and lamented that it would have been better for them if they had paid attention to warnings by wiser kings and had refrained from participating in the competition.

All their boast of strength, valour, power and majesty was reduced to dust against the formidable wall of the bow; they could not scale it (refer: the present Chaupai no. 4). All their hopes of being declared the “greatest warrior of all times, the most powerful and the strongest king in the entire world who has won the hands of Sita in marriage after being declared victorious in the once-in-a-lifetime competition (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250)” crumbled like a clod of mud when it hits a wall.

The infamy and humiliation was more striking when they could not move the bow as compared to a defeat at the hands of a human enemy during a battle because in

the latter case at least the enemy is alive, is active, and it is a duel where both parties try their best in a dynamic manner to subdue the other, but in the case of the bow the latter laid passively on its platform, it did not fight back like a human enemy, but still managed to defeat the kings by not moving a bit.]

श्रीहत भए हारि हियँ राजा । बैठे निज निज जाइ समाजा ॥ ५ ॥

नृपन्ह बिलोकि जनकु अकुलाने । बोले बचन रोष जनु साने ॥ ६ ॥

śrīhata bha'e hāri hiyaṁ rājā. baiṭhē nija nija jā'i samājā. 5.

nṛpanha bilōki janaku akulānē. bōlē bacana rōṣa janu sānē. 6.

Despondent, crestfallen, distraught, disheartened, embarrassed, forlorn, frustrated and humiliated (śrīhata bha'e), the defeated kings went to their seats and sat down with a low head in the company of those who had accompanied them to the venue (such as their ministers, courtiers, attendants etc.)¹. (5)

Seeing the defeated kings who bore signs of abject despair and excess of shame writ large on their faces (and all of them had literally surrendered before the stubbornness of the 'bow' which had decided not to yield any ground and to inflict shame and humiliation on all the competing kings in one single master-stroke), king Janak became exceedingly peeved, impatient and worried (janaku akulānē).

[This was obviously because if none of the kings or princes could break the bow, his daughter would have to remain unmarried. This was an eventuality no father would want to happen. Janak was getting impatient as the time was passing away fast and in spite of all their efforts none of the warriors could move the bow an inch. He was worried about the fate that awaited his daughter, as well as the spectre of war that loomed large when he observed the belligerent mood of the competing kings who he guessed would raise their swords and begin a fight to hide their shame and defeat.]

Then he (stood up and) spoke words that had a clear tinge of anger in them.

[In other words, when all the kings failed to move the bow and returned to their seats defeated and crestfallen, king Janak stood up and rebuked all of them. He vented his frustration and rebuked all of them in angry words which follow below.]²
(6)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 5 also.

After being humiliated en-masse by the adamant bow as described in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 above, all the kings—remember, they were “ten thousand of them”—lost all shine on their faces, which now looked weary, haggard and ashamed. They dragged themselves somehow to their seats and slumped in them. Their friends and relatives tried to comfort them to the best of their abilities. They must have hidden their faces in their palms to avoid the glare of the assembly. They must have been wringing their hands and squirming in their seats in anger at being forced to accept defeat from such an inconsequential and lifeless thing as an old and rusty bow.

They were waiting for revenge, and the opportunity would soon come. We shall soon read that when Sita was putting the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram, these kings rose in revolt and there was a sudden spectre of a looming war and mayhem. It was at this instant that sage Parashuram arrived angrily at the venue to

punish anyone who had dared to break his revered Lord Shiva's bow. Seeing this angry sage, all the kings scrambled for cover and hid themselves wherever they could—because Parashuram had a reputation of killing members of the Kshatriya (kingly or warrior) race at the least provocation. It was so planned by the Creator that nothing would go wrong—because the arrival of Parashuram at the moment when the kings had drawn their weapons and were ready for a fight had prevented a battle which otherwise was sure to have taken place. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268; and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 269.

²Refer also: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 292 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; and (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 5.

King Janak was the most concerned man in the assembly because it was he who would have to bear with the ignominy and pain of being instrumental in ruining the future of his daughter by making such an incongruous vow that was impractical to implement. Now, what will he do; how will he show his face to the world; what would his own subjects say about him; how will he morally answer his daughter whose future was ruined by his stubbornness; wasn't he becoming a butt of laughter in the society?

Though his intention was good—that he must find the strongest and ablest warrior for his daughter, but he had not been practical and had not weighed the pros and cons of his decision of tying his daughter's future with a bow that belonged to Lord Shiva. He should have thought over the matter and consulted senior members of the society, such as Brahmins and others, before deciding to get this special bow that belonged to no one less than Lord Shiva himself broken for such a humdrum worldly routine affair as getting his daughter married. He repented now for his decision; he lamented that he had made a great mistake by annoying Shiva by putting the sanctity of the Lord's bow at stake—because getting it 'broken' could be interpreted as an insult to Lord Shiva. 'Why didn't I think of it?—the king must have regretted.

All the competing kings would go home and forget about this bitter incident over time, but what would Janak do? As long as he lives, this incident would keep biting at his conscience and make life hell for him.

But now it was too late. Janak was extremely perturbed and disheartened. His frustration manifested itself in the form of anger and rebuke for the kings.]

दीप दीप के भूपति नाना । आए सुनि हम जो पनु ठाना ॥ ७ ॥

देव दनुज धरि मनुज सरीरा । बिपुल बीर आए रनधीरा ॥ ८ ॥

dīpa dīpa kē bhūpati nānā. ā'ē suni hama jō panu ṭhānā. 7.

dēva danuja dhari manuja sarīrā. bipula bīra ā'ē ranadhīrā. 8.

#The king spoke in a stern voice with a tone marked by anger, rebuke and frustration—'Countless great kings from all the continents and islands on earth ("Deep, Deep"—i.e. from all corners of the earth) have come here after hearing of my vows (that they would have to participate in a competition where Lord Shiva's bow was to be lifted and broken, and anyone who succeeded in it would not only be gifted

my daughter Sita in marriage but would also be declared the most gallant and strong king in the entire world¹). (7)

What to talk of human beings, even the gods and the great demons have come here in the guise of humans. There are innumerable warriors of all hues and denominations, warriors who pride themselves for their gallantry, strength, valour, courage and invincibility, who have assembled here. (8)

[Note—#King Janak’s angry words and expression of utter disgust and frustration as well as regret and feeling of sorrow at the fate of Sita has been narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza nos. 6-7 also.

¹Refer: The declaration of the heralds in Doha no. 249 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-4.]

दो०. कुअँरि मनोहर बिजय बड़ि कीरति अति कमनीय ।
पावनिहार बिरंचि जनु रचेउ न धनु दमनीय ॥ २५१ ॥

dōhā.

ku'amṛi manōhara bijaya baḍi kīrati ati kamanīya.
pāvanihāra biranči janu racē'u na dhanu damanīya. 251.

Inspite of a beautiful princess as the prize to be won (in the form of marriage with her), along with a triumph that would have bestowed astounding fame and splendid glory of being the strongest and the most powerful warrior of the world, a glory and fame that would have been matchless, fabulous and awe-inspiring—it is so frustrating and dismaying to discover that it appears the Creator has not made anyone who could match this honour, who could get this credit by breaking the bow. It appears that the bow was made not to be broken by anyone created by the Creator! (Doha no. 251)

[Note—King Janak sternly rebuked the competing kings. All of them had boasting till now of their strength and valour and the greatness of the family they belonged to. Why then could they not break the bow? Is it because they did not put their heart and soul and best of efforts into lifting and breaking the bow as they thought it not worthwhile because the reward for being successful was not upto their expectations? And therefore, is this the reason why none could break the bow? This factor played heavily in the mind of Janak when he chided the kings with his observation about the uniqueness of the reward—viz. the hands of Sita, who was matchless in beauty and charm in this world, in marriage.

At the same time, it seems out of place for a father of king Janak’s stature to call his own daughter “a beautiful princess as the prize to be won” in a public place. It must be remembered here that Janak is overwhelmed by anger and frustration and worry about his daughter, and in this tumultuous state of mind which was under immense emotional stress he had forgotten about what to say and what not to.

Besides this aspect, the point that Janak wished to make was that if the kings and princes hadn’t known that his daughter Sita was exceptionally beautiful, they wouldn’t have rushed to try their luck in marrying her. Of course they also knew that this marriage was tied to the breaking of the bow, but in their eagerness and greed to

grab Sita as their wife they had overlooked that this bow was not an ordinary one but belonged to Lord Shiva, a fact that should have rung alarm bells in their minds. They had become so greedy and passionate that they thought they would be able to break the bow by invoking the blessings of their personal deities, something they actually did—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 250. Then now, what has happened? Aren't they all ashamed of themselves? Shame to all of them!

In order to understand why the kings decided to participate in this competition inspite of knowing that the bow that was to be broken belonged to Lord Shiva and it would be a formidable obstacle in their realising their dream of marrying Sita, we must look at the natural character and mentality of kings. All these kings must have thought that it made sense to at least try their luck, for if they succeeded then the rewards were great. After all, kings are not averse to taking risks to enhance their reputation and expand their realms by conquest. They are accustomed in equal measure to defeat and victory; they take such things in their stride. The kings are, by nature and habit, impulsive, egoist and full of vanity; they want to grab everything on offer. Shying away from open challenge is demeaning and insulting for them. And for this they usually don't bother too much for the consequences of their actions, nor do they do too much of procrastination before acting—because they want to be the first one to grab the honour of being valiant and brave. If they defer decisions then someone else would grab the opportunity.

As for the stupendity of the fame and glory that would accompany the breaking of the bow, the heralds of Janak had already declared them in Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 250 above.]

चौ०. कहहु काहि यहु लाभु न भावा । काहुँ न संकर चाप चढ़ावा ॥ १ ॥

रहउ चढ़ाउब तोरब भाई । तिलु भरि भूमि न सके छड़ाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahahu kāhi yahu lābhu na bhāvā. kāhum'na saṅkara cāpa caṛhāvā. 1.
raha'u caṛhā'uba tōraba bhāī. tilu bhari bhūmi na sakē chaṛāī. 2.

Say, who would not like to get this reward and honour? Say then, why couldn't anyone lift and string this bow of Lord Shiva? (1)

Forget about lifting and string it or breaking it, no one could as much as move it even a bit from the ground! [How shameful and ignominious it is; how disgusting and humiliating it is.] (2)

[Note—King Janak prodded the competing kings to come clean and to tell the assembly the actual reason for their not making an all-out effort to break the bow if the case is such. It is simply unbelievable that not a single person could as much as move an old rusty bow an inch from its place on the ground, though all those who tried their hands had prided themselves as great warriors of matchless reputation, as very strong and powerful kings. Where has all that boast gone now?

Why, if some amongst the kings thought that the challenge of breaking the bow was too small for them as it undermined their dignity and self-respect by trying to test their gallantry, valour, strength and prowess against an old and rusty thing, then they must remember that king Janak had no intention to insult them by making them

lift an old and non-descript bow—because this challenge was most formidable as the bow was not an ordinary old and rusty one but that which belonged to Lord Shiva, and one which even two formidable demon kings, Ravana and Banasur, had dared not touch—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 250.

As for the matchless beauty and charm of Sita, she personified these virtues themselves—refer: Doha no. 247 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that have been narrated above.

Hence, the reward as well as the challenge was most appropriate for and befitting the stature of great kings. So, what was the problem?

Does it mean that no one could match the high standards of gallantry, valour, strength and power that Janak had envisioned in his mind to be the quality of the person who would be eligible as a groom for his beloved daughter Sita when he decided to hold this competition to find such a person? Well, as the things stood, it appears that this is the case, that it is the truth. The earth seems to lack ‘true warriors’; those who declare themselves as being strong and invincible are in fact pretentious and boastful, having nothing in substance. All of the kings are hollow balloons, and shame to them!!]

अब जनि कोउ माखै भट मानी । बीर बिहीन मही मैं जानी ॥ ३ ॥
 तजहु आस निज निज गृह जाहू । लिखा न बिधि बैदेहि बिबाहू ॥ ४ ॥
 सुकृतु जाइ जौं पनु परिहरऊँ । कुअँरि कुआरि रहउ का करऊँ ॥ ५ ॥
 जौं जनतेउँ बिनु भट भुबि भाई । तौ पनु करि होतेउँ न हँसाई ॥ ६ ॥

aba jani kō'u mākhai bhaṭa mānī. bīra bihīna mahī mair̥ jānī. 3.
 tajahu āsa nija nija gr̥ha jāhū. likhā na bidhi baidēhi bibāhū. 4.
 sukṛtu jā'i jaum̥ panu parihara'um̥. ku'am̥ri ku'āri raha'u kā kara'um̥. 5.
 jaum̥ janatē'um̥ binu bhaṭa bhubi bhāī. tau panu kari hōtē'um̥ na hamśāī. 6.

Let no warrior show any signs of anger and a wish for revenge now at this stage (because equal opportunity was given to all, and the formidable nature of the bow was also disclosed in clear terms by my heralds)¹.

Don't get angry when I say that now I have realized that the earth is devoid of a real gallant warrior who can be said to possess the grand qualities of strength, power and valour that are expected from him². (3)

Abandon all hopes (of marrying Sita) now, and go back home. [I am not going to rescind on my vows. So don't think that I will contemplate upon any alternative arrangement to get my daughter married. It is unthinkable for me. Therefore, it is futile for all of you to wait here in my kingdom any longer in the hope of marrying Sita by other means. You better go back to your kingdoms as early as possible.]

It looks that Vidhi (Creator) had not written in the destiny of Vaidehi (Sita, the daughter of the king of Videha, king Janak) that she would be married. [In other words, it is Sita's destiny that she will remain unmarried for the rest of her life. The Creator hadn't wanted her to marry. So be it; I can't change her destiny.] (4)

If I abandon my vows and divert from it, then I will invite scorn, ignominy and infamy as a person who is not trustworthy and one who breaks his vows, for it is said in all sooth that the word of a noble king is his bond; it will ruin my immaculate

reputation and honour. [An honourable king is expected to live up to his words no matter what happens. This is a noble character in all great kings; there is nothing more sinful and ignominious for a king than breaking his own word and going back on his declarations.]³

Therefore, I can't help it now if the princess (Sita) remains unmarried; I am helpless as I can't do anything at this stage. (5)

Oh brothers! Had I known that the earth is devoid of real warriors (i.e. 'warrior kings'), I wouldn't have made this vow (that Sita would be married to anyone who breaks Lord Shiva's bow) and become a butt of laughter and ridicule in this world.⁴ (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Janak was a wise and elderly king; he had sensed the simmering signs of revenge by the demeanours of the defeated kings.

²Janak said, in effect, that inspite of the explicit warning that this bow belonged to Lord Shiva, and that Ravana and Banasur (the two demon warriors renowned the world over for their matchless strength and abilities as they had easily lifted two huge mountains known as Kailash and Meru which were the abodes of Lord Shiva and the gods respectively, a feat that is not a joke, had refrained from even touching the bow what to talk of attempting to lift it), all the kings paid no heed and boldly dared to lift the bow. Therefore, they have no moral ground to accuse Janak of employing any sort of deceit or subterfuge to insult and humiliate them in open court.

Janak also said that all of them were well aware of the nature of the competition and the reward that was to be given. They weren't ignorant of anything; nothing was hidden from them. They had known that it was Shiva's bow and that the reward would be marriage with Janak's daughter Sita when invitations were sent to all corners of the earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251 with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

So, the defeated kings and princes had no ground to vent their frustration for defeat by rising in revolt and creating an unsavoury scene now.

He was very angry for another reason also—he had watched with alarm, indignation and utter disgust when "ten thousand kings" had tried to move the bow simultaneously--refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 251. How horrible, immoral and incredulous it was for a father to even imagine that in the unfortunate eventuality that they succeeded in moving and breaking the bow together, he would be forced to marry his daughter to all these mad and pervert men who were no less than personified greedy-and-lustful demons in the guise of kings.

So, Janak now sternly rebukes them without any reservation or mincing words. This made the defeated kings more ashamed of themselves. As we shall read a little later, they did rise in revolt to avenge their humiliation in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 266 herein below.

³The same thing is said about king Dasrath of Ayodhya, the honourable father of Lord Ram, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 28. However, the context here is absolutely different. Queen Kaikeyi wanted to make her son Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, as the king of Ayodhya instead of Ram who was the eldest of the four brothers and was planned to be

anointed on the throne by his father, Dasrath, soon. So she threw tantrums and invoked two promises that her husband had made to her in some distant past but were still pending to be implemented. She had doubts that the king would not keep his vows, so she wanted an assurance or guarantee from him. It was at this time that Dasrath had said that “it is an established tradition amongst members of king Raghu’s dynasty to which he belonged that they would gladly lay their lives but not break their own words, that there is no greater sin than speaking a lie or denying the truth”.

The same idea is being expressed by Janak here. He would prefer to see his beloved daughter remain unmarried than going back on his words and inviting ridicule and infamy for all times to come.

⁴Janak literally said that all of you are impotent. A warrior who lacks strength and can’t even move an old rusty bow is no better than an impotent man.

After all the diatribe, Janak has used the affable term “brothers” (‘Bhaai’) to assuage ruffled feelings and soothen tempers amongst the kings when he scolded and rebuked them in stern words. “Brothers” is a polite mode of address, and Janak intended to convey the message that despite whatever that has happened he harbours no ill-will against any of the kings. They and he are brothers belonging to the same fraternity of great kings. So they should not harbour any animosity against him. They must understand the pain and grief in his heart as a father who has to face the bleak future of his daughter staring at his face.

This word “brother” has been used by Janak in his concluding sentence, implying that he has nothing more to speak.]

जनक बचन सुनि सब नर नारी । देखि जानकिहि भए दुखारी ॥ ७ ॥
माखे लखनु कुटिल भइँ भौंहेँ । रदपट फरकत नयन रिसौंहेँ ॥ ८ ॥

janaka bacana suni saba nara nārī. dēkhi jānakihi bha'e dukhārī. 7.
mākhē lakhanu kuṭila bha'im' bhaunhēm. radapaṭa pharakata nayana
risaunhēm. 8.

Hearing these deeply agonized words of Janak lamenting the dark future of his daughter Sita, all the assembled men and women looked at her (Sita) and felt very sorry for her; they felt very sad and hurt for her in their hearts¹. (7)

Laxman became incensed (by the words of Janak). His eyebrows narrowed and his forehead furrowed as his eyes spit fire and lips quivered in anger and indignation². (8)

[Note—¹When the assembled citizens heard that Janak would not make an alternative arrangement to marry Sita as declared by him above, they were overwhelmed with gloom and sorrows. Initially they may have thought that in case none is able to break the bow, then in that eventuality Janak would implement some alternative arrangement that he must have had planned before hand in his mind. Any wise man would always have alternatives ready in case the main plan fails. But Janak was so confident that surely the Creator must have readied some suitable groom for Sita because he, the Creator, can’t be so cruel as to force a girl to remain unmarried for life. His (Janak’s) job was just to trace the designated groom decided for Sita by the Creator. He had no inkling of what was to come.

As we shall see soon, Janak was not wrong in this surmising. The Creator had indeed decided a groom for Sita, and that groom was Lord Ram. So obviously, how could the Creator let others break the bow and marry Sita? But being a human being after all, Janak was not aware of certain things, such as who would be Sita's groom as decided by the Creator.

We have a lesson to learn here. We accuse our destiny and our God for all the ills that befall us during the course of our lives. When we face some problem we lament that God is not listening to us or is stone-hearted. It is not that at all: we must have trust and faith in the Lord's overall intention of ensuring our welfare like a loving Father should. Times of misery and pain and grief in life are the tests of our faith and love and trust in the Lord our Father. Who would not like to pass in any test that he is subjected to? We do our best to pass this and that test in the world to qualify for this or that post, but we fail in the 'great test' of life when we lose our confidence, faith, love and devotion in our Lord, the Supreme Father! We can trust our worldly father for doing us well and helping us when we need him, but the great irony is we doubt our Supreme Father.

A very remarkable thing is to be observed here. While all the men and women, along with king Janak, his queen and the rest of his family (refer: Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 256) were overcome with sorrows and grief, Sita, who should have been the one most distressed and grieving as she was directly affected, showed no emotions or signs of grief when none of the kings were able to break the bow. Why was this? The reason is that she hadn't wanted to marry any one of them in the first place. In fact, she must have given a sigh of relief that now she wouldn't be forced to marry any of the kings against her will.

From the very beginning she had a desire in her heart to marry Lord Ram, and this fact has been repeatedly said in many previous verses. [Refer: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 248.] Therefore, she must have felt relieved when her father king Janak declared all the kings defeated. She knew that sage Vishwamitra, who was a great sage with tremendous mystical powers, would surely do something now because Lord Ram had yet not gone to the bow.

Further, besides this, she remembered the blessings of goddess Parvati in the garden temple when she had blessed her that she would get the groom of her choice. [Refer: Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and the accompanying Chanda.]

So, Sita stood assured that whatever has happened would be for her good. There was nothing to worry.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 8-9 also.

Laxman got very angry because Janak had said that "the earth is devoid of true warrior kings". Why and how dare he utter such insulting words when they, he himself and his elder brother Ram who themselves belonged to a famous warrior family of Ayodhya, were personally present in the assembly? They hadn't been given a chance, and therefore such blanket condemnation of all kings as being impotent and lacking strength is uncalled for and unjustified. So, Laxman became furious as he took umbrage at the statement of Janak.]

दो०. कहि न सकत रघुबीर डर लगे बचन जनु बान ।

नाइ राम पद कमल सिरु बोले गिरा प्रमान ॥ २५२ ॥

dōhā.

kahi na sakata raghubīra ḍara lagē bacana janu bāna.
nā'i rāma pada kamala siru bōlē girā pramāna. 252.

He (Laxman) wanted to retort and rebuke Janak for making such insulting general statements without thinking. Though Janak's scathing words hit him like arrows, yet he could not speak out of fear of annoying Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave warrior of the Raghu dynasty).

So, he first bowed at the lotus-like (holy) feet of Lord Ram (to seek his permission; to imply that he be forgiven for what he was about to say to defend the honour of their family). Then he spoke truthful words. [That is, whatever Laxman said was not boastful, but matter of fact.] (Doha no. 252.)

[Note—Laxman always showed the greatest of respect for his elder brother Lord Ram. Whenever any development happened which may, even remotely, be insulting for his revered Lord, Laxman stood up in arms to protect him and defend his dignity. We shall read about this nature of Laxman at many places in the story of Ramayan later on.

Meanwhile, Laxman hesitated to stand up and rebuke Janak because he was the latter was his host and a great respected king. Any father whose daughter faced the bleak future that Sita now purportedly faced would make him emotionally upset and lose his mental balance and calm. Laxman also observed that not all the invited kings had participated in the lifting of the bow; some had completely abstained—refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246. These kings had not objected to Janak's caustic outburst.

So, Laxman initially felt a little constrained and could not decide whether to speak or not, lest his anger may annoy Lord Ram. The Lord may get angry at him for speaking unnecessarily instead of keeping quiet in a dignified manner. It is not good manners to speak angrily against the host, especially when the latter is not at fault, is speaking in a general manner without targeting any individual in particular, and is a noble king no less great than their own father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya.

Wouldn't it be more decent if Laxman just stands up, raises his hand and seeks permission either for himself or his brother to go to the bow, lift it and break it, instead of spouting fire and brimstone?

So, Laxman politely sought permission from Lord Ram before he spoke.

One very significant observation can be made here—Laxman has sought permission from Lord Ram, but not from sage Vishwamitra. This is because he knew that if Lord Ram gives him permission then it is deemed that he must have taken prior approval from the sage. Orders are taken through a chain of command: the junior takes permission from his immediate superior, and the latter in turn takes permission from the person higher up in the hierarchy. Therefore, Laxman would seek permission from Lord Ram, and the latter would then ask sage Vishwamitra if he gives his consent.

And therefore, for all practical purposes, as far as Laxman was concerned, permission from Lord Ram meant permission from the great sage too, because Lord Ram would never give his consent for anything for which the sage does not approve. The fact that Laxman then spoke out his mind in the strongest of terms is a proof that both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra approved of it.

But we shall also read below that in his anger and zest to defend the honour and dignity of his race, and more importantly of his revered Lord Ram, sometimes he crossed the limits of dignity and politeness while pouring scorn at Janak. At those times Lord Ram had to intervene to restrain Laxman—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

The reader is requested to see note appended to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254 herein below which further explains this Doha in another context.]

चौ०. रघुबंसिन्ह महुँ जहँ कोउ होई । तेहिं समाज अस कहइ न कोई ॥ १ ॥
कही जनक जसि अनुचित बानी । बिद्यमान रघुकुल मनि जानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

raghubansinha mahum' jaham' kō'u hō'ī. tēhim samāja asa kaha'i na kō'ī. 1.
kahī janaka jasi anucita bānī. bidyamāna raghukula mani jānī. 2.

Laxman spoke in a scathing language, pouring fire and brimstone: ‘No one dares to speak in the way it has been spoken (by Janak) anywhere in an assembly where any member of the Raghu dynasty is present. (1)

It is totally unacceptable the way Janak has blatantly spoken unwarranted and insulting words inspite of being aware (knowing well) that the gem of the Raghu dynasty (i.e. Lord Ram, the best warrior of this line of kings) is present here (in the assembly). (2)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 8-9 also which describe Laxman’s strong retort to Janak.

Laxman took exceptional offence of the unilateral declaration of Janak that “he has discovered that the earth is devoid of real warriors, that all the kings were impotent, and had he known of this he wouldn’t have made his vow (of marrying Sita to anyone who breaks the bow)”—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 and 6 that precede Doha no. 252.

The reason for Laxman getting angry is obvious—none of the two brothers were given a chance to try their hands at the bow. Self-respect and honour of the family were affected by this remark of Janak though the king had not meant to insult any particular king or prince and his family or race.

By saying “any member of the Raghu dynasty”, Laxman meant that even an ordinary member of this line of kings and princes was capable of tackling an old and rusty bow, what to talk of the better amongst them. In the present case, Lord Ram, who is a literal “gem of the Raghu dynasty”, was personally present in the assembly. So Janak was totally unjustified in making this undignified comment; it’s not acceptable.

Janak was fully aware of the stupendous abilities and astounding powers of Lord Ram because he was explicitly told by sage Vishwamitra about the Lord’s brave achievements and martial acumen when he had successfully killed the demoness Tadaka and the entire army of demons led by its chief Subhau while protecting the fire sacrifice of the sage. Janak was also fully aware that they were the sons of king

Dasrath of Ayodhya who belonged to Raghu dynasty. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with the preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

So, Janak can't feign ignorance that he did not know who Lord Ram was, and therefore he shouldn't have made the insulting comments without inviting the Lord to try his luck at the bow.]

सुनहु भानुकुल पंकज भानू । कहउँ सुभाउ न कछु अभिमानू ॥ ३ ॥
जौं तुङ्गारि अनुसासन पावौं । कंदुक इव ब्रह्मांड उठावौं ॥ ४ ॥
काचे घट जिमि डारौं फोरी । सकउँ मेरु मूलक जिमि तोरी ॥ ५ ॥

sunahu bhānukula paṅkaja bhānū. kaha'um' subhā'u na kachu abhimānū. 3.
jauṁ tumhāri anusāsana pāvauṁ. kanduka iva brahmāṇḍa uṭhāvauṁ. 4.
kācē ghaṭa jimi ḍārauṁ phōrī. saka'um' mēru mūlaka jimi tōrī. 5.

[Then Laxman turned to Lord Ram and said--] Listen oh Lord who is like the sun for the lotus representing the Raghu dynasty¹. I speak words without any trace of pride and ego in me². (3)

If I get your (Lord Ram's) permission, I will lift the entire universe ("brahmāṇḍa") as if it was a mere ball [4], and then I will dash it and break it like a mud-pot that has not been baked properly. Not only this, I can uproot and break Mt. Meru (the abode of gods) as if it was the humble radish [5].³ (4-5)

[Note—¹Here, the Raghu dynasty is compared to the lotus flower, and Lord Ram to the sun. The lotus flower opens when the sun rises in the sky. This metaphor implies that Lord Ram gives honour and self-respect to all the members of his dynasty, he makes all of them feel happy and joyous by his presence, and they feel lucky to have him in their midst as a member of this dynasty.

In fact, this metaphor is most apt here because all the kings of the Raghu dynasty belonged to the 'Solar Race'; they descended from the Sun God.

²In other words Laxman says "I am not boasting, and what I am about to say are truthful words. I will actually do what I say, and I will turn this earth upside down to avenge this insult cast upon you by Janak." Read on and let's see in the following verses what Laxman would do.

³Laxman was indeed not boasting because he was an incarnation of 'Lord Seshnath', the celestial serpent with thousand hoods who is said to support the world from below aloft these hoods. He is also the serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean known as 'Kshir Sagar'. In this role, Seshnath protects Vishnu by spreading his thousand hoods on the head of the Lord.

This Seshnath had accompanied Lord Vishnu to help the latter to eliminate the evil demons and free the earth of their horrors. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17; and (ii) Doha no. 197.

The universe is like a rounded ball or egg. It is especially compared to a "ball" here for the reason that it cannot be so easily broken just like the rubber ball which does not break no matter how hard one dashes it against the ground. But it can be easily lifted like the ball. So, when saying how he will break such a universe, Laxman cites

the example of a half-baked mud or clay pot. The latter would crumble to pieces as soon as it dropped on the ground.

Therefore, Laxman meant that he would lift the entire universe as if it was a ball, and then break it as if it was a mud pot.

This example was to answer Janak's condition about "lifting" and "breaking" the bow of Lord Shiva which was supposed to be the heaviest and hardest thing in the whole world. It is clear in the declaration of the heralds that this bow was "very strong" and "heavy". Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 3 that precede Doha no. 250.

Laxman in effect says that "What to talk of the rusty old bow; I can lift and break the entire universe".

As for the metaphor of the "uprooting and breaking Mt. Meru like it was a piece of radish", Laxman was referring to Janak's comment that none of the kings could move the bow even a fraction of an inch what to talk of lifting it and breaking it. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 252.

Well, Laxman said in effect that "If he got a chance, he would pull the bow out of its platform like one pulls out radish from the ground, and then snap the bow in one sweeping move of the hand as easily as one breaks the radish".]

तव प्रताप महिमा भगवाना । को बापुरो पिनाक पुराना ॥ ६ ॥
नाथ जानि अस आयसु होऊ । कौतुकु करौं बिलोकिअ सोऊ ॥ ७ ॥
कमल नाल जिमि चाप चढ़ावौं । जोजन सत प्रमान लै धावौं ॥ ८ ॥

tava pratāpa mahimā bhagavānā. kō bāpurō pināka purānā. 6.
nātha jāni asa āyasu hō'ū. kautuku karaum bilōki'a sō'ū. 7.
kamala nāla jimi cāpa caṛhāvaurṁ. jōjana sata pramāna lai dhāvaurṁ. 8.

Oh Lord (Sri Ram)! What is this wretched old and rusty bow when it is compared to your immense glory and potentials! [To wit, if I invoke your divine glories and mystical powers and apply them on this petty bow, it won't stand even a trifle of a chance to oppose me, and would be splintered into smithereens like broken glass pieces.]¹ (6)

Oh Lord! Think this over, and treating it as an honest declaration on my part (to preserve the dignity of our race), please give me your permission and watch the fantastic spectacle that unfolds before you. (7)

[What would be this spectacle like? Well—] I will lift the bow and string it as easily as it was a soft and light stalk of the lotus flower, and then I will run gleefully with it for a distance of a thousand Yojan as a proof ("Pramaan") of the truth of my statements (all the while waving the bow triumphantly like one waves a flag of victory). [1 Yojan = approx. 8 miles on an average.]² (8)

[Note—¹Laxman has said in Chaupai line no. 3 that follows Doha no. 252 above that "he is not saying anything out of ego or false pride". In other words, Laxman is not concerned about his own honour, dignity and self-respect being rubbed the wrong way, but he is angry because his beloved brother and Lord, Sri Ram, has been insulted by the words of Janak. That is why he clarifies in this verse any misunderstanding that

may rise in the mind of anyone present in the assembly—that “he is annoyed because the glory of Lord Ram is questioned; he is angry because an old bow is used as an excuse to undermine the greatness of Lord Ram as well as the rest of the kings of the famous Raghu dynasty which is renowned for brave and strong kings”.

²Laxman assured Lord Ram that once he is given a nod of approval, he will lift the bow, string it, and then go around the world waving it like a flag to triumphantly declare to everyone that he has conquered the bow, and through it in a symbolic manner the combined might of arms of all the great kings of the world who could not as much as move the same bow an inch despite their trying to do so together.

The imagery is excellent. When a team wins any competition, it runs round the stadium with the flag of the country it represents as a symbol of triumph. Laxman meant exactly this. The assembled kings and princes had come from all the corners of the world (apropos: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251), but none of them had succeeded in moving the bow, either individually or together (apropos: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 252). This is followed by Janak’s declaration that no one has succeeded in moving the bow, and that the earth is devoid of true warriors (apropos: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 252).

Laxman wanted to tell the world that Janak’s declaration is wrong and false. In order to convince the world that it is indeed so, and that he has actually lifted the bow and stringed it, it was necessary for Laxman to “run around the world and declare his triumph by physically carrying the stringed bow with him so that the people can see it as a proof, and be convinced”. Otherwise, the world would think that Laxman was merely boasting because king Janak, who was renowned for his truthfulness, can’t speak a lie.]

दो०. तोरौं छत्रक दंड जिमि तव प्रताप बल नाथ ।
जौं न करौं प्रभु पद सपथ कर न धरौं धनु भाथ ॥ २५३ ॥

dōhā.

tōrauṁ chatraka daṇḍa jimi tava pratāpa bala nātha.
jauṁ na karauṁ prabhu pada sapatha kara na dharauṁ dhanu bhātha. 253.

Oh Lord, not only this. If I get your permission I would break this bow (effortlessly) like it was a stalk of a mushroom by relying on the strength of your glory and might¹.

If, on the other hand, I fail to do so, then I swear (promise) in the name of your holy feet that I will not hold a bow and a quiver in my hands again (for the rest of my life)!’ (Doha no. 253)

[Note—Two things are important in this Doha. First is Laxman’s declaration that he can break the bow if Lord Ram permits. In other words, the Lord need not take this trouble and leave it to Laxman. Able ministers or army commanders would tell their Lord, the Emperor or the King, not to bother about small inconsequential things as they are capable to handle them on their own. The Emperor or the King should intervene when they fail.

Similarly, Laxman meant that this menial and inconsequential job of lifting and breaking a rusty old bow does not suit the stature of the majesty of Lord Ram that he should personally go and touch this dusty bow. The Lord should remain sitting and just instruct Laxman to carry out the job for him on his behalf. This is how great Kings and Emperors acted: they rarely intervened personally but left the mundane affairs of the kingdom or empire to their subordinate ministers or commanders.

Laxman deemed fit to make this statement to remove any traces of doubts in the mind of all that it was not that he can only “lift and string the bow” but won’t be able to actually “break it”.

The second point is that Laxman did not wish to undermine the greatness and authority of Lord Ram by overstepping him, and breaking the bow himself instead of the Lord. Laxman wished to make it clear that his breaking of the bow was not due to his own powers and strength but due to the powers and authority vested in him by Lord Ram. It is similar to the situation when ministers and commanders of a king or emperor carry out their duties independently, but they do it on behalf of their master, the king or the emperor. That is why the spoils of war were deemed to rightly belong to the king and not to the army commanders. Similarly, the credit for good governance went to the king and not to his ministers who were supposed to act anonymously on behalf of the king.

Since the marriage of Sita was hitched to the breaking of the bow, it was very imperative for Laxman to declare that “he is breaking the bow not by his own volition or strength but on the instructions of Lord Ram and by employing the latter’s mystical powers”. Therefore, the reward—marriage with Sita—would be Lord Ram’s and not Laxman’s!]

चौ०. लखन सकोप बचन जे बोले । डगमगानि महि दिग्गज डोले ॥ १ ॥
सकल लोग सब भूप डेराने । सिय हियँ हरषु जनकु सकुचाने ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

lakhana sakōpa bacana jē bōlē. ḍagamagāni mahi diggaja ḍōlē. 1.
sakala lōga saba bhūpa ḍērānē. siya hiyam̐ haraṣu janaku sakucānē. 2.

When Laxman spoke words seething with anger, the earth shook and the Diggajs moved (shifted) from their places and tottered¹. (1)

Everyone present there in the assembly, the citizens as well as the kings, became terrified. But Sita’s heart, on the other hand, felt happy and joyous (as this was the moment she was waiting for, because now either of the two brothers would be allowed to break the bow, and her dreams would not be crushed), while king Janak blushed (became red-faced) at this strong rejoinder². (2)

[Note—¹These two things—shaking of the earth and moving of the Diggajs—are figures of speech to mean that there was a huge turmoil in the world as if some catastrophe was about to happen.

Remember: Laxman is an incarnation of the Seshnath who supports the world on its ten thousand hoods (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 17), and therefore if Laxman becomes angry and shakes his head violently the earth is bound to tremble as if there was an earthquake.

The ‘Diggajs’ are the eight strong elephants that support the earth in all the directions. Since there are eight directions, there are said to be eight ‘Diggajs’. These eight directions are as follows—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, and north-west. See also Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 260.

So, when Seshnath in the form of Laxman shook his head in anger, the earth as well as its supporting elephants too shook and trembled. This is a poetic way of saying that Laxman’s words were exceedingly scathing and he spoke at the top of his voice in a wrathful tone.

²Sita was earlier worried when her father, king Janak, had virtually declared the competition over when he said that since no one could break the bow he will now have to bear with the ignominy and pain of letting his daughter Sita unmarried—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 252.

She could not at all intervene and ask her father to let Lord Ram also try his hand at the bow—well, it would be absolutely ridiculous and incongruous for her to even think of personally speaking out. This is the irony of the situation as it prevailed in ancient tradition-bound society—the girl whose entire future was at stake did not get a chance to at least express her thoughts or voice her concern. It would be highly incongruous, very improper and certainly violative of established traditions and royal protocol if Sita did gather courage to speak out in public to request her father king Janak to ask Lord Ram to at least try his hand at lifting and breaking the bow because he had not been given a chance till now. She would have become a laughing stock everywhere in the world, and would not only invite utter scorn and infamy for her self but would also put her father to extreme shame.

Therefore, when Laxman angrily spoke that he is capable of lifting and breaking the bow if Lord Ram gives his permission to him to do so, and as a proof of his abilities there was a virtual earthquake, Sita felt very happy. She mentally blessed Laxman for rebuking her father because the latter had neglected Lord Ram before declaring that “no one could break the bow”, and the insulting general surmise that he made that “the earth was devoid of true warriors”. How could Janak use the phrase “no one” when Lord Ram or Laxman had yet not even gone to touch the bow?

Didn’t the king know that these two brothers too belonged to a royal family of great repute, and didn’t he personally like the two brothers that he wanted to avoid them, that he did not wish them to break the bow and marry Sita? Not at all—both these notions were wrong. For one, Janak was well aware who they were and how brave they were, as sage Vishwamitra had himself told him about them—refer: Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8. And secondly, Janak had himself taken a fascination for the two brothers and had been overwhelmed by their charm—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216.

So, to neglect Lord Ram and Laxman before declaring the competition closed and sealing the fate of Sita to remain unmarried was something Janak shouldn’t have done, and naturally Sita was annoyed and angry with her father for it.

Perhaps the all-knowing and omniscient Lord Ram had sensed Sita’s predicament and grief as well as her suppressed anger, and he knew that Sita sincerely wished to marry him—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259. The fact that Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient is endorsed at other places also in Ram Charit Manas—e.g. (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 62; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 66; and (iii) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.

Therefore, Lord Ram must have subtly inspired Laxman to speak. Remember: If we examine Doha no. 252 of Baal Kand closely we discover that though Laxman did bow at the feet of Lord Ram to seek his permission before speaking, no explicit permission was given by the Lord. Lord Ram had neither said ‘don’t speak’, nor said ‘yes, go ahead’; the Lord had just kept quiet. This clearly implies that Laxman had his subtle, tacit support and approval. Laxman was very wise, and he was also privy to the developments in the garden when Lord Ram and Sita had met for the first time. The Lord had clearly expressed to Laxman his liking for and appreciation of Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 231 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 238.

The above observations are also the probable reason why Laxman did not think necessary to seek an independent permission from sage Vishwamitra before angrily snubbing king Janak in open court.

The above observations that both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra subtly approved Laxman’s actions will be clear below when we read Chaupai no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 that “both Lord Ram and Guru Vishwamitra, as well as the other junior sages who had accompanied Vishwamitra, felt exceptionally glad and happy in their hearts”. Had any one of them disapproved Laxman’s words and actions then surely Laxman would not have dared to stand up and speak the way he did.

Janak squirmed with a red-face because Laxman was indeed speaking the truth. Janak realised that he should have requested sage Vishwamitra to ask Lord Ram, being the elder of the two brothers, to lift the bow. But he hadn’t, and so when Laxman spoke angrily and the sage did not step-in to stop him, the king realised the gravity of the situation: he sensed that even sage Vishwamitra has not liked his declaring “the earth devoid of real warriors” and not even offering the chance to Lord Ram, especially when he knew that a mighty sage of Vishwamitra’s status is accompanying him and the sage has himself told the king about the valour and stupendous powers of the two brothers when the king had gone to welcome the sage on his arrival at Janakpur—refer Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 earlier in this narration.

So Janak decided to bear this humiliation quietly. It was indeed a great humiliation for king Janak—who was one of the greatest kings of his time, was an aged man, and was the host of the event—to be publicly rebuked and taken to task by a young prince, in the front of the entire assembly full of kings and princes from all quarters of earth as well as by the entire citizenry of his own kingdom!

But so noble-hearted and broad-minded was the great king Janak that he did not feel offended or took any umbrage to Laxman’s diatribe against him as he realised that it was his own mistake. If there would have been some other king in place of Janak, it is certain that he must have angrily shot back and ordered his soldiers to imprison this prince who dared to insult him in open court, is it not? Not only tolerating Laxman’s public scorn, Janak was so forgiving by nature that he had later on married his own daughter, the sister of Sita, with Laxman—refer: Baal Kand, line nos. 1-2 of Chanda stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 325.]

गुर रघुपति सब मुनि मन माहीं । मुदित भए पुनि पुनि पुलकाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
सयनहिं रघुपति लखनु नेवारे । प्रेम समेत निकट बैठारे ॥ ४ ॥

gura raghupati saba muni mana māhīm. mudita bha'e puni puni pulakāhīm. 3.
sayanahīm raghupati lakhanu nēvārē. prēma samēta nikaṭa baiṭhārē. 4.

[At whatever Laxman said and as a result of this new development—] The Guru (i.e. sage Vishwamitra)*, Raghupati (Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghu dynasty) as well as all other sages (who had accompanied Vishwamitra) felt exceedingly happy and exhilarated; their bodies showed signs of repeated thrill passing through them¹. (3)

Raghupati (Lord Ram) politely signalled Laxman by a gesture of his eyes to stop now². Then the Lord affectionately made him (or asked him to) sit near him³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/89, stanza no. 10 also.

As we have noted earlier while discussing verse no. 2 just above, the persons who fully approved of Laxman's actions were the following—Sita, Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra as well as the other sages who had accompanied Vishwamitra. As far as Laxman was concerned, this was enough; he didn't give a damn to anybody else.

One very important reason for all of them feeling glad in their hearts is this—even in his anger, Laxman had not undermined the majesty and dignity of Lord Ram. He had fully maintained the honour and respect of the Lord because he had clearly said that whatever he would actually do will be only “if Lord Ram gives his permission” (refer Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 253), and that “whatever he does would be by relying on the glory and powers of Lord Ram” so as to give the Lord full credit for his astounding feats (refer Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 253).

*If we re-visit the question ‘Why did Laxman not seek permission from sage Vishwamitra, though he sought so from Lord Ram before standing up and speaking angrily in the assembly’ as implied in Doha no. 252, and then we read here in the present verse that ‘the sage was happy at the developments’, an interesting thing emerges which shows how wise and long-thinking Laxman was. This interesting thing is this:—If Lord Ram gets the right to claim the reward of the breaking of the bow by Laxman, which in this case would be the marriage with Sita, because it was by relying upon Ram's powers and authority that Laxman had been able to break it, then the same right would also belong to sage Vishwamitra if Laxman had sought any permission from the sage and had invoked his blessings and mystical powers to actually break the bow.

What does it translate into practical terms? Well, in this eventuality, both Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra would have had ‘equal right’ over Sita like the case we come across in the epic Mahabharat where a single woman named Draupadi was the wife of five Pandava brothers. Remember that it was not that the sages during the era of Lord Ram did not have wives—for instance, sage Vasistha, the royal priest of Ayodhya and the first guru of Lord Ram, had a wife named Arundhati (refer: Ayodhya Kand—Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 78: and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 187), and sage Atri whom the Lord had met during his forest sojourn also had a wife named Anusuiya (refer: Aranya Kand—Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5). So, sage Vishwamitra having a wife would, prima facia, be alright.

But it also must be remembered at the same time that the situation during the era when Lord Ram was on earth, i.e. the Hindu epoch known as the ‘Treta Yug’, was

quite different than what prevailed during Krishna's period in 'Dwapar Yug'. In Treta Yug it was simply unimaginable and unthinkable for a woman to have more than one husband, let alone one of them being a king and the other a sage! It would be extremely hilarious, absurd, scandalous, sacrilegious, outrageous and immoral to even speak of this thing. It just couldn't be allowed to happen.

Therefore we find that Laxman was so wise that he did not want to create any embarrassing situation like the one described above, and so he decided to completely avoid the sage to prevent any sort of scandal getting a chance to find a root in any time in future. Hence he did not seek any permission from sage Vishwamitra and bypassed him altogether.

As the situation stood, if Laxman had indeed broken the bow, then he would have done so on behalf of Lord Ram because he was the only Authority from whom Laxman has sought permission. Hence, the reward of breaking of the bow, which was marriage with Sita, would go solely to Lord Ram, and the scandalous as well as the sacrilegious idea of sage Vishwamitra too having any right or claim to the reward would not arise at all!

The sage was extremely practical and wise, and having read into Laxman's mind he not only not take any offence at not being consulted and taken permission from by Laxman before he launched on his angry outpouring, but even felt very happy at the turn of events as is clear in the present verse we have read above.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 10 also.

³Lord Ram restrained Laxman by gesturing with his eyes as a sign of great dignity. Remember: Lord Ram had not, in the beginning, given any oral permission to Laxman to get up and defend their dignity. So here also he quietly, with the help of a gesture of the eye, asked him to stop saying anything further because the message has already been conveyed, and speaking unnecessarily and too much would undermine their own dignity and prestige. The first volley of angry words created the shock and awe that the Lord intended to create, but any more speaking would not only undo the effect of this initial shock but also may make the people start laughing and jeering at Laxman.

The Lord also feared that if he does not stop Laxman then he would continue pouring fire and brimstone, and in his zest may even take the Lord's silence as a subtle, tacit approval for Laxman's announcement that he would "lift the bow and run for a thousand Yojan with it", and "break it" (refer—Doha no. 253 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8). If this happens, then the situation would spin out of control for everyone. It would be undermining the dignity of Lord Ram and would be against established protocol of good behaviour, decency, manners and observance of traditions that his younger brother supercedes him even when he is personally present on the occasion.

So it was very necessary for Lord Ram to stop Laxman now, before he actually moves ahead and steps on the platform where the bow was kept. Should it happen, it would be extremely odd as well as humiliating for Laxman to be stopped at that late stage. Hence, it was prudent to stop Laxman now before any harm is done, and before it was too late.

The fact that Vishwamitra gave his tacit approval and support will be absolutely beyond doubt as we read the following verses herein below--]

बिस्वामित्र समय सुभ जानी । बोले अति सनेहमय बानी ॥ ५ ॥
उठहु राम भंजहु भवचापा । मेटहु तात जनक परितापा ॥ ६ ॥

bisvāmitra samaya subha jānī. bōlē ati sanēhamaya bānī. 5.
uṭhahu rāma bhanjahu bhavacāpā. mēṭahu tāta janaka paritāpā. 6.

Observing that the time was most appropriate (i.e. the time has come for him to step-in and break the impasse), sage Vishwamitra spoke (to Lord Ram) in very affectionate words.¹ (5)

‘Get up Ram and break the ‘bhavacāpā²’ (the bow belonging to Lord Shiva, also known as “Bhava”) to remove (or eliminate) the torments and agony from which Janak is suffering.’ (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 11 also.

The situation had become extremely sensitive: Laxman has violated protocol by making caustic comments against Janak, and he had also challenged that he is indeed capable of breaking the bow only if Lord Ram gives his consent. Then Laxman was asked to sit down. The wise sage realized the gravity of the situation—if Lord Ram does not respond it will mean that Laxman had gone out of his head and that whatever he had said was totally boast and lie. The whole of the Raghu dynasty would be put to shame. What face would the sage show their father, king Dasrath, when this news reaches him and he feels so ashamed and angry at the sage that inspite of his presence he allowed such ignominy to come to the family. King Dasrath had sent his dear sons with the sage with full confidence that the sage is fully capable to protect them and would always act for their good and welfare. Why did the sage take the two brothers to Janakpur to be allowed to be humiliated in this way? The sage had only asked Dasrath to send the brothers with him to protect his fire sacrifice, and what right did he have to exceed his brief?

Forget about Dasrath; the entire world would laugh and sneer at Vishwamitra that he allowed shame and insult to be heaped on the two brothers who were under his care and protection inspite of the sage being fully able to make them victorious in the assembly as he possessed stupendous mystical powers? Is this the reward the sage intended to give the two brothers and king Dasrath, their father, for the sacrifices they had made and the trouble they had taken for the happiness and welfare of the sage? Well, the the king had allowed the two brothers to leave the comfort of the kingdom and go on foot to the forest to fight and kill ferocious demons so that the sage’s fire sacrifice is completed without any hitch, a duty the two brothers did diligently and successfully?

Why didn’t the sage ask Janak to at least let Lord Ram or Laxman make an attempt at breaking the bow, and why did he sat silently when Janak declared that there is no true warrior in the world because no one had been able to move the bow an inch?

The sage would get to more shame than anybody else when the world would ask him such questions. Sure enough, the world as well as the entire city of Ayodhya would blame him if he kept quiet and forced the two brothers to accept defeat even without trying. The situation has become all the more worse and delicate now as Laxman has angrily stood up and vented his suppressed emotions of disgust and annoyance. Couldn’t the sage understand that the two brothers have felt very angry

and betrayed by the sage for not giving them permission to defend their honour as well as the honour of their dynasty by keeping quiet? Couldn't the sage intercede on their behalf with Janak to allow one of them to break the bow—because he was their Guru and guardian, and therefore it was his moral and practical responsibility to see that their honour, self-respect and dignity are maintained and upheld, especially when the sage was fully capable of doing so? Couldn't the sage appreciate that the two brothers were showing great restraint and respect for him by not walking to the bow without his consent, like all other invited kings and princes had done, and therefore it was now his turn to stand up on their behalf?

Countless such questions swirled in the mind of Vishwamitra. It was not that he wasn't aware of his responsibility, not at all. In fact, he was very much aware of it and conscientious about it. He was more capable in enhancing the glory of Lord Ram and Laxman than their own father Dasrath could imagine of being himself. Remember: Had the two brothers not accompanied the sage and had remained in Ayodhya, then the immense fame and glory that came to them when they killed the most formidable of demons who were famed for their ferocity and bloodthirstyness wouldn't have been theirs. Remember also that by liberating Ahilya by touching her with the dust of his holy feet, Lord Ram had established his divine healing and liberating powers beyond doubt.

The sage had showed them the love a father would show his dearest of sons. The two brothers had also treated him with the same affection as they would show their own father. The bond between them transcended the physical world for it had a spiritual dimension to it. Remember: After returning from the garden, Lord Ram had narrated the entire incident of his meeting with Sita to the sage (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237). At that time, the sage, having realized that Lord Ram and Sita had developed liking for each other, had explicitly blessed the two brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 237). After making this promise or blessing, the sage took them to the arena of the bow breaking ceremony. The sage was not a child; he knew where he was taking the two brothers. The sage was 'Trikaalagya'—i.e. one who knew the events of the past, the future as well as the present. He wouldn't have either blessed them that "their wishes would be fulfilled" nor would he have taken them to the ceremony if he had known that Lord Ram would not break the bow.

Again, the sage wouldn't have felt happy when Laxman stood up to sternly rebuke king Janak (as narrated above in Doha no. 253 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8).

The sage was not so utterly selfish or devoid of common and moral sense that after getting his work of completing the fire sacrifice done he would bring the two honourable brothers, who had obliged him no end, to Janakpur to be humiliated and dishonoured in this way.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that the sage "was waiting for an opportune moment to make his announcement". And this moment came now after Laxman had declared their presence in strongly-worded terms.

Now, the next question is: Why was the sage waiting for so long? He wanted the whole assembly to focus its attention on Lord Ram and Laxman, he wanted to dramatise Lord Ram's appearance on the stage, he wanted to give the Lord the importance, the prominence and the dominance he deserved, he wished that the Lord is presented to the world as the saviour and the provider of solace and succour at times of utter despair and hopelessness, he did not want the Lord's presence and glory

to get lost in the melee of over-jealous kings pushing and shoving each other and loudly boasting of their own strength by throwing all caution and decency to the wind, he did not, in short, want the dignity and honour of Lord Ram be compromised in anyway whatsoever.

Hence, when the sage quietly observed the restless, boastful, over-jealous and excited crowd of kings and princes vying with each other in the beginning of the competition, he decided to exercise restraint and let the storm pass. He did not wish to undermine Lord Ram's supreme stature, honour and dignity by allowing him to join an uncontrolled motley crowd of haughty and egoist kings and princes, sweating and swearing, jostling, pushing, shoving and cursing each other. In this scenario, even if Lord Ram had broken the bow, this singularly marvelous achievement and its significance would have been lost in the shouting and shoving, in the noise and clamour.

After all the kings failed to move the bow, a pall of gloom had descended on the arena. When Janak spoke, there was a complete grave-like silence of shame, defeat and humiliation. In this deathly gloom, Laxman's angry words struck like lightning, waking the entire assembly from the depth of numbness of the mind into which it had sunk. Everyone sat erect on their seats and craned their necks in the direction of the two brothers just like people look up at the sky when lightening streaks through it with a terrifying whiplash-of-a-sound against the background of dark foreboding clouds. And just after this thundering and lightening it is the time when the rain starts pouring down on the parched earth, quenching the thirst of its creatures.

So, metaphorically speaking, this was the time the wise sage selected to make his announcement that he is sending Lord Ram to remove the agony and grief in the heart of Janak, and by implication, of the rest of the citizens as well as of Sita by breaking the bow—just like the case of the rain-God, Indra, ordering the cloud to pour its soothing and cool rain-water upon the earth soon after the lightening alerts the world to be ready for this nectar which is about to be made available to them in a short time!

The moment that the sage selected was dramatic and effective in highlighting Lord Ram's astounding feat. It also effortlessly settled once and for all who actually broke the bow. Remember: At the time Lord Ram went on stage to the bow, the place was completely empty; there was not a single king or prince standing anywhere near the bow. The same place was over-crowded a while ago; there were “thousands of competing kings there”—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251.

So, Lord Ram would be the undisputed victor. No one would ever dare to challenge his victory by saying that someone else had broken the bow and he is being given undue credit because it was not possible to determine in a huge crowd of jostling kings and princes who had ‘actually’ broken the bow. This question did not arise now when the stage was empty.

Another positive spin-off of this moment would be that all the citizens of Janakpur as well as the royal household would be thankful to the sage and obliged to Laxman to create a situation that enabled Lord Ram to go and break the bow to save the truthful king Janak from the agony and humiliation that he would have had to suffer otherwise for being steadfast to his vows. Janak has himself already declared that he “will have to bear with the infamy and agony of seeing his daughter remain unmarried because he does not wish to gain notoriety and sin by breaking his own vows” (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 252).

Therefore, in the event that Lord Ram breaks the bow now after the king has openly declared his pain and helplessness would make the king not only the happiest person on earth but also make him remain ever-obliged to the Lord as well as to the sage, and thankful to Laxman too, for saving him from the horrifying ignominy of being instrumental in forcing his innocent, hapless and helpless daughter to remain unmarried against her will because of his adamant vows and outlandish ideas.

The sage had wanted to declare to the world the glory of the Raghu dynasty as a token of thanksgiving to king Dasrath who had sent his beloved sons, Lord Ram and Laxman with the sage to help him complete his fire sacrifice. And for this purpose it was necessary to choose an appropriate moment. And the opportunity arrived when Janak declared that the “earth was devoid of real warriors”. This incensed Laxman. The wise sage was observing things closely, and when he saw signs of suppressed anger on Laxman’s face, he decided to give a silent go-ahead to him. So he inspired Laxman to get up and speak to defend the honour and glory of the Raghu dynasty. Remember: As has been made clear earlier in a note of Doha no. 252 and again in a note to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254 above, that Laxman would not have spoken so angrily if he knew that the sage would not approve. This explains why Laxman had his way with his angry outburst which lauded the glory of the Raghu dynasty—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 253 above.

²The word “Bhava” has two broad meanings—one refers to ‘Lord Shiva’ because it is one of the many names of the Lord, and the other meaning refers to the agony one suffers in this mortal world of an endless cycle of birth and death, a world held under the spell of Maya (attachments and delusions).

The second word “Chaap” (cāpa) again has two meanings—one obviously refers to the ‘bow of Lord Shiva’, and the other meaning is ‘pressure or tension’ of this world which keeps the creature’s happiness and liberation suppressed under the overwhelming weight of pain and agony that are inherent and a natural part of existence.

So, at a very mundane and ordinary plane Lord Ram was asked by sage Vishwamitra to break the bow of Lord Shiva and remove the cause of agony of king Janak that his daughter would have to remain unmarried because of it.

At a higher spiritual plane, the sage asked the ‘Lord of the World’ to get up and ensure that all his devotees get happiness and bliss by singing his glories and divine deeds that he does in this world so that their spiritual miseries are taken care of.]

सुनि गुरु बचन चरन सिरु नावा । हरषु बिषादु न कछु उर आवा ॥ ७ ॥
ठाढ़े भए उठि सहज सुभाएँ । ठवनि जुबा मृगराजु लजाएँ ॥ ८ ॥

suni guru bacana carana siru nāvā. haraṣu biṣādu na kachu ura āvā. 7
ṭhāṛhē bha'ē uṭhi sahaja subhā'ēm̃. ṭhavani jubā mṛgarāju lajā'ēm̃. 8.

Upon hearing the words (or rather, ‘instructions’) of his Guru (sage Vishwamitra), he (Lord Ram) bowed his head at his feet (as a mark of respect and acceptance).

The Lord was without any sort of emotions—he neither felt happy and joyous nor sorrowful; he exhibited neither excitement nor hesitation or doubt.¹ (7)

He stood up in a natural way (without being self-conscious and showing any sign of excitement or nervousness, especially when thousands of eyes of the assembled people were focused on him). As he stood there, he looked so elegant, majestic and magnificent that he put to shame a young lion who is the king of the forest.² (8)

[Note—¹This was the special quality of Lord Ram which we find throughout the story of the Ramayana. The Lord remained unruffled, and the excitement accompanying any good news, or worry arising from any bad news, did not disturb his mental poise. For instance, when he learnt about the bad news that he was banished to the forest for 14 year exile by his step-mother Kaikeyi by forcing king Dasrath to concede to her outrageous demands, the Lord remained calm and showed no anger or ill-will towards any one. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41; (ii) Doha no. 51 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 149.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12 in which the gods have acknowledged this well-established divine quality in Lord Ram; (ii) Baal Kand, 2nd line of Doha no. 270 which describes how Lord Ram responded politely and without fear or arrogance to sage Parashuram when he came angrily to punish anyone who had dared to break Lord Shiva's bow.

Feelings of joy and sorrow are the emotions of ordinary mortal creatures, and not who are divine and self-realised—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 116. Lord Ram was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and thus he was beyond the effects of sorrows and happiness.

²The lion does not treat any challenge in the forest as deserving any special attention. As the king of the forest, it is natural for it to hunt down even the wild elephant that all other animals fear because of its sheer size and strength. Likewise, Lord Ram stood up majestically, and his bearing was elegant and fearless; he was not at all worried about the formidable nature of the challenge of breaking the mighty bow that had just a while ago vanquished the combined might of all the assembled valorous kings and princes of the realm who were famed for the strength of their arms. To wit, Lord Ram stood up fearlessly and majestically like the lion rising to make the kill.]

दो०. उदित उदयगिरि मंच पर रघुबर बालपतंग ।

बिकसे संत सरोज सब हरषे लोचन भृंग ॥ २५४ ॥

dōhā.

udita udayagiri mañca para raghubara bālapataṅga.
bikasē santa sarōja saba haraṣē lōcana bhṛṅga. 254.

As Raghubhar (the brave chief of the kings of the Raghu dynasty) rose elegantly from his seat (to carry out the instructions of the sage), he resembled a sun rising majestically over the 'Udaigiri' Mountain (the legendary mountain above which the sun appears to rise) in the eastern horizon.¹

Even as the lotus feels happy when the sun rises (as is evident from its beginning to open its petals as soon as the sun emerges over the horizon), and the blackbee too feels joyous (as it begins to buzz enthusiastically over the flower in search of nectar), the saints and other noble-hearted persons present there felt

themselves happy and joyous much like the lotus flower, their eyes opening wide to exhibit their excitement and exhilaration even as they became lively and active (to watch each and every move of Lord Ram) just like the blackbee hovering over the lotus flower with expectation in its heart.² (Doha no. 254)

[Note—¹A dark pall of gloom and despair had descended over the assembly after none of the kings could move the bow, and king Janak made his determination clear that he is not going to change his vow inspite of that meaning that his daughter, Sita, would have to remain unmarried.

Everyone in the assembly, the citizens as well as the members of the royal household, had expected that Sita would be married on this occasion—because they could not have guessed, even in their wildest of dreams, that with thousands of strong and brave warrior kings and princes from all the corners of the earth assembled there and determined to break the bow, none would be able to as much as move the bow even an inch from its position on the platform.

This foreboding prospect that Sita would have to remain unmarried and the utter sense of helplessness and abject despair that followed in its wake were like the darkness of the night that had descended upon the whole assembly. The lotus flower closes during the night and the bees retire to their hives.

When Lord Ram was instructed by sage Vishwamitra to ‘get up’ and break the bow, the Lord ‘rose’ from his seat. His ‘rising’ from his seat is compared here to the ‘rising of the sun from behind the Udaigiri Mountain’.

The metaphor is most appropriate because Lord Ram’s getting up from his seat to break the bow, which would in turn eliminate the torment, the sorrow and the grief that had eclipsed the hearts of Janak and others in the city, is like the sun rising and eliminating the darkness of the night.

What was a moment earlier an atmosphere of gloom and defeated spirits, an atmosphere that was filled with dejection, despair, helplessness and haplessness, is now replaced with that of hope and expectation of happiness to come.

The metaphor of the ‘Udaigiri Mountain’ is also significant here as it stresses the intensity of hope and expectation that was generated when Lord Ram rose from his seat. When the land is flat, as in plains, light begins to appear in the east and the land begins to get illuminated even though the sun is still far below the line of the horizon at dawn. Even as the sun rises above this line, its splendour, glory and brightness in those early moments of sunrise are not as much intense as when the sun is much above the horizon.

But imagine the scene when we are in a valley and the landscape is surrounded by high mountains: the darkness of the night is more profound, and the valley remains quite dark inspite of the dawn breaking in the eastern horizon. The nascent sun is not visible because of the obstruction of the surrounding mountains. Therefore, it is much later when the sun has risen much higher up in the sky so as to be at an angle above the peaks of the eastern mountians, and in the meanwhile has attained its full splendour and dazzling glory, that one is able to have its first sight. The rays of the sun pierce through the valley and stabs the darkness of the night in a sudden move, eliminating it instantly as compared to a flat land where the darkness goes away gradually.

So we now see how remarkably this metaphor has been employed to dramatise the effect of Lord Ram getting up from his seat by comparing it to the “rise of the sun over the Udaigiri Mountain”. It highlights the severity of the depression that prevailed

in the assembly, and the way it was suddenly replaced with the ray of light of hope and joy as soon as Lord Ram made his divine presence clear by rising from his seat.

²The saintly and pious people (“Sant”) present on the occasion immediately cheered up like the lotus flower opening its petals as soon as it sees the first light of the sun. The lotus knows for certain that once the sun has risen there is neither any chance of the darkness of the night surviving nor of the sun going away suddenly; the brightness of the sun would go on enhancing with the progress of the day. So, the lotus opens its petals with confidence, and without harbouring any doubts about the sun’s ability to keep the darkness of the night at bay. Similarly, good people were confident that once Lord Ram has got up from his seat to break the bow, there is no going back, there is no chance of the gloom of a few moments early coming back to haunt them again. So they all cheered up and became happy like the lotus flower.

The blackbee also becomes active during the daytime because the lotus has opened, and therefore now they can seek nectar from the flower. During the night the bee retires because the lotus was closed. The bee hovers over the lotus flower, waiting for it to open fully. Similarly, the eyes of these saintly persons began hovering over Lord Ram, expecting the Lord to quickly break the bow and allow them the once-in-a-lifetime chance to enjoy the pleasure of watching and participating in the festivities and ceremonies that would mark the divine marriage of the Lord with his divine consort Sita.]

चौ०. नृपन्ह केरि आसा निसि नासी । बचन नखत अवली न प्रकासी ॥ १ ॥

मानी महिप कुमुद सकुचाने । कपटी भूप उलूक लुकाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nṛpanha kēri āsā nisi nāsī. bacana nakhata avalī na prakāsī. 1.
mānī mahipa kumuda sakucānē. kapaṭī bhūpa ulūka lukānē. 2.

[In these verses which follow now we will read what pshycological effect Lord Ram’s getting up from his seat to go and break the bow had on others in the assembly.]

The night symbolising the remnants of hope that the failed kings might have harboured in their hearts faded away. All the countless words of boast and pretension they had all been vociferously voicing too faded away and lost their relevance like the countless stars of the night that begin lose their light with the fading away of the night (that comes automatically with the rise of the sun)¹. (1)

While the kings who were falsely proud of themselves became ashamed and bashful, withdrawing themselves like the water-lily shutting up its petals in the presence of the sun, those who were wicked and evil-hearted hid themselves from view like the owl which vanishes from sight during the daytime². (2)

[Note—¹As soon as Lord Ram got up from his seat to break the bow, the remnants of murmur and consultations that were going on amongst the kings as to what options were open to them and what king Janak might now propose, subsided. Deep silence prevailed in the entire assembly.

Prior to Lord Ram standing up to go and break the bow, the defeated kings and princes, already smarting from their defeat and its attendant humiliation, were discussing amongst themselves what measures they should take to avenge their insult even though king Janak had virtually declared the competition closed. Remember: They were not ordinary competitors who would accept defeat and return home humbly. All the participants were great kings in their own right, and had kingdoms and vast realms under their domain. They could not afford to go back to their native kingdoms where their own subjects would be anxiously waiting for their king to return victor and with the trophy represented by Sita in tow. Further, all of them were accustomed to politicking and scheming, making and breaking alliances to suit their interests. Accepting such a ridiculous defeat in such an abject manner at the hands of a lifeless bow that was old, rusty and creaking was simply unpalatable for them. They were contemplating some sort of action, even planning a revolt and were getting ready for the battle that would ensue in its wake. In fact, they would rise in revolt a little later, even going to the extent of declaring their intention of snatching Sita forcibly at the time of her putting the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266.

While all this was going on, Laxman stood up and spoke angrily like thunder striking the earth. These murmurs suddenly vanished like countless people talking animatedly amongst themselves suddenly falling silent as soon as a stab of lightning strikes the earth with a deafening roar. Everyone was stunned into numbness—because none had expected anyone to speak such fiery words directed straight at Janak in full court. But when Laxman was asked to sit down by Lord Ram, some of the murmuring and buzzing reappeared.

Remember: The developments happened in quick succession—as soon as Laxman was asked by Lord Ram with a gesture of his eyes to stop and sit down, sage Vishwamitra asked the Lord to get up and break the bow, and immediately the Lord stood up. In other words, the murmurings that may have resumed in the few intervening moments between Laxman sitting down and Lord Ram standing up, subsided once again. This silence persisted till the time the bow was broken with a snap and a thunderous roar that reverberated throughout the world—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and its accompanying Chanda that precede Doha no. 261.

²Two categories of kings are cited here: one category consisted of kings who were very proud of their strength and valour as well as the majesty and powers of their respective clans, and the second category was those kings who were crooked at heart and would go to any length to fulfill their wishes, even if it meant adopting unfair means and violating the norms of society and good conduct.

The first category of kings felt ashamed when Janak had sternly rebuked them for their vanity and boastfulness, and their humiliation was compounded by Laxman's caustic words. They lowered their faces in shame and kept sitting with a dejected mood, trying to avoid any attention. These kings may have had a history of valiant deeds to their credit which made them so confident that they would easily tackle this bow, but the bow proved too much of an opponent for them. Their defeat at the hands of the bow did put them to shame, but since they had not adopted any unfair means they just sat in their seats with a shameful look on their faces as compared to the second category of wicked kings.

This second category of kings were the evil and wicked ones who had never adopted honest means to achieve success in their lives and had relied on cunning and

deceit to achieve their objectives. They had little or no history of creditable and valiant deeds to boast of, and they had even tried all the dirty tricks to break the bow, throwing all caution to the wind. It was this category of kings which tried to hide like the owl. In their zest to grab Sita by hook or by crook and to claim credit for breaking the bow, they waited on the sidelines till the time the major kings had individually tried and failed. Then these wicked fellows invoked the brotherhood of kings and instigated others to come and join hands with them so that they would move the bow together—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251.

They did not actually exert any effort at moving the bow, but may have merely touched it and pretended to make exertion, while others had actually sweated, huffed and puffed and made strenuous efforts to move it. And in the event the bow would have been broken, they would also have claimed credit for it as well as an equal right for the reward like their friends who had actually made some effort. These cunning and wicked kings are likened to the owl here. They made some excuse and slid away quietly from the venue, fearing exposure and severe punishment.]

भए बिसोक कोक मुनि देवा । बरिसहिं सुमन जनावहिं सेवा ॥ ३ ॥
 गुर पद बंदि सहित अनुरागा । राम मुनिन्ह सन आयसु मागा ॥ ४ ॥
 सहजहिं चले सकल जग स्वामी । मत्त मंजु बर कुंजर गामी ॥ ५ ॥

bha'ē bisōka kōka muni dēvā. barisahim sumana janāvahim sēvā. 3.
 gura pada bandi sahita anurāgā. rāma muninha sana āyasu māgā. 4.
 sahajahim calē sakala jaga svāmī. matta manju bara kunjara gāmī. 5.

The sages and gods resembled the bird known as 'Koka' (or "Chakwak", the ruddy goose, a type of ostrich). They were freed from the sense of sorrow and grief that had been felt by them till now. They showered flowers (on Lord Ram) to show their approval and happiness (at the Lord deciding to go and break the bow)¹. (3)

Lord Ram paid his respects (bowed his head) at the feet of his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) with affection, and also sought permission from the sages who were accompanying him². (4)

After that, the Lord of the entire world ("Jag-Swami") proceeded ahead (towards the platform where the bow was kept) with an elegant gait that was normal and routine for him (as if nothing special had happened, or there was nothing special to be done; the Lord had no sign of excitement or uncertainty on his face; his gait was normal)³.

This gait, however, was very majestic and elegant as it reminded one of a mighty elephant in a rut who is walking triumphantly without any bother in its mind⁴. (5)

[Note—¹The Chakwak bird is happy during the day because a male is reunited with its female companion. The couple was separated during the night. Lord Ram has been compared to the 'rising sun' in Doha no. 254 above. Hence, when the sages and the gods saw him standing and ready to proceed to the bow to break it, they felt very happy and exuberant.

The question is: Why were the sages and gods worried; hadn't they known that Lord Ram was able to break the bow and remove the darkness of gloom that had descended on the assembly? The answer is: Yes, they were aware of the abilities of the Lord, but they were concerned because they wondered whether or not the Lord wanted to actually break the bow as till that moment he had shown no sign of interest in doing so. Lord Ram had kept sitting silently, and had even asked Laxman to sit down when the latter sought his permission to go and break the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 253 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

So, the sages and gods were in doubt. Lord Ram remaining neutral and showing no visible sign of interest in breaking the bow made them unhappy. But the situation changed suddenly when sage Vishwamitra asked the Lord to stand up and go and break the bow, and the Lord obeyed his instructions and stood up immediately. Now these sages and gods were sure that the desire of their hearts would bear fruit as Lord Ram would now surely break the bow. That is why it is specially highlighted in this verse that they became happy at the exact moment when Lord Ram stood up to go and break the bow.

Their doubts were dispelled and they all felt cheerful. They showed their happiness and approval by showering flowers.

²Remember: Sage Vishwamitra was not alone; many sages had accompanied him to Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 240.

Sage Vishwamitra was the Guru (teacher) of the two brothers; he had taught them the secrets of using mystical weapons and skills required to defeat the most formidable of enemies, as well as how to overcome hunger and thirst during long battles—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

It is absolutely necessary to pay the greatest of respect to one's Guru if one wishes to succeed in any endeavour. Lord Ram himself set an example by bowing at the feet of his Guru before setting out on the endeavour to break the bow. This is also the reason why the Lord walked confidently as he proceeded towards the bow because he was certain that with the blessing of his Guru—and mind you, he was not any ordinary Guru, but a renowned sage with stupendous mystical powers and spiritual capabilities, one who had the ability to turn events favourably for anyone whom he desired to favour—he had nothing to worry about. The Lord was well aware of how fearless and confident he had felt in the protective custody of the sage when ferocious demons had confronted him in the forest, once by Tadka while they were on the way to the sage's hermitage, and then by the huge demon army of Marich and Subahu at the time of the protection of the sage's fire sacrifice. At that time there was a real danger and uncertainty because it was a ferocious no-hold-barred battle with demons, but now the issue is merely of breaking an old creaking bow! If the spiritual powers and mystical might of the sage had enabled the former victory, the Lord thought, the breaking of the bow is merely a child's play. So, what to worry and bother about?

He sought permission from all other sages present there to show his respect to them, though this was nothing but a formality. None would have gone against the wishes of sage Vishwamitra in the first place, and secondly, all of them had wanted that Lord Ram should go and break the bow as it is clear when they felt happy at Laxman's angry outburst—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 254.

With the blessing of these great sages, Lord Ram was absolutely sure of success.

³Lord Ram was “the Lord of the world”, or in other words, the Supreme Being, the Parmatma in a human form. The supreme Lord is also known as “Brahm” in the Upanishads. This Brahm is said to be neutral and dispassionate; for Brahm every situation is alike. There is nothing so desirable that its access or possession would give happiness to him, or so undesirable that its presence would create repugnance in him. Being the supreme Lord of the world, he knows everything. Lord Ram knew that he was Lord Vishnu, and that Sita was his eternal divine consort goddess Laxmi, that they had taken human forms to fulfill the promise the Lord had made to the gods and mother earth to come down from the heaven to eliminate the cruel demons who had unleashed a reign of terror (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 187).

Therefore Lord Ram knew that he and Sita were destined to be united, and this is another reason why he showed no reaction or emotion as he walked towards the bow when sage Vishwamitra asked him to break it.

⁴In Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 11, the way Lord Ram walked towards the bow has been compared to the way a ‘lion’ (mrgapati) walks forward—fearlessly, without a trace of hesitation and doubt, majestically and royally.]

चलत राम सब पुर नर नारी । पुलक पूरि तन भए सुखारी ॥ ६ ॥
बंदि पितर सुर सुकृत सँभारे । जौं कछु पुन्य प्रभाउ हमारे ॥ ७ ॥
तौ सिवधनु मृनाल की नाई । तोरहुँ रामु गनेस गोसाई ॥ ८ ॥

calata rāma saba pura nara nārī. pulaka pūri tana bha'e sukhārī. 6.
bandi pitara sura sukr̥ta sam̐bhārē. jaur̥m kachu pun'ya prabhā'u hamārē. 7.
tau sivadhanu mṛnāla kī nā'ir̥m. tōrahum̐ rāmu ganēsa gōsā'ir̥m. 8.

As Lord Ram moved towards the bow, a thrill passed through the bodies of all the men and women present on the occasion; all of them felt exceedingly happy and excited (as this was the moment they were waiting for)¹. (6)

They (the men and women; the citizens who had collected to watch the event) frantically bowed before their respective ‘Pittars’ (benevolent Spirits of dead ancestors) and prayed to the gods (“Surs”), pleading with them urgently and sincerely as follows—‘Whatever good deeds we have done, whatever merit we have accumulated in our lives [7], then oh Lords, as well as Lord Ganesh, please make it possible that the bow of Lord Shiva is easily broken by Lord Ram as if it was merely a stalk of the lotus flower [8].²’ (7-8)

[Note—¹All the citizens had fervently wanted Lord Ram to be Sita’s groom. This is abundantly clear at two places—(i) the first is during the two brothers’ visit to the city: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222; and (ii) the second evidence is when the citizens rushed to the arena as soon as they learnt that the two princes are going to attend the bow breaking ceremony: refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 240.

What more could they want? The grand moment has arrived. This electrified all the citizens, and they were filled with hope and expectation. As we shall be reading in the following verses, all of them staked whatever rewards were due to them for any good and meritorious deed they may have done as they prayed frantically to their respective gods and goddesses to make the bow light so that Lord Ram breaks it easily.

These citizens were overcome with grief and sorrow a while ago when king Janak had declared that since no one could break the bow, Sita would have to remain unmarried—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5 and 7 that precede Doha no. 252.

Their sense of despair was compounded because Janak had made no mention of inviting Lord Ram to break the bow when he said “no one could break it”; he had not given any hint to the effect that the Lord was offered an opportunity but he had declined to accept it. The humble citizens fretted and fumed under their breaths, but none could dare to challenge their king because it would mean great indiscipline and an insult of their king in front of the full assembly where great kings and princes from all the corners of the world were present. Even if the king excused them if they stood up and spoke, as he had indeed forgiven Laxman, still the citizens feared that these invited kings would get a very wrong and negative impression of the kingdom which they would spread far and wide when they returned home. All of them loved their kind king and his lovable daughter Sita very much. So they did not want to do anything from their side that would precipitate things and create a horribly piquant situation of ignominy that comes with indiscipline in a kingdom, a development that would leave an indelible negative image of the citizenry and the kingdom as a whole on the minds of the assembled kings and princes.

Therefore, at that time the citizens had felt very sorrowful and sad. But now, when Lord Ram stepped forward to break the bow, the atmosphere of gloom and despair was suddenly replaced with that of hope and joy. Hence, the citizens felt ‘happy now’. The contrast between the two moments is sharp and clear.

²The citizens have heard Laxman who had, just a few moments ago, declared that he would lift the bow as if it was very light and soft like the stalk or stem of the lotus flower—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 253. Hence, they decided that it must be made as light and soft as the stalk of the lotus flower to enable Lord Ram to break it because Laxman can’t be wrong in making this comparison. The people had no time or the mental inclination during those crucial moments to think of some better metaphor or simile, so they just invoked Laxman’s example to pray to their gods because there was no time to be lost.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 260 herein below.]

दो०. रामहि प्रेम समेत लखि सखिन्ह समीप बोलाइ ।

सीता मातु सनेह बस बचन कहइ बिलखाइ ॥ २५५ ॥

dōhā.

rāmahi prēma samēta lakhi sakhinha samīpa bōlā’i.

sītā mātu sanēha basa bacana kaha’i bilakhā’i. 255.

Sita's mother looked affectionately at Lord Ram. She summoned her lady friends and, unable to contain her emotions arising out of her affection for the Lord, spoke to them with great sadness and grief in her poignant words. (Doha no. 255)

[Note—This was the first time when Sita's mother, the queen, had seen the two brothers. The mere sight of Lord Ram filled her motherly heart with affection and natural love like that a woman would have for her own son. She lamented that it is inappropriate to send such a nice, such a tender and young boy to lift a hard and heavy bow that even the mightiest of kings of the earth had failed to move. This young boy should be spared this humiliation even if her daughter remained unmarried for life. Sending him to lift the stern bow is like striking a rocky mountain with a soft clod of earth; how can this clod move the mountain? The clod itself would be broken to pieces. Why does the sage and her own husband, the king, not realise this?

A mother's kind heart cannot bear to see her young son, who has never faced any hardships in life previously, being suddenly left to fend for himself against odds that stack heavily against him by his own father and other senior members of the family. Her heart cries out in grief and agony and pain though she cannot gather courage to resist the orders of her husband and other seniors. She vents her frustration and pain by telling her close female friends how much and how strongly she disapproves of this development. This is the way Sita's mother reacted.

This Doha also shows that she too had developed a natural sense of love and affection for Lord Ram as her husband had done already at the time of meeting the Lord when he had gone to welcome sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

What the queen told her companions, we will read below from verse nos. 1-5.]

चौ०. सखि सब कौतुकु देखनिहारे । जेउ कहावत हितू हमारे ॥ १ ॥

कोउ न बुझाइ कहइ गुर पाहीं । ए बालक असि हठ भलि नाही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakhi saba kautuku dēkhanihārē. jē'u kahāvata hitū hamārē. 1.

kō'u na bujhā'i kaha'i gura pāhīm. ē bālaka asi haṭha bhali nāhīm. 2.

Sita's mother was extremely sad and poignant, and when she spoke her words reflected her pain, dismay and desperation—'Oh friend! Even those who profess that they are our friends and well-wishers, are watching (or rather 'enjoying') this development as ordinary spectators.

[To wit, why are our so-called friends and well-wishers not intervening and speaking up against the inappropriateness of pitting such a young boy as Lord Ram against the bow which is very strong and sturdy? Why do they keep quiet? Don't they see that it is a great injustice that is being perpetrated right before their eyes? Why should an innocent boy of young age be humiliated in this way because he cannot disobey the orders of his Guru who has thoughtlessly instructed him to break a bow which everyone has seen just now didn't move a bit even when kings renowned for their strength and power did their best to move it? A person is said to be one's friend and well-wisher if he fearlessly gives appropriate good advice, but these people are sitting mutely and enjoying the spectacle like other ordinary people. Then say, what is

the difference between them and the rest of the people? Haven't they lost the moral right to call themselves our friends and well-wishers?]¹ (1)

Why is no one explaining to the Guru (sage Vishwamitra) and advising him that he (Lord Ram) is now merely a young boy, and not a matured warrior. Hence, this decision on the Guru's part in ordering him (to go and break the bow) is totally uncalled for; it is absolutely unwarranted and unjustified. (2)

[Note—¹The implication is clear: The queen means that these people are not willing to speak out of fear of king Janak. But a true friend and well-wisher is one who speaks fearlessly and gives honest advice, who is more concerned about the welfare of the person than the fear of annoying him if he does not like their advice. Remember: Janak was a king, and a king is supposed to have advisors who give him good advice irrespective of whether he likes it or not. Can't the king's ministers and confidantes see the wrong that is being perpetrated just because Sita has to be married?

Is it that they don't want to give the impression that they are creating hurdles in allowing a competitor to try his hand at the bow in the hope that he might actually succeed against all the odds inspite of clearly seeing that this boy's tender age and delicate body do not allow this to become possible?]

रावन बान छुआ नहिं चापा । हारे सकल भूप करि दापा ॥ ३ ॥
सो धनु राजकुअँर कर देहीं । बाल मराल कि मंदर लेहीं ॥ ४ ॥

rāvana bāna chu'ā nahim cāpā. hārē sakala bhūpa kari dāpā. 3.
sō dhanu rājaku'amra kara dēhīm. bāla marāla ki mandara lēhīm. 4.

Even Ravana and Banasur did not dare to touch the bow. All the kings who dared were defeated after making loud boasts. (3)

How ridiculous and strange it is that the same bow is being allowed to be handled by a young prince? Say, can a young Swan ever lift Mt. Mandar (“mandara”; also known as Mandrachal)? [Has everyone, the sage, the king and all our well-wishers, taken leave of their senses?] (4)

[Note—Mt. Mandrachal is a huge cylindrical mountain that was used to churn the ocean by the gods and the demons in search of nectar. According to mythology, it is one of the heaviest mountains in existence, the others being Mt. Sumeru where the gods live, and Mt. Kailash where Lord Shiva lives.

In this verse, Lord Ram is compared to a young swan, and the bow to Mt. Mandrachal. Sita's mother wonders how it is ever possible for a swan to lift this huge mountain. In other words, she says that it seems highly unlikely to her that Lord Ram would be able to lift the mighty bow.]

भूप सयानप सकल सिरानी । सखि बिधि गति कछु जाति न जानी ॥ ५ ॥
बोली चतुर सखी मृदु बानी । तेजवंत लघु गनिअ न रानी ॥ ६ ॥

bhūpa sayānapa sakala sirānī. sakhi bidhi gati kachu jāti na jānī. 5.
bōlī catura sakhī mṛdu bānī. tējavanta laghu gani'a na rānī. 6.

It appears that good sense and wisdom have taken leave of the king (Janak) (because he is allowing such a stupid thing to happen in his presence, without resisting or at least requesting sage Vishwamitra to reconsider his orders).

Oh friend, the ways of destiny and providence are queer; no one knows what the creator (“Bidhi”) had in mind while he designed a person’s future.¹ (5)

[The queen’s female attendant, who was also her close ‘friend’, constant companion and confidante, assured her that she need not worry about Lord Ram’s young age or delicate frame as these external features are very misleading and do not give an idea of the Lord’s mystical powers that are of an astounding proportion.]

The clever friend of the queen replied reassuringly with a sweet voice—‘Oh queen! One must not be misled or become deluded to treat someone as weak, fragile, incompetent, lacking in abilities and powers simply due to his external features because more often than not they do not give a true idea of the reality hidden behind the external façade, the reality about the person’s stupendous mystical and spiritual powers as well as his virtues, abilities, strength, character, nature, intelligence etc. that are subtle aspects of a person’s over-all personality and are hidden from view².

So oh queen, he (Lord Ram) has astounding glory and dynamic powers that are not visible externally. And therefore, you must not treat him as weak and fragile and incompetent (to break the formidable bow)³. (6)

[Note—¹The queen mother implies that this world is such a mysterious place to live in. One person’s destiny entangles another person if the two cross paths. If it is true that it is written in providence that Sita would remain unmarried as declared by king Janak (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 252), then this innocent boy, Lord Ram, has unnecessarily been drawn into this vortex of misfortunes just because he happened to come here for a causal visit in the company of sage Vishwamitra.

She laments, “How sorrowful it is that this lovely and innocent boy Ram is being dragged into the dark pit of infamy and humiliation just because my daughter Sita has everything written wrong in her own destiny!”

She argues that Lord Ram was not a competitor; he had not shown any interest or eagerness to try the bow. This is proved when the sage ordered him to get up and go break the bow: Lord Ram had shown no emotions whatsoever (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 254).

He had even disciplined his angry brother and made him sit down (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254).

Why is he then being forced to face certain humiliation when everyone knows about the fate of other kings who are physically much stronger and better well-built than Lord Ram, and are experienced and matured at handling weapons?

²From the perspective of spiritualism and metaphysics, one must not be misled by, or be disillusioned with the external features of something in this gross world, as more often than not this veil of delusions hide the subtle reality which is quite the opposite of what is visible externally. For instance, the world appears to be true and real from its external features, it appears to be a provider of happiness and joy. But in reality it

is a harbinger of all sorrows and miseries that torment the creature. It is just like a mirage seen in a desert: the more one pursues it in the quest for happiness and peace, the further away it recedes from him. So those who are wise do not seek happiness or bliss in this external world, but rather they turn inwards to find these virtues hidden in a subtle form in the Atma, the pure consciousness, that lies within one's own 'self' rather than in the external world.

³The lady friend must have heard about Lord Ram's great achievements, such as his liberation of Ahilya (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 211 along with its preceding Chanda and Chaupai line nos. 11-12), his slaying of the demoness Taadka (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209), his defeating and elimination of the demon army along with its commanders Subahu and flicking of another demon Marich into the ocean (refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 210), and helping sage Vishwamitra complete his fire sacrifice (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 6 that precede Doha no. 210).

The word about Lord Ram's great achievements had spread like wildfire in the city of Janakpur—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 221.

Hence, this friend was well aware of all these developments and therefore was confident about the Lord's abilities. Further, she also knew about sage Vishwamitra's own fame and great mystical powers, and when she observed that Lord Ram has full blessing and support of the sage she became absolutely certain that victory that would come with the breking of the bow will be his.

The queen's lamentations and doubts show that she was yet unaware of these developments; no one had told her about them. This means also that her own husband, king Janak, either hadn't had the time or did not think it necessary to tell her about Lord Ram and Laxman as well as about the arrival of the great sage Vishwamitra, because had the king told her about what the sage had himself told him about the two brothers (refer: Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos.6-8) then she would not have behaved the way she did.

The king did not tell anybody about the two brothers because it would have been extremely odd on his part and would have given a wrong message to everyone if he had praise any one particular prince when so many hundreds of them have arrived to take part in a competition which was supposed to be open to all in an impartial manner. King Janak was renowned for his dispassion and detachment from all worldly emotions (which the king himself has admitted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 216), and if the king had praised the two brothers openly it would have given an impression that he has developed some sort of liking for them, something that was not in his nature or character, and would have surely boomeranged to create a negative picture of him and undermine his exalted stature in the society. Hence, king Janak had not told anybody, including the queen herself, about his affection for the two brothers.]

कहँ कुंभज कहँ सिंधु अपारा । सोषेउ सुजसु सकल संसारा ॥ ७ ॥
रबि मंडल देखत लघु लागा । उदयँ तासु तिभुवन तम भागा ॥ ८ ॥

kaham̃ kumbhaja kaham̃ sindhu apārā. sōṣē'u sujasu sakala sansārā. 7.
rabi maṇḍala dēkhata laghu lāgā. udayam̃ tāsu tibhuvana tama bhāgā. 8.

[To prove her point and convince the queen, this friend sites a number of instances in the following verses—]

What comparison can be made between sage Agastya who was born out of a pitcher or jar (“Kumbhaj”—i.e. one who had a small frame that fitted in a pitcher)¹, and the vast ocean that cannot be measured (which is endless and fathomless). But still this sage’s glory and fame is well known in the world as he had dried the mighty ocean by scooping it up in his cupped palms and then drinking it in three gulps².

[To wit, inspite of being like any other human being with a limit to what one can drink and accommodate in one’s stomach, sage Agastya had such astounding mystical powers that he had once drunk the water of the whole ocean to completely empty it, to completely dry it. Sage Agastya’s physical body was like any other man, and so apparently was the ability of his stomach to accommodate water.

No one could have imagined by looking at the physical features of sage Agastya who was like an ordinary ‘man’ with limited space in his body that he can drink the whole ocean in merely three gulps so as to completely dry its bed. But he actually did it, and this mysterious feat of his is well known in the world and has made him famous for all times to come. So, in the present context of Lord Ram and the mighty bow, you must not be worried: just like the humble-looking sage Agastya had devoured the mighty ocean which seemed an impossible thing to do if one were to judge things merely on their physical aspects and dimensions, Lord Ram would also triumph over the resistance offered by the bow very easily though he looks so young and tender while the bow has already proved its mightiness and strength by defeating the combined strength and might of the greatest of kings.] (7)

The Sun looks so small against the background of the vast domain of the sky, but as soon as it rises, the darkness that had hitherto encircled the entire world known as the ‘Tribhuvan’ (i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world) runs away from sight (i.e. the darkness of the night vanishes and leaves the sky alone)³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 3, and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 32.

²The story of sage Agastya and his drinking of the ocean is as follows in brief—

Sage Agastya is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a ‘Brahm-rishi’ or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as ‘Kumbha’. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vasistha, the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vasistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them.

This story is narrated in: (i) Skanda Puran, Nagar Khand, (ii) Padma Puran, Srishti Khand, and (iii) the epic Mahabharat, Vanparva.

Some of the demons, however, managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the Anand Ramayan (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so

eager to reach heaven as quickly as possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100. Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term 'Agastya' became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as 'Agastya', and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a 'bright star' and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the 'Agastya Sanhita' which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.]

³The same idea was earlier expressed by Laxman in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 239.

The lady friend uses the same logic as she had used for sage Agastya in the previous verse, that one must not judge anyone by physical appearances, here also by applying it to the Sun and its ability to remove the darkness of the night. She in effect says that merely judging the ability of any entity based on its physical dimensions does not provide the real picture of its actual abilities because the Sun, though only a small ball against the vast area of the sky, is able to triumph over the all-encompassing and impenetrable veil of darkness that prevailed in the world before it (the Sun) arrived.

The veil of darkness of the night is absolutely over-powering; it covers the entire world in a thick dark shroud that not even the combined strength of the full moon as well as millions of stars are able to remove or overcome. But the mere hint of the sun coming up in the sky in the very early hours of dawn while it is still below the horizon in the east, much before actual sun-rise, the darkness of the night begins to fade away, or literally the darkness 'runs away', leaving the sky and world free from its overwhelming influence.

Further, when the sun rises in the sky, all other heavenly bodies that had made their appearances during the night, such as the moon and the stars, too fade away. Similarly, Lord Ram's presence in the arena has put to shame all the kings and princes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245; (ii) Doha no. 238.

Hence, the lady friend assured the queen that Lord Ram would certainly overcome the might of the bow and remove the darkness of gloom and despair that this bow has cast over all of them much like the Sun triumphing over the formidable and foreboding darkness of the night.]

दो०. मंत्र परम लघु जासु बस बिधि हरि हर सुर सर्व ।
महामत गजराज कहूँ बस कर अंकुस खर्ब ॥ २५६ ॥
dōhā.

mantra parama laghu jāsu basa bidhi hari hara sura sarba.
mahāmatta gajarāja kahum̐ basa kara ankusa kharba. 256.

A Mantra (which is an esoteric spiritual formula)¹ is very small (as it consists of a few letters, words or phrases), but its effect is so profound and far-reaching that all the great Gods, such as the three great Gods of the Trinity, ‘Bidhi’ (Brahma, the creator), ‘Hari’ (Lord Vishnu) and ‘Har’ (Lord Shiva), as well as all other gods of the pantheon are under its influence.

Similarly, a simple looking goad is so powerful and effective in controlling even the wildest of elephants².

[Though a Mantra is too small and consists of lifeless letters, but its dynamism and effect are so profound that even the most powerful of gods are under its control and influence. Similarly, a small iron goad that may not even be visible from a distance is used by the elephant tamer to control a huge wild elephant. Hence, sizes and appearances are no measurements or criterion to judge the potentials, abilities, strength and power of any given entity.

In the present context this means that though Lord Ram appears to be so delicate in frame and young in age that he apparently appears to be no match against the might of the bow which has successfully put to shame thousands of well-built and strong warriors, but this is a fallacious premise to determine the Lord’s actual hidden potentials and mystical powers.

In other words, the lady friend assures the queen that she must be sure that Lord Ram will indeed break the bow, and therefore she must stop worrying.] (Doha no. 256)

[Note—¹A Mantra is an esoteric formula specific for each god. It represents a god’s dynamic field, and it is like that god’s special code or key. It consists of individual letters known as the Beej Mantra or seed Mantra of that god, or may also be a group of letters forming words, such as the holy name of the god, or of phrases that may take the shape of a hymn dedicated to a particular god.

A Mantra is employed by the devotee of a god to invoke the blessings of the worshipped god; it sort of knocks at the concerned god’s door directly, reminding the latter that his devotee needs his help. These Mantras are used for worship purposes as well.

Being specific, use of a particular Mantra during rituals means that a particular god to whom it belongs is being exclusively worshipped or invoked though the general external features and usual steps involved in all the rituals may appear to be the same.

²As compared to the huge size of a wild elephant as well as its strength, the goad appears to be too small and inconsequential. But a Mahaut (an elephant tamer) sits on the animal's back and controls it by stabbing this goad on the elephant's head, neck or sides.]

चौ०. काम कुसुम धनु सायक लीन्हे । सकल भुवन अपनें बस कीन्हे ॥ १ ॥

देबि तजिअ संसउ अस जानी । भंजब धनुषु राम सुनु रानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kāma kusuma dhanu sāyaka līnhē. sakala bhuvana apanēm basa kīnhē. 1.

dēbi taji'a sansa'u asa jānī. bhañjaba dhanuṣu rāma sunu rānī. 2.

The god known as Kamdeo (cupid) has kept the whole world under his sway by holding an arrow consisting of flowers; he uses this arrow to subdue and conquer the world.

[Flowers never injure or harm anybody in any way. They are metaphors for beauty, love, kindness and softness. When one has to overcome stiff resistance from one's opponent, when one finds that the use of conventional weapons of threat, persuasion, reasoning and reward fail to make any dent on the opponent's stubbornness, the humble 'flower' does the trick, and it does it so softly, sweetly and harmlessly that the same opponent submits meekly in a way that no other weapon would ever be able to do. All resistance crumble, even the sternest of hearts yield and buckle when literally attacked by this subtle weapon, the 'flower'. Where all other methods fail to achieve the desired result and make one's adversary mellowed, the 'flower' does the trick.

Kamdeo is the god of love. He uses this soft weapon to conquer the world. In other words, 'love' that is manifested in the form of a 'flower' is able to subdue all resistance and opposition that one may face in life.]¹ (1)

Hence, oh gracious lady (i.e. the queen), you must abandon all sort of doubts and their attendant consternations and confusions. Listen queen—Lord Ram will indeed break the bow.² (2)

[Note—¹Kamdeo had used this trick to overcome Lord Shiva's reluctance to get involved in such mundane matters as marrying and raising a family, because the Lord is always engrossed in meditation and contemplation, is a renunciate hermit and a recluse. The story goes that when the demon Tarkasur had unleashed his reign of terror in the world, the gods approached Brahma, the creator, to plead with him to find out a way of this horror. Brahma said that it is written in destiny of Tarkasur that he would be killed only by the son of Lord Shiva. But the irony was Shiva was lost in a state of perpetual meditation, and has declared his intention to remain a recluse and a hermit. 'So what has to be done', asked the gods. Brahma replied that only if Shiva marries and begets a son then this demon could be eliminated.

The problem was not of finding an appropriate wife for Shiva because Parvati, the daughter of the king of Mountians, had already done severe Tapa (penance) to be able to marry him, but the problem was that Shiva had renounced all his attachments with the mundane affairs of the world and submerged himself in deep meditation. So,

the question now was how to arouse him from his trance-like state of meditation and inspire him to marry.

Since Lord Shiva was the senior god, being known as ‘Maha-deva’, the ‘Great God’, it would not be proper for the gods to be impolite with him and rudely wake him up from his meditative posture. Some subtle and pleasant method had to be urgently found. It was now that Kamdeo was summoned and assigned this task by the gods.

Kamdeo used an arrow made of ‘flowers’ to strike at Lord Shiva. The use of this weapon ensured that the Lord was neither hurt and nor would be insulted—because flowers are used routinely in worship and offerings. As it happened, Lord Shiva did wake up, but he was so annoyed by Kamdeo’s impertinence and temerity to disturb his meditation and contemplation that the Lord opened his third eye from which spouted a flame of angry fire which burnt Kamdeo to ashes.

This entire story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 87.

²It is noteworthy how confidently this friend assures the queen. The message here is simple and obvious: We must have fast and total faith in our Lord God; we must not doubt his ability to remove our grief and sorrows. The Lord is omniscient and all-knowing; he watches every thing we do or think of. He just waits for the moment when we put a decisive foot forward, and then the victory is ours. Dithering and trying to jump boats midstream—i.e. getting distracted and thinking that the Lord God whom we adore is not as strong and able as the one whom our companion worships—would make us sink in the sea rather than reaching the shore. Then we go to blame our Lord God for all our miseries and misfortunes and his inability to help us, not ourselves for our lack of faith and conviction and devotion and love for our Lord.]

सखी बचन सुनि भै परतीती । मिटा बिषादु बढी अति प्रीती ॥ ३ ॥
तब रामहि बिलोकि बैदेही । सभय हृदयँ बिनवति जेहि तेही ॥ ४ ॥

sakhī bacana suni bhai paratīti. miṭā biṣādu barhī ati prīti. 3.
taba rāmahi bilōki baidēhī. sabhaya hṛdayam³ binavati jēhi tēhī. 4.

When the queen heard these words of her friend, she developed affection and faith in Lord Ram (and the Lord’s ability to remove her sorrows and worries about the future of her daughter Sita). Her despondency, grief and the sombre mood that had hitherto overwhelmed her disappeared. This was replaced with enhanced affection and faith in the Lord¹. (3)

At that moment (i.e. at that time when her mother raised doubts about Lord Ram’s abilities and her fears were dispelled by her friend, and the moment when Lord Ram had risen from his seat to walk to the bow), Vaidehi (Sita) looked at Lord Ram, and with fear in her heart she began to pray or plead with all and sundry she could think of (to help her at this crucial moment of her life by enabling Lord Ram to break the bow so that the uncertainty about her future is removed)². (4)

[Note—¹The queen’s lady friend has literally acted as her ‘Guru’ or moral preceptor in disguise. A Guru’s duty is to remove doubts and fears in the mind of his disciple or student. To achieve this aim the Guru speaks fearlessly, without any favour or bias. It is his duty to enlighten his disciple about the reality, and not to add to his confusion. The disciple may not be aware of certain things which the Guru knows, and therefore he must tell the truth. For this purpose and to achieve this aim, anyone can be a person’s Guru as long as this Guru helps the person see the reality behind the misleading façade of externals and helps him to overcome doubts and groundless fears.

The lady friend therefore acted in the role of the queen’s Guru. When the disciple is told the truth about anything by his Guru, he finds peace because his mind comes to rest.

This attendant of the queen also lived upto her role as a true friend, companion and advisor who strives to remove all sorts of misgivings from the mind and heart of his or her friend in distress, and tries his or her best to encourage the other person to not give up hope.

So, when her lady attendant told her the real potentials of Lord Ram, the queen was reassured and found her mental peace amidst the emotional turmoil that she had faced till now. She now was confident that Lord Ram would indeed break the bow and thereby remove all cause of her misery.

This being the certainty of the case, the queen and her husband king Janak began henceforth to treat Lord Ram as her dear son because once the Lord breaks the bow and marries Sita he would become their ‘son-in-law’, an inseparable part of their family. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 242.

Similar ideas are expressed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, goddess Parvati had her doubts about the divine nature of Lord Ram removed when her divine consort, Lord Shiva, had enlightened her about the reality of Lord Ram. Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 119—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 120.

Similarly, Garud, the celestial mount of Lord Vishnu, had doubts about the divine nature and supremacy of Lord Ram because he had seen the Lord acting like an ordinary human being. So he approached Lord Shiva to tell him the truth. The Lord directed him to the crow-saint Kaagbhusund who was able to remove all doubts in the mind of Garud who thanked the crow for it. Refer: Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 124 Kha—to Doha no. 125 Ka.

Another important point to note here is this: One develops affection, respect and faith in someone only when he is enlightened about that person’s noble virtues, goodness, character, abilities and qualities. In Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 89, saint Kaagbhusund tells Garud that “When one is not aware about the grand virtues and qualities of someone, he cannot develop respect, affection, faith and devotion for him just like it is not possible to have a smooth, lubricating effect on a surface without the presence of water”.

Having doubts and confusions are like poisonous snakes that robs a person of his mental peace and happiness, and instead fills his mind with fear from imaginary phantoms and ghosts—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 93; and (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 11.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 2 also.

Let us remember that three developments are occurring simultaneously: (i) Lord Ram has got up from his seat and is proceeding towards the bow; (ii) Sita's mother was concerned at the wisdom of allowing Lord Ram to attempt to break the mighty bow that had put to shame the mightiest of warriors in this world by not moving a bit; and (iii) Sita herself becoming extremely worried as to what would happen of her future in the coming few minutes. In fact, Sita was the most worried of the lot as her entire future hinged on the outcome of the next few moments.

When a man becomes extremely nervous and worried, he loses his mental bearing and begins to seek help from any quarter that he can imagine of. It's like the case of a drowning man who would cling to any float in the hope of swimming to safety. This is why Sita prays to all the gods and goddesses that came to her mind.

In those desperate moments Sita had forgotten what goddess Parvati had assured her when she had gone to pray and seek her blessings in the temple in the royal garden. The goddess had categorically assured her that her wishes would be fulfilled and that she would be able to marry the dark-complexioned prince she has taken fancy for—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 236 and its preceding Chanda along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Sita was so nervous and overcome with uncertainties that she forgot this boon. She asks goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva to make the bow light as we shall read in verse nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 257 just below this verse. She didn't realize that even Parvati would not like this attitude of Sita especially in the context of the goddess' explicit assurance as cited above, because it means that Sita did not have faith in her blessings and words, and now repeats her requests once again. Not only limiting herself to requesting Parvati and Shiva, Sita goes on pleading with sundry other gods—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 257.

This incident teaches us not to lose our mental bearing and calm during troubles in our lives because then we tend to forget about our inherent abilities and strengths as well as the hidden support we have been assured of by our patron deity. It only rocks the boat rather than stabilizing it.

This fidgety and anxious state of mind of Sita was read by Lord Ram. We shall read how Lord Ram had waited for the moment till Sita could focus her mind and concentrate her attention on the Lord instead of seeking help from sundry other gods and goddesses. In her anxiety and nervousness, Sita had forgotten this sacrosanct rule of 'Bhakti', or devotion for the Lord, by asking this god and that god to save her future instead of relying on the Lord himself to extricate her from her predicament. So, Lord Ram waited till she finally decided to surrender her self and her fate to the Lord and seek exclusive refuge with him before he actually broke the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 259, and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261.

This observation is in consonance with the one made in respect to her mother in a note of verse nos. 2 and 3 that appear just before the current verse. Having true faith and devotion in one's chosen Lord means that one should ask only him for his needs and have loyalty only towards him. For a true devotee, his chosen Lord God is the only god, the only lord and the only master in this world. He would not go knocking at the doors of other gods and goddesses because this clearly means lack of loyalty and faith. If this happens, his boat is sure to sink mid-stream.]

मनहीं मन मनाव अकुलानी । होहु प्रसन्न महेस भवानी ॥ ५ ॥

करहु सफल आपनि सेवकाई । करि हितु हरहु चाप गरुआई ॥ ६ ॥

manahīm mana manāva akulānī. hōhu prasanna mahēsa bhavānī. 5.
karahu saphala āpani sēvakāī. kari hitu harahu cāpa garu'āī. 6.

She was very upset mentally, and eagerly prayed to Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and his consort Bhavani (goddess Parvati)—‘Oh Lord Mahesh and goddess Bhavani. (5)

Please give me the reward of all the services that I have rendered to you in my life (such as prayers, worship, offerings and all such other meritorious and good deeds that I have done and offered to you). For my sake and my welfare, please remove the heaviness of the bow (and make it light so that Lord Ram can easily lift and break it). (6)

[Note—Refer to note appended to verse no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257 herein above.]

गननायक बरदायक देवा । आजु लगे कीन्हिउँ तुअ सेवा ॥ ७ ॥

बार बार बिनती सुनि मोरी । करहु चाप गुरुता अति थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

gananāyaka baradāyaka dēvā. āju lagēm kīnhi'um' tu'a sēvā. 7.
bāra bāra binatī suni mōrī. karahu cāpa gurutā ati thōrī. 8.

Oh Lord Gan-naayak (“gananāyaka”; i.e. Lord Ganesh, the chief of all attendants of Lord Shiva)! Thou art the Lord who grants desired boons to those who seek them from thee (“baradāyaka”; i.e. you are the wish-fulfiller of those who pray to you)¹.

I have been serving thee (i.e. offering worship to you and praying to you) till this day with all diligence and faith, and to the best of mine ability. (7)

I most earnestly and repeatedly beg thee (by citing and invoking thine gracious nature of fulfilling the wish of those who seek anything from thee, and especially so in mine case because I have been serving thee all my life till this fateful day when my future is to be decided) that thou must pay heed to mine prayers and make the bow as light-weighted as it possibly can be made by thee (for I am thine humble devotee who hath been serving thee for the whole of mine life, and therefore expect this favour from thee).² (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 235 of this book.

Lord Ganesh has many other names besides the two cited here, i.e. ‘Gan-naayak’ and ‘Bar-daayak’. He is also known as Vinaayak. Other names of Lord Ganapati are enumerated in the Ganapati Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition as follows:—Lord Ganesh (refer verse no. 8); Ekdanta or the Lord with one tusk, Vakratunda or the Lord with a bent trunk (refer verse no. 10); Vraatpati or the one who is the chief amongst the Gods, Ganapati or the chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva, Pramath-pati or the chief of a special category of attendants of Lord Shiva, known as Pramaths, who give immense misery to those who are sinful, Lambodar or the one with a big abdomen; pot-bellied, Vighna-Vinaayak or the one who destroys all hurdles and misfortunes, Sri Varadmuti or the one who is an embodiment of blessings

and grants whatever boons one desires, and Shiva-sut or the son of Lord Shiva (refer verse no. 15).

The Lord derives his name Gajaan or Gajpati or Gajamukh from the root word 'Gaj' meaning an elephant, and 'Ja' meaning an origin or birth. Hence, these names indicate that the Lord has taken birth in a form that has the head and body like that of an elephant. The elephant head stands for the macrocosm, while the rest of the body which resembles that of a human stands for the microcosm. These two aspects of this creation are not separate from one another but form a composite unit just like the head and the body of Lord Ganesh are not separate from one another but form one composite body of the Lord, though the head represents an animal (an elephant) and the rest of the body represents a human being.

In other words, one is regarded as learned, wise and enlightened only if he is able to see the Supreme Being even in the oddest and the most unconventional form of life in this creation. One must see the Lord in a healthy man as much as in a deformed and a handicapped individual; one must see the Lord in an animal as much as in a human form.

Another connotation is the following—the word 'ga' implies 'gati' or fate and destination of creation, and 'ja' means birth or origin. Hence, the word 'Gajpati' means the Lord from whom the rest of the creation has taken birth, and in whom the creation would finally collapse and merge at the end.

He is said to be the wisest and most honoured of the Hindu Gods and is always worshipped in the beginning of any endeavour or enterprise, whether it pertains to the mundane worldly affairs or to the spiritual realm. This is done to invoke his blessings which preempt any evil forces from throwing a spanner in the wheel of the successful completion of the exercise.

The two wives of Lord Ganapati are said to be Buddhi and Shiddhi who are personifications of the virtues of intellect and the glories that come with achievements.

One of the sub-Purans or Up-purans, known as 'Mudgal-puran' which is named after sage Mudgal is dedicated chiefly to the narration of the nine main incarnations of Lord Ganapati, or Lord Ganesh who is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and is the chief deity who is worshipped first during any religious ceremony or auspicious activity. This Up-puran was probably written between 900-1100 A.D. The nine incarnations of Ganapati mentioned in this sub-Puran are the following—Vakradanta, Ekdanta, Mahodar, Gajaan, Lambodar, Vikat, Vighna-raaja, Dhumra-varna, and Yoga. Besides these nine incarnations, it also lists 23 more forms of Lord Ganesh.

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The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 3, verse no. 15, describes the Mantra of Lord Ganesh which highlights his exalted nature and superior stature amongst all the gods, while Canto 4, paragraph no. 12 describes its importance for the worshipper.

The Mantra is "Ganaanam Twa Ganpatim Havaamahe Kavim Kavinaamupasra-vastabham; Jyestha Rajam Brahanam Brahamnaspata Aa Naha Srinva-nnutubhiha Seed Saadanam". [Briefly it means—"I pay my obeisance and respect to Lord Ganesh who is the most senior amongst all the attendants of the Lord

and even the Gods. He is most exalted, wise and learned. He is like the biggest king or emperor amongst those who are enlightened about Brahm, and is Brahm himself personified. There is no one better or senior than you. Be gracious upon me; be pleased with me. I bow before you most humbly and submit myself before you.’]

When this hymn is being said, the worshipper should prefix and suffix it with the Beej Mantra of Ganesh, which is the Sanskrit letter ‘Ga’ (as in gum) with a Bindu (dot) on top, and pronounced as ‘Gam/Gan(g)’ (pronounced as gum or gun(g)).]

The ‘Tarak Mantra’ of Lord Ganapati is ‘OM Gum/gun(g)’ according to the Ganapati Upanishad, verse no. 8.

Now let us understand the symbolism of the various parts of this God. His ‘large ears’ imply that the Lord hears everything, from every corner, and from everyone; the Lord is extremely receptive and gathers information and knowledge from all available sources. He is a good listener, a virtue that makes him a good teacher, because one has to learn first and it is only then that he can teach others. The large size of the ear that resemble a winnow-basket or a hand-held fan indicate that the Lord is able to blow away useless pieces of information and accept only the useful ones like the case of the winnowing basket or the hand-fan that is used to blow away chaff and retain the grain.

His ‘large head’ stands for great intellect and mind.

He has ‘two tusks’—one that is full stands for the Truth that is perfect, complete, priceless and beautiful. The other tusk that is broken indicates an imperfect world that is incomplete, worthless, and not as good as it seems to be. Since the two tusks are part of Lord Ganesh’s body, the implication is that both the Absolute Truth as well as the not-so-absolute truth is a part of the universal whole known as Brahm. In other words, the perfect world of spiritual truth represented by the full tusk, and the imperfect world of material sense objects represented by the broken tusk are part of the same universal Truth known as Brahm. The fact that the intellect helps one to discriminate between the right and the wrong only when there is a choice is indicated by the two tusks—one that is full indicates the correct and the straight path, and the one that is broken implies the crooked and the wrong path.

The ‘bent and long trunk’ has the following connotations—(i) it stands for OM, the cosmic sound that reverberates (‘trumpets’) in the ether that fills the space of the sky where the entire creation is harboured; (ii) since the trunk emerges from the head of the elephant and it can uproot big trees and clear the path ahead for the elephant, the implied meaning is that the Lord employs his mind and intellect to get rid of the greatest of delusions and ignorance and other spiritual obstacles or hurdles, no matter how crooked they may be, that come in the way of seekers of Truth.

His ‘wide mouth’ indicates a good appetite, and this stands for his ability to accept a wide range of knowledge. It also means that the Lord can speak on a wide range of topics with the greatest of ease and with the highest level of erudition and expertise at oratory.

His ‘big belly’ stands for his endless appetite for knowledge and wisdom which he assimilates with ease. Being a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being, it also means that the Lord harbours the entire creation inside his own self. His big belly stands for the immense size of the universe.

Ganesh has ‘four arms’ indicating the four components of the Antha-karan, called the inner-self. These are Mana (mind), Buddhi (intellect), Chitta (sub-conscious) and Ahankaar (ego, false pride etc.)

One of his hands holds a ‘Paasha (snare; rope)’ which stands for worldly attachments and entanglements that the Lord is able to control. The second hand holds

an ‘Ankush (goad)’ which stands for the ability to exercise control over the sense organs and natural urges. The third hand holds a ‘Modak’ (a ball of sweetmeat) which stands for the spiritual rewards. And the fourth hand is held in the ‘Var Mudra’ which is used to bless his devotees and give them fearlessness.

His mount is a ‘small mouse’. The mouse is notorious for stealing grain and ruining the store. Hence it is a metaphor for all the evil and negative qualities in a creature that are demeaning for his soul and lead to his ruin, and the fact that the Lord sits on the mouse shows that the Lord helps one to overcome them; or the fact that the Lord is able to overcome and subdue all the negativities of creation. The ‘small’ size of the mouse indicates that even a small negative trait in us can rob us of all the other good we have like the small rat can ruin the greatest of harvest or a huge granary.

The mouse is fond of sweets and grains. This indicates that the Lord is fond of good virtues and qualities of creation, and he searches them out from all the corners of creation like the mouse that goes on rummaging for grain and sweetmeats throughout his life.

The *Ganapati Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, which is the twenty-fifth Upanishad of this Veda, is entirely dedicated to him. It is propounded therein that Lord Ganapati resides in the inner-self of all living beings as their Atma, the soul and the pure consciousness. It then goes on to explain the meaning of the word Ganapati, how to meditate upon the Lord, the Mala-Mantras dedicated to him which are used to turn the beads of the rosary while doing Japa (repetition of the holy Mantras), the spiritual rewards of such meditation and contemplation, some special Mantras of the Lord which helps the worshipper fulfill his desires and attain fruits of his efforts, the benefits of reading this eclectic Upanishad, and the rules to be followed while doing so as well as for preaching this Upanishad to others. The visible form of Lord Ganapati has also been described in this Upanishad (verse no. 11-14).

The image of Lord Ganapati is described in verse nos. 11-12 of the *Ganapati Upanishad* as follows—

“verse no. 11 = The Lord (Ganapati) has one tusk and four arms. He holds a ‘Paash’ (a snare) and an ‘Ankush’ (a goad) in two of his arms, while the third is held in the ‘Abhaya Mudra’ (the posture that grants perpetual fearlessness to his devotees) and the fourth in the ‘Var Mudra’ (the posture that grants boon of wish fulfillment to his devotees). He holds a flag with the insignia of a rat/mouse (11).

“verse no. 12 = His countenance is red like blood. His abdomen is large (big and pot-bellied). His ears are also large like the hand-held winnowing fan. He is covered in clothes of red colour.

His body is covered by a paste of red-coloured perfume. He is duly worshipped with red coloured flowers (12).”

²Sita’s prayers can be paraphrased in a different way as follows—“Oh Lord Ganesh! You have an unchallenged and immaculate reputation as the God who fulfills any desire the worshipper has when he offers his worship to you. You are universally adored and offered worship on a priority basis before one offers worship to any other god because not only are you the greatest in the pantheon of gods but also because once you are pleased with the worshipper then all other gods are easy to please; none of them would ever think of denying what the worshipper wishes if you have agreed to fulfill his wishes. This fact is metaphorically depicted in your being appointed as the ‘chief of the attendants of Lord Shiva’. Lord Shiva the greatest of the three senior-most gods, i.e. the three gods of the holy Trinity consisting of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva or Rudra the concluder. It is this reason why Shiva is

honoured by the title of a ‘Maha-Deva’, the Great God. All other gods are his juniors, i.e. they attend to the wishes of Lord Shiva. Therefore, your anointment as the chief of Shiva’s attendants is a symbolic way of making you the ‘chief of all the gods who are junior to Lord Shiva’.

Today is the day I had been waiting all my life. Today is the day of my judgement as to how sincerely and diligently I have been serving you. Today is the day that will test your fame as the gracious and benevolent bestower of boons. Today is the day which will decide the entire future of my life and its happiness. Today is the day of making or breaking for me.

Hence, I employ all the powers that prayers inherently have in them, and I have come begging at your doorstep with the full hope and expectation that I will not be turned away disappointed. Remember Lord Ganesh: If my wish is not fulfilled today, which is extremely crucial for me and my entire future life, then you will not be able to save your reputation, your grace and your face in the world anymore.

I have never requested you for anything all my life inspite of serving you to the best of my ability. This is the first time I am in need. So please be compassionate and considerate inspite of my failings and drawbacks that I cannot deny I have. So, notwithstanding all other things, you are requested to salvage my life today. And all I request you is to ‘make the bow as light-weight as you can.’”]

दो०. देखि देखि रघुबीर तन सुर मनाव धरि धीर ।
भरे बिलोचन प्रेम जल पुलकावली सरीर ॥ २५७ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi dēkhi raghubīra tana sura manāva dhari dhīra.
bharē bilōcana prēma jala pulakāvalī sarīra. 257.

Sita repeatedly glanced at the form (literally the ‘body’; “tana”) of Lord Ram, gathered courage and invoked or prayed to the gods.

Her eyes were filled with tears of affection (for the Lord), and her body was thrilled. (Doha no. 257)

[Note—In other words, the more Sita looked at Lord Ram, the more anxious and nervous she felt. She has already prayed fervently to Parvati, Shiva and Ganesh, the three deities who are renowned for their benevolence and magnanimity when it comes to granting boons and fulfilling one’s desires. After this prayer, Sita somehow felt a little bit reassured that the chances of Lord Ram breaking the bow has brightened because she was absolutely certain that none of these deities would disappoint her. So she looked at Lord Ram and sighed. But she was so overcome with anxiety and worries that she could not sufficiently assure herself, and therefore started praying to the remaining gods so that they too feel pleased and help her. She feared that otherwise the remaining gods might get offended at being by-passed and create some sort of unexpected problems in Lord Ram’s breaking of the bow.

Inspite of the prayers, Sita’s worries and anxiety did not abate. She sobbed and wept silently and plaintively, because she was not sure if her desire to marry Lord Ram would ever fructify. She thought that this is the last chance she has of seeing her beloved Lord, because if he is unable to break the bow for any reason whatsoever,

then that is it: she will never see him again! This uncertainty compounded her miseries manyfold.

The verses that follow herein below explain why she was so worried.]

चौ०. नीकें निरखि नयन भरि सोभा । पितु पनु सुमिरि बहुरि मनु छोभा ॥ १ ॥
अहह तात दारुनि हठ ठानी । समुझत नहिं कछु लाभु न हानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nīkēm nirakhi nayana bhari sōbhā. pitu panu sumiri bahuri manu chōbhā. 1.
ahaha tāta dāruni haṭha ṭhānī. samujhata nahim kachu lābhu na hānī. 2.

She (Sita) looked at the charming, handsome and enthralling form of Lord Ram till her eyes felt contented. But soon the gloom and despair returned as she recalled the vows of her father (that he will marry her only to someone who breaks the bow)¹. (1)

She was remorseful and lamented as follows—‘Oh my dear father! What a horrible vow have you made without taking into consideration its consequences. You have not understood its gains or losses; you did not weigh its pros and cons.

[You have put my entire life on stake just to prove that you are very truthful to your words—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 252. But this is an utter nonsense; it is not practical. You have not consulted me, when it is I who am directly affected.]² (2)

[Note—¹As we have read in the note of Doha no. 257 above, Sita initially felt assured after her prayers to Parvati, Shiva, Ganesh and all other gods that they would listen to her prayers and enable Lord Ram to break the bow. So for a while she enjoyed the wonderful sight of Lord Ram’s enchanting image. But her gloomy thoughts took hold over her once again.

She recalled the vow of her father, and his nature that he does not yield once he makes up his mind. He has already declared that since no one could break the bow, he will have to bear with the pain of keeping his daughter unmarried—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 252.

Like her mother who had doubts about the ability of Lord Ram, by the external look of his delicate frame and his young age, to lift and break the heavy bow which has already put to shame the strength, power and valour of thousands of kings who prided themselves for these qualities, Sita too gets worried about the Lord being actually able to lift and break the bow. But whereas the queen mother had felt free to disclose her thoughts to her well-informed friend who had removed her doubts by explaining the reality to her, Sita did not have this privilege at this moment as she was standing in the arena with all eyes focused on her, and therefore had to be careful about each movement and gesture to avoid scandals and ignominy. She was left to fend for herself, trying to rationalise with her anxious mind which was already on the edge, to the best of her logic and reasoning, without being able to seek any moral support or having a shoulder of a friend to place her head upon and weep.

It’s really to the credit of Sita that she managed to maintain her external poise, did not faint or her allow her knees to buckle and make her fall.

Now, when she remembered her father’s vow, she mentally cursed him as narrated in verse no. 2.

²Sita admonishes her father silently in her heart for his lack of foresightedness. He had made the breaking of the bow the sole criterion for deciding who would marry Sita. Breaking of a bow could judge the candidate's physical strength and abilities, but it was no judgement for his other qualities, such as his personal character, his nature, his temperament, his intelligence, his wisdom, his education, his family background, his habits and likings, and so on. Did he ever take into consideration what would happen if some rascal, a wicked person, a pervert, a drunkard or a promiscuous man was able to break the bow; would he like his daughter to be married to such a person? If not, then isn't his vow tying her marriage to the breaking of the bow nonsense and illogical?]

सचिव सभय सिख देइ न कोई । बुध समाज बड़ अनुचित होई ॥ ३ ॥
 कहँ धनु कुलिसहु चाहि कठोरा । कहँ स्यामल मृदुगात किसोरा ॥ ४ ॥
 बिधि केहि भाँति धरौं उर धीरा । सिरस सुमन कन बेधिअ हीरा ॥ ५ ॥

saciva sabhaya sikha dē'i na kō'ī. budha samāja bara anucita hō'ī. 3.
 kaham' dhanu kulisahu cāhi kaṭhōrā. kaham' syāmala mṛdugāta kisōrā. 4.
 bidhi kēhi bhām'ti dharauṁ ura dhīrā. sirasa sumana kana bēdhi'a hīrā. 5.

The chief minister is afraid of annoying you, and so are the rest of those who call themselves wise and learned in the society, because no one has the guts to rise up and advice you that whatever is happening, or is being allowed to happen, is extremely uncalled for and is most pitiful, unjust, improper, inappropriate, impractical and unwise.

[There is another way of reading this verse as follow—“The chief minister is afraid of giving appropriate advice because he fears of annoying the king. None of the others are also gathering courage to give proper advice. It's a great pity that a great injustice is being perpetrated upon me openly in a society that prides itself of its members who are expected to be wise and act wisely in a rationale and well-thought out way. But it seems to me that all wisdom and caution has been thrown to the winds in my case because such an impractical and improper thing is being allowed to happen in front of all without anyone raising a voice of sanity and opposing this grave injustice and wrong that is being done.”]¹ (3)

On the one hand is the bow which is harder than 'Kulis' (Vajra, the weapon of Indra, the king of gods; said to be made of the hardest material in existence), and on the other hand is this dark-complexioned prince with a delicate frame and immature (young) age. [It is highly absurd to force such a delicate prince to go and lift a bow that is so stern and unyielding that it has just a few moments earlier shamed thousands of strong warriors by not moving an inch from its place inspite of their making strenuous efforts to the best of their abilities.]² (4)

I am dismayed and distressed, am in a great dilemma, and feeling flustered. Oh Creator, I don't know how to keep my wits together and gather sufficient courage to maintain my mental balance, poise and calm.

Say, is it ever possible for the pointed end of a tender Siras flower (of a family of trees similar to the Shisham tree, the Indian rosewood tree; Latin name *Dalbergia*

sisu) to be able to pierce a piece of diamond* (which is the toughest thing in the world)?³ (5)

[Note—¹The same thing was said by Sita's mother to her friend—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256.

Sita curses under her breath that her father wishes to keep her unmarried out of some old-fashioned notion of being true to one's words, no matter how nonsensical that 'word' may be. At least she should now be given a last chance to make her choice and choose her groom, especially when it is clear that no one has been able to marry her in accordance to her father's wishes or vow of breaking the bow. How ridiculous it is to let her suffer for life just because her father had made an absurd vow by tying her entire future and happiness to an old and rusty bow.

Even if he had erred in his decision to call-off her marriage just because no one could break the bow, at least now his chief minister or his other court advisors must step forward and tell him what to do that would be proper and fit under changed situation. After all, this is the very function, a moral obligation and a duty of a chief minister or other advisors of any king to give him sane and practical advice if they find that the king is making a mistake or taking a wrong decision. If they do not do so out of fear of annoying the king, then they fail to live up to their expectations, and must be dismissed and punished. It means they are all sycophants, yes-men. A king who allows himself to be surrounded by such 'yes-men' is bound to come to ruin. Sita wonders, why does her father not realise this?

Why aren't these so-called wise men and intelligent advisors not taking the king into confidence and fulfilling their responsibilities to fearlessly tell him that it is not proper to keep his daughter unmarried just because every candidate has failed the eligibility test that the king had decided arbitrarily without taking the pros and cons into consideration—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 above? Why has no one got the courage to stand up and tell the king that in all sooth it is a good wisdom for a king not to be rigid in his views or stance because one must be practical in his approach and change one's course of action or decision to suit changed circumstances, and to rework one's expectations and objectives in accordance with the current situation? Being stubborn and adamant and inflexible is not a sign of wisdom. Great kings are supposed to be quick to adapt themselves to changed situations, whether it is in the battle-field or in dealing with the administrative and political affairs of the kingdom. Rigidity makes one stale and outdated; adaptability and flexibility infuses vibrancy and life. If one does not change and adapts according to the changing times and circumstances, one leads to one's own ruin, and no one else, not even the gods, is to be blamed for the misfortunes that come in the wake of being stubborn, adamant and rigid.

Now, this is Sita's perspective. But from the viewpoint of the chief minister and other advisors of the king it would have been overstepping their jurisdiction if they had intervened and requested Janak to let Sita make the choice of her husband. This is because the marriage of a king's daughter is his family matter and his personal affair, and not the affair of the state or the kingdom for which they have been appointed to advise the king. If the king made a mistake in making a decision related to the affairs of the state then the chief minister as well as other advisors would have been within their rights to stand up and tell the king that what he is planning to do was wrong. But they may be rebuked by the king if they unnecessarily tried to act smart in matters that are king's family and personal affairs.

Besides this point, the king had not sought their opinion or advice with respect to his decision of making the breaking of the bow the sole criterion to choose the

groom for his daughter Sita, and therefore it was prudent for them to keep quiet. In matters of state they would be within their jurisdiction to convey their ideas to the king even if not being asked specifically, but in personal affairs it was wise to keep quiet.

²Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 78, stanza no. 3, and verse no. 70, stanza no. 3.

In other words, there is no match between them. It is not wise and proper to pitch two opponents against each other if there is a glaring mismatch between their abilities and qualifications. For instance, there is no sense in making a doctor stand up against an engineer to debate on an engineering subject, or an engineer to argue with a doctor on a medical topic.

All the earlier competitors were mature veteran warriors with muscular, well-built bodies. But Lord Ram is of a young age and has a delicate frame. It will be incongruous to imagine that he would be able to lift a bow that is extremely hard and huge, especially when thousands of strong warriors have tried their might but failed to move it an inch—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 12 that precede Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 256.

³In this verse, Lord Ram is likened to this flower, and the bow to the diamond. Even as it is ridiculous to imagine that the soft pointed end of the flower could pierce through the diamond, it is also equally ridiculous to imagine that Lord Ram, who has a delicate body, would be able to lift the rusty huge bow and overcome its hardness in order to break it.

Sita wonders, ‘So, why are these people putting this lovely prince to shame; why do they want to humiliate him in this abject manner? My fate is decided by the absurd vow my father has made. I will have to remain unmarried for life; it’s my bad fate. But what is the great idea in insulting this innocent prince and subjecting him to public insult by making him attempt to lift a bow which apparently he won’t be successfully able to do because of the obvious mismatch between the physical appearances of the two—for, Lord Ram is of a delicate frame, while the bow is heavy, rusted, old, ugly and huge in size.’

These verses show the extent of affection and love that Sita had developed for Lord Ram. A true lover would never want the object of his or her adoration to be subjected to any trouble or humiliation for his or her sake. A true lover would rather suffer himself or herself than allowing or wanting the object of adoration to undergo any sort of suffering.

Sita in effect laments that her fate is already doomed, but why should Lord Ram, the object of her adoration and affection, be put to shame unnecessarily for no fault of his. The Lord has not even shown any desire to participate in the competition; even when his brother Laxman vented his anger at Janak, the Lord had calmed him down and ordered him to sit down—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

But when his Guru sage Vishwamitra ordered him to go and break the bow, he was left with no choice but to obey his Guru’s command. But this is injustice and improper. Just like my whimsical father who has made me a laughing stock in this world by making an absurd vow, the sage is also making Lord Ram an object of laughter by forcing him to go and break the bow though apparently there is no physical possibility of the Lord being able to lift and break it because he is delicate while the bow is exceptionally heavy and stern.

*One important thing to note here is this: In the previous verse, the bow is compared to the Vajra of Indra (“Kulis”), and here it is compared to the diamond. The underlying quality in both the Vajra and the diamond is ‘their un-breakability and formidably high strength’. They are the toughest things in existence.]

सकल सभा कै मति भै भोरी । अब मोहि संभुचाप गति तोरी ॥ ६ ॥
 निज जड़ता लोगन्ह पर डारी । होहि हरुअ रघुपतिहि निहारी ॥ ७ ॥
 अति परिताप सीय मन माहीं । लव निमेष जुग सय सम जाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

sakala sabhā kai mati bhai bhōrī. aba mōhi sambhucāpa gati tōrī. 6.
 nija jaratā lōganha para ḍārī. hōhi haru'a raghupatihi nihārī. 7.
 ati paritāpa sīya mana māhīm. lava nimēṣa juga saya sama jāhīm. 8.

[Now, as a last resort, Sita pleads with the ‘Bow’ itself as follows--]

The whole assembly has forfeited its senses; every single person seems to have lost wisdom. In this frightening scenario, oh Lord Shiva’s bow, I seek refuge in you. [I surrender before you and pray to you to help me.] (6)

You¹ have already cast your legendary heaviness upon the people (by dulling their senses and making them inert). So, please now become light as soon as you see Lord Ram (i.e. please show mercy upon Lord Ram and shed your stubbornness for his sake; please become light in the view of the fact that the Lord himself is so delicate).’ (7)

Sita’s heart was very agitated and tormented. Even a second appeared to be as long as an era (“Yuga”) for her. [Time was passing too slowly for her; each second appeared to be as long as an age, weighing heavily on her mind as she waited with bated breath for her fate to be decided. She was on her edge during the time Lord Ram rose from his seat till the time he broke the bow.] (8)

[Note—¹Here, the word ‘you’ refers to a personified form of Bow, or the ‘bow’ has been deified as a ‘divine entity’ that has great powers to decide what to and what not to do, as well as to oblige someone who prays to it. It is no longer an ordinary bow, but a ‘Bow’ with mystical powers. And it is also not wrong to assume this ‘bow’ to be a divine entity because it is the ‘bow of Lord Shiva’.

Sita is so upset mentally that she has begged all and sundry to somehow help her overcome her miseries, but everyone seems powerless and helpless. Previously she has already begged with Shiva, Parvati, Ganesh and other gods. Then she has cursed her father and his advisors. Failing to evoke sympathy and empathy from anyone, she now turns to the ‘bow’ and begs it to help her. We shall soon discover that once she did it, the mystical ‘bow’ of Lord Shiva immediately obliged her: it became as light as a feather, and as fragile and soft as a lotus stem so that Lord Ram would easily lift and break it as if it was a trifle matter.

Sita pleads with the ‘bow’ to become appropriately light so that it can match the delicate nature of Lord Ram. She tells the bow—“Oh bow! You are so hard and stern. Have a look at Lord Ram; he has such a soft touch of his hands. Won’t you be ashamed of yourself if your rough surface injures the Lord’s hands? I don’t request

you to break; what I am begging of you is simply to become light and soft so that the Lord is not hurt when he touches you. You are Lord Shiva's bow, and Shiva is a merciful Lord. Say then, how can you be so stern with Lord Ram whom even your own master, Shiva, adores Lord Ram so much as to enshrine him in his heart as his revered Lord—for instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51, or (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82 amongst many other examples? Hence, please be gracious to become light and soft as soon as you see Lord Ram near you.”]

दो०. प्रभुहि चितइ पुनि चितव महि राजत लोचन लोल ।
खेलत मनसिज मीन जुग जनु बिधु मंडल डोल ॥ २५८ ॥

dōhā.

prabhuhi cita'i puni citava mahi rājata lōcana lōla.
khēlata manasija mīna juga janu bidhu maṇḍala ḍōla. 258.

Sita was repeatedly glancing first at the Lord and then at the ground in quick succession. This created an impression that two lovely fish of Kamdeo (cupid) are swimming around a pail represented by the full disc of the moon. (Doha no. 258)

[Note—Sita's eyes explored the Lord's lovely face by gliding over it, and then she felt abashed because the whole assembly was watching her each move. So, she immediately looked down towards the ground. Unable to resist the charm of the Lord's countenance and her internal urge to look at the beautiful sight of the Lord's image as much as she could while still there was time and chance, she would lift her eyes from the ground to look at Lord Ram once again. A storm was blowing in her mind and heart. She was overwhelmed with emotions of love and affection on the one hand, and with uncertainty and helplessness on the other hand. She was unable to either fix her eyes on the Lord or on the ground. For one moment she looked up at Lord Ram, and at the other moment she lowered her eyes to look at the ground. This up-and-down movement of Sita's eyes continued unabated, prompting Tulsidas to write this Doha.

Sita's face was beautiful and fair complexioned like the face of the full moon which is here likened to a silver pale full of Amrit, the elixir of bliss and happiness, while her eyes are compared to two fish of the god of beauty and love, known as Kamdeo (cupid). When her eyes constantly flickered and shifted from one point to another as she once looked at Lord Ram, allowing her eyes to hover over the Lord's charming face for some time, and then to the ground for some moments, only to lift the eyes again to look at the Lord's lovely countenance, and this process went on repeating again and again, Tulsidas, the poet, compares it with two fish of Kamdeo (cupid) which were moving around playfully in a silvery-pail full of Amrit for which the bright disc of the full moon is used as a metaphor.

In effect, this 'full moon' refers to the lovely fair-complexioned face of Sita, and the 'two fish of Kamdeo (cupid)' to her eyes. The reason for citing 'Kamdeo (cupid)' is that Sita was overcome with affection and love for Lord Ram, and she longed to marry him.]

चौ०. गिरा अलिनि मुख पंकज रोकी । प्रगट न लाज निसा अवलोकी ॥ १ ॥
लोचन जलु रह लोचन कोना । जैसे परम कृपन कर सोना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

girā alini mukha pañkaja rōkī. pragaṭa na lāja nisā avalōkī. 1.
lōcana jalu raha lōcana kōnā. jaisēm parama kṛpana kara sōnā. 2.

Sita could not say a word out of shyness and shame. It appeared that her voice was held captive in her lotus-like mouth just like the black-bee does not gather courage to venture out during the night.

[The bee becomes active during the daytime when there is light and the lotus flowers open up. The reason is that the bee searches for nectar of the flower to quench its thirst, and the majority of flowers open their petals only during the day. This fact is already pointed out with reference to the lotus flower in Baal Kand, Doha no. 254 herein above.]¹ (1)

Tears did well up in her eyes, but they remained confined to the corners of her eyes (as if they had dried up even before they could emerge from eye and roll down her cheeks) just like a miser's gold remains buried in some remote or obscure corner². (2)

[Note—¹It is to be observed here that Sita wishes to speak and let the assembly know how she feels, what she wants and what injustice is being done to her without as much as giving her a chance to put forward her views, especially when the issue at hand directly effects her entire future life. But hesitation takes the better hold of her and forces her to keep quiet. She is reluctant to speak up as it would be completely at odds with the established tradition of society which forbades a girl, especially a girl who is about to be married and is standing in the middle of an assembly full of people watching her intently, to speak out boldly in public. It would be deemed to be scandalous and sacrilegious; it would put her entire family to shame and public scorn; it would embarrass her father, herself and the rest of the family; it would be high indiscipline, extremely indecent and violative of established protocol.

There were thousands of invited kings and princes in attendance; what impression would they get about her character? So, reluctantly and out of compulsion she desisted from speaking.

²Sita held back her tears. She literally fought back her tears. Onlookers did not see even a single drop of tear on her face, and therefore no one could judge the horribly agonizing state of her mind. People thought that Sita is not affected or bothered by the development that no one has been able to break the bow, that a dark future stares her on the face. No one in the assembly could have a hint of the great emotional storm that was blowing in her mind and heart. Had tears flowed down her cheeks, some in the assembly would have had shown empathy for her and gather courage to intercede on her behalf to ask her father Janak to at least find out why Sita is weeping or what causes her discomfort. It would have been simply cruel and inhuman to let a helpless girl stand in the middle an assembly with hawkish eyes devouring her and letting her cry inconsolably without showing any mercy and compassion. So at least someone in the assembly would have stood up on her behalf and taken up the issue with king Janak. May be the king himself, or Sita's mother or the chief minister or some other high-ranking courtier would have noticed her weeping and realize that she is in great

discomfort, ask her the reason for her weeping, and then some solution could have been found.

But though it would have been in Sita's favour if she had wept openly, it would have meant that she has a weak heart, a feeble mind, and is emotionally immature. Weeping and sobbing in public is certainly not a trait of someone with a strong mind and personality. Sita did not want to create an unsavory scene bordering on drama that would make her a butt of laughter in this world. She was already in great misery, and if there were jeers and cat-calls if she showed any sign of weakness of personality by letting the tears drop from her eyes, the resultant agony and shame would be unbearable.

So Sita fought back her tears and soaked them in the corners of her eyes before they could roll down her cheeks.

Sita was not only fighting to hold back her tears but also the strong desire to speak and let everyone present there know what she wants as has been said in the previous verse no. 1.

Her determination not to let the tears come out and make her mental agonies and torments public is compared in this verse to a miser who tries his best to hide his gold from public knowledge by tucking it in some secret place. Sita wishes to put up a brave face that would make her look dignified and as one who possesses a strong personality.]

सकुची व्याकुलता बड़ि जानी । धरि धीरजु प्रतीति उर आनी ॥ ३ ॥
 तन मन बचन मोर पनु साचा । रघुपति पद सरोज चितु राचा ॥ ४ ॥
 तौ भगवानु सकल उर बासी । करिहि मोहि रघुबर कै दासी ॥ ५ ॥

sakucī byākulatā baḍi jānī. dhari dhīrajū pratīti ura ānī. 3.

tana mana bacana mōra panu sācā. raghupati pada sarōja citu rācā. 4.

tau bhagavānu sakala ura bāsī. karihi mōhi raghubara kai dāsī. 5.

Finding her self extremely nervous and agitated, Sita thought that it was prudent and wise to keep her mind calm and have courage in her heart (instead of fretting and fuming in vain). She decided instead to rely on the strength of her (true) love for the Lord (as it is said that true love always wins against the most severe of odds)¹. (3)

If my vow (of surrendering myself to Lord Ram for the rest of my life, of accepting only the Lord as my life-partner and husband) is truthful, honest and sincere in all respects involving my 'Tana' (literally the 'body', implying one's physical being, physical existence, and deeds or actions of the physical body), my 'Mana' (thoughts of the mind and emotions of the heart) and my 'Bachan' (words that are spoken), and if I have true affection for the lotus-like holy feet of Lord Raghupati (Ram) [4], then, Oh Lord God ("Bhagwan") who lives in the heart of all living beings (and hence knows the secret thoughts and emotions of all; nothing is hidden from him), let me please become a loyal maid of the Lord. [The word used in the text is "Daasi" which literally translates into a female attendant who serves her lord faithfully and loyally, with great sense of servitude, for the rest of her life as if she was under a bond to serve him. But here the word means a 'loyal wife' and not a slave. In other words, Sita prays that she should be blessed and allowed to serve Lord Ram diligently and faithfully as if she was his maid, not as a bonded slave but as a loyal and loving wife

who finds pleasure in serving her husband, who does not treat this service as a burden on her, but as a privilege.] [5] (4-5)*

{*These two verses can also be read slightly differently as follows—“If my determination to serve Lord Ram with my body, my heart and mind, and by my words (i.e. what I speak) is honest and truthful, then I am sure that the Lord God, who is privy to all the personal thoughts and emotions of every single living being because he lives in the innerself of all, will enable me to serve the holy lotus-like feet of Raghupati (Lord Ram) for the rest of my life.” (4-5)}²

[Note—¹Sita was perplexed because she did not know what to and what not to do. Fretting and fuming, worrying and getting anxious, weeping and sobbing, or cursing and muttering angrily under the breath—none would help in any way. As far as requesting gods and goddesses to intervene, she has already done it.

So, the only way now is to have courage and reassure her self that there is still chance of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying her because it has been always said that true love and devotion for the Lord do not go in vain and are sure to produce positive results in her favour (refer especially to Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precedes Doha no. 259 below that expressly endorses this view).

Hence she thought over the matter and decided that it is wiser to keep calm and surrender her self to Lord Ram and rely on the Lord’s basic nature of honouring the virtues of love and devotion in his devotees (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 35 where Lord Ram has told Sabari, the old woman who was patiently waiting in the deep forest for the Lord for a long time for the Lord to come to her hermitage and provide her with liberation).

Not only this, the Lord has declared that he will give unconditional protection to those who, after having lost all other hopes in this world for solace and succour, have come to him for protection (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 48 where the Lord welcomed Vibhishan, the younger brother of the demon king Ravana, warmly when he was insulted and kicked out of his kingdom by his elder brother in a fit of rage).

Sita’s condition was no better: no one was coming to her aid. Her own father had become instrumental in her torments, what to talk of others. Her mother, ministers of the kingdom, their Guru (royal priest, Satanand) and the rest of those who she had thought were her well-wishers had now become mute spectators and dumb. So, the only route open for Sita to escape this horror is to surrender at the holy feet of the Lord himself, and leave her fate upon him. This is what she has done now. Refer also to Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261 below which clearly endorse the views elicited here.

²Sita has finally sought succour in the strength of her own faith in the power of her devotion for Lord Ram and a desire to completely surrender herself for the rest of her life at the holy feet of the Lord. Such is the mystical power of having Bhakti (devotion) for Lord Ram that where all other methods had failed to give any trace of relief to Sita, as soon as she invoked this sole method of Bhakti by declaring to her self that she would think and serve no one else in her life except Lord Ram, peace and comfort came to her.

Not only this, as has been noted in earlier verses, this was the only factor for Lord Ram to decide whether or not he should break the bow. So, as soon as the Lord learnt that Sita has stopped praying to this god and that goddess, and has completely

surrendered herself to him, the Lord lost no time to snap the bow into two pieces—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 261 herein below.]

जेहि कें जेहि पर सत्य सनेहू । सो तेहि मिलइ न कछु संदेहू ॥ ६ ॥
 प्रभु तन चितइ प्रेम तन ठाना । कृपानिधान राम सबु जाना ॥ ७ ॥
 सियहि बिलोकि तकेउ धनु कैसें । चितव गरुरु लघु ब्यालहि जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

jēhi kēm̄ jēhi para satya sanēhū. sō tēhi mila'i na kachu sandēhū. 6.
 prabhu tana cita'i prēma tana ṭhānā. kṛpānidhāna rāma sabu jānā. 7.
 siyahi bilōki takē'u dhanu kaisēm̄. citava garuru laghu byālahi jaisēm̄. 8.

There is no trace of doubt in the ancient adage that a one surely gets something for which one has sincere love and affection, which one longs for, yearns for, and for which one has a strong desire.¹ (6)

Then she (Sita) looked at the physical form (body) of Lord Ram and made a stern vow of love and affection for the Lord. The merciful Lord Ram, who is all-knowing and omniscient, became aware of every thing (i.e. the Lord saw that Sita has finally committed herself to him, and there is no more any doubt in her faith and love for him). (7)

The Lord gave Sita a final glance (as if to assure her not to worry any longer), and then he looked at the bow in the same fashion as Garud (the mount of Lord Vishnu, here meaning an eagle or a kite) looks down contemptuously at a small serpent.

[The kite or the eagle swoops down on the reptile as soon as it sees the latter lying on the ground. Once the bird decides to make a kill for the serpent, the latter cannot escape no matter what trick it tries because the bird swoops down so swiftly on it from the sky that the poor serpent has no time to escape and hide anywhere.]² (8)

[Note—¹This adage has very practical usage. If a man is sincere about his objective in life, then he is sure to make an all-out effort to achieve it, and surely success would be his. His efforts to reach his goal in life then won't be half-hearted or driven by formalities or hindered by obstacles, no matter how formidable they may be; his efforts to reach his target would be diligent and forceful and honest. And this is surely going to produce positive results for him.

Even Lord Shiva has endorsed this view when he had advised the gods to pray to Lord Vishnu right at the place where they were present at the moment instead of worrying to go to the heavenly abode of the Lord searching for him. Shiva said—“If you have true and sincere devotion and love for the Lord then he will manifest himself right here. I know of this fact; I vouch for its truthfulness.” Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 185.

Sita has full confidence in herself and her conviction that if her surrender to the Lord is true and complete in every sense then there is no doubt that Lord Ram would accept her. This is very clear in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 109.

²These two verses, nos. 7-8, clearly indicate that by this time Lord Ram has reached the bow and is contemplating his next move. Things are happening quickly, but their narration takes some time.

When Lord Ram discovered that Sita has pledged her loyalty and her own self at the feet of the Lord, and that she has made a vow to live up to her determination to serve the Lord and be faithful in her love for him for the rest of her life come what may, he decided to remove the only hurdle that stood between his devotee, Sita, having access to him.

The shape of the bow lying on the platform resembled a huge python sleeping on the ground. This is why a serpent is used as a metaphor here. Lord Ram did not waste any time in lifting, stringing and breaking the bow just like the fraction of time that elapses between the instant the kite or the eagle sees the serpent and it actually swooping down and scooping it away in its claws.]

दो०. लखन लखेउ रघुबंसमनि ताकेउ हर कोदंडु ।
पुलकि गात बोले बचन चरन चापि ब्रह्मांडु ॥ २५९ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana lakhē'u raghubansamani tākē'u hara kōdaṇḍu.
pulaki gāta bōlē bacana carana cāpi brahmāṇḍu. 259.

Laxman saw that the Lord (Ram), who was like a 'gem of the Raghu dynasty' ("raghubansamani"), was looking (gazing) intently at the bow (and was preparing to break it)¹.

So he (Laxman) became thrilled in his body (i.e. he became excited and hoped for the best)². He pressed the universe ("brahmāṇḍu") under his feet³, and warned (the entities listed below in the forthcoming verses to become alert so that the world does not split and collapse by the shock waves that would be generated when Lord Ram breaks the bow)—(Doha no. 259)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram stood close to the bow, he considered it carefully. Many thoughts were flying past his mind: such as that he should first and foremost silently offer his prayers to Lord Shiva and seek his nod to break the latter's bow; he should closely examine the bow and contemplate upon the best strategy to be adopted to tackle it; he should keep in mind and consider the long-term consequences of breaking this bow because the Lord was fully acquainted with Janak's vow that it would automatically mean marriage with Sita but he wasn't sure how his own father, king Dasrath, would take this news as he was unaware of the equation between him and Janak; what would be done if the failed kings rose in revolt and there was a battle and bloodshed; whether or not Sita would be compatible with him or the other members of his family; and so on and so forth. Many such factors were weighing heavily on Lord Ram's mind simultaneously during those crucial moments when he stood gazing at the bow. He had but little choice though—because his Guru, sage Vishwamitra, had ordered him to go and break the bow, and defying the Guru's orders was unthinkable for him no matter what befell as a result.

²Laxman was a personified form of the qualities of bravery, valour and strength. On other occasions also, when the chance came for Lord Ram to exhibit these virtues,

Laxman has felt excited and thrilled. One such example is found when Lord Ram has raised his bow to dry the ocean when the latter was adamantly not giving Lord Ram and his army of monkeys a passage to cross over to Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 58.

Another reason for Laxman to get excited was that his feeling of being insulted by Janak when the king had declared that the world has no strong warrior because no one could break the bow, even without giving any of the two brothers a chance, would now be vindicated.

³Laxman was a personified form of Seshnath, the thousand-hooded celestial serpent who is believed to hold the world aloft on its hood. In other words, it was the duty of Laxman to make sure that the world does not tumble over and get destroyed by the huge waves of shock that would be generated when the bow of Lord Shiva would break into two, and compounded when Lord Ram throws the broken pieces onto the ground with a horrifying thud.

Besides this, there was the fear that as soon as it is lifted from its pedestal, the earth would lose its balance and may roll over because the bow was extremely heavy and its lifting by Lord Ram would shift the center of gravity many points.

So, Laxman symbolically put his legs on the top of this ball-like universe to prevent it from rolling over and obliterating life.]

चौ०. दिसिकुंजरहु कमठ अहि कोला । धरहु धरनि धरि धीर न डोला ॥ १ ॥
 रामु चहहि संकर धनु तोरा । होहु सजग सुनि आयसु मोरा ॥ २ ॥
 चाप समीप रामु जब आए । नर नारिन्ह सुर सुकृत मनाए ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

disikun̄jarahu kamaṭha ahi kōlā. dharahu dharani dhari dhīra na ḍōlā. 1.
 rāmu cahahiṃ saṅkara dhanu tōrā. hōhu sajaga suni āyasu mōrā. 2.
 cāpa samīpa rāmu jaba ā'ē. nara nārinha sura sukṛta manā'ē. 3.

[Laxman alerted the following entities as Lord Ram prepared to lift and break the bow—] ‘Oh Diggajs¹, the Tortoise², the Serpent³, and the Varaaha⁴! Hold the earth carefully so that it does not topple or roll over.* (1)

Become alert on my command as Lord Ram wants to (or is preparing to) break Lord Shiva’s bow. (2)

When Lord Ram came near the bow, all the men and women invoked the blessings (help) of the gods and staked all the rewards that were due to them for the good and meritorious deeds they had ever done in their lives (so that the Lord successfully breaks the bow)⁵. (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to:--(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254; (ii) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand—stanza no. 4-5 of verse no. 90; stanza no. 1 of verse no. 92 etc.; and (iii) Janki Mangal, verse no. 98.

The Diggajs—These Diggajs are eight in number and they are said to be strong elephants which support the earth from eight directions or corners. The word ‘Diggaj’ itself means anyone who is very strong and muscular. According to the

Purans, these eight directions and their respective Diggajs are the following—(i) in the north, the Diggaj (elephant) is known as ‘Saarvabhoom’; (ii) in the north-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Suprateek or Saptateek’; (iii) in the east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Airaawat’; (iv) in the south-east, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pundareek’; (v) in the south, the Diggaj is known as ‘Vaaman’; (vi) in the south-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Kumud’; (vii) in the west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Anjan’; and (viii) in the north-west, the Diggaj is known as ‘Pushpa-danta’.

However, according to Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 40, verse nos. 14, 18, 20 and 22, when king Sagar’s sons went to dig the earth in search of the horse of the sacrifice that had gone missing, they saw only four Diggajs as follows—(i) in the east they saw the Diggaj named ‘Virupaaksha’, (ii) in the south, the Diggaj named ‘Maha-padma’, (iii) in the west, the Diggaj named ‘Saumnas’ (pronounced as Saw+um+nus), and (iv) in the north, the Diggaj named ‘Bhadra’.

²The Tortoise (Kamath)—This is said to be one of the forms of Lord Vishnu who holds the earth on the back of his shell so that it does not sink into the fathomless pit of the nether world and get lost for ever. It is the second incarnation of Vishnu. The Lord had supported the legendary Mountain called Mandara which had started sinking during the churning of the ocean by the Gods and the Demons in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternal and life.

³The Serpent (Ahi)—This is the celestial serpent with a thousand hoods which holds the earth on its hoods. Its name is Seshnath. Laxman is believed to be a manifestation of Seshnath—refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 197. Lord Vishnu reclines on the coiled body of Seshnath as it floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as Kshir-sagar.

⁴The Varaaha (Kolaa)—The Boar manifestation of Lord Vishnu. It is the third incarnation of Vishnu in which he killed the demon Hiranyaaksha and lifted the earth from the flood water where it had vanished. According to some versions, this demon had hidden the earth in the bowls of the ocean. This extrication and resurrection of the earth is a symbolic way of saying that the Lord saves the creation from being submerged in the vast ocean of sins and evil. An Upanishad preached by Lord Varaaha appears in the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition as its 30th Upanishad. The female aspect of Varaaha is known as Goddess Vaaraahi.

*The above four entities hold the earth from below in the following sequence—at the very bottom is Varaaha (the Boar), then comes Seshnath (the Serpent), above the latter is the Tortoise (Kachhap; Kurma), and on the top are the Diggajs (the Elephants).

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255 which endorse this view.

The citizens are perplexed by the magnitude of the obstacle that Lord Ram had to face. The following verse nos. 4-7 enumerate the hurdles that have all teamed up to oppose Lord Ram.]

सब कर संसुड अरु अग्यानु । मंद महीपन्ह कर अभिमानू ॥ ४ ॥

भृगुपति केरि गरब गरुआई । सुर मुनिबरन्ह केरि कदराई ॥ ५ ॥
सिय कर सोचु जनक पछितावा । रानिन्ह कर दारुन दुख दावा ॥ ६ ॥

saba kara sansa'u aru agyānū. manda mahīpanha kara abhimānū. 4.
bhṛgupati kēri garaba garu'ā'ī. sura munibaranha kēri kedarā'ī. 5.
siya kara sōcu janaka pachitāvā. rāninha kara dārūna dukha dāvā. 6.

The doubts and ignorance of all those who had assembled there (who did not know the truth of Lord Ram being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and of Sita being that of Laxmi, the divine couple whose union in their human forms was merely a formality that was destined to happen), the arrogance and vanity of foolish kings (that no one is stronger than them, that if they could not break the bow then no one else would, and that they would not allow Sita to be married to anyone else even if he manages to break the bow) [4], ---

--- the pretensions and ego of sage Parashuram (“Brighu-pati”) about his own strength and invincibility (as well as being the one who finds pleasure in punishing the Kshatriya race, the warrior race to which Lord Ram belonged), the fear and apprehension of gods and sages (that in case Lord Ram is not able to break the bow, what would happen to Sita, and more importantly, about the long-term objective of Lord Vishnu to kill the cruel demons in his human as Lord Ram when their king, Ravana, would steal Sita and the Lord would find an excuse to wage a war to liberate her, and in the process eliminate the terror of the demons) [5], ---

--- the worries in the mind and heart of Sita (which made her pray to so many gods and goddesses), the lamentations and regret of Janak (about the rigid vow he had made, a vow that proved to be nonsensical and impractical, a vow that became instrumental in causing so much pain and agony to all concerned, such as Sita, the royal family members, the citizens etc.), the horrifying agony in the heart of Sita’s mother who was literally burning in its fire [6], (4-6) ---

संभुचाप बड़ बोहितु पाई । चढ़े जाइ सब संगु बनाई ॥ ७ ॥
राम बाहुबल सिंधु अपारु । चहत पारु नहिं कोउ कड़हारु ॥ ८ ॥

sambhucāpa baṛa bōhitu pā'ī. caṛhē jā'i saba saṅgu banā'ī. 7.
rāma bāhubala sindhu apārū. cahata pārū nahim kō'u kaṛahārū. 8.

--- All of the above have personified themselves as formidable obstacles and have teamed together to board the huge boat represented by the great bow of Lord Shiva [7] ---

--- in their attempt to cross over or measure the fathomless ocean represented by the might and powers of Lord Ram’s arms [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Chaupai line nos. 4-8 should be read together to make the meaning clear. The citizens are worried that all the negative factors listed in verse nos. 4 to 6 have formed a coterie to oppose, challenge and tease Lord Ram.

Here, the strength of Lord Ram's arms is compared to an ocean that is so vast that it cannot be measured, but the entities mentioned here are doing their best to prove themselves superior to the Lord and symbolically defeat him by teaming together to challenge the authority and powers of the Lord successfully, using the bow as a weapon. If Lord Ram could not lift and break the bow it would mean that he has been defeated by his opponents who are hell-bent to prevent Lord Ram from marrying Sita.

If the strength of Lord Ram's arms is compared to the vast ocean that is measureless in length, then these opponents are compared to the passengers who have boarded a ship represented by the bow to cross this ocean to prove to the latter that it is wrong to say that the 'ocean is measureless' as they have been able to cross it and find its other end. One cannot find the other end of something that is 'measureless', but when one reaches the other shore of the ocean it means that he has symbolically 'measured' the length of the ocean, from the end where he boarded the ship to the end where he disembarked from it.]

दो० राम बिलोके लोग सब चित्र लिखे से देखि ।

चितई सीय कृपायतन जानी बिकल बिसेषि ॥ २६० ॥

dōhā.

rāma bilōkē lōga saba citra likhē sē dēkhi.
citaī sīya kṛpāyatana jānī bikala bisēṣi. 260.

Lord Ram glanced at all the people and saw that all of them are in an immobile and transfixed state as if they are part of a picture.

Then the merciful Lord looked at Sita and found her in a specially (i.e. more than anyone else) agonized, restless and perplexed state. (Doha no. 260)

[Note—This Doha links with Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 of Doha no. 259 herein above, and with Chaupai line no. 1 that follows herein below.

The reason for Sita being in an extremely agitated state of mind was that it is she who would be directly affected by the outcome of this bow breaking competition. The few moments that were left between the time Lord Ram had yet not touched the bow and when he had actually broken the bow looked like an interminable period of time for Sita. Her heart must have been beating rapidly, her body perspiring profusely and her head reeling under the tremendous nervous and emotional pressure through which she was passing in those crucial moments of her life.

The entire assembly was on edge; the people were sitting or standing transfixed as if in a daze. Even their eyelids stopped flapping and they held their breath in anticipation of some miraculous event that was about to occur. There must have been a total pin-drop silence in the extensive arena which was abuzz a while ago with whisperings and mutterings.

The scene is aptly summarised by comparing it to a picture where none of the characters move or show any sign of life.]

चौ० देखी बिपुल बिकल बैदेही । निमिष बिहात कलप सम तेही ॥ १ ॥

तृषित बारि बिनु जो तनु त्यागा । मुँ करइ का सुधा तड़ागा ॥ २ ॥
का बरषा सब कृषी सुखानें । समय चुकें पुनि का पछितानें ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhī bipula bikala baidēhī. nimiṣa bihāta kalapa sama tēhī. 1.
tṛṣita bāri binu jō tanu tyāgā. mu'ēm̃ kara'i kā sudhā tarāgā. 2.
kā baraṣā saba kṛṣī sukhānēm̃. samaya cukēm̃ puni kā pachitānēm̃. 3.

Lord Ram observed that Vaidehi (Sita) was extremely agitated and perturbed. A second appeared to be a long era for her (because time seemed to come to a standstill in those crucial moments of her life)¹. (1)

[The Lord thought to himself—] If someone dies for want of water to drink, then what is the use and sense of giving his dead body an access to a pond of water (or 'nectar', because "Sudha" means 'an elixir of eternity known as Amrit, and "Tadaka" means a pond²) to quench its thirst? (2)

Similarly, what is the use of having rains once the fields dry up and the harvest is destroyed?

Say, what is the use of regretting later on if the right time for doing something passes away; or what sense does it make in not taking timely action and repenting for it later on once the window of opportunity is closed?³ (3)

[Note—¹Refer Doha no. 260 herein above. This verse is an extension of this Doha and seeks to establish a bridge between its previous events and what is to follow next.

²The word "Sudha" literally means an elixir of life that provides eternity. So it may mean 'water' as well as 'Amrit', the nectar drunk by gods to remain free from death. This Amrit has a mystical power to prevent death, but it cannot revive a body that is already dead. However, in the context in which this word is used in this verse, both the meanings fit well. That is, it's no sense to pour Amrit or water over a dead body if the person dies of thirst for want of water.

³Refer also to: (i) Geetawali Ramayan, Sundar Kand, verse no. 7, stanza no. 2, line no. 4; and (ii) Dohawali, verse no. 444.

After observing the precarious condition of Sita, her emotional upheaval, the dilemma of her hear and the perplexity of her mind, Lord Ram decides to take action immediately. We have read earlier that he wanted to make sure that Sita has sincerely surrendered herself to him, and her devotion for him was complete and doubtless. But now the Lord discovered that she was on the verge of collapse, and if he delayed in breaking the bow much longer then in all probabilities she would faint. So, there was no point in postponing the breaking of the bow any longer.

The above two adages are time tested doctrines that simply mean that one must take timely action.]

अस जियँ जानि जानकी देखी । प्रभु पुलके लखि प्रीति बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

गुरहि प्रनामु मनहिं मन कीन्हा । अति लाघवँ उठाइ धनु लीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

asa jiyam̐ jāni jānakī dēkhī. prabhu pulakē lakhi prīti bisēṣī. 4.
gurahi pranāmu manahim̐ mana kīnhā. ati lāghavam̐ uṭhā'i dhanu līnhā. 5.

Contemplating thus in his heart (that there is no point in delaying any further as each passing moment is becoming unbearable for Sita and the rest of the people), the Lord glanced one more time finally at Sita. The Lord felt thrilled (i.e. fully contented and satisfied in his heart) when he observed that Sita's affection (as well as her devotion, loyalty and love) for the Lord is remarkable (i.e. it is complete, undiluted and undoubtful)¹. (4)

He (Lord Ram) mentally offered his obeisance to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) to invoke his blessings², and then he lifted the bow so swiftly that everything was finished in an instant, so fast that in one instant the bow was on the ground and in another instant it was in the Lord's hand³. (5)

[Note—¹Refer: Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse nos. 103—104 also.

We will note that Lord Ram had decided to accept Sita by breaking the bow only after ensuring himself that her affection, devotion and surrender to the Lord is complete and unquestionable. The lesson to be drawn from these lines is that the Lord first tests his devotee's 'Bhakti' (devotion) and sincerity in seeking the Lord's grace and refuge before going all-out to help him. And once the devotee is able to convince the Lord about his integrity and sincerity, he has nothing to worry any longer as it now becomes the Lord's responsibility to take full care of him.

²Lord Ram has bowed to his Guru three times till now, this being the third time. The 'first time' was when the sage had ordered him to get up and go break the bow—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 254; the 'second time' was when Lord Ram actually left his seat and moved towards the platform where the bow was kept—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 255; and now at this is the 'third time' when he pays his respects to his Guru while actually lifting and breaking the bow, or in other words, carrying out the orders of the Guru.

It is said that paying one's respects to elders, such as one's parents and his Guru, has three dimensions—by one's physical body and its actions, by one's words or what one speaks, and the third component is mental which implies that one is completely committed to obey at the mental level.

All these three dimensions are applicable here: (i) In the first instance when Lord Ram has bowed at the feet of his Guru as he got up from his seat on the latter's orders, it is his obeying the Guru's commands with physical action of getting up instantly without hesitation. (ii) In the second instance when he bowed to the Guru and asked his permission to move towards the bow, it is his obeying the Guru's orders by employing words because he has 'asked' for the Guru's permission and told him that 'it will be done as ordered'. (iii) And finally now, in the third instance, he has bowed to his Guru at the mental level to seek his final blessing before actually carrying out the ordered deed, which in this case was to break the bow.

There is another interesting reason why Lord Ram has bowed before his Guru 'mentally'. For one, the Guru was sitting far away in his seat near king Janak, and it made no sense of going there to touch his feet to seek his blessings and permission once again when that has already been granted.

Secondly, at that time Lord Ram was facing the bow and had his back to the place where the Guru was seated in the pavilion. Had he physically turned round to, say, wave at the Guru or loudly seek his blessings, it would have been a laughable matter and would have given a wrong signal to all those present that he was dithering, feeling fidgety and uncomfortable, and that he was being showy and boastful. This would unnecessarily stoke the fire of jealousy and envy in the heart of the failed kings. Lord Ram did not want to create scene and a mockery of himself.

The third reason is that the mystical powers of holy souls and their blessings and goodwill are invoked silently by means of mental prayer, without any physical sign that one is offering worship and prayer. The worship and prayer is done at the mental level rather than at the physical level, and it is the sincerity and faith with which this is done that is of paramount importance than the show of supplication and devotion.

³This is the same bow which had not moved an inch when all the warriors, individually as well as together, had tried their best to lift it, or at the least move it. The Lord simply plucked it from the ground in a swift move, so quickly that there was no time lapse between the moment when the bow lay on the ground and the moment it was in his hand.]

दमकेउ दामिनि जिमि जब लयऊ । पुनि नभ धनु मंडल सम भयऊ ॥ ६ ॥
लेत चढ़ावत खैंचत गाढ़ें । काहुँ न लखा देख सबु ठाढ़ें ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि छन राम मध्य धनु तोरा । भरे भुवन धुनि घोर कठोरा ॥ ८ ॥

damakē'u dāmini jimi jaba laya'ū. puni nabha dhanu maṇḍala sama bhaya'ū.

6.

lēta caṛhāvata khaiṅcata gāṛhēm. kāhum'na lakhā dēkha sabu ṭhāṛhēm. 7.
tēhi chana rāma madhya dhanu tōrā. bhare bhuvana dhuni ghōra kaṭhōrā. 8.

[These three verses, nos. 6-8, describe the actual breaking of the bow.]

As soon as the Lord lifted it from the ground, it emitted a dazzling spark of brilliant light that resembled the stab of lightning one sees in the rain-bearing dark clouds in the sky. Then when the bow was in the air in the Lord's hand, it bent and assumed a curved form like the curvature of the sky's parasole (as the Lord bent its one end in order to string it). (6)

No one could see him pick the bow from the ground, stringing it, and then pulling it hard (with one outstretched hand holding the bow in front, and the other hand pulling its string as far back as his ears). All they could see that there was a dazzling light and then Lord Ram was standing with the bent bow in his hands.

[In other words, these three actions—of lifting, stringing and pulling the bow—were done very swiftly, as if done in a second. The blinding spark of light that was produced at the instant the bow had left the ground made all those watching the proceedings blink their eyes, and when they opened it they found that the Lord was standing with the bow already stringed and bent sharply because its string was pulled back right upto his ears in a swift movement of his hand.] (7)

Right at that instant, Lord Ram broke the bow in the middle. It snapped with a thunderous roar that reverberated and echoed throughout the ‘Bhuvans’ (or the entire world)¹. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 5 also.

Remember that it was not an ordinary bow made by any human craftsman. It was crafted by Vishwakarma, the Smith of the gods, and was intended to be used by Lord Shiva to kill demons. So naturally this bow had celestial dimensions.

The bow gave out a sharp spark of blinding light like the one that is seen in the dark rain-bearing clouds in the sky, or that is witnessed when a high-voltage live electric wire is snapped. Then the upper end of the bow was pulled in to bend it sufficiently in order to put the string on it. After that, without losing any time, the Lord pulled the string hard, right upto his ears, thereby bending the bow to an angle which made it snap in the middle.]

छं०. भरे भुवन घोर कठोर रव रवि बाजि तजि मारगु चले । १ ॥
चिक्करहिं दिग्गज डोल महि अहि कोल कूरुम कलमले ॥ २ ॥
सुर असुर मुनि कर कान दीन्हें सकल बिकल बिचारहीं । ३ ॥
कोदंड खंडेउ राम तुलसी जयति बचन उचारहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

bharē bhuvana ghōra kaṭhōra rava rabi bāji taji māragu calē. 1.
cikkarahim diggaja ḍōla mahi ahi kōla kūruma kalamalē. 2.
sura asura muni kara kāna dīnhēm sakala bikala bicārahim. 3.
kōdaṇḍa khaṇḍē'u rāma tulasī jayati bacana ucārahim. 4.

#All the ‘Bhuvans’¹ were filled with the deafening sound of the bow breaking into two. The horses of the chariot of the Sun God got so scared that they ran hither and thither away from their designated path across the sky. (Chanda line no. 1)

The Diggajs gave out a shrill cry. The earth shook and trembled. The Serpent, the Tortoise and the Boar squirmed and shifted in their respective places². (Chanda line no. 2)

The gods (in the heaven), the demons (in the nether world), and the sages and hermits (on the earth) closed their ears with their hands (when they heard the deafening roar of the bow as it broke). All of them became restless and guessed that (Chanda line no. 3) ---

--- Lord Ram has finally broken the formidable bow (because no other event would produce this sort of sound)³.

Tulsidas (the author of this epic book, the Ram Charit Manas) praises this moment and honours his Lord, Sri Ram, hailing his victory and proclaiming his glory in the world.⁴ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—# Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/90, stanza no. 8; and verse no. 1/92, stanza no. 5.

¹There are fourteen ‘Bhuvans’ or parts of this universe. They are the following—(A) The upper worlds called Urdhva Lokas are seven in number:—(i) Bhu, (ii) Bhuvha, (iii) Swaha, (iv) Maha, (v) Janaha, (vi) Tapaha, and (vii) Satyam. (B) The seven nether worlds or lower worlds called Adhaha Loka:—(i) Atal, (ii) Vital, (iii) Satal, (iv) Rasaatal, (v) Talaatal, (vi) Mahaatal, and (vii) Paataal. The total number of Lokas is, therefore, fourteen.

These fourteen Bhuvans incorporate the entire living creation within its meaning. Hence, the sound of the bow breaking spread throughout this creation.

²Now, broadly speaking, the Bhuvans can be divided into three areas—the heaven consisting of the sky, the terrestrial part made up of the earth, and the nether world which lies underneath the earth. Each of these parts is represented here by one entity—viz. the heaven is represented by the Sun God’s horses that move across the sky, creating day and night, the Diggajs represent the earth because they hold the latter from its eight corners, and the lower world is represented by the Serpent, the Tortoise and the Boar who lie below the Diggajs and hold the earth from below.

³The news of the bow-breaking ceremony had spread far and wide. The ‘gods’ represent the heaven, the sages represent the earth, and the demons represent the nether world.

⁴Chanda line nos. 3-4 can be interpreted in another way as follows—“Tulsidas says that the gods, the sages and the demons closed their ears with their hands as the thunderous sound of the bow breaking reached them. They realized that this sound means that the bow was indeed broken by Lord Ram (as all of them had heard that the bow-breaking ceremony was in progress). So they hailed this development and sang the glories of the Lord.”

Now, a pertinent question would arise—it is alright to think of the gods and the sages lauding Lord Ram’s breaking of the bow, but why did the demons celebrated when they knew that Lord Vishnu has come down to earth as Lord Ram to kill them? Well, the answer is simple: not all the demons were bad, and not all of them were killed by the Lord. This will be evident later on in the story when we read that at the end of the war at Lanka, Vibhishan, the younger brother of the demon king Ravana, was anointed as the ruler of Lanka along with the demons who survived the war, and this included Ravana’s wife Mandodari. In other words, only the nasty demons were eliminated, and not those who did not torment others in spite of them having the physical body of a demon.]

सो०. संकर चापु जहाजु सागरु रघुबर बाहुबलु ।

बूड़ सो सकल समाजु चढ़ा जो प्रथमहिं मोह बस ॥ २६१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

saṅkara cāpu jahāju sāgaru raghubara bāhubalu.

būṛa sō sakala samāju caṛhā jō prathamahim mōha basa. 261.

The bow of Lord Shiva was like a huge ship, and the strength of Lord Ram’s arms was like the vast and fathomless ocean (whose depth and enormity could not be

measured). Those deluded and ignorant people who had tried to cross this ocean with the help of this symbolic ship sank in this ocean along with the ship itself. (Sortha/Doha no. 261)

[Note—In this Sortha/Doha, the breaking of the bow by Lord Ram is likened to the sinking of the ship in the ocean. Those who had laughed at the thought (i.e. had thought it impossible) that the Lord would be able to break it simply because none of the mightiest warriors of the earth, either individually or together, had been able to move the bow as much as an inch, had to hide their faces and bury themselves in a heap of shame.

Since the deluded people, including the haughty kings, in their utter ignorance had relied on the hardness of the bow and its determination not to move, no matter what happens, to doubt at the possibility of Lord Ram ever breaking it, a possibility they thought was never going to materialise, all their misconceptions about the true nature of Lord Ram collapsed like a pack of cards and sank in a pit of shame, disgrace, embarrassment and humiliation just like a group of arrogant and over-confident passengers, who are determined to conquer the vastness and ferocity of the ocean, boarding a big ship that is renowned for its robust built and unsinkability, jeering and teasing the huge waves of the mighty ocean to challenge the latter, suddenly drowning in its deep waters when the ship capsizes all of a sudden without any warning.

Yes, this is what exactly happened. The bow broke ‘without a warning’; it was a very sudden and an unexpected development—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 and their following Chanda that precede this Sortha no. 261.

In other words, those who did not know the reality of Lord Ram that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, and in their ignorance they thought him to be an ordinary human prince, just could not imagine in their wildest of dreams that the bow which all of them could not move even a fraction of an inch could ever be lifted, stringed and broken so easily by Lord Ram. They had attempted to measure the strength of the Lord’s arms by weighing it against the determination of the bow not to break at any cost; they had tried to compare the Lord’s endless divine abilities and measureless strength with their own limited human abilities and strength. They had virtually challenged the ability of the Lord to break the bow and prove himself as the strongest warrior in the world. All such people had to bite the dust.

When Lord Ram was proceeding towards the bow, these people, who were under the spell of delusions and were driven by ignorance, had thought that a big joke is being played upon them. They wondered how a young prince, who has a delicate body as compared to the muscular and well-built bodies of veteran kings, and who is still very young and lacks experience which these war-hardened veterans possessed, can ever lift the heavy bow, leave aside stringing and breaking it, when all the warrior kings had failed to move it an inch?

The common people harboured grave doubts about the possibility of Lord Ram lifting the bow, while the kings who had actually tried to lift the bow thought it was impossible because they had actually touched it, examined its strength and had tried their best but failed. These kings were so sure and confident of themselves, of their own strength and powers that they thought that if they can’t do it, nobody on earth would be able to do it. They must have sneered, smirked and jeered at Lord Ram when he got up from his seat, proceeded towards the bow, and stood before it.

Hence, when the bow actually snapped, the ego, haughtiness and arrogance of these kings also snapped with it. In other words, both the bow as well as the false sense of pride of the haughty kings broke simultaneously.]

चौ०. प्रभु दोउ चापखंड महि डारे । देखि लोग सब भए सुखारे ॥ १ ॥
 कौसिकरूप पयोनिधि पावन । प्रेम बारि अवगाहु सुहावन ॥ २ ॥
 रामरूप राकेसु निहारी । बढत बीचि पुलकावलि भारी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu dō'u cāpakhaṇḍa mahi ḍārē. dēkhi lōga saba bha'ē sukhārē. 1.
 kausikarūpa payōnidhi pāvana. prēma bāri avagāhu suhāvana. 2.
 rāmarūpa rākēsu nihārī. baṛhata bīci pulakāvali bhārī. 3.

The Lord dropped the two pieces of the broken bow on the ground. Everyone became happy and joyous when they saw this¹. (1)

Sage Vishwamitra became exhilarated, and his body thrilled beyond description. His physical form was metaphorically like a huge ocean of nectar (or sweet water) in which huge waves of happiness and exhilaration began to heave and rise up when the sage saw the beautiful form of Lord Ram that resembled a full moon.

[Here, the metaphor of the waves of the ocean rising when the full moon shines in the night sky is cited to give an idea of the happiness and joy that the sage felt. His excitement and jubilation is like the rising waves in the ocean which is compared to the sage's body. Just like an ocean that is filled with sweet water instead of the usual salty water, the sage's inner being was filled with fatherly love and affection for Lord Ram. When he saw the Lord standing triumphantly near the broken bow, he could no more suppress his joy and excitement just like the ocean cannot suppress its waves that rise up and go higher up as if they want to reach out and touch the full moon.]² (2-3)

[Note—¹Earlier it has been already said that “the Lord broke the bow from the middle”—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Sortha no. 261 above. In other words, the bow broke into ‘two pieces’ of roughly the same size which the Lord then dropped on the ground.

This was the moment the people were waiting for. So, as soon as the Lord dropped the broken bow pieces on the ground, the people became jubilant.

Remember: These people who became happy should not be confused with those who are referred to above in Sortha no. 261. Those people were the ones who harboured inimical thoughts and had negative attitude, and they obviously were the defeated kings. These kings had refused to listen to the sane advice of their bretherens but decided to go and break the bow so that they can marry Sita inspite of being advised that she was Jagdamba (the mother of the world, the Mother Goddess) and Lord Ram was the personified form of the Supreme Father of the world—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246.

The people who felt happy and joyful by the breaking of the bow were the citizens of Janakpur¹, the family members of Sita², and of course the ‘good kings’³ who had decided to desist from attempting to lift the bow as they were wise enough to perceive the reality of Lord Ram and Sita.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—1(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255; (iii) Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257; and 3(iv) Doha no. 245 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; (v) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 246.

²To wit, when the sage saw Lord Ram standing victorious by the side of the broken bow, his heart pumped with joy and his body could not hide its excitement.

Remember: It was a moment of great happiness for sage Vishwamitra as he had fulfilled his role and obligation as a ‘foster-father of Lord Ram’ that the Lord’s real father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, had assigned upon him at the time of sending the two brothers with the sage to protect his fire sacrifice—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 10.

What would any father want more than his son achieving a magnificent victory that would proclaim him at once as the greatest warrior on earth, an achievement that would at once establish his fame and name in the whole world because this victory was no mean achievement as it involved the breaking of a formidable bow that none of the famous and the mightiest kings of the time could break, an event that was witnessed by all the kings and princes of the world in a jam-packed assembly, and which was rewarded with marriage with a girl of one of the greatest dynasty of kings that ruled the earth at that time, a girl whose beauty and elegance was unmatched anywhere.

Indeed sage Vishwamitra felt happy that he was able to reward Lord Ram and Laxman with this happy moment for their helping him to complete his fire sacrifice, and freeing him from the terror of the demons, who had been constantly tormenting him for long, by killing all of them.]

बाजे नभ गहगहे निसाना । देवबधू नाचहिं करि गाना ॥ ४ ॥

ब्रह्मादिक सुर सिद्ध मुनीसा । प्रभुहि प्रसंसहिं देहिं असीसा ॥ ५ ॥

बरिसहिं सुमन रंग बहु माला । गावहिं किंनर गीत रसाला ॥ ६ ॥

bājē nabha gahagahē nisānā. dēvabadhū nācahiṃ kari gānā. 4.

brahmādika sura sid'dha munīsā. prabhuhi prasansahiṃ dēhiṃ asīsā. 5.

barisahiriṃ sumana raṅga bahu mālā. gāvahiṃ kinnara gīta rasālā. 6.

[As soon as the formidable ‘bow’ broke into two, there was a spontaneous outburst of celebrations that erupted instantaneously everywhere—in the heavens as well as on the earth. There was a thunderous applause of congratulation, thanksgiving and adulation that was accompanied by the clamour of playing of variety of musical instruments, the exuberance of merriment and dancing and singing in joyance abundance, and a general atmosphere of great exhilaration and ecstasy that seemed to surpass anything ever witnessed anywhere in the world aforesaid and not to be witnessed aftertime.

Thereat, Janak’s royal priest ordered Sita to proceed to Lord Ram and put the ‘victory garland’ around the Lord’s neck to declare him victorious and seal the bond of marriage. Thence, Sita was escorted to the spot where Lord Ram stood near the bow. Sita was so much seized with ecstasy and dumbfounded with joy that seemeth to burst through her heart and swamp her entire being that when the time came to actually raise her hands and garland the victor, her beloved Lord Ram, and then bow down to touch his feet as a gesture of paying her respect, she was absolutely stunned and

stone-immobile as a statue, her mind failing to register any thoughts and the body responded to no impulses though they were thrilled beyond imagination and measure.

When the defeated kings and princes saw Sita demur from garlanding Lord Ram and bowing to pay her respects to him, these pervert-minded and jealous fellows misinterpreted it as Sita's unwillingness to accept the Lord. Earlier we have read in Baal Kand, Doha no. 248 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that when Sita came to the arena at the beginning of the bow ceremony, she had causally glanced in all the direction to see the assembly, obviously taking stock of the situation and getting a general bird's eye view of the suitors who had assembled there to vie for her. While doing this her eyes fell on each of the eager faces of the competing kings and princes who were all staring at her. Now, when Sita's eyes scanned the assembly and bounced from fact to face, each of these greedy and lustful fellows thought that Sita had stopped her glance at him for a trifle longer moment, implying that she seemeth to like him! The fact was that Sita was searching for Lord Ram, and as soon as she saw him she stopped moving her eyes any further, casting them down out of modesty.

Therefore, when these envious and jealous kings of perverted mind saw Sita's stupefied reaction when asked to garland Lord Ram and touch his feet, they rose up in revolt in what seemeth to be their apparent attempt to express sympathy for her cause and solidarity with her in her reluctance to declare Lord Ram the victor by the means of putting the 'victory garland' around the Lord's neck and accepting him as her husband by bowing and touching his feet, expecting that by this dare-devilry and chivalrous action of theirs they would be able to gain her attention and admiration, and, in their vilest of hopes, of her hand as well in marriage.

These events that haply happened in quick succession are described below, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 266.]

Kettle-drums began to be sounded (played) in the sky (heaven) with a loud noise. The celestial nymphs and dancers of the gods (known as Apsaras) broke out in a spontaneous dance that was accompanied by singing of melodious songs. (4)

Brahma (the creator) and other gods, the Siddhas (mystics) and the Munis (sages) praised the Lord and blessed him profusely. (5)

They rained (showered) flowers of a variety of colours as well as garlands upon the Lord. The Kinnars (heavenly male dancers and singers) sang many melodious songs. (6)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 9 also.

Whereas the gods, the Kinnars and the Apsaras represented the inhabitants of the heaven, the sages and mystics represented those of the earth.

A similar idea of an all-round celebration and blessing by the sages and mystics appears in Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327 in the context of the marriage of Lord Ram along with his other three brothers. It is said here that “there was immense exultation in the city as well as in the sky (heaven); everyone, the sages, the saints, the mystics and the senior gods, blessed the four couples with a long and happy life; and musical instrument known as Dundubhi (a kettle-drum) was played with great enthusiasm”.

Celebrations were accompanied by dancing, singing and playing of musical instruments both in the city as well as in the heaven—refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 265. The verses that follow

below compliment the description of the celebrations that have started in the current verses.]

रही भुवन भरि जय जय बानी । धनुषभंग धुनि जात न जानी ॥ ७ ॥
मुदित कहहिं जहँ तहँ नर नारी । भंजेउ राम संभुधनु भारी ॥ ८ ॥

rahī bhuvana bhari jaya jaya bānī. dhanuṣabhaṅga dhuni jāta na jānī. 7.
mudita kahahim̐ jaham̐ taham̐ nara nārī. bhañjē'u rāma sambhudhanu bhārī.
8.

The entire world was filled with the sound of profound blessings and profuse felicitations that were showered upon Lord Ram from all the different directions; all the Bhuvans reverberated with the sound of praises and hailings of the Lord's glorious achievement. The cacophony created by the sound of these exultations, cheers, hailings, praises and blessings that erupted everywhere, in all the corners of the world, was so intense and deafening that it literally drowned (i.e. was louder than) the still-lingering echo of the thunder that was initially created when the bow broke an instant ago.

[In other words, no sooner had the bow broken than the world erupted in a tumult of joy and cheering. The first wave of the thunderous sound that was produced at the instant the bow broke was heard by everyone, and all who heard it had to involuntarily close his or her ears to avoid becoming deaf. But almost simultaneously there was an eruption of joy and exultation, the sound of which was so immense that it surpassed the intensity of the sound of the bow's breaking.

The cacophonous sound of celebrations suppressed the secondary sound of the breaking of the bow that still lingered on in the form of an echo that continued to reverberate for some more time before it subsided completely.]¹ (7)

Exhilarated men and women are exulting with joy, and they tell each other excitedly here and there that Lord Ram has broken the heavy bow of Lord Shiva². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

दो०. बंदी मागध सूतगन बिरुद बदहिं मतिधीर ।
करहिं निछावरि लोग सब हय गय धन मनि चीर ॥ २६२ ॥

dōhā.

bandī māgadha sūtagana biruda badahim̐ matidhīra.
karahim̐ nichāvāri lōga saba haya gaya dhana mani cīra. 262.

While the talented bards, minstrels, poets and singers sang praises of the Lord and the legend of his glories, other people gave away horses, elephants, wealth and clothes as gifts to celebrate the occasion and express their joy. (Doha no. 262)

[Note—The royal bards were employed by the king to sing laudatory songs on happy occasions. Refer other instances in Ram Charit Manas such as when Lord Ram and his other three brothers were born (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 194), and when Sita has put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265 among other instances.

These singers assemble during celebrations such as marriage or the birth of a child in the household to sing songs, and in return they are gifted valuables such as gems, money, food and clothes. Gifting of elephants and horses may be a figure of speech, a hyperbole to indicate the enormity of the gifts that were given. But at the same time it must also be remembered that Janakpur was a prosperous kingdom, and there is no doubt that there were rich merchants and other wealthy citizens who could afford to keep a personal collection of large number of horses and elephants as symbols of their status in the society. So it was not difficult for them to give some of these animals as gifts to others to show their happiness.

The general scene is of extreme euphoria and mass celebrations. It was a momentous event, and the whole city erupted in a spontaneous wave of happiness and joy that was not experienced by its citizens earlier in their lives.]

चौ०. झाँझि मृदंग संख सहनाई । भेरि ढोल दुंदुभी सुहाई ॥ १ ॥

बाजहिं बहु बाजने सुहाए । जहँ तहँ जुबतिन्ह मंगल गाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jhām̃jhi mṛdaṅga saṅkha sahanā'ī. bhēri ḍhōla dundubhī suhā'ī. 1.

bājahim̃ bahu bājanē suhā'ē. jaham̃' taham̃' jubatinha maṅgala gā'ē. 2.

A cacophony of loud sound was produced by an assortment of musical instruments playing simultaneously. They included crashing of cymbals, playing of timbrels or tambourines, blowing of conches and clarionets, beating of drums and kettle-drums in a pleasant and melodious form¹.

Women folk sang auspicious songs befitting the occasion everywhere, wherever they were present on that moment (as soon as this auspicious news reached their ears)². (1-2)

[Note—¹The moment is for a grand celebration. Music played on musical instruments of various kinds to the accompaniment of melodious songs is part of such celebrations. These instruments were in vogue in those days. The kettle-drum is the standard musical instrument that is played by the gods in the sky (heaven). There are many references to this instrument played by the gods to celebrate special occasions. Some of these occasions are the following:--(i) Birth of Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 191); (ii) Lord Ram breaking the bow (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262); (iii) Celebration of Lord Ram's victory over the demon king Ravana at the end of the

epic war of Lanka (refer: Lanka Kand, line no. 3 of Chanda no. 1 that precede Doha no. 103, and line no. 1 of Doha no. 109).

The conch is blown prior to making of an important announcement, such as before the commencement of battle or after some great victory. It is also blown at the start and the end of an auspicious, religious ceremony, when one proceeds for a journey, and all such occasion that herald a change. For instance, when the marriage party of Lord Ram and his brothers left the kingdom of Janakpur for their own kingdom of Ayodhya, all these musical instruments mentioned here, including the conch, were played enthusiastically—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344.

Geetawali Ramayan of Tulsidas also captures this celebratory moment in its Baal Kand, verse no. 94.

²It is not practical that each and every woman of Janakpur was present in the arena where the bow was broken. Though a large number of them had come, but an equally large number could not be accommodated or had preferred to remain at home because they knew there won't be sufficient space in the arena, no matter how vast it might have been, to accommodate each single citizen of the city. All the citizens had been eagerly waiting for the good news that Lord Ram has finally broken the bow. And when this news spread like wild-fire as soon as the bow broke, spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the city. The women folk sprang up to dance and sing wherever they were present at that instant. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 265 below.]

सखिन्ह सहित हरषी अति रानी । सूखत धान परा जनु पानी ॥ ३ ॥

जनक लहेउ सुखु सोचु बिहाई । पैरत थकें थाह जनु पाई ॥ ४ ॥

sakhinha sahita haraṣī ati rānī. sūkhata dhāna parā janu pānī. 3.
janaka lahē'u sukhu sōcu bihā'ī. pairata thakēm thāha janu pā'ī. 4.

[These two verses, nos. 3 and 4, describe the happiness of Sita's parents, the queen mother (Sunayana) and king Janak.]

The queen, along with her companions, was as happy and contented as a farmer is when it begins to rain just at the time when the horrible spectre of a drought was looming on the horizon¹. (3)

Janak's worries and consternations faded away just like the case of man who has become tired of swimming in deep water (of an ocean) and is about to give up when he suddenly finds a some solid land (or any float for that matter) that renews his hope and saves him from sure drowning². (4)

[Note—¹The queen was very perplexed as to what would happen if Lord Ram does not or is unable to break the bow. She had confided with her close companion about her worries. This friend had then assured the queen not to be distressed and feel contrite as Lord Ram was sure to break the bow and marry Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

But though the queen found some solace by this assurance, she was still skeptical as no one can predict with absolute certainty what is in store in the future. Her condition is compared to a farmer who is on the edge and in great mental and emotional torment as he fears about the possibility of a severe drought which will ruin his harvest. He would pray to gods and discuss with everyone he meets to find some emotional support, but his mind is submerged in fear and worries. Then the unexpected miracle happens—when everything seems lost, when he has no more hopes of saving his harvest and has resigned himself to his fate, preparing to face the worst consequences that stare on his face, dark clouds portending the coming of rain suddenly, unexpectedly, appear on the horizon, and then soon it begins to rain heavily. Obviously, his joy will know no bounds.

In this metaphor, when all the kings had failed to move the bow, for the queen it was like the looming drought that the farmer faces because Sita would have to remain unmarried for the rest of her life. No mother would ever want this to happen. It was tantamount to the farmer coming to utter ruin when his hope of a good harvest is destroyed without rainfall.

When all seemed lost, Lord Ram rose from his seat. It was like the unexpected appearance of the dark rain-bearing clouds in the horizon. The metaphor is exceptionally apt because Lord Ram had a dark complexion and was provider of solace and succour to all his devotees much like the rain-bearing clouds that provide the life-giving rain that quenches the thirst of the earth, helps produce crops, and provides happiness to all living beings. Hope rose as soon as the queen saw the Lord get up from his seat to proceed towards the bow—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

And when the Lord finally broke the bow, it was like the rain actually falling down on the parched field of the farmer, saving his crop and harvest. It is indeed a time to celebrate.

²Refer also to: (i) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 7; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 286.

The same logic applies to Sita's father, king Janak. He too had lost all hopes of ever being able to marry Sita. He was a renowned king and could not act foolishly by breaking his vows and becoming a butt of laughter and scorn in the world. After all, he had to maintain his dignity and respect of his dynasty that had always stood by its words.

The mental and emotional condition of Janak is compared with a man about to get drowned when he suddenly sees a buoy floating towards him out of nowhere to save his life.

In this instance, when Janak had declared that Sita would have to remain unmarried because no one has been able to break the bow, he had virtually surrendered himself to his fate like a man who has lost all strength to swim any more and has resigned to his fate that he would be drowned. Then suddenly, unexpectedly and without his asking anybody, sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow to “remove the worries of Janak” (refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254. This was like the case of tired swimmer who was about to give up and prepare himself to face the worst scenario of getting drowned when he suddenly feels some solid land below him. It is also like the case of a providential buoy that comes floating on its own volition to the drowning man to save him.

One really marvels at the skill of Tulsidas, the author of this great epic Ram Charit Manas, in employing excellent metaphors and wonderfully apt similes to highlight the subtle nuances of any development.]

श्रीहत भए भूप धनु टूटे । जैसे दिवस दीप छबि छूटे ॥ ५ ॥

सीय सुखहि बरनिअ केहि भाँती । जनु चातकी पाइ जलु स्वाती ॥ ६ ॥

śrīhata bha'e bhūpa dhanu ṭūṭē. jaisēm divasa dīpa chabi chūṭē. 5.
sīya sukhahi barani'a kēhi bhāmṭī. janu cātakī pā'i jalu svātī. 6.

[This verse describes the condition of the kings who had failed to move the bow.]

The competing kings (who had failed to move and break the bow) lost all their glories, their countenances losing their shine to become faded just like the earthen lamps losing the illumination of their lights and fading away in importance to become irrelevant as soon as the sun rises and the day dawns¹. (5)

[This verse describes the condition of Sita and her extreme sense of fulfillment.]

How can sufficiently describe the joy and happiness that Sita felt (when Lord Ram broke the bow). Her condition was like a female Chatak bird who gets a drop of dew that falls during the Swati constellation². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 6 also.

When it is dark in the night, even a single lamp appears to shine brilliantly, its light illuminating its surroundings. Against the background of the darkness, the lighted lamp can be seen from a distant. But when the sun rises up in the sky, all these lamps become inconsequential, and even if they are lighted they do not attract attention. Against the brilliant illumination of the day and the dazzling light of the sun, the feeble light emanating from the wick of the lamp is as good as not being there at all. Millions of lighted lamps fade away in the presence of a single sun.

Here, all the thousands of kings are likened to the lamps in this verse. Their faces glowing with pride and self-importance are like the light around the wick of these lamps, and Lord Ram is compared to the single sun in the sky during the daytime. All the kings sulked and lost the sheen on their faces as soon as the bow broke because a single prince, Lord Ram, had put all of them to shame. It is exactly like the case of thousands of lighted lamps suddenly fading away when the sun rises in the sky.

²The Chatak bird is famous for its determination to drink only that drop of dew or rain that falls during a special constellation of stars known as Swati (pronounced as 'Swaati'). If it does not get this drop of water, it would prefer to die than to save its life by drinking from any other source of water.

Sita had decided that if she has to marry then she would marry Lord Ram and no one else. She would prefer to remain unmarried for life if she was denied marriage with Lord Ram. That is why she felt happy in her heart when none of the kings could move the bow and Laxman has stood up to challenge her father that if Lord Ram gives him permission he will break the bow as if it was a child's play. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254 above.

So, her dreams were realized when the Lord broke the bow. She felt a new life was given to her just like a Chatak bird who is about to die due to thirst is granted a drop of dew or rain-water during the Swati constellation.

The immense sense of contentedness and fulfillment of Sita is indescribable in words—refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 242.]

रामहि लखनु बिलोकत कैसें । ससिहि चकोर किसोरकु जैसें ॥ ७ ॥
सतानंद तब आयसु दीन्हा । सीताँ गमनु राम पहिं कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

rāmahi lakhanu bilōkata kaisēm. sasihi cakōra kisōraku jaisēm. 7.
satānanda taba āyasu dīnhā. sītām̐ gamanu rāma pahim̐ kīnhā. 8.

[This verse describes the happiness of Laxman, Lord Ram’s younger dear brother and constant companion.]

Laxman watched Lord Ram, happily and with great affection, in a way a young Chakor bird looks at the full moon, enchanted and exhilarated in its heart¹. (7)

Then, on the instructions of Satanand (the royal priest of king Janak), Sita proceeded towards Lord Ram (to put the victory garland on him)². (8)

[Note—¹The Chakor bird is said to be so enamoured of the moon that it fixes its gaze on the latter as soon as it rises in the east, follows the path of the moon across the sky and till it sets in the west. Likewise, Laxman watched his dear and loving brother Lord Ram closely: from the time he rose from his seat, walked upto the bow, and finally broke the bow and stood beside the broken pieces lying on the ground.

Laxman was not only a dear brother of Lord Ram but also his close friend and constant companion with whom the Lord shared all his thoughts. Laxman had served the Lord truly like a devoted servant during the 14 years of forest exile, carrying out all his orders and making the Lord’s stay in the forest as comfortable as possible. Laxman had remained vigilant and gave protection to Lord Ram and Sita throughout their forest sojourn, even going without sleep for this long period so that he can keep watch while the Lord and Sita rested. If there was any remote hint of danger or harm to Lord Ram, it was Laxman who stepped forward to give protection. There are countless instances to support these observations in Ram Charit Manas. Some of them are the following—

(a) Baal Kand: (i) Doha no. 197; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 198; (iii) from Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 238; (v) Doha no. 253 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

(b) Ayodhya Kand: (i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 70—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 72. (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 90; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6 that precedes Doha no. 141; (iv) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 142; (v) Doha no. 230 along with its Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

(c) Aranya Kand: (i) Doha no. 23; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30.

(d) Kishikindha Kand: Doha no. 18 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

(e) Sundar Kand: Chaupai line nos. 1 and 5 that precede Doha no. 58.

(f) Lanka Kand: Sortha no. 61 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-18.

Hence, it was natural for Laxman feel jubilant when his beloved Lord and dear brother obtained victory by breaking the bow.

This happiness of Laxman also removes any doubt about his intentions when he had angrily said that if Lord Ram gives his permission then he would break the bow like it was some soft lotus flower. Laxman did not mean to either insult Lord Ram or marry Sita by breaking the bow. What he intended was to seek retribution and save the glory of Lord Ram because king Janak had declared in the Lord's presence that "the world was empty of warriors because no one could break the bow". How dare Janak make this statement in the presence of Lord Ram when the latter was not even invited to break the bow, or at least asked if he would like to try his hand at the bow. This infuriated Laxman as he could not tolerate such slight on his Lord.

²Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/96, stanza no. 2 also.

It was a standard practice that before taking any action, a permission was needed from the family's Guru. If that family happened to be the ruling family, then its Guru played the role of a royal priest as well.

In the case of king Janak, this Guru and the royal family's priest was Satanand, while in the case of king Dasrath of Ayodhya the royal priest was sage Vasistha.

For Lord Ram and Laxman, this role of a Guru was assumed by sage Vishwamitra as he had taught them the secrets of the art of warfare and use of mystical weapons, and was their guardian in the forest as well as in Janakpur.

There is an interesting point to note here. When Sita was summoned to come to the arena, king Janak had ordered that she be brought there, and not Satanand. But here it is Satanand who gives the orders to Sita to go and put the garland on Lord Ram. This difference is because Janak was Sita's father, and a father can call his son or daughter any time he wants. No permission is needed by any father from anyone for this. But putting the victory garland on Lord Ram was a formal occasion as it would seal their marriage in an open court, which was a very important event. The whole of the marriage ceremony and its accompanying rituals needed the guidance and participation of the family's Guru, and putting the victory garland on the would-be-groom was the first step in this process. Hence, the Guru had to be involved.

We have already read about a similar thing earlier in the case of Lord Ram being summoned by his father to pay his obeisance to sage Vishwamitra when the latter had arrived in Ayodhya. But when the time came for sending the two brothers to the forest with the sage, their Guru sage Vasistha had to intervene. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 207, and Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 208.

Now, when Lord Ram had broken the bow and claimed undisputed victory, Sita was automatically deemed to have become his bride according to the vows of king Janak (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 250). But formalities had to be kept, and so Sita was needed to put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram to officially and formally acknowledge his victory and seal the bond that made them husband and wife in an open court.

It is merely said in this verse that "Satanand has given his orders", but it has not been clarified what orders he gave. The answer lies in common sense that it was for Sita to go and put the victory garland on the victor, who in this case was Lord Ram.

Though her marriage with Lord Ram had been decided at the instant the bow was broken, but it was necessary for her to walk upto the Lord and voluntarily put the garland around his neck to show that she had accepted this alliance and was ready to become the Lord's wife.

Though seemingly superficial and merely a formality, this ritual of 'putting the garland on the victor' was necessary to make sure that the bride-to-be has no objection to accept the victor as her groom. In case she did not approve of him, she had one last chance to show her dislike and disapproval by refusing to garland him. Then her parents and the assembly would be given a hint that the girl is not ready to accept the competition's victor as her groom, and then some other methods could be devised. This was an extremely crucial step in the entire process because the girl—whose whole future was tied to such marriage ceremonies as the one employed by Janak to marry his daughter Sita that were in vogue in ancient times—was not consulted by her parents before they decided on any method to find a suitable groom for her. The poor girl was left at the mercy of her parents in a patriarchal society. Hence, if the girl did not approve of anyone who was to become her groom, she can publicly show her disapproval by refusing to garland him.

In other words, this ritual of 'garlanding the victor' by the girl was used as a 'safety valve' to avoid future complications.]

दो०. संग सखीं सुंदर चतुर गावहिं मंगलचार ।

गवनी बाल मराल गति सुषमा अंग अपार ॥ २६३ ॥

dōhā.

saṅga sakhīm sundara catura gāvahim maṅgalacāra.
gavanī bāla marāla gati suṣamā aṅga apāra. 263.

Accompanied by her friends who were charming and clever, and who were singing auspicious songs suitable for the occasion, she (Sita) walked elegantly (towards Lord Ram with the garland in her hand) like a young Swan (a cygnet). Her countenance and form were exceptionally charming and beautiful to behold. (Doha no. 263)

[Note—Sita was in full bridal gear. She was a princess, and therefore all measures must have been taken to adorn her with the best of ornaments and clothes; no effort was left to decorate her. The girls who accompanied her must have been selected carefully to match her elegance and glamour as they were the center-piece of the entire ceremony; all eyes would be focused on them. The best of beautiful girls of the kingdom must have been selected to accompany Sita.

Besides the criterion of beauty and charm, their level of wisdom, common sense and wit was also taken into consideration so that they could deftly handle any sticky situation that may arise which needed instant decision. Sita would be nervous and had to maintain her dignity, she would be required to conform to traditions by keeping her eyes and head low. Hence, those who accompanied her needed to be careful and witty. Refer also to Baal Kand, Doha no. 246 which has an identical idea.

Another quality that was required of the bride's companions was their ability to sing auspicious songs of the marriage ceremony. This practice is still in vogue in India whereby the ladies accompanying the bride sing songs throughout the marriage

rituals. Refer also to Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 311 which reiterates this view.]

चौ०. सखिन्ह मध्य सिय सोहति कैसें । छबिगन मध्य महाछबि जैसें ॥ १ ॥

कर सरोज जयमाल सुहाई । बिस्व बिजय सोभा जेहिं छाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sakhinha madhya siya sōhati kaisēm. chabigana madhya mahāchabi jaisēm.

1.

kara sarōja jayamāla suhāī. bisva bijaya sōbhā jēhim chāī. 2.

Sita looked so fabulous and extremely beautiful in the middle of her friends that this scene reminded one of a wonderful picture which was very enchanting and attractive in a general way, but its central figure was so remarkably outstanding that it stood out from the rest of its surroundings and caught one's eyes instantly¹. (1)

She held a wonderful "victory garland" (jayamāla) in hands².

This garland personified (symbolized; represented) victory over the whole world; it appeared that the glory and fame of attaining undisputed triumph over the whole of the world were condensed and packed into the form of this 'victory garland'³. (2)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 230. The occasion was Sita's arrival in the garden and Lord Ram seeing her for the first time. Her beauty and charm had held the Lord spell-bound.

²Refer: (i) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 1 also wherein it is said that it looked as if this garland was made by Kamdeo-cupid, the patron god of the virtues of beauty, comeliness and magnificence, himself.

(ii) 'Janki Mangal', verse no. 107.

³This is because only a person who could break the formidable bow of Lord Shiva, a bow that Shiva had used to conquer the three legendary cities of the demon Tripura that was a metaphoric victory over all the three worlds, i.e. the heaven, the earth and the nether world, would become eligible to wear this 'victory garland'. This garland stood as a symbol of victory over all the three levels of the universe as said above. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 250.]

तन सकोचु मन परम उछाहू । गूढ़ प्रेमु लखि परइ न काहू ॥ ३ ॥

जाइ समीप राम छबि देखी । रहि जनु कुअँरि चित्र अवरखी ॥ ४ ॥

tana sakōcu mana parama uchāhū. gūṛha prēmu lakhi para'i na kāhū. 3.

jā'i samīpa rāma chabi dēkhī. rahi janu ku'amṛi citra avarēkhī. 4.

While Sita's body showed all signs of modesty and restrained behaviour (as she walked slowly to put the garland around Lord Ram's neck), her heart on the other hand was jumping with joy, it was exhilarant. No one could externally perceive the enormous amount of hidden joy and happiness that Sita felt inside her heart¹. (3)

When she reached near Lord Ram and looked at the Lord's astounding beauty from so close a quarter, she was spell-bound by it and stood motionless as if in a daze and stone-cast, resembling a portrait of a beautiful princess². (4)

[Note—¹After all, this was the moment she was waiting for. Externally she had to maintain her calm and walk in a dignified manner as she was conscious of the fact that thousands of eyes are riveted on her. But her inner being was bubbling with joy and happiness. These moments were the best moments of her life.

A person's eyes do not have the penetrating ability to see what goes inside the other person's heart; only the external behaviour is seen. Hence, all those who were watching Sita had no inkling of the immensity of joy that filled her heart. The onlookers thought that the victory of Lord Ram had no special effect on Sita; they did not know how much she was affected.

This illusion of disinterest and nonchalance that was created by Sita's external calmness led some of the frustrated kings to make a wrong deduction that she was not happy with this alliance but was reluctant to speak because of fear of her father and rebuke by the society. We shall read below that when Sita was reluctant to touch Lord Ram's feet because she feared that she would also meet the same fate as Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam who was liberated from her gross body as a stone to come alive in a divine body that she originally had (refer: Baal Kand, from Doha no. 210 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 12—to Chanda line nos. 1, 14-16 that precede Doha no. 211), the defeated kings thought that she does not like to be married to Lord Ram, and so they stood up in revolt and created a rucous, declaring their intention to prevent her marriage with the Lord—refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 266.

To give due credit to Sita it must be pointed out that she had maintained her poise throughout this ordeal—even when her future was hanging in the balance, she had shown minimal external signs of weakness and worry. Refer: from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.

²Till this time Sita had seen Lord Ram from a distance, whether it was in the garden where she had gone to offer prayers to goddess Parvati and had seen the Lord for the first time, and also when she stood in the arena during the bow-breaking event. Now, when she approached the Lord to put the victory garland on him, she saw him at close quarter, and the Lord's stunning beauty completed dumbing her into immobility.

It was also the first time that Lord Ram was seeing the stupendous charm of Sita from so close. Hence it is practical to expect that both of them were enchanted with each other in equal measure. This fact is endorsed a little later in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line nos. 3-4 of Chanda stanza no. 2 that precede Doha no. 323 which we shall be reading when we come to it during our narration.]

चतुर सखीं लखि कहा बुझाई । पहिरावहु जयमाल सुहाई ॥ ५ ॥

सुनत जुगल कर माल उठाई । प्रेम बिबस पहिराइ न जाई ॥ ६ ॥

catura sakhīm lakhi kahā bujhāī. pahirāvahu jayamāla suhāī. 5.
sunata jugala kara māla uṭhāī. prēma bibasa pahirā'i na jāī. 6.

The clever friends saw that the opportune moment was there, and they advised Sita to put the beautiful victory garland on Lord Ram¹. (5)

When Sita heard this advice, she raised her two hands with the victory garland, but she was so overwhelmed and numbed with love and affection for the Lord that she could not actually put the garland around his neck². (6)

[Note—¹It has been said in the previous verse no. 4 that Sita was dazed at the sight of Lord Ram when she saw the Lord from up close. She was virtually immobile like an image in a painting. These two verses, nos. 5-6, expand upon it.

When the friends of Sita observed that she is standing motionless and time was passing away, they prodded her to put the garland on the Lord. As as been noted earlier, her companions were selected carefully, and only those who could handle delicate situations were allowed to accompany her. This was one such occasion which needed deft handling. So, the wise friends muttered into Sita's ears to stop procrastinating and put the garland on Lord Ram; why is she delaying?

The same situation had prevailed earlier in the garden where also Sita had stood motionless on seeing Lord Ram and Laxman for the first time, and there also her friends had to wake her up from her trance-like state—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 232; Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 234.

²Sita woke up to the realities of life and raised her hands that held the garland to put it around Lord Ram's neck. But a storm was still blowing in her heart and mind. She must have been thinking in these lines: “what is the necessity of this formality of putting the garland on the Lord when I have already accepted him as my eternal lord and master? ”; Or that “this garland is made up of worldly flowers that would dry up and shrink in due course of time, so why should I use it to express my love for the Lord that is eternal and more beautiful than the flowers of this garland? ”; Or that “why should I not embrace the Lord with my outstretched arms and encircle his neck with a natural wreath symbolized by them instead of using an artificial garland to express my love for him?”

In order to put the garland around the Lord's neck and drape it on his broad shoulders and chest, she had to move still closer to him. It was like a dream come true for Sita! For some moments she forgot that she was here to perform some formal task in the full glare of the public. She instead dreamt of embracing her beloved Lord right there. The physical movement of the hands that was required to put the garland around the neck was similar to actually reaching for the Lord with her outstretched hands and then making a circle around his neck with these hands to bring him closer and embracing him. In other words, these thoughts so overwhelmed Sita that she did not realize that her internal emotions are translating into external delay in observing the formality of garlanding the victor.

So we see how these and such other thoughts made Sita hesitate for a fleeting moment before she finally put the garland around the Lord's neck.]

सोहत जनु जुग जलज सनाला । ससिहि सभित देत जयमाला ॥ ७ ॥
गावहिं छबि अवलोकि सहेली । सियँ जयमाल राम उर मेली ॥ ८ ॥

sōhata janu juga jalaja sanālā. sasihi sabhita dēta jayamālā. 7.
gāvahim chabi avalōki sahēlī. siyam̐ jayamāla rāma ura mēlī. 8.

The fascinating and adorable sight of Sita's two raised hands holding the victory garland in front of the face of Lord Ram resembled the sight of two tender lotus flowers with their stalks attempting hesitatingly to encircle the moon in a gesture that meant that they want to adorn (honour) it with a garland of victory¹. (7)

Watching this charming and magnificent scene (as described in earlier verses), the friends of Sita began to sing in merriment. At that moment (or alerted by their singing), Sita finally put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram and draped it on his chest as its adornment (as well as an unequivocal declaration of Lord's victory and an affirmation of her acceptance of the Lord as her dear husband).

{This verse can be read as follows—"When the friends of Sita saw the beautiful sight of Sita standing with the garland in front of Lord Ram, they felt so exhilarated that they began singing songs spontaneously. This alerted Sita, and so she finally put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram so that it draped on the Lord's chest."}

There is yet another way of reading it as follows—"When the friends of Sita saw the wonderful sight that Sita has put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram and it is resting elegantly on the chest of the Lord, they broke out in spontaneous singing of auspicious songs befitting the occasion."}² (8)

[Note—¹In this wonderful metaphor, Lord Ram's beautiful face is compared to the full moon, while the two raised hands of Sita are likened to the stalks of the lotus flowers. The two fists of Sita that hold the two upper ends of the garland are like the lotus flowers themselves.

This imagery is so remarkable and fascinating. Since the face of the Lord is in the middle of the circle formed by the Sita's raised hands holding the garland, it is likened to viewing the disc of the moon through the circle formed by two lotus flowers touching each other atop their long stalks.

A striking resemblance is found at one other place—when Lord Ram applies vermilion powder on the head of Sita during the wedding rites. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 325. When read together, they appear to be a symphony in verses.

Refer also to the books (i) 'Janki Mangal' of Tulsidas, verse no. 109; and (ii) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4.

²Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 10; and verse no. 93, stanza no. 3.

The entire episode of Sita garlanding Lord Ram has been narrated in Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 96 also.

We have seen earlier how Sita was dazed and stood motionless with the garland. Her friends had told her to put the garland on Lord Ram in verse no. 5 above, but still Sita did not. The reason for her delaying is explained in verse no. 6, that she

was overwhelmed and rendered immobile with emotions of affection and love for the Lord.

People were watching intently from all directions. So these ‘clever and wise’ friends thought that instead of telling Sita quietly and whispering into her ears not to delay any further because the whole assembly was watching, they decided to sing appropriate songs that are sung when the victory garland is actually put on the victor. This was a master stroke by them—because it alerted Sita and pulled her out of her loving reverie.

To those watching from their seats in the arena which were at a considerable distance from the spot where Sita was standing, surrounded by her friends, in front of Lord Ram, the songs camouflaged the delay in Sita putting the garland around the neck of the Lord. As soon as they began singing appropriate songs, the people sitting around the extensive area of the arena thought that the garland has been put on Lord Ram, whereas the fact was that it still was in Sita’s hands. Meanwhile, Sita suddenly realized her folly, and immediately put the garland around the neck of the Lord. This clever ploy of the friends had saved Sita from great embarrassment and scandalous gossip.

²While in the first interpretation of this verse, Sita hadn’t put the garland on Lord Ram when the friends started singing songs so as to subtly alert her, to remind her to go ahead and not delay any further as her standing with the garland without actually putting it on the Lord is creating an extremely piquant and uneasy situation, the second interpretation is that they began to sing once Sita had put the garland on the Lord.

This verse is a typical instance of the wonder in Tulsidas’ composition—that a single statement can be interpreted and read in a variety of ways, depending on the way the reader visualises the actual events as they may have unfolded at the time of their happening.]

सो०. रघुबर उर जयमाल देखि देव बरिसहिं सुमन ।

सकुचे सकल भुआल जनु बिलोकि रबि कुमुदगन ॥ २६४ ॥

sōraṭhā.

raghubara ura jayamāla dēkhi dēva barisahir̄ sumana.
sakucē sakala bhu'āla janu bilōki rabi kumudagana. 264.

When the gods saw that the victory garland has adorned the chest of Lord Ram, they showered flowers (from the sky).

On the other hand, the kings (who had attempted to lift the bow but had failed) felt ashamed and shrank due to embarrassment and disgrace like the lily that shrivels up and closes its petals at the sight of the sun². (Sortha no. 264)

[Note—¹The gods have expressed their joy by two means—by showering flowers and by playing musical instruments. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 262 where flowers have been showered upon the Lord; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes the same Doha no. 262 that says that musical instruments were played and dancing and singing had broken out in the sky.

Similar idea is expressed in Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow hereinafter just below the present Sortha.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 238; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263.]

चौ०. पुर अरु ब्योम बाजने बाजे । खल भए मलिन साधु सब राजे ॥ १ ॥
सुर किंनर नर नाग मुनीसा । जय जय जय कहि देहिं असीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pura aru byōma bājanē bājē. khala bha'e malina sādhu saba rājē. 1.
sura kinnara nara nāga munīsā. jaya jaya jaya kahi dēhim asīsā. 2.

Musical instruments started playing in the city (of Janakpur) as well as in the sky (i.e. in the heavens)¹. Those who were wicked went into depression (were dejected and depressed; they hid their faces), while those who were virtuous and saintly beamed with joy (i.e. became happy and joined in the celebrations)². (1)

All the pious and noble souls, such as the gods (sura), the kinnars (celestial dancers), the human beings (nara), the subterranean creatures represented by the 'Naagas' (nāga; serpents), and the sages, seers, hermits and ascetics (collectively called the 'munīsā')—all of them broke out in a chorus of praises for the Lord, Sri Ram. They collectively blessed the Lord (dēhim asīsā) and hailed his victory by chanting 'Hail, Hail; Glory to the Lord (jaya jaya jaya kahi)!³' (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 1 also.

²There were two categories of people—one who had a dominance of 'Tama Guna' or the evil qualities dominating their mind and heart, and the other who had the 'Sata Guna' or the virtuous qualities dominating their character.

The first category of people was that who were inherently wicked and inclined to be jealous with everyone, and enjoy when others suffer even if their sufferings won't do them any personal good. These people would have preferred that no one breaks the bow and there was gloom and grief all around. Then they would have fodder for gossip and spreading of scandals, such as saying that Janak had done this and that misdeed in his life and it is the result of it that he has to suffer. They could not tolerate others being happy; celebration and festivities were like painful sores for them. This group of people included the selfish, haughty and over-jealous kings who had thrown all caution and principles of morality to the wind when thousands of them had together tried to move the bow without bothering the horrible consequences of their action upon the marital future of Sita if they had managed to move and break the bow. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precedes Doha no. 245; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 266; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 241; and (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263.

The second category of people was that who had seen a divine aura around Lord Ram and could judge the situation wisely, if not by anything else than at least by the use of common sense when they found that the mighty sage Vishwamitra was in

the Lord's favour, and that amongst all those who were present as candidates vying to marry Sita, it was Lord Ram who fit the bill perfectly because of so many factors, such as his age that was in consonant with the age of Sita, his charm and beauty that matched Sita's, and his demeanours and manners, his elegance and dignity and the way he carried himself that was most suitable for someone who would become a royal groom and an honoured guest of the renowned kingdom of Janakpur. In this category of people we include those kings who desisted from participating in the bow lifting competition precisely for the reasons listed above. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5, that precedes Doha no. 241.

Amongst this category of wise people were those who were pious, holy and saintly who could see in the form of Lord Ram a personified form of the deity they worshipped—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 242. The citizens of Janakpur also come under the second category because they would not have liked gloom and despair to descend upon the kingdom; they all wanted that Sita be married to Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Doha no. 223; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7, that precedes Doha no. 252; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1, 8 that precede Doha no. 262 etc.

And of course, the family members of Sita, her parents and friends and other kith and kin, the gods in heaven and the sages and others on earth too come under the second category as all of them felt very happy when Lord Ram had broken the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 263.

³All these entities collectively represented the three levels of the world—viz. the gods and kinnars represented the heaven, the humans and the sages represented the terrestrial world, and the serpents represented the subterranean world.

In other words, the victory of Lord Ram was welcomed and celebrated by all the good creatures in this world, in whatever form they were. We have already read in verse no. 1 above that only those who were good at heart welcomed the Lord's victory and celebrated the occasion. Refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 262.

A similar situation prevailed when Lord Ram won the war at Lanka and had slayed the demon king Ravana. At that time also, there was a chorus of praise and blessings for the Lord from all directions—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-11 that precede Doha no. 103.]

नाचहिं गावहिं बिबुध बधूटीं । बार बार कुसुमांजलि छूटीं ॥ ३ ॥
जहँ तहँ बिप्र बेदधुनि करहीं । बंदी बिरिदावलि उच्चरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

nācahiṃ gāvahiṃ bibudha badhūṭīṃ. bāra bāra kusumāñjali chūṭīṃ. 3.
jaham̐ taham̐ bipra bēdadhuni karahīṃ. bandī biridāvali uccarahīṃ. 4.

All sorts of heavenly dames and damsels (such as the consorts of different gods of various denominations, as well as the celestial nymphs or dancers known as Apsaras)

began dancing and singing merrily. They filled their hands with flowers and repeatedly sprinkled them (upon Lord Ram and Sita from the sky)¹. (3)

Here and there and everywhere, the Brahmins (individually as well as in groups) were chanting verses from the Vedas and the bards and minstrels were singing the glories of the royal dynasty². (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4 and 6 that precede Doha no. 262.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 262 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 5 in the context of the breaking of the bow, and (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194, as well as Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 195 in the context of the celebrations that marked the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers at Ayodhya.]

महि पाताल नाक जसु ब्यापा । राम बरी सिय भंजेउ चापा ॥ ५ ॥
करहिं आरती पुर नर नारी । देहिं निछावरि बित्त बिसारी ॥ ६ ॥

mahi pātāla nāka jasu byāpā. rāma barī siya bhanjē'u cāpā. 5.
karahim āratī pura nara nārī. dēhim nichāvari bittā bisārī. 6.

The auspicious news and glad tidings that Lord Ram has married Sita by breaking the bow spread to all corners of the world, such as the terrestrial world (earth), the nether world and the subterranean world¹. (5)

The men and women folk of the city waved lighted lamps before the couple (Lord Ram and Sita) to ward off any bad effects of evil eyes or by evil spirits (in a ritual known as the 'performing of the Aarti'), and they gave away abundant gifts irrespective of their financial standing to celebrate the occasion as well as to invoke the blessings of the receivers of such gifts for the welfare of the couple². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 261; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262; and (b) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/93, stanza no. 3.

²An identical idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas in Baal Kand where the birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers has been described.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194 that mentions the performance of the ritual of "Aarti" by the women folk of Ayodhya for the welfare of the newly born brothers.

The "Aarti" is a formal ritual in which lighted earthen lamps are arranged on a platter along with other items such as rice grains, coloured powder, incense sticks etc. and waved in a clockwise fashion or in a to-and-fro pattern before the person who is to be honoured or blessed.

Aarti is usually accompanied by showering of flowers upon the person who is being honoured or blessed, or putting a garland around his neck.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194 which describes how the citizens of Ayodhya liberally gave away gifts and whatever valuables they had to anyone who sought them to celebrate the happy occasion of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers. Even those who received these gifts did not keep them for themselves, but they gave them to others in an all-pervading spirit of generosity and magnanimity, of celebration and festivities.]

सोहति सीय राम कै जोरी । छबि सिंगारु मनहुँ एक ठोरी ॥ ७ ॥

सखीं कहहिं प्रभुपद गहु सीता । करति न चरन परस अति भीता ॥ ८ ॥

sōhati sīya rāma kai jōrī. chabi siṅgāru manahum̐ ēka ṭhōrī. 7.

sakhīm kahahīm prabhupada gahu sītā. karati na carana parasa ati bhītā. 8.

The image of the couple, Sita and Lord Ram, looked so fabulously beautiful and charming that it fascinated all those who watched it, for the couple looked like personified forms of the virtues of beauty and love respectively that have come together to stand side by side of each other¹. (7)

Sita's friends told her to bow (or kneel) down to touch the feet of Lord Ram (as a gesture of showing respect to him, as well as to surrender or submit her self before the Lord). But Sita hesitated in touching the Lord's feet as she was afraid to do so. [As a result, she remained standing before Lord Ram.]² (8)

[Note—¹In this imagery, Lord Ram is likened to the virtue of love, and Sita to beauty.

Likening Lord Ram to the virtue of 'love' is very significant here because till this moment it was Sita who has been repeatedly depicted as the one who has developed affection for Lord Ram. There are many instances where her love and affection for the Lord have been stressed. On the other hand, Lord Ram has been portrayed as being the recipient of this affection.

This has happened during the bow-breaking event that is currently being described here {refer:--(i) Doha no. 257; (ii) Doha no. 258 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 1; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 259}, and earlier when Sita met Lord Ram for the first time in the garden {refer:--(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 232; (ii) Doha no. 234 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 5.}

So it was necessary to make the record straight and point out that even Lord Ram had love and affection for Sita in equal measure in which she had them for him, as has been done in the present verse.

The fact that Sita was a personified form of beauty is undisputed. Even Lord Ram has acknowledged this. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 230 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; (ii) Doha no. 231; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 235; and (iv) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 238.

Again, Sita's beauty has been extensively described with the help of metaphors in Doha no. 247 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

So we see that this verse acts as bridge to bring together the twin virtues of beauty and love so they form a formidable force to reckon with.

²The reason for Sita's reluctance and fear has been given in the next Doha no. 265 that follows below.

Touching the feet of elders, learned people, one's husband or parent or teacher etc, is a gesture of showing respect and honour to them is a tradition in vogue since ancient times. For instance, Lord Ram and Laxman had bowed and touched the feet of sage Vishwamitra at many places—viz. Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 238, (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 239, etc.

When king Janak had met sage Vishwamitra, he had knelt down and touched his head to the feet of the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 215.

Earlier, when Lord Ram and Laxman had departed from Ayodhya to accompany sage Vishwamitra to the forest, the Lord had gone to touch the feet of his mother—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 Ka.

Later on in this story we read that when Lord Ram had gone to his mother to seek her permission to go to the forest, he had bowed at her feet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 52.

At the time of leaving Ayodhya, he had bid farewell to his father Dasrath as well as the royal priest sage Vasistha in the same way, by bowing at their feet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 77; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 79.

Lord Ram had bowed at the feet of all elders, Brahmins and his Guru sage Vasistha before proceeding to the forest: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, (i) Doha no. 79; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 81.

Moving further ahead we see that when Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, meets him in the forest where the former had gone to try to persuade the Lord to return to Ayodhya, he had also fallen at the feet of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 240.

Then we see that Hanuman, the monkey devotee of the Lord, had also fallen down at the feet of the Lord when they first met at the foothills of Mt. Rishyamook—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2.]

दो०. गौतम तिय गति सुरति करि नहिं परसति पग पानि ।
मन बिहसे रघुबंसमनि प्रीति अलौकिक जानि ॥ २६५ ॥

dōhā.

gautama tiya gati surati kari nahim parasati paga pāni.
mana bihasē raghubansamani prīti alaukika jāni. 265.

Remembering (recalling) the fate of sage Gautam's wife Ahilya, Sita was reluctant to touch the feet of Lord Ram¹.

'Raghubansamani' (Lord Ram, the gem of king Raghu's dynasty) realised the sublime and divine nature of Sita's love for him, and so he smiled internally (instead of feeling uneasy due to her hesitance to touch his feet)². (Doha no. 265)

[Note—¹Please refer to a detailed note on Ahilya appended to Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 210 above.

The news of Ahilya turning from the visible gross form of a stone into an invisible subtle form as the wife of sage Guatam when Lord Ram touched her with the dust of his feet, and then ascending to the heaven to join her husband, had spread far and wide. Everyone in Janakpur was aware of it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 221.

Sita feared that if she touched the Lord's feet then chances are that her soul would also be freed from its gross body which the world recognised as 'Sita', the daughter of king Janak. She would then have to assume her original sublime form as goddess Laxmi. Well, how then will she serve Lord Ram, whom she knew to be a human form of Lord Vishnu, her eternal divine Lord in the heaven, and how will then she accompany him in a gross visual form on this earth to help him accomplish the task of killing the demons? Being the divine goddess Laxmi who is a consort of Lord Vishnu, she was taken into confidence by the Lord at the time of coming down to earth, and was told that she will have to play the role of a bait by which the demon king Ravana would be trapped and finally killed by Lord Vishnu in his human form as Lord Ram. We will read that the Lord reminded her of this role just prior to her abduction by Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 24.

So, if by chance Sita gets to leave her gross body as the daughter of king Janak and is transformed into goddess Laxmi by the mystical and powerful effect of touching Lord Ram's holy feet—which incidently must be remembered, has a natural and inherent power to give liberation and deliverance to the soul of all living beings from the grossness that surrounds it in this world—then the whole plan devised to eliminate the demons and free the gods and the earth from their terror would fall apart. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Sita was undecided because she thought that if her gross body was discarded and replaced with a subtle form while her beloved Lord was still in his gross human form, then how will she serve him and help him in carrying out his duty to give protection the gods and earth by eliminating the evil forces represented by the cruel demons.

But while the reason for Sita's hesitation was realised by Lord Ram, and he felt extremely happy in his heart, the wicked kings who were watching from the stands misinterpreted it as a sign of Sita's unwillingness to accept Lord Ram as her husband. Putting the 'victory garland' on the victor is one thing as no one could deny that Lord Ram had broken the bow and had publicly become eligible for this honour, but accepting him as a husband by Sita in a whole-hearted manner, without any reservation and with full submission, was another thing.

This misinterpretation of Sita's internal feelings for Lord Ram that was triggered by her delay to touch his feet was compounded by her delaying to put the garland around the Lord a few moments earlier—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 264 above.

We shall soon read that the defeated and frustrated kings stood up in revolt menacingly, and there was a spectre of a fierce battle had sage Parashuram not arrived at that time. The sage's arrival was ostensibly was to seek revenge for breaking the bow of Lord Shiva, but it sent kings scrambling for cover because the sage was renowned to mercilessly punish kings at the slightest wrong committed by them. All these developments have been elaborately described below, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268.

²Lord Ram realised Sita's internal feelings as he was all-knowing and omniscient. We have already read how the Lord had judged Sita's love for him before he decided to actually break the bow. In this context, refer specially to (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 261 above.

The Lord had witnessed this behaviour of Sita earlier also in the garden where they had met for the first time. At that time also she had become so stunned at the sight of the Lord that she had been rendered completely immobile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 232.

So, the Lord was not surprised either when Sita delayed to put the garland on him, and when she delayed to touch his feet.]

चौ०. तब सिय देखि भूप अभिलाषे । कूर कपूत मूढ़ मन माखे ॥ १ ॥
उठि उठि पहिरि सनाह अभागे । जहँ तहँ गाल बजावन लागे ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

taba siya dēkhi bhūpa abhilāṣē. kūra kapūta mūrha mana mākhē. 1.
uṭhi uṭhi pahiri sanāha abhāgē. jaham̃ taham̃ gāla bajāvana lāgē. 2.

Then, looking at Sita (i.e. watching that she was reluctant to both put the garland on Lord Ram and also hesitating to bow down to touch his feet¹), some of the kings who had no scruples, were morally degenerate, were a scar on the reputation of their respective royal families, and were extremely stupid, rose up in revolt because they had a subdued and oppressed longing for Sita². (1)

These pervert and malice-bitten jealous kings, who were smacked with a burning desire for revenge and settle scores, for they could not come to terms with the stark reality of their ignominious defeat that had stared right up their noses, rose from their seats one after another, tied their body armours (to get ready for battle), and began to boast like a vain coxcomb³. [What they said is narrated below in verse nos. 3-5.] (2)

[Note—¹Refer to an elaborate note appended to Doha no. 265 above.

These were the same kings who refused to heed sane advice given by their compatriots that they shouldn't try to break the bow and invite sure defeat and its attendant humiliation because all subtle indications are that Sita would be married to Lord Ram as he was not an ordinary human prince but Lord Vishnu and the one whom even Lord Shiva, the lord of the bow that is to be broken, worships. Therefore, how can these 'stupid and ill-witted' kings expect Shiva to favour them instead of Lord Ram? Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 246.

²But these malice-ridden pervert kings were so overcome with passion and lust on the one hand, and on the other hand, itching with jealousy to seek revenge for their abject defeat and humiliation which they faced when they couldn't lift and string the great Bow, which they all tried to move with the combined strength of their muscular arms but failed to move it an inch, that they now threw all caution and decency to the wind and rose up in a common revolt, creating a furious uproar and a wild pandemonium in the packed arena.

Their senseless action only added to their self-invited ridicule and public sensor and scorn as it not only proved their moral turpitude but also established the stupidity and perversion of their minds in the face of the fact that they had all failed to move the bow individually as well as jointly when thousands of them had tried to lift the bow simultaneously without bothering about the immorality and impropriety of this act. These wicked kings should have kept their wits together and remained silent, sitting quietly in their seats to avoid further embarrassment. They should have realized that they had already committed a grave sin by trying to break the bow in their thousands—because had they been successful, Sita would be married to ‘thousands of kings at the same time’, making her ‘a wife of all of them’ at once! It was, in the first place, such an extremely ridiculous and absurd proposition that it ought to have made them remorseful, regretful, repentant and shameful to the extreme. But on the contrary, they had now started shouting and making a mockery of themselves because these maddened kings’ mind and intellect and the common sense of propriety and probity were so much eclipsed by delusions that were driven by passion and fired by their jealous zeal to grab Sita at any cost that they had not thought of the huge negativity and the ignominious consequences that would come in the wake of their creating a nuisance by their ruckus behaviour that caused an un-called for pandemonium in the middle of a sober royal assembly of great kings and princes from all the corners of the world, especially when all those assembled had themselves witnessed the defeat of these mischief-mongers when the latter could not break the bow and returned to their seats with a down-cast head. These rascals did not even think of the negative name their respective families would get by their irrational and pervert behaviour.

As it turned out finally, they did get shame and ignominy. They were so extremely idiotic that inspite of seeing how Lord Ram had so easily broken the same bow which they could not as much as move in their thousands, they still wanted to challenge the authority and might of the Lord. Didn’t they witness Laxman’s anger a little while ago, and how even king Janak could not reprimand him? Didn’t they realise that Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita by breaking of the bow had the unreserved blessing of the mighty sage Vishwamitra whose mystical powers were well known? Didn’t they understand that Sita had already put the garland on Lord Ram, and for all practical purposes was his bride, and in this condition how immoral it is to even think of grabbing her and preventing her from marrying the Lord? Didn’t they realise that now Lord Ram and Laxman would wipe them out if they dared do any nonsense?

But still these stupid, ill-witted and pervert kings were so overwhelmed by lust and passions that they could not desist from making a last-ditch attempt to marry Sita. Now, in the following verses we shall read what they did and said.

But the question arises: what was the fuse that lit this fire of revolt amongst the failed competitors? Well, when they observed that Sita was demurring and hesitating to immediately put the victory garland around Lord Ram, they deduced that it was because she was reluctant to marry him, she did not actually wish to marry the Lord but was forced to go with the garland under instructions of her guru Satanand and father Janak. So they instantly grabbed this opportunity to jump into the fray with the intention of settling accounts with their common enemy, Lord Ram.

On the pervious occasion we have read that when they came back from the bow, unable to move it, and sat down crest-fallen on their seats, with lowered heads and shame writ large on their ashen faces, they had witnessed how Laxman brazenly and fearlessly rebuked Janak, a powerful king in his own right, the Lord in whose realm and patronage the ceremony was taking place, and who could have severely

punished Laxman for his irreverent behaviour, but chose to keep quiet, which these failed kings took as a signal for themselves to keep quiet too, for they quickly consulted amongst themselves in hushed tones that there must be surely something serious and powerfully in favour of Laxman that forced Janak to bear with this insinuation of Laxman's vitriolic diatribe in front of full court.

They also feared sage Vishwamitra who was accompanying Lord Ram and Laxman, for everyone knew the might of the sage's mystical powers; 'it's better not to annoy him and invite his wrath', they decided.

But now when they saw Sita herself dithering in the matter of garlanding Lord Ram, they thought it was the right moment to hit back at their adversary. If Sita was not willing to marry Lord Ram, they surely she would side with these revolting kings and see to it that her father too supports their cause—for it would give her a chance to break free from the bondage of marrying someone she did not like.

So they rose in revolt to challenge Lord Ram for a combat, saying that if he were to marry the princess then first he will have to prove himself in princely valour, strength and courage by defeating other suitors before thinking of marrying her. As for the condition of the marriage being tied to the mere breaking of the bow, they have serious doubts about the fairness and the integrity of the way in which the ceremony was undertaken, for they are certain there was foul play and underhand dealing in the entire matter—for it seems obvious that the things were contrived in such a devious way that the bow wouldn't move a bit when anyone else tried his hand on it, but would easily be lifted when the pre-selected person, in this case Lord Ram, comes to lift and break it. If this is true, then god forbid and heaven be a witness, king Janak would pay a heavy price for it for subjecting all the great kings and princes of the earth to such humiliation and shame as he had managed to inflict upon them in the garb of holding a bow breaking ceremony with the bait of marrying his daughter.

This strong feeling and resentment of the kings is clear in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that follow herein below.

Alas indeed and pity for these unfortunate wicked people who did not know the facts of the case. We shall soon read that they couldn't get the chance to fulfill their desire for a combat, for soon sage Parashuram would arrive on the scene, furious and hell-bent in punishing anybody who had broken the Bow as it belonged to Lord Shiva, his revered deity. Seeing the raging sage, known for his anger and willingness to kill Kshatriya kings at the least provocation, these kings and princes were once again on the defensive, hiding themselves and trying to avoid eye-contact with sage Parashuram, lest he would turn his wrath upon them instead of Lord Ram.

From a different angle, the arrival of angry sage Parashuram was a boon-in-disguise for these kings itching for a fight to settle scores with Lord Ram. Well, they were rather happy—for now they can sit quietly and enjoy the drama that would unfold, and let the sage do the dirty job for them, for all of them were sure that now Lord Ram and his short-tempered irreverent brother Laxman would be smacked for good and taught a bitter lesson of their lives by the angry sage. This we shall be reading soon. {Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 270 which explicitly reiterates the above observation.}

³Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 95, stanza no. 1 also.]

लेहु छड़ाइ सीय कह कोऊ । धरि बाँधहु नृप बालक दोऊ ॥ ३ ॥

तोरें धनुषु चाड़ नहिं सरई । जीवत हमहि कुअँरि को बरई ॥ ४ ॥
जौं बिदेहु कछु करै सहाई । जीतहु समर सहित दोउ भाई ॥ ५ ॥

lēhu charā'i sīya kaha kō'ū. dhari bām̐dhahu nr̥pa bālaka dō'ū. 3.
tōrēm dhanuṣu cāra nahim sara'ī. jīvata hamahi ku'am̐ri kō bara'ī. 4.
jauṁ bidēhu kachu karai sahā'ī. jītahu samara sahita dō'u bhā'ī. 5.

Some of them ranted as follows—‘Snatch Sita by force, and capture and hold in bondage the two princes of the king (i.e. Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman). (3)

Merely breaking the bow won't suffice to satisfy his (Lord Ram's) desire (to marry Sita). Say, how can anyone dare to have his wish to marry the princess fulfilled as long as we are alive?

[To wit, let Ram be sure that the matter is not as easily settled as he thinks it to be. First he will have to prove his mettle, valour, strength and eligibility to marry such a great princess as Sita by vanquishing us in a combat if he wishes to fulfill his dream of marrying her. We smell a rat; there seems to be some cunning underhand method contrived to make him so easily break the mighty bow which our combined might failed to move even a fraction of an inch. No, it is not going to be a cake-walk for him; never as long as we are around, and it is not going to be otherwise. We challenge him for a duel; let us engage in a combat and prove ourselves.] (4)

If Videha (king Janak) tries to help them (Lord Ram and Laxman), we will win him too along with the two brothers in the battle.¹ (5)

[Note—¹The intention of the wicked kings was clear: they were ready for bloodshed and a showdown. The reason is that passion and lust aside, they faced the prospect of shame, disgrace and humiliation when they returned empty-handed to their respective kingdoms. This was unacceptable by all of them. In their madness to save their dignity they thought that with all of them joining hands it would be very easy to defeat king Janak and his army in a battle if they tried to protect Sita and side with the two brothers.

In this context, the reader should refer to an elaborate note appended to verse nos. 1-2 herein above.

This episode of Sita's marriage hinging on an absurd condition of breaking of a bow without considering other factors such as testing the qualifications, abilities, family history, personal character and temperament of the would-be groom, or even without consulting the girl whose entire future was at stake, and open declaration of war for such minor issues as marrying this or that girl, especially when she has already been officially declared as a bride of a particular man, is a sad and poignant commentary of the ways the society worked and the conditions that prevailed in ancient India.

We have read above that these kings were “stupid and ill-witted”. Didn't they realize that if king Janak decided to order his huge army to surround and disarm them, what would they do; what chance did they have against the huge army of Janakpur with only a few, a handful and a limited number of body-guards and soldiers who had accompanied them to Janakpur as escorts and official retinue that routinely accompanies a king going to attend an invitation?

Common sense says that they stood no chance, but passion and prospects of shame had the better of them when they decided to revolt.

Besides this logic, the other reason for them being decidedly “stupid” is that it was well known to them that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva, and they themselves had tried their best, both individually and jointly, to move it, but had failed miserably. The same bow was broken so easily by Lord Ram. Couldn't they realize that there must be some hidden mystery in this development? They had been explicitly warned not to make a fool of themselves by wiser kings who had told them that Lord Ram and Sita were personified forms of the Lord and Mother of this world respectively, and that Lord Ram was worshipped even by Lord Shiva himself, but these kings paid no heed. These kings have also been described as being driven by passion and lust, as well as by arrogance and self-pride. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.]

साधु भूप बोले सुनि बानी । राजसमाजहि लाज लजानी ॥ ६ ॥
 बलु प्रतापु बीरता बड़ाई । नाक पिनाकहि संग सिधाई ॥ ७ ॥
 सोइ सूरता कि अब कहूँ पाई । असि बुधि तौ बिधि मुहँ मसि लाई ॥ ८ ॥

sādhu bhūpa bōlē suni bānī. rājasamājahi lāja lajānī. 6.
 balu pratāpu bīratā baṛāī. nāka pinākahi saṅga sidhāī. 7.
 sō'i sūratā ki aba kahum̃ pāī. asi budhi tau bidhi muham̃ masi lāī. 8.

When the good kings heard this boastful outburst of the wicked kings, they sternly admonished and rebuked them, saying—‘Shame to all of you! In fact, this assembly of kings and princes has acted in such a disgraceful manner that if ‘shame’ had been personified then it would have shied away from coming here and show its face. (6)

Your boast of having great strength, bravery and fame has already been shattered and cut to pieces with the breaking of the bow. [Or, all your pretensions of strength, valour and reputation of being brave have already been crushed as soon as the bow broke.] (7)

Now say, from where have you retrieved these qualities of bravery and valour again? [Or, these qualities had already vanished with the breaking of the bow in public, so tell us from where have you got them back again?]

It is because you fellows are so foolish and dull-headed that the Creator decided to blacken your faces in full public view in this manner. (8)

[Note—These good kings are the ones who had seen the writing on the wall. They had realized that Sita is destined to marry Lord Ram, and had tried to persuade the stupid kings to have common sense and desist from trying to break the bow. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 2-4, and 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.

So when they found that inspite of Lord Ram's clear victory and the evidence of the broken bow lying in front for anyone to see these arrogant kings are hell-bent on creating nuisance, they intervened and rebuffed these stupid fellows. They have come to attend a marriage ceremony and not to a battle-field!

Didn't these stupid kings realize that in an open competition only one person wins, whoever he is. And in this case it was Lord Ram, and he himself was a prince. So there was no reason for creating such a fuss and rubble-rousing. Had Lord Ram not belonged to a royal family or some higher class in the society then there was a ground to argue that since Sita belonged to a royal family then only a prince or king befitting her stature can marry her, and nobody else. But in this case this question does not arise at all as the family of Lord Ram was as reputed as that of Sita.

A shameful and disgraceful act by a handful of pervert and shameless kings would taint and cause ignominy to the entire society of kings and princes for no fault of theirs. Hence, the wise amongst them stood up to rebuke the nonsensical behaviour of their brethren.

Refer also to Tulsidas' 'Kavitawali Ramayan', Baal Kand, verse nos. 15 where the good kings have scolded these wicked kings.]

दो०. देखहु रामहि नयन भरि तजि इरिषा महु कोहु ।
लखन रोषु पावकु प्रबल जानि सलभ जनि होहु ॥ २६६ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhahu rāmaḥi nayana bhari taji iriṣā madu kōhu.
lakhana rōṣu pāvaku prabala jāni salabha jani hōhu. 266.

Look at Lord Ram and imbibe the beautiful sight of the Lord till your eyes are fully satisfied with it. Discard the attitude of jealousy and arrogance, and overcome your futile anger.

Laxman's anger is no less than a raging fire, and so be ware. Don't allow yourselves to become insects that get burnt when they voluntarily come too close to a burning fire. (Doha no. 266)

[Note—The good kings had advised the same thing—to enjoy the rare sight of seeing the beautiful form of Lord Ram—earlier also before the bow breaking ceremony had commenced. They themselves concentrated in enjoying this sight. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 6-7 that precede Doha no. 246.

The beautiful form of Lord Ram in the arena has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 242—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244.

Laxman's anger was so violent that the earth shook, and its support, the Diggajs, had trembled out of fear—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.]

चौ०. बैनतेय बलि जिमि चह कागू । जिमि ससु चहै नाग अरि भागू ॥ १ ॥
जिमि चह कुसल अकारन कोही । सब संपदा चहै सिवद्रोही ॥ २ ॥
लोभी लोलुप कल कीरति चहई । अकलंकता कि कामी लहई ॥ ३ ॥
हरि पद बिमुख परम गति चाहा । तस तुझार लालचु नरनाहा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bainatēya bali jimi caha kāgū. jimi sasu cahai nāga ari bhāgū. 1.
 jimi caha kusala akārana kōhī. saba sampadā cahai sivadrōhī. 2.
 lōbhī lōlupa kala kīrati cahaī. akalañkatā ki kāmī lahaī. 3.
 hari pada bimukha parama gati cāhā. tasa tumhāra lālacu naranāhā. 4.

[In these four verses, the good kings have ridiculed their greedy and haughty friends, the wicked kings who have stood up in revolt and want are itching for a bloody fight to take Sita away, by comparing them to a number of entities whose attempt to do the impossible make them a laughing stock in this world.]

Just like a crow wanting to grab the share kept aside for Garud (during a religious ceremony), or just like a humble rabbit coveting the share of a lion (who is so strong that he can comfortably afford to be an enemy of an elephant without fear), [1] ---

--- Or just like a man who is accustomed to become angry without any cause expecting to have welfare, happiness and peace, or just like someone who is inimical to Lord Shiva expecting to have good fortunes and prosperity in life, [2] ---

--- Or just like a greedy, indulgent, selfish and rapacious man ever expecting to have any kind of credit, a good name and worthy reputation, or just like a lustful, lascivious and promiscuous man ever hoping to acquire a reputation of an immaculate character and trustworthiness, [3] ---

--- Or just like a person opposed to Lord Hari's holy feet (Hari = Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord) ever imagining that he will have liberation and deliverance for himself (i.e. freedom for his soul from the world and its horrors, freedom from the cycle of birth and death)—

Oh foolish kings, your desires and longings (for Sita, for victory over the two brothers, for acquiring some fame, for saving your lost prestige and honour etc.) are similar to the instances cited above by us. [4]

[To wit, you will never succeed in your stupid endeavours, you will never get what you desire, and you will never get any chance of having any sort of honour, but instead you will only invite further disgrace and humiliation for yourselves by indulging in utter nonsense and acting imprudently.

At least till now you had an excuse that it was Lord Shiva's bow which you did not actually want to break for the fear of causing insult to the Great Lord of the world, Lord Mahadeva, Shiva, but had gone to the bow to touch it and pay your respects to it, but what you all are up to now, declaring your intention to fight a battle to take Sita away and capture the two brothers, will close all doors for you to somehow gracefully save your ugly faces from abject disgrace and ignominy. Come on, have common sense, and stop being fanatically mad and creating nuisance to put all of us of the kingly class to utter shame in the annals of history. So you better shut up and sit down before it's too late.] (1-4)

[Note—¹Refer also to Tulsidas' book 'Kavitawali Ramayan', Baal Kand, verse no. 1/15 in this context.

The wise kings were stunned and confounded by the unwarranted belligerent attitude of the wicked kings. First, they had not heeded the sane advice given to them by their wiser compatriots to desist from trying to lift the bow and make a mockery of

themselves, then they had failed to move the bow individually, and finally they had miserably failed to do it even when thousands of them joined hands to try their combined might against a single opponent which was only an old and rusty ‘bow’, something that would be otherwise considered as absolutely inconsequential and easy to handle.

Meanwhile, king Janak was so gracious that he had kept quiet even when thousands of kings were trying to move the bow simultaneously—though he would have been within his rights to disallow it and could have strongly objected to this highly unethical act of these wicked kings because his daughter could not be allowed to marry all of them at the same time if they managed to somehow break the bow. Besides this, it was common sense that the king had meant that a ‘single individual who would be able to break the bow first would marry his daughter Sita, without any second thoughts and imposition of any other subjective conditions’. No father would allow this nonsense be perpetrated right in his front in the name of his daughter. But still Janak has maintained his calm. Couldn’t these wretched kings give king Janak a credit for showing so much restraint when all of them tried to break the bow jointly by not ordering his army to imprison all of them as they were violating principles of morality and proper conduct and attempting to bring disgrace to his entire dynasty? And instead of empathising with him and sharing his sorrows at the doomed fate of his daughter, they were now preparing for bloodshed?

So the wise kings took strong exception to the wild act of these greedy and arrogant kings who failed to accept their undeniable fate gracefully, politely, and with a smile in a sportsman-like spirit instead of showing the negative side of their character. Their hilarious act of belligerence and dare-devilry would bring disgrace and disrespect to the entire community of kings and princes to which even the noble-hearted and good kings belonged. Hence it was totally unacceptable to the latter category of kings that any nuisance be allowed to be perpetrated by their disillusioned and deluded brethren in their presence.

In all probability, if these wicked kings had indeed managed to go ahead with their plan to fight and forcefully snatch Sita, the good kings would have risen against them and fight alongside Janak and the two brothers. But as the things happened, this situation did not arise because sage Parashuram came in angrily to the arena just at that time, and seeing the angry sage those kings who were shouting and creating a ruckus a while ago went into hiding out of fear for their own lives! We shall soon read about it below.

Meanwhile, let us examine the similes cited by the good kings to rebuke the wicked ones.

(a) Chaupai line no. 1 = (i) The first instance is of the crow trying to eat the share kept aside for Garud. It is a normal practice during religious ceremonies that out of the offerings, a small part is kept aside for ‘Garud’ (the divine Eagle who is a mount of Lord Vishnu) along with parts kept aside for other gods and holy spirits. A hungry crow, which is also a bird like the Garud but is employed as a metaphor for a contemptuous, sinful and greedy creature, watches from a distance, coveting this share of Garud which is a divine bird. As soon as this crow hops near and tries to touch this share of Garud, it is shooed off contemptuously. The wicked kings are like the crow, Lord Ram is like Garud, and Sita is like the offering of the religious ceremony. She is meant to be married to Lord Ram, but these wicked crow-like kings are coveting her.

The comparison of the wicked kings with a ‘crow’ is very apt because like this bird which keeps on greedily eyeing the offering and crowing continuously for it until

its voice becomes hoarse, and finally shooed away or even beaten back if it dares to come too near the holy offering intended for Garuda, these failed and frustrated kings are also unsuccessfully trying to grab Sita though they know, like the wretched crow, that they won't succeed.

(ii) The lion is so powerful that it does not fear the mighty elephant that is huger in size than it; it easily kills the elephant. The lion may eat its hunt over a number of days, little at a time. A greedy rabbit eyes the kill, and when the lion's attention is diverted it tries to steal the food that is meant for the lion. The foolish rabbit does not realize that if the lion discovers that the wretched rabbit has been stealing over his shoulders, it would be killed instantly. Can the humble rabbit oppose and fight and win over the lion that can easily kill the mighty elephant which is hundred times larger and stronger than the petty rabbit? But in its ignorance the rabbit does not realize this but thinks that it can have its way with the lion. A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 28.

(b) Chaupai line no. 2 = (iii) A person who is inclined to be angry and wrathful for no reason, or for inconsequential reasons, cannot ever hope to find mental peace and happiness. He will surround himself with enemies instead of friends. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 38.

(iv) The next example is that of a person who is opposed to Lord Shiva. Shiva is the "Maha-Deva", the Great God. When a person can't expect his welfare by opposing ordinary lords and masters of this world under whose domain he lives, how can he imagine that he will live happily by opposing the 'Great Lord' of the world, Lord Shiva? Kamdeo had dared to tease Lord Shiva and was reduced to ashes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 83.

(c) Chaupai line no. 3 = (v) Similarly, a greedy, indulgent and lascivious man, a man who is haughty and arrogant, will only invite dishonour and ignominy instead of any good name or honour. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand—(i) Doha no. 38; (ii) Doha no. 23.

(vi) And finally, a person who is opposed to the Lord God, the Lord of the world known as Lord Hari (Vishnu), can only live in a fool's paradise if he expects any welfare for his soul, if he aspires for attaining liberation and deliverance for himself. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 5 that precedes Doha no. 23.

The good kings essentially advised their angry brethren that they cannot expect to have any welfare by opposing Lord Ram who is a personified form of the Supreme Being. An identical idea was conveyed by Angad to Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, when he was sent by Lord Ram as a messenger to the court of Ravana in an attempt to avoid the ruinous war of Lanka. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 27.

These deluded, impertinent and haughty kings, who were driven by a false sense of hurt ego and shamed self-esteem as well as overcome with lust and jealousy, must realize that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince, but the Lord of the world in a personified form (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 246). Even Ravana's wife Mandodari had advised her husband the same thing (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14), and once again Angad had also warned him of this fact (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 26). But unfortunately like Ravana, these foolish kings won't listen.]

कोलाहलु सुनि सीय सकानी । सखीं लवाइ गई जहँ रानी ॥ ५ ॥
रामु सुभायँ चले गुरु पाहीं । सिय सनेहु बरनत मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

kōlāhalu suni sīya sakānī. sakhīm lavā'i ga'īm jaham' rānī. 5.
rāmu subhāyam' calē guru pāhīm. siya sanēhu baranata mana māhīm. 6.

When Sita saw the pandemonium created by the wicked and boastful kings and heard the noise and the ruckus created by them, she was frightened (because she feared for the worst and the unexpected, as she had all along been watching the mad and fidgety behaviour of this wretched kings, and she had heard how quickly such situations go out of control and lead to violence and all sorts of misdemeanours).

So, her companions quickly escorted her back to the queen-mother for safety.

(5)

Meanwhile, with Sita leaving the place, Lord Ram too decided to go to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) as there was no point in remaining standing there any longer. On the way, he kept on praising in his heart Sita's affection for him.

[This shows that the madness of the kings and the tumult they created had no effect on the Lord. He wasn't even a bit afraid of these kings just like a lion not being afraid of a herd of trumpeting mad elephants.] (6)

[Note—Sita had an inkling of what was to come. Remember: She was a princess, and was aware of how bloody wars were occasionally fought by kings and princes over a woman and hurt ego. Before Lord Ram broke the bow, she had observed how these kings were greedily eyeing her, and how they had put all morality and principles of propriety and conscientiousness to the wind when they attempted to lift the bow together in their thousands, not bothering to imagine what horror it meant for Sita if they succeeded in their ridiculous attempt.

She was now afraid that these kings would try to hide their frustration and disgrace by indulging in unwarranted bloodshed. So she was quickly scurried by her escorting companions to her mother, the queen, for safety.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram gave a damn to these rascals. Remember: Lord Ram and Laxman had fearlessly faced and effortlessly killed ferocious and blood-thirsty demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chuapai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210).

So, when the Lord hadn't feared the demons, there was no question of his fearing these human kings. Rather, his attention was fixed on Sita and her love for him. This verse is a representative one that indicates the mental condition of all men who are about to be married to their beloved. For some time their mind and heart seemed obsessed, as if possessed, by the thought of their beloved, and they become oblivious of everything else, even of a great danger that might be lurking in the corner.]

रानिन्ह सहित सोचबस सीया । अब धौं बिधिहि काह करनीया ॥ ७ ॥
भूप बचन सुनि इत उत तकहीं । लखनु राम डर बोलि न सकहीं ॥ ८ ॥

rāninha sahita sōcabasa sīyā. aba dhaurñ bidhihi kāha karanīyā. 7.
bhūpa bacana suni ita uta takahīm. lakhanu rāma ḍara bōli na sakahīm. 8.

Hearing the mad rantings of the angry kings (that they would snatch Sita, that they will imprison the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, and that they would defeat king Janak if he decides to intervene on the behalf of the two brothers in the battle that is bound to ensue), Sita and the queen became extremely worried as to what would happen now according to the destiny determined by the Creator¹. (7)

Meanwhile, upon hearing the boastful words of these kings, Laxman looked became irritated and fidgetedly looked here and there with great annoyance. He wanted to speak out (just like he had sternly rebuked Janak a while ago), but desisted from doing so out of fear of annoying Lord Ram.² (8)

[Note—¹No one can be certain what the destiny holds for him or her. There is an old adage that says ‘there are many a slips between the cup and the lip’. When everything appeared to be going in the right direction and things had started taking an upswing after the harrowing hours of uncertainties when no one had been able to move the bow and king Janak had virtually declared the ceremony closed and that Sita would have to remain unmarried, there was a sudden ray of hope and a light at the end of the dark tunnel when sage Vishwamitra ordered Lord Ram to break the bow and let Janak overcome his grief, and at the end of the tense moments that followed the Lord had actually broken the bow into two, thereby settling the issue for all times to come. And then, as if a thunderbolt struck from the blue, sparked by some ill-fortune, this nasty situation of revolt by the defeated kings has arisen.

So, Sita and her mother became remorseful and lamented at Sita’s misfortunes as they contemplated at the mysterious and stern ways of the Creator who shows no mercy and compassion when deciding the destiny of a person, placing the latter on a bed of roses at one moment and then tossing him or her on charcoals at the next. Both the daughter and her mother were in a quandary, not knowing what to do and how to respond.

²Laxman never did anything without the permission of his elder brother, Lord Ram. Even when he had spoken out against Janak a while ago, he had first taken permission from Lord Ram (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 252). But at that time the Lord was sitting near him, while in the present situation he is at a distance from Laxman as he is near the bow.

Remember: It was a huge arena, and things were organized and planned on a grand scale. The bow was kept in the center and the seats for the guests were in a circle all around it like we have in modern-day sport stadiums. The bow must have been separated from the sitting galleries by a distance of, say, roughly a hundred or so metres. So, at the time when the kings started creating a ruckus, Lord Ram was far away from Laxman and the latter had no opportunity to seek the Lord’s permission to bluntly face these boastful kings and show them their ground. This made Laxman fidgety with irritation. On the one hand he was finding hard to suppress his anger and was eager to vent his ire at the kings, and on the other hand he could not do anything without Lord Ram’s permission. And since the Lord was at a distance there was no choice for Laxman but to remain silent, though he must have been edgy and muttering curses under his breath for these wicked kings!

Just read the Doha that follows herein below to get an idea of the anger which Laxman was trying to suppress.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 95, stanza nos. 2-3.]

दो०. अरुन नयन भृकुटी कुटिल चितवत नृपन्ह सकोप ।
मनहुँ मत्त गजगन निरखि सिंघकिसोरहि चोप ॥ २६७ ॥
dōhā.

aruna nayana bhr̥kuṭī kuṭila citavata nr̥panha sakōpa.
manahum̐ matta gajagana nirakhi siṅghakisōrahi cōpa. 267.

His (Laxman's) eyes became red and his eyebrows curved menacingly as he looked angrily at the kings. His mental condition and demeanours were like a lion's young cub which gets excited when it sees a group of trumpeting elephants. (Doha no. 267)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/95, stanza nos. 2-3 also.

Bravery and fearlessness is in the blood of a lion, it's his natural character, and it is inherited by its cub. Elephants are proud of their huge and strong bodies. When they walk they trample underfoot humble creatures and young plants without any bother; they rampage in the forest uprooting trees and breaking their branches. When a wild elephant is in heat, no animal dare face it. The only adversary of this elephant is the 'king of the forest', i.e. a lion. The lion is not at all afraid of the elephant, and it cleverly kills even the wildest and the strongest of elephants.

This trait of the parent lion is inherited by its cub. So when the cub sees a group of trumpeting elephants, it gets excited and wants to attack them.

This metaphor is cited here to indicate how Laxman felt. The boasting kings are likened to the group of trumpeting wild elephants, and Laxman to the lion's young cub.]

चौ०. खरभरु देखि बिकल पुर नारीं । सब मिलि देहिं महीपन्ह गारीं ॥ १ ॥
तेहिं अवसर सुनि सिव धनु भंगा । आयउ भृगुकुल कमल पतंगा ॥ २ ॥
देखि महीप सकल सकुचाने । बाज झपट जनु लवा लुकाने ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kharabharu dēkhi bikala pura nārīṃ. saba mili dēhiṃ mahīpanha gārīṃ. 1.
tēhiṃ avasara suni siva dhanu bhaṅgā. āya'u bhr̥gukula kamala pataṅgā. 2.
dēkhi mahīpa sakala sakucānē. bāja jhapaṭa janu lavā lukānē. 3.

When the women-folk of the city saw the tumult, they became restless, and all of them joined to unanimously curse the kings (who were creating the ruckus)¹. (1)

Just at that moment, sage Parashuram, who was like a sun with respect to the lotus representing the great family of sage Bhrigu (bhr̥gukula kamala pataṅgā—the most illustrious and famous member of the line of sages descending from Bhrigu)², came there when he heard that Lord Shiva's bow has been broken³. (2)

When the defeated kings (who were up in arms and restless for a bloody showdown with Lord Ram) saw the angry sage (Parashuram) enter the arena in a huff, panting and scowling menacingly in fierce rage, they were so scared out of their wits that they tried to hide themselves from view like a quail hiding when the hawk swoops down upon it⁴. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 95, stanza nos. 2-3 also.

When everything appeared to be settled and the tide seemed to have turned in favour when Lord Ram was a clear victor as he had broken the bow in front of everyone, when Sita had already put the marriage garland on Lord Ram and there was no turning back from it, the claim of these pervert, greedy and haughty kings that they won't allow Sita to be married to anyone else other than themselves though none of them could move the bow for as much as even a fraction of an inch, what to talk of lifting and breaking it, and that merely breaking the bow was not the determining factor to decide who will marry her, was as hilarious and ridiculous as it was improper, pervert and wicked because it was the declared condition that whosoever breaks the bow would marry Sita, and they had entered the competition with full knowledge of this singular condition.

So, instead of accepting failure with dignity, self-respect and a spirit of competition, these rascals were showing their true colours possessed by an evil mind that is driven by wickedness and perversion.

So, the citizenry vehemently cursed these wicked kings for their rashness, for their lack of scruples, for their imprudence and impertinence.

²Sage Parashuram was born in the line of sages that traced their origin to sage Bhrigu. The metaphor of 'the sun and the lotus flower' is used to mean that Parashuram gave great fame and glory to this family of great sages who felt happy that he was a member of their race just like the lotus flower that feels so happy when the sun rises in the sky that it opens its petals to indicate its joy at the sight of the sun.

Refer also to: Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 18—22.

Now, let us read in brief about this great sage Parashuram whose name literally means "Ram with a battle-axe".

It is believed that he was the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. Parashuram was the youngest of the five sons of sage Jamdagni (pronounced "Jamdaagni") and his wife Renuka. He had subdued the haughty Kshatriya race or the warrior race led by king Kaartavirya who had become tyrannical and were oppressing others. The story goes that once Jamdagni doubted the infidelity of his wife Renuka and therefore asked his sons to behead her. The four sons refused and were cursed by him, but Parashuram did as told. The father was pleased and asked Parashuram to request for a boon, upon which the latter requested that his mother be revived, his brothers be pardoned, and Jamdagni should discard his angry temperament. The father agreed to all.

Jamdagni was killed by Sahastraarjun. The story in brief is as follows:--

There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as 'Sahastraarjun' or 'Arjun with a thousand hands'. Once he approached the Ocean and asked who was stronger than him. The Ocean told him that sage Jamdagni's son Parashuram was a fit match for him and would welcome him in battle. Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. {This story is narrated in Srimad Bhagwat's Aashwamedhik Parva.}

Extremely peeved and angered by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

The Shiva-Puran has narrated the story of sage Parashuram as follows—

There was a king named Gadhi. His daughter was name Satyavati. Satyavati was married to the sage Richika. Richika arranged for a spectacular sacrifice. Some rice pudding was obtained from the yajna and Richika gave it to his wife Satyavati.

He said, 'Split this rice pudding into two halves. Eat half yourself and give the remaining half to your mother. Here, let me divide it. This is your half and that is your mother's. We are Brahmins. So we will have a son who will display the traits of a Brahmin. Your father is a Kshatriya, and your mother will have a son who will behave like a Kshatriya.'

Saying this, Richika went off to meditate in the forest. But mother and daughter managed to mix up their halves. In the course of his meditations, Richika realized that Satyavati was going to give birth to a Brahmin son who would display Kshatriya traits.

Through his powers, he managed to postpone this birth by a generation. So Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni. It was Jamadagni's son Parashuram who exhibited all the Kshatriya like characteristics.

Gadhi's son was Vishvamitra. Vishvamitra was born a Kshatriya. But because of the mixing up of the rice pudding, Vishvamitra turned out to be Brahmin-like.

There was a king of the Haihaya dynasty named Arjun. He had a thousand arms. He had also obtained the boon that flaming fire itself would be perpetually present on the tip of his arrow. Whenever he shot an arrow, the fire from the tip of the arrow burnt up the target. In this fashion, Arjuna used to burn up villages, cities and forests. He once burnt up the hermitages of sages. And one of the sages cursed Arjun that he would be killed by Parashuram.

Parashurama learnt the art of fighting from Shiva himself. While Parashuram was away learning how to fight, Arjuna arrived in Jamadagni's hermitage. Jamadagni had a wonderful cow (dhenu), known as a kamadhenu because it produced whatever

objects one asked (Kama) from it. Using this Kamadhenu, Jamadagni treated Arjun and his entire retinue to a royal feast.

Arjun asked Jamadagni to give him this cow, but the sage refused. Arjun then asked his soldiers to forcibly take away the cow. But just as this was going on, Parashuram arrived. He killed Arjun, slicing off Arjun's thousand arms in the process. Having disposed of Arjun, Parashuram went off to meditate and pay another visit to Shiva.

Taking advantage of Parashuram's absence, Arjun's sons invaded Jamadagni's hermitage. They killed Jamadagni. When Parashurama returned, he exacted vengeance for this evil deed. He killed Arjuna's sons. Since Arjuna and his sons happened to be Kshatriyas, Parashuram also killed all the Kshatriyas in the world. He did this not once, but twenty-one times over. Why twenty-one times? The reason was that there were twenty-one weapon-marks on the dead Jamadagni's body.

But killing was a crime and Parashuram had committed a sin. As penance, Parashuram donated cows and performed a lot of Tapa. He also arranged an Ashvamedha Yagya, the great horse-sacrifice. All this did not prove to be atonement enough. To complete the penance, Parashuram sought the advice of the sage Kashyapa. Kashyapa told him to perform the donation that is known as Tulaa-Purush. A Tula (or 'Tulaa-danda') is a pair of scales; the person (Purush) who is performing the donation is placed on one side of the weighing scale. On the other side are placed objects like honey, clarified butter, molasses, clothing and gold. The weight of the objects being donated has to be equal to the weight of the person performing the donation. This is known as 'Tulaa-purush'. Parashuram performed Tulaa-purusha and was freed from his sin.

³When Lord Ram had broken the bow its thunderous sound was heard in every corner of the world. All the gods as well as the sages knew about it, and they had rejoiced on the occasion. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 2 that preceded Doha no. 263.

It was not a secret that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva. King Janak had openly declared it to be so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 252. Everyone knew it to be so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 262.

Now, when sage Parashuram heard about it, he became very angry, as he interpreted this breaking of the bow as an insult of his revered deity Lord Shiva. So he took his battle-axe and rushed to the site to punish the guilty.

Tulsidas has cleverly conceived of the idea of the arrival of the sage at the site of the bow breaking ceremony at the moment when the kings were itching for a bloody fight and Laxman was getting ready to give them a befitting reply to dramatically turn the tide of events in a favourable manner and effortlessly steer clear of bloody showdown that was otherwise imminent. This is because as soon as the angry kings saw the sage, they were so scared that they tried to hide themselves from view like a quail hiding when the hawk swoops down on it (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268 below).

At the same time, Tulsidas wanted to highlight the fact that not even sage Parashuram, who was reputed to kill members of the Kshatriya race, the warrior race, at the drop of a hat at the slightest provocation (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 272), could do any harm to the two brothers, that neither Lord Ram nor Laxman was afraid of him, and that the sage at

last realized that Lord Ram was indeed a personified form of Lord Vishnu (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285 below).

This is in consonance with Tulsidas' entire effort in writing his epic books on the story of Lord Ram—that is to highlight the divinity of the Lord and to treat him as the Supreme Being himself personified. Every event and every opportunity has been used to underscore this point. We will read below how sage Parashuram realizes this fact, and then gives Lord Ram the 'Sarang bow' that is held by Lord Vishnu (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8).

However, Tulsidas was well aware of the fact that the other renowned versions of the story of Lord Ram, cited herein below, depict the arrival of the sage while the marriage party was on its way back to the kingdom of Ayodhya. So in deference to these versions and to show his respects for their authors, Tulsidas has briefly referred to this meeting in his book 'Janki Mangal' which is exclusively dedicated to the theme of Lord Ram's marriage with Janki, or Sita. In this book, sage Parashuram meets Lord Ram, Laxman and their father king Dasrath, vents his anger and then goes back subdued—refer: Janki Mangal, verse nos. 177-179.

The other famous versions of the story of Ramayana mentioned herein above where sage Parashuram has arrived when the marriage party was on its way back to Ayodhya instead of at the venue of the marriage itself are the following—(i) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Baal Kand, Canto 7; and (ii) Valmiki's Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 74, verse nos. 13-24—to Canto 76.

⁴Tulsidas has cleverly conceived of the idea of the arrival of the sage at the site of the bow breaking ceremony at the moment when the kings were itching for a bloody fight and Laxman was getting ready to give them a befitting reply to dramatically turn the tide of events in a favourable manner and effortlessly steer clear of bloody showdown that was otherwise imminent. Refer to a detailed note appended to verse no. 2 above.

The metaphor of the hawk 'swooping down' on the poor quail indicates that the sage came almost running to the venue from his hermitage in the mountains, precisely Mt. Mahendraa-chal, prepared to punish anyone who broke the bow. And as soon as the kings saw him, they scrambled for cover like the terrified quail.

Well, this is very dramatic. While thousands of kings who prided themselves for their valour and strength, who were a moment ago boasting of snatching Sita and imprisoning Lord Ram and Laxman as well as defeating the entire army of Janak, are now scampering for cover to hide themselves from the view of the angry sage Parashuram because they feared that he will chop-off their heads with his battle-axe without even giving them a chance to explain themselves or protect themselves, Lord Ram and Laxman stood fearlessly and nonchalantly as if nothing had happened.

So we see how Tulsidas has expertly employed this episode to underscore the inherent strength, authority and power that the two brothers had. This incident is the second in the series of many such events that would emphasise this point. The first event, as we all know, was when the two brothers had faced and killed the fierce demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra.]

गौरि सरीर भूति भल भ्राजा । भाल बिसाल त्रिपुंड बिराजा ॥ ४ ॥

सीस जटा ससिबदनु सुहावा । रिसबस कछुक अरुन होइ आवा ॥ ५ ॥

भृकुटी कुटिल नयन रिस राते । सहजहुँ चितवत मनहुँ रिसाते ॥ ६ ॥
 बृषभ कंध उर बाहु बिसाला । चारु जनेउ माल मृगछाला ॥ ७ ॥
 कटि मुनिबसन तून दुइ बाँधे । धनु सर कर कुठारु कल काँधे ॥ ८ ॥

gauri sarīra bhūti bhala bhrājā. bhāla bisāla tripuṇḍa birājā. 4.
 sīsa jaṭā sasibadanu suhāvā. risabasa kachuka aruna hō'i āvā. 5.
 bhr̥kuṭī kuṭīla nayana risa rātē. sahajahum̃ citavata manahum̃ risātē. 6.
 bṛṣabha kandha ura bāhu bisālā. cāru janē'u māla mṛgachālā. 7.
 kaṭi munibasana tūna du'i bām̃dhēm̃. dhanu sara kara kuṭhāru kala kām̃dhēm̃.
 8.

[These five verses, nos. 4-8, describe the glorious image or physical form and vestiture of sage Parashuram.]

The ash that is smeared over his fair-complexioned body looks magnificent. The three horizontal lines of the religious mark known as the 'Tripund' (that is worn by devotees of Lord Shiva) adorn his broad forehead. (4)

There was a matted lock of hairs on his head. His bright moon-like face, that was otherwise very charming, now however looked a bit red with anger. (5)

With knitted and curved eyebrows as well as eyes that are virtually effusing anger, even when he glances anywhere in a causal manner (without any particular intention or meaning any harm) it gives the impression that he is looking there in anger¹. (6)

His shoulders were well-built and muscular like those of a strong bull. His arms are long, and his chest is broad. He wore a magnificent sacred thread (across his chest), a wonderful garland (that was draped on his chest; or a rosary that was around his neck), and a deer-skin (that was wrapped around the upper part of his body). (7)

Around his waist was tied a piece of cloth like the one worn by hermits, and to its fastening cord were tied two quivers on either side of his hip. He held a bow and arrows in his two hands, while a battle-axe was tied to his shoulder. (8)

[Note—¹We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 269 that “even when the sage glanced at any of the kings casually in a normal friendly way, that individual was so terrified that he thought that the span of his life has come to an end—i.e. the sage has selected him to vent his anger”.

Why were the kings so terrified at the mere sight of sage Parashuram? Doha no. 268 says that Parashuram's general attire and bearing, his general appearance was like that of a serene and dispassionate sage, but the deeds that he did were very cruel, such as relentlessly killing members of the princely class for whimsical reasons. The general physical description of the sage as narrated above is in consonance with the appearance of any other great sage, except the last half of verse no. 8 that describes him as having quivers tied to the hip, a battle-axe tied on his shoulders, and a bow and arrows held in the hands. This is the physical sign that he was a warrior sage.

Normally he would be calm and poised like any other great sage of repute, but when he became angry he spouted fire and brimstone. This is indicated by his reddened eyes and curved eyebrows.

So, when he approached the kings with fiery eyes, they lost their wits and feared the worst.]

दो०. सांत बेषु करनी कठिन बरनि न जाइ सरूप ।
धरि मुनितनु जनु बीर रसु आयउ जहँ सब भूप ॥ २६८ ॥

dōhā.

sānta bēṣu karānī kaṭhina barani na jā'i sarūpa.
dhari munitanu janu bīra rasu āya'u jaham̐ saba bhūpa. 268.

It is very difficult to describe the real character, form and nature of sage Parashuram because though his external attire and general appearance resembled those of great sages, but his deeds and acts were cruel (and just the opposite of what one would expect from some great sage whom he resembled by his appearance).

[But if one were to describe him using a simile or a metaphor, then it can be said that when sage Parashuram came to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony—] It appears that the qualities of a gallant warrior and a valiant hero have taken the glorious form of a hermit or a sage and have arrived at the place where all the kings were present. (Doha no. 268)

[Note—Sage Parashuram's external appearance presents a picture in contrast. On the one hand he wears all the signs of a sage or a hermit—viz. ash smeared on the body, the Tripund mark on his forehead, matted hairs on the head, a sacred thread, a rosary or a garland on his chest, a deer-skin wrapped around his upper body, and a broad loin-cloth around his hips.

Contrasted with this is his warrior-like signs that suited war veterans rather than pious hermits—viz. a battle-axe, quivers, a bow and arrows; broad shoulders and long arms.

Further, while great sages and hermits always have a calm and peaceful countenance, Parashuram's was one of anger and wrathfulness—viz. curved and knitted eyebrows, red angry eyes.]

चौ०. देखत भृगुपति बेषु कराला । उठे सकल भय बिकल भुआला ॥ १ ॥
पितु समेत कहि कहि निज नामा । लगे करन सब दंड प्रनामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhata bhṛgupati bēṣu karālā. uṭhē sakala bhaya bikala bhu'ālā. 1.
pitu samēta kahi kahi nija nāmā. lagē karana saba daṇḍa pranāmā. 2.

As soon as the kings saw the fierce form of Bhrigupati (sage Parashuram, the lord of line of sages tracing their origin to Bhrigu), they were all terrified, and rose from their seats (to pay respect to him). (1)

They began to mention their own names along with that of their respective fathers, and then prostrated themselves before him (a mark of respect that was done

mechanically more out of fear of incurring the sage's wrath than out of any genuine respect for him because all the kings knew his reputation that he is inherently inimical to their race and finds pleasure in punishing members of the warrior Kshatriya race for the flimsiest of reasons). (2)

[Note—Just a few moments ago the kings had been on their feet, shouting and gesticulating wildly, seeking revenge for being humiliated—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 266 above. And now it is said that “they rose from their seats as soon as they saw sage Parashuram, and introduced themselves by telling their own names as well as those of their fathers before prostrating themselves in front of the angry sage.

It clearly means that as soon as they saw the angry sage rush in through the gate of the arena, they stopped shouting and boasting and immediately sat down so that they do not invite the attention of the wrathful sage. Pin-drop silence descended upon the arena as if by magic. No king or prince wanted to be caught red-handed, shouting and boasting, by the sage, because if the sage saw any one of them standing and shouting then it was sure that he would immediately vent his ire on that individual by chopping-off his head even before anyone could blink an eye.

Now, after entering the arena, the excited and angry sage was looking here and there to find out who was the culprit who broke the bow, and as he walked down the row of kings he stared down their faces. The person who faced the sage as he walked down the arena must have been shivering and sweating under his clothes out of fear for dear life. So, before the sage could become annoyed at them for not saying who they were, they began introducing themselves by uttering their names and those of their fathers, and then falling at the sage's feet to please him and keep him appeased and in good humour.

All of them fell before the sage one after another in quick succession. If they had not done so, they feared that the sage would treat it as sign of arrogance and haughtiness, and taking this sign as an affront to his authority he would have immediately chopped-off their heads.

When one prostrates before another person, he not only shows respect to the second person but also implies that he is surrendering before him and intends no confrontation. One is always unarmed while prostrating on the ground.

We can visualise this hilarious scene: As soon as the sage moved on to the next king, not bothering about the one who had just a moment ago fell down and prostrated on the ground before him, the first fellow rose up terrified, expecting the axe of the sage swinging towards him to cut off his head, and seeing that the sage has moved ahead to the next fellow and has spared him, he must have profusely thanked his stars and gods for still being alive! Then, after heaving a sigh of relief, this coward king must have wiped the sweat off his brow and sat down to see which fellow faces the sage's wrath.]

जेहि सुभायँ चितवहिं हितु जानी । सो जानइ जनु आइ खुटानी ॥ ३ ॥
जनक बहोरि आइ सिरु नावा । सीय बोलाइ प्रनामु करावा ॥ ४ ॥
आसिष दीन्हि सखीं हरषानीं । निज समाज लै गई सयानीं ॥ ५ ॥

jēhi subhāyam̐ citavahim̐ hitu jānī. sō jāna'i janu ā'i khuṭānī. 3.
janaka bahōri ā'i siru nāvā. sīya bōlā'i pranāmu karāvā. 4.

āsiṣa dīnhi sakhīm haraṣānīm. nija samāja lai gaīm sayānīm. 5.

Even when the sage glanced at any of the kings casually in a normal friendly manner, that individual was so terrified that he thought that the span of his life has come to an end—i.e. the sage has selected him to vent his anger (otherwise why is he looking at him, why has he not moved ahead)¹. (3)

Then king Janak came forward and bowed his head before the sage. He called Sita and made her too bow before him². (4)

The sage (Parashuram) blessed her (Sita), and this made her friends happy. [Now there was no fear for her as well as her groom Lord Ram from the wrath of sage Parashuram.]³

After this, they (Sita's friends) escorted her back to the place where other women were waiting. (5)

[Note—¹We have read above in verse no. 2 that each of the kings told the sage his own name as well as that of his father. Sage Parashuram knew all the great kings and their family dynasties. So when he heard the names of each of these kings and the names of their fathers, he would stop now and then before any one of them if he happened to belong to some great dynasty to wish that particular king and ask for the welfare of his family. But the sage had such a wild reputation of being angry, wrathful and vengeful that even though he spoke in a friendly manner, or just smiled and shook his head politely to a king whom he knew or had heard of, just to acknowledge the latter's respects, the concerned king lost his breath, fearing for his life!

²Janak deemed it fit, necessary and obligatory, being the host of the event, to come forward voluntarily to welcome and pay his respects to sage Parashuram. Earlier also, when sage Vishwamitra had come to Janakpur with Lord Ram and Laxman, Janak had gone outside the city to pay his respects to the sage and welcome him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 215).

When a king learnt that a great sage has arrived, he would invariably go to receive him. When sage Vishwamitra had gone to Ayodhya to meet king Dasrath to ask the latter to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him so they can protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons, the king had gone forward to meet the sage outside the palace gates—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 206 and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 207.

³Then king Janak summoned his daughter and made her pay respects to sage Parashuram.

Again, this is a normal thing for a father to do. We have seen earlier that when sage Vishwamitra had gone to Ayodhya to ask king Dasrath to send Lord Ram and Laxman with him, the king had first paid his own respects to the sage and then called all his four sons (Lord Ram and his other three brothers) to pay their individual respects to the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 207.

Now obviously, when king Janak politely bowed before the sage and summoned his daughter to make her also bow before the sage, no matter how angry the sage might have been he had no other choice but to exercise restraint as it would

have been absolutely unbehaving for a sage or a hermit of his stature not to bless an innocent girl and her elderly father when they are bowing before him and seeking his blessing.

Now, how would a sage bless someone paying his respects? The obvious rule-of-thumb response to such situations is to bless by saying “be happy; be blessed; may god keep you happy and prosperous; have a long life; let your wishes be fulfilled”, and so on and so forth.

Once a sage blesses someone, the recipient sort of acquires immunity against all things that would go against his interests that are covered by this blessing. For instance, if the sage blesses that ‘you will succeed in your life’, then none of the evil stars that would have otherwise ruined his life would be able to make him fail now.

A girl’s most cherished desire, especially when she is about to be married, is to seek a sage’s blessings and good omen for the welfare and well-being of her husband and herself, for a happy married life, for a bright and happy future together. An elderly sage would voluntarily, as a natural impulse, out of his inherent compassionate nature, and out of courtesy, always bless a girl for a happy married life and good fortunes for her husband. But certainly, he cannot at all curse her and her husband; that would be wrong for a great sage.

Hence, sage Parashuram blessed Sita that she will have a cheerful married life, and all happiness would be hers. As soon as the sage uttered these reassuring words, Sita’s friends felt very happy because the danger on Lord Ram was eliminated instantly, by default. This is because the blessing of the sage, in whatever words he may have actually used to bless Sita, would become null and void if Sita’s beloved groom, Lord Ram, comes to any harm. Sita can’t be expected to remain happy and joyful if her dear husband Lord Ram is harmed in any way by the sage’s anger for the Lord breaking the bow. And since the sage’s words can be in vain, Lord Ram’s safety was ensured. In other words, the sage had granted an indirect immunity to Lord Ram by blessing Sita!

The same logic applies to her father Janak. What more a father would want at a time when his daughter is on the brink of being married than for her and her groom’s welfare and well-being? Sage Parashuram has also blessed the king, and so this was another ensurance for Lord Ram’s safety.

Further on we shall read herein below in verse nos. 6-7 that sage Parashuram has also blessed Lord Ram and Laxman directly in the presence of another great sage Vishwamitra. It is now certain that no harm can ever come to either Lord Ram or his brother Laxman through sage Parashuram at least, because he has himself blessed them.

That is why no matter how angry the sage was and how hard he had tried to hit either Lord Ram or his brother Laxman, his hands did not cooperate with him and refused to hit at either of the two brothers. There are enough hints of this—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 that precede Doha no. 275; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 276; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 278; (iv) Doha no. 279 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 281; and (vi) from Doha no. 283—to Doha no. 284.

Besides this, if sage Parashuram had harmed Lord Ram in any way, it would have directly gone against his blessing for Sita that she be happy in future, and if he had harmed Laxman then also it would go against his blessing because Lord Ram cannot be expected to remain happy with Laxman injured, and therefore Sita too can’t be expected to be happy with this situation.]

बिस्वामित्रु मिले पुनि आई । पद सरोज मेले दोउ भाई ॥ ६ ॥
 रामु लखनु दसरथ के ढोटा । दीन्हि असीस देखि भल जोटा ॥ ७ ॥
 रामहि चितइ रहे थकि लोचन । रूप अपार मार मद मोचन ॥ ८ ॥

bisvāmitru milē puni āī. pada sarōja mēlē dō'u bhāī. 6.
 rāmu lakhanu dasaratha kē ḍhōṭā. dīnhi asīsa dēkhi bhala jōṭā. 7.
 rāmahi cita'i rahē thaki lōcana. rūpa apāra māra mada mōcana. 8.

Then sage Vishwamitra came and met sage Parashuram, and made the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) together touch the lotus-like (holy) feet of the sage. (6)

He introduced them to sage Parashuram, saying—‘They are Ram and Laxman. They are sons of king Dasrath.’¹

Parashuram saw the charming pair of brothers and blessed them². (7)

When the sage’s eyes fell upon Lord Ram—whose beautiful form was so astounding that it put to shame the pride of Kamdeo (cupid) that he has the most charming form in the world—he was completely swept off his feet, became spell-bound and so profoundly mesmerized by the Lord’s matchless charm that his eyes could not move away from the Lord³. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and Laxman were still young princes. Their father, king Dasrath, was however a renowned king, and was therefore known to sage Parashuram. But obviously for practical reasons, the sage was not expected to know about every son of every king who ruled the earth. That is why each of the kings had introduced themselves to him by first telling their own names and then that of their father and dynasty—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269 herein above.

When sage Vishwamitra had met king Janak for the first time after arrival at Janakpur, at that time also he had introduced the two brothers to the king in the same way—telling their names and the name of their father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

²Till this moment sage Parashuram did not know who had actually broken the bow. This will be clear shortly when he enquires from king Janak about the reason for the festivities, and upon learning about the breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow he demanded to know who had broken it. Refer: Doha no. 269—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 270 that follow herein below.

This is the primary reason why he has not yet cursed anyone or had threatened anyone that he would kill him. On the contrary, he has blessed all who sought his blessings—e.g. Janak, Sita, Lord Ram and Laxman.

But Parashuram was caught unaware in his own trap: After blessing Sita and the two brothers he will discover that it was Lord Ram who has broken the bow, and to rub salt on his wounds he will face the scathing taunts and scorns of Laxman who will tease the sage no end, leaving him wringing his hands and fretting and fuming in anger—but, ironically, unable to do anything. Why? Well, after having blessed them, how can the sage now cause them any harm. His blessing itself stood as a shield that afforded protection to Laxman and Lord Ram against the sage’s wrath.

This entire episode is narrated below in Baal Kand, from Doha no. 270—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

³The images of Lord Ram and Laxman were so mesmerizing, so captivating that they enthralled the mind and heart of anyone who looked at them. Every single place that we come across in the story of the Ramayan which describes the reaction of those who saw the two brothers, we observe this fact in a universal manner. More recently, we can cite the following examples:--

(i) Janak was enthralled by this beautiful image when he first saw the two brothers while welcoming sage Vishwamitra (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216);

(ii) then the citizens too were swept off their feet by this beautiful sight (refer: Baal Kand, from Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221);

(iii) and of course Sita was deeply enchanted by them (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Doha no. 234).

What's more, even the dispassionate sage Vishwamitra could not move his eyes away from the face of Lord Ram when he first saw him at Ayodhya when the sage had gone to bring the two brothers to his hermitage for protection of his fire sacrifice—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207.

Now, as it happened, after the two great sages Vishwamitra and Parashuram met each other and exchanged customary greetings, Lord Ram and Laxman were ordered by their guardian sage Vishwamitra to touch the feet of Parashuram. Till this moment sage Parashuram had no chance to closely see the charming images of the two brothers as his attention was diverted elsewhere. But when the two brothers stood up before him after paying their respects to the sage by touching his feet, it was the first time that Parashuram saw them from so close quarters. And as was expected, he was enthralled.]

दो०. बहुरि बिलोकि बिदेह सन कहहु काह अति भीर ।
पूछत जानि अजान जिमि ब्यापेउ कोपु सरीर ॥ २६९ ॥

dōhā.

bahuri bilōki bidēha sana kahahu kāha ati bhīra.
pūchata jāni ajāna jimi byāpē'u kōpu sarīra. 269.

Now, in spite of being aware of everything, sage Parashuram feigned ignorance and asked Janak—‘Well, tell me, why is there such a huge crowd here?’

Though he pretended to be ignorant of the reason for this huge assembly, he was seething with anger internally so much so that his whole body was virtually soaked in anger and a desire for revenge. (Doha no. 269)

[Note—Sage Parashuram asked Janak and nobody else because Janak was the ruler of the place, its king, and therefore acted as the host of the ceremony. The kings and other people had gathered here at his invitation. So he is the proper person to answer this question.

The sage already knew that Shiva's bow has been broken—this was the reason why he had come here to the venue in the first place. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268. But he wanted to punish Janak along with the

person who broke the bow, and so used this ploy of ignorance to let Janak say himself that this gathering had been called for breaking the bow, at which the angry sage will get an excuse to punish him. This is clear when he threatened Janak that he will upturn the earth within the periphery of his kingdom, meaning he would cause widespread destruction in his kingdom and bury everything underground like it happens during an earthquake—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 270 herein below.

From the corner of his eyes perhaps he had seen the broken bow lying on the ground, and this sight had fired his anger so much that his whole body seemed to be soaked in it.]

चौ०. समाचार कहि जनक सुनाए । जेहि कारन महीप सब आए ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

samācāra kahi janaka sunā'ē. jēhi kārana mahīpa saba ā'ē. 1.

Janak told him (sage Parashuram) the whole story in detail as to why all the kings had come there. (1)

[Note—The reason has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

सुनत बचन फिरि अनत निहारे । देखे चापखंड महि डारे ॥ २ ॥
 अति रिस बोले बचन कठोरा । कहु जड़ जनक धनुष कै तोरा ॥ ३ ॥
 बेगि देखाउ मूढ़ न त आजू । उलटउँ महि जहँ लहि तव राजू ॥ ४ ॥

sunata bacana phiri anata nihārē. dēkhē cāpakhaṇḍa mahi ḍārē. 2.
 ati risa bōlē bacana kaṭhōrā. kahu jaṛa janaka dhanuṣa kai tōrā. 3.
 bēgi dēkhā'u mūṛha na ta ājū. ulaṭa'um' mahi jaham' lahi tava rājū. 4.

Hearing this, the sage turned his eyes towards that direction where the pieces of the broken bow were lying on the ground.¹ (2)

The sight of the broken bow lying unceremoniously on the ground infuriated him beyond measure, and losing all inhibitions and control over himself he sternly asked king Janak in an extremely harsh and threatening voice—‘Oh you stupid fellow Janak, tell me who has broken the bow. (3)

Be quick to answer me, you fool, and show me that fellow who has done it (and who had the temerity to break Lord Shiva's bow). If you don't do it, I will turn the earth upside down as far as your kingdom stretches (i.e. I will reduce your kingdom to rubble and bury everything underground).² (4)

[Note—¹The sage was fully aware that the bow had already been broken as he had heard the loud thunder caused when it had snapped into two—refer: Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268.

The bow was central to the whole ceremony, and therefore was placed prominently on a central platform of the circular arena. The seats of invited kings and other guests were arranged in a circle around this platform. The king hosting the event, king Janak, and the chief guest of the event, sage Vishwamitra, were seated on an elevated area in one prominent corner of the arena that was so strategically located that the entire venue could be seen from there. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precedes Doha no. 224.

The bow was not a small one; it had huge unconventional dimensions because it had belonged to Lord Shiva and was used by him to kill the demon Tripurasur. So its broken parts were visible from all parts of the arena.

Remember: We have read a little earlier that Parashuram had ‘pretended’ that he does not know why this assembly has gathered—refer: Doha no. 269 above. We have also read that his eyes were red with anger and his general countenance showed that he was restless with anger and vengeance—refer: (i) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 268; and (ii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 269, along with Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes it.

In short, Parashuram had already seen the bow lying broken on the ground, but was waiting for Janak to tell him the story of its breaking. Sage Parashuram had the intention of punishing Janak in public for being the cause of something that was otherwise deemed unimaginable—which was ‘to cause an indirect insult to Lord Shiva by getting the Lord’s bow broken at his behest’.

²Janak has been dubbed as a “fool and stupid fellow” by the angry sage Parashuram who used these epithets to mean that Janak should have used this bow to worship Lord Shiva through its medium, as a symbol of Shiva or a treasured gift by the Lord, but instead he has got it broken. What can be more idiotic and nonsensical behaviour? Sage Parashuram has threatened to “upturn the earth as far as the kingdom of Janakpur stretched”. Well, Parashuram knew that Janak was a compassionate king who loved his subjects more than anything else. When he is threatened with the prospect of ruining his kingdom and causing unprecedented horrors for his subjects, then the chances are better that he will divulge the name of the person who has broken the bow.

We must note here that though Parashuram knew about the breaking of the bow even before he arrived at the venue, he did not know who had actually broken it. He did not guess that this person was Lord Ram till the moment the Lord himself stepped forward to tell him so—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 270—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 271 which we shall read below shortly.

We observe that Janak has had to face great humiliation in full public view for his decision of getting the bow of Lord Shiva broken. The ‘first occasion’ was Laxman’s humiliating verbal tirad against him (refer—Baal Kand, from Doha no. 252—to Doha no. 253; Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 254), the ‘second occasion’ was the kings threatening to defeat him in battle and snatch his daughter right under his nose (refer—Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266), and the ‘third occasion’ is now with sage Parashuram calling him names, viz. ‘a stupid’, ‘a fool’, and threatening to destroy his kingdom and lay it to ruin in the present verses.

Why was this so? The answer is very interesting. Let us see how.

When we come to think of it and scrutinize the events, we observe that Janak had indeed acted impertinently and irresponsibly by being instrumental in getting Lord Shiva's bow broken in public, thereby causing an indirect insult of Lord Shiva. Remember: This bow was kept by Lord Shiva with his ancestors for safe-keeping because the Lord trusted them. The Lord had not told the custodian king to get rid of it or dispose of it as he wills either at that time or in any time in future. What right did one of their descendants, Janak, have to get it broken? Obviously the answer is 'none'.

Then there were other problems too. Breaking anything kept by someone for safe-keeping without that person's express permission is equivalent to showing utter contempt and disrespect to that person to whom the thing originally belongs. In this case the bow belonged to Shiva, and Janak's family was a mere custodian. Therefore, Janak had no moral right to show disrespect to it and its rightful owner Lord Shiva by getting it broken.

Since this bow had once been held by Lord Shiva, it deserved reverence and respect like any other thing or symbol associated with the Lord. Getting it broken so contemptuously was nothing short of an insult of Shiva.

Now let us see what punishment Janak got for this sin. This is very interesting. He got repaid with the same coin that he had used to imply disrespect for Shiva. He was scolded, scorned at, rebuked, bitterly threatened and humiliated in full public view, in an over-packed assembly attended by his own subjects as well as by all the worthwhile kings and princes of the time, along with their retainers, in front of his own daughter, ministers, courtiers, priest etc.—not once, not twice, but 'thrice', for his misdeed.

It definitely goes to the credit of Janak that he bore with this public humiliation quietly without showing any anger, perhaps because he, being a highly wise, righteous and judicious king, realized that this was a punishment for his sin of getting Shiva's bow broken. He must have regretted his decision; he must have wondered that he should have thought of it before it was too late, that he could have devised some other means of finding a suitable groom for his daughter instead of making the bow a condition as it is now proving a thorn on his back.

But was this public humiliation enough of a punishment for Janak for getting Lord Shiva's bow broken? Yes, it was. Being ridiculed, scorned at, strongly censored, facing abuses, angry reprimands and admonishments, with a lowered head and not being able to answer back to defend one's self, one's honour and actions, or unable to seek retribution, is worse than actual physical death. For an honourable man of self-respect, an upright man of dignity and stature, nothing can be worse. Janak was not an ordinary man of humble means; he was a great king.

He definitely felt like burying himself in the ground, out of shame and humiliation, if it split open, after being subjected to such unimaginable ignominious treatment thrice in front of his own subjects and family members, in the midst of the society of kings and princes and other invited dignitaries. Death is far better than to live in this world after having been subjected to this great public insult—this is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas as well. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 63. The context here is this: Sati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva, had gone to attend the fire sacrifice of her father, Prajapati Daksha. He harboured some old grudge against Shiva, and therefore had neither invited the Lord to attend the fire sacrifice nor had kept any offering for him though offerings were made to all other gods as is the practice during such sacrifices. Sati regarded this as a public insult

of her husband, Lord Shiva, and declared “all past sorrows and wounds of my heart caused by previous insults and humiliation have faded in comparison to this present one which is intolerable for me; though there are countless forms of sorrows and grief in this world, the worst is an insult and humiliation in front of the society to which one belongs”. Here she meant that her father has publicly insulted and shown contempt for her husband, Lord Shiva, by not inviting him to the sacrifice, or giving him his due share of the offerings made to the sacred fire while all other gods, even those who are very junior to Shiva, have been invited, shown due respect and offered their share. The invited gods were looking at Sati with smirks and wicked smiles on their faces, sneering at her for being there even when she knew that her dear husband would be insulted. Why did she come to the fire sacrifice of her father when she knew that Shiva has not been invited; is she so eager to join in the celebrations that she preferred to disregard the value of her husband’s prestige and self-respect? This showed her in very bad light as for any honourable woman her husband occupies the highest place in her life.

So, Sati decided to burn herself and die instantly rather than live all her life with this shame and the memory of the public humiliation that she has had to face. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 63—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 64.

The idea is that the way Janak was insulted and humiliated thrice, as enumerated above in this discussion, it was the worst kind of punishment that he could have got. It would have been better if he was killed in action in a battle than having to live all his life with this history dogging him.]

अति डरु उतरु देत नृपु नाहीं । कुटिल भूप हरषे मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

सुर मुनि नाग नगर नर नारी । सोचहिं सकल त्रास उर भारी ॥ ६ ॥

ati ḍaru utaru dēta nṛpu nāhīm. kuṭila bhūpa haraṣē mana māhīm. 5.
sura muni nāga nagara nara nārī. sōcahīm sakala trāsa ura bhārī. 6.

The king (Janak) was so terrified that he could not answer the sage. The wicked kings, meanwhile, felt very happy (as they now felt that the angry sage would do what they had themselves hoped to do—i.e. punish king Janak as well as Lord Ram)¹. (5)

On the other hand, the gods, the sages, the Naagas (the serpents; the subterranean creatures), and the citizens of the city, men and women alike, became very worried and extremely anxious in their hearts (because none of them knew what would happen now as almost all had heard about the unforgiving and uncompromising nature of sage Parashuram)². (6)

[Note—¹Janak was struck with fear as he knew about the sage’s reputation. He knew that Parashuram was not merely boasting; he will indeed cause unprecedented havoc in his kingdom now that the bow has been broken and this fact cannot be hidden. His fear was compounded because it was he who had been the cause of its breaking. He was terrified because what was expected to be an occasion for celebration will turn out to be an occasion for grieving and mourning.

The wicked kings, as expected, rejoiced. What more could they want. They had wanted to disrupt the marriage ceremony somehow, even by an armed conflict—

refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266 above. Now they were happy that sage Parashuram would do it for them; they were rather grateful to him for fulfilling their desire without giving them any trouble or any bad name.

The question why the kings and princes felt happy when they heard sage Parashuram declaring that he will punish him who has broken the Bow has been explained elaborately earlier as a note on this subject that has been appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 266 heretofore.

²The entities mentioned here represent all the living beings in this world. The gods represent the inhabitants of the heaven such as holy spirits etc., the serpents represented the subterranean creatures, and the terrestrial creatures were represented by the sages and the citizens, the former symbolizing learned men and the latter the ordinary human beings.

Earlier, when the bow was broken and there was celebration, they had rejoiced; they had played musical instruments, sang and danced. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263.]

मन पछिताति सीय महतारी । बिधि अब सँवरी बात बिगारी ॥ ७ ॥

भृगुपति कर सुभाउ सुनि सीता । अरध निमेष कलप सम बीता ॥ ८ ॥

mana pachitāti sīya mahatārī. bidhi aba sam̐varī bāta bigārī. 7.

bhrgupati kara subhā'u suni sītā. aradha nimēṣa kalapa sama bītā. 8.

Sita's mother (queen Sunayana) regretted and lamented in her heart about the developments. She became pensive and very remorseful that at a time when things appeared to be getting right, the malignant Creator ("Bidhi") threw a spanner in the wheel and ruined everything¹. (7)

When Sita heard of the sage's temperament and reputation (from her friends), she was so emotionally upset that each passing moment appeared to be as long and stretched as a full era of time². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256. When Lord Ram had stood up to break the bow on the orders of sage Vishwamitra, the queen mother had worried at that time also.

When he had broken the bow, she had felt elated. Refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Now, all of a sudden, this horrifying prospect of ruin and being at the receiving end of a sage's anger has erupted out of nowhere and most unexpectedly.

These quick developments were like a roller-coaster emotional ride for the queen-mother. She was swung from the extreme of joy when Lord Ram broke the bow and Sita had put the victory garland on the Lord's body to the pit of grief and sadness when first the failed kings threatened battle and then this furious sage, who was well-known for his killing sprees while in anger, has now come with his battle axe drawn to strike-off the head of the culprit who broke the bow. Oh Creator, she prayed, what do you want?

²To wit, Sita became very impatient; time became unbearable for her, it seemed to stop. She did not want to contemplate about the next moment because god only knew what would happen then. She feared the worst.

What was the thing about sage Parashuram's nature that made her so nervous when her friends told her about it? Well, we don't have to go far to seek the answer; it is provided by the sage himself while venting his anger on Lord Ram and Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 274; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 275; (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 281; and (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283.

Sita was very sad and felt hopeless, hapless and helpless. When things began to look bright for her, there is this sudden prospect of gloom and overriding grief. To use a metaphor, when the sun broke through the gloomy darkness of the night to shine bright and give the world the light of hope and happiness, it was suddenly being overcome by the solar eclipse, causing darkness and gloom to descend once again on the world!

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 267 which says that both the queen and Sita were worried when they saw that the wicked kings had risen in revolt and there was an imminent danger of war.]

दो०. सभय बिलोके लोग सब जानि जानकी भीरु ।
हृदयं न हरषु बिषादु कछु बोले श्रीरघुबीरु ॥ २७० ॥

dōhā.

sabhaya bilōkē lōga saba jāni jānakī bhīru.
hr̥dayam'na haraṣu biṣādu kachu bōlē śrīraghubīru. 270.

When Raghubir (Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghu dynasty) saw that all the people as well as Janki (Sita) were afraid, he spoke (to answer sage Parashuram) without feeling either happy or remorseful in his heart. (Doha no. 270)

[Note—Lord Ram is very merciful and compassionate. He is the Lord and protector of the world; he is its guardian and supreme care-taker. So when he saw that everyone is terrified and Janak has become tongue-tied, the Lord decided to intervene and spare them any further embarrassment.

Lord Ram has a natural temperament of being neutral and dispassionate; he exhibits an exemplary sense of equanimity in all situations, favourable or unfavourable. Goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech, has acknowledged this in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Ealier in this episode, when sage Vishwamitra had ordered Lord Ram to get up and break the bow to remove the cause of Janak's immense sorrows, the Lord had got up from his seat and moved towards the bow with the same nonchalance, the same indifference and neutrality that he shows now while speaking to sage Parashuram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254.

Since he was the one who had broken the bow, the Lord decided that it was his responsibility to face the consequences, whatever they might be. Why should he let

others suffer? King Janak had already suffered so much, so it would not be proper to force him to undergo any more rounds of sufferings and humiliations.]

[PAUSE 9 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. नाथ संभुधनु भंजनिहारा । होइहि केउ एक दास तुहारा ॥ १ ॥
 आयसु काह कहिअ किन मोही । सुनि रिसाइ बोले मुनि कोही ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

nātha sambhudhanu bhanjanihārā. hō'ihī kē'u ēka dāsa tumhārā. 1.
 āyasu kāha kahi'a kina mōhī. suni risā'i bōlē muni kōhī. 2.

[Lord Ram spoke very politely to sage Parashuram—]

‘Oh Lord! The person who has broken the bow of Lord Shiva must be (literally) one of your servants. [That is, this person is surely junior to you, because you are such a great sage that no one can be greater than you. And being your servant or subordinate, he surely had no intention at all of insulting you or injuring your ego.]
 (1)

Why don't you tell me what you command is, or what you wish? [That is, why don't you tell me what is that you want, now that the bow is broken already?]¹

Hearing these words of Lord Ram, the sage replied angrily—(2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has carefully worded his enquiry. What he said in verse no. 1 was intended to soothe the ruffled ego of the haughty sage. The message that was conveyed was crystal clear—“It is me, Ram, who has broken the bow, but oh sage, do not become unnecessarily angry as I had no intention of either insulting you or Lord Shiva, and neither do I want to give an impression that I have any intention of insubordinating you. You are a great sage, while I am merely a prince. I don't deny that I have broken the bow, but you being so senior a person, you must exhibit maturity and poise. The bow is already broken, and so getting angry and shouting won't help. Let us be practical and discuss wisely what remedy can be found for something that has already happened. What do you want from me?”

This statement of Lord Ram shows that inspite of breaking the formidable bow of Lord Shiva that had defied the combined might of the mightiest of kings of the earth, the Lord had no trace of ego or pride in him. This is clear by the term “Daas” in the text—which literally means a ‘servant’. Here the term does not actually mean a menial servant who does household chores for his lord or master, but it means someone who is very humble and junior to the person addressed.

The sage was not a child; the Lord's reply hinted to him that he is the one who has broken the bow. This is because the sage had asked king Janak about who had broken the bow, and it was Janak who should have replied. Why would or why should someone else, a third person who is not involved in the incident at all, must unnecessarily interfere when he is not being asked anything? This clearly hinted to the sage that it was Lord Ram who had broken the bow, or at least directly involved in its breaking, or someone else who had Lord Ram's support had broken it on the Lord's orders, thereby necessitating intervention by the Lord.

Since Lord Ram spoke in the third person, i.e. said “it must be someone who is your servant” instead of directly accepting responsibility, the reply of the sage matched it: he also referred to that ‘third person’ who had broken the bow—refer: verse nos. 3-5 herein below.]

सेवकु सो जो करै सेवकाई । अरि करनी करि करिअ लराई ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनहु राम जेहिं सिवधनु तोरा । सहसबाहु सम सो रिपु मोरा ॥ ४ ॥
 सो बिलगाउ बिहाइ समाजा । न त मारे जैहहिं सब राजा ॥ ५ ॥

sēvaku sō jō karai sēvakā'ī. ari karanī kari kari'a larā'ī. 3.
 sunahu rāma jēhiṁ sivadhanu tōrā. sahasabāhu sama sō ripu mōrā. 4.
 sō bilagā'u bihā'i samājā. na ta mārē jaihiṁ saba rājā. 5.

[The sage replied to Lord Ram angrily—]

‘A servant is one who serves with humility, and not one who acts like an enemy by doing something that annoys his lord. (3)

Listen Ram, anyone who has broken the bow of Lord Shiva is like the thousand-handed enemy for me. [Or, such a person is equivalent to ‘Sahastra-baahu¹’ as far as I am concerned. He had killed my father, and to punish him I had cut-off his thousand arms and killed him. Likewise I will chop-off the hands of the person who has broken this bow before killing him.] (2)

Let him step forward and separate himself from the rest of the kings, for otherwise I will kill all of them.’ (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 272.

The story of ‘Sahastra-baahu’, also known as ‘Sahastraarjun’ or ‘Arjun with a thousand hands’ is narrated in a detailed note on sage Parashuram that is appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268 above. Now, Lord Shiva was sage Parashuram’s revered deity and his Guru, a moral preceptor, as Shiva is regarded as the universal Guru of all hermits and ascetics. Insulting a Guru is equivalent to insulting one’s parent, especially one’s father. Parashuram is referring to it. He means that since Shiva is as revered by him as his father sage Jamdagni, anyone who has dared to insult Shiva by breaking his bow is deemed to be Parashuram’s enemy just like Sahastrabaahu who had insulted his father Jamdagni. Therefore, just like he had killed Sahastrabaahu, he would also kill the person who has broken the bow.

It’s better for this fellow to step out, because otherwise all the kings would be punished for shielding him and taking side with him.

An interesting thing should be mentioned here in the passing. We have read earlier, while reading the note on sage Parashuram in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268, that he had vowed to kill the Kshatriya kings for “twenty-one times”. This limit had been crossed before this incident of the bow breaking ceremony had taken place. Perhaps the sage had not kept any count of the number of times he had already eliminated the kings, for if he had done so he wouldn’t have threatened to kill anyone beyond this limit.

As it eventually turned out, no matter how hard the sage had tried to hit Laxman when the latter was speaking to him in very scorching tones, his hands won't move and refused to cooperate with him. In fact, Parashuram was himself astonished why he was not able to punish Laxman, and why his hands refused to cooperate with him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280.]

सुनि मुनि बचन लखन मुसुकाने । बोले परसुधरहि अपमाने ॥ ६ ॥
 बहु धनुहीं तोरीं लरिकाई । कबहुँ न असि रिस कीन्हि गोसाईं ॥ ७ ॥
 एहि धनु पर ममता केहि हेतू । सुनि रिसाइ कह भृगुकुलकेतू ॥ ८ ॥

sunī muni bacana lakhana musukānē. bōlē parasudharahi apamānē. 6.
 bahu dhanuhīm tōrīm larikā'īm. kabahum'na asi risa kīnhi gōsā'īm. 7.
 ēhi dhanu para mamatā kēhi hētū. suni risā'i kaha bhṛgukulakētū. 8.

[Laxman was restive. He just could not cope with someone talking angrily with his beloved brother and Lord, Sri Ram. Unable to resist his urge to intervene on behalf of Lord Ram, Laxman spoke sweetly with a smile, but his demeanours were so aggressive and his manner of speaking so taunting and overtly insulting that his words and smile added fuel to the fire of the anger of the sage instead of calming him down.]

Hearing the words of the sage, Laxman smiled sarcastically and spoke in a way that was deemed to be insulting by Parashuram¹—(6)

Laxman said to sage Prashuram—‘As a child I had broken many bows, but my lord you had never shown such anger at that time. (7)

What is so special with this particular bow that you love it so much (that its breaking has annoyed you extremely to the extent as to have brought you down puffing and fuming to this place from your hermitage, causing you to disrupt your spiritual pursuit and meditation, and get so much upset and angry)? [I don't see anything special with this bow; it looks to me as an old, rusty and wornout bow that is of no use whatever in practice, and therefore there should be no cause to become so fretful and agitated at its breaking. I don't think it is of any precious value or importance to invite such reaction from a sage of your repute and status. Come on sage, what's so wrong with its breaking that you are so furious and mad about?]

Hearing these words of Laxman, sage Parashuram (“bhṛgukulakētū”; literally ‘the flag-bearer of the greatness of the line of sages coming down from sage Bhṛgu’) became very angry and peeved. He said in fury²—(8)

[Note—1The sage was already angry, and first Lord Ram had spoken to him out of turn because the sage had demanded to know who had broken the bow from king Janak and not from Ram, and now another prince has started speaking out of turn, without being asked anything. This truly annoyed the sage because he thought that these two brothers are taking him lightly and making a fun, a mockery of him.

Parashuram wondered angrily, ‘Why are these two fellows chirping out of turn? Do they think that I have come here to joke with them? The situation is very grave, my revered Lord Shiva has been broken, and instead of expressing any remorse

or regret, this fellow Laxman is ‘smiling sarcastically’ at me as if the breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow is of no importance. Well, this is intolerable for me.’

Indeed the sage was extremely exasperated and infuriated because whereas other powerful kings and princes had developed pale faces out of fear of the sage, and were perhaps searching for a way to sneak out to avoid the wrath of the sage’s anger, here were two young princes talking boldly and fearlessly with him as if the issue was something of a joke. The sage was excessively annoyed at Laxman’s light-hearted treatment of this issue which the sage regarded as very grave.

The question arises, ‘why did Laxman choose to act in a way that would be insulting for the sage?’ Well, for one, a sage is supposed to be a calm and peaceful person who is forgiving by nature, and not one who spits fire and brimstone, who is full of spite and haughtiness, and who is ready to kill others at the drop of a hat. In other words, if a person who calls himself a ‘sage’ does not show virtues that are characteristic of such exalted souls then he is worthy of contempt. The second reason is that the sage had threatened to kill anyone who had broken the bow, and since this person happened to be Lord Ram whom Laxman revered highly, any hint that the Lord is being insulted ignited Laxman’s wrath. In a way, Laxman warns sage Parashuram to behave himself as he has at last met his match.

Further, the sage was very proud of his martial prowess and his ability to subdue the mightiest of kings. This character was not good for the spiritual welfare of the sage because pride, haughtiness and arrogance as well as anger and vengeance are negative characters that are never expected from a great sage and hermit; these negative traits pull down a sage from his exalted stature instead of elevating him. The sage was dressed like a hermit but behaved like an ordinary worldly man who is soaked in negative qualities. Hence, he was fit for contempt. The lesson that we draw from this episode is that no matter how learned a person is or how highly placed in society he may be, if he has negative qualities in him, such as anger, pride, haughtiness and vengefulness, then one day or the other he is bound to be insulted and put to shame.

²Why did the sage become angry? Well, this bow belonged to Lord Shiva whom sage Parashuram regarded as his Guru (moral preceptor and revered teacher) as well as the deity whom he worshipped. Treating a bow that belonged to the sage’s respected Guru and revered deity (Shiva) as being equal to other ordinary insignificant bows that children play and break umpteen numbers of time in a routine manner was deemed by sage Parashuram to be an extreme form of insubordination of Shiva, and since an insult caused to one’s Guru and deity is to be regarded as one’s personal insult, the sage took strong objection at Laxman’s behaviour.

Laxman’s questions offended the sage who took his sarcastic smile (Chaupai line no. 6 above), and his carefree attitude as if nothing wrong has happened (Chaupai line no. 7), as an affront to his dignity, self-respect and exalted stature as a renowned sage of a great pedigree, being a descendent of the famed sage Bhrigu whose family name Parashuram carried, for never before had anyone dared to confront Parashuram with the same boldness and fearlessness which Laxman displayed now. This sort of attitude was unthinkable and too much to bear for the sage.]

दो०. रे नृप बालक काल बस बोलत तोहि न सँभार ।
धनुही सम तिपुरारि धनु बिदित सकल संसार ॥ २७१ ॥

dōhā.

rē nr̥pa bālaka kāla basa bōlata tōhi na sam̐bhāra.
dhanuhī sama tipurāri dhanu bidita sakala sansāra. 271.

[Sage Parashuram was very peeved and so he scolded Laxman, chiding him for his impertinence and denigrating Lord Shiva by comparing the Lord's bow worthy of respect and worship with an ordinary bow that children often break in their childhood while casually playing with it.]

The angry sage said to Laxman—‘Oh you young prince (“nr̥pa bālaka”; ‘nr̥pa’ = a king; ‘bālaka’ = a young boy)! (It appears that—) You are in the grip of death (or are under the spell of the death-god; “kāla basa”), and so you have no control over your words and speak without thinking of what you are saying, not understanding the gravity of your utterances (“bōlata tōhi na sam̐bhāra”).

How dare you compare the world-famous bow of Lord Shiva, the great Lord who is known as “Tripurari” (because he had used this bow to conquer the three formidable legendary cities and kill their ruler, the demon ‘Tripura’), with an ordinary, humble bow (when you say that you had broken many bows as a child and there was no hue and cry at that time). How dare you say so?’ (Doha no. 271)

[Note—The sage has used the words “Nrip-Baalak”, literally meaning a young son of a king, while addressing Laxman, and the word “Tripurari” for Lord Shiva. What the sage means is clear. He chides Laxman that the latter talks like an ignorant and immature boy (‘Baalak’) who seems to be unaware of the great events of this world, for otherwise did he not know that this bow was used by Lord Shiva to kill the formidable demon by the name of Tripura (‘Tripurari’) whom none of the other Gods, including Vishnu, could face. Besides this, the bow belonged to Shiva who is also known and revered as the ‘Maha-Deva’, the Great God of creation. Therefore it is absolutely irrational and highly stupid to compare such a mighty bow with an ordinary bow that children break while playing, as Laxman thinks it is—refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes the current Doha no. 271.

The greatness and uniqueness of the bow was declared by king Janak's heralds as well as by king Janak himself—refer: Baal Kand: (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 250; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 252. So, how idiotic it is for Laxman to compare this formidable, world-renowned bow of Lord Shiva with ordinary bows that he (Laxman) may have broken as a child?

Only those people whose minds begin to hallucinate when they are under the spell of death talk irrationally and nonsense things. The sage sternly warns Laxman to mind his words and be careful with what he says because death is staring in his face, and if he (Laxman) tries to act too smart with the sage then let him be warned that he will be responsible for the consequences which would be fatal for him.

When Parashuram referred to ‘death’ while admonishing Laxman, he meant that hadn't Laxman paid attention to what the sage had said just a few moments ago—that he is determined to severely punish the person who has broken the bow of Lord Shiva, and when he punishes someone it means ‘death’. Refer—Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 270; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 271.

The fact that the sage had no reservations about killing a person as a means of punishment is clearly declared by the sage himself a little later during this episode.

Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 274; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283.

It is said that when one is destined to die, when death is inevitable, when death looms over a person, his rational thinking, intellect and wisdom abandon him, and he is propelled to death by becoming reckless, ‘by losing control over what he says’, what actions he takes and how he behaves. He is attracted to death like the insect is to the wick of a lighted lamp or a raging fire, only to get burnt to death.

This particular sign that ‘one begins to talk incoherently and madly when one is in the jaws of death’ as implied by sage Parashuram here when he admonishes Laxman has another parallel in this book ‘Ram Charit Manas’ when Angad says the same thing to Ravana in Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33. In this case, Angad was sent as an emissary by Lord Ram to Ravana in a final attempt to avoid the ruinous war. Angad tried every logic he could think of in an attempt to persuade Ravana to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid the calamitous war, but the demon king won’t listen. Instead, Ravana started boasting and denigrating the Lord. So Angad chides Ravana by saying that the latter’s death seems to be imminent because he won’t listen to any sane advice and ‘was babbling incoherently as if in a delirium because death seems to have got hold of him (by deluding and eclipsing his intellect, his sense of rational thinking and his wisdom)’.

A very interesting development has occurred here in a subtle manner. While Parashuram admonishes Laxman that the latter seems to be in the throes of death because he is talking nonsense, the sage himself, in his fit of anger, had been talking nonsense, without giving thought to what he is saying. Why is it so? Well, the sage has repeatedly stressed that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva. So why did he not ponder over the fact that since it is not a joke to break Lord Shiva’s bow, then obviously if someone had indeed broken it then that person must be at least equivalent to Lord Shiva if not greater than him! Besides this logic, how could anyone ever break Lord Shiva’s bow without the Lord’s consent. In other words, anyone who had broken the bow must have had Shiva’s approval and backing.

Therefore, would sage Parashuram not commit a grave and unpardonable sin by going against the wishes of Lord Shiva himself because it was impossible to break the bow without the Lord’s consent. This sin would be aggravated by harming that person who has broken the bow, obviously with Shiva’s consent—the person surely had the backing of Lord Shiva simply because had Shiva not wanted the bow to be broken then no power on earth would have been able to move it, let alone break it. This is evident when none of the mighty kings could move the bow even a fraction of an inch—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 251; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 252.

So the sage had gravely erred in this case by threatening to kill the person who had broken the bow because he had neglected the fact that the bow cannot be broken without the consent of Lord Shiva. Therefore, while trying to act unilaterally in a self-righteous manner and pretending that he has the mandate to uphold the dignity of Lord Shiva by punishing any person who does anything that is purportedly insulting to the Lord, in the present case by breaking the Lord’s bow, the sage had unwittingly invited ridicule and humiliation upon himself at the hands of Laxman.

The lesson we draw from Parashuram’s episode is that ‘anger is one’s worst enemy’. It is anger that makes one lose sense of what he must say and do, anger is actually the element that makes a man lose his bearings and throws him virtually into

the jaws of death because his intellect and wisdom abandon him, and it is anger that forces a man to make a clown of himself in the society.

By being angry, Parashuram had made a mockery of his own greatness and exalted stature, of his immense strength and powers that he had acquired by doing severe Tapa (penances) so much so that instead of seeking retribution for breaking of Shiva's bow he had only invited ridicule upon himself.]

चौ०. लखन कहा हँसि हमरें जाना । सुनहु देव सब धनुष समाना ॥ १ ॥
का छति लाभु जून धनु तोरें । देखा राम नयन के भोरें ॥ २ ॥
छुअत टूट रघुपतिहु न दोसू । मुनि बिनु काज करिअ कत रोसू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

lakhana kahā haṁsi hamarēm jānā. sunahu dēva saba dhanuṣa samānā. 1.
kā chati lābhu jūna dhanu tōrēm. dēkhā rāma nayana kē bhōrēm. 2.
chu'ata ṭūṭa raghupatihu na dōsū. muni binu kāja kari'a kata rōsū. 3.

Laxman smiled wryly and retorted—‘Oh respected Lord (“dēva”)! In my opinion all the bows are alike. (1)

What is lost or what harm is done, and likewise what gain is made or honoured acquired by breaking an already worn-out, old, rusty and decrepit bow? So, why would Lord Ram break the bow intentionally?

The matter of fact is that when Lord Ram saw it, he just wanted to examine it closely by turning it sideways on its stand and lifting it in his hands, and he had no intention whatsoever to break it. (2)

But unfortunately this bow crumbled as soon as Raghupati (the Lord of the Raghu dynasty) touched it (because it was extremely fragile and highly rusted due to its old age and long storage without use, resulting in its losing its tensile strength and substance). [That is, the fact that the bow broke during its examination by Lord Ram was no fault of the Lord for the bow was already fragile and past its life span, and it simply gave in when turned on its side as is the wont of old and worn-out things that have remained untouched and uncared for a long time and had outlived their life span. No one gets fame by breaking old things, and so why would Lord Ram try such a stupid thing as to expect getting fame by breaking an old and rusty bow? Actually it would give him a bad name that he caused harm to an antiquity; and no one would like to be ticked off for this act.]

Oh sage, say then, what is the fault of Lord Ram, and therefore you are unnecessarily getting angry and worked-up for no reason or rhyme. [You must be realistic and try to understand the position. Lord Ram had no intention of either showing disrespect to Lord Shiva or the bow; perish such thoughts if you have any. And neither did the Lord wish to break the bow and attempt to get any fame for doing so as no one honours a person for breaking old things; rather it only invites scorn and infamy. So, oh wise and learned sage, think over the matter with a cool head and overcome your anger which is misplaced and out of proportion to the actual event. You know sage: by behaving the way you are behaving, it is not Lord Ram who gets a bad name but it is you who invite infamy and scorn and ridicule upon yourself.]’ (3)

[Note—Laxman has jumped to the defence of Lord Ram and puts forth the argument that the bow had already decayed; it was very rusty as well as crumbly because it was very old and had been kept in storage without use, resulting in it losing its tensile strength and material substance which had undergone severe decay. In this situation, anyone who would have touched it even for the purpose of routine cleaning would have caused some damage to it, such as a fracture to its frame. But it does not mean that the cleaner had any intent of either insulting the bow or purposely breaking it.

Lord Ram, says Laxman, went to examine it like other kings and princes, and that too only when their Guru sage Vishwamitra had ordered him to do so. The Guru perhaps wanted Lord Ram to have a look at this unique bow which was a novelty of sorts because thousands of kings and princes had gathered there just for the sake of this single bow, so there must surely be some mystery about it. And when one sees anything that is unique and magical, something that is a rarity and has an antique value, it is normal for him to go and see it. When one examines something rare and curious, he will first see it from all angles, then touch it to have a feeling of it, and then softly turn it sideways or lift it slightly to have a better understanding and feel of it. The examiner has no intention at all of harming the item on display, but if that thing inadvertently breaks while being examined then the person who was examining it must not be held guilty of willful and premeditated damage.

Laxman argues that the same thing has happened in this case also. Lord Ram had no intention of willfully breaking the bow to cause any insult to Shiva; it is unthinkable for him to even imagine it. The bow crumbled because it was already decayed and fragile. So there was no ground for Parashuram to become so angry, for Lord Ram does not get any honour for breaking something that was already rusty and fragile. After all, there is no valour and bravery in breaking an old bow, isn't it? The sage must understand that one cannot expect his well-being and good name by getting angry without a justified reason and at trifles—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 173.

Now, given that the damage has been done, merely shouting and creating a rucous or throwing tantrums won't rectify it; anger is no solution. If the sage has so great affection for the bow then they must all sit together to find out a remedy—to investigate how this bow can be repaired and restored to its former glory. Laxman suggests exactly this a little later to the angry Parashuram in an attempt to calm him down—that it would be better to call some expert bow-smith and get the bow repaired instead of wasting time and energy on anger—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

It will be noted that each time Laxman had spoken to sage Parashuram, he had done so with a smile on his face. Now, this implies two things—one, that Laxman wanted to convey the message that he is not scared of sage Parashuram like all other kings, and two, that he wanted to be as polite and humble as he could be because smile indicates a friendly, a positive attitude and surely not a hostile one.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram got the hint from Laxman, and when his turn came to speak to Parashuram he too had offered the same excuse—that the bow broke on its own as it was very old and decayed. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 283.]

बोले चितइ परसु की ओरा । रे सठ सुनेहि सुभाउ न मोरा ॥ ४ ॥

बालकु बोलि बधउँ नहिं तोही । केवल मुनि जइ जानहि मोही ॥ ५ ॥

bōlē cita'i parasu kī ōrā. rē saṭha sunēhi subhā'u na mōrā. 4.
bālaku bōli badha'um' nahim' tōhī. kēvala muni jaṛa jānahi mōhī. 5.

[Laxman's out-of-turn bold replies and smiles were taken as an affront by sage Parashuram because he was not accustomed to such behaviour. Whenever the sage talked with or confronted kings and princes, they had always stood before him with a bowed head and folded hands, agreeing to whatever he said, but never ever gathering courage to reply him back or argue with him. So the sage regarded Laxman's behaviour as highly objectionable, and each statement of Laxman added fuel to the fire of anger of the sage.]

Sage Parashuram glanced at his battle-axe (in a hint that Laxman be warned of it) and retorted menacingly to Laxman—‘Oh you stupid and dull-witted boy; have you not heard of my nature and temperament (i.e. about my temper, and zero tolerance to bad behaviour and impertinence)? (4)

I am not killing you (and chopping-off your head with me blood-thirsty battle-axe) because you are merely a child (and killing a child would be sin)¹. In your utter ignorance you think that I am merely a run-of-mill ordinary hermit (because had you known of my glories, my exploits, my famous deeds and achievements, you wouldn't have dared to speak with me the way you are doing at present)². (5)

[Note—¹To kill a child or a very young boy (“Baalak”) is a grave sin—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 167. The context here is mother Kaushalya comforting Bharat who was gravely grieving at the death of his father king Dasrath and for Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita going to exile in the forest. Bharat told her that he considers himself a great sinner because he had been, unwittingly and without his knowledge though, the cause of both these unfortunate incidents. It was then that Kaushalya lists some great sins that are unpardonable and lamentable, and ‘the killing of a child’ is one such great sin.

Remember: Both Lord Ram and Laxman are of a tender age, and this fact has been reiterated elsewhere also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 256 where the mother of Sita also calls Lord Ram a ‘Baalak’, a young boy of an immature age.

Earlier, Sita's father had also called the two brothers ‘Baalak’ when he had first seen them while welcoming sage Vishwamitra to Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 216.

²Now we shall read below how sage Parashuram boasts about himself. Boasting and haughtiness are definitely not good virtues, and the lesson we derive from Parashuram's episode is that one must not be boastful and haughty because one fine day all our ego and pretensions would bite the dust in a very humiliating way like Parashuram's.

Later on in this epic story we will read that when Angad was sent by Lord Ram to the court of the demon king Ravana in an attempt to make truce and avoid war, Ravana had also boasted haughtily. At the end Ravana had to bite a humble pie when he was humiliated in full court by Angad who challenged him to move his foot from the ground to prove that he is indeed as strong and powerful as he claims himself to be. Ravana had failed to move Angad's foot even a fraction of an inch just like this bow which could not be moved an inch by the boastful and haughty kings. This

episode of Angad and Ravana is narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35. {Refer especially to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 35.}

Sage Parashuram thought that Laxman thinks that being a hermit and sage he (Parashuram) won't harm him. So the sage warns Laxman to be careful because aside of being a sage and hermit he was an invincible warrior too. Laxman should not take him for granted; Laxman should not play fools with him anymore.]

बाल ब्रह्मचारी अति कोही । बिस्व बिदित छत्रियकुल द्रोही ॥ ६ ॥
 भुजबल भूमि भूप बिनु कीन्ही । बिपुल बार महिदेवन्ह दीन्ही ॥ ७ ॥
 सहसबाहु भुज छेदनिहारा । परसु बिलोकु महीपकुमारा ॥ ८ ॥

bāla brahmacārī ati kōhī. bisva bidita chatriyakula drōhī. 6.
 bhujabala bhūmi bhūpa binu kīnhī. bipula bāra mahidēvanha dīnhī. 7.
 sahasabāhu bhujā chēdanihārā. parasu bilōku mahīpakumārā. 8.

[Sage Parashuram now boastfully describes his own glories and achievements.]

I am a 'Baal Brahmachari', a celibate since birth, and am renowned for my anger (temper). It is known by the whole world that I am inimical to the Kshatriya¹ (warrior) race. (6)

On the strength of my arms I had eliminated all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth repeatedly, and had each time given the land to the Brahmins. (7)

Oh son of a king (mahīpakumārā: "Oh prince")! Look here at this battle-axe which had chopped-off the arms and head of my enemy Sahastrabaahu². (8)

[Note—¹The Hindu society has been divided into four sections or classes or segments by ancient sages for the sake of convenience and proper regulation of the huge society. It helped in judicious distribution of work to be done, to regulate the functioning of the society by delegation of authority and clearly specifying the jobs each section is supposed to do to maintain order and system in the world, to prevent overlapping of functions and avoid anarchy and chaos. This system helped in judicious regulation of the working of the society as a whole because each individual member of any given Varna knew what is expected of him. It helped in proper distribution of work that had to be done for day-to-day survival, without any duplicity and tussle.

These four sections are— (a) Brahmins*—the learned and teaching class; a wise one well-versed in the knowledge of the ultimate Truth about the supernatural Being called Brahm. They also presided over religious functions as priests, because these functions were central to life in the Vedic period; (b) Kshatriyas—they were the warrior, fighting, kingly class. They were assigned the job of giving protection to the society, dispensing justice and maintaining general law and order. (c) Vaishyas—they were the trading and farming class responsible for commerce and wealth generation. They provided for the necessities for a comfortable life. And finally (d) the Shudras—the service class of people whose main function was to free the other three classes

from the humdrums of daily chores and concentrate their energies to the particular jobs assigned to those classes to which they belonged.

In ancient Indian tradition, the kings and the ruling class belonged to the caste called 'Kshatriya', and their main job/vocation was giving protection and providing sustenance to their subjects belonging to the other three castes. To do this, they had to wage wars—some in defense and some in aggression because they wanted to expand their area of influence. But wars nevertheless involved bloodshed which any peace loving soul of Satwic tendency would abhor. So a king could be Satwic by temperament but Rajsic by occupation and compulsion. Those who were Satwic were prescribed the non-violent method of worship and sacrifices to Goddess Durga during peace times as described in Devipurān Mahābhagwat, Canto 46, verse nos. 15-17½, while those of Rajsic bearings were to do worship requiring animal sacrifices as described in verse nos. 17-21, especially in preparation for and during wars. Even today it is observed that the army is non-vegetarian in its food habits because the soldiers cannot kill their enemies in battle—as is required of them because of their vocation as a soldier—if they avoid killing and instead show mercy and compassion on their enemies. Perhaps this is the reason why meat-eating is never looked down in army; in fact, it is a normal diet amongst the Kshatriya class. Though mercy and compassion are indeed supremely good qualities, they are not meant for the battlefield unless the enemy surrenders and relents. The world would have been a 'heaven-on-earth' if this quality prevailed in the battlefield! However, since Sri Ram was at war with a vicious, unforgiving, cruel and formidable enemy (Ravana), and a lot was at stake (e.g. the very existence of the world and its peace), and it was a no-holds-barred, fierce and uncompromising war, the second category of worship—animal sacrifice symbolising the death of the enemy—was prescribed for him by the Goddess. And this was precisely what Brahma and other Gods did as is evident in verse nos. 33.

Yajur Veda 31st Chapter, 11th Mantra says that Brahmins are the mouth of society, the Kshatriyas are its arms, Vaishyas are its stomach or abdomen, and Shudras are its legs. The body is regarded as a symbol of the society. As is obvious in this analogy, all these four units of the body must function properly and in close cooperation with each other in order that the body can survive and live comfortably and carry on with its assigned duties in an orderly fashion. The mouth is important because it is the medium by which the body takes food and speaks; the arms procure food and give protection to the body against enemies; the stomach digests food and supplies the whole body with the energy needed by it; the abdomen holds all the internal organs; and the legs carry the body wherever it wants to go such as the place where food is available. Since food is the basis necessity of life, this instance is cited here. And the logic can be extended to everything else. Each component of the society must work properly in order that the whole society survives; each component is as vital as the other; each has its own importance in the bigger picture.

*The salient features of Brahmins are the following—they should possess these noble qualities—(1) 'Riju'-be expert in the Rig and the Yajur Vedas, (2) 'Tapa'-should be involved in doing penances, observing austerities and enduring sufferings for the welfare of the soul and the society, (3) 'Santosh'-be contented and satisfied, (4) 'Kshamaa'-to be forgiving and tolerant, (5) 'Sheel'-to have such virtues as good character, dignity, decorum and virtuousness, (6) 'Jitendriya'-to have self control over the sense organs, (7) 'Data'-to be a giver, one who sacrifices his own interests for the benefit of others, (8) 'Gyani'-one who is well learned, wise, enlightened and erudite, (9) 'Dayaalu'-to be merciful and compassionate. [Shatpath Brahman.]

This word 'Brahmin' is too often misunderstood and misinterpreted to mean a particular member of the society who is supposed to be given respect, no matter what his moral and educational standard is. The real intention is not that even a corrupt, unwise, morally depraved and foolish person should be honoured just because he is born a 'Brahmin'. The intention of the scriptures is never this. In ancient times this was the class of people who were designated to study the scriptures and act as moral and practical guide to the rest of the society. This was envisioned by our ancestors to help regulate the functioning of the society in an orderly manner by dividing the entire working into four clear segments and delineating each segment with a list of duties its members were supposed to do. This prevented clash and duplicity of work, as each of the four classes knew what it is supposed to do. This in effect created a hierarchy in the society, with the learned ones who were known as the 'Brahmins' occupying the upper rung just like a patriarch of a large extended family who oversees the working and welfare of the entire family. A patriarch is an old man, and has the backing of years of experience behind him. Obviously he is the most competent man to give sane and rationale advice to the younger generation. This exactly was the role of the Brahmin.

Even in the modern world, a child is taught to give respect to his elders; its part of his moral education. Hence, 'paying respects to Brahmins' should be understood in the correct perspective.

²The story of sage Parashuram killing kings and the thousand-armed Sahastrabaahu has been narrated above as a note appended to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268 of this chapter known as Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 12; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254.

By and by, the Kshatriya class had become very haughty and arrogant because all physical powers and military strength were vested in it. The king's treasury was supposed to a common pool where the society could keep its wealth that it generates by toil, and the king was merely its custodian. But as time passed, the kings began to treat this treasury as their personal property, and while they rolled in luxury the peasant class, the working class that toiled day in and day out to generate this wealth hadn't a square meal to dump in their empty tummies and a roof to cover them against the vagaries of cruel Nature. Though the powers and wealth of the Kshatriya class were meant for the welfare of the society as a whole, more often than not these elements went to the head of kings, making them arrogant, haughty, exploitative and insensitive towards others.

In this context, the elimination of such wild kings belonging to the Kshatriya Varna who had deviated from their duties and moral responsibilities that were ordained by ancient sages and seers became obligatory for the Supreme Lord of the world as the Lord was the Father of all, and he could not bear with one of his offsprings making others suffer because of his own pervert behaviour and selfishness. Hence, the Lord assumed the form of sage Parashuram to teach a lesson to such wicked kings who had fallen from their paths.

Killing such Kshatriya kings and restoring the earth to Brahmins should be viewed in this context; it has a great symbolic meaning. Whenever evil tendencies and negativity rises in this world, be it in the guise of demons or kings, the Lord comes down to set the house in order. This is the reason why sage Parashuram is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world.

The logical spin-off of this is that Lord Ram and sage Parashuram are both the same Lord in different roles. What Lord Ram did for the welfare of sages and the humble creatures of the world by killing their tormentor demons led by Ravana of Lanka, sage Parashuram did the same thing by killing arrogant and wicked Kshatriya kings and handing over the world to pious and holy men known as Brahmins.

Going further on the issue we deduce that this is the precise reason why Laxman was not afraid of Parashuram because he, Laxman, being an incarnation of Seshnath, the legendary serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean of milk known as Kshir Sagar, knew the real identity of the sage—that he was a manifestation of his beloved Lord Vishnu just like Lord Ram, his brother. Laxman knew that sage Prashuram cannot harm him because Lord Vishnu loves Seshnath. It is only due to the gross body that Parashuram has that he has forgotten his real identity and who Ram and Laxman were. We shall read a little later on in this narration that finally the sage has realized the true identity of Lord Ram, and then he had bowed before him, asked for forgiveness and went to the mountains for doing penance. Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.]

दो०. मातु पितहि जनि सोचबस करसि महीसकिसोर ।
गर्भन्ह के अर्भक दलन परसु मोर अति घोर ॥ २७२ ॥

dōhā.

mātu pitahi jani sōcabasa karasi mahīsakisōra.
garbhanha kē arbhaka dalana parasu mōra ati ghōra. 272.

Oh you young son of a king! Don't do anything that would put your mother and father to grief. My battle-axe is very fierce and merciless; it can kill even an unborn offspring (i.e. the embryo) in its mother's womb. (Doha no. 272)

[Note—Just imagine the horrible and most disgusting way Parashuram is threatening Laxman without realising that he is publicly acknowledging that he is guilty of such a heinous crime as destroying a mature embryo, which obviously is a grave crime and sin.

Parashuram implies that he has spared Laxman for two reasons—one, that he is still a child (Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272), and two, that he does not want to be accused of giving unwarranted sorrows to a great king of the Raghu dynasty, king Dasrath, by killing Laxman as Dasrath had not committed any offense and would surely be extremely sorrowful when he hears of his son's death because he loves him very much.

This Doha tells us how even an exalted person of the stature of a sage and a hermit would lose his high stature and neutralise all the good effects of his meritorious deeds when he commits heinous crimes out of his arrogance and haughtiness or in a fit of anger as was in the case of sage Parashuram. Born in a sage's Brahmin family and having done severe Tapa (penances and austerities), he was perfectly eligible to occupy a high spiritual stature in the society of great sages, hermits and ascetics. But instead of acquiring any good fame and spiritual credit in his life, he has gone down in history as 'a merciless killer of kings and unborn children (while they are still in their mother's wombs in the form of an embryo)', an

achievement that would put even the greatest of sinners to shame, and definitely not something to be proud of. In fact, the horrible deeds of Parashuram had cast a long dark shadow on the otherwise exalted lineage of sages tracing their origin to the great sage Bhrigu.

Now, if we closely examine what sage Parashuram says in this Doha no. 272, that his axe kills unborn children in their mother's wombs, and compare it with what he says earlier in Chaupai no. 5 that precedes this Doha no. 272 where he says that he is sparing Laxman because he is merely an immature boy, a child ("Baalak"), there appears to be a contradiction—on the one hand he says that he does not spare even an unborn child, and then he says that he is sparing Laxman because he is only a child or an immature boy. How do we reconcile these two statements of Parashuram?

Well, the deduction is clear—he did not actually kill the embryo in the womb because that would require the mother to be killed first. Killing an innocent and helpless woman is more severe a crime than killing a male warrior in battle. What Parashuram actually meant was that his name created such a terror in the hearts of women-folk that as soon as a pregnant woman heard his name or a queen heard that her husband, the king, had to face Parashuram's wrath, she would abort automatically. He singled out the battle-axe for this (dis)honour because he used to kill his enemies with it by chopping off their heads. So, whenever a pregnant woman heard that sage Parashuram has arrived waving his battle-axe, she was so terrified and horrified that she aborted immediately!

This conclusion is not merely a wild guess but a fact because sage Parashuram has himself endorsed it a little later in Doha no. 279 herein below.]

चौ०. बिहसि लखनु बोले मृदु बानी । अहो मुनीसु महा भटमानी ॥ १ ॥

पुनि पुनि मोहि देखाव कुठारू । चहत उड़ावन फूँकि पहारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bihasi lakhanu bōlē mṛdu bānī. ahō munīsu mahā bhaṭamānī. 1.

puni puni mōhi dēkhāva kuṭhārū. cahata uṛāvana phūmki pahārū. 2.

Laxman smiled once again in a sarcastic manner and said to sage Parashuram—‘Oh sage! You regard (think) yourself as some great warrior [1], and are repeatedly showing me your axe as if you want to threaten me with it. It is like attempting to blow a huge mountain away by puffing breath at it [2]. (1-2)

[Note—Laxman essentially tells sage Parashuram that finally the latter has met his match. He tells the angry sage that he is very boastful, haughty and pretentious when he keeps on repeating that he is renowned for killing kings with his battle-axe. May be he is correct, but this time round the story is different. He has met his match in Laxman, and threatening him into submission with his battle-axe is like a ridiculously mad attempt to make the mountain move by blowing breath towards it.

Laxman taunts Parashuram when he addresses him as a “Maha Bhat”, meaning a great warrior. He means that sages are famed for their politeness, their loving, caring and friendly attitude, as well as for their peaceful and calm demeanours, and never for anger, vengeance, revenge and blood-shed. Further, a sage is never expected to be haughty and proud of his achievements as Parashuram is—“Bhat-Maani”, literally meaning ‘a proud warrior’. These negative characters are not

behaving of a great sage. And if this is the case, then Parashuram is merely a warrior and not a sage, and therefore Laxman is within his rights to face him with a tit-for-tat reaction like any brave warrior would face his adversary.

And to top it all, isn't sage Parashuram ashamed of himself for boasting of being a slayer of infants and even un-borns; is this some great thing for which he is so proud? Shame to him for even uttering such a reprehensible thing as killing of infants and aborting of embryos! Has he completely lost his senses and committed his wits to demons to be so naïve as to admit of this horrendous crime and atrocity in public, and then have the temerity and audacity to claim fame for such a sinful and vile act?

Laxman implies that if Parashuram behaves like a sage and a hermit in accordance with his attire and lineage, then he can expect due respect from him, but if he boasts to be a warrior then Laxman would face him like a warrior faces his opponent; there's nothing wrong in it. This fact is also endorsed by Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from line no. 2 of Doha no. 281—till Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 282.

Another reason for Laxman smiling sarcastically at Parashuram and treating him with contempt is that the former claims to be a great warrior and sage while at the same time openly claiming to be a killer of unborn children who are still in their mother's womb, a sign of an extremely cruel and sinful person who is no less than a demon. How can such a pervert man expect anyone to show respect to him? Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 272, and (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 167.

So, how can such a sinful man who is guilty of voluntarily killing embryos in mothers' wombs call himself a 'warrior'? Rather, such a person is a taint on the warrior race, and he deserves condemnation instead of honour.

Laxman said that Parashuram attempts to brow-beat him by showing his battle-axe 'repeatedly'. Well, till this point of time, Parashuram has indeed invoked his battle-axe three times in quick succession as follows—Chaupai line nos. 4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 272, and line no. 2 of Doha no. 272 itself.]

इहाँ कुङ्कड़बतिया कोउ नाही । जे तरजनी देखि मरि जाहीं ॥ ३ ॥
देखि कुठारु सरासन बाना । मैं कछु कहा सहित अभिमाना ॥ ४ ॥

ihām̃ kumharabatiyā kō'u nāhīm̃. jē tarajanī dēkhi mari jāhīm̃. 3.
dēkhi kuṭhāru sarāsana bānā. mair̃ kachu kahā sahita abhimānā. 4.

Here there is no one who is like a pumpkin-in-the-bud which withers away or collapses as soon as an index finger is raised against it¹.

[To wit, I (Laxman) am not like the super-sensitive mimosa plant that would shrivel up as soon as someone touches it. Don't think that I am scared of you and moved by your boasts, which however do not show you in good light in the first place.]² (3)

I (Laxman) have said some words of pride to show you my right to protect my dignity and self-respect after seeing your external features that bears an axe, a bow and an arrow.

[To wit, since you appear to be a warrior by your external features because you bear arms such as an axe, a bow and arrows, and have openly called yourself a 'brave

warrior', I must stand up against your angry boasts and insulting behaviour towards me in order to protect my dignity and self-respect as no warrior worth his salt would ever tolerate in a cowardly manner such insults upon his self-respect as you are inflicting upon me in an open court. This is why I have replied to you in a tit-for-tat manner, though I do not intend to insult you in any manner whatsoever.]³ (4)

[Note—¹This is a figure of speech to mean someone who is extremely sensitive by nature or is afraid of even harmless things.

²Laxman refers to the other kings in the assembly who became terrified when they saw sage Parashuram. He means that Parashuram should not treat Laxman in the same way that he had treated these impotent kings who fell at his feet and shivered at the sight of the axe that he held. Parashuram must remember that he is facing a warrior of his own match, and not a coward prince. So, Parashuram must not expect Laxman to be brow-beaten by his boisterous mannerisms.

³Refer: Lord Ram's explanation of Laxman's behaviour towards Parashuram in Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 281, and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 282. Here, Lord Ram has explained that it was because of Parashuram's external features that resembled that of some warrior that Laxman had stood up to reply sternly to him as he got the impression that Parashuram was some fighter who has come to create a hurdle in the marriage ceremony and was itching for a fight.

Being a warrior prince himself, it was natural for Laxman not to be cowed down by threats and wielding of weapons; only a coward would be afraid of such menacing attitude of his opponent.

Therefore, Laxman was not at fault for replying Parashuram sternly in the same language that the sage had used.]

भृगुसुत समुझि जनेउ बिलोकी । जो कछु कहहु सहउँ रिस रोक़ी ॥ ५ ॥
सुर महिसुर हरिजन अरु गाई । हमरें कुल इन्ह पर न सुराई ॥ ६ ॥

bhṛḡusuta samujhi janē'u bilōkī. jō kachu kahahu saha'um̃'risa rōkī. 5.
sura mahisura harijana aru gā'ī. hamarēm̃ kula inha para na surā'ī. 6.

I (Laxman) tolerate whatever you say by somehow suppressing my anger and controlling myself (i.e. resisting the urge to challenge you for a duel to prove who is stronger and a real warrior) because I understand you to be a son of the exalted lineage of sage Bhṛigu¹, and also because you wear a sacred thread (showing clearly that you are a Brahmin)². (5)

Indeed, my family and the race (i.e. the dynasty of Kshatriya kings) to which I belong do not find honour in showing lordship (i.e. pretend to be senior to; showing valour and strength) over 'Surs' (the 'gods who live in heaven'), 'Mahisurs' (the Brahmins; literally, the 'gods who live on earth'), 'Harijans' (devotees of Lord Hari, or Lord Vishnu), and 'Gaai' (cows)³.

[Since you are a Brahmin, I do not want to do anything that would violate this self-imposed restraint that our family and our forefathers have been practicing since

ancient times. We do not treat ourselves senior to gods, Brahmins, devotees of Lord Hari, and the holy cows; all of them are revered by us.

So, I do not want to go down in history with an ignominious tag as being the one who had insulted and fought with a Brahmin sage belonging to the exalted race of sage Bhrigu, notwithstanding your angry, rude, vengeful, ruckus, haughty and bellicose behaviour which is completely at odds with the traditional way a sage should talk, behave and act.

I do not want to repeat the mistake you are committing by giving your family and race a bad name by speaking, behaving and acting in the way you are doing.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 269.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 268.

³Laxman means to say that Parashuram is showing him his battle-axe repeatedly to frighten him, to threaten him, but Laxman is resisting from drawing his own arms, which is the arrow and the bow he holds, and challenging Parashuram for a duel because the latter wears a sacred thread, and this means he is a Brahmin. To fight with a Brahmin and humiliate him by defeating him in full public view, which Laxman was sure to do if the two actually fought with each other into a duel, is a great sin.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 294, sage Vasistha, the royal priest of Ayodhya, praises king Dasrath, the father of Laxman, by saying that he has always served his Guru (moral preceptor and teacher), Bipra (Brahmins), Dhenu (cows), and Surs (gods). So Laxman was obliged to follow the tradition of his family by giving due respect to a Brahmin, which in this case was sage Parashuram.

Laxman is exercising self-restraint because of this problem, but Parashuram thinks that Laxman is merely a boy and cannot compare himself with the mighty warrior that Parashuram considers himself to be. This is why Laxman retorts with the stern words as spoken in these verses to warn Parashuram that he should not treat Laxman's restraint as a sign of submission or cowardice but as a sign of self-imposed restriction to uphold age-old tradition that one should not fight and humiliate a Brahmin under any circumstance as it would be a grave sin. Refer Chaupai line no. 7 herein below.]

बधेँ पापु अपकीरति हारेँ । मारतहूँ पा परिअ तुहारेँ ॥ ७ ॥

कोटि कुलिस सम बचनु तुहारा । व्यर्थ धरहु धनु बान कुठारा ॥ ८ ॥

badhēm pāpu apakīrati hārēm. māratahūm' pā pari'a tumhārēm. 7.

kōṭi kulisa sama bacanu tumhārā. byartha dharahu dhanu bāna kuṭhārā. 8.

Killing you, a Brahmin, in a battle would be a grave sin, and to lose in the battle (willingly, just to show respect to you as a Brahmin) would bring infamy and humiliation to me. [Therefore, it is not wise for me to challenge you for a duel. But don't take it as my weakness or my running away from the challenge. I am not going

to repeat the sin you have committed by letting blood at the fall of a hat and for reason that is most hilarious and untenable!]

Hence, it is prudent for me to pay respect to you by falling at your feet even if you beat me. [You are a sage and an elderly man. I have been taught to show great respect to such people irrespective of the situation and the provocation. So I prefer to humbly submit before you instead of confronting you.]¹ (7)

[Now, in order to make it clear to Parahuram that what Laxman has just said about ‘falling at the former’s feet’ does not mean that he is afraid of him, Laxman taunts him further.]

Your (Parashuram’s) words are as sharp and hard to bear with as the ‘Kulis’. [The Kulis is also known as the ‘Vajra’ which is the weapon of Indra, the king of gods. It is said to be made of the hardest material in existence and is exceptionally sharp like a razor, striking hard and creating terror all around. Laxman means that the words of Parashuram are very sharp, caustic and irritating. The sage does not know how to speak politely in a civil manner, and speaks as if acid is being poured on the listener.]

Therefore, it is useless for you to hold a bow, an arrow and a battle-axe (because their purpose of subduing anyone who dares oppose you, and forcing him to submit himself before you is very well served by your words alone). [To wit, you need not trouble yourself by carrying the weight of a bow, arrows and a heavy axe, because when you get angry at someone and scold him, your scorching words are sufficient to terrorise him and make him faint, and they have the same, if not more, horrifying effect upon the person concerned as the sight of the weapons you carry.]² (8)

Note—¹This verse concludes what Laxman has said in the previous verse nos. 5-6 above. He makes it clear here why he is tolerating all the nonsense that sage Parashuram is babbling and the haughty way he is behaving—because he (Laxman) does not want to commit the sin of hitting back at a Brahmin and hurting him, nor does he want to invite humiliation for himself by first challenging Parashuram for a duel and then being forced to step back to avoid hurting a Brahmin for the fear of committing a great sin, and by inference being forced to accept defeat inspite of the fact that he is perfectly able to show Parashuram the dust in a duel.

Laxman was correct to say that even if sage Parashuram, being a Brahmin, hits him, it is wiser for Laxman to bow before the sage and not hit him back because it is an established principle that one should never hurt a Brahmin even if the latter becomes hostile and scolds a person, because a Brahmin is always to be shown respect—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Even Lord Vishnu had politely borne with the insult when sage Bhrigu had once kicked the Lord on his chest out of anger. Well, Laxman knew of this incident and hence he says that even if Parashuram, a descendent of Bhrigu, hits him, he would still bow before the feet of Parashuram simply because he is a Brahmin and belongs to the family of Bhrigu, and not because Laxman is afraid of him and has surrendered before him to avoid being injured or killed.

²Remember: Brahmins who did Tapa (penances and austerities) possessed great mystical powers. When they got annoyed with anyone they would merely ‘curse’ him, and their curse had the potential of destroying the offender like any other powerful weapon.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 13-14 that precede Doha no. 109. Here it is reiterated that even if anyone manages to escape punishment in the form of death by Indra's weapon known as Kulis (Vajra) and Kaal's (god of death's) weapon known as Kaal-danda, he cannot escape being burnt to death by the scorching effects of the fire of wrath (curse) of a Brahmin.

So, Laxman taunts Parashuram by saying that since he is a Brahmin, why does he not destroy his opponents by merely cursing them instead of getting his hand bloodied by killing them physically with such weapons as a bow and an arrow or a battle-axe that would look more suitable in the hands of a Kshatriya king than in the hands of a Brahmin. Parashuram is expert in using caustic words that can scorch a person as if hot liquid has been poured over him. And therefore he can simply give effect to his wrath by cursing his opponent instead of wasting his energy by waging a physical battle against him and using these difficult and heavy weapons.

As is to be expected, these words of Laxman fanned Parashuram's anger further instead of dousing it. This will be clear in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow Doha no. 273 herein below.]

दो०. जो बिलोकि अनुचित कहेउँ छमहु महामुनि धीर ।
सुनि सरोष भृगुबंसमनि बोले गिरा गभीर ॥ २७३ ॥

dōhā.

jō bilōki anucita kahē'um̐ chamahu mahāmuni dhīra.
suni sarōṣa bhrgubansamani bōlē girā gabhīra. 273.

I have said unwarranted words when I saw them (i.e. when I saw your weapons, the axe, the bow and the arrow) (because I thought that you are some haughty warrior showing yourself off and itching for a fight). So oh great sage, have patience and forgive me.'

When 'Bhriḡumani' (literally 'the gem of sage Bhrigu's family'; i.e. sage Parashuram) heard Laxman politely asking for forgiveness (after first sternly replying on his face in an insulting manner, and then taunting him about his way of speaking and holding of weapons), he became very peeved, and angrily said in a grave voice— (Doha no. 273)

[Note—Parashuram's annoyance had two prominent reasons—one, why did Laxman speak to him sternly and in an impolite manner to cause insult to him when he knew that he was a Brahmin, and two, it was the first time in his life that anyone had ever dared to speak back so boldly and fearlessly with Parashuram.

Parashuram was accustomed to people falling over their backs, heads over heels, to appease him so that he does not get angry with them. And here was Laxman, a young boy, who entered into a verbal duel with him. It was a height of impertinence and disobedience in the views of Parashuram that a Kshatriya prince should talk back to him, instead of bowing his head in submission.

After insulting Parashuram with impunity and teaching him a bitter lesson of his life for which he was not ready, Laxman now asks for forgiveness, putting the sage on a sticky ground. When an opponent begs forgiveness and even gives a reason for his earlier uncalled for behaviour of being rude, a noble warrior or a Brahmin is morally bound to excuse him and not punish him.

The reason which Laxman cites is justifiable: he says that when he saw the weapons that Parashuram held, such as the bow, the arrow and the axe, he had thought that Parashuram was a jealous warrior who has come to show off his strength in the middle of the society of kings and princes, or to create an unnecessary ruckus to divert attention upon himself and come to the limelight to establish himself and get recognition. Otherwise there was no reason for so much futile jumping and shouting just because a rusty old bow was broken.

But when Laxman realized that this person, Parashuram, whom he had mistaken to be a jealous and haughty warrior, was actually a great sage who traces his line to the exalted race of sages descending from sage Bhrigu, he immediately became polite and asked for forgiveness.

Lord Ram has endorsed Laxman when he requests sage Parashuram not to mind Laxman's words or behaviour and excuse him because he is merely a boy, had behaved in an insulting manner with the sage because he had mistaken the latter for a haughty warrior, and because it is the natural reaction of a Kshatriya prince when anyone comes and threatens him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

In this situation, if sage Parashuram does not forgive Laxman than it is he whom the world would raise its fingers against—because one of the stellar qualities of a sage and a Brahmin is 'forgiveness and tolerance'. Thus, Parashuram was in a quandary. Given to being vengeful, angry and wrathful as his fundamental nature and character, Parashuram became angrier instead of calming down and ending the bitter saga.]

चौ०. कौसिक सुनुहु मंद यहु बालकु । कुटिल कालबस निज कुल घालकु ॥ १ ॥

भानु बंस राकेस कलंकू । निपट निरंकुस अबुध असंकू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kausika sunahu manda yahu bālaku. kuṭila kālabasa nija kula ghālaku. 1.
bhānu bansa rākēsa kalaṅkū. nipaṭa niraṅkusa abudha asaṅkū. 2.

[Extremely peeved by Laxman's behaviour and angered at the way he rebuked sage Parashuram, the latter did not want to talk with Laxman any longer. So, he turned to sage Vishwamitra and said—]

'Listen Kuasik (another name of sage Vishwamitra). This boy is very stupid and wicked. He seems to be under the grip of the death-god known as 'Kaal' (i.e. he is courting death by instigating me), and is therefore inviting ruin for his own family by his own impertinence. [In other words, Laxman goes on instigating me (Parashuram) though I do not want to kill him as he is merely a boy. But there is a limit to my tolerance. If he provokes me further I will kill him, and then his whole family would grieve.] (1)

He is a scar on the face of the full moon representing the glory of the Solar Race (to which his father, king Dasrath and the rest of his forefathers belong). He is extremely unruly, rowdy, wild, unmanageable, boisterous and reckless. Not only that, he is foolish and dull-witted as well as ignorant of the consequences of his words, actions and behaviour. [He, Laxman, does not understand the gravity of the situation. If I lose my cool or self-control and actually carry out my threat by swinging my battle-axe at

him, he would be killed instantly. He is so idiotic and haughty that he does not seem to realize this. Say, can a Kshatriya prince ever withstand the wrath and the curse of a Brahmin sage? Why is Laxman not realizing this?] (2)

[Note—This angry outburst of sage Parashuram is in answer to Laxman’s dressing-down of the former a while ago in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 273.

Unable to cope with Laxman boldly preaching him as to how he should have behaved, sage Parashuram was so much irritated and angered with Laxman that he did not want to instigate the latter any more to provoke him to unleash another palisade of insults, which would further aggravate the situation and may force Parashuram to actually carry out his threats of killing Laxman. Further, the sage was angry also because one should not answer back at someone who is senior to him in terms of age, experience, knowledge and abilities. Laxman was yet a boy, but Parashuram was an aged sage of repute, a renowned warrior, and one who had done great Tapa (penances and austerity) as a result of which he possessed profound mystical powers. So, in effect, there was no comparison between sage Parashuram and Laxman.

This is what the angry sage means when he told Vishwamitra that this boy is stupid, ill-witted, does not know the consequences of his actions and behaviour, and is inviting ruin for his whole family. Not only would Laxman invite scorn from the world for insulting a mighty sage by speaking irreverentially with him but would also certainly invite physical harm by instigating a mighty warrior that Parashuram treated himself to be.

We find here that both Parashuram and Laxman are hot-headed. And when two such individuals meet in a confrontational situation, god can only help. But there is another spin to it—when an individual who thinks that he is superior to all others and goes around throwing his weight over all and sundry, threatening them and calling them names, suddenly meets another person of his match, the wind in the sail of the former passes away. When the first person realizes to his dismay that his boasts and threats that worked on other docile people and made them surrender to him in an abject manner won’t work on this second person who matches him in every respect, the former makes a u-turn, proving that he was having his way till now simply because he hadn’t met his real adversary.

In the present case we find exactly this to happen: till this day, sage Parashuram went around threatening and killing kings and princes at will, but now he is forced on a back-foot because he got the wind that if he takes one physical wrong step in his haughtiness, such as actually lifting and hitting Laxman with his axe to punish him, it would boomerang upon him and would do more harm to him than to Laxman.

So in brief, Parashuram wanted to avoid further confrontation with Laxman. Thus, he looked up and addressed sage Vishwamitra because the latter was deemed as Laxman’s guardian. Remember: Parashuram has repeatedly called Laxman a “Baalak”, a young boy or a child. When a child is out of control or acts irreverentially, one would naturally talk to the child’s father, guardian or teacher, all three roles now vested in sage Vishwamitra, to rein in the troublesome boy who has become disobedient and has no sense of good manners. The father, guardian or the teacher is expected to exercise his influence upon the unruly boy and bring him under control. {(i)Vishwamitra as a ‘father and guardian’ = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208. (ii)Vishwamitra as a ‘teacher or Guru’ = Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218; etc.}

So Parashuram sought Vishwamitra's help to keep Laxman under control because the latter was Laxman's Guru, guardian and a foster-father at present.

Another reason for Parashuram turning to sage Vishwamitra was that the latter himself being a 'sage' would understand the gravity of the situation and the deemed insult that is being caused to another sage of repute by a prince talking with the latter in a disrespectful manner as Laxman is doing at present. Parashuram thought that amongst all those present in the assembly, the only person who would empathise with him is another sage, i.e. Vishwamitra, and the latter is the only one who could prevail upon the naughty Laxman to be quiet because the latter would listen to no one else.

Parashuram's intention was to find out and punish the individual who had broken the bow, and not to enter into an unnecessary and futile verbal duel with some unknown prince who is not guilty of breaking the bow. The bow was broken by Lord Ram, and instead of being able to turn on the heat on the Lord, Parashuram was forced to dissipate his anger on Ram's brother, Laxman. It was a waste of time and energy to have a heated debate with Laxman, and so this nonsense had to be stopped so that the attention can be diverted to the actual offender, Lord Ram.

Hence, Parashuram turned towards sage Vishwamitra in the hope that the latter would instruct Laxman to be careful and keep quiet. This intention of Parashuram will be clear in the following two verses, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that follow herein below.

But as we shall discover, sage Vishwamitra did not intervene, and Laxman would further taunt Parashuram in bitter terms.

The question arises: Why did sage Vishwamitra not intervene and pull-up Laxman for his behaviour? Well, we see that earlier also, when Laxman had sternly rebuked king Janak when the latter had declared that since no king could break the bow it is deemed that there are no strong warriors left on the surface of the earth and that Sita would have to remain unmarried, Vishwamitra had not intervened; he kept quiet. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 253 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The probable reasons are two—(i) sage Vishwamitra was well aware of Laxman's tempestuous nature unlike Parashuram. So he did not wish to invite insult upon his own self by saying anything to Laxman while he is angry. (ii) Vishwamitra had known that the two brothers were divine personalities, i.e. Lord Vishnu and Lord Seshnath in the human form of Lord Ram and Laxman respectively. Seshnath is the legendary thousand hooded serpent who supports the earth on its hood. Seshnath hisses violently and fire is spewed out with its hiss. A serpent is by nature a vicious creature; it is extremely poisonous and dangerous when provoked. A man in his senses would always avoid any direct contact with a live poisonous snake. Laxman was, therefore, best to be left alone and avoided!]

काल कवलु होइहि छन माहीं । कहउँ पुकारि खोरि मोहि नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

तुह हटकहु जाँ चहु उबारा । कहि प्रतापु बलु रोषु हमारा ॥ ४ ॥

kāla kavalu hō'ihī chana māhīm. kaha'um̃ pukāri khōri mōhi nāhīm. 3.

tumha haṭākahu jaum̃ cahahu ubārā. kahi pratāpu balu rōṣu hamārā. 4.

He (Laxman) would be in the jaws of death in an instant (if he does not behave himself). I openly declare this, and hereat let no one blame me for the consequences henceforth. (3)

If you (Vishwamitra) want him to be saved from this horror, then please do something to rein him in by telling him about my glories, my valour and strength, as well as about my vicious anger (against which no one has ever survived till now).’ (4)

[Note—Refer note appended to previous verse nos. 2-3 herein above.

To wit, Parashuram requests sage Vishwamitra to advise Laxman to behave properly with a sage of Parashuram’s stature. Vishwamitra should tell Laxman about the glories of sage Parashuram, about his reputation as an invincible warrior who has not spared anyone who dared to defy him. In spite of all these warnings, if Laxman continues with his impertinence, if this irritating spat continues, then if Parashuram loses control over his anger and hits Laxman hard, then nobody should blame him for harming a boy.

Parashuram has said the same thing again a little later in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275 that “no one should blame him if he kills this boy (Laxman) who speaks in such a caustic and wicked manner”. So we conclude that Parashuram was angry with Laxman not because the latter had harmed the bow but because he speaks boldly and irreverentially with him, something to which Parashuram was not accustomed.]

लखन कहेउ मुनि सुजसु तुझारा । तुझहि अछत को बरनै पारा ॥ ५ ॥
अपने मुँह तुह आपनि करनी । बार अनेक भाँति बहु बरनी ॥ ६ ॥

lakhana kahē'u muni sujasu tumhārā. tumhahi achata kō baranai pārā. 5.
apanē mumḥa tumha āpani karanī. bāra anēka bhāmṭi bahu baranī. 6.

Laxman was fearless and unrelenting as he retorted to the sage’s threats in a taunting manner—‘Oh sage, who else can laud your glories more competently and effectively than you can do yourself. (5)

Verily, you have indeed praised yourself repeatedly, recounting your glories and abilities, as well as citing your deeds and achievements in your own words in variety of ways.

[To wit, when you (Parashuram) are ready to list your achievements and heap praises on your own self, when you are blowing your own bugle and beating your own trumpet, what is the need for someone else to praise you? Well, you know about your own glories better than a third person can ever know about them. And you have already boasted about them¹, so where is the need for sage Vishwamitra to tell me about them again?²] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

²A man who boasts about his own achievements is not regarded as honourable and respectable. He is pretentious and boastful. Such a man is more often than not an

egoist, haughty and arrogant; he is full of vanity and a false sense of self-importance. None of these are noble characters, especially in a sage. That is why Laxman retorted to Parashuram in a sarcastic manner.]

नहिं संतोषु त पुनि कछु कहहू । जनि रिस रोकि दुसह दुख सहहू ॥ ७ ॥
बीरब्रती तुह धीर अछोभा । गारी देत न पावहु सोभा ॥ ८ ॥

nahim santōṣu ta puni kachu kahahū. jani risa rōki dusaha dukha sahaḥū. 7.
bīrabratī tumha dhīra achōbhā. gārī dēta na pāvahu sōbhā. 8.

If you are still not satisfied by what you have already said, then go ahead and say something more to satisfy your ego. Do not subject yourself to the agony of having to suppress your anger by not letting sufficient steam.

[To wit, you have already boasted so much about your self and have threatened to kill me. What else is left to be said? If there is still anything up in your mind, then let it out. If you suppress your anger it would torment you more, so it's better to vent your anger completely.]¹ (7)

You have assumed the role of a warrior, a hero who is resolute and not perturbed or disturbed by circumstances. It does not behove of you to abusive language for others.

[To wit, if you want to boast more about your achievements or marital exploits, then go ahead and enumerate them. But a brave and heroic warrior does not abuse his opponent like you have done by calling me names².] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 280. Here, Parashuram has accepted that his chest is getting 'burnt' (i.e. he is very irritated, peeved, angry etc., causing him a virtual heart-burn) at not being able to punish Laxman.

²Parashuram has used a number of denigrating epithets for Laxman. He has called Laxman a "Satha", broadly meaning someone who is extremely stupid, foolish, pervert, wild and wicked (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 272); he has said that Laxman is a taint on his family, is in the jaws of death, is unruly, reckless, misbehaved and irreverent, is ignorant and unaware of the consequences of his actions and words, and that he would kill Laxman with his axe (Doha no. 271 and 272; Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 274).

In the next Doha no. 274, we shall read that Laxman gives another piece of advice to Parashuram that is more of a challenging taunt to him than a sincere advice to the sage to calm down. It further stoked the sage's anger.]

दो०. सूर समर करनी करहिं कहि न जनावहिं आपु ।
बिद्यमान रन पाइ रिपु कायर कथहिं प्रतापु ॥ २७४ ॥

dōhā.

sūra samara karanī karahim̐ kahi na janāvahim̐ āpu.
bidyamāna rana pā'i ripu kāyara kathahim̐ pratāpu. 274.

A true hero and warrior is one who does valiant deeds in a battle, and not merely boast about what they had done on some previous occasion by way of blatantly advertising their past achievements.

It is a sign of cowardice to boast about one's valour and past exploits when fact to face with an opponent in a battle-field.' (Doha no. 274)

[Note—This statement of Laxman is an open challenge to Parashuram. Laxman in effect tells the sage that if he is itching for a fight then it would be better to settle scores through a duel instead of using abuses and spitting fire and brimstone in anger. If Parashuram indeed has done such great deeds as he claims to have done, such as for instance eliminating all the kings by killing them with his battle-axe, then well and good, let him use it against Laxman to show that he is merely not boasting but has some substance in him.

Parashuram had become very haughty and arrogant of late; he had forgotten that he had been able to kill haughty, selfish and wild kings because it was a divine mandate from the Supreme Lord of creation to teach them a lesson. A king who does not fulfill his role as a merciful caretaker of his subject is worthy of elimination. The fact that Parashuram had killed only such kings and not 'all' kings is borne by the fact that good kings who followed the laws of Dharma by being righteous, noble and judicious in all their actions and deeds were not harmed by Parashuram. Examples abound—we have the Raghu dynasty to which king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram and Laxman, belonged, then there was the Nimi dynasty to which Janak belonged. Further, we have already read about 'thousands of kings who had tried to lift the bow'; they weren't harmed by him.

In other words, it is obvious that Parashuram was exaggerating his exploits when he claimed that "he had eliminated all the kings from the surface of the earth many times over and handed the earth (land) to Brahmins" (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 272) to impress the assembly of kings and terrify Laxman into submission.

Therefore, Laxman wanted to hint to Parashuram that he has caught his cunning and he is ready to face the bull and catch it by its horns, because he knows that the bull is merely boasting and does not have the guts to charge at a wall as it is well aware that striking the wall would result in breaking of its horns, instead of harming the wall.

Obviously, this infuriated sage Parashuram further. This will be clear in the forthcoming verses. Refer especially to Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 275 herein below. Now Parashuram could not find an excuse for his inability to face Laxman (or even Lord Ram for that matter though the Lord was very civil and polite with him) by saying that he has refrained from killing Laxman because he is a mere boy (a "Baalak")—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272.

This episode of Parashuram being subjected to such public admonishment and rebuke has a subtle lesson: it is that if a person becomes unduly proud and haughty, if he thinks that he is the one who did this and that, if he is boastful of his achievements unmindful of the spiritual philosophy that it is the Lord God who controls every thing in this world and it is the Lord God who has made success possible for him, and that no one is superior to him in this creation, then one fine day he will meet his match and forced to bite the dust. The Supreme Lord of creation does not tolerate such negative

attitudes, especially in a sage who is supposed to exhibit qualities just the opposite of what Parashuram had shown.

Then we must remember that Lord Ram, who is none else but the Supreme Lord himself in a human form, is present personally at the site where Parashuram is being given a dressing down. This means that the Lord, the Emperor of this creation, decided to teach Parashuram some lessons in his presence. As it would eventually turn out, Parashuram realised this fact, and would beg forgiveness from the Lord for whatever he had said and done, and then bow before the Lord and go to the forest to do Tapa (penances to atone for sins). {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.}

Incidentally, we shall also read a little later that Parashuram had conceded that he is feeling powerless against Laxman. He says “I don’t know what has happened that I am unable to raise my arm and my battle-axe against Laxman”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 280.]

चौ०. तुह तौ कालु हाँक जनु लावा । बार बार मोहि लागि बोलावा ॥ १ ॥
सुनत लखन के बचन कठोरा । परसु सुधारि धरेउ कर घोरा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

tumha tau kālu hāmka janu lāvā. bāra bāra mōhi lāgi bōlāvā. 1.
sunata lakhana kē bacana kaṭhōrā. parasu sudhāri dharē’u kara ghōrā. 2.

[Laxman continued—] ‘It appears that you (Parashuram) have ‘Kaal’ (the god of death) at your beck and call, and are repeatedly summoning him for my sake (in order to punish me and vent your anger at me).¹ (1)

Hearing these highly scorching bold and harsh words of rebuke from Laxman, Parashuram was infuriated like a raging fire. He took the battle-axe in one of his hands and moved the other hand over it to find a proper place to grip it firmly, and then held it menacingly, with its sharp end pointing at Laxman². (2)

[Note—¹Parashuram has indeed threatened to kill Laxman repeatedly, five times to be precise, till this point of time—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Doha nos. 271 and 272; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 3 that precede Doha no. 274.

So, Laxman scorns at and taunts the angry Parashuram that he has already threatened to kill him (Laxman) five times as if Laxman’s death, his destiny, is in the hands of Parashuram. So, the latter should either go ahead with his threats or keep quiet!

²Parashuram is so furious with indignation that he has lost sense of propriety and common sense; he forgot that a huge assembly is watching the oral duel closely, and the spotlight now seems to be on how he is being consistently humiliated by Laxman without him being able to exact any retribution inspite of all his boasts and threats in this regard. Parashuram was so mad with anger that he did not have the time to consider why, after all, Laxman is able to confront him so boldly and fearlessly, and he being unable to carry out his threats of punishing the offender.

Parashuram's mind and wisdom were so eclipsed by the dark veil of anger and indignation that came with his hurt ego that he could not think that surely there must be some real gravity in the matter and some sort of powerful backing that Laxman has to support him which has emboldened him so much so as to have the courage to rebuke the sage with complete impunity.

The sage's anger was fuelled by his inability to force Laxman to mind his tongue and desist from rebuking him further, so therefore he fretted and fumed furiously, and was so highly incensed with Laxman that he could not resist the temptation of drawing and wielding his favourite weapon, the battle-axe, waving it wildly in the air and threatening his adversary with dire consequences.

The sage thought that Laxman thinks that he (Parashuram) is merely trying to threaten him so that he (Laxman) would shut up, so he (the sage) waved the battle-axe merely as a warning for Laxman, but had no intention of actually harming the latter. Hence, Parashuram took out the axe and showed it to Laxman as a gesture to tell him that he actually means to carry out his threat to kill the latter if he does not behave himself. "Enough is enough, and now Laxman should shut up" was what Parashuram really intended when he wielded the battle-axe.]

अब जनि देइ दोसु मोहि लोगू । कटुबादी बालकु बधजोगू ॥ ३ ॥
बाल बिलोकि बहुत मैं बाँचा । अब यहु मरनिहार भा साँचा ॥ ४ ॥

aba jani dē'i dōsu mōhi lōgū. kaṭubādī bālaku badhajōgū. 3.
bāla bilōki bahuta mair̄m bām̄cā. aba yahu maranihāra bhā sām̄cā. 4.

[Parashuram said vehemently and seething with anger—] 'Let no one blame me now because this boy who speaks so wickedly and irreverentially is indeed fit to be killed. (3)

I have spared him for quite some time because he is a young boy (a "Baalak")¹. But enough has happened, and it is true that it looks that he will die now.

[To wit, I have spared him a lot because he is a child, but he has crossed all limits and has become aggressive. So he deserves severe punishment. Let no one in this assembly blame me for killing a boy because this fellow's behaviour is inviting death on his own self.] ' (4)

[Note—¹Parashuram was making a clown of himself. Just a few moments ago he had bragged as the one who has slayed infants and aborted embryos (refer: Doha no. 272), and now he says that he had spared Laxman because he was a child as he had done earlier in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272.

The message in this episode is that anger makes a person lose all sense of wisdom and wit and turns him into a clown, making him irrational and a victim of self-contradictions and ridicule.]

कौसिक कहा छमिअ अपराधू । बाल दोष गुन गनहिं न साधू ॥ ५ ॥
खर कुठार मैं अकरुन कोही । आगें अपराधी गुरुद्रोही ॥ ६ ॥

उतर देत छोड़ुँ बिनु मारें । केवल कौसिक सील तुझरें ॥ ७ ॥
न त एहि काटि कुठार कठोरें । गुरहि उरिन होतेउँ श्रम थोरें ॥ ८ ॥

kausika kahā chami'a aparādhū. bāla dōṣa guna ganahim na sādihū. 5.
khara kuṭhāra maim akaruna kōhī. āgēm aparādhī gurudrōhī. 6.
utara dēta chōra'um' binu mārēm. kēvala kausika sila tumhārēm. 7.
na ta ēhi kāṭi kuṭhāra kaṭhōrēm. guraḥi urina hōtē'um' śrama thōrēm. 8.

[Seeing that things may go out of hand, and that this verbal spat between Laxman and Parashuram seems to be becoming more and more acrimonious and stretching beyond acceptable limits, the wise sage Vishwamitra intervened. He tried to calm the angry sage Parashuram and bring things under control before it's too late.]

Kausik (sage Vishwamitra) said to Parashuram, 'Excuse him (Laxman) for his misdemeanours and impertinent behaviour. Sainly people do not pay heed to either the faults or the virtues (i.e. demerits or merits) of children.'¹ (5)

[When sage Vishwamitra spoke to Parashuram, trying to pacify him, the latter replied—] 'My axe is sharpened and unforgiving. I have no mercy in my heart when I get angry. The fellow who has offended my Guru (Lord Shiva)² is standing before me (in a defiant mood). (6)

[Normally I must not forgive him because he has been instrumental in insulting Lord Shiva, my Guru, by being a part of the plan to break Shiva's bow. He has also offended me, and therefore deserves severest punishment.]

But oh Kausik (Vishwamitra), I will still let him go (i.e. I won't harm Laxman) just because of your gracious manners and good nature (inspite of this fellow's irreverential behaviour towards me, and his mocking of me by answering back at me in such an insulting way). (7)

Otherwise, had it not been for you, I would have put my stern and cruel axe on his neck (i.e. I would have mercilessly chopped-off his head with my axe). By doing this, I would have paid-off my moral debt that I owe to my Guru (Shiva)³. (8)

[Note—¹Vishwamitra has recalled Parashuram's own statement that the latter has spared Laxman till now because he was a "Baalak", a child, a young immature boy. Children are prone to be naughty and mischievous. When they grow up and face the world, they normally become more responsible. So a wise man neglects the behaviour of a child and pardons him for his misbehaviour. The child does not know what is correct and what is incorrect. Besides this normal trait in all children, a prince is more prone to be mischievous because of his pampered upbringing. Therefore, Parashuram should overlook how Laxman behaved with him, and move on.

²Lord Shiva is deemed to be sage Parashuram's Guru because the Lord is a revered diety and a deemed moral preceptor of all ascetics who practice Yoga and do Tapa.

³A disciple should protect the dignity and honour of his Guru at all times; it's moral duty that he owes his Guru. If anyone causes any insult to his Guru then the disciple must endeavour to punish the offender as soon as possible.

Now, in the present case, breaking of Lord Shiva's bow is an indirect insult of him. Since Parashuram holds Laxman equally guilty as Lord Ram for this sin, if he managed to punish Laxman in any severe manner then he would have symbolically repaid his moral debt to his Guru, Lord Shiva.

Parashuram should have known by now that Laxman was not guilty of actually breaking the bow of Shiva, and that it was broken by his elder brother Lord Ram. This is clearly indicated by Laxman himself in Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 272.

So, what was Laxman guilty of? One, Laxman was trying to defend Lord Ram and his breaking of the bow—refer: from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no.3 that precedes Doha no. 272. And two, Laxman has been continuously sneering at Parashuram and answering him back for quite some time, causing insult to a revered sage before whom the world bowed. This impertinent and irreverential behaviour of Laxman had angered sage Parashuram more than his taking the side of his brother, Lord Ram, and defending him for breaking the bow.]

दो०. गाधिसूनु कह हृदयँ हँसि मुनिहि हरिअरइ सूझ ।
अयमय खाँड़ न ऊखमय अजहुँ न बूझ अबूझ ॥ २७५ ॥

dōhā.

gādhisūnu kaha hr̥dayam̃ ham̃si munihi hari'ara'i sūjha.
ayamaya khām̃ṛa na ūkhamaya ajahum̃ na būjha abūjha. 275.

Hearing the angry outburst of Parashuram, sage Vishwamitra, the son of Gaadhi (“gādhisūnu”) smiled internally in his heart (at the delusions that have overtaken sage Parashuram's intellect and wisdom). He muttered to himself in an ironical tone that the sage (Parashuram) sees only greenery everywhere¹.

Vishwamitra thought to himself that Parashuram does not realise that this time he has to deal with a steel sword (a reference to Laxman) and not a soft stem of the sugar-cane (that one chews easily)². How ignorant and foolish is he! (Doha no. 275)

[Note—¹That is, Parashuram treats everyone in the same way. He thinks that Laxman and Lord Ram are merely ordinary princes whom Parashuram can push and shove in any way he likes. Seeing ‘greenery everywhere’ is a figure of speech meaning that Parashuram thinks that he can easily frighten Laxman like he has been frightening all other kings since a long time. He is so deluded that he thinks that the whole earth is full of green vegetation, and does not realise that there may be a dry patch of land somewhere where not even a shrub grows.

In other words, in his arrogance Parashuram forgets that he will not be able to subdue Laxman as he has been subduing countless other kings earlier.

²Parashuram repeatedly speaks of ‘chopping-off the head of Laxman with his axe’. Does he not understand that his axe can cut a soft stem of the sugar-cane, but would bounce off a steel sword? In this metaphor, Laxman is likened to a steel sword which the axe cannot cut through.

An interesting thing can be seen in this comparison. Both the blade of the axe and that of the sword are made of steel. Here it clearly implies that both sage Parashuram and Laxman are a perfect match for each other in their stern attitudes;

both of them are equal in terms of showing anger, using uncouth words, threatening each other, and being fearless of the other. Laxman's taunting remarks with words soaked in sarcasm that follow herein below reinforce this view.

One very important observation can be made here. Sage Vishwamitra has not stopped Laxman even once during the entire oral spat with Parashuram. What can be the probable reason? Well, obviously it is this: Vishwamitra had realized that Laxman is made of a very stern stuff, and barring his brother Lord Ram he cares for no one else no matter whoso he may be so much so that he had no regrets at not even sparing king Janak by speaking harshly at him and rebuking him in full assembly in spite of the fact that Janak was the host king, a most gracious one who had shown great hospitality towards them, and also an aged one who was almost of the age of Laxman's own father king Dasrath—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 254.

So Vishwamitra exercised prudence and kept quiet, being reluctant to say anything to Laxman to avoid any ugly situation should the latter forget to maintain decorum and decency of behaviour in his fit of anger and say something insulting to sage Vishwamitra in public which would be totally unacceptable to him, and in this scenario the things would go completely out of hand and control.]

चौ०. कहेउ लखन मुनि सीलु तुहारा । को नहिं जान बिदित संसारा ॥ १ ॥
माता पितहि उरिन भए नीकेँ । गुर रिनु रहा सोचु बड़ जीकेँ ॥ २ ॥
सो जनु हमरेहि माथे काढ़ा । दिन चलि गए ब्याज बड़ बाढ़ा ॥ ३ ॥
अब आनिअ व्यवहरिआ बोली । तुरत देउँ मैं थैली खोली ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'u lakhana muni sīlu tumhārā. kō nahim jāna bidita sansārā. 1.
mātā pitahi urina bha'ē nīkēm. gura rinu rahā sōcu baṛa jīkēm. 2.
sō janu hamarēhi māthē kāṛhā. dina cali ga'ē byāja baṛa bāṛhā. 3.
aba āni'a byavaharīā bōlī. turata dē'um' mairi thailī khōlī. 4.

Laxman scorned at Parashuram and continued with his fearless talk, taunting the sage further in this manner—‘Oh yes sage, who in this world is not aware of your civility and good manners! It is famous world-wide¹. (1)

You have fully paid the debt you owed to your parents (“mother and father”) and have washed your hands clean of this obligation², now what is left is the debt you owe to your Guru³, and this obligation is agitating you, vexing your mind and making you worried. (2)

And it seems that we (Laxman and Lord Ram) had pledged to repay that burden of debt that you owed to your Guru, and you have come to force us to pay it. A lot of time has elapsed, increasing the burden of interest on the principal amount of the debt! (3)

So be it. Call the creditor⁴ here at once, and I will open my purse to repay his loan immediately (to free you of your moral obligation so that you can calm down your

anger and get peace like a true sage, instead of going about threatening people with your axe).’ (4)

[Note—¹The sarcasm is obvious and apparent. Parashuram has poured vitriol at Laxman and has called him names, has threatened him with death, has drawn his axe at him, has shouted and boasted of his achievements as a mass killer of kings who has not learnt to show mercy on anyone.

‘Under which criteria are these things considered polite and civil, who will regard the way Parashuram behaved as being good manners’—wondered Laxman when he made this taunt. Of course Parashuram is famous in the world, but everyone knows that his fame is based on all the wrong things.

Laxman is playing on Parashuram’s own use of the word “Sheel” (meaning civil and good behaviour, politeness and good manners) in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 275 where Parashuram has praised the good virtues of sage Vishwamitra and said that it was because of the latter’s patronage that he (Parashuram) is sparing Laxman.

There is of course no comparison between the “Sheel” of these two sages. While Vishwamitra was a calm, wise, tolerant and loving sage, Parashuram was an embodiment of recklessness, intolerance, wrath and anger.

²This fact that Parashuram had avenged his father’s death by killing the Kshatriya kings because one of the members of this race, king Sahastraarjun, had killed his father sage Jamdagni, is lauded by Lord Ram himself in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 76, verse no. 2.

The story of Parashuram “paying the debt that he owed to his parents” refers to an incident in the sage’s life which is narrated in brief below. No monetary transaction was involved; it is a symbolic way of saying that Parashuram had fulfilled the wishes of his father which every son ought to do, notwithstanding the propriety of his father’s instructions. The story is this:

Once, Parashuram’s father, sage Jamdagni, asked his wife Renuka (who was a daughter of king Prasenjit) to go and fetch water from the river. When she went there she saw a Gandharva couple frolicking around and indulging in love making. She began to watch this playful activity and was therefore late in bringing water for her husband, sage Jamdagni. The sage closed his eyes and used his mystical powers to become aware of what had happened. He did not approve of his wife watching a stranger couple making love, so he became angry. He wanted her killed. He had five sons—Rumanyavaan, Sushen, Vasu, Vishwavasu and Parashuram. He summoned each of them, but the elder four sons refused to kill their mother. Jamdagni was extremely peeved, so he finally ordered Parashuram to kill Renuka as well as the four disobedient sons. Parashuram obeyed the instructions of his father and used his axe to kill all of them.

Jamdagni was very pleased with Parashuram and asked him to seek a boon. Then, the wise Parashuram requested his father for two boons—one, that all his four dead brothers and his mother be brought back to life, and two, that they should not remember who killed them. Jamdagni was delighted, and all were revived.

In this way, Parashuram not only fulfilled the wishes of his father but also helped his mother as well as his four brothers to overcome the bad effects of the sin they had committed by undergoing severe punishment for it by getting themselves killed. But Parashuram did it in such a clever way that all of them emerged unscathed

from the harshness of this punishment (of death) because they were all revived and did not remember what had happened to them.

Another version varies slightly in two minor details. One is that Renuka saw king Chitra-rath playing in the water with his wife, instead of seeing the Gandharva couple. And the second variation is that Parashuram had asked his obliged father an additional boon—that he has a long life and no one can ever defeat him in battle. The rest of the story is the same as the aforesaid version. This story is based in accordance with the version given in Mahabharat, Vanparva, Canto 116. The names of Parashuram's brothers are given in verse no. 2-4 and 10, while his boons are narrated in verse nos. 17-18.

Now, the above story outlines how Parashuram had obliged his father. Now let us see how he had obliged his mother. Once, the thousand-armed king known as 'Sahastraarjun' had taken away Jamdagni's all wish fulfilling cow known as Kamdhenu. Parashuram rushed to cut all the arms of Sahatraarjun as punishment. Sahastraarjun's kith and kin came back to the hermitage of Jamdagni when Parashuram was not there, and took revenge by killing the sage. Parashuram's mother grieved and wailed. When he came back and discovered what had happened, he promised his mother that he would take revenge, and vowed to kill all the Kshatriya kings on the surface of the earth to avenge Sahatraarjun's killing of his father. So in this way he had also fulfilled the wishes of his mother.

In Mahabharat, Shantiparva, Canto 49, verse nos. 45-47 it is mentioned that it was Sahatraarjun's son who had stolen the Kamdhenu cow, and not Sahastraarjun himself.

It ought to be noted that 'Sahastraarjun' is also known as 'Sahastrabaahu' because he had a thousand arms.

Now, after unnecessarily killing so many innocent Kshatriya kings, who had committed no offence, but who were nevertheless killed just to avenge his father's death at the hands Sahastraarjun, sage Parashuram was severely criticized by the community of Brahmins, which made the sage contrite and full of guilt. So, with a somber and disgusted mood, he went to the forest to do penance. At that time, sage Vishwamitra's grandson named Paraavasu came to him and teased him, saying, 'A fire sacrifice was done recently in which so many countless Kshatriya kings had come. But you did not kill any of them, thereby disobeying the promise you had made to your mother and have also violated your own vows. This is a sin in itself.' Peeved and instigated, Parashuram rose immediately and went berserk, killing and hacking all the kings and their kith and kin at random. Their pregnant wives somehow escaped by hiding here and there. After this, Parashuram performed a Horse Sacrifice known as the 'Ashwamedh Yajya', and gave the entire land (earth) that he had snatched from the kings to sage Kashyap as donation or gift during this sacrifice.

Sage Kashyap was wise, and he was worried that if some way out is not found then one day Parashuram will create such a situation by repeatedly killing kings that there would be no one to take care of the creatures who inhabit the planet, because the main function of the Kshatriya kings was to look after the welfare of the subjects of their kingdoms and protect the earth from marauding savages.

So Kashyap told Parashuram, 'Now that you have given me this earth as a gift, it belongs to me, and henceforth you have no right to kill any of its inhabitants (including of course the kings). You go to the shore of the southern ocean and do Tapa there.' After this, Parashuram lived on the shore of the southern ocean during the day, and left the earth during the night.

This version of the story is clearly mentioned in Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 75, verse nos. 25-26, and Canto 76, verse nos. 13-14.

This is how Parashuram overcame the moral debt that he owed to his parents: by obeying their commands without questioning them. First he obeyed his father by killing his mother on his instructions, then he obeyed his mother by seeking revenge for her husband's death at the hands of Sahastraarjun by killing the latter as well as all the Kshatriya kings at random.

³Now, who was his 'Guru'? His Guru was Lord Shiva as the Lord is a deemed moral preceptor of all hermits, which sage Parashuram was. What was Parashuram's moral debt towards his Guru, Lord Shiva? It was to avenge the perceived insult that the breaking of the Lord Shiva's bow had caused by punishing the offender severely as he had done in the case of the Kshatriya kings who had killed his father. Breaking of Shiva's bow and killing of his father are equal offences because both these events involve violence.

So here Laxman hints at these major events in Parashuram's life when he says that the latter has freed himself from the obligation of repaying his parents debts because he had obeyed their commands. But his Guru's debt is still pending till he punishes Laxman and Lord Ram for breaking Shiva's bow.

⁴Laxman says that Parashuram should call the 'creditor' so that his loan can be paid. Who is the so-called 'creditor'? The creditor is his Guru, Lord Shiva, to whom Parashuram owes moral responsibility to uphold his dignity and punish anyone who insults his Guru even slightly and even by inference. So, Laxman asks him to summon Shiva. Laxman knows that Shiva loves Lord Ram and it was not possible to break the Lord's bow without his consent. In other words, Lord Ram could break the bow only because Shiva consented. Remember: When the bow was broken, all the gods—and the word "all" includes Lord Shiva—had assembled in the sky to shower flowers on Lord Ram, sing and play their musical instruments. (For instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262; (ii) Doha no. 264; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 265.)

A little later on we shall read that when Lord Ram was proceeding towards the marriage venue dressed as a groom, Lord Shiva was exhilarated beyond measure; Shiva was captivated by Lord Ram's enchanting image and thanked his stars that he had fifteen eyes (five faces with three eyes each)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 317.

Obviously therefore Lord Shiva was not at all offended by Ram breaking the bow, because otherwise he wouldn't have enjoyed and felt happy at Lord Ram's marriage, and wouldn't have joined in the celebrations either. After all, the marriage hinged on breaking of Shiva's bow, and how can one expect Shiva to celebrate the marriage of someone whom he held guilty of insulting him by breaking his bow?

These are clear indications that Shiva gave his consent to Lord Ram when the latter broke the bow. Therefore, the purported 'insult' of Lord Shiva by his bow being broken has no ground. But Parashuram was so overcome with anger and spite that he overlooked this fact. It was precisely for this reason that Laxman tells him to call the 'creditor', i.e. Lord Shiva, to ask him if anything is due to him. And if nothing is 'due'—in other words if Shiva says that he is not all offended by the breaking of this old and rusty bow which he himself had despised (because this bow had let Shiva down in his face-off with Vishnu, and it had been a cause of lot of bloodshed: see note

of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 244)—then why is Parashuram jumping around angrily that his Guru has been insulted?

Laxman was confident that Parashuram would be further trounced for being so haughty and angry, characters totally unbecoming for a great sage and a hermit.]

सुनि कटु बचन कुठार सुधारा । हाय हाय सब सभा पुकारा ॥ ५ ॥
 भृगुबर परसु देखावहु मोही । बिप्र बिचारि बचउं नृपद्रोही ॥ ६ ॥
 मिले न कबहुँ सुभट रन गाढ़े । द्विज देवता घरहि के बाढ़े ॥ ७ ॥
 अनुचित कहि सब लोग पुकारे । रघुपति सयनहिं लखनु नेवारे ॥ ८ ॥

suni kaṭu bacana kuṭhāra sudhārā. hāya hāya saba sabhā pukārā. 5.
 bhṛgubara parasu dēkhāvahu mōhī. bipra bicāri baca'um' nṛpadrōhī. 6.
 milē na kabahum' subhaṭa rana gārḥē. dvija dēvatā gharahi kē bārḥē. 7.
 anucita kahi saba lōga pukārē. raghupati sayanahim lakhanu nēvārē. 8.

Hearing these scornful and bitter words of Laxman, Parashuram moved his hands menacingly over his battle-axe, firmed his grip over it, as if about to strike. Seeing his grave posture, the assembly shouted in dismay—‘Alack, alack; Have mercy, have mercy’¹. (5)

Laxman struck back with a vengeance, retorting—‘Oh Bhrigubar (literally meaning an exalted member of sage Bhrigu’s family; here meaning Parashuram)! Hark: why are you showing me your battle-axe repeatedly to threaten me?

But listen, you enemy of the kings! I am restraining myself from giving you a befitting reply (i.e. I am sparing you) just because you are a Brahmin (as we have been taught to show due respect to them). (6)

You have never met a brave warrior in a battle. [You have always met terrified kings who submitted before you humbly because you are a Brahmin. They never fought you because they thought that it would be improper to fight with and injure a Brahmin. This made you proud of your self as being invincible and being able to ride roughshod over everyone else. Now your time is up; you have met your match in me.]

Brahmins and gods are accustomed to receive submission and get obedience, but it is confined to places where they have their unbridled authority such as their own domains (i.e. homes for Brahmins, and heaven in the case of gods)².

[But, remember, a battle-field is the domain of warriors, and not Brahmins and gods who are pampered beyond limits, making them boastful and haughty of their authority and powers. You had gone on the rampage, killing kings and princes in their homes, their cities and palaces, and never ever dared to face them in real battle conditions in a battle-field. Say, is it not unfair to kill someone who has submitted and is begging for mercy? And by killing submissive Kshatriya kings, you think you had done a big job or gained some great honour. Well, it is nothing short of cowardice. Now come, I challenge you for a real bit of battle, and I am a Kshatriya. Come, kill me if you can. Why are you merely raising the battle-axe in a hostile manner without being actually doing something about your threats just to prove your impotency?]' (7)

All the people assembled in the arena raised their voice at this rejoinder of Laxman, saying that it was not proper. [That is, the assembly objected to Laxman's remark invoking gods and Brahmins in general. Laxman had unleashed a torrent of rebukes and sarcastic remarks against Parashuram that was slipping out of control.]

So, Raghupati (Lord Ram, the lord of the Raghu dynasty) signaled to Laxman with a gesture of his eyes to stop³. (8)

[Note—¹Parashuram had wielded his battle-axe a number of times to threaten Laxman. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 273.

Moving his hands over the handle and the metal the blade of the axe was a gesture that he is preparing the weapon to hit. When a combatant readied himself for combat, he wiped his weapon and moved his hands, i.e. the palms and the fingers, over it to test its cleanliness and remove any last traces of dust etc, as well as to check the sharpness of its edge.

A warrior was habituated to this practice. For instance, we shall read later on in the story that when Bharat approaches the hermitage of Lord Ram in Chitrakoot along with senior citizens of Ayodhya and an army in an attempt to persuade the Lord to return to Ayodhya, Lord Ram was sitting in the company of sages and hermits who lived in the forest. At that time, "Lord Ram was slowly revolving his bow and an arrow in his hands". Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 239.

Meanwhile, we see here how a man, who has lost his wits due to anger, behaves. When a man of substance and authority threatens to punish someone for disobedience, he should actually punish the offender instead of just threatening to do so repeatedly, for otherwise he makes a mockery of himself. After one or two ineffective threats, his words lose their gravity and people start treating him as a clown. Thus, a powerful man should either keep quiet or go ahead with his threat of punishment by acting accordingly; a mere boastful threat without any follow-up action not only undermines a powerful man's authority but also demeans him and makes him a butt of joke and ridicule.

²Chaupai line no. 7 can be read as follows also—"Oh Vipra (Brahmin)! You have been treated with respect like a 'god' by householders (i.e. kings and princes), but you have not met someone in the environs of a battle-field. There you would have received a fair treatment that you deserve! Being accustomed to pampering and abject surrender by kings and other householders who showed respect to you like they would respect the gods they worshipped simply because you are Brahmin, you have become very arrogant and haughty. You have not met a true warrior till date, for he wouldn't have bowed to you and surrendered to your threats. So you think that you are invincible and the lord of the world. Come, today I'll show you the reality. Come, face me in battle. But don't show this axe to me like a pretender."

This statement of Laxman taunted Parashuram by saying in effect that he had shown his bravery by killing his mother and brothers at home. Then when he went around killing kings, they had submitted before him because he was a Brahmin whom everyone is taught to give due respect as one gives to a god. But that did not prove that Parashuram is a brave warrior—for he has never met someone in real battle conditions in a battle-field where his opponent refuses to submit before him and gives him a tit-for-tat reply. Perhaps if this had ever happened, Parashuram would have known how much wind was actually in his sail, but unfortunately no one ever dared to

confront him and show him the ground he stood upon perhaps out of fear of his reputation of being excessively wrathful, and also because it would be improper to answer back a sage of great stature, for then the world would blame the person for insulting the sage instead of blaming the sage for unwarrantedly humiliating others, who had done no harm to him, just to satisfy his ego!

³It is interesting to note that till the time people did not object to Laxman's verbal duel with Parashuram and his insinuations, Lord Ram had kept quiet. But when the Lord saw that the public opinion is turning against Laxman, he immediately intervened to stop him.

By stopping Laxman with a polite gesture of the eye, Lord Ram showed his love for him and that he did not want to offend or insult Laxman by scolding him for showing his bad temper in public and insulting sage Parashuram. After all, Parashuram deserved this dressing-down because he had cultivated a bad habit of becoming angry and boasting.

Besides this, Lord Ram also showed that he respected the views of the people, for as soon as he discovered that the people are disapproving of Laxman's behaviour, he instantly got the latter stopped.

Refer Doha no. 276 herein below.]

दो०. लखन उतर आहुति सरिस भृगुबर कोपु कृसानु ।
बढ़त देखि जल सम बचन बोले रघुकुलभानु ॥ २७६ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana utara āhuti sarisa bhrgubara kōpu kṛsānu.
barhata dēkhi jala sama bacana bōlē raghukulabhānu. 276.

Laxman's replies and rejoinders were like offering of liquid clarified butter as oblation into the fire pit of a sacrifice, sage Parashuram's anger was like the raging fire, and when Lord Ram, who was like a 'sun¹ in the dynasty of king Raghu', saw that the fire was getting out of control (as it would go on becoming wilder and more fierce without subsiding or cooling off if more oblations or fuel was added to it by way of Laxman retorting to Parashuram's angry tirade and the latter getting wilder and angrier at Laxman's boldness, fearlessness and irreverential behaviour), he spoke polite and soothing words as if to pour water¹ to douse this fire. (Doha no. 276)

[Note—¹The comparison is very apt. The 'sun' is responsible for producing rain because it first helps in the evaporation of water from oceans and seas. This evaporated water vapour transforms into a cloud which then pours 'rain water' on the 'heated' earth below.

Lord Ram has a 'dark' complexion, which is also the colour of rain-bearing clouds.

The idea is that when the people started feeling the heat of Laxman's and Parashuram's anger and they feared that this verbal duel between the two might turn ugly and result in open battle, like the 'heat on earth that torments its inhabitants', Lord Ram metaphorically poured 'rain water' to calm it down by speaking politely and humbly so that the anger of sage Parashuram, which was like a raging fire, would

subside. Meanwhile, he stopped Laxman from adding more fuel to this fire by asking him to keep quiet.]

चौ०. नाथ करहु बालक पर छोहू । सूध दूधमुख करिअ न कोहू ॥ १ ॥

जौं पै प्रभु प्रभाउ कछु जाना । तौ कि बराबरि करत अयाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nātha karahu bālaka para chōhū. sūdh dūdhamukha kari'a na kōhū. 1.
jauṁ pai prabhu prabhā'u kachu jānā. tau ki barābari karata ayānā. 2.

[Lord Ram tried to assuage sage Parashuram's ruffled feelings and hurt ego by using a soothing balm of polite words, requesting him to forgive Laxman and neglect his rash behaviour as the latter was merely a child and does not have any experience of interacting with a great personality of Parashuram's stature. Indeed it is expected that elders should overlook the mischief created by inexperienced youngsters.]

Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram—‘Oh Lord! Be gracious upon this child¹; have mercy on him. He is simple-hearted (i.e. he has no real intention of insulting you or hurting your ego and prestige). He is literally so young that he still drinks milk for survival². So you must not become angry on him. (1)

Say, if he had any inkling of your glories and achievements, would he have imagined or thought of ever comparing himself with you, and behaving the way he did?

[He is ignorant of everything, because as I have told you and as you have yourself acknowledged, he is still a ‘child’, and a wise person does not expect much from children as they are supposed to be innocent at heart though their action seems to be naughty. Laxman indeed is unaware of your true potentials and prowess, as well as your exalted stature as renowned sage of repute. He does not know your background or your stupendous achievements, like your doing severe Tapa, your practicing Yoga, and about your performing various sacrifices. He does not know the astounding mystical powers you possess. He thinks that you are merely some ordinary sage or hermit who is prone to becoming angry at trifles, and when you indeed become angry you lose control over your senses and your behavior makes you seem to be a clown in a child's eye who then tries to emulate you as a fun exercise.

Besides, being a prince, Laxman is not accustomed to anyone threatening him, or of boasting in front of him. But he does not know the reality about you. That is why he has answered back at you and behaved such irreverentially with you. Yes indeed, if he had known of your great mystical powers, your martial achievements, your spiritual abilities and your exalted lineage, he certainly wouldn't have dared talk with you the way he did.

He was misled by your physical appearance and behaviour. You hold fierce weapons such as a battle-axe, a bow and arrows. Then, you started shouting and threatening the moment you came here. These are not the characteristics of sages and hermits. So this boy thought that you are some warrior, and as is the wont of brave princes who are taught not to be cowed down by adversaries, he stood up against you.

But then, as I've told you, he is inexperienced, and yet a child. You have also accepted this fact that he is child, a “Baalak”. Oh holy sage, fighting with children never gives any honour to an adult, especially to a sage of your stature. By quarrelling with him you are only inviting ridicule on yourself.

Laxman can be excused for his misdemeanours because he is a child, but how will you excuse yourself for your ruckus and boastful behaviour?] (2)

[Note—¹Parashuram has himself conceded that Laxman is a ‘child’, a “Baalak”. He has also said that he spares Laxman just because he is a child. Refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272. So Lord Ram has wisely reminded the sage of his own statement which he can’t deny; the sage can’t say now that Laxman is not a child.

²The Lord implied that a warrior should feel ashamed of himself by fighting with a child who still has not learnt how to eat solid food, who still drinks his mother’s milk. It is merely in a literal sense that it is said that “Laxman still has milk in his mouth”. It is observed that children who are very young drink a lot of milk which is their staple food, and thus their mouths smell of milk. It is a figure of speech to mean that the person concerned has not grown up mentally; he still acts, behaves and thinks like a child though he may have grown up in physical age.

Elders also refer to their beloved younger ones as still being a child; it shows that they have great affection for them like a father would have for his child, and therefore are ready to forgive or overlook their misdemeanours.

So we finally see that like a true guardian who would step forward to protect his ward, Lord Ram uses his wit and calm manners to diffuse the tense situation by assuaging the furious sage’s hurt ego and self-respect by reminding him of his exalted stature and greatness that obliges such illustrious sages to be kind and forgiving, especially when their offender is a child who does not know or understands how to behave properly with such exalted souls.

Hence, Lord Ram begs for forgiveness from sage Parashuram on behalf of his younger brother Laxman to settle the matter and peacefully and bring this unsavoury episode to a safe conclusion. The outcome was definitely positive, as we shall soon see. The Lord’s calm and apologetic manner quietened the sage, who was internally happy that after all a safety valve was finally found that would help him to save his face with dignity and honour, as now he will have an excuse of leaving Laxman unharmed because his elder brother, Lord Ram, has asked for forgiveness, and as a great sage it was obligatory for him to forgive anyone who surrenders and asks for grace.]

जौं लरिका कछु अचगरि करहीं । गुर पितु मातु मोद मन भरहीं ॥ ३ ॥

करिअ कृपा सिसु सेवक जानी । तुह सम सील धीर मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ४ ॥

jauṁ larikā kachu acagari karahīm. gura pitu mātu mōda mana bharahīm. 3.
kari'a kṛpā sisu sēvaka jānī. tumha sama sīla dhīra muni gyānī. 4.

If a child or an innocent young lad plays some kind of prank or talks in a playful and nonsensical way as is the wont of children, his elders, such as his teacher and parents (“gura pitu mātu”), take it lightly and are filled with joy (instead of getting annoyed and taking umbrage at the child’s behaviour).

[To wit, you are a senior and exalted sage, and for you he is like a child. You have yourself said it that you are restraining yourself because Laxman is a mere child or a “Baalak”—chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272. You must understand

that some children are mischievous, and therefore you must neglect his behaviour and calm your anger down.] (3)

Treating him as a child and a humble servant (of sages and hermits), have compassion and mercy on him. You (being an exalted sage and hermit) have the auspicious virtues of equanimity, good manners, forbearance and patience; you are a self-realised sage. [So you must behave like one, and should not be sucked into an unpleasant confrontation with a child because it would undermine your exalted stature.]’ (4)

[Note—Lord Ram has talked very cleverly and diplomatically. On the one hand he has defended Laxman’s behaviour, and on the other hand he has politely told sage Parashuram that his behaviour does not suit him.

It will be noted here that Parashuram had become so stupid in his anger that he took Lord Ram’s statement that “Laxman does not know about the sage’s glories and achievements” so literally that he forgot that he had already boasted of them a while ago—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

So, Parashuram decided to make more boast of his famous deeds. He will brag about himself again in Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 283.

We shall read in a while that Lord Ram has to repeat this plea once again when Laxman started annoying sage Parashuram once again. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 279 below.]

राम बचन सुनि कछुक जुड़ाने । कहि कछु लखनु बहुरि मुसुकाने ॥ ५ ॥
 हँसत देखि नख सिख रिस ब्यापी । राम तोर भ्राता बड़ पापी ॥ ६ ॥
 गौर सरीर स्याम मन माहीं । कालकूटमुख पयमुख नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
 सहज टेढ़ अनुहरड़ न तोही । नीचु मीचु सम देख न मोही ॥ ८ ॥

rāma bacana suni kachuka juṛānē. kahi kachu lakhanu bahuri musukānē. 5.
 haṁsata dēkhi nakha sikha risa byāpī. rāma tōra bhrātā baṛa pāpī. 6.
 gaura sarīra syāma mana māhīm. kālakūṭamukha payamukha nāhīm. 7.
 sahaja ṭēṛha anuharaṛi na tōhī. nīcu mīcu sama dēkha na mōhī. 8.

Parashuram felt a bit reassured and comforted by the pleasant and soothing words of Lord Ram¹.

But his peace was short-lived as Laxman smiled sarcastically once again, mocking the sage even as he made some new taunting and disparaging remarks targeting him (that spited sage Parashuram, and further stoked his anger and vehemence)². (5)

Meanwhile, when Parashuram saw Laxman sneering at him, anger was reignited and pervaded his entire being. Rage surged within his body, flushing him with anger from the tip of his toe-nail to the top of his head.

Thus, the infuriated sage turned to Lord Ram and said—‘Hark Ram, your brother is very sinful. [That is, he is not only insulting towards me but is also seemingly defying you. Look, while you are pleading with me to excuse him for being a child, and while you behave so politely with me, this fellow does not even

understand that if his elder brother wishes to bring the issue to rest than he should not do anything to raise dead corpses again, and that if his elder brother is showing so much respect to me than there must be some reason. He should have withdrawn by now, but is very defiant. He is hell-bent on insulting me, and probably he also gives a damn to you.

Well, this is exactly what he is doing by sneering at me and uttering nonsense once again even while you have not finished speaking. For that matter, who knows he may be sneering at your words, and not at me. What could be more impertinent and sinful than this?'] (6)

He may be fair in complexion (i.e. appears to be good), but his heart is very dark (i.e. internally he is pervert and full of spite). He has poison in his mouth, and not milk (as you claim him to be—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 277 herein above). (7)

Look, he is a very wicked, impolite and impertinent fellow. He is not like you; he does not follow your example. This rascal treats me with utter contempt, and hates me like one hates death.^{3'} (8)

[Note—¹Parashuram was burning with anger and spite. So Lord Ram's soothing words calmed him down "a bit". When the earth has been scorched by the heat of summer, then it is observed that the first round of rains do not cool it down completely. In fact, if the rain is not sufficient, the heat is felt more intensely than how it was felt previously because the little amount of rain-water that falls cannot cool the heated surface of the earth, but, instead, it itself turns hot as soon as it touches the earth's surface.

It is like sprinkling some cold water on a hot iron plate; it begins to sputter and hiss, and emanates heat. It is also well known that one gets scalded if one comes in direct contact with steam escaping from the spout of a kettle. So, insufficient rain creates more heat than cooling down the earth. Often it becomes stifling hot after the first shower of rain during severe summer than what one had experienced before the rain had come.

In other words, sage Parashuram was beginning to get calmer and regain control over himself when Lord Ram spoke to him politely, seeking forgiveness and expecting a compassionate attitude. But as it happened, Laxman smiled sarcastically once again, uttering some caustic words which stoked the sage's anger once again.

Laxman wanted to ensure, as it were, that the sage vents his full steam here and now so that when later on he goes to do Tapa (austerity and penances) or Yoga (meditation), he will be able to do it properly with a calm head! Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

²Laxman was at it again. He did not like his brother, Lord Ram, surrendering to this haughty and boastful sage, trying to pacify him by asking for forgiveness on Laxman's behalf. Laxman wanted to teach this arrogant sage a lesson of his life, but his elder brother, whom he revered so much, was pleading and submitting before Parashuram. This did not go down well with Laxman.

Later on in the story we shall read other incidents also where Laxman has not approved of Lord Ram's dealing with his adversaries in a polite manner. For instance—

(i) When Bharat came to the forest with his army and citizens of Ayodhya in an attempt to take Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, Laxman apprehended that Bharat had some ill intentions; he also did not approve of Ram's welcoming him with an open arm. So, Laxman stood up to fight with Bharat. Lord Ram had then calmed him down. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227—to Doha no. 232.

(ii) When the ocean was not providing a passage to Lord Ram's army to cross over to Lanka, the Lord had first prayed to the ocean to let him go, but finally he got angry. The Lord pulled out his arrow to dry the ocean. This was liked by Laxman. In other words, Laxman had not approved of Lord Ram begging the ocean to give him a passage, but preferred strong action. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 58.

In essence, Laxman did not approve that Lord Ram should plead before sage Parashuram to either excuse Laxman or even himself for breaking the bow. So he could not resist himself and said something more that caused further irritation to the sage. This will be clear in the following verses.

Now, what did Laxman say this time? It is not clear from the text. So we can make assumption. Perhaps he said, "You (Parashuram) is known as a killer of your mother and brother at the instructions of your father; you are known as a killer of innocent kings to please your mother; you are famous as the killer of unborn babies with your cruel axe. Well, this is the great fame you have. How nice of you indeed; how praise-worthy are your deeds indeed!" Obviously, this sent the sage into a fit of anger like he probably never had experienced in his life earlier.

³We have read earlier that when Parashuram could not bear Laxman's heat, he had turned to sage Vishwamitra in order to find an escape route. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 274. At that time also, Laxman has shot back with caustic comments. Refer: from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 274—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 275.

Once again, when things seemed to go out of hand, sage Vishwamitra had intervened and requested Parashuram to excuse Laxman as elders and wise men do not pay heed to ignorant children. Refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 275. And once again, Laxman retorted boldly, taunting Parashuram with very caustic comments. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 276.

The same thing is repeated here. Lord Ram is trying to pacify the angry sage Parashuram, and Laxman goes on adding fuel to the fire of sage's anger.]

दो०. लखन कहेउ हँसि सुनहु मुनि क्रोधु पाप कर मूल ।
जेहि बस जन अनुचित करहिं चरहिं बिस्व प्रतिकूल ॥ २७७ ॥

dōhā.

lakhana kahē'u hamśi sunahu muni krōdhu pāpa kara mūla.
jēhi basa jana anucita karahim carahim bisva pratikūla. 277.

Laxman smiled wryly and advised Parashuram mockingly—'Oh sage, anger is at the root of all sins. A living being commits errors and does wrong things under its spell. It is anger that drives them against the whole world, making them enemies of everyone. [Anger creates unnecessary ill-will and hatred that robs one of his peace of mind. It

generates animosity that leads to a feeling of insecurity because an angry man begins to look at others with suspicion and scepticism.] (Doha no. 277)

[Note—This is in response to Parashuram telling Lord Ram that Laxman is a great sinner in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes this Doha no. 277. So Laxman tells sage Parashuram that it is the latter who is a sinner because he has become inappropriately angry and vengeful for a minor issue such as the breaking of an old and creaking bow, and not Laxman who is calm and smiling.

It is Parashuram who is angry, and not Laxman. It is an established doctrine that anger is a bad thing; a man loses his wisdom, his mental bearing and rationality when he becomes angry. An angry man's actions cause him more harm than good. He creates enemies all around him, and no one comes forward to help him in his times of need. This makes life hell for an angry man. Besides this aspect, he acquires infamy and ill-will.

Laxman means that Parashuram is a sage of high repute. All his religious merits and spiritual achievements are turned into a naught by his anger. Whatever mystical powers he manages to gather by doing severe Tapa and Yoga are dissipated and neutralized by his becoming angry.

This Doha summarizing the bad effects of anger is a message for all of us—that we must endeavour to overcome our anger if we want to have peace and happiness in our lives. The ill effects of anger are summarised in Valmiki Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 55, verse nos. 5-6 also.

This said, we shall note below that Laxman has taken a cue from his elder brother Lord Ram and has changed his tone of speaking. Instead of using scorching words, he now talks mildly and seeks forgiveness from sage Parashuram. He advises the sage that instead of fretting and fuming in anger at breaking of Lord Shiva's bow, it will be wiser to plan as how to undo the damage that has already been done by calling some expert craftsman and getting the bow repaired. Refer: Chaupai line no. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 278 below.

But even while Laxman's words seemed to be polite, his general expressions were no less than being hostile and his tone of speech smacked of taunting sage Parashuram. So, instead of getting calmed down, Parashuram became more furious. This will be clear when we read Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 278 herein below.]

चौ०. मैं तुझार अनुचर मुनिराया । परिहरि कोपु करिअ अब दाया ॥ १ ॥
टूट चाप नहिं जुरिहि रिसाने । बैठिअ होइहिं पाय पिराने ॥ २ ॥
जौं अति प्रिय तौ करिअ उपाई । जोरिअ कोउ बड़ गुनी बोलाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

mair̥m tumhāra anucara munirāyā. parihari kōpu kari'a aba dāyā. 1.
ṭūṭa cāpa nahim̥ jurihi risānē. baiṭhi'a hō'ihim̥ pāya pirānē. 2.
jauṁ ati priya tau kari'a upāī. jōri'a kō'u baṛa gunī bōlāī. 3.

I (Laxman) am your “Anuchar”, meaning that I am junior to you by all accounts, am like one of your followers, a subordinate and a servitor of yours. Abandon your anger and have mercy upon me now (for, truly, a senior person must show leniency on his junior, and forgiveness and tolerance are virtues and not signs of weakness)¹. (1)

The broken bow would not be mended by getting angry; it needs repair. Please sit down; your legs must be tired and aching.² (2)

If this bow is so dear to you (and its breaking has offended you so much), then it is nary a problem because we can find out a practical way to get it repaired by summoning some expert craftsman who can do the job.’ (3)

[Note—¹Primia-facia, Laxman’s words were welcoming, polite and soothing. He seems to be trying to comfort the angry sage and help him to find a solution of the vexed problem that has caused him so much anger in the first place, and the problem still exists. Getting angry and fighting won’t help. The real solution to this perplexing problem is to get an expert to mend the broken bow and restore it to its original state.

By saying that he was an “Anuchar” of sage Parashuram, Laxman means that since he is born as a Kshatriya prince, he will always remain submissive to a person who is born in the Brahmin race. Brahmins are always shown great respect by Kshatriya kings; the latter are always afraid of and submissive to the former. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 284.

So Laxman meant that the sage is unnecessarily getting worked-up as he (Laxman) has no intention of either insulting the sage or hurting him. The way he reacted was because the sage himself behaved in a manner unfit for a Brahmin—he became angry, shouted at him, and called him names. Then, the sage wielded weapons, such as an axe, a bow and arrows, which a Brahmin is not supposed to. The sage boasted about the way he went about killing kings, something abhorable to the extreme and completely at odds with the nature of a Brahmin who is supposed to be forgiving and compassionate—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

Anger only harms the person who exhibits this negative character, and no one else; anger burns his inner self like the fire burns the external body—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 39.

A sage and a saintly person must have a calm and compassionate temperament; he must show mercy towards the humble and those who are junior to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Parashuram has exhibited none of these auspicious virtues of a Brahmin or a sage. Then, Laxman seems to subtly ask him, how can he expect respect and politeness from the former?

Lord Ram uses the same logic later on when Parashuram was unwilling to relent, and the Lord had to assume a stern posture to subdue him at last. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 283—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 284.

Hence, in essence, what Laxman said to Parashuram in these verses was a sort of subtle admonishment of the latter for his bad behaviour that does not behove of a good Brahmin and an exalted sage of Parashuram’s stature. It gives a bad name also to his ancestors. Laxman indirectly told the sage that he should first see the way he has behaved before accusing the former of any misdemeanour.

²Laxman told Parashuram that merely getting angry would provide no solution. The main issue at stake is the broken bow, and so we must direct our attention to it instead of wasting time on pouring vitriol on each other.

Parashuram must have been exhausted by now, because, first, he had come a long way from the shores of the southern ocean, and second, he was angry, and anger saps one's energy more than anything else. So his legs must be tired; he must sit down to relax a bit. Meanwhile, they will call some expert craftsman and get the bow repaired.]

बोलत लखनहिं जनकु डेराहीं । मष्ट करहु अनुचित भल नाही ॥ ४ ॥
थर थर काँपहिं पुर नर नारी । छोट कुमार खोट बड़ भारी ॥ ५ ॥

bōlata lakhanahim janaku dērāhīm. maṣṭa karahu anucita bhala nāhīm. 4.
thara thara kāṁpahim pura nara nārī. chōṭa kumāra khōṭa baṛa bhārī. 5.

As Laxman spoke, king Janak was feeling uneasy and afraid. [Because he feared that Laxman would suddenly say something which would ignite Parashuram's wrath, and the latter may wreak vengeance upon him.]

So Janak said softly, 'Stop; it is not good to speak unnecessarily; it is wrong to provoke things.'¹ (4)

The men and women folk of the city (who had assembled at the venue to witness the bow-breaking ceremony) shivered in anticipation of some disastrous consequences (of Laxman's persistence with speaking up to the angry sage Parashuram).

They muttered amongst themselves that the younger of the two princes is indeed very naughty². (5)

[Note—¹Laxman had already annoyed sage Parashuram, and the latter loathed the former. Anything Laxman said, no matter how harmless and innocent, the angry sage would take it in the wrong sense. It is to be noted here that Lord Ram has said almost the same thing as what Laxman has said in the above verses. Compare what Lord Ram said in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277, with what Laxman said in Doha no. 277—to Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

But the difference is apparent in Doha no. 277 which says that Laxman 'smiled'. Of course this smile was less of a gesture of politeness, and more in the nature of a sneer. Janak was an experienced king; he could feel the heat of the fire of anger in Parashuram that Laxman's body language was generating.

So, the king muttered that enough was enough, and now Laxman must be stopped.

²Earlier also, the citizens had disapproved of the way Laxman had answered sage Vishwamitra. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 276.]

भृगुपति सुनि सुनि निरभय बानी । रिस तन जरड़ होइ बल हानी ॥ ६ ॥
बोले रामहि देइ निहोरा । बचउँ बिचारि बंधु लघु तोरा ॥ ७ ॥
मनु मलीन तनु सुंदर कैसें । बिष रस भरा कनक घटु जैसें ॥ ८ ॥

bhṛgupati suni suni nirabhaya bānī. risa tana jara'i hō'i bala hānī. 6.
 bōlē rāmaḥi dē'i nihōrā. baca'um̃ bicāri bandhu laghu tōrā. 7.
 manu malīna tanu sundara kaisēm̃. biṣa rasa bharā kanaka ghaṭu jaisēm̃. 8.

As Bhṛigupati (the chief of the Bhṛigu's race; sage Parashuram) continued to hear Laxman's fearless and bold words, he became more and more exasperated; the sage's body kept literally burning with anger, and as time passed in this manner of attrition, he progressively lost his energy and strength, becoming exhausted, weary and worn-out¹. (6)

[Unable or unwilling to talk with Laxman and face the latter—] Parashuram turned to Lord Ram and said with complaint in his voice—'I am sparing this fellow because I know that he is your younger brother. [Otherwise, I would have punished him most severely. But since you are civil and cultured, and you have shown respect to me, I am inclined to overlook as this boy's mischief in deference to your request to forgive him—refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277.] (7)

He has a pervert and dark heart. I wonder how he has got such a charming body. It is like having a harsh poison in a golden pitcher².' (8)

[Note—¹This verse teaches us the bad effects of anger. Anger burns one's strength, vitality and energy so much so that when the anger subsides, the person is left exhausted and worn-out and completely drained, as if he has done some greatly strenuous work and wishes the thing comes to an end as soon as possible to give him some respite from sufferings.

In the present context we shall see that by and by the sage lost all his stamina and vigour. A stage would come when he felt like a punctured balloon.

Now, if we examine this episode closely in the context of this principle that one is drained of his energy and vitality by becoming angry, we discover that Laxman's verbal duel with Parashuram was part of a strategy. It caused the sage to become wild and excessively angry, shouting, threatening and gesticulating violently, thereby dissipating all his reserve of strength and energy, making him incapable to actually fight in a battle.

Eventually, therefore, when Lord Ram would face him and crack the whip in the final showdown, the sage would be like a deflated balloon. The same Parashuram who had boasted of the strength of his arms and his battle-axe would submit in a docile manner as if he had been drugged. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 283—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

²Here, Laxman is compared to the golden pitcher because of his fair complexion, and his nature, temper and behaviour, his way of speaking in a scorching manner, to the poison stored in the golden vessel.]

दो०. सुनि लछिमन बिहसे बहुरि नयन तरेरे राम ।
 गुर समीप गवने सकुचि परिहरि बानी बाम ॥ २७८ ॥

dōhā.

suni lachimana bihasē bahuri nayana tarērē rāma.
gura samīpa gavanē sakuci parihari bānī bāma. 278.

Hearing these words of sage Parashuram, Laxman smiled in a teasing manner once again. [But now he was transgressing limits of decent behaviour, and the assembly was not taking the developments lightly. Even king Janak disapproved of Laxman's behaviour as much as the rest of the citizens. So, Lord Ram wished to put a stop to it before the thing became too nasty. Hence—] Lord Ram intervened and looked at Laxman sternly from the corner of his eyes (signaling the latter to behave himself and call it quits).

At this warning from the Lord, Laxman stopped talking in a bold and fearless manner that was irritating sage Parashuram. He then withdrew himself and abashedly went close to his Guru (sage Vishwamitra). (Doha no. 278)

[Note—Lord Ram could sense that the people as well as their host, king Janak, were annoyed at Laxman's behaviour. Being the elder brother it was his duty to rein-in his younger sibling if the latter was doing something wrong in the eyes of the world.

When Lord Ram looked sternly at Laxman and hinted him to stop with a winking gesture from the corner of his eyes and furrowed eyebrows, Laxman became 'abashed' because he realized that his actions had embarrassed his beloved brother. Laxman had never intended to do anything that would put Lord Ram in a sticky situation, but unwittingly he had done exactly that. So he felt ashamed of himself, and shyly withdrew to go to the place where sage Vishwamitra was sitting.

One important reason of Laxman's withdrawing to a spot near sage Vishwamitra was that he would be very safe there should things go out of hand and Parashuram becomes determined to hit him. This is because sage Vishwamitra was not less powerful than Parashuram, and the latter would have to think a thousand times to harm someone who was protected by Vishwamitra. So, Laxman was safer near sage Vishwamitra than at any other place.

Normally he should have stood with Lord Ram to give him moral support and help him if things became bad. But Laxman was sure that Lord Ram was competent to look after himself.

Another reason of moving away from the spot of the confrontation was that his (Laxman's) presence at the side of Lord Ram would never have allowed sage Parashuram to calm down, because his mere sight infuriated the sage, stoking his anger further.

Refer also to Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 279 along with their appended notes herein below.]

चौ०. अति बिनीत मृदु सीतल बानी । बोले रामु जोरि जुग पानी ॥ १ ॥
सुनहु नाथ तुह सहज सुजाना । बालक बचनु करिअ नहिं काना ॥ २ ॥
बरै बालकु एकु सुभाऊ । इन्हि न संत बिदूषहिं काऊ ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ati binīta mṛdu sītala bānī. bōlē rāmu jōri juga pānī. 1.

sunahu nātha tumha sahaja sujānā. bālaka bacanu kari'a nahim kānā. 2.

bararai bālaku ēku subhā'ū. inhahi na santa bidūṣahim kā'ū. 3.

Lord Ram spoke in a voice that was polite, sweet and pleasant, using words that were cool, soothing and comforting. He also brought together his hands and joined his palms in his front as a gesture of polite request and submission before the angry sage¹.
(1)

Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram—‘Listen oh Lord! You are inherently wise and very learned. You must not give your ears (i.e. pay attention to) the words of a boy.’
(2)

The reason being that wasps (“*bararai*”) and boys (“*bālaku*”)² are of the same nature. [Just as a wasp has the habit to sting anyone who touches it even inadvertently, without meaning any harm to it, a boy too has the habit to respond in an irritating manner to anyone who provokes him. So, it is always better to keep a safe distance with a wasp as well as a child because their behaviour is very unpredictable, they are very quick in their response without any thought of its long-term effects, and they tend to show no respect to their offender.]

Therefore, those who are wise and saintly never accuse them or find fault with them because it is their natural, inborn habit. [A wise man knows that a wasp would sting if touched, and so if the insect stings and causes pain to him, he would not feel angry. Rather, he would find a remedy for the burning and the swelling caused by the sting and take precaution to avoid that wasp in future. Similarly, a wise man knows that it makes no sense in accusing a naughty child for its demeanours because it is its natural habit; the child’s responses are always unpredictable because it does not know how to interact with others. Hence, it is futile in getting angry at their behaviour. A wise man would make a fool out of himself at taking a child seriously as he would take the response from an adult.] (3)

[Note—¹After signalling Laxman to withdraw from confrontation with the gesture of his eyes, Lord Ram spoke very politely to sage Parashuram. He will ask the sage to excuse his younger brother because all children are prone to commit mistakes and are usually naughty—refer the verses that follow below.

This is the second time however that Lord Ram has had to intervene and try to calm down the angry sage. The first occasion was in Doha no. 276—to Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277.

²The word “*bararai*” also means one who is out of one’s mind; one who behaves like a mad person; a person who does not know how to speak, behave and do anything in a proper way. In other words, a boy of young age or a child does not know what to say to whom, how to behave decently with others, and what to do and what not to. There is not much of a difference between a child and a mad man—the behaviour of both of them is not only irrational, unpredictable and erratic but also, more often than not, it is stinging and irritating, and a constant cause of worry and annoyance for the other person, just like being near to a wasp.

If we take this meaning into consideration, then verse no. 3 should be read as follows—“A mad man and a child have the same nature and mental state. A wise and intelligent man should not pay any attention to them (because both act irrationally, erratically and unpredictably; their behaviour makes no sense and so they should be completely neglected).”

Lord Ram has invoked sage Parashuram's own admission that Laxman is a boy ("bālaku"—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272) to request him not to take the latter's behaviour seriously and become annoyed; it is not worth it.

The Lord has compared Laxman's words with the vicious sting of a wasp ("Barrai"). In other words, the Lord could judge the mood of the sage and the way he has felt exceedingly hurt by Laxman's words which had stung the sage so viciously that his entire being was shaken as if a wasp had bitten him.

This is why verse no. 1 above says Lord Ram spoke to Parashuram with words that were cool, soothing and comforting as if the Lord was applying a balm on the sage's ruffled ego which was wounded by Laxman's harsh words, just like a man applies an ointment on the wound created by a wasp's sting.]

तेहिं नाहीं कछु काज बिगारा । अपराधी मैं नाथ तुहारा ॥ ४ ॥
 कृपा कोपु बधु बँधब गोसाईं । मो पर करिअ दास की नाई ॥ ५ ॥
 कहिअ बेगि जेहि बिधि रिस जाई । मुनिनायक सोइ करौं उपाई ॥ ६ ॥

tēhim nāhīm kachu kāja bigārā. aparādhī maim nātha tumhārā. 4.
 kṛpā kōpu badhu baṁdhaba gōsā'īm. mō para kari'a dāsa kī nā'īm. 5.
 kahi'a bēgi jēhi bidhi risa jā'ī. munināyaka sō'i karaum upā'ī. 6.

Besides this, he (Laxman) has not done any harm to anyone. In fact, it is me whom you should treat as the one who has offended you; it is me who is the culprit (because it is me who has broken the bow, the offence which has angered you so much). (4)

Treating me as one of your humble servants or someone who has submitted himself before you, you can decide to have mercy upon me (to show that you are highly gracious and fit to be called an exalted sage), or you can decide to wreak your anger at me by killing me or putting me in shackles (as punishment for the offence that I have done to you by breaking the bow)¹. (5)

Meanwhile, oh the leader of sages ("munināyaka"), tell me quickly how your anger would subside, and I will endeavour to find a solution to it². (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram tells Parashuram: "Oh great sage! You must first keep in mind that Laxman is not the real offender; it's me. So, in whatever way you want to deal with the offender, you should deal with me. But at the same time, before deciding on your course of action, you must keep in mind that I have submitted myself before you, and being an exalted sage and a learned Brahmin of high pedigree because you belong to the race owing its origin to the renowned sage Bhṛigu, you must watch your actions. The world is closely watching you.

The world would forgive Laxman because, as I have said, children are like mad men or wasps whom a wise man pays no attention to, but you are a grown-up and responsible sage, an acclaimed hermit. You can't find excuses for your misdemeanours, especially when I have surrendered before you. A sage gains honour in forgiveness, and not in bloodshed or seeking revenge. So be careful with how you decide to deal with my error. The best course of action for you would be to have mercy upon me and forgive me. But should you decide to vent your anger at me, you

can either kill me as you have been threatening all along, or put me in shackles like a prisoner to punish me for breaking the bow.

Whatever you do, do it with me. Why involve Laxman who is not guilty of any crime?

²Lord Ram has played his cards well, and diplomatically. He has first given Parashuram a choice of either showing mercy that a sage is expected to show, or exhibiting cruelty by killing or shackling him that is never expected from a sage. Then Lord Ram addresses him as a “leader of sages”, or someone who must lead by example how a sage acts and responds to any given unfortunate situation, especially when the offending person is seeking forgiveness with all the humility he can command, and is also ready to undo the damage.

Any reckless action of revenge that sage Parashuram may be inclined to take would only give him a bad name, and would not serve his purpose of getting the bow repaired.

Both Laxman and Lord Ram have expressed their desire that they wish to surrender before sage Parashuram; both have asked for forgiveness independently so that the angry sage could overcome his anger. If the broken bow is the cause, then Laxman suggested that they should call an expert and get it repaired. If Parashuram wants something else, then Lord Ram here asks him to make a suggestion so that his wishes can be fulfilled. Either way, anger is no solution; it aggravates matters instead of ameliorating them.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 278 with respect to Laxman’s plea, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279 with respect to Lord Ram’s submission.]

कह मुनि राम जाइ रिस कैसें । अजहुँ अनुज तव चितव अनैसें ॥ ७ ॥
एहि केँ कंठ कुठारु न दीन्हा । तौ मैं काह कोपु करि कीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

kaha muni rāma jā'i risa kaisēm. ajahum' anuja tava citava anaisēm. 7.
ēhi kēm kaṇṭha kuṭhāru na dīnhā. tau maim kāha kōpu kari kīnhā. 8.

The sage (Parashuram) said to Lord Ram—‘Ram, how can my anger go away (subside)? Even now, while you are trying to please me and ask for forgiveness and finding a solution for the vexed problem, your younger brother (Laxman) is looking at me with a sneer and mischief in his eyes. (7)

If I can’t or do not put my battle-axe on his neck (i.e. if I can’t or do not chop-off his neck), then all my anger goes in vain. What was the use for me to become angry if I can’t punish him by chopping-off his head with my sharp axe? (8)

[Note—Parashuram had become obsessed with Laxman. He could not divert his attention away from this naughty prince whose every move, no matter how innocuous it may have been, was interpreted by the offended sage as being directed at him to taunt him. If Laxman looked even causally at his direction, the offended sage thought that he is sneering at him. Laxman was by nature of a cheerful disposition; smile was part of his normal facial expression. But the sage interpreted this harmless smile as a taunting smirk directed at him to tease him.

Even when Lord Ram was speaking to him, sage Parashuram's gaze was fixed on Laxman; so annoyed was the sage with him that Laxman's mere presence was intolerable for him! Since he hadn't been able to punish Laxman, his anger at the latter could not be requited, and so no matter what Lord Ram said, the sage's anger would not subside as long as Laxman was in sight. And to the chagrin of Parashuram, he could not force Laxman out of the venue as the latter was standing next to sage Vishwamitra. Had Laxman been standing next to Lord Ram, perhaps the angry sage would have done exactly that—demand that Laxman be thrown out of the venue.

In fact, he has demanded from Janak that “Laxman be removed from his sight” as we shall read shortly in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 280 below. But since Laxman was standing near sage Vishwamitra and not near Lord Ram, Parashuram couldn't force that his demands be met.

Now do we see how clever Laxman was when he decided to withdraw and go near his Guru, sage Vishwamitra when Lord Ram gestured him to stop his exchange of rancour with Parashuram as narrated in Doha no. 278 herein above.]

दो०. गर्भं स्रवहिं अवनिप रवनि सुनि कुठार गति घोर ।
परसु अछत देखउँ जिअत बैरी भूपकिसोर ॥ २७९ ॥

dōhā.

garbha sravahim avanipa ravani suni kuṭhāra gati ghōra.
parasu achata dēkha'um'ji'ata bairī bhūpakisōra. 279.

[The sage boastfully said:] It is an irony that I am forced to see this ‘young son of a king’ (“bhūpakisōra”; meaning a prince), who is inimical towards me, alive, in spite of having my fierce battle-axe with me, the axe that is so formidable, relentless, powerful and merciless that when pregnant queens hear about it, they are so terrified that they abort automatically. (Doha no. 279)

[Note—Refer also to Baal Kand, Doha no. 272 in this context.

The infuriated sage was so highly incensed and exasperated that he does not realise the gravity of what he is saying. Lord Ram has just addressed him as a “leader of sages” (“Muni-naayak” in verse no. 6 that precedes this Doha), implying that Parashuram should be careful with what he says and does because he is supposed to exemplify the virtues of great sages and hermits as he is a ‘leader amongst them’. Who would expect that a great “Muni” goes on killing people and causing women to abort? It is a most shameful act. But Parashuram has lost his mental bearing because of his anger. This is exactly what Laxman had hinted to him in Doha no. 277 when he said that “anger is at the root of all sins”. Say, will anyone kill embryos while he is sober? It is a wild act of an equally wild mind.

Parashuram does not realize that he is willy-nilly inviting scorn and infamy by boasting about his killing sprees.

Nevertheless, the angry sage feels frustrated that he has not been able to vent his anger at Laxman. The same frustration is expressed again in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280 below when he is astonished why his hands do not move to strike at Laxman.]

चौ०. बहइ न हाथु दहइ रिस छाती । भा कुठारु कुंठित नृपघाती ॥ १ ॥
 भयउ बाम बिधि फिरेउ सुभाऊ । मोरे हृदयँ कृपा कसि काऊ ॥ २ ॥
 आजु दया दुखु दुसह सहावा । सुनि सौमित्रि बिहसि सिरु नावा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

baha'i na hāthu daha'i risa chātī. bhā kuṭhāru kuṅṭhita nṛpaghātī. 1.
 bhaya'u bāma bidhi phirē'u subhā'ū. mōrē hṛdayam' kṛpā kasi kā'ū. 2.
 āju dayā dukhu dusaha sahāvā. suni saumitri bihasi siru nāvā. 3.

I am astonished and flustered as I wonder why my hands are not moving forward (to strike at Laxman). This inability to take revenge is causing me heart-burn. It is equally ironic that my merciless axe, that is famed as the killer of kings (“Nrip-Ghaati”, because it had always shown thirst for blood of kings, and was eager to take revenge from kings and princes), too has been paralysed now¹. (1)

It appears that Vidhi (the Creator) has become hostile towards me (as he is not letting me fulfill my wishes). Otherwise, how can my nature and temperament suddenly take an about turn? How can there be mercy in my heart? (2)

Today, the Creator has forced me to suffer the great agony of having to show mercy²!
 [I have never learnt to refrain from hitting my opponent immediately. But it is such a big mystery for me that I am unable to avenge my insult and punish Laxman. This is obviously because the Creator has become hostile towards me; he wishes to humiliate me and force me to go against my wishes and nature.]³

When Saumitri (i.e. Laxman; literally, ‘the son of queen Sumitra’) heard this (funny) regret of Parashuram, he smiled once again and bowed his head.

[Laxman laughed subtly at this queer regret of Parashuram, because a sage should regret when he becomes angry but here we have a person who claims himself to be a sage and a Brahmin and regretting for showing mercy! He ‘bowed his head’ so as to prevent Parashuram from looking at him and observing the smile on his face as it would make the sage jump out of his skin with a fresh dose of anger.]³ (3)

[Note—¹Parashuram explains in this verse the statement that he made in Doha no. 279 above where he says that he regrets that he is unable to put the axe on Laxman’s neck. It is because his hands and his axe have both become paralysed. He wonders why it is so. Being unable to punish the offender for the first time in his life, Parashuram’s inner being seems to get roasted in anger.

In the following verse no. 2 he blames the Creator, the “Vidhi”, who has turned against him because the Creator is the one who determines each second of a person’s life, and if the Creator does not want that Laxman be killed at the hands of Parashuram, then no matter what the latter does he won’t be able to kill Laxman.

Therefore, in order to prevent Parashuram from killing Laxman, the Creator whom Parashuram considers as being unfavourable towards him has paralysed his hands and axe so that Laxman is not harmed.

This surprises Parashuram very much because it is at odds with his nature and temperament to let go of his enemy so easily.

As regards his hands it must be noted carefully here that he has been able hold his battle-axe in a menacing form in his hands, but this hand refuses to move forward and make a swiping movement so that the axe can strike at Laxman whom

Parashuram has begun to wholesomely loathe as if the former was the latter's greatest and inveterate enemy.

We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 281 that when Parashuram challenges Lord Ram for a duel to prove that the Lord is worthy of being called "Ram", i.e. is worthy of being shown respect due to a warrior, his hand is raised and it holds the axe, but it isn't to strike at the Lord who stood with a bowed head.

²What a pity! A sage should wonder why he has lost his cool and become angry at any given time, but here we have a 'sage' who wonders "why he has not become sufficiently cruel and kill his opponent instantaneously"!

³How ironical it is that Parashuram feels ashamed to show mercy and compassion! He should, on the other hand, have been ashamed at showing anger as well as his boastings about his merciless killings. This is the reason why Laxman smirked and sneered once again at the ridiculous way Parashuram is behaving under the influence of anger. Parashuram has indeed made a clown of himself in the full assembly.]

बाड कृपा मूरति अनुकूला । बोलत बचन झरत जनु फूला ॥ ४ ॥
जौं पै कृपाँ जरिहिं मुनि गाता । क्रोध भएँ तनु राख बिधाता ॥ ५ ॥

bā'u kṛpā mūrati anukūlā. bōlata bacana jharata janu phūlā. 4.
jauṁ pai kṛpāṁ jarihiṁ muni gātā. krōdha bha'ēṁ tanu rākha bidhātā. 5.

Amused and unable to restrain himself, Laxman scoffed at Parashuram in a derisive manner, saying with open sarcasm in his words—"Oh sage! Your kind words that are spoken with a lot of wind (i.e. spoken aloud; spoken with a lot of boasting and haughtiness) are in accordance with your gracious image (form; countenance; appearance). [A lot of pun and mockery is involved here.]

When you speak it appears that flowers (that symbolize acidic words, rancour, vengeance, wrathfulness, bad temper etc.) are showering down from a tree symbolized by your image (that is like a ugly tree with a hard bark, with thorns sticking out everywhere from its trunk and branches, with red hot carnivorous flowers which trap insects and kill them, and that is so short of green leaves that it gives no shade to anyone who comes near it).¹ (4)

Oh sage, if your being benevolent and merciful has made your body burn as if it on fire, well then what would have happened if you would be angry; surely your body would burn to ashes!² (5)

[Note—¹Laxman is at his sarcastic best once again. He uses harmless words, but their hidden meaning and implication are very caustic. The reference to the "wind" has two meanings here—one, it means a boastful talk, and two, it means that when Parashuram says anything it appears that the wind or a strong breeze is causing bitter flowers to fall down from the tree that is symbolized by his body.

The wind will make the flowers fall down only when it is strong enough to shake the branches of a tree. So Laxman means that Parashuram is so angry that when

he speaks his whole body shakes with anger; he gesticulates wildly and throws up his arms in the air as if punching someone there!

Laxman scoffs at Parashuram and says in effect that—“When Parashuram lets out his steam and begins to blow hot and cold, his words seem to be in consonance with his menacing appearance and fearful countenance. Is he not holding an axe, a bow and arrows? Why, say, has anyone ever seen a hermit, a sage and a Brahmin with these weapons?”

In this verse, Parashuram is compared to a tree that is hard and wild. This tree has dry and rough bark that would cut the skin of anyone trying to touch it. It does not provide any relief by way of shade to others, and instead it has sharp pointed thorns sticking out of its sides which will hurt anyone who wants to take a little rest by leaning his back against it. Its flowers are killers of insects, and foul smelling. Even the wind that grazes this tree becomes foul and hot.

²Parashuram has spared Laxman because the latter is a boy. This is tantamount to his showing mercy which is against his nature and reputation. Laxman taunts the sage by recalling his own admission that “his heart is burning with anger because he could not punish Laxman for whatever reason” as conceded by him in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280 herein above by saying that if having mercy causes his body to get so heated that his inner being is roasted, then if he did get actually angry in the way he is accustomed to be, then obviously he would be reduced to ash!

If the virtue of having mercy which always has soothing effect on the nerves and the mind causes the body to be hot as if being roasted in fire, then actual anger and being merciless would surely reduce Parashuram to ash because its heat is many times more intense.]

देखु जनक हठि बालकु एहू । कीन्ह चहत जड़ जमपुर गेहू ॥ ६ ॥
बेगि करहु किन आँखिन्ह ओटा । देखत छोट खोट नृप ढोटा ॥ ७ ॥
बिहसे लखनु कहा मन माहीं । मूदें आँखि कतहुँ कोउ नाही ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhu janaka haṭhi bālaku ēhū. kīnha cahata jaṛa jamapura gēhū. 6.
bēgi karahu kina āṁkhiṅha oṭā. dēkhata chōṭa khōṭa nṛpa ḍhōṭā. 7.
bihasē lakhanu kahā mana māhīm. mūdēm āṁkhi katahum kō'u nāhīm. 8.

(Hearing the mocking words of Laxman, the frustrated sage Parashuram, who was out of wits, not knowing how he could tame Laxman, finally sought succour by turning to king Janak and saying in an exasperated tone—) ‘Look Janak! This stubborn boy (“Hati-Baalak”) wants to go to the abode of Jampur, the god of death*. [In other words, Laxman is constantly irritating me; and if I lose my cool I will kill him and send him to the abode of the god of death known as Jampur.]

*[This verse can be read in another way also: “Look Janak at this stubborn boy. It appears that he wishes to make the abode of the god of death, known as Jampur, as his home. In other words, don’t blame me if I kill him and send him to hell.] (6)

So, remove this son of a king (i.e. a prince; “Nrip Dhota”) out of my sight. He appears diminutive in size and very humble in his appearance, but actually he is highly pervert and wicked.¹ (7)

[Laxman was so mischievous that he still did not relent, but had a ready-made retort for Parashuram's asking Janak to remove him from sight and earshot. So—]

Laxman muttered to himself and said, 'Well, if one closes one's eyes, no one would be seen by him, and for all practical purposes he is left alone. [In other words, why is Parashuram not closing his eyes instead of asking him to leave the venue? If he does so, he will have an additional benefit—he won't be able to see the broken bow, the mere sight of which is keeping his anger alive.]²' (8)

[Note—¹In his exasperation, sage Parashuram turned to Janak in order to ensure that Laxman is made to keep quiet somehow, and not aggravate the already bitter feeling between them any further, because he thought that the king, being the host of the ceremony, would be able to restrain Laxman more effectively than either his elder brother Ram or his Guru sage Vishwamitra for till now they seem to be helpless in taming Laxman and prevailing upon him to shut up.

Lord Ram had attempted to quieten Laxman (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos. 276 and 278), but it had little impact on the latter. Perhaps this is because Laxman and Lord Ram shared a very congenial brotherly relationship with each other that kept them very close and made them love each other so dearly that neither of them was afraid that he would physically be harmed by the other. After all, Laxman had become angry because sage Parashuram was unnecessarily throwing a spanner in the wheel by trying to obstruct Lord Ram's marriage ceremony and insulting him by threatening to kill him for breaking the bow. It was a duty of Laxman to give moral and physical support to his brother when he is alone to face an angry and powerful adversary as the sage. Laxman just could not tolerate someone saying unpleasant words to Lord Ram or acting in a hostile manner with the Lord whom he loved most dearly.

Instead of strongly admonishing Laxman for his insolent behaviour in public, Lord Ram had sought his pardoning from Parashuram. The same thing was done by sage Vishwamitra when he too asked Parashuram to excuse Laxman, instead of scolding the latter to behave with respect with the renowned sage—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 275.

Neither Lord Ram nor sage Vishwamitra had condemned Laxman for his misbehaviour. On the contrary, king Janak had declared that "Laxman must stop; his behaviour and words are very inappropriate"—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 278. Therefore, Parashuram had some hopes from Janak that he may sternly pull up Laxman for his persistent impertinent and insolent behaviour because, being the host of the ceremony, it was the duty of Janak to maintain order and decency in the assembly.

The stunned Parashuram was left with no option but to seek Janak's help and intervention, with the hope that he, being the host and the ruler of the realm, would be in a better position to prevail upon his guest (Laxman) to mind his behaviour at least till the time he resides within the boundaries of his rule, for any irreverent behaviour shown to a great sage of Parashuram's stature by his guest, with the host (Janak) looking the other way and not taking any action, would be a very-very bad thing to happen, an event that would have a long-term ignominious consequences for the host king and his reputation.

So, what should Janak do to avoid the situation from slipping out of hand? He must remove Laxman from the site; send him out of sight by telling him to leave the arena and sit down somewhere else, out of sight and earshot of Parashuram.

²Earlier we have read that sage Vishwamitra had also muttered under his breath to say in essence that Parashuram seems to be hallucinating—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 275.

Laxman smiled at Parashuram's loss of sense and mental bearing because he is babbling incoherently, saying inconsistent things. First he had said that he would kill Laxman with his battle-axe (refer: Baal Kand—Doha no. 272 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 274; again Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275). Then he said that he is unable to lift his hands to kill Laxman and his axe has become stupefied (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280). And now he says that he will send Laxman to hell, i.e. to 'Jampur' which is the abode of the god of death (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 280).

In other words it is clear that Parashuram won't be able to do anything that he threatens to do. He is making a clown of himself by such nonsensical statements. Unable to carry out his threats, he now wants Laxman out of the venue.

Not only this; he lost hopes from Lord Ram and sage Vishwamitra. So he has now turned for help to king Janak. He is behaving in a ridiculous manner like a man not certain of himself.

So, Laxman made the comments as narrated in the present verse no. 8 in a low voice ostensibly to himself, but with a sharp smirk and a sneer on his face, and loud enough so that Parashuram could hear it!]

दो०. परसुरामु तब राम प्रति बोले उर अति क्रोधु ।
संभु सरासनु तोरि सठ करसि हमार प्रबोधु ॥ २८० ॥

dōhā.

parasurāmu taba rāma prati bōlē ura ati krōdhu.
sambhu sarāsanu tōri saṭha karasi hamāra prabōdhu. 280.

Then, Parashuram turned to Lord Ram in a very angry mood and said—'Oh you wicked fellow! You have first broken the (revered) bow of Lord Shiva, and now you give me a lecture, you teach me wise lessons! (Doha no. 280)

[Note—It is obvious that Parashuram's anger is directed more at Laxman than at Lord Ram because he had just overheard the former saying that "if one closes his eyes, no one would matter to him" when the angry sage wanted Laxman out of sight and earshot—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 280. Parashuram took this statement of Laxman as a preaching, as if Laxman was teaching him a lesson as to how one can avoid someone who irritates him. Unable to face the irritating younger brother for fear of further insult, Parashuram preferred to deal with the elder brother who appeared to be docile, polite and more decent as compared to his younger sibling.

Besides this above conclusion we may also say that Parashuram was directly referring to Lord Ram's advice that the Lord had given him earlier. For instance, in which Lord Ram had essentially advised the sage that "he should forgive Laxman as the latter is merely a child, and children do not have the proper sense to decide how to behave with whom, and that elders should overlook mischief of innocent children".

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 277; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 279.

This Doha also shows that by this time Parashuram had become fully aware that the bow had been broken by Lord Ram.]

चौ०. बंधु कहइ कटु संमत तोरें । तू छल बिनय करसि कर जोरें ॥ १ ॥
करु परितोषु मोर संग्रामा । नाहिं त छाड़ कहाउब रामा ॥ २ ॥
छलु तजि करहि समरु सिवद्रोही । बंधु सहित न त मारउँ तोही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bandhu kaha'i kaṭu sammata tōrēm. tū chala binaya karasi kara jōrēm. 1.
karu paritōṣu mōra saṅgrāmā. nāhiṁ ta chāṛa kahā'uba rāmā. 2.
chalu taji karahi samaru sivadrōhī. bandhu sahita na ta māra'um' tōhī. 3.

Your brother has your hidden (subtle) consent when he says such irritating and scorching words, and makes such scathing remarks at me. [For, otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to say things that he has said, and you wouldn't have taken his side by asking me to forgive him.]

And you are so cunning that you pray to me by holding your hands together as if to show how nice and submissive you are.¹ (1)

Satisfy me in a battle, or stop calling yourself a 'Ram'.² (2)

You, the enemy of Lord Shiva, must fight with me without employing any cunning tricks; otherwise I would kill you along with your brother.³ (3)

[Note—¹Sage Parashuram assumed that Laxman had his elder brother's tacit support in confronting him and using scathing remarks for him. In Parashuram's views, Lord Ram has used Laxman as a front-man to rebuke the sage, and still pretend to be innocent and very polite. Otherwise, it is just not possible that Laxman would go on and on with his obtrusive and insolent behaviour without his elder brother telling him to shut up.

Parashuram in effect tells the Lord that he is very cunning and mischievous like his younger sibling. While he has given his subtle nod to Laxman to confront the sage, he himself pretends to be the holy-cow, docile and submissive, asking for mercy and forgiveness.

²By saying "stop calling yourself 'Ram' if you can't defeat me in an honest battle", Parashuram means that if Lord Ram can't defeat him in an even fight where no dirty tricks are played and only valour and skill are employed, then he will lose the right to call himself a warrior of this name, i.e. a warrior whose name incorporates the word "Ram", and thereby demean the greatness that is inherently attached with the word "Ram".

In other words, Parashuram says that the word "Ram" has great importance and it cannot be taken lightly; it is associated with someone who is the invincible conqueror of the world, the Supreme Lord of the world. A weak, wicked, pretentious and imbecile person has no right to use this great word as his name. In fact, the word "Ram" is called the 'Tarak Mantra', the spiritual formula which gives liberation,

deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of a creature. This is a universal doctrine accepted in the Upanishads, and an entire Upanishad known as the Ram Tapini Upanishad, having two elaborate divisions, is dedicated to it.

Lord Ram is the personified form of the Supreme Being, known in the Upanishads as “Brahm”, and in the Purans as the “Viraat Purush” or Lord Vishnu. It is only the Lord who has the right to call himself with this great name that has divinity and supremacy in this creation attached to it in a natural way.

So, Parashuram tells Lord Ram that it would be a matter of great shame and an issue that would need an immediate remedial action in the form of severe punishment if the latter can’t prove himself to be the original “Ram” as implied by the name. If that happens then clearly he is an imposter who is deceiving the world by using such a holy name, and therefore he (Parashuram) would punish him with death.

An interesting deduction can be made here. Sage Parashuram was not an ordinary Brahmin sage; he was very learned and well-versed in the scriptures. He must have known what the word “Ram” refers to in the scriptures. He must have also read in the Purans that time and again Lord Vishnu had taken the form of a human to overcome evil forces represented by the demons, and one such incarnation of Lord Vishnu was named “Ram”.

So he had become suspicious about who this particular prince calling himself ‘Ram’ was—because, by his own admission, he was surprised that his axe and his hand have refused to obey him when he tried to lift them to punish Laxman, and so he was forced to let-off the offender though it was completely against his nature. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 280.

Besides this, he was fully aware that to break the mighty bow of Lord Shiva was not a joke; only the Supreme Being himself could do it because no living being, either of the mortal world where humans live, or of the world where Spirits such as the various categories of gods and demi-gods live, can ever dare to destroy anything belonging to Shiva who himself is the “Maha Deva”, the Great God who is superior to all the gods in creation.

Therefore there must be surely some mystery in the whole episode of the breaking of the bow by this young prince. Parashuram was curious to find out what it was. Hence, he used this ploy of a battle to find out the truth, because if this prince was the real “Ram”, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, it was sure that his identity would be revealed. Perhaps even Lord Shiva, Parashuram’s Guru, would intervene to restrain the sage from raising his weapons against the Supreme Lord of creation as it would be a horrendous sin that would be unpardonable. On the other hand, if this prince was an imposter, then Parashuram was determined to avenge his insult as well as the implied insult of Lord Shiva when the Lord’s bow was broken.

³This is what sage Parashuram meant when he said he would kill the two brothers if Lord Ram can’t ‘satisfy’ him in battle—i.e. if Lord Ram can’t convince him that he is indeed Lord Vishnu.]

भृगुपति बकहिं कुठार उठाएँ । मन मुसुकाहिं रामु सिर नाएँ ॥ ४ ॥
 गुनह लखन कर हम पर रोषू । कतहुँ सुधाइहु ते बड़ दोषू ॥ ५ ॥
 टेढ़ जानि सब बंदइ काहू । बक्र चंद्रमहि ग्रसइ न राहू ॥ ६ ॥

bhṛgupati bakahiṁ kuṭhāra uṭhā'ēm̃. mana musukāhiṁ rāmu sira nā'ēm̃. 4.
 gunaha lakhana kara hama para rōṣū. katahum̃ sudhā'ihu tē baṛa dōṣū. 5.
 ṭērha jāni saba banda'i kāhū. bakra candramahi grasa'i na rāhū. 6.

Bhṛigupati (sage Parashuram) was ranting and raving angrily with his raised hands that held the axe. [Parashuram continued to adopt a hostile posture, threatening to hit Lord Ram with his battle-axe.]

Meanwhile, Lord Ram smiled and politely lowered his head.¹ (4)

[Lord Ram said to Parashuram—] ‘The fault is of Laxman’s (that he has spoken out boldly before you, whose words and behaviour has provoked you so much because you took them as an affront, but upon whom you could not carry out your threats of severe punishment of killing him with your axe), and ironically now you are venting your anger upon me, and making me a scapegoat for your inability to punish him who has actually stoked the fire of wrath in you by boldly confronting you with impunity, and that too in full court, under full public scrutiny.

Indeed, sometimes it is true that politeness, humbleness and civility is a bane instead of being a virtue for the person who practices it². (5)

Verily, if a person is wicked and crooked, (if people know that annoying or irritating him even slightly would invariably invite bitter scorn and a ‘bite like that of a wasp’—refer: Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 279), everyone would show him respect, everyone would be courteous towards him (though this show of respect and courtesousness is superficial and done just to avoid any direct confrontation with him.

Indeed it is true as reflected in the case of the moon. Rahu (the mythological demon) does not devour a crooked (crescent) moon (for the fear of it getting stuck in its throat, lacerating it as well as causing suffocation)³. (6)

[Note—¹Why did Lord Ram ‘smile’? It was a sarcastic smile because by now Parashuram’s boast had been exposed, and he could do nothing to punish Laxman though the latter had boldly confronted the sage and unrelentingly answered him back in the same tone as the sage threatened him. The sage had himself conceded a moment ago that he is astonished why his hands are not moving ahead to strike his opponent with the axe (refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 280 above), and he has till now threatened in vain to kill the two brothers umpteen numbers of time. He has lost all sense of self-respect and propriety because in spite of proving himself in vain and incompetent to harm the two brothers he continues to make a mockery of himself by once again raising his axe as if to strike Lord Ram with it.

Why did Lord Ram lower his head? Well, the Lord lowered his head for two reasons. One was to tell the sage that instead of threats he should go ahead and use his axe on him by bringing it down on the Lord’s neck, if he can do it, that is. This will be clear from Chaupai line no. 7 herein below. And if he can’t do it, then it is high time that he stops this rubbish of boastful talk, and behave in a responsible manner like a sage of his stature should.

The second reason was to placate the angry sage and show him that the Lord does not want to confront and insult Parashuram in any way at all because he was a respectable sage as well as a Brahmin who was born in the illustrious race of an ancient and respected sage by the name of Bhṛigu. Lowering the head or bowing it

before someone is a sign of respect and submission, and a gesture of seeking forgiveness and grace.

Lord Ram wished to reply to Parashuram's accusation that he was pretending to be humble and submissive while not only condoning his younger brother's misbehaviour but also giving a tacit support to the latter and signalling him secretly to go ahead and teach Parashuram a lesson. We have read that the angry sage has called Lord Ram 'cunning and pretentious' because on the one hand the Lord pretends to ask for forgiveness and on the other hand he signals Laxman to tease and insult the sage. Refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281 herein above.

Now, even Lord Ram would adopt a stern posture as we shall find out in the following verses because he feels that Parashuram understands only one language—and it is the language of toughness, rebuke, tit-for-tat, and hard talk. The sage won't yield to politeness; he thinks that a polite man is a coward. Being polite and civil with Parashuram would not stop him from continuing with his ranting and raving, his fretting and fuming, though it serves no purpose and shows him in a very poor light.

²Lord Ram said: "Oh sage, it is Laxman who has offended you, but unable to get square with him, you seem to avenge your hurt ego by directing your wrath at me because I am submitting myself before you and show politeness to you in deference to your exalted stature as being a Brahmin sage. My gesture of politeness and respect towards you is being misinterpreted by you as my weakness. So you have decided to seek revenge with me after you have failed miserably to settle your accounts with Laxman who was a proper match for you and a perfect antidote for your inflated ego.

I am polite with you unlike Laxman, so you have decided to be harsh with me. I have discovered to my dismay the truth of the adage that more often than not, good manners lead a man to more discomfiture than his being rude and ill-humoured in certain situations, for it scares the adversary away."

³Rahu is a demon who has a boon that he can eat the moon to squeeze out its nectar in order to derive his nourishment because his trunk had been severed by Lord Vishnu's discus during an event dating back to the churning of the celestial ocean by the gods and the demons. This story is narrated earlier as note no. 3 that accompanies Chaupai line no. 2 which precedes Doha no. 238 of this chapter known as Baal Kand of this book Ram Charit Manas.

Though Rahu devours a full moon, which according to mythology is the cause of the lunar eclipse, he is scared of eating the moon that has a carved-out edge, the edge which is curved like a sickle, or in other words 'an edge that is not perfectly rounded as during the night of the full moon', i.e. the 'crescent moon', because Rahu is afraid that this shape of the moon will cut his mouth, lacerate his throat, and cause grave injury to him, even leading to suffocation and death.

This metaphor is employed by Lord Ram to mean that the angry sage Parashuram has started avoiding Laxman now because he has discovered to his dismay and chagrin that Laxman would retort viciously and sting him like a wasp if the sage says anything more to the latter. But it's such an irony that finding Lord Ram polite and submissive and civil, Parashuram has decided to vent his anger at him.]

राम कहेउ रिस तजिअ मुनीसा । कर कुठारु आगेँ यह सीसा ॥ ७ ॥

जेहिं रिस जाइ करिअ सोइ स्वामी । मोहि जानिअ आपन अनुगामी ॥ ८ ॥

rāma kahē'u risa taji'a munīsā. kara kuṭhāru āgēm yaha sīsā. 7.
jēhīr̄ risa jā'i kari'a sō'i svāmī. mōhi jāni'a āpana anugāmī. 8.

Lord Ram said to sage Parashuram—‘Oh sage, get rid of your anger and calm down. You have your axe in your hand, and my lowered head is in front of you. (7)

Oh Lord (svāmī), do anything you wish by which your anger may subside. [To wit, if you want to use your axe upon me, go ahead and do so.] But remember that I am your humble follower, and have submitted myself before you, before you take any impulsive action.

[In other words, be careful that the world is watching you and it knows that I have surrendered before you. Remember: If you harm me in any way by taking any reckless action in the context of your inability of harming my younger brother Laxman who had stood up against your threats and rantings, the world would not forgive you; you will invite the harshest of scorn and the greatest of ignominy by harming me. It would clearly mean that Laxman was right in beating you in your own game; he was right in giving you the bitter dose of medicine that you deserve.

And be warned also that Laxman is watching you. Be careful with your actions and hands. Remember: If you do decide to hurt me with your axe, Laxman would pounce upon you and cut-off your hands even before they reach my neck. Don't blame me later on for being instrumental in dismembering your body!] (8)

[Note—Parashuram was itching to strike with the axe though he has himself admitted that he won't be able to do so. Refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 280.

So Lord Ram knew that Parashuram won't be able to harm him. But the Lord did not wish to give Parashuram a chance to say that he had not used his axe at him because he the Lord had begged for mercy and requested to spare his life. Instead, Lord Ram has invited Parashuram to use his axe on his neck as the Lord has lowered his head before Parashuram and told him to do anything he likes.

Hence, Parashuram could no longer boast of showing mercy or pity. He will have to admit in open court that he could not hurt either Laxman or Lord Ram as he was indeed 'full of wind' (i.e. boastful and pretentious) as Laxman has said earlier in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 280.

So we see that Parashuram's anger has made him red-faced and an object of pity himself. Whatever dignity and respect he had for himself in the eyes of the people were crushed to pieces by his own anger and haughty nature. Indeed what Laxman had said in Doha no. 277 earlier has proved itself to be true in case of Parashuram—“that anger is at the root of all evil, that one loses his senses and wisdom under its evil influences, thereby inviting ill name for himself by behaving in an evil manner”.]

दो०. प्रभुहि सेवकहि समरु कस तजहु बिप्रबर रोसु।
बेषु बिलोकें कहेसि कछु बालकहू नहिं दोसु ॥ २८१ ॥

dōhā.

prabhuhi sēvakahi samaru kasa tajahu biprabara rōsu.
bēṣu bilōkēm kahēsi kachu bālahāhū nahim dōsu. 281.

Why, there is no question of a battle or any kind of confrontation or a showdown between a humble servant and his lord (prabhuhi sēvakahi samaru kasa); it's unthinkable and ridiculous. So, oh exalted sage, discard your anger and be calmed down.

[Here, Lord Ram has compared sage Parashuram with the 'lord', and himself with a 'servant'. A servant always obeys his master; he cannot imagine of fighting with his lord.]

This boy (i.e. Laxman) has said something that has irritated you, but even then it is not entirely his fault. He has said whatever he said when he saw your appearances and your demeanours.

[Laxman in effect said, "Oh sage! Your appearance is more like a warrior than like a sage or hermit. Had your demeanours been like a sage and hermit who is expected to be calm, serene, munificent, smiling, friendly, contented and welcoming, one who inspires confidence and warmth and invites automatic respect and reverence from the person in front, instead of spreading terror and affright among the masses like you have done, I would naturally have treated you with the greatest of respect that would have surpassed what others may have shown to you.

But the problem is that your behaviour, visage and countenance give a signal that is quite the contrary. You had started shouting and threatening as soon as you stepped here. Tell me honestly then, is this becoming of a person who claims himself to be a respectful sage and a hermit and a Brahmin? Say then, how can you expect an inexperienced boy like me, who does not even recognise you, or knows who you actually are and about your exalted pedigree, to show respect to you in the light of your wielding the battle-axe threateningly at me and the rash way you are behaving, hopping and jumping madly here and there?

Therefore, the fault of this meeting turning so sour and dour, getting more hostile and bitter by the passage of each moment, with the accompanying verbal spat between you and me, actually lies with you and not with me!'] (Doha no. 281)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 268 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; (ii) Doha no. 273 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 282 that follows herein below.]

चौ०. देखि कुठार बान धनु धारी । भै लरिकहि रिस बीरु बिचारी ॥ १ ॥
नामु जान पै तुहहि न चीन्हा । बंस सुभायँ उतरु तेहिं दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi kuṭhāra bāna dhanu dhārī. bhai larikahi risa bīru bicārī. 1.
nāmu jāna pai tumhahi na cīnhā. bansa subhāyam' utaru tēhim dīnhā. 2.

When he (Laxman) saw your battle-axe, the arrow and the bow, he thought that you were some warrior, and in his childishness¹ he became annoyed and angry. (1)

In spite of coming to know your name², he could not recognise you and your potentially fully, and therefore he replied to you in a way to which he is accustomed to in accordance with the race to which he belongs³.

[To wit, Laxman replied to you in a way that all princes belonging to the Kshatriya race are accustomed to. They cannot tolerate anyone threatening them and trying to brow-beat them into submission with boastful talk and pretensions, wielding weapons at them and raving boastfully about their killing sprees. When you claimed that you had killed Sahastrabaahu and the Kshatriya kings at random, it simply meant that you were threatening Laxman with the same fate. Why, couldn't you have said calmly at the outset that you had immense mystical powers by doing severe Tapa, that you had pleased Lord Shiva, that since you regard Lord Shiva as your patron deity it is annoying to you that the Lord's bow should be broken by someone, and that it is the prime reason of your getting hurt and angry and you wish to know why this Shiva's bow was broken, before you started yelling and threatening us with death.

Why, even without acquainting yourself with the facts and the ground realities in a calm manner, even without determining whether the bow was broken to willfully insult Shiva or because Shiva himself had disliked it so much that he did not want to keep it with him and had intended it to get rusted and perish in due course of time so as to get rid of its memory, and therefore it was just incidental that it got broken as soon as I (Ram) touched it, you have behaved in an irrational manner that is hostile, belligerent and aggressive, ranting and raving from the instant you had put your feet in the arena? You ought to have clarified matters first and then taken appropriate action, oughtn't you?

Say oh sage, what do you expect from others if you don't behave in a dignified manner befitting your own stature as a great sage, a revered hermit and an honourable Brahmin. In that case, I say in all sooth, Laxman would have paid his obeisance to you for we are taught to show the greatest of respects to elders, especially Brahmins, sages, seers and hermits. If you have any doubts, please ask sage Vishwamitra; he will vouch for every word I am uttering.

But instead of it if you act like a boastful warrior, menacingly threatening vengeance at others for no fault of theirs, then obviously you must be prepared to get a corresponding response from them like the one that Laxman gave you.] (2)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 273, Laxman has himself said that he has spoken rudely with Parashuram because he saw the axe, the bow and the arrow, ensembles of a warrior and not of a sage or a hermit. Therefore, being a warrior prince, Laxman says he replied to Parashuram in a manner befitting a warrior. In this present verse, Lord Ram reiterates the same thing.

Earlier also, Lord Ram had requested the angry sage to pardon Laxman because he was a 'child' ("Sisu") and a 'servant' ("Sevak") of the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 277.

Sage Parashuram has himself accepted that Laxman is a mere child, or an immature boy, and it is because of this that he does not hit him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 272.

²Laxman had said himself that he knew that Parashuram was a son in the family of sage Bhrigu, and therefore a Brahmin—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 273.

So, what Lord Ram meant was that though Laxman knew about Parashuram being a son of the family of Bhrigu, he wasn't aware of the sage's rare personal

spiritual achievements and mystical powers that he had acquired by doing severe Tapa and Yoga (penances and meditation). Laxman treated Parashuram as an ordinary son of some sage, because in ancient times many sages used to marry and have families. One good instance is that of sage Vasistha, the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya to which the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, belonged.

So Laxman thought that Parashuram was some spoilt son of Bhrigu's family who is accustomed to boast and go around throwing his weight on others, threatening them of punishment by invoking his Brahmin race.

Laxman might have also deduced that since Parashuram was a mass murderer of kings and possessed many negative traits such as a short temper, ego, haughtiness, arrogance, recklessness etc., perhaps his father (Jamdagni) was so disgusted by his behaviour that he had thrown him out of his hermitage, disowning him and disinheriting him from the legacy of sage Bhrigu.

³Parashuram had loudly boasted about his many rarities. But these achievements were all of a negative nature, such as for instance his slaying of Sahastrabaahu (Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 271), his famed anger as well as his renown as a perpetual enemy of the Kshatriya race so much so that he had mercilessly killed countless numbers of kings over time and again (Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 272).

This claim of Parashuram—that he had killed Kshatriya kings many times over—had only led to Laxman being enraged as the latter thought that Parashuram was citing these killings to threaten him. And any brave prince worth his name won't tolerate this behaviour; he won't be cowed down by a person who thinks random bloodshed is something of credit and worthy of boasting about.

So, therefore, Laxman replied to Parashuram in a way that is appropriate for a brave and fearless prince.]

जौं तुह्ण औतेहु मुनि की नाई । पद रज सिर सिसु धरत गोसाईं ॥ ३ ॥
छमहु चूक अनजानत केरी । चहिअ बिप्र उर कृपा घनेरी ॥ ४ ॥

jauṁ tumha autēhu muni kī nā'īṁ. pada raja sira sisu dharata gōsā'īṁ. 3.
chamahu cūka anajānata kērī. cahi'a bipra ura kṛpā ghanērī. 4.

Oh sage! Had you appeared to be like a sage and a hermit ("Muni"), this child ("Sisu") would have put his head on the dust of your feet (or, he would have put the dust of your feet to his head) as a mark of showing great respect to you.¹ (3)

So, whatever he has done was done inadvertently and out of ignorance. You should therefore forgive him. Oh sage, a Brahmin ought to have a lot of mercy, grace and kindness in his heart (as this is their special quality that sets them apart from the rest of the society, making them respected and honourable).² (4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram means to tell Parashuram that if the latter had been polite and affable like one expects a learned Brahmin and a renowned sage and hermit to be, Laxman would have shown the greatest respect by putting his head to Parashuram's feet.

This is what they have been taught—to show great respect to elders, to sages and Brahmins. There are ample proofs of it—for instance, when sage Vishwamitra came to Ayodhya to request king Dasrath to send the two brothers with him to his hermitage so that the demons who had been defiling his fire sacrifice could be eliminated, the king had summoned his four sons, i.e. Lord Ram and his other three brothers, and made them bow at the feet of the sage. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 207.

²Lord Ram has subtly and politely chided Parashuram with this observation. Parashuram has become so angry at Laxman because he feels insulted by the latter's behaviour. But for this behaviour of Laxman, it is Parashuram who himself is responsible as has been clearly said in Chaupai line nos. 1-3 herein above. Laxman was a Kshatriya prince, so his behaviour is understandable.

But what defense has Parashuram for his own rowdy behaviour? He has not at all acted in a decent and polite manner like a learned Brahmin or a wise sage, or even a responsible adult should have. Instead, his behaviour reminds one of street urchins, hooligans and pervert ruffians itching for creating nuisance and raucous.

Hence, Lord Ram urges Parashuram to exhibit noble virtues of a Brahmin by showing grace and compassion.]

हमहि तुह्महि सरिबरि कसि नाथा । कहहु न कहाँ चरन कहँ माथा ॥ ५ ॥

राम मात्र लघु नाम हमारा । परसु सहित बड़ नाम तोहारा ॥ ६ ॥

hamahi tumhahi saribari kasi nāthā. kahahu na kahām̃ carana kham̃ māthā.
5.

rāma mātra laghu nāma hamārā. parasu sahita baṛa nāma tōhārā. 6.

Say, how can there be any comparison between me* and you¹?

[*The first word used in this verse is “Hamahi” which has a singular as well as a plural connotation. If the singular meaning is taken, then it would mean ‘me’, a reference to the speaker, which in this case is Lord Ram. However, the plural would be ‘we’, and in this case the verse would mean that Lord Ram includes Laxman when he says that the sage is so exalted and great that there can be no comparison between the two brothers and him. All the anger and fire have no ground, and are raging without any cause.]

Say, how can one compare the feet with the head²?

[This part of the verse may also be read as—“Wherever your holy feet are, I am (or ‘we’ are) ready to put my (or ‘our’) head (s) there to show you respect”.] (5)

My name is a small one, consisting of only one word ‘Ram’, but yours is a big one because it has the prefix ‘Parashu’ attached to it³.

[Parashu + Ram = Parashuram, the name of the sage. Lord Ram means that even in their names, the sage's name is ‘bigger’ as compared to the Lord's name. So, as the Lord has said above, ‘There is no comparison between you and me. Your name has a prefix attached to it, and this prefix, the word ‘Parashu’ meaning an axe, instantly makes you so distinguished amongst all the warriors on this earth. I am merely a humble person with no distinguishing title attached to my name. So oh sage,

how can I ever deem myself to be equal to you. Perish the thought and calm down.’]
(6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has indirectly hinted to sage Parashuram that there is no comparison between them because the Lord is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and Parashuram symbolizes an ordinary creature engulfed in worldly delusions and attachments. Otherwise, if Parashuram is a true hermit and renunciate, why is he so bothered about a gross thing such a bow? Does he not know that Lord Shiva had himself felt disgusted with this bow, and hating to keep it with him he had kept it with the ancestors of king Janak? Notwithstanding the history of this bow, a hermit and a renunciate sage should be detached and dispassionate towards everything related to this mundane gross world; he should be of a loving and compassionate temperament, and not vengeful and acerbic like Parashuram.

Even if Lord Ram’s sublime form as the Supreme Being is overlooked, the Lord has exhibited all the noble virtues and exemplary characters that a good human being should possess. On the other hand, Parashuram has all the negative characters one ought to avoid. So, naturally and obviously there is no comparison. But Parashuram’s anger had so much the better of him that he still could not understand the hidden suggestions in Lord Ram’s statements, and continued with his earlier acrimonious posture.

²The ‘feet’ is the lowest part of the body and is a metaphor for someone who is humble and lowly. On the other hand, the ‘head’ stands for an exalted stature, a high position and of learning. After all, Ram was a Kshatriya prince, and Parashuram was a Brahmin. A Brahmin is always more respectable as compared to any other class in the society. How can a very junior man compare himself to one who is very senior to him in the social hierarchy and pedigree as the feet is to the head?

Lord Ram makes these observations to somehow assuage the sage’s ruffled ego and calm him down. Parashuram was accustomed to outright submission from his opponents, expecting people to fall down at his feet wherever he went, and it was the first time in his life he faced the treatment that Laxman had meted out to him. So, by these polite and prayerful words of humility and humbleness, Lord Ram tries to sooth the sage’s anger and sort of apply an ointment on his wounded ego.

He essentially tells Parashuram that he as well as his brother Laxman fall down at his feet because he is a Brahmin, and so Parashuram should also behave like a true Brahmin by forgiving them and discarding his anger and smitefulness.

³There is a profound spiritual message here. Lord Ram’s name “RAM” (pronounced as “Raam” or “Rāma”) is a great Mantra, a spiritual formula that provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to a creature’s soul. It is therefore known as a ‘Tarak Mantra’, one that takes the living being across the ‘Bhava-Sagar’, the ocean represented by this world of delusions, miseries, birth and death.

Here, the Lord has advised his devotees not to dilute the holiness and divinity of his Tarak Mantra by adding unnecessary letters or words or phrases to it. Let the Holy Name retain its pristine glory by being plain and simple “RAM”.

Another interpretation of this verse is that if someone acts smart by tampering with this holy name by adding letters to it in his enthusiasm to make it look more attractive and effective, he is not only making a fool out of himself but also poisoning the name “RAM” because any addition to it would make it have the same effect as the word “Parashuram” has. That is, just like sage Parashuram possessing all the

characters that are opposite of Lord Ram inspite of having the word “Ram” as part of his name, any tweaking of the Holy Name “RAM” by additions of any kind would make it spiritually ineffective and dangerous for the person who uses it for his spiritual practices. This is because instead of being of any help, it would only create problems for the practitioner just like the prefix ‘Parashu’, which means an ‘axe’, had changed the entire nature and character of a sage from being someone worthy of respect and showing exemplary virtues, to someone who is foul mouthed, someone who is full of rancour, spite and haughtiness, someone who is despised by the world at large.]

देव एकु गुनु धनुष हमारें । नव गुन परम पुनीत तुद्धारें ॥ ७ ॥

सब प्रकार हम तुद्ध सन हारे । छमहु बिप्र अपराध हमारे ॥ ८ ॥

dēva ēku gunu dhanuṣa hamārēm. nava guna parama punīta tumhārēm. 7.
saba prakāra hama tumha sana hārē. chamahu bipra aparādha hamārē. 8.

*Oh Lord! (Another reason why no comparison can be made between your exalted stature and me is as follows—) While I have only one quality, and it is that I have a bow which makes me a warrior, you have nine divine qualities¹. [So, obviously you are much senior to me in every respect.]

[*This verse can be read as follows also—“Oh Lord! While my bow has only one quality, and it is to win wars, your bow has nine divine qualities in it, so where is a comparison between the two of us?”²] (7)

Nevertheless, I* have accepted defeat in every possible way (or, I am inferior to you in all possible way, and I as well as my younger brother Laxman have no intention whatever either to show any disrespect to you or confront you).

So oh Brahmin! I apologise to you and request you to please forgive my faults (by showing tolerance, fortitude, understanding, magnanimity, graciousness and maturity of thought behoving your exalted stature).³] (8)

[*Once again, if the word “Hama” used in the text is technically interpreted to mean a plural pronoun, then Lord Ram includes Laxman in requesting sage Parashuram to pardon them. So, the Lord says—“We have accepted that we are much inferior to you in all possible way and means. Now respected Brahmin, please pardon us for our inadvertent mistakes, for we are but children before you and expect a fatherly treatment from your exalted self.”] (8)

[Note—¹The ‘nine divine qualities’ mentioned by Lord Ram are the nine auspicious and noble virtues that are inherently present in a Brahmin as well as in a sage. They are the following—Sham (equanimity; evenness of mind; tranquility), Dam (self-restraint), Tapa (penance and austerity), Shauch (cleanliness and purity, external and internal), Kshama (forgiveness, forbearance), Aarjav (straightforwardness; honesty in behaviour and talk), Gyan and Vigyan (knowledge and self-realisation), and Vishwas (belief in God; faith and conviction). Refer: Krishna’s Gita, 18/42.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284 also.

So in essence, Lord Ram told sage Parashuram that he (Ram) is merely a warrior, but Parashuram is a warrior who is a Brahmin as well. So Parashuram should

keep in mind his exalted position and act accordingly. Whatever had happened till now was justified in the light of the fact that it was a face-off between two brave warrior, but Parashuram must realize that his position was unique because besides being a warrior he is also an exalted Brahmin. As a warrior it is alright that he threatened his adversary and opponent (Laxman and Lord Ram) with severe punishment by killing them with his axe for their supposedly misdeeds, but being a Brahmin it is now expected of him that he would put all bitterness behind when his purported enemy has surrendered before him and is ready to put his head on his feet (refer: Chaupai line nos. 3 and 5 that precede Doha no. 282).

Now, Parashuram must exhibit the noble characters of a sage and a Brahmin by forgiving the two brothers and bless them instead.

²The second interpretation would be as follows—For a warrior, his bow is his identity, his insignia and a symbol of his authority. Similarly, for a Brahmin and a sage, his nine noble virtues listed above are his identity, a sign of his moral authority and superiority in society. So, Lord Ram praises sage Parashuram by telling him that he, being a sage and a Brahmin, has as many as nine good qualities in him in addition to his abilities as a warrior which is evident in the form of his axe, bow and arrow.

³Lord Ram has asked Parashuram to forgive him and his younger brother by giving two independent reasons. For Laxman the Lord says he should be forgiven because he is an inexperienced child who does not know what to say to whom, and who could not recognize who truly Parashuram was. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 279; (ii) Doha no. 281; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 282.}

For himself Lord Ram says that he has always respected Parashuram, never teased him, and considers himself very junior as compared to the exalted stature of the Brahmin sage. Lord Ram even hinted that he has admonished Laxman for his behaviour which is anyhow excusable given his basic nature not to submit to threats and his level of maturity which is still like a child. So he deserves, and must be, pardoned. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 276; (ii) Doha no. 278; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; (v) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 281; and finally (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 282.}

दो०. बार बार मुनि बिप्रबर कहा राम सन राम ।

बोले भृगुपति सरुष हसि तहूँ बंधु सम बाम ॥ २८२ ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra muni biprabara kahā rāma sana rāma.

bōlē bhrgupati saruṣa hasi tahūṁ bandhu sama bāma. 282.

Lord Ram addressed his namesake (i.e. Parashuram) by using honourable epithets such as calling the latter ‘a sage and a hermit’ (“muni”) or an ‘exalted Brahmin’ (“biprabara”) in order to show respect to Parashuram and try to calm his anger down.

But unfortunately Parashuram took even this show of reverence as an affront and a taunt. So he smiled wryly, and angrily said to Lord Ram—‘You are also as wicked as your brother.’ (Doha no. 282)

[Note—Parashuram has become so biased and devoid of rational thinking due to his anger that even harmless gestures are taken in the wrong light by him. This episode teaches us that when one is angry, no matter what we do to make him see reason and overcome his anger, the angry person won't understand anything because of his prejudices.

Parashuram has earlier also accused Lord Ram of being wicked and cunning as the latter purportedly has given his tacit support to Laxman when the latter was answering him back, while pretending to be nice and humble by asking for forgiveness—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 281.

Angry as he was, he took every gesture and every harmless word as a taunt and insult. Now he has gone beyond limits by interpreting such innocuous words as a 'Brahmin' and a 'sage' as teasing.]

चौ०. निपटहिं द्विज करि जानहि मोही । मैं जस बिप्र सुनावउँ तोही ॥ १ ॥
 चाप स्रुवा सर आहुति जानू । कोपु मोर अति घोर कृसानू ॥ २ ॥
 समिधि सेन चतुरंग सुहाई । महा महीप भए पसु आई ॥ ३ ॥
 मैं एहिं परसु काटि बलि दीन्हे । समर जग्य जप कोटिन्ह कीन्हे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

nipaṭahim̐ dvija kari jānahi mōhī. maim̐ jasa bipra sunāva'um̐ tōhī. 1.
 cāpa sruvā sara āhuti jānū. kōpu mōra ati ghōra kṛsānū. 2.
 samidhi sēna caturaṅga suhāī. mahā mahīpa bha'ē pasu āī. 3.
 maim̐ ēhim̐ parasu kāṭi bali dīnhē. samara jagya japa kōṭinha kīnhē. 4.

[Parashuram ego was so hurt by now that instead of grasping at the opportunity to quit the futile confrontation that leads him nowhere and only causes him more and more embarrassment, he started boasting about his achievements and valour once again in an attempt to bolster his self-esteem and assuage his ruffled ego. So, the sage outlined his achievements as a fearless and invincible warrior when he told Lord Ram—] 'You know me to be merely a Brahmin. What sort of Brahmin I am, I will tell you now.

[To wit, you (Ram) underestimate my potentials and powers, thinking that I am an ordinary Brahmin, and you say you give me respect just by the virtue of my being a Brahmin. But you don't know that I am not an ordinary Brahmin, but someone who stands apart from the run-of-the-mill Brahmins you are talking about. I have certain special qualities in me which I shall enumerate now, and which has set me apart from the rest of the Brahmin race. Therefore, I deserve special treatment even in the community of Brahmins. How dare you show disrespect to me?]¹ (1)

[I, Parashuram, will now describe to you the symbolic fire sacrifice that I do as a Brahmin.] You (Lord Ram) must know and understand that my bow is like the ladle used to offer oblations to the sacred fire, while my arrows are the offerings themselves. My formidable anger is equivalent to the blazing fire of the sacrifice. (2)

The firewood used in this sacrifice (known as the "Samidha") consists of the four wonderful wings of the army of kings (represented by the horses, the chariots, the

elephants and the foot-soldiers, the infantry). The sacrificial animal of the great fire sacrifice that I do is represented by great kings whom I slay in battle. (3)

I have used this battle-axe of mine to kill them to complete my sacrifice, and in this way I have completed countless such sacrifices in the form of battles and wars, all the while muttering sacrificial Mantras (i.e. doing ‘Japa’ or repetition of sacred hymns or formulas) in the form of war cries as part of the ritual.² (4)

[Note—¹We see that Parashuram is still not satisfied and wants to brag more of his achievements. A Brahmin’s main duty in ancient times was to perform fire sacrifices. A fire sacrifice involves many basic steps. Parashuram uses these steps as metaphors to emphasise that he is a ‘Warrior Brahmin’, and not one who merely sits around a sacred fire chanting abstract Mantras. When we read the following verse nos. 2-4 we will see that he regards his martial skills and maneuverings in battle as being equivalent to the skills a normal Brahmin has in completing rituals of a fire sacrifice successfully.

Hence, Parashuram wishes to tell Lord Ram that he deserves double respect—one as a Brahmin, and other for being a great warrior, a respect that is usually reserved for a Kshatriya king. In other words, he wants to stress that in the human race he is perhaps the only person who embodies the greatness of a Brahmin as well as of a Kshatriya. Therefore, he deserves to be revered, shown respect to and honoured both as a learned Brahmin who leads the society in religious matters, as well as a Kshatriya who gives protection to the society from being harmed by others.

This observation by Parashuram is motivated by Lord Ram’s statement that “in all respects, sage Parashuram is senior to him”. Parashuram wants to make it known that he is senior not only because he is born a Brahmin, but also because he possesses grand qualities of great warriors. A born-Brahmin may not always deserve a high degree of respect if he does not live up to the expectations one has from him by the virtue of his birth in the exalted race in which he is born, as is true in the case of Parashuram—because he shows many negative traits that are unwelcome in a Brahmin. For instance, he is notorious for his anger, intolerance, lack of restraint, desire for revenge, haughtiness, boastfulness, killing sprees etc., nothing that behoves of a noble Brahmin. Even Lord Ram has hinted at it in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

So, sage Parashuram tries to defend himself here that he may lack in some of the eclectic qualities of a Brahmin, but he has compensated for them by possessing some other grand qualities that also invite equal respect and honour—such as the qualities and abilities of a great warrior. A warrior is highly respected by the entire society because he is the one under whose protective umbrella even the Brahmins live in peace.

So in effect Parashuram snubs Lord Ram and scoffs at his statements that he (Ram) is junior to Parashuram—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 282. ‘Yes indeed it is so; what’s new in it’—the angry sage implies to tell the Lord. ‘While you (Lord Ram) are merely a ‘Kshatriya’ prince, I, Parashuram, combine the goodness of a Brahmin as well as a Kshatriya. So how can you compare yourself with me?’

‘Yes indeed’, Parashuram wishes to declare to the assembly while speaking to Lord Ram, ‘I am definitely senior to Lord Ram because I possess the qualities of a warrior, and therefore twice as much honourable and worthy of respect too because I

am a Brahmin also! If this is the case, then aren't the two brothers ashamed of themselves for humiliating me in the way they have done?'

²This statement of sage Parashuram is an answer to Laxman and to Lord Ram who have independently told him that his martial appearances as evidenced by his holding of an axe, a bow and an arrow had led Laxman to believe that he was a 'warrior'. Refer: Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 273; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 282; and (iii) Doha no. 281 respectively.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram has treated him as a mere 'Brahmin'. Refer: Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 279; (ii) Doha no. 281; (iii) Doha no. 282 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

Besides this, Lord Ram's advice to Parashuram to discard anger and show mercy at them was also taken in the wrong light by the sage. He regarded this advice as a lecture to him. He wants to justify why he is reluctant to show mercy at anyone whom he challenges for a duel. It is because like other normal run-of-the-mill Brahmins who perform fire sacrifices as part of their religious duty, he too performs a fire sacrifice, but with a difference. He uses his bow as a ladle, his arrow as the offering, his anger as the raging fire, and the killing of Kshatriya kings with their huge armies as the sacrifice of the animal done during a routine fire sacrifice. Since sacrificing of an animal is a routine part of a fire sacrifice which cannot be completed without this ritual, Parashuram deems it obligatory to 'sacrifice Kshatriya kings' in order to complete the type of sacrifice he has chosen to do.

A very interesting thing is to be observed here. Though Parashuram has not mentioned here in explicit terms, perhaps because he was too agitated to think coherently, a fire sacrifice remains incomplete without the final donation that is to be given to the priests, the Brahmins, who participate in the performance of the fire sacrifice. Well, Parashuram does that too—after the sacrificial ritual in which he chopped-off the heads of kings in the place of animals, he 'donated the earth to Brahmins as gift'—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272.

So Parashuram seems to defend himself from the charge leveled against him that he has been rampaging around the earth killing kings just because he had become arrogant, haughty, blood-thirsty and mad, or because he found sadistic pleasure in it. He gives this justification for his actions by saying that he treats it as a 'religious obligation because for him it is equivalent to doing a fire sacrifice in the conventional way it is done'.

This being the case, he is not sinful or guilty of mass murder or bloodshed by killing Kshatriya kings on the one hand, and of being short-tempered and spouting vitriol, fire and brimstone on the other hand. It is a part of his religious vows; it is the way he has chosen for himself to do the fire sacrifice that a Brahmin must do.

After all, a Brahmin is also guilty of killing an innocent animal during the final rituals of a fire sacrifice when the animal is killed by cutting-off of its head in the name of 'offering of sacrifice'; obviously it is technically a murder of an innocent and helpless creature who is not even given a chance to defend itself. At least Parashuram gives the kings whom he 'sacrifices' a level playing field when he wages a war against them, for they are openly given a chance to either defend themselves or defeat him. In this context any neutral observer would agree that Parashuram was less sinful than other Brahmins who performed fire sacrifice involving killing of animals.

One more important thing comes to the mind in this context. The fire sacrifice was of two types—one that the Brahmins did in their households as a regular form of

personal worship of the Fire God, and the other that was organized by kings on large scale as a state affair. Animals were sacrificed in the second type of fire sacrifices—i.e. the one that was organized by kings. The Brahmins were the ones who actually did the rituals, and the king was the patron. The rewards of such sacrifices were deemed to accrue to the kings, and only a minute fraction went to the Brahmin priests because they received monetary rewards in lieu of their efforts. The killing of an innocent animal is a heinous crime and a sinful act by all accounts, and no amount of justifications can condone this act. Since animal sacrifice was a part of such fire sacrifices, those who participated in it, those who actually killed the animal, those who ordered it to be killed, those who financed this crime—in short, everyone involved in this heinous crime was guilty of snuffing out an innocent life. That is, both the patron king as well as the Brahmin priest was equally guilty of murder and bloodshed in the false premise of doing something religious. The king was doubly guilty—because he was instrumental in making the Brahmins commit this crime. Left to themselves, the Brahmins wouldn't have done it, as they do not kill any animal in the personal fire worship they do regularly in their individual households.

If the reward of the fire sacrifice went to the king, the punishment of the crime of killing an innocent, helpless and harmless creature, shrieking for mercy and compassion, too should be of the king. This is one prime reason why Parashuram, on the behalf of the entire Brahmin race, went on killing the kings to punish them for luring the Brahmins to commit the grave crime of killing an animal in the name of a sacrificial ritual.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272.

One wonders that if Parashuram had killed the Kshatriya kings repeatedly, how come the two great dynasties of the time, i.e. the Raghu dynasty of Ayodhya and the Nimi dynasty of Janakpur survived?

The answer is found in Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 242, verse no. 159 where Parashuram has himself told Lord Ram that the descendants of the 'Ikshwaku dynasty' belonged to the line of kings tracing its origin to Parashuram's maternal grandfather. Therefore, he can't kill them. Both these two dynasties, i.e. the Raghu dynasty to which Lord Ram belonged, and the Nimi dynasty to which Sita belonged, were off-shoots of the Ikshwaku dynasty.

In Srimad Bhagwat Maha Puran, Skandha 9, Canto 9, verse nos. 4-5, and Canto 10, verse nos. 1-2, sage Shukdeo says that when Parashuram was on the mission of eliminating all the kings from the surface of earth, a son named 'Moolak' was born to king Ashmak. The ladies hid the son and so he escaped being killed by Parashuram. Later on, he became the progenitor of the new generation of kings. After four-five generations in his line, king Raghu was born. Raghu's son was king Aja, and the latter's son was Dasrath. Lord Ram was Dasrath's son.]

मोर प्रभाउ बिदित नहिं तोरें । बोलसि निदरि बिप्र के भोरें ॥ ५ ॥

भंजेउ चापु दापु बड़ बाढ़ा । अहमिति मनहुँ जीति जगु ठाढ़ा ॥ ६ ॥

mōra prabhā'u bidita nahim tōrēm. bōlasi nidari bipra kē bhōrēm. 5.
bhanjē'u cāpu dāpu baṛa bāṛhā. ahamiti manahum' jīti jagu ṭhāṛhā. 6.

You (Lord Ram) are totally unaware of my astounding powers and glories. You call me merely a 'Brahmin' (or, you talk with me as I was merely an ordinary Brahmin). (5)

By breaking the bow you have become very haughty and stand here thinking that you have done some stupendous deed, making you behave as if you have conquered the world!' (6)

[Note—Parashuram means to say that Lord Ram thinks he is a great warrior by breaking a creaky bow, and it has led him to become bold enough to dare to take a stand against the mighty sage by speaking out fearlessly to him and giving excuses for the misdemeanours of his brother, instead of prostrating before the sage and touching his feet, and shaking with fear like the rest of the kings had done when Parashuram had entered the arena—refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 268; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 269.

That is why Parashuram lists his exploits in the battle-field and says that he has used his 'bow' as the ladle for performing the fire sacrifice symbolized by countless wars.

Parashuram was obliquely hinting at Janak who had got this declaration made by his heralds at the beginning of the bow-breaking ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

राम कहा मुनि कहहु बिचारी । रिस अति बड़ि लघु चूक हमारी ॥ ७ ॥
छुअतहिं टूट पिनाक पुराना । मैं केहि हेतु करौं अभिमाना ॥ ८ ॥

rāma kahā muni kahahu bicārī. risa ati baḍi laghu cūka hamārī. 7.
chu'atahirṁ ṭūṭa pināka purānā. mairṁ kēhi hētu karaum abhimānā. 8.

Inspite of all the provocations, Lord Ram maintained his poise and calmly said to the angry sage—'Oh sage, say anything after giving due thought to what you say. Your anger is out of all proportions to the small error that I made.'¹ (7)

The old and worn-out bow broke at my mere touch. Why should or how can I boast of having done anything great, of being brave or valiant?² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram says—“Oh Sage, my small error was that I touched this already fragile, worn-out and rusty bow. I shouldn't have done it. But since it appeared to be extremely sturdy and hard as was evident when even thousands of kings could not move it a bit, I thought there was no harm in my touching it to get a feel of it and to see how it looks from the underside. But I agree that this was an error, for unfortunately the lifespan of the bow was over and it was I who was to be assigned the infamy of being guilty of breaking Shiva's bow. Say, oh sage, how can I ever think of causing insult to Lord Shiva by purposely breaking his bow?

But even as I accept that I did make a mistake of touching this antiquated rusty bow and should have exercised prudence by avoiding it altogether or coming too close to it, your anger is totally uncalled for and out proportion to the damage that was done inadvertently by me. I have repeatedly been pleading with you to forgive us, but you continue to rant and rave. Is this good for you as a Brahmin who needs to practice

forgiveness and compassion? There is after all, no cause for creating such a fuss over an old and decrepit bow. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 282.

²Since I don't claim to have broken the bow, so where is the question of my boasting of breaking it or of having conquered the world in a symbolic manner by this feat as you accuse me of? The bow was rusty and creaking; it was so fragile that when I touched it to examine it out of curiosity, it just crumbled in my hands, split into two and fell down from my hands. So, I can't brag of any great deed. Rather, it was a mistake on my part of not being careful enough while handling an antique item; I should have been more careful and alert while examining it. In fact, I should not have touched it at all. I regret it and apologise for it. What more can I do? My brother has also suggested that let us call an expert and get it repaired, but anger is no solution—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

Inspite of all this, you continue to be angry and vengeful. What should I do; tell me how to calm you down and bring this ugly situation to an end?"

दो०. जौं हम निदरहिं बिप्र बदि सत्य सुनहु भृगुनाथ ।
 तौ अस को जग सुभटु जेहि भय बस नावहिं माथ ॥ २८३ ॥

dōhā.

jaur̥ṁ hama nidarahiṁ bipra badi satya sunahu bhṛgunātha.
tau asa kō jaga subhaṭu jēhi bhaya basa nāvahiṁ mātha. 283.

Listen oh lord of the Bhrigu's race, I am telling you the truth. If, as you claim, I am insulting you because you are a Brahmin¹, then tell me which warrior in this world is so great and gallant that I would bow my head before him just out of fear (Brahmin or no Brahmin)? (Doha no. 283)

[Note—Lord Ram now became a bit serious and stern in his approach to warn the sage not to take things too far from where there is no return. For the sage must be warned that politeness and submissiveness on the part of the Lord is not a sign of weakness or defeat, but merely an attempt to diffuse the situation and avoid a showdown, as well as to show due respect to the sage. So, let the sage not draw the Lord into an ugly situation that would be detrimental to the sage's own good.

Lord Ram addresses sage Parashuram's misplaced belief and grievance that the former is speaking so boldly with the latter, which the latter has incidentally taken as a deemed affront and an insult to him, because the Lord knows that Parashuram can cause no harm to him as he (Parashuram) is a Brahmin who cannot stand a fight with a well-trained Kshatriya (the warrior race; here referring to Lord Ram), and also because a Brahmin has the habit of not harming his opponent no matter what the provocation is. This assurance of no personal harm from a Brahmin, in this case sage Parashuram, perhaps has encouraged Lord Ram to be bold enough to speak before the sage. Otherwise, he and his brother Laxman would have outright submitted themselves before the sage without the daring verbal duel that had happened just a while ago.

It is not the case at all, points out Lord Ram. ‘I am not insulting you, nor have I even the remotest intention to do so. Now that I have submitted before you and beg you for forgiveness is because you are a Brahmin, and not for any other reason whatsoever. For verily and in all sooth, I am not afraid of you or your might because no warrior worth his salt would bow before his opponent without a fight, no matter how powerful and mighty he may be, and even if he is the God of death himself personified. Therefore, all the hue and cry you have caused are totally uncalled for and irrational. Be sure sage that being a Kshatriya prince I am not scared of you that you might kill me, but I bow before you because you are a revered Brahmin. This being the case, there is no ground for assuming that I am insulting you in any remotest way. So please calm down. Any warrior worth his name will never cowardly submit himself before anyone out of fear. If he does submit and lowers his head, then it is out of respect for the other person.’

This was a subtle hint for Parashuram that enough was enough. The sage must not treat Lord Ram’s humility and politeness as a sign of weakness, and thereby go on and on with his angry tirade. The time has come to call it quits, and the sage must be practical and stop this nonsense before it is too late.

Well, does the sage not know who Lord Ram actually was? Did he not know that Lord Ram was a personified form of Lord Vishnu? Why, talking of the breaking of Shiva’s bow and punishing the person who has broken it, was Parashuram not aware that his Guru, Lord Shiva—whose purported insult caused by breaking of the bow had so much infuriated the sage—had himself been defeated at the hands of Lord Vishnu when the two had fought, and ironically this very bow could not save Shiva from defeat?

Parashuram has gone over his head boasting of his many successes in the battle-field, but if he does not stop then Lord Ram would be forced to recount that incident when he, as Lord Vishnu, had trounced Shiva, and this very bow which has become the bone of contention, could not save Shiva from this humiliating defeat.

This story is narrated in a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250.]

चौ०. देव दनुज भूपति भट नाना । समबल अधिक होउ बलवाना ॥ १ ॥

जौं रन हमहि पचारै कोऊ । लरहिं सुखेन कालु किन होऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēva danuja bhūpati bhaṭa nānā. samabala adhika hō'u balavānā. 1.

jauṁ rana hamahi pacārai kō'ū. larahiṁ sukhēna kālu kina hō'ū. 2.

Whether our opponent is a god, a demon, a king or any warrior of whatever denomination, whether he is equivalent to us in strength or superior to us [1], if anyone challenges us in battle then we will gladly face him, even if he is Kaal (the god of death) himself personified the form of the opponent [2]. (1-2)

[Note—Uptil now, Lord Ram has assumed a conciliatory and submissive posture in order to off-set Laxman’s bold answers to sage Parashuram, something which had added fuel to the fire of sage’s wrathfulness. But unfortunately, Parashuram has treated this as a weakness on the part of the Lord. This is amply proved by the fact that the sage could not either harm Laxman or force him to keep quiet by his threats.

Laxman had retorted word-by-word to Parashuram. Vexed and frustrated, Parashuram had to himself quit facing Laxman because he felt that the more he incited the latter the more rebukes will he get. As we have seen in the forgoing narrative, Laxman became quiet not because of any fear of Parashuram but because Lord Ram had ordered him to do so—refer: Doha no. 278.

On the other hand, Lord Ram had been polite towards the sage from the very beginning, so Parashuram vented his suppressed wrath on the Lord. Hence, Lord Ram decided that the sage understands only one language, the language that Laxman had spoken—the language of boldness, fearlessness and harsh retorts, the language of a true warrior. That is, it was useless to be polite and submissive with Parashuram, and the only way to rein him in is to be bold, stand up to him and call off his bluff.

These verses, from Chaupai line no. 1 to 5, were the Lord's stern warning to Parashuram to call it a day and bring this acerbic exchange to an end, because it is a mere waste of time and energy. Parashuram should not think that either Lord Ram or Laxman are afraid to face him in battle; rather they are too willing to teach this haughty sage who happens to have blood of countless kings on his hand and conscience the best and the last lesson of his life! But they are exercising restraint just because he is a Brahmin (Chaupai line no. 5 below).

This answer of Lord Ram is a reply to the brag that Parashuram had made in Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 283 herein above. Lord Ram has in effect told Parashuram that he (Ram) does not fear the 'gods' representing the invincible warriors of the heaven, the 'demons' who represent the invincible warriors of the nether world, and the 'kings' etc. who represent the brave warriors on earth.

Parashuram had boasted of defeating the 'kings' who rule over earth (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 272; and Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 283), but here Lord Ram tells him that he does not fear any warrior in creation, and not merely the 'kings'. In other words, Lord Ram pokes fun at Parashuram that the latter could go around wielding his axe on human beings, but was terrified of the demons and the gods upon whom he knew his boast won't work and they would smother him to a past should he challenge any one of them. Parashuram found the human kings an easy target of his blood-thirsty, pervert and revengeful mind because all humans are inherently mortal and under the sway of Kaal, the death god, and have a short lifespan. So, armed with this basic knowledge, he went around sledge-hammering them at will. Besides this, the human kings were easy to defeat because when he fought them they were already demoralized at having to fight a Brahmin, and therefore because they did not want to physically harm Parashuram as he was a 'Brahmin sage', the latter swung his axe on their neck. Lord Ram indirectly tells Parashuram to be ashamed of his disgusting career; its something to bury one's head in shame than to go about shouting and boasting about it!

If Parashuram was so powerful and strong and invincible, why did he not fight the demons and their king, who in the time of Lord Ram was the famous king of Lanka, the demon king Ravana, or even others such as Banaasur. Again, why did not Parashuram go and fight Indra, the selfish and highly jealous king of gods? It is because Parashuram feared for his own life.

So Lord Ram tells him to keep quiet and stop boasting. The Lord does not fear either the gods or the demons if they dared to challenge him in battle—quite unlike the pretentious Parashuram.

We shall read below (in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 284) that these subtle hints given by Lord Ram led Parashuram to think over the matter, and like all boastful and pretentious persons who are full of wind, he surrendered abjectly

at the end, almost as suddenly as a balloon which has been punctured. In this context, refer to what Laxman has said in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 273, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 280.]

छत्रिय तनु धरि समर सकाना । कुल कलंकु तेहि पावरँ आना ॥ ३ ॥
 कहउँ सुभाउ न कुलहि प्रसंसी । कालहु डरहिं न रन रघुबंसी ॥ ४ ॥
 बिप्रबंस कै असि प्रभुताई । अभय होइ जो तुहहि डेराई ॥ ५ ॥

chatriya tanu dhari samara sakānā. kula kalaṅku tēhi pāvam̐ra ānā. 3.
 kaha'um̐ subhā'u na kulahi prasansī. kālahu ḍarahim̐ na rana raghubansī. 4.
 biprabansa kai asi prabhutāī. abhaya hō'i jō tumhahi ḍērāī. 5.

A person who is a Kshatriya by birth (i.e. who is born in a warrior race) and who fears from entering (fighting in) a battle, such a person is a scar on this (Kshatriya) race and is deemed to be sinful (because he is not living upto his expectations as a warrior, and fulfilling his moral duty as a protector of the society and dignity of its members). (3)

I am not heaping false praises on either this Kshatriya race or my own family known as the Raghu dynasty, but a member of this family (Raghu dynasty to which I belong) does not fear even the 'god of death' known as Kaal if he faces the latter in battle.¹ (4)

But the Brahmin race has such superiority (i.e. glory, mystical powers and majesty) that if someone (i.e. a member of the Kshatriya race) fears or submits himself before one of its members (i.e. any member of the Brahmin race), such as 'you' in the present case, that person becomes fearless; he becomes free from any danger or harm to himself.² (5)

[Note—¹Parashuram had been boasting of his status as being a special class of Brahmin—a 'warrior' Brahmin. These three verses are reply to this brag. Lord Ram essentially tells him that he thinks that the Kshatriya kings whom he had killed all along were afraid of his strength, were weak or something else, but it is not so. They had submitted themselves before him just because he happened to be a Brahmin.

Unfortunately, he (Parashuram) had misinterpreted their submission as their weakness, and instead of pardoning them he had chopped-off their heads. And he thinks that it was an act of bravery and gallantry. What nonsense it is. Lord Ram wants to remove this illusion of gallantry and grandeur from the haughty sage's mind that he is invincible, very powerful and strong, and that the Kshatriya kings are weak and imbecile, that they are impotent and incapable. None of it; a Kshatriya can face even the god of death if the latter challenges the former in battle. The Kshatriya is fearless and strong.

²Here, Lord Ram explains why the members of the Kshatriya race surrendered themselves to sage Parashuram. It was because the latter was a 'Brahmin'. Earlier, Laxman had also said the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 273. Even Lord Ram had said a similar thing in Chaupai line nos. 4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 282.]

सुनि मृदु गूढ बचन रघुपति के । उघरे पटल परसुधर मति के ॥ ६ ॥
 राम रमापति कर धनु लेहू । खैंचहु मिटै मोर संदेहू ॥ ७ ॥
 देत चापु आपुहिं चलि गयऊ । परसुराम मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

suni mṛdu gūṛha bacana raghupati kē. ugharē paṭala parasudhara mati kē. 6.
 rāma ramāpati kara dhanu lēhū. khain̄cahu miṭai mōra sandēhū. 7.
 dēta cāpu āpuhiṁ cali gaya'ū. parasurāma mana bisamaya bhaya'ū. 8.

When the ‘holder of the axe’, i.e. sage Parashuram (“parasudhara”), heard these words of Lord Ram, words that were spoken in a sweet tone but which were grave and had a hidden connotation, his mind underwent a dramatic change, with his sub-conscious telling him that there was something very serious and mysterious that does not meet the eye. [That is, the statement of Lord Ram made Parashuram think over the matter seriously, and his sub-conscious warned him that his bluff won’t work here, and therefore it is high time to withdraw before it’s too late for him.]¹ (6)

Parashuram addressed Lord Ram and said—‘Oh Ram! Take this bow of ‘Ramaa-pati’ (Lord Vishnu). Hold it and pull its string so that the doubts in my mind are removed. [In other words, I have begun to have doubts about your true identity. I thought that you were some ordinary prince like the rest of the crowd assembled here. But my mind warns me that there is something deeper than what is apparent on the surface. I have this bow of Lord Vishnu with me. Take it and pull it; let me see if you can do it. If you can, then my suspicion is correct—that you are Lord Vishnu, because no one else would be able to hold this bow. Let me find out the truth.]’ (7)

Even as Parashuram extended his hands to give the bow that he had held with him to Lord Ram, the bow slid out of his hands and migrated (went) to Lord Ram out of its own accord.

Parashuram was exceedingly amazed and perplexed; his mind was numbed and unable to fathom the import of the developments (for it was now clear to him that Lord Ram was not an ordinary human prince, because had it been so the bow of Lord Vishnu wouldn’t have gone willingly to him)². (8)

[Note—¹We make an interesting discovery here: and it is that the ‘bow’ which Parashuram had held (as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 268) was Lord Vishnu’s bow.

Lord Ram had subtly hinted to Parashuram about the special quality of the bow the latter held. In other words, Lord Ram told him that he knew about that bow. In all probabilities, this observation of Lord Ram made Parashuram think that something was mysterious in the entire episode—because otherwise how could Lord Ram know that the bow which Parashuram held had some special quality in it. Parashuram began to wonder—‘Why had Lord Ram singled out the ‘bow’ for such praise, while he Parashuram had all the while been praising his ‘axe’ as his invincible weapon-of-pride?’ Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282.

In the current verses we read that Parashuram’s mind underwent a dramatic change because he had developed doubts about the real identity of Lord Ram. Well, though Parashuram had been shouting and jumping all this time, his mind was working fast behind the scene; he was thinking that it is not an easy thing for someone

to break Lord Shiva's bow. Besides this, even after knowing about his horrifying reputation that he mercilessly slays Kshatriya kings, and more importantly that he was a Brahmin, none of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were afraid of him. So surely there must be something fishy; definitely there must be some hidden reason.

Remember: Sage Parashuram was not an ordinary angry Brahmin sage; he belonged to a line of sages that traces its origin to sage Bhrigu who has been highly praised in the scriptures. Though he is depicted as being haughty and short-tempered, but that does not mean that he was stupid and illiterate. He had studied the scriptures as all Brahmins were expected to do. Therefore, he must have heard or known that Lord Vishnu would come down to earth to eliminate the cruel demons. When the bow of Lord Vishnu that Parashuram had with him was given to him in some ancient time, it was clear to him that it was to serve certain purpose.

Remember: Parashuram had never used this bow of Lord Vishnu; he had waged wars and killed kings by his 'axe' alone. This is absolutely clear at a number of places in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. For instances, refer: (i) Doha no. 272; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 273; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 275; (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 276; (vi) Doha no. 279 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; and (vii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 283.

The story of this bow is narrated briefly below:—

Vishwakarma, the gods' craftsman, built two bows. One was for Vishnu and the other for Shiva. When Parashuram began learning how to use the bow from his teacher ("Guru"), Lord Shiva, none of the ordinary bows that Parashuram used could withstand his strength; all of them broke when he pulled their strings.

Pleased with his disciple, Lord Shiva gave him his own bow known as 'Pinaak'. But this bow was too strong for Parashuram who couldn't pull its string, and neither did the bow break no matter how hard he pulled at it. So Parashuram did severe Tapa (penance) on Mt. Mahendraachal to propitiate Lord Vishnu. Pleased with his Tapa, Vishnu gave him his own bow called 'Shaarang'.

At that time Lord Vishnu had told him that when he (Vishnu) takes the form of Lord Ram, the purpose of Parashuram's birth will be over, and that this bow would go automatically (migrate; get transferred on its own) to Lord Ram. So, Parashuram was waiting for that moment when Lord Vishnu would come down on earth as Lord Ram to take his bow back.

That is why when Lord Ram referred to this bow as being special, as having nine divine qualities (in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282), Parashuram's ears stood up on their edges. He became alert that something mysterious is there.

In order to test whether Ram was an ordinary prince of Lord Vishnu in a human form, he asked the Lord to take the bow known as 'Shaarang'—refer: verse no. 7.

²As has been narrated in the note herein above, this was the test that proved to Parashuram that Lord Ram was indeed Lord Vishnu.

With the passage of the of Lord Vishnu's bow from Parashuram to Lord Ram, all the divine powers that the former possessed migrated to the latter. Remember: Parashuram himself is regarded as one of the many incarnations of Lord Vishnu. When Lord Vishnu decided to descend from his heavenly abode at Vaikuntha to earth, his weapon, the Shaarang bow with which he was to kill and eliminate the demons from earth, had to come down somehow. So the Lord devised this clever method—he

first gave it to Parashuram who also was one of his many forms, thereby ensuring that the divine bow did not reach wrong hands, and got it back now.

The going of the bow automatically from the hands of Parashuram to Lord Ram is a symbolic transfer of mystical and divine powers from the former to the latter. After this incident, Parashuram remained a humble sage for the rest of his life on earth; all his anger and killing sprees ended.

After this transfer of the bow, Parashuram lost all his glories and strength for which he had boasted so much, becoming a fallen Brahmin who was burdened with a guilty conscience. This is mentioned in Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, Canto 242, verse nos. 163-164.

So, finally with this development of Lord Vishnu's bow migrating on its own accord from the hands of sage Parashuram to the hands of Lord Ram, the sage realised that the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were not ordinary human princes but the Divine Being in their forms. The sage realised that Lord Ram was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, because had it been otherwise the bow of Vishnu wouldn't have gone on its own to Lord Ram. The divine bow has cheerfully gone to its rightful owner and Lord just like a child cheerfully goes in the arms of its parent from the arms of a stranger.

Regretting his confrontationalist attitude and the rude way he had behaved with Lord Ram and Laxman, sage Parashuram prayed to the two brothers and asked for forgiveness. We shall read about it in the following verses.]

दो०. जाना राम प्रभाउ तब पुलक प्रफुल्लित गात ।
जोरि पानि बोले बचन हृदयँ न प्रेमु अमात ॥ २८४ ॥

dōhā.

jānā rāma prabhā'u taba pulaka praphullita gāta.
jōri pāni bōlē bacana hṛdayam'na prēmu amāta. 284.

When the bow went automatically to Lord Ram, Parashuram realized the divinity of the Lord. As soon as he understood the reality, his body was thrilled in ecstasy and joy. For now he had realized that he had the good fortune to see Lord Vishnu first hand, right in his front.

He (Parashuram) immediately went into a prayerful mode. He brought together his hands and joined their palms as a gesture of submission and great respect. Then he said (prayed) with a heart bubbling with love and affection for the Lord. (Doha no. 284)

[Note—Parashuram had great respect for Lord Vishnu. Remember: He had done Tapa to please Vishnu, and therefore he knew the might and divinity of the Lord. He was well aware that Vishnu is the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm. This cosmic form is known as the Viraat Purush. So here he was—standing before the very Lord for whom he had done severe Tapa on Mt. Mahendraachal to get this bow. What more would any devotee want if his revered deity stands before him, so close and unpretentious as Lord Ram had vis-à-vis Parashuram.

Hence, Parashuram considered himself extremely lucky and privileged. He prayed to Lord Ram because now he had realized that the Lord was Vishnu himself.]

चौ०. जय रघुबंस बनज बन भानू । गहन दनुज कुल दहन कृसानू ॥ १ ॥
जय सुर बिप्र धेनु हितकारी । जय मद मोह कोह भ्रम हारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaya raghubansa banaja bana bhānū. gahana danuja kula dahana kṛsānū. 1.
jaya sura bipra dhēnu hitakārī. jaya mada mōha kōha bhrama hārī. 2.

[Sage Parashuram prayed to Lord Ram as follows—] ‘*Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who gives joy and happiness to the dynasty of king Raghu (of Ayodhya) just like the sun delights a cluster of lotuses¹.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who is like a raging fire for the purpose of destruction of the cruel demon race². (1)

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who is a well-wisher and provider of well-being to the Gods, the Brahmins, and the cows (representing all the docile and humble creatures of the world)³.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who eliminates the negative traits such as ‘Mada’ (arrogance; haughtiness), ‘Moha’ (wordly attachments and engrossments), ‘Krodha’ (anger; wrathfulness), and ‘Bhram’ (delusions; misconceptions; falsehoods) that may be present in a creature⁴. (2)

[Note—¹The lotus flower opens up its petals as soon as the sun appears in the sky at daytime. It is a sign that the lotus feels cheerful at the sight of the sun, it welcomes the sun, and its delight is seen in the form of the opening of its closed petals. Similarly, Lord Ram gives glory to the exalted dynasty of the kings of Ayodhya.

²Lord Vishnu had incarnated as Lord Ram at the request of the gods and mother earth to eliminate the demons who had become extremely cruel and blood-thirsty. These demons were ruled by Ravana, their king based at the island of Lanka. Just as a fierce fire completely destroys a wild forest, Lord Ram would ultimately eliminate all the cruel demons who had been terrorising innocent creatures of the world.

*The word “Jai” is used as an exclamation to laud someone, to give him praise and honour, to applaud his rare achievements and qualities. The nearest English phrase would be either ‘glory to you’ or the word ‘hail’. Both of them have been used here to completely convey the idea incorporated in the Hindi word “Jai”.

It will be noted that this word “Jai” has been used eight times between verse nos. 1-7, and its derivative word “Jayati” once (in verse no. 3), bringing the total to ‘nine’. This figure is significant in the context of Lord Ram telling sage Parashuram that he (Ram) has only one Guna (quality or virtue) and it is that he is a warrior who holds a bow, while the sage has nine of them or that his bow has nine grand qualities—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282.

Now, once Parashuram recognised who Lord Ram actually was, he wished to express his regrets at the way he had been behaving with the Lord till now on the one hand, and on the other hand he wished to express his reverence for the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram. So the sage used the laudatory word “Jai” nine times to

imply that the Lord too has ‘nine’ eclectic qualities for which the Lord had praised him earlier. It’s an indirect way of saying ‘thanks’ to Lord Ram by Parashuram.

Remember: Sage Parashuram is regarded as the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and therefore if he has ‘nine Gunas’ then surely Lord Ram also has them because the latter is the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. The transfer of Lord Vishnu’s bow, that was with Parashuram till now, to Lord Ram (refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 284) is a subtle indication of this fact—that the ‘baton has been passed on from the sixth generation to the seventh one’!

In this context, sage Parashuram praising Lord Ram is a symbolic way of saying that—‘Oh Lord Ram, from now onwards, it is you who will have to take care of those who become unruly and torment the subjects of the kingdom of God. I have kept cruel and selfish kings under tight leash till now, but the situation has changed drastically over period of time. Instead of those tormentor kings, there are new ones in the form of cruel demons. These demons are beyond my means to control. Hence, please take charge of the earth from now onwards!’

Another reason for Parashuram saying “Jai” nine times is to ask Lord Ram not only to forgive him (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285) but also to bless him that the nine Gunas which he had possessed till now (refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 282), and which had passed on to Lord Ram along with the transfer of Lord Vishnu’s bow (refer: Doha no. 284 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8), can be restored back to him.

The fact that all the great powers and strength that Parashuram possessed had left him and migrated to Lord Ram is evident when we closely analyse the sage’s behaviour and postures that have undergone a dramatic transformation. Whereas till this point he has been bold and aggressive, flaunting his axe and battle prowess, he has now suddenly become crestfallen, docile, polite, submissive and humble like a true saint. Whereas earlier he was unforgiving, uncompromising and hell-bent for revenge (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 281), now he himself begs to be forgiven (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285).

³The elimination of the demons would certainly delight the Gods, the Brahmins and mother Earth who had assumed the form of a ‘cow’ to approach Lord Vishnu to protect her from the terror unleashed by the demons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 184, and Doha no. 186 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that follow it.

⁴Sage Parashuram means that he was so grateful to Lord Ram that the Lord had removed these four negative qualities that had eclipsed his mind and heart till now. Parashuram had all these four negativities in him—(i) he was arrogant and haughty; (ii) he was attached to the gross things of the world as evident from his affection for the bow and his getting so annoyed at its breaking that he wanted to kill the person who had done it, without taking into account that this killing would make the would-be bride a widow in a premature manner because the groom would be killed; (iii) he was anger personified; and (iv) he was gravely under the influence of delusions, not realising that breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow cannot be the job of a human being.]

बिनय सील करुना गुन सागर । जयति बचन रचना अति नागर ॥ ३ ॥

सेवक सुखद सुभग सब अंगा । जय सरीर छबि कोटि अनंगा ॥ ४ ॥

binaya sīla karunā guna sāgara. jayati bacana racanā ati nāgara. 3.
sēvaka sukhada subhaga saba aṅgā. jaya sarīra chabi kōṭi anaṅgā. 4.

Oh Lord, you are an ocean of the great virtues (“Guna Sagar”) of politeness, good manners, courteousness, mercy, compassion, and all other good qualities in this world¹.

I praise the glory of the Lord (Ram) and hail him who is an expert in the use of proper words and whose speech is extremely well thought of and sweet². (3)

Oh Lord, you give delight, happiness and joy to all your followers and servants (the literal meaning of the word “Sevak”, but in practice it refers to the devotees of the Lord)³. Your whole body, i.e. your physical form with all its parts⁴, is divine and auspicious.

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him whose body embodies the beauty and magnificence of millions of Kamdeos (cupids)⁵. (4)

[Note—¹The sage has now realised how calm Lord Ram had remained throughout the episode. So the great sage now praises Lord Ram for the dignified and responsible way the latter had behaved and tackled the situation.

In spite of all provocations, Lord Ram had maintained his dignity, had spoken with great respect for the sage, and had been very polite and courteous towards him (for instance, refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; Doha no. 281 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 282; and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 283).

Lord Ram had even asked for forgiveness on behalf of his naughty brother Laxman (refer: Doha no. 276 and Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that follow it), and instead of using stern words to ask Laxman to stop confronting the sage, the Lord had politely signalled him to keep quiet by mere frowning of his eyebrows (refer: Doha no. 278).

²In this praise, Parashuram refers to the diplomatic way Lord Ram had tackled him and his anger (for instance, refer: from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 281—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 282), and at the same time had informed him who he (Ram) actually was (refer: Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 282; Doha no. 283; and Doha no. 284 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8).

³When Ravana’s brother Vibhishan decided to go and surrender before Lord Ram, he was sure that the Lord would accept him as he always gives happiness to his followers and devotees—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 42.

When king Manu and his wife Satrupa had done Tapa, and Lord Vishnu revealed himself before them, Manu had also prayed to the Lord saying that “the Lord is like a evergreen tree for his servants and followers”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 146.

⁴This observation refers to the principle advocated by the scriptures that all gross visible forms of this creation have some kind of worldly fault in them. If this is the established norm then one will be inclined to believe that even the gross form of a human being that the Supreme Being had assumed in the form of Ram must also have

some or the other negative traits that are universally present in all the living beings who have a gross body.

To remove this misgiving regarding Lord Ram, sage Parashuram says that inspite of the Lord having a physical body like all other human beings, his form is nevertheless divine and holy like a consecrated image in a temple. This image that is worshipped in temples is made of a gross material, such as a piece of stone, wood or precious metal. But for the worshipper it represents the Supreme Lord, the Holy God before whom the whole world bows. Likewise, Lord Ram's physical form as a human being does not have the worldly grossness that is universally associated with all living beings in this mortal world.

⁵The physical form or image of Lord Ram is so attractive and captivating because it embodies in its self the beauty of Nature. All those who see him are simply charmed by his form. There are countless instances spread throughout Ram Charit Manas eulogizing the magnificence of the Lord's image or form. Some of the instances in Baal Kand are the following—(i) Doha no. 218 where sage Vishwamitra endorses this fact when he gives permission to Lord Ram and Laxman to go and see the city of Janakpur; (ii) Doha no. 233 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 where Sita is swept off her feet by the Lord's fabulous image; (iii) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221 which narrate how the women folk of Janakpur were enchanted by the beauteous sight of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 50 where even Lord Shiva was enthralled by the lovely beauty of Lord Ram; and (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 199 that refers to the beauty of Lord Ram as a child, a beauty that was like an image formed from millions of Kamdeos.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327 that describe the fabulous beauty of Lord Ram as a groom.

Even the demons had accepted that Lord Ram's charm was matchless—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 19 where the demons Khar and Dushan were simply stunned at the Lord's beauty and did not initially want to harm him.

And finally we may cite another example of how the crow saint Kaagbhusund, who had gone to Ayodhya to play with Lord Ram as a child, was exceedingly delighted by the Lord's charming form, filling his eyes full with this wonderful image—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75.

Further, sage Kaagbhusudn also reiterates that Lord Ram's form embodies the charm of millions of Kamdeos (cupids)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 76.

When king Manu and his wife Satrupa did Tapa (penance) to have Lord Vishnu as their son, they had visualized the divine form of the Lord which was exceptionally charming and entralling for the heart—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 146.]

करौं काह मुख एक प्रसंसा । जय महेस मन मानस हंसा ॥ ५ ॥

अनुचित बहुत कहेउँ अग्याता । छमहु छमामंदिर दोउ भ्राता ॥ ६ ॥

karauṁ kāha mukha ēka prasansā. jaya mahēsa mana mānasa hansā. 5.
anucita bahuta kahē'um' agyātā. chamahu chamāmandira dō'u bhrātā. 6.

Oh Lord! How can I praise you with a single mouth? [That is, even if I had thousands of mouths I won't have been able to sufficiently praise you and your glories.]¹

Glory to the Lord (Ram) and hail him who floats like a divine Swan in the lake of Lord Shiva's heart². (5)

I (Parashuram) have said many inappropriate things out of my ignorance and delusions.

Oh you two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman), please forgive me because both of you are like oceans of forgiveness and forbearance; I sincerely regret and apologise for my irreverent behaviour and rudeness.*

[*This verse can be read differently also as follows—“You two brothers are like oceans of the virtues of forgiveness and forbearance. Hence, I request you (or, plead with you) to forgive me for my impertinence and irreverence because I have said many things to you out of my utter ignorance and delusions that I should not have uttered at all otherwise.”]³ (6)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram was going to the marriage venue for the formal rituals of marriage, the same idea is conveyed there also. Lord Shiva feels privileged that he can see the Lord with his fifteen eyes (5 heads x 3 eyes in each = 15); Brahma the creator is happy that he can see the Lord with his four heads (i.e. 4 heads x 2 eyes in each = 8 eyes); Indra, the king of gods, is very happy that he has thousands of holes on his body through which he can see the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 317.

At the time of Lord Ram's birth, the patron goddess of speech, known as Saraswati, had failed to find words to describe the celebrations of the time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 246 where the good kings have declared that the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, live in the heart of Lord Shiva.

As regards comparing Lord Ram and Laxman with Swans, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 221 where this fact is also endorsed by the women folk of Janakpur.

³Parashuram's anger and bad temper, his vanity, ego, arrogance and haughtiness, his habit of boasting of his exploits, especially of the negative sort—after all, going around killing kings indiscriminately is definitely an abhorable thing to do for someone who calls himself a 'sage' belonging to an illustrious family of luminary sages descending from the legendary sage Bhṛigu—had all contributed to delude his mind and make him hallucinate. It led to his final downfall so much so that not only he became an object of ridicule in the world but he also decimated all the religious merits he had accumulated till now by doing various types of Tapa (austerities and penances) and Yagya (fire sacrifices).

This episode teaches us a lesson as to how anger forces even a wise man to act in an irresponsible manner and say things which only go against him. Had Parashuram not lost his temper, and instead had acted wisely, patiently and in a practical way, he

would not have had to reach a piquant situation where he will be forced to surrender suddenly and abjectly before someone whom he had been threatening with a kill just a few moments earlier. What more humiliation can a person face than to submit himself abjectly, to surrender unconditionally, and to ask for forgiveness from a person whom he had declared as his arch enemy and had publicly threatening to kill him.

When Lord Ram and Laxman were begging Parashuram to forgive them and calm down, the latter had been scornful and pouring fire and brimstone at them. And now the same Parashuram has asked for forgiveness. What a ‘turn-of-tables’!

We have read earlier that Laxman had warned Parashuram that anger is a bad thing because it impels a person to commit sins or get involved in wrongdoings for which he has to regret later on. Here we see that Parashuram accepts that he had said many inappropriate things out of ignorance and delusions. But why did he say such things? It was because he was ‘angry’ at the person who had broken the bow. He wanted retribution; he wanted revenge. In anger he lost control over himself. He acted in a rash manner, shouting, threatening, wielding his axe, using abrasive language, and so on.

The angry sage had threatened to kill both the brothers. For Laxman he had a justification—and it was that he (Laxman) had all along adopted a confrontationist attitude—refer for instance, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 274 where Parashuram points out this fact to sage Vishwamitra, (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 275 where Parashuram addresses the assembly to point out that he has been sparing Laxman but the latter continues to tease him; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 277, and Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 279 where the sage clearly told Lord Ram that Laxman is misbehaving with him.

But even while rebuking Parashuram, Laxman had a smile on his face, and did not have a bitter scowl like Parashuram had sported. A smile acts as a sweetener that blunted the sharpness of the words Laxman had used. Refer: Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 272; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 273; (iii) Doha no. 277; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 280.

Earlier, Laxman had even offered to get the bow repaired by calling in experts— Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 278.

The sage, meanwhile, had been continuously threatening Laxman with murder, and had used insulting words for him. For instance, refer: (a) Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 271; (ii) Doha no. 272; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 274; and (iv) Doha no. 279 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 which describes Parashuram threatening Laxman with murder.

Then, in the following instances we find that Parashuram has used abrasive language for Laxman—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 272 (the use of the word “Satha”); (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 274 (many words that essentially describe Laxman as very wicked, pervert, a taint for his family, in the jaws of death, unruly, reckless, stupid and ignorant); (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 275 (one who speaks scorchingly, whose words are biting and corrosive); (iv) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 277 (having a mouth full of poison; very crooked); (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 278 (having a pervert heart and mind; being like a golden pitcher filled with the most ferocious poison); and (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 280 (“Khot”—defective, faulty, ill-humoured and ill-witted, pervert and corrupted).

But there was no justification for Parashuram threatening Lord Ram repeatedly inspite of the Lord’s submission that he was sorry for what had happened, begging for forgiveness, using of polite words, praising the sage’s glory, and even

signalling Laxman to keep quiet. Lord Ram had been extremely courteous with the sage; he was very apologetic for the breaking of the bow, saying that he had no intention of breaking it, but that it split into two on its own when he (Ram) was examining it because it was old and worn-out. Refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 283—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 284.

The result was that sage Parashuram had made a joke of himself in a crowded assembly.

One important point to note here is that sage Parashuram's prayer is the only one in the whole book of Ram Charit Manas where the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, are offered prayers together.]

कहि जय जय जय रघुकुलकेतू । भृगुपति गए बनहि तप हेतू ॥ ७ ॥
अपभयँ कुटिल महीप डेराने । जहँ तहँ कायर गवँहि पराने ॥ ८ ॥

kahi jaya jaya jaya raghukulakētū. bhṛgupati ga'e banahi tapa hētū. 7.
apabhayaṃ kuṭila mahīpa dērānē. jaham̃ taham̃ kāyara gavam̃hiṃ parānē. 8.

Saying, 'Hail Lord Ram who is like a 'flag' (i.e. the most prominent member; one who stands out from the rest; one who gives glory to others; one who is the flag-bearer of the family's glory, name and fame) in the illustrious dynasty of king Raghu! Glory to Lord Ram who is the flag-bearer representing the greatness of the dynasty of king Raghu!! Hail Lord Ram, and glory to him!!!'*

[*Sage Parashuram has hailed Lord Ram and his glory three times to emphasise the greatness of the Lord. He has addressed the Lord as "Raghu-kul-ketu" to stress that Lord Ram is the most illustrious member of the great family of kings descending from Raghu.]

After thus praying to Lord Ram and begging for forgiveness from him, 'Bhrigupati'¹ (sage Parashuram) went away to the forest to do Tapa (to do penance for his misbehaviour with the Lord, as well as to regain his lost mystical powers and glory that were decimated by his unholy behaviour).² (7)

The wicked kings were seized with imaginary fears, while the coward amongst them stealthily fled away from there³. (8)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that in both the cases of Lord Ram as well as sage Parashuram, the great families to which they belonged has been cited. For Lord Ram, the 'Raghu dynasty' is invoked, and for sage Parashuram the luminary sage 'Bhrigu and his family' are referred to.

Hence, while Lord Ram is said to be like a 'flag', i.e. the most prominent member, one who represents the dignified status of the family of king Raghu, sage Parashuram is said to be the 'chief' of sage Bhrigu's exalted family. Both the terms 'flag' and 'chief' imply the same thing—that the concerned person is superior to others in the family.

There were so many kings in the Raghu dynasty, but Lord Ram's life and deeds stood out as being exemplary, and the Lord was remembered for all times to come by all the living beings in this world. Similarly, sage Parashuram had made himself famous on two counts—one was by his earlier deeds about which he had himself boasted in the aforesaid episode, and two by his meeting Lord Ram and

transferring his mystical powers to the Lord by the symbolic transfer of Lord Vishnu's bow (Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284).

In other words, of all the numerous members of these two families, the ones who are remembered even today by a common man are Lord Ram and sage Parashuram.

Refer also to (a) Dohawali, verse nos. 431-433; (b) Janki Mangal, verse no. 178; (c) Kavitawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 22.

²It is not mentioned here where sage Parashuram had gone to do Tapa. But according to sage Valmiki's epic 'Ramayan', Parashuram had gone to a mountain named 'Mahendra'—refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 76, verse no. 22.

In Padma Puran, Uttar Khand, it is mentioned that Parashuram went to the abode of Lords Nar-Narayan, now known as Badrinath, in the Himalayas.

It is to be noted that though it is not explicitly mentioned that Lord Ram and Laxman had forgiven Parashuram, but it is deemed to be so. This is based on the premise of sage Parashuram himself when he says that the two brothers are "oceans of forgiveness and forbearance"—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above.

Remember: Lord Ram has a unfaltering nature of showing grace and mercy upon his "Sevaks", i.e. those who surrender themselves before him like a servant does to his master. There are numerous instances of this: for example, Hanuman tells this fact to Vibhishan when the two met in Lanka where Hanuman had gone to search for Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 6.

Another important question is this: How was Parashuram's sins overcome or neutralised? Lord Ram has himself declared that when anyone surrenders himself before the Lord and asks for his protection and refuge, the Lord forgives all his sins and misdeeds, and the person becomes free from all the evil consequences of his wrong-doings. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 44, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 48. Here, the Lord has made these observations when Vibhishan had come to seek refuge with the Lord after being kicked out of Lanka by his own brother, the demon king Ravana.

³What was their fear? Well, before sage Parashuram had arrived, these wicked and pervert kings had threatened to capture Sita and put the two brothers in shackles. They had threatened to defeat king Janak in battle if he took their side. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266 herein above.

So now they were terrified out of their wits. They thought that Laxman would divert his suppressed anger for Parashuram towards them, and would single-handedly punish them for what they had said earlier as referred to above.

More than anyone else—and that includes even Lord Ram whom they had observed to be very polite and civil during the confrontation with Parashuram—they feared the wrath of Laxman who had shown publicly that he fears not even the mighty sage Parashuram before whom these kings had trembled and prostrated out of fear for their dear lives as is clear in Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 269.

Some of these kings preferred to show a brave face by pretending that they had conceded defeat and had remained behind to witness, to participate in and enjoy the grand marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. But some of them were totally cowards; they scampered out quickly, fearing reprisals.

These wicked kings had felt happy when they had earlier watched the angry sage Parashuram threatening king Janak to divulge the name of the person who had

broken the bow, and if he failed to do so the sage would turn his kingdom upside down—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 270.

Now when the tables were turned in favour of Lord Ram and Laxman, these pervert kings ‘imagined’ that they would be captured and thrown into prison. But their fears were unfounded because both Lord Ram and Laxman were “oceans of forgiveness”—refer: 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 285 above. Hence it is said that they had ‘imaginary fears’.]

दो०. देवन्ह दीन्हीं दुंदुभीं प्रभु पर बरषहिं फूल ।
हरषे पुर नर नारि सब मिटी मोहमय सूल ॥ २८५ ॥

dōhā.

dēvanha dīnhīṁ dundubhīṁ prabhu para baraṣahīṁ phūla.
haraṣē pura nara nāri saba miṭī mōhamaya sūla. 285.

[Festivities, rejoicing and celebrations resumed in right earnest once again as soon as sage Parashuram went away.] The gods immediately sounded their musical instruments known as the kettle-drums and showered flowers on the Lord (from the sky).

All the citizens of Janakpur, the men and the women folks, became delighted and happy. All their consternations, fears, agonies and perplexities having their origin or basis on ignorance were eliminated. [There was cheer and joy everywhere, both in the heaven as well as in the city.] (Doha no. 285)

[Note—Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 270 that says the same thing.

Now, what were the citizens and the gods afraid of? They were afraid of what Parashuram may do in his fit of anger. Remember that the sage had threatened to “turn the earth upside down as far as the kingdom of Janak extended”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 270. It would mean a catastrophe of an unprecedented scale. Everything would be reduced to rubble.

Then they also feared for the security of Lord Ram and Laxman whom the citizens had begun to love, admire and adore very much by now. Sage Parashuram’s reputation as an angry and merciless killer was well known. The fear was aggravated by the fact that Laxman was pouring fuel to the sage’s fire of anger by his rebukes.

So when the sage surrendered and offered his apologies to the two brothers, the gods and the humans alike felt as if the brilliant sun has emerged from behind the thick veil of dark doomsday cloud, removing the foreboding darkness symbolizing death and destruction to give a fresh light of happiness and joy to the world.]

चौ०. अति गहगहे बाजने बाजे । सबहिं मनोहर मंगल साजे ॥ १ ॥
जूथ जूथ मिलि सुमुखि सुनयनीं । करहिं गान कल कोकिलबयनीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ati gahagahē bājanē bājē. sabahim manōhara maṅgala sājē. 1.
jūtha jūtha mili sumukhi sunayanīm. karahim gāna kala kōkilabayanīm. 2.

There was a thunderous noise of musical instruments of all sorts being played together. Everyone (i.e. the citizens as well as the members of the royal household) enthusiastically displayed their happiness by putting out whatever charming and auspicious things that they had (to celebrate the occasion and to rejoice that the last vestiges of hurdles created by malignant stars were removed when sage Parashuram had surrendered and went away to the forest after praying to Lord Ram)¹. (1)

A large number of ladies gathered together and formed groups to sing auspicious songs with pleasant voices. They had sweet faces and beautiful eyes². (2)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram had broken the bow, there was universal rejoicing and playing of musical instruments—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Again, when Sita had put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram, there was a repeat of the tumult of musical instruments, singing and dancing—refer: Ram Charit Mans, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 264—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265.

But soon this atmosphere of merriment and rejoicing turned sombre and grave because of two reasons—(i) the first was that the wicked and frustrated kings had created a ruckus and were readying for battle, and then (ii) immediately thereafter the angry sage Parashuram burst in, threatening menacingly to spill blood. Refer respectively to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line 7 that precedes Doha no. 267; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 270.

Now the situation had once again turned favourable, and it did so with a bang—because not only the danger posed by the determination of sage Parashuram, who had the notorious reputation of killing anyone who annoyed him in the least, to punish Lord Ram and Laxman had passed away, the other danger that was posed by the would-be trouble makers, the wicked kings who were earlier getting restive for a bloody showdown to avenge their humiliation and defeat, also vanished when they scampered out of the arena in a hurry to save their lives after they watched sage Parashuram surrendering before the Lord.

Hence, with all dangers and obstacles to the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita being finally removed, the rejoicing and celebrations resumed with renewed vigour.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263 where it is narrated that the women folk sang auspicious songs as soon as the bow was broken.]

सुखु बिदेह कर बरनि न जाई । जन्मदरिद्र मनहुँ निधि पाई ॥ ३ ॥
बिगत त्रास भइ सीय सुखारी । जनु बिधु उदयँ चकोरकुमारी ॥ ४ ॥

sukhu bidēha kara barani na jāī. janmadaridra manahum̃ nidhi pāī. 3.
bigata trāsa bha'i sīya sukhārī. janu bidhu udayam̃ cakōrakumārī. 4.

The happiness and delight of Janak was so great that it is not possible to describe it. His ecstasy and joy was like that of a man who had been a pauper since birth but has suddenly found an unexpected trove of treasure¹. (3)

All mental and emotional torments, perplexities and uncertainties that Sita was suffering from were also instantly dispelled, and she was very happy and exhilarated just like the case of a young female Chakor bird feeling delighted when the full moon rises². (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263 where another analogy of a man in water suddenly finding land is cited to give an idea of the happiness of Janak. Well, this was expected because he was the father of Sita, and any father would naturally be happy when his daughter's marriage goes to completion smoothly and according to his wishes.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 263 where another analogy of the female bird known as 'Chataki' feeling contented when a rain drop falls in its open beak during the asterism of Swati.

The Chakor is the Indian red-legged partridge. It is said to be so enamoured of the moon that as soon as the moon rises in the eastern sky, the bird fixes its gaze on it and goes on looking at the disc of the full moon as it travels across the sky and sets in the west. The bird feels extremely ecstatic when it sights the moon. This analogy means that Sita had got what she had been longing for: that all hurdles are removed and she is happily married to Lord Ram. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259.]

जनक कीन्ह कौसिकहि प्रनामा । प्रभु प्रसाद धनु भंजेउ रामा ॥ ५ ॥
मोहि कृतकृत्य कीन्ह दुहँ भाई । अब जो उचित सो कहिअ गोसाई ॥ ६ ॥

janaka kīnha kausikahi pranāmā. prabhu prasāda dhanu bhanjē'u rāmā. 5.
mōhi kṛtakṛtya kīnha duhum̃ bhā'īm̃. aba jō ucita sō kahi'a gōsā'īm̃. 6.

Now, king Janak bowed before sage Vishwamitra ("Kaushik") and said cheerfully—
'Oh sage! It is by your grace and blessings that Ram has broken the bow. (5)

The two brothers had done me a great favour and have obliged me a lot. [In other words, I thank them very much and feel grateful to them.]

Now, oh lord, tell me what is the proper thing to do (so that I can take the next step and prepare for the finalization of the marriage between Ram and Sita as per your advice).' (6)

[Note—King Janak has shown his respects to the sage as it is a tradition as well as courteousness that one must honour elders for any achievements. Remember: It was sage Vishwamitra who had expressly ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow so

that the grief and worries of Janak are removed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254. So Janak must thank the sage first before he thanked Lord Ram for removing his worries by breaking the bow.

Besides this expression of formal courteousness by Janak, the fact remains that even Lord Ram had also sought sage Vishwamitra's blessings 'three times' before he broke the bow because the sage was his Guru. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 255; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261.

He expressed his thankfulness to Laxman because the latter had stood up and objected to Janak declaring the competition closed when none of the kings had been able to move the bow, claiming the right to break the bow. With his bold initiative, Laxman had saved the day for Janak when the latter had lost all hopes of getting Sita married. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Doha no. 253.

Not only this, when the angry sage Parashuram had threatened to turn the earth upside down and punish the person who had broken the bow, Laxman had faced him boldly and with his stance had put the sage on the backfoot. This entire episode is narrated above in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 270—to Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 284.]

कह मुनि सुनु नरनाथ प्रबीना । रहा बिबाहु चाप आधीना ॥ ७ ॥

टूटतहीं धनु भयउ बिबाहु । सुर नर नाग बिदित सब काहु ॥ ८ ॥

kaha muni sunu naranātha prabīnā. rahā bibāhu cāpa ādhīnā. 7.
ṭūṭatahīm dhanu bhaya'u bibāhū. sura nara nāga bidita saba kāhū. 8.

The sage (Vishwamitra) told the king—'Listen oh wise and expert king¹. The marriage was tied to the bow (i.e. it was subject to and dependent upon the breaking of the bow). (7)

As soon as the bow was broken, the marriage was deemed to have taken place. This is an open fact, and is known to all—the gods (in the heaven), the humans (on earth), and the serpents (underground). [In other words, the fact that the marriage between Lord Ram and Sita was finalized at the instant the bow was broken is an established fact. Everyone is aware of it; all the three worlds represented by the gods in the heaven, the human beings on earth, and the serpents representing the subterranean world, are aware of it.]² (8)

[Note—¹The sage has called king Janak 'wise and expert' ("Praveena") to mean that though the king knew what to do, what was proper, and so on and so forth, he still was seeking advise from the sage just to show respect to him. Besides this, Janak had his own priest by the name of Satanand (pronounced 'Sataa-nand'). The latter was a competent priest and must have already advised king Janak on every minute detail of the preparations for marriage. So, if Janak seeks advice from sage Vishwamitra in this context then it is surely a formality and an expression of respect for him.

Janak was wise also because he knew how to interact with a 'guest sage', because Vishwamitra was his guest.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265 which is very explicit on this point.]

दो०. तदपि जाइ तुह करहु अब जथा बंस व्यवहारु ।
बूझि बिप्र कुलबृद्ध गुर बेद बिदित आचारु ॥ २८६ ॥

dōhā.

tadapi jā'i tumha karahu aba jathā bansa byavahāru.
būjhi bipra kulabr̥d'dha gura bēda bidita ācāru. 286.

(Sage Vishwamitra told Janak--) In spite of this (that the marriage has already taken place as soon as the bow broke), you can go ahead with the formal preparations and follow the traditions of your family and race.

Consult the Brahmins of your kingdom, the elders in your family, and your Guru (Satanand), and after that do according to their advice, keeping in mind the norms laid down in the Vedas and other scriptures for such occasions. (Doha no. 286)

Note—Acknowledging the king's gracefulness, sage Vishwamitra too reciprocated with equal graciousness by thanking Janak for seeking his advice but then telling him politely that he must ask the seniors in his family, the Brahmins of the kingdom, and his Guru, and act according to their advice. This simple gesture of Vishwamitra made him friendly to all other seniors in Janakpur.

But since Janak has sought his advice, sage Vishwamitra gave one personal one—that the king must send a messenger to Ayodhya and call king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, to attend the marriage ceremony, because it is a norm that the groom's parents must be present during his marriage.

Why did Vishwamitra choose to give this advice which is very obvious? Well, he had doubts that in the sort of marriage devised for Sita, the winning competitor is married-off immediately as soon as the condition set for the marriage is fulfilled, even if none of the family members of the groom can attend. If it is found necessary, the formality of doing various rituals and elaborate ceremonies is observed at a later date. This is clearly hinted when Vishwamitra says “the marriage had taken place as soon as the bow was broken”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes this Doha no. 286; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes this Doha no. 265.

It was also possible, thought sage Vishwamitra, that the bride's side would insist that since he was present on the occasion, he should assume the role of Lord Ram's father and complete the rituals on king Dasrath's behalf. The sage wouldn't have been able to deny this role, especially because Dasrath had himself told him, at the time of handing over the two brothers to the sage, that for all practical purposes he (Vishwamitra) was their father—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208.

But sage Vishwamitra was so gracious that he did not wish that king Dasrath be denied the privilege and joy of witnessing the marriage of his beloved son, Lord Ram.

Besides the above reason, the majesty, pomp, pageantry and ceremony of the occasion would be enhanced manifold times when two great kings joined hands and stood side-by-side to participate in the festivities. Otherwise this rare occasion would lack in its glamour and magnificence by half.

So, in order to pre-empt this possibility, he specifically asked Janak to send a messenger to Ayodhya and call king Dasrath—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. दूत अवधपुर पठवहु जाई । आनहिं नृप दसरथहि बोलाई ॥ १ ॥

मुदित राउ कहि भलेहिं कृपाला । पठए दूत बोलि तेहि काला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dūta avadhapura paṭhavahu jāī. ānahim nṛpa dasarathahi bōlāī. 1.
mudita rā'u kahi bhalēhim kṛpālā. paṭha'e dūta bōli tēhi kālā. 2.

(Sage Vishwamitra advised king Janak—) ‘Send a messenger to Ayodhya with an invitation for king Dasrath, and let that messenger bring the king here (to attend the marriage of his son Ram).¹ (1)

The king (Janak) was delighted, and he responded—‘Very well, oh merciful Lord! It will be done.’

The king summoned his messengers immediately and sent them to Ayodhya (with the message as well as the invitation)². (2)

[Note—1 Refer note of Doha no. 286 herein above.

Besides the reason given in the above referred note, there were other considerations in the mind of sage Vishwamitra also which prompted him to make this specific request to Janak.

One consideration was that Dasrath was a ‘bigger’ king as compared to Janak. With ‘bigger’ we mean that Dasrath that he was a “Charavarti King”, a king who was equivalent to an Emperor because he had a number of kings under his dominion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 which explicitly honours Dasrath as being a ‘Chakravarti King’.

There are other instances also where it is clearly stated that the majesty of Dasrath as a great king, one who possessed the same honour that an emperor possesses, was unmatched in the whole world. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 2 it is said that “all the kings were eager to have his favour and sought his blessings; they were all desirous or being in his good looks; and that there was no one more privileged and fortunate in the whole world consisting of three levels (heaven, earth and nether worlds) than Dasrath”. The same idea is repeated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 173.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 320 it is declared that the gods acknowledged that both Janak and Dasrath were of equal stature and glory.

The other consideration was that may be Janak would not like to give Dasrath the trouble of coming to Janakpur because of the great distance involved in travelling between the cities of Ayodhya and Janakpur.

The third reason of why Janak had not invited Dasrath to attend the bow breaking ceremony that was organised to solemnise the marriage of Janak's daughter Sita seems to be very stark. It is this: The chances were high that Dasrath would refuse to come to attend the same marriage ceremony because he might have felt offended by not being invited along with other great kings of the earth. So, sage Vishwamitra wanted to ensure that this omission on the part of Janak should not act as a thorn and mar the future of cordial relationship between Janak and Dasrath, especially when Janak's daughter is married to Dasrath's son. When Dasrath would come to know that the invitation to come to Janakpur had the backing of sage Vishwamitra, he would never refuse to come—though of course he might have thought twice if only Janak had invited him at this late stage.

This understood, we shall now discuss why Janak apparently avoided or refrained from inviting Dasrath to attend the bow-breaking ceremony.

Well, the answers to this question are easy to deduce by application of simple logic based on the events mentioned in the Ramayan, though nowhere in the epic a precise reason is to be found that would address this query.

(i) First and foremost is that Janak had not sent any specific invitation to any particular king, prince or emperor to come and attend the bow-breaking ceremony. He had made a general proclamation to the effect that his daughter would be married to anyone who would lift and break the bow, and had sent heralds to all the seven continents to make known this intention of his so that all those interested could come. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7.

Of course he may have sent specific letters of invitation to those kings or princes with whom he had personal ties, such as his relatives etc., or official ties such as some sort of strategic diplomatic or military alliances. But surely such invitations must have been limited. This fact is borne out when we closely scrutinize the verses of Ram Charit Manas that tell us about the guests and competitors who had assembled at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony, and Janak's own declaration at that time. Those who came included 'demons' and 'gods' besides human kings and princes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 251. Then we learn that even the demon kings Ravana and Banasur had also come—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3 that precede Doha no. 256.

Any human father in his senses would not invite 'demons' and 'gods' to come and marry his daughter. Marrying 'gods' was tantamount to sending his daughter to premature death because gods do not live on earth; they live in heaven where one goes only after death. Besides this, gods do not have a physical body whereas the bride is a human being. Similarly, 'demons' as a race are evil, cruel, sinful, ugly, blood thirsty and hated by the world, and say which father would ever imagine that his loving daughter would become a wife of such a person?

Then we also find that bad, immoral and pervert kings had come to attend—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 245; (ii) Doha no. 250 and its following Chaupai line no. 1; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 266; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285. Obviously, no father would willingly invite such people

Therefore in all probabilities his heralds had gone to the kingdom of Ayodhya but its king, Dasrath, decided not to come.

(ii) Even if we assume that Janak had purposely not invited Dasrath to the bow-breaking ceremony or had instructed his heralds not to go to Ayodhya, then there

must have been a reason behind this decision of Janak. What was that reason? Let us now analyze them.

(a) Dasrath had a severe curse dangling on his head like a deadly sword. This curse essentially said that 'he would die pitifully grieving for his son'. This curse was cast on him by a blind hermit couple whose son named Srawan-kumar had been mistakenly killed by an arrow shot by Dasrath when he had gone out hunting. This episode is briefly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 155, and in detail in Veda Vyas' narration of this epic story in his 'Adhyatma Ramayan', Ayodhya Kand, Canto 7, verse nos. 19-47, especially in verse no. 45 where Dasrath mentions this curse.

This rang an alarm bell in the mind of Janak, and he was afraid that if he invites Dasrath and the latter sends his son to attend the bow-breaking ceremony, or brings him along if he decides to come personally himself, and then this prince successfully breaks the bow, then Janak would have to marry his daughter Sita with him according to his own declaration. With a strong possibility of some danger coming to the would-be groom in the context of the aforesaid curse on Dasrath which meant that he would have to die a death while grieving for his son, it would be willfully creating a situation on the part of Janak where his daughter would be surely widowed. Naturally this very thought made Janak decide not to take any risk, and therefore not to invite Dasrath altogether.

This is the primary reason also why Janak had refrained from inviting Lord Ram to try his luck at breaking the bow, especially when all the other kings had failed to do so and his daughter's future was doomed because now she would have to live unmarried throughout her life, something that was no less than a severe curse both for the girl as well as for her father and his family. Janak had gone to the extent of declaring that he would prefer that his daughter remain unmarried because no one could break the bow than invite ridicule and ignominy by breaking his words and marrying her in violation of his declaration. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 252.

Now well, this was the same Janak who was so charmed by Lord Ram and Laxman when he first met them at the time of welcoming sage Vishwamitra that he minced no words in praising them and accepting that his mind and heart are overwhelmed with a surge of affection for the two princes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216, and once again in Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precedes Doha no. 217.

But when Vishwamitra introduced the two brothers to him as princes of the kingdom of Ayodhya and sons of Dasrath (refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 216), Janak suddenly developed cold feet and was on the horns of a dilemma. Should he or should he not ask them to participate in the bow breaking event? As the event eventually unfolded we learn that he decided against it and kept mum on this issue, though he had invited the sage to the venue of the ceremony.

The next question is—'if this is the case, then why did he not object to Lord Ram finally going up to break the bow?' The clear-cut answer is that sage Vishwamitra had intervened and he was the one who had instructed Lord Ram to go and break the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 254. Obviously king Janak did not object because he did not wish to oppose a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra as this would not only be a highly irreverent thing to do that would unnecessarily burden him with unwarranted punishment that accompanies committing of a great sin of insulting a sage who is his

guest-of-honour at that moment, but also there was the fear of inviting the sage's wrath. This obviously was another reason why Janak calmly bore with Laxman's insinuations and angry outburst directed straight at Janak as described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 252—to Doha no. 253. Janak knew that both the brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, had the loving patronage of sage Vishwamitra, and it would be wise for him to keep quiet because Laxman must surely have had a silent nod from the sage to speak so angrily in public, for otherwise it is unimaginable to think that he could behave in such an insulting and angry manner if the sage did not give his consent.

(b) The other reason of Janak not inviting Dasrath to the bow-breaking event is this—Janak observed the strict rule of having one wife to whom he was loyal throughout his life, his queen Sunayana. In fact, even his younger brother Kushdwaj had only one wife. But on the other hand, Dasrath was lustful and had gone wayward because he had married more than once—he had three well-known wives, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. Not only this, whereas Janak was a highly spiritual man with a high level of metaphysical knowledge and detachment from materialistic world, one who used to hold conclaves of great scholars on a regular basis where great metaphysical and theological debates took place and had the renowned scholar-sage Yagyawalkya as one of his moral preceptors with whom he used to have thorough discussions on spiritual matters (refer: Brihad-Aranyak Upanishad of the Shukla Yajur Veda, Cantos 3-4), king Dasrath is depicted as a lustful man who had fallen so low in terms of self-restraint of his passions that he had become a virtual servant of one of his wives, Kaikeyi, so much so that he had been forced by her to send Lord Ram to 14 years of forest exile. Instead of standing up like a bold, brave and courageous king who could defeat the mightiest of enemies in battle, Dasrath succumbed to her, fell at her feet and wept like a child before her, pleading with her to spare his life and excuse Lord Ram from going to the forest! This episode is narrated in graphic detail in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 25—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 40.

Though this incident occurs after the marriage, but the ill-reputation of Dasrath as being a lustful and passionate man who preferred the company of women had spread far and wide. Then say, given this, how would Janak wish that his daughter should marry either such a king who already has three wives, or even in his discredited family?

(c) The third reason that is usually cited by scholars is that Dasrath was a 'Chakravarti king', i.e. an Emperor whose realm stretched to far-off places on earth that covered a wide circle ('Chakra' = a circle). Since king Janak, meanwhile, was merely a 'king' and not an Emperor of the stature of Dasrath, so he feared that if he sent an invitation it would be turned down, and that would be insulting and humiliating for Janak as well as for his kingdom. But this argument does not hold water because it is clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precedes Doha no. 320 that the gods who never speak a lie declared that both the kings were of equal stature and majesty.

²King Janak was delighted because sage Vishwamitra had given him an advice that was most appropriate and welcomed by him. He had wanted to send the invitation to Dasrath nevertheless, but now with the stamp of approval from sage Vishwamitra he was exhilarated that whatever doubts that he had in his mind as to whether Dasrath would like to accept the invitation or not were now dispelled. As the father of Sita he would certainly have liked to welcome and make sure that the father of the groom,

Lord Ram, attended the marriage ceremony, especially when the groom's family had an equal stature as that of the bride's. On the other hand, it would have been a matter of scandalous gossip if the groom's family had abstained from the marriage for whatever reason.

Janak was a wise king. Marriages were, and are still, used in traditional societies as great bonding factors, uniting two great families and forging ties that stand in good stead for both the families. If for some reason the marriage was solemnized without the presence of Dasrath then it would have created a situation of bitterness between two mighty kingdoms that no amount of sweetener would ever let its affects be overcome later on.

The king wasted no time in sending the messenger. This messenger had two briefs: One was an 'invitation' from king Janak for king Dasrath, requesting the latter to come to Janakpur to attend the marriage ceremony of his son, Lord Ram, with Sita, the daughter of Janak. The other was a 'message' from sage Vishwamitra to the same effect.

The wise sage wished to tell Dasrath that his two sons were hale and hearty, that they had given their father and his family great glory and honour, and that the sage has fulfilled his moral obligations towards Dasrath by ensuring that his two sons, whom he had entrusted into the care of the sage, had achieved rare distinction in the world and gained the sort of fame that they would not have attained if they had remained at Ayodhya.]

बहुरि महाजन सकल बोलाए । आइ सबन्हि सादर सिर नाए ॥ ३ ॥
हाट बाट मंदिर सुरबासा । नगरु सँवारहु चारिहुँ पासा ॥ ४ ॥

bahuri mahājana sakala bōlā'ē. ā'i sabanhi sādara sira nā'ē. 3.
hāṭa bāṭa mandira surabāsā. nagaru samvārahu cārihum' pāsā. 4.

The king then summoned leading citizens (of Janakpur), all of whom came immediately and bowed their heads before him. ['Bowing the head' had two purposes: one obviously was to show their respect to their king, and the other was to say that they are ready to follow his instructions.] (3)

The king instructed them, 'Decorate the city from all sides—be it the market places, the streets, the homes or the temples.' (4)

[Note—The city was already decorated as it had been spruced up for the bow-breaking ceremony where thousands of kings from far away lands were invited. No one would want his home dirty and unkempt when he has invited guests. So it was natural that all arrangements had been made to give a positive impression of the kingdom to the invited kings. Besides these special arrangements, the city of Janakpur was well-planned and had been bestowed with natural beauty. There is ample evidence of it in its description in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 214.

In this context the present instruction of the king means that if there were any shortcomings then they must be looked into and fixed, and fineness must be added to the décor. Now that the marriage has been finalized, and fortunately the groom's family is one of the most reputed and well-known families on earth, then an

appropriate welcome should be granted to it by erecting gates and arches for instances, and all resources must be used to make the guests as comfortable and happy as possible.

Whereas earlier the exterior of the city was decorated, now preparations must be made to decorate it more closely, with each individual home and temple given special attention to give the whole city a pristine look of glamour and magnificence from one end to the other that will make it appear like a decked-up bride from foot to head, so to say.

For instance, fresh flowers and plants should replace the stale ones put many days ago; the streets should be washed clean with scented water; the homes and public buildings should be adorned with festoons and hangings; the temples decorated wonderfully; the public parks and market places should bear a festive atmosphere as well as one of opulence and prosperity.

That is why the wise king had invited “all leading citizens of the city” instead of only state employees and professionals such as decorators, carpenters, plumbers, smiths, florists, craftsmen and engineers etc. He wanted each individual citizen of the city to feel that he is a part of the celebrations, to make them participate in a team spirit, to feel that it was his responsibility to contribute his might in the whole effort because it was a common celebration for all citizens, big and small. Thus, each man went home and started decorating his own home, leaving the royal employees free to take care of public places such as markets, streets, squares, parks and temples.

This observation will be very clear in the following verse nos. 5-7 herein below. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 289 below. There we shall read that “each household and building of the city was so decorated that they had the same beauty and splendour, the same glamour and grandeur as the palace of king Janak”.]

हरषि चले निज निज गृह आए । पुनि परिचारक बोलि पठाए ॥ ५ ॥

रचहु बिचित्र बितान बनाई । सिर धरि बचन चले सचु पाई ॥ ६ ॥

haraṣi calē nija nija gr̥ha ā'ē. puni paricāraka bōli paṭhā'ē. 5.
racahu bicitra bitāna banā'ī. sira dhari bacana calē sacū pā'ī. 6.

The leading citizens (such as chiefs of families, businesses, traders, noblemen, grandees, knights and councillors) were very happy and glad to hear this instruction, and all of them cheerfully went away from there and arrived at their homes (to carry out the wishes of the king).

The king then summoned his royal attendants and senior members of his royal staff. (5)

He instructed them—‘Erect a wonderful pavilion which should be uniquely decorated.’ [Though not specifically mentioned, the pavilion probably would be the one where the marriage ritual was to be performed. It may also mean that the king ordered his craftsmen to erect a number of beautiful pavilions around the city at many important places to act as shelters or resting place for guests who would like to visit the city for the purpose of sight-seeing could relax and take rest.]

All of them (i.e. the royal employees and personal staff of the king) gladly accepted the king’s words, literally keeping the king’s instructions on their heads as a

gesture of obeying them without any question or doubt, and they cheerfully proceeded forthwith to accomplish the task assigned to them. (6)

[Note—Refer also to note appended to verse nos. 3-4 herein above.

So we see that the king summoned the senior citizens as well as his personal staff members who were also state employees. The first group was to take care of the decorations at the micro level, and the second group was to take care of the preparations at the macro level. Whereas the citizens were asked to decorate their own homes and neighbours, the royal employees were instructed to start working on public projects by making suitable arrangements and inviting expert craftsmen. The wise king knew very well how to organize things on a massive scale while ensuring the willing participation of all involved.

A good servant is one who cheerfully obeys his master's commands—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 301. This is exemplified here in both the cases of the citizens as well as the state employees because all of them were glad when they heard the instructions of their king to go and decorate the city glamorously.]

पठए बोलि गुनी तिन्ह नाना । जे बितान बिधि कुसल सुजाना ॥ ७ ॥
बिधिहि बंदि तिन्ह कीन्ह अरंभा । बिरचे कनक कदलि के खंभा ॥ ८ ॥

paṭha'e bōli gunī tinha nānā. jē bitāna bidhi kusala sujānā. 7.
bidhihi bandi tinha kīnha arambhā. biracē kanaka kadali kē khambhā. 8.

Now, the royal staff members summoned many skilled artisans and craftsmen who were experts in erecting beautiful pavilions and canopies of different forms and sorts, with varying sizes and designs. (7)

All of them first sought the blessings of the Creator (“bidhihi bandi”) (so that the work is accomplished perfectly without a hitch), and then got on with their assigned jobs in right earnest. The pillars and supports they made for the pavilions and canopies were of gold and designed like plantain trees. (8)

[Note—These artisans were experts in their respective fields. Some would build the pillars, some the gates, some the arches, some the platforms and seats, some would design the canopy and the parasol, some would take care of the central part where the sacred fire would be lit, and there was an army of such skilled craftsmen who would take care of many other finer details of the different features of the pavilion that was to be erected.

So we see that there was a clearly marked hierarchical set up in the kingdom. The king ordered the senior members of his royal staff, and they passed on the instructions to the artisans, the workers and the labourers.]

दो०. हरित मनिन्ह के पत्र फल पदुमराग के फूल ।
रचना देखि बिचित्र अति मनु बिरंचि कर भूल ॥ २८७ ॥

dōhā.

harita maninha kē patra phala padumarāga kē phūla.
racanā dēkhi bicitra ati manu biran̄ci kara bhūla. 287.

Green gems (i.e. the emerald) was used to craft leaves and fruits out of them, and the red gem (i.e. the ruby) was used to shape blooming flowers from them. [To wit, these gems were carefully chiseled and given the shape of leaves, fruits and flowers that would be used to decorate the various parts of the pavilion, such as its pillars which were designed like the stem of the plantain tree.]

The craftsmanship was so wonderful and the creation was so fabulous that even the Creator (who has created such a beautiful world with so much diversity and wonderful sights) was awed when he saw them. His mind was bewildered at this magical sight which he couldn't imagine to be true, and thus he thought that his mind was making a mistake by wrongly interpreting the sight. [To wit, the pavilion was so magically beautiful that the Creator himself was deluded. He thought that he was seeing a mirage because his mind could not imagine or visualize of such a wonderful creation.] (Doha no. 287)

[Note—The Creator had been very proud of his craftsmanship. He had hitherto thought that no one can ever create anything more wondrous than what he had created in the form of this majestic world. The design of this pavilion was beyond his conception or imagination. He had never dreamt of anything of such a magnificent beauty. So he was stunned at its sight. He rubbed his eyes in amazement and thought that he was hallucinating because the pavilion was beautiful beyond his imagination.]

चौ०. बेनु हरित मनिमय सब कीन्हे । सरल सपरब परहिं नहिं चीन्हे ॥ १ ॥

कनक कलित अहिबेलि बनाई । लखि नहिं परइ सपरन सुहाई ॥ २ ॥

caupā'ī.

bēnu harita manimaya saba kīnhē. sarala saparaba parahim̄ nahim̄ cīnhē. 1.
kanaka kalita ahibēli banā'ī. lakhi nahim̄ para'i saparana suhā'ī. 2.

Emerald, the green gem, was used to craft all the bamboo sticks out of them, complete with its straight part and its knots. These artificial bamboo sticks made of emerald were so natural in their appearance that it was impossible to distinguish them from the real ones¹. (1)

Creepers of the Piper-betel (that were twined around the pillars and the thin rafters) were made from gold, complete with their leaves, and fashioned so expertly and perfect in shape and design that they did not appear to be artificial (i.e. they appeared to be natural creepers of a golden colour)². (2)

[Note—¹The roof of the marriage pavilion is traditionally made of green and fresh bamboos. For this particular pavilion however, emeralds were used, but the craftsmanship was so fine that it was impossible to say whether the finished product was made of gems or real bamboo stems.

²The Piper-betel is regarded as very auspicious in Indian households, and the leaf of this creeper is used in all religious occasions when offerings are made to different

gods and goddesses. The leaves are also used as mouth freshners, and chewed along with fillings of areca-nut slivers or scrappings, condiments such as cardamom and clove, and garnished with a dash of thin paste consisting of calcium and catechu.

The pavilion's pillars and other straight components were decorated with long threads of gold which were designed like creepers of the Piper-betel. The leaves of this creeper were also made from gold plates.]

तेहि के रचि पचि बंध बनाए । बिच बिच मुकुता दाम सुहाए ॥ ३ ॥
मानिक मरकत कुलिस पिरोजा । चीरि कोरि पचि रचे सरोजा ॥ ४ ॥

tēhi kē raci paci bandha banā'ē. bica bica mukutā dāma suhā'ē. 3.
mānika marakata kulisa pirōjā. cīri kōri paci racē sarōjā. 4.

These creepers were intricately intertwined to make fine ropes (or cords which were used as strings to tie together and hold in position the various components of the pavilion). Here and there, precious pearls were either tucked (inserted) in these ropes (to look like dew or rain drops), or hung in clusters or as strings from them (resembling either garlands or pendants made of gold)¹. (3)

Gems such as rubies, emeralds, diamonds and turquoises were cut, scooped, carved and inlayed to fashion beautiful lotus flowers with open petals from them². (4)

[Note—¹The pearls added beauty to the golden creepers and made a wonderful contrast because the gold is yellow in colour while the pearl is white. Individual pieces of the pearl that were tucked here and there on the golden creepers gave the impression of dew or water drops clinging to these creepers. The strings of pearls were also used as garlands hung from the pillars and rafters. Some of the pearls that were hung in the form of a free-hanging string gave the impression of a decorative hanging or a pendant which swayed in breeze.

²Large pieces of these gems were used to make lotus flowers. All religious ceremonies are deemed to be incomplete without this flower. Like the betel leaves, the lotus flowers too are necessary in all religious ceremonies.]

किए भृंग बहुरंग बिहंगा । गुंजहिं कूजहिं पवन प्रसंगा ॥ ५ ॥
सुर प्रतिमा खंभन गढ़ि काढीं । मंगल द्रव्य लिएँ सब ठाढीं ॥ ६ ॥

ki'ē bhṛṅga bahuraṅga bihaṅgā. guṅjahim kūjahim pavana prasaṅgā. 5.
sura pratimā khambhana gaḍhi kāḍhīṁ. maṅgala drabya li'eṁ saba ṭhāḥim. 6.

[To complete the ambience created by the bamboo stalks, the lotus flowers and the creepers, it was necessary to make the following additions—] Black-bees and various kinds of birds of colourful feathers were also made. They buzzed and whistled when they were rustled by the breeze blowing past them¹. (5)

Images of gods were sculpted on the pillars. These images depicted all the gods in a standing posture with auspicious things in their hands². (6)

[Note—¹The ‘black-bee’ is associated with the lotus flower because this insect hovers around the flower in search of nectar as soon as it opens. The birds chirp and hop around trees and creepers, in search of fruits and insects to feed themselves. Without these creatures the picture would have been incomplete.

Though it is not mentioned here what gem or precious stone was used to craft the bee or the bird, but one can fairly easily guess that every precious thing that was used to make pillars, rafters, sticks, flowers, fruits and creepers was also used to fashion birds and bees out of it.

²What were the ‘auspicious things’ these images held in their hands? An indicative list of things that are regarded as ‘auspicious and providers of good omen’ is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 346. They are the following—turmeric, blades of Durba grass, curd, ordinary leaves (especially mango leaves), flowers of different kinds, betel leaves, areca-nuts, auspicious edible roots, unthrashed rice, sprouts of barley, goroChan (a yellow pigment), puffed paddy, and buds of the basil plant.

In other words, these images of gods had many such things in their hands to mark auspiciousness of the occasion.

It is to be noted that the images depicted the gods in a ‘standing posture’ as a sign of showing respect to Lord Ram who was an incarnate Supreme Being, and all other guests who had come to attend the divine union of the Lord with his Shakti known as Sita.]

चौकें भाँति अनेक पुराई । सिंधुर मनिमय सहज सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥

caukēm bhām̐ti anēka purā’īm. sindhura manimaya sahaja suhā’īm. 7.

Decorative squares and geometric designs based on religious themes (i.e. patterned on various ‘Yantras’ or geometrical designs as prescribed for different rituals) were drawn on the ground (which were either painted on the floor, or made by making lines on the ground by pouring a thin layer of powder of different colours or even flours of different cereals and pulses that were mixed with various colours).

They were beautifully designed and decorated with ‘elephant pearls (sindhura mani)¹’. (7)

[Note—¹A special class of wild elephants are said to exude a white sap from the skin of their heads. It is very rare, and when solidified each drop of this sap appears in the shape of natural pearl. It is known as ‘Gaja-Mukta’, or “the pearl of the elephant; pearl produced by the elephant”.

The ‘squares’ and other geometrical patterns were designed like worship ‘Yantras’ that are ancient worship instruments used in occult forms of religious practices to invoke the divine powers of gods and goddesses who stand for the cosmic energy that is sought to be harnessed.]

दो०. सौरभ पल्लव सुभग सुठि किए नीलमनि कोरि ।
हेम बौर मरकत घवरि लसत पाटमय डोरि ॥ २८८ ॥

dōhā.

saurabha pallava subhaga suṭhi ki'ē nīlamani kōri.
hēma baura marakata ghavari lasata pāṭamaya ḍōri. 288.

Leaves of the mango plant were made by cutting the edges of sapphire and engraving the design of leaves on them, while its small flowers were made from gold, and bunches of its fruits (the mango) were crafted from emerald. These fruits were made to hang with the help of short strings made of silk. (Doha no. 288)

[Note—“Saurabha” = mango. “Neelmani” = the blue gem; the sapphire. “Hema” = gold. “Markat” = emerald. “Dhavari” = cluster of flowers. “Paat” = silk; “Paatmaya” = silken.

This Doha describes the way the mango fruits, leaves and flowers were designed. These were added to the other items that were used to decorate the pavilion.]

चौ०. रचे रुचिर बर बंदनिवारे । मनहुँ मनोभवं फंद सँवारे ॥ १ ॥
मंगल कलस अनेक बनाए । ध्वज पताक पट चमर सुहाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

racē rucira bara bandanivārē. manahum̃ manōbhavam̃ phanda samvārē. 1.
maṅgala kalasa anēka banā'ē. dhvaja patāka paṭa camara suhā'ē. 2.

The artisans made fascinating festoons that were hung on all entrance and exit points such as the doorways, the gateways and the archways. These hangings were so charming and intricately woven that they appeared to be like snares put up by Kamdeo (cupid) (to captivate the mind and the heart of all the guests who would attend the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita)¹. (1)

Many auspicious vessels (“Kalas”) were crafted and put up. Similarly, beautiful flags, banners, curtains and whisks were also made and hung up at appropriate places (for the purpose of decoration and to give the whole arena an image of a huge grand palace)². (2)

[Note—¹In the foregoing verses, from Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 288, we have read about the special features of the pavilion where the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita was to be solemnised with respect to its design and the materials used to make it. Now in these verses we shall read about the external features of this pavilion. The present verse no. 1 deals with the entrance and exit points of the huge pavilion itself as well as the arena in general.

Remember: It was the venue of the marriage of a ‘princess’, and therefore the construction was done on a grand and extensive scale. The venue had many entrance and exit points, and each was extensively decorated. The metaphor of the Kamdeo is commonly cited in Indian scriptures and other literature to stress on the beauty and

charm of the object referred to. Kamdeo is the god of beauty and physical charm, and hence wherever and whenever he is invoked, the intent is to show that the thing in question has remarkable beauty and charm.

In this context, refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 346 that also invokes Kamdeo with respect to the auspicious pitchers filled with scented liquid as if Kamdeo had squeezed the virtue of auspiciousness to extract its essence and then filled these pitchers with it.

The entrance points of the venue had to be especially attractive because they were like the face of the main venue. They would hint to the guest what was to be expected inside. These gateways, archways and doorways had to be so wonderful that the guest would feel warmly welcomed even before he entered the main venue.

It is just like the case of a ‘beautiful and attractive face’ of the body; when one meets someone it is the face which he sees and appreciates first before anything else. If the face is ugly and gloomy, the rest of the interaction becomes unattractive and lacking in charm. The beautiful interior is often marred by an ugly or unsuitable exterior. For instance, we remember a person with a lovely face more favourably than a person with an ugly face. The same thing applies here: all efforts were made to deck-up the exterior of the pavilion as well as the arena in general so that the immense efforts invested in the construction of the magnificent pavilion itself do not go to waste, so that the visitor carries with him a permanently sweet memory of what he has seen and witnessed.

²The “Kalases” are pitchers and other vessels that are ordinarily made of clay, but those who can afford them they can also be made from precious metals such as gold and silver, or of lesser valuable materials such as copper, brass etc. On auspicious occasions they are placed at strategic points such as all entrances and exits of a place where a religious ceremony is to be held. They are painted colourfully and decorated with leaves, fruits etc.

The previous verse no. 1 deals with the entrance points, and so now this present verse no. 2 elaborates on it to tell us more about how these entrances were decorated: there were auspicious pitchers placed on either side of the entrances which were wonderfully decorated with flags, banners, curtains and whisks that were put up on them to give them the appearance of the gates and doors of a royal palace.

Besides being placed at the entrance and exit points, these auspicious vessels are placed on the ceremonial ‘squares’ that are painted or made from coloured powder on the ground as mentioned in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 288 above.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296 which tell us how the citizens of Ayodhya decorated their households when the good news of Lord Ram’s marriage reached the city. Here also we shall read that the decoration made by them had all the components mentioned in the present verse: there were flags, banners, curtains, whisks, golden pitchers, festoons and nets made from gems and precious stones of many kinds. Then there were garlands and hangings made from blades of fresh green grass.]

दीप मनोहर मनिमय नाना । जाइ न बरनि बिचित्र बिताना ॥ ३ ॥

जेहिं मंडप दुलहिनि बैदेही । सो बरनै असि मति कबि केही ॥ ४ ॥

dīpa manōhara manimaya nānā. jā'i na barani bicitra bitānā. 3.
jēhim maṇḍapa dulahini baidēhī. sō baranai asi mati kabi kēhī. 4.

Many kinds of oil-lamps made from gems of different varieties were so beautiful to look at that they virtually stole the mind and the heart of the onlooker (i.e. these lamps held the attention of the viewer so much so that he was captivated by their fabulous beauty).

In this way, the extensive pavilion was erected in such a magnificent way that it looked most wonderful and awe-inspiring, and it defied description¹. (3)

Say, which poet has the expertise and acumen, literary as well as poetic, sufficient enough to describe the grandeur, opulence and elegance of the pavilion in which “Vaidehi” (the daughter of king Videha, another name of king Janak) was to be present as a bride². (4)

[Note—¹The lighted lamps are placed at different locations of such a pavilion. Some are placed on leaves that cover the mouth of the ceremonial vessels like the ones described in the previous verse no. 2, some are placed at the sides of the gate itself, others along the walls and steps leading upto the platform, and still others at nooks and corners of the pavilion to give the whole place a glittering and romantic look.

The lighted lamps are also used for formal worship rituals, and are placed on and around the altar, at the foot of the image of the deity to be worshipped, and etc.

²This verse answers the question ‘which pavilion was especially decorated by the expert artisans of Janakpur?’ Does it mean that no other pavilions were erected? No; certainly many other pavilions were erected all over the city, such as along main city thoroughfares and around public parks and squares for the purpose of giving a place to rest for the visitors and guests who would like to roam around the city. But the focus of attention was the pavilion where the marriage was to be held.

The use of the word “Vaidehi” for Sita is very significant here. It is used to remove any misgivings about who Sita actually was, because marriages are worldly events that unite one mortal human being to another mortal human being. One must not be misled by this story of Sita marrying Lord Ram to get an impression that an ordinary princess is being married to a prince. Because if this misconception creeps in then the very purpose of narrating this event would lose its element of divinity and holiness, and it would be reduced to the narration of the marriage of king’s daughter by one of the royal bards! It is not to be allowed to be so.

Remember: Both Sita and Lord Ram are not ordinary human beings who have a gross body that will become old and die one day. They are not ordinary human princess and prince who are marrying each other. These two are divine Beings—Sita being goddess Laxmi and Sri Ram being Lord Vishnu—who have willingly assumed the form of human beings for some great work of the gods that was pending to be done. In other words, they are the ‘disembodied supreme Self’, an image that has no physical aspect other than a mere reflective form of the original—as clearly meant by the word “Vaidehi” which means ‘one without a physical gross body’.]

दूल्हु रामु रूप गुन सागर । सो बितानु तिहुँ लोक उजागर ॥ ५ ॥
जनक भवन कै सोभा जैसी । गृह गृह प्रति पुर देखिअ तैसी ॥ ६ ॥

dūlahu rāmu rūpa guna sāgara. sō bitānu tihum^o lōka ujāgara. 5.
janaka bhavana kai sōbhā jaisī. gr̥ha gr̥ha prati pura dēkhi'a taisī. 6.

The canopy under which Lord Ram—who is an ocean¹ of all Gunas (auspicious virtues) and Roop (beauty)²—will appear as a groom, is definitely the one that shines³ (occupies a privileged and special place) in the entire world consisting of three dimensions⁴. (5)

The beauty and splendour that was seen at the royal palace of Janak was also replicated in all the homes of the city. [In other words, each individual household of the city was decorated in the best possible way as each householder regarded himself as a part of the grand celebration of Sita's marriage. Hence, each household and building of the city was so decorated that they had the same beauty and splendour, the same glamour and grandeur as the palace of king Janak.]⁵ (6)

[Note—¹The word “ocean” is a figure of speech to mean that the Lord's goodness and his virtues are countless and immeasurable just like the vastness of the ocean.

²Good and auspicious virtues give glory and fame to the one who possesses them. They are a person's adornment just like the beautiful clothes and ornaments he wears. The good qualities and exemplary characters that a person possesses give his personality an intrinsic beauty and enduring charm that are more meaningful than merely possessing artificial good-looking paraphernalia that are pleasant for the eyes but hollow from the inside as well as transient.

So, here it is meant that Lord Ram's beauty (“Roop”) is not merely limited to his lovely physical appearances but goes deep down to mean the inherent good nature and excellent qualities that he possesses. His beauty is not skin-deep, but it is as ‘deep as the ocean’, because it is represented by the wonderful qualities and characters that the Lord possesses in a natural way.

³This canopy is distinct from all other such canopies. It has a unique place or distinction of its own; it stands out; it occupies a place of pride; it has an outstanding glory of its own.

Now, the use of the word “canopy” and then describing it as being “unique” is very significant here. It subtly refers the cosmic form of Lord Ram because he indeed is the Supreme Being in a manifested form. From the cosmic perspective of this world, the ‘sky’ is the canopy! So, when the Lord of the world stands below a canopy it implies that it symbolises the ‘sky’ that covers the whole world.

In this context one must refer to the previous verse no. 4 where Sita is addressed as “Vaidehi”. The two verses, nos. 4 and 5, together intend to convey the message that the reader must not treat this marriage as between to human beings, but as a divine event that would bring together two unique cosmic forces of Nature—one is ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being represented by Lord Ram, and the other is ‘Shakti’, the cosmic forces of Nature.

⁴The three worlds referred to here are the heaven, the earth and the nether world. It may also mean the past world, the present world and the future world.

In other words, the canopy under which Lord Ram would stand as a groom was so magnificent that its like had never been erected before, would never be erected in future, and has never been erected in the present time also.

⁵Earlier, in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 287, we have already read that Janak had called the senior citizens and requested them to decorate their individual homes and neighbourhoods. This present verse is an extension of it.

So, while the army of royal artisans and craftsmen engaged themselves to erect the marriage pavilion and other public pavilions, the citizens got down to the task of cleaning and beautifying their individual homes as well as their neighbourhoods.

It was a sort of community effort, and the result was that the entire city looked spick and span, glittering in every corner and appearing like heaven on earth.]

जेहिं तेरहुति तेहि समय निहारी । तेहि लघु लगहिं भुवन दस चारी ॥ ७ ॥

जो संपदा नीच गृह सोहा । सो बिलोकि सुरनायक मोहा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhim tērahuti tēhi samaya nihārī. tēhi laghu lagahim bhuvana dasa cārī. 7.
jō sampadā nīca gr̥ha sōhā. sō bilōki suranāyaka mōhā. 8.

Anyone who happened to look at ‘Tirhooti’ (the city of Janakpur) at that time found it so magnificent and glamorous that all the fourteen Bhuvans (i.e. the 14 mythological worlds; or the fourteen levels of the existing world) appeared to fade away in glory and look humble when compared to it (Janakpur)¹. (7)

The prosperity and wealth that even the humblest of householder possessed in the city of Janakpur amazed the king of gods (Indra). [That is, Indra had not expected that such uniform distribution of prosperity and wealth would be witnessed on earth. He was also astonished at the immensity of wealth in Janakpur as it surpassed even the wealth of his heavenly kingdom.]² (8)

[Note—¹Refer to a note appended to Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 261 above which lists the names of the fourteen Bhuvans referred to here.

A pertinent question arises here: who has seen these ‘fourteen Bhuvans’ that he would be able to compare them with Janakpur and find that the latter is more beautiful than any or all of them? Of course it is not possible for humans to do so. Then who were they who did the comparison?

The answer is this: Lord Ram’s marriage was witnessed by all the gods, including the chief amongst the gods, such as Brahma the creator, Shiva the concluder, and Indra who is the king of gods. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289 herein below; as well as (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 314.

²How this unique achievement was made possible is explained by Lord Shiva in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 314 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it by advising the stunned gods, including the creator Brahma who was dazed at the fabulous beauty he saw in Janakpur and began to doubt whether the city was his creation, by telling them to realise that—“It is the place where the supreme Lord

Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram is present along with his divine consort Laxmi in the form of Sita, so how can it lack anything? The Lord is the one who grants all wishes by merely taking his holy name, whose name is an eternal treasury of auspiciousness and well-being, and it can bestow the four legendary fruits obtained by doing meritorious deeds to the person who repeats this holy name.” The four fruits are ‘Artha’ = wealth and prosperity; ‘Kaam’ = fulfilment of desires; ‘Dharma’ = honour as an upholder of laws and doer of duties in an ethical manner; and ‘Moksha’ = spiritual liberation and deliverance.

Goddess Laxmi is the patron goddess of material wealth. This being the case, there is no wonder that there was extensive opulence and prosperity in Janakpur because Laxmi is present here in the form of Sita. Refer: Doha no. 289 herein below.

The beauty of the city of Janakpur has been described earlier also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214.]

दो०. बसइ नगर जेहिं लच्छि करि कपट नारि बर बेषु ।
तेहि पुर कै सोभा कहत सकुचहिं सारद सेषु ॥ २८९ ॥

dōhā.

basa'i nagara jēhiṁ lacchi kari kapaṭa nāri bara bēṣu.
tēhi pura kai sōbhā kahata sakucahiṁ sārada sēṣu. 289.

The magnificence, the grandeur, the opulence and the splendour of a city where goddess Laxmi (the patron goddess of material wealth and prosperity; the divine consort of Lord Vishnu) herself lived in an illusionary form as a woman (i.e. as Sita, the daughter of Janak) was so great that even Sharda (goddess Saraswati who is the patron goddess of speech and learning) and the Sesha (the thousand-tongued celestial serpent) failed to describe it, they were reluctant to attempt to describe it (because they knew they won't be able to do it). (Doha no. 289)

[Note—As noted above in the note appended to previous verses, this Doha explains why the city looked so wonderful that there was no comparison between it and the rest of the world.]

चौ०. पहुँचे दूत राम पुर पावन । हरषे नगर बिलोकि सुहावन ॥ १ ॥
भूप द्वार तिन्ह खबरि जनाई । दसरथ नृप सुनि लिए बोलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pahumčē dūta rāma pura pāvana. haraṣē nagara bilōki suhāvana. 1.
bhūpa dvāra tinha khabari janāī. dasaratha nṛpa suni li'ē bōlāī. 2.

The messengers¹ (of king Janak) reached the auspicious (“pāvana”; holy and sacred) city of Lord Ram (i.e. Ayodhya). They were thrilled to behold the beautiful and pleasant city². (1)

When the messenger reached the gates of the palace of king Dasrath, he sent in a message for the king, who called him as soon as he heard of his arrival³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to (i) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 102; and (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296 also.

Now we pick up the narration that was paused in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287 herein above. Janak had sent his messengers to Ayodhya on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra. Both the cities of Janakpur as well as Ayodhya were wonderful to look at. We have already read about the pleasantness of the city of Janakpur and its suburbs in Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 214. Though not specifically mentioned here but we can comfortably assume that the city of Ayodhya as well as its suburbs were equally pleasant and wonderful to look at. This present verse no. 1 hints at it.

One important point is to be noted here. Ayodhya has been called “Rampur”, the ‘city of Ram’. This is done purposely to sum-up its glory—i.e. it is a city where the supreme Lord Vishnu has decided to come down to earth and live in the human form as Lord Ram. This being the case, there is no need for further elaboration on the city’s grandeur and beauty. Any intelligent person can arrive at a logical conclusion of the city’s magnificence based on common-sense when he reads about the beauty and grandeur of Janakpur where the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, i.e. goddess Laxmi, lives in the form of Sita. If the city of Sita (Janakpur) is grand, then obviously and naturally the city of her divine spouse, Lord Vishnu as Sri Ram, must at least be equal to the former if not more so.

Another important point to note is this: When the city was referred to as the “city of Lord Ram”, i.e. ‘Rampur’, in the first half of the verse, it was described as being ‘auspicious, holy and sacred’—i.e. as “Paawan”. But in the second half when it is merely referred to as a ‘city’ or “Nagar”, it is described as being pleasant and wonderful to look at. Well, the subtle idea is that a place where the Lord God lived was equivalent to a pilgrim place, a holy site. The arrival of the messengers here is equivalent to a person arriving at any holy site where one goes for pilgrimage. In other words, the messengers were very lucky to have gone on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Ayodhya.

Once inside the city, like any other normal pilgrim, they looked at its sights, its temples and other buildings, its parks, gardens, market places and streets as they were making their way to the palace of king Dasrath. Hence, this view of the city in general is being described in a normal way—as consisting of pleasant sights.

²It ought to be noted here that ‘more than one person was sent as messenger’, though of course there was a chief amongst them. This fact is clearly mentioned in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 67, verse no. 27.

They were sent on the instructions of sage Vishwamitra as well as on the advice of Satanand, the royal priest of Janakpur—refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 68, verse no. 13.

³King Dasrath was like an Emperor; many kings had to wait for their turn to meet him. There must have been a hierarchical setup in the palace as well as the royal court, and those senior to others were given quicker audience with the king. This is clear in the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand: (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 2 that says “the kings were anxious to be in the favour of

Dasrath, and they performed their respective duties keeping in mind that Dasrath is pleased and approves of their actions”; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25 that says “the kings of this world sought the goodwill and lived at the pleasure of king Dasrath on the strength of whose arms even the king of gods (Indra) lived without any hindrance to his authority”.

These arriving messengers must have seen a number of important persons waiting at the gates for their turn to meet king Dasrath. So they informed the guards that they have come with a special message from sage Vishwamitra, and it concerns Lord Ram and Laxman. This message was to be delivered to the king immediately. This gave them a ‘green flag’ and a preferential treatment at the hands of the guards who rushed inside the royal palace to inform the king of their arrival.

So, as soon as the king heard the news that messengers have arrived with the news of the two princes, and they carry a message from sage Vishwamitra, he immediately ordered that they be ushered in.]

करि प्रनामु तिन्ह पाती दीन्ही । मुदित महीप आपु उठि लीन्ही ॥ ३ ॥
बारि बिलोचन बाँचत पाती । पुलक गात आई भरि छाती ॥ ४ ॥

kari pranāmu tinha pātī dīnhī. mudita mahīpa āpu uṭhi līnhī. 3.
bāri bilōcana bām̐cata pātī. pulaka gāta āī bhari chātī. 4.

The messengers bowed before the king and gave him the letter with due respect. The king was exhilarated and he himself got up and took it with his own hands¹. (3)

As he (Dasrath) read the letter, tears (of joy and affection) gushed out of his eyes. His body was filled with thrill, and so was his heart that was overwhelmed². (4)

[Note—¹Usually any message or letter was given to the king through his attendants. But in this case, the king stood up himself to receive it. He was very anxious to learn about his two sons who had gone away with sage Vishwamitra for quite some time now. This was the first time any news about them has arrived. So naturally as a father the king was extremely eager to read it.

Another reason for Dasrath getting up himself to receive the letter was that it had a message from the revered sage Vishwamitra. Now do we see why king Janak had been reluctant to send messengers to Ayodhya before sage Vishwamitra specifically instructed him to do so? Janak was aware that kings have to wait for their turn to meet Dasrath, as the latter was an Emperor. So he feared that if he sent the messenger in an ordinary routine way like a king’s letter-bearer, then perhaps he will have to wait in a queue for getting a chance to present himself before king Dasrath. But if he bore a message from sage Vishwamitra, then he will get prompt response.

The king was exhilarated upon receiving the letter because it was the first time, after a long gap, that any news has come about his beloved two sons, Ram and Laxman, and that even through sage Vishwamitra. In this context, the following verses are very explicit: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 291; and (ii) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 101.

²Dasrath was so overwhelmed with emotions that his throat was virtually choked as tears flowed from his eyes, a current of thrill shot through his entire body, and his

heart literally skipped a beat. He perhaps read some lines and stopped for a while to recover himself. This will be clear in verse nos. 5-6 herein below where it is said that: “He was virtually dumbfounded upon remembering Lord Ram and Laxman so much so that and could not read the letter long enough to learn any good or bad it contained. However, he regained his composure and once again read it with patience”, after having recovered from the emotional ecstasy that accompanied his initial euphoria.]

रामु लखनु उर कर बर चीठी । रहि गए कहत न खाटी मीठी ॥ ५ ॥
पुनि धरि धीर पत्रिका बाँची । हरषी सभा बात सुनि साँची ॥ ६ ॥

rāmu lakhanu ura kara bara cīṭhī. rahi ga'e kahata na khāṭī mīṭhī. 5.
puni dhari dhīra patrikā bāñcī. haraṣī sabhā bāta suni sāmñcī. 6.

With the image (memory) of Lord Ram and Laxman in his heart and the letter in his hand, the king stood dumbfounded so much so that he could not utter anything and say whether there was good news or bad one in it (i.e. in the letter)¹. (5)

However, recollecting himself and regaining his composure, the king read the letter again patiently. [This time he read it fully and aloud so that everyone could hear its contents.]²

The royal court was exhilarated and overjoyed upon hearing the correct news (and truthful information about the two princes, news that was trustworthy, news that conveyed Lord Ram's great achievement of breaking the formidable bow which not only established his name and glory in the whole world but also entitled him to marry Sita, the most beautiful girl of her time)³. (6)

[Note—¹The king was an extremely busy person, and he had no time to brood about his two sons who had been away from him for quite some time now. So when he saw the letter, the pleasant and fond memories of Lord Ram and Laxman flooded his heart and mind and virtually drowned him in a surge of emotion. He choked; tears gushed out of his eyes; his body was thrilled. He stood like a statue for some time. He could not even tell anything to the royal court that had its ears standing erect to hear what that letter contained, so overwhelmed he was.

Those moments must have been certainly very anxious for all those attending the court at that time when they saw tears rushing out of the king's eyes. His ministers and other courtiers must have kept their fingers crossed, hoping for good news as they watched their king in a stunned state!

To underline the dramatic effect of the letter and to emphasise the uncertainty and anxiety of the moment, this verse says that the king “could not utter anything, whether it was good news or bad news”.

²As we have read in the foregoing verses, Dasrath could not read the letter initially as he was overwhelmed with surging waves of emotions. Soon however, he regained his composure and read the letter aloud. How do we know that he “read it aloud?” Well, this is evident because it is said that the “court heard it and everyone felt joyous”.

We shall soon see that Dasrath had read this letter “twice”—once it now, and then once again when Bharat asked him about its contents. Refer: Doha no. 290 herein below.

³It is to be noted that it is said in the second part of this verse that “everyone in the assembly was over-joyed to hear the ‘truthful’ news”. The emphasis is on “hearing of truthful news” (bāta suni sām̐cī). This is because the letter had come with the signature of sage Vishwamitra, and it therefore had true, ‘trustworthy and genuine’ news about Lord Ram and Laxman, that the invitation to come to Janakpur was genuine, and that there was no trap in it.

In ancient times, it was quite common to trap a king’s army in an ambush by first inviting him to attend some sort of ceremony and then laying out a trap for him mid-way. Against this backdrop, the use of the word “true news” assumes significance as it implies that the court of king Dasrath was reassured that the news was ‘genuine’ and ‘trustworthy’, and not some kind of foul play to cheat the king.

In this context, refer to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 291 herein below.]

खेलत रहे तहाँ सुधि पाई । आए भरतु सहित हित भाई ॥ ७ ॥
पूछत अति सनेहँ सकुचाई । तात कहाँ तें पाती आई ॥ ८ ॥

khēlata rahē tahām̐ sudhi pāī. ā'ē bharatu sahita hita bhāī. 7.
pūchata ati sanēham̐ sakucāī. tāta kahām̐ tēm̐ pātī āī. 8.

When this news reached the place where Bharat was playing with his friends and brother Shatrughan, he (Bharat) immediately came (to his father, king Dasrath) along with his playmates and brother. (7)

He (Bharat) hesitantly asked the king most affectionately—‘Dear father, please tell me from where has the letter come?’ (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 102, stanza no. 1 also.

Bharat’s question clearly indicates that he had only heard that some good news has come, but wasn’t aware of either its contents or from where it has come.

Bharat was “hesitant” because he was not sure if he was observing royal protocol by bursting excitedly into the royal court with his playmates and directly asking the king about the contents of the letter and from where it had come. It was alright that Bharat was the son of king Dasrath and therefore a prince, but still he was expected to observe the rules of protocol when in the court. He could not be as informal with his father in an open court that was a formal place bearing the authority of state as he was with him inside the royal palace which was his home. But Bharat was so excited that he could not wait for formal permission from the king to ask questions or speak with him.

Besides this, the king had not summoned Bharat in this case; Bharat had heard the news from someone and had come on his own accord. May be the letter had to do with official matters of the kingdom and if that is the case then Bharat had no right to ask such questions as he did.

Even if everything else is neglected, we read here that Bharat was accompanied by his “playmates” when he came to king Dasrath’s court. Now, a royal court is certainly not a play-ground or palace courtyard where the prince can collect his friends and playmates around him. Certain basic level of court decorum and royal

dignity had to be maintained, and a crowd of excited children in a court is certainly not acceptable.

These are some of the plausible reasons why Bharat was “hesitant” in asking his father about the letter that the messengers had brought.

Bharat asked “affectionately” because the letter contained news about Lord Ram and Laxman whom not only Bharat but also his brother Shatrughan, as well as all other friends loved very much. All the boys were terribly excited to know more about Lord Ram and Laxman, their best friends and brothers.

Remember: Though the four brothers, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were royal princes, yet they never lived a life that would create a wall between them and the subjects of the kingdom, so that all the boys of the city who were of their age were treated as equal friends, and the four princes would regularly interact with these citizen-boys without any hint of superiority complex or displaying any taint of snobbishness in their behaviour. In this context, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 205.]

दो०. कुसल प्रानप्रिय बंधु दोउ अहहिं कहहु केहिं देस ।

सुनि सनेह साने बचन बाची बहुरि नरेस ॥ २९० ॥

dōhā.

kusala prānapriya bandhu dō'u ahahim kahahu kēhim dēsa.
suni sanēha sānē bacana bācī bahuri narēsa. 290.

Bharat asked his father king Dasrath—‘Are my brothers, who are very dear to my heart, happy and doing well? Say, where are they at present, and in which country?’

When the Emperor (“narēsa”) heard these honestly affectionate words, he read aloud the letter once again (so that Bharat and the others could hear it once again for clarifications). (Doha no. 290)

[Note—The word “narēsa” here endorses the view that Dasrath was an Emperor as expressed earlier in our discussion of how easily the messengers of Janak had been ushered in to meet Dasrath whereas other kings had to wait in a queue.

Now, this was the third time the letter was read by Dasrath. On the first occasion he was so overwhelmed that he couldn’t read it fully, and on the other occasion he did read it fully but Bharat was not present—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4 and 6 herein above respectively.

The king decided to read the letter fully once again because he realized that Bharat won’t be satisfied unless he hears the contents fully. Besides this, the king wanted to train his sons on the way such invitations should be written, because such occasions do not come frequently.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 102 also.]

चौ०. सुनि पाती पुलके दोउ भ्राता । अधिक सनेहु समात न गाता ॥ १ ॥

प्रीति पुनीत भरत कै देखी । सकल सभाँ सुखु लहेउ बिसेषी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suni pātī pulakē dō'u bhrātā. adhika sanēhu samāta na gātā. 1.
prīti punīta bharata kai dēkhī. sakala sabhām' sukhu lahē'u bisēṣī. 2.

Upon hearing the letter the two brothers were overjoyed, and were so excited with happiness that it seemed their bodies were unable to contain their emotions of happiness, thrill and excitement. (1)

Seeing the undiluted, unpretentious, and sincere affection of Bharat (for Lord Ram and Laxman)¹, the whole court was extremely delighted². (2)

[Note—¹Bharat shared a special bond of love and affection with Lord Ram, and the Lord reciprocated it in full measure. Both the brothers acknowledged each other's love on every occasion in the epic story of Ram Charit Manas as we shall see below.

For instance, let us see the following verses of Ayodhya Kand:--

(i) In Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 169 of Ayodhya Kand, mother Kaushalya tells Bharat that “Ram is dearer to you than your own Pran (life), and likewise you are dearer to Ram than his own self”.

(ii) In Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 205 of Ayodhya Kand, the holy rivers at Triveni (i.e. river Ganges, Yamuna and Saraswati) had together praised Bharat's devotion and love for Lord Ram in an unequivocal term by assuring him that no one is more dear to Lord Ram than Bharat is.

(iii) A little later, even sage Bharadwaj has declared in an un-ambiguous language that Bharat has a special place in the heart of Lord Ram and the Lord loves him more than anyone else—refer: Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 208—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 210.

(iv) Even the creator Brahma had acknowledged the bond of undiluted and robust love and affection that Lord Ram and Bharat shared with each other when he had advised the gods—who wanted to prevent Bharat from persuading Lord Ram to return to Ahodhya because then the demons won't be eliminated—to leave everything to Bharat and never attempt any dirty tricks with him, because while on the one hand Lord Ram will never defy Bharat's wishes, Bharat too will never do anything that goes against the wishes of the Lord. This observations are ratified in the following verses of Ayodhya Kand:—(a) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259; (b) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 266; (c) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 266; (d) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 266; and (e) Doha no. 269 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

(v) In Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 289 of Ayodhya Kand, king Janak has affirmed that the mutual love that Lord Ram and Bharat shared for each other was so immense and honest that neither can one describe it nor it can be ever be subjected to doubts.

(vi) Not only this, the glory and purity of love as well as devotion that Bharat had were so immense and deep that even Lord Ram was unable to fathom them—this was stated by king Janak in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289.

(vii) When we read this magnificent story we find that Bharat has himself acknowledged Lord Ram's great love and affection for him when he tells the Lord at Chitrakoot that when they were young the Lord used to voluntarily lose a game so that Bharat could win it—refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 260.

(viii) Earlier in the story, when Bharat learnt that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita had gone to the forest and his mother had been instrumental in this most unfortunate development because she wanted to make him (Bharat) the king of Ayodhya instead of Lord Ram, Bharat had not only rebuked and insulted his mother sternly, and refused to accept the crown at any cost, but had also considered himself as a great sinner because his beloved brother had to go to the forest due to him, and had told the full court that his best welfare lied in serving Lord Ram and in nothing else whatsoever—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(a) Doha no. 160; (b) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 161—to Doha no. 162; (c) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 167—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 169; and (d) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 177—to Doha no. 183.

²This idea that the assembly was delighted to observe that there was a strong bond of love and affection between Bharat and Lord Ram is reflected twice again in the story—(i) once when Bharat had declared his decision not to accept the crown of Ayodhya that rightfully belonged to Lord Ram, and therefore he would go to the forest to bring the Lord back (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 185), and (ii) the second time when Bharat had accepted Lord Ram's instructions to wait patiently till the time of the Lord's exile is over (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 307).

Even the gods as well as the sages and holy men approved of this mutual acceptance of each others will by the two brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 269—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 270.]

तब नृप दूत निकट बैठारे । मधुर मनोहर बचन उचारे ॥ ३ ॥
भैया कहहु कुसल दोउ बारे । तुहू नीकें निज नयन निहारे ॥ ४ ॥

taba nrpa dūta nikaṭa baiṭhārē. madhura manōhara bacana ucārē. 3.
bhaiyā kahahu kusala dō'u bārē. tumha nīkēṁ nija nayana nihārē. 4.

Then the king called the messengers and made them sit cordially near (i.e. close to) him¹. He then spoke to them with a pleasant voice, using sweet friendly words². (3)

The king said—‘Brother(s)³, tell me about the well-being of the two children. Have you seen them personally and close enough to know about their welfare*?’

[*This half of the verse can be also read as follows—“You are so fortunate that you have been able to see them from close.”] (4)

[Note—¹The messengers were till now standing at a distance from the king's throne while he read the letter and when Bharat had come in to learn what the news was. Since the news was exceptionally good and welcome, the messengers now got a special treatment, were accorded a treatment reserved for dignitaries and special guests as they were called near the king and made to sit close to him so that he can talk with them privately and on a one-to-one basis.

When one is very pleased with someone he calls the latter close and talks with him pleasantly. When Hanuman had come back from Lanka with the good news that Sita has been found, Lord Ram too had sat him close to him and had talked with him affectionately—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 33.

Further on in the story we read that Lord Ram had summoned Angad, one of the chief commanders of Lord Ram’s army consisting of monkeys and bears that had attacked Lanka, and made him sit close to him to ask Angad about the news he has brought of the city when he had been sent by the Lord as an emissary to try to make truce with Ravana, the demon king. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Earlier in the story we have already read that when Lord Ram and Laxman arrived at the place where king Janak had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra at the time of the latter’s arrival at Janakpur, the sage had made the two brothers sit close to him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215.

The idea is that when one wishes to show special treatment to someone, or when he wants to discuss something confidentially, the other person is invited to come and sit close.

²The king was pleased to hear the good news, and that is why he spoke very politely and pleasantly with the messengers. The situation hypothetically would have been radically different if the messengers had brought some bad news—then the king’s tone would have been stern and scathing.

In the next verse we read that the king addresses the messengers with the friendly term of “Brother”, which is usually used when one speaks informally with someone very close, such as a friend or a close associate, someone of importance and an equal.

³It is to be noted that king Dasrath has addressed the messengers with an affectionate term “Brother”. This fits in well with his calling them close and making them sit near him like they were very close to him, or were well-known to him, or were his friends.

This also shows the good nature of king Dasrath—that inspite of him being an Emperor he had no ego in him and he did not feel ill-at-ease in giving others their due respect. After all, the messengers were employees of king Janak and not royal members of his family. But Dasrath gave them the same respect he would have given some royal guest.]

स्यामल गौर धरें धनु भाथा । बय किसोर कौसिक मुनि साथ ॥ ५ ॥

पहिचानहु तुह कहहु सुभाऊ । प्रेम बिबस पुनि पुनि कह राऊ ॥ ६ ॥

syāmala gaura dharēm dhanu bhāthā. baya kisōra kausika muni sāthā. 5.

pahicānahu tumha kahahu subhā’ū. prēma bibasa puni puni kaha rā’ū. 6.

[The king then identifies the two brothers so that the messengers can understand about whom the king was talking.] They have a dark and fair complexion respectively, and hold a bow and arrow each. They are young in age, and are in the company of Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra). (5)

If you recognize them then please tell me about their nature and behaviour.’

The king was so overwhelmed with love and affection (for his two sons) that he repeatedly asked the messengers this question¹. [To wit, the king asked them to tell him more about Lord Ram and Laxman. The king was not contented and felt that he still didn’t have enough of the good news about his two sons, so he prodded the messengers to say more each time they stopped speaking.] (6)

[Note—¹Now the question arises—why did Dasrath repeatedly ask about the welfare of the two brothers? The answer is that Lord Ram and Laxman had gone with sage Vishwamitra to fight ferocious demons, and this was a matter of grave concern for Dasrath. Though he could not defy sage Vishwamitra’s request and the advice given by his own royal priest Vasistha, but internally he was very uneasy and upset while sending the two brothers away to the forest to face demons, as he apprehended danger for them. This is abundantly clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Doha no. 208.

So Dasrath wanted to be certain he was hearing right, that he was not dreaming. The news was like music for his ears, and he wanted to hear it again and again as it gave him comfort and pleasure and happiness.

There was no news of the two brothers ever since they had gone away with sage Vishwamitra. This fact has been expressly mentioned in the next verse no. 7 that follows herein below, as well as in Tulsidas’ another classic book known as “Geetawali Ramayan” in its Baal Kand, verse no. 101. This was the first time the people of Ayodhya had heard of the welfare of the two brothers.

The ladies of the royal household at Ayodhya had regretted the king’s decision to send the two young inexperienced princes with sage Vishwamitra to fight with demons. The queen mothers and others were extremely worried about the welfare of Lord Ram and Laxman. This is clearly brought out in ‘Geetawali Ramayan’, Baal Kand, verse nos. 99—101.

Therefore in this context, the king felt as if his two beloved sons have been re-born when the messengers told him that they were hale and hearty. Like any loving father who hasn’t heard about his sons who had gone away for a long time, Dasrath wanted to hear this pleasant news again and again because it was like music for his ears.

There was another reason for the king to ‘repeatedly ask the messengers about the welfare of Lord Ram and Laxman’. For this, please read note of verse no. 8 herein below.]

जा दिन तें मुनि गए लवाई । तब तें आजु साँचि सुधि पाई ॥ ७ ॥

कहहु बिदेह कवन बिधि जाने । सुनि प्रिय बचन दूत मुसुकाने ॥ ८ ॥

jā dina tēm̄ muni ga'ē lavā'ī. taba tēm̄ āju sām̄ci sudhi pā'ī. 7.

kahahu bidēha kavana bidhi jānē. suni priya bacana dūta musukānē. 8.

Ever since the day the sage (Vishwamitra) had taken them away, this is the first time that I have got an authentic news about them (and their well-being)¹. (7)

Tell me, how did king Janak come to know about them (Lord Ram and Laxman)?²

Hearing these pleasant words of Dasrath, the messengers smiled.³ [What they replied is narrated in the following Doha no. 291 and the verses that follow it.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 290 above. As has been observed in a note appended thereto, the news was deemed to be ‘true, trustworthy, authentic and correct’ because it bore the signature of sage Vishwamitra. We have read earlier that it was he who had instructed Janak to send the messengers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 287.

In the present verse no. 7, Dasrath acknowledges the authenticity and trustworthiness of this letter.

In Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 1/99—1/101 we read that mothers Kaushalya and Sumitra were very worried about the welfare of Lord Ram and Laxman because ever since sage Vishwamitra took them away with him there was no news of the two brothers. It was at this juncture that the messengers arrived from Janakpur with the letter of king Janak. When Bharat heard the good news he rushed to inform his mother Sumitra—refer Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/101, stanza no. 4.

²Refer to note of verse no. 6 herein above. It should be noted here that the letter had come from the king of Janakpur, whereas the two brothers had gone with sage Vishwamitra to his forest hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice. Under normal circumstances the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, were supposed to come back, escorted by one of the sage’s disciples, after having completed the assigned task of eliminating the demons who were tormenting the sages. Sage Vishwamitra had not mentioned about taking them anywhere else.

So king Dasrath was amazed at the invitation from king Janak saying that Lord Ram is to marry his daughter Sita. It was not expected by him and beyond his imagination. That is why the king asked the messengers repeatedly about the news because he could not believe his ears, and then he wanted to cross-examine facts by seeing that the messengers’ information is consistent when they are made to repeat it again and again.

³Why did the messengers “smile”? Well, the messengers were smart and clever. They could gauge the wonderment in Dasrath’s mind. They were amazed that such a big king would become so dazed with the news that he would find it necessary to tell the messengers about the physical characteristics of the two princes as if they needed identification—refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 291 above.

After all, the very purpose of the messengers coming to Dasrath was related to the two brothers, and this being the case it was absolutely unnecessary to ask them if they had recognized Lord Ram and Laxman as Dasrath had indeed done in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 291 above.

So, this is why the messengers “smiled”. They were astonished that such a mighty king as Dasrath would act like an ordinary man of low intellect.]

दो०. सुनुहु महीपति मुकुट मनि तुङ्ग सम धन्य न कोउ ।
रामु लखनु जिन्ह के तनय बिस्व बिभूषन दोउ ॥ २९१ ॥

dōhā.

sunahu mahīpati mukuṭa mani tumha sama dhan'ya na kō'u.
rāmu lakhānu jinha kē tanaya bisva bibhūṣana dō'u. 291.

The messengers said—‘Listen oh great king! You are like a crown-jewel in the community of kings. [That is, you are not only an ordinary king and simply an emperor but you are like a ‘gem’ of the community of kings and emperors. You are indeed a great Emperor.]

[Now, the messengers give the reason why Dasrath was so special a king.] There is no one more fortunate and privileged than you in this world because Lord Ram and Laxman—who are like two magnificent adornments of the entire world—are your sons. (Doha no. 291)

[Note—King Dasrath is great because he has two wonderful sons, Lord Ram and Laxman. These two boys give glory to this world: the world has many glorious sons and fantastic heroes, but if all of them are to be compared to a king’s crown then Lord Ram and Laxman are like the two crown-jewels. Their presence in the world makes the world worth living in. Just like even a beautiful woman shorn of her ornaments would look dull and unattractive, the two brothers adorn the world and shine in it like the sun and the moon do in the sky.

In other words, Lord Ram and Laxman are one of their own kind, having no one to match them.

This statement of the messengers is an answer to Dasrath’s query in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 291 where the king has asked: “do tell me about their nature and behaviour”.

Dasrath is honoured and feted for his great good fortune that he has Lord Ram and Laxman as his two sons elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. Refer: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 294 where the king is praised by his learned Guru, sage Vasistha, precisely for this reason; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 173 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-7 where once again sage Vasistha repeats the same idea when he lauds king Dasrath after his death while trying to persuade Bharat to accept the crown of Ayodhya.

Dasrath’s immensity of love and devotion for Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, had been so intense, so profound that it compelled the Lord who is the Supreme Father of this entire creation, who has a cosmic presence that is transcendental and beyond the grossness of the physical world to assume the form of a human being and become Dasrath’s son. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, from Doha no. 149—to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 150; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 4; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, the 1st line of Doha no. 209.

So definitely Dasrath was not an ordinary king or emperor: it is not easy and almost impossible to have the Lord of the world to come and become one’s son. Hence, certainly king Dasrath was praiseworthy.]

चौ०. पूछन जोगु न तनय तुहारे । पुरुषसिंघ तिहु पुर उजिआरे ॥ १ ॥

जिन्ह के जस प्रताप के आगे । ससि मलीन रबि सीतल लागे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pūchana jōgu na tanaya tumhārē. puruṣasiṅgha tihu pura uji'ārē. 1.
jinha kē jasa pratāpa kēm āgē. sasi malīna rabi sītala lāgē. 2.

The messengers replied—‘No enquiry is needed about your (king Dasrath’s two) sons, for their glory and goodness are so excellent and profound that they don’t need someone to highlight them as they make their presence self-evident. [In other words, no introduction is needed about the two brothers even as no introduction is needed for the sun as it rises in the sky at dawn.]

In fact, they occupy a unique position in the human race as if they were lions in the whole of humankind (**puruṣasiṅgha**), and they are so celebrated that their glory virtually illuminates and shines in the whole of the three worlds (consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world)¹. (1)

The moon looks dim and the sun seems cold when compared the immensity, the stupendity, the vastness, the quality and the dimension of their (Lord Ram and Laxman) glory, majesty and renown². (2)

[Note—¹This introductory praise of Lord Ram and Laxman by the messengers is in response to king Dasrath’s outlining the physical characteristics of the two brothers, that one of them is dark complexioned and the other is of a fair complexion, and that they hold a bow and an arrow each in their hands (refer: Chaupai line no. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 291), to help the messengers understand about whom the king is asking.

So they reply that there is no need to identify the the two brothers just as one does not need to be told who is a lion in a large group of animals because the lion stands out apart from the rest of them by the virtue of its majesty, its bearing and its authority as the mighty and unquestioned king of the jungle. Similarly, one need not be told about the sun in the sky because its presence is self-evident, because its light illuminates the whole world like no other celestial body.

There were thousands of kings and princes in the royal arena where the bow-breaking ceremony was held. But Lord Ram and Laxman were the cynosure of all eyes. Here, their physical well-built and muscular body as well as their general demeanours and bearing are compared to the lion. Just like the lion which is fearless and is not cowed down by any other animal, Lord Ram and Laxman were bold and fearless so much so that the renowned sage Parashuram, who is famous for his anger and ability to subdue even the mightiest of opponents, had to finally bow before them. Besides this feat, Lord Ram had so easily broken the bow of Lord Shiva that it appeared to me made of clay, and this feat was especially significant because thousands of kings could not muster enough combined strength to as much as move the same bow by an inch.

Lord Ram and Laxman have been compared to a ‘lion’ elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—e.g. (i) Sorth/Doha no. 208 Kha; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 234.

When the bow broke with a thunderous roar that was heard in all corners of the world, it literally declared to the entire living world consisting of the heaven, the earth and the nether world, in an unambiguous term, the stupendous glory of Lord Ram. The glory of the Lord was thus established by this single event in even the remotest corners of the world. This is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 and its following Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 261; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 262.

It is just like the case of the sun rising at a specific spot with a limited area in the eastern horizon but spreading its illumination throughout the world so much so that even the remotest corners of the earth till the western horizon are lighted by its rays.

Comparing Lord Ram with the ‘sun’ as an illuminator of the world: refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 31.

²The moon is the brightest object in the night sky, and the sun the brightest in the day sky. This is because there is no other object brighter than them in the sky at that time. But just as the moon would pale into insignificance if it remains in the sky after sunrise, as it often happens, and the heat of the sun would look inconsequential if one were to stand close to a raging fire during the day, the virtues, the glory and the majesty of Lord Ram and Laxman were so great and profound that even the most majestic and powerful of kings and princes faded away when compared to them.

This observation of the messengers invoking the moon and the sun draws on the ideas reflected earlier during the actual bow-breaking ceremony.

Citing the metaphor of the ‘moon’: The royal heralds had declared that the bow was like a ‘Rahu’ vis-à-vis the strength of the kings which was compared to the ‘moon’, because the kings would be unable to resist being humiliated at the hands of the bow just as the moon cannot resist being darkened by the Rahu during the lunar eclipse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Citing the metaphor of the ‘sun’: When sage Parashuram had arrived angrily in the assembly, he has been compared to the ‘sun’ vis-à-vis the exalted family of sage Bhrigu which is compared to the lotus flower which opens its petals as soon as the sun rises. In other words, Parashuram gives glory to the entire family descending from sage Bhrigu. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268.

The messengers chose these two heavenly bodies, the moon and the sun, because they shine in the heaven, and therefore are more exalted than any other illuminated object in the world. So the messengers imply that the two brothers, Laxman and Lord Ram, are not only like the moon and the sun respectively but even far better than them.]

तिन्ह कहँ कहिअ नाथ किमि चीन्हे । देखिअ रबि कि दीप कर लीन्हे ॥ ३ ॥

सीय स्वयंबर भूप अनेका । समिटे सुभट एक तें एका ॥ ४ ॥

tinha kaham̃ kahi'a nātha kimi cīnhē. dēkhi'a rabi ki dīpa kara līnhē. 3.
siya svayambara bhūpa anēkā. samīṭē subhaṭa ēka tēm ēkā. 4.

Oh lord (a respectful way of addressing king Dasrath)! For such outstanding princes who have no parallel in this world, you say “how we recognised them?”!

Say, oh respected king, does one need a lamp to see the sun? [In other words, just like the sun does not need an introduction for its self, the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman need no introduction for themselves; their presence itself is a sufficient introduction for these two noble brothers.]¹ (3)

On the occasion of the marriage ceremony known as a ‘Swayambar’ in which the would-be groom of Sita was to be selected via the medium of an open competition²,

countless strong warrior-princes had assembled, each one of them a champion in his own right and better (stronger, more powerful, well-built, handsome, dynamic, energetic, enthusiastic, youthful, having a grand personality, an aura of authority and majesty, and so on and so forth) than his competitor.

[To wit, all those who participated in the Swayambar ceremony organised to select a groom for Sita, all the competitors or participants who had come, were great and majestic. All of them had great reputation and were renowned in their own right as famous kings and renowned warriors who were proud of their reputation and greatness as kings, princes and warriors. It was therefore an assembly of the mightiest and the greatest of kings and princes and warriors of the time on earth.] (4)

[Note—¹The messengers are responding to king Dasrath's query in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 291.

In verse no. 2 that precedes this present verse, the messengers have already compared Lord Ram and Laxman to the moon and the sun. Both these celestial bodies have their place of pride in the sky—i.e. the moon is the brightest object in the night sky, and the sun in the day sky. Millions of lamps lighted simultaneously would not be able to match the illumination of the sunlight.

Here in this verse the messengers want to stress that even as it is ridiculous and laughable for anyone to attempt to see the dazzling, splendorous sun with help of the light of the lamp, it is impossible for anyone not to acknowledge the presence of the two wonderful, matchless, grand and glorious sons of king Dasrath, i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman, anywhere in the world, let alone only in Janakpur.

Just like the sun that makes its presence felt even without anyone specifically paying attention to it, for the sun's presence in itself is responsible for vanishing of the darkness of the night and revival of worldly activity in its full zest and dynamism, Lord Ram and Laxman do need to tell others about themselves to make the world realise who they are, or acknowledge their majestic presence.

Lord Ram and Laxman invite automatic attention and invoke natural reverence of all living beings. The aura of divinity and holiness, of graciousness and dignified presence that effuses from both of them is as inspiring and as dynamic as the life-giving energy and warmth of the sun. Given this, what more introductions do they need?

Now, the messengers would elaborate upon what they say in this verse in the following verses, from Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293.

²The "Swayambar" was a system prevalent in ancient India wherein a groom was selected for the girl to be married. The word "Swayambar" literally means "self-selection of the would-be groom". Now, this meant either "the would-be bride's self-selection of her groom", or "the candidate's self-selection by meeting certain declared criterion to become the groom".

The process therefore had two primary variations: (i) In one option, the girl was allowed to choose a groom for herself by either walking down the row of invited candidates and putting a garland on the one she chose, or by any other means she preferred for such selection. (ii) In the other option, the parents of the girl declared a condition, and anyone who fulfilled this condition was selected as the groom.

In the case of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the first process was followed. In the case of Sita, the second option was followed.

Thus, in Sita's case the condition set for her marriage was the breaking of the formidable bow of Lord Shiva which was kept since a long time in the family of kings belonging to the Nimi dynasty.

Now, not only was Sita renowned for her magnificent beauty, but her family, i.e. king Janak's kingdom, was also very well known, had a great reputation, and was established in the world as one of the great dynasties of the time. So naturally, when her father king Janak declared his intention to marry her and invited the great kings and princes of the time to participate in the competition known as Swayambar, all the kings who had marriageable sons, and even those wished to take in more than one queen, came to Janakpur to try their luck.

The fact that there was a huge and unprecedented rush of competing kings and princes that ran into thousands of them vying with each other to marry Sita by meeting the condition of breaking of the bow is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251 which says that "ten thousand kings (and princes) tried together to lift the bow (when individuals and small groups failed to move it a bit), but the bow did not move from its position". This fact is reiterated in verse no. 5 below also.]

संभु सरासनु काहुँ न टारा । हारे सकल बीर बरिआरा ॥ ५ ॥
तीनि लोक महँ जे भटमानी । सभ कै सकति संभु धनु भानी ॥ ६ ॥

sambhu sarāsanu kāhum'na ṭārā. hārē sakala bīra bari'ārā. 5.
tīni lōka maham'jē bhaṭamānī. sabha kai sakati sambhu dhanu bhānī. 6.

But none of them was able to move Lord Shiva's bow even for a fraction of an inch. All the mightiest and greatest of warriors, who had prided themselves for their strength, invincibility, power and valour, were defeated in this competition¹. (5)

The might and self-respect of all those who were proud of their strength, power, invincibility and valour in the whole of the three worlds (i.e. who thought that there was no one more strong, powerful and valorous than them in the heaven, on the earth and in the nether world) were crushed (and reduced to dust) by the determined bow of Lord Shiva². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252. Here, king Janak has sternly chided all the thousands of competing kings and princes for their failure to move the bow. In the present verses, the messengers reiterate what their own king Janak had said earlier.

²To wit, the bow was literally determined to show these haughty and pretentious kings and princes their right place in the pecking order of great and noble warriors renowned for their valour and strength of arms in the entire world, not only on earth but even in the heaven and the nether worlds included, by defeating them, because this proved to them how hollow was their boastful claim to be great warriors for they could not even move an old and rusted bow, what to talk of them lifting and stringing it.]

सकइ उठाइ सरासुर मेरू । सोउ हियँ हारि गयउ करि फेरू ॥ ७ ॥
जेहिं कौतुक सिवसैलु उठावा । सोउ तेहि सभाँ पराभउ पावा ॥ ८ ॥

saka'i uṭhā'i sarāsura mērū. sō'u hiyam̐ hāri gaya'u kari phērū. 7.
jēhim̐ kautuka sivasailu uṭhāvā. sō'u tēhi sabhām̐ parābha'u pāvā. 8.

Even he (a reference to Banasur)¹ who could easily lift the celestial mountain known as Mt. Meru, which is the abode of the king of gods (known as Indra), had lost heart and courage to even attempt to lift the bow. So, preferring to save his face by instead of being defeated openly by the bow, he circumambulated it (i.e. went round it in a circle)² and went away, implying that he has accepted defeat. (7)

Even he who had lifted the mountain of Lord Shiva (a reference to the demon king Ravana) had accepted defeat in that assembly (like Banasur had)³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250.

²The bow belonged to Lord Shiva who was a deity universally worshipped by the entire demon race, including Banasur and Ravana, the king of Lanka as well as of the demon race. The process of going round anything in a circle is to show respect to it. In this particular case of Banasur, we can make two assumptions:--

(i) One is that when he learnt that the bow belonged to Lord Shiva, he did not want to show his disrespect to it by attempting to break it. So he decided to pay homage to it by circumambulating it, and then going away.

(ii) The second assumption is based on what the messengers said in this verse—that when Banasur learnt that the marriage was linked to the breaking of the bow of Shiva, he realized that it was beyond his means to do so. He thought to himself that if he made an attempt and failed then two negative things would happen simultaneously:—One, he will become a laughing stock in the community of demons as well as the rest of the world as his inability to break the bow would puncture his reputation of being an invincible and a mighty warrior who was so strong that he could lift even the mountain where the king of gods lives, i.e. Mt. Meru. And two, he would unnecessarily antagonize Lord Shiva by showing disrespect to the Lord's bow in spite of knowing fully well that he won't be able to move, lift and break it.

Therefore, Banasur thought that no purpose would be served in making a joke of himself by making a futile attempt to break the bow.

In an assembly of great warriors which was called 'not to offer worship to the bow' but to 'break it', such an abject surrender by Banasur and his quietly going away was tantamount to accepting defeat.

Now the question arises that there were other kings also in the assembly who had desisted from attempting to break the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 245; (ii) From Sortha/Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246. Does this mean that they too had accepted defeat? Well, the answer is found in the verses themselves: these kings had the vision of the Supreme Father and the Holy Mother of creation in the physical forms of Lord Ram and Sita respectively (refer: Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 246).

Further, the same idea is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4-5 that precede Doha no. 242.

Why was it so? The reason is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241 that essentially says that “everyone looked at Lord Ram according to his liking, spiritual status, and mental setup”.

In other words, the good and noble kings who had come just to oblige king Janak and honour his invitation—because refusal would mean a rebuke for Janak and a show of discourtesy to him besides being an undiplomatic gesture for them—but had no intention to participate in the competition of breaking the bow, did not feel defeated and humiliated at all. This is proved because they cheerfully preferred to remain seated and witness the full event like neutral observers. They had even tried to dissuade the greedy kings to refrain from trying to make a mockery of themselves by trying to break the bow because they won’t be able to do so—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 246.

So we see the difference between Banasur and these kings—whereas Banasur had ‘gone away’ from the assembly out of fear that Janak might invite him to come on stage and try his luck, these kings would have cheerfully told Janak that they had come as a friend and guest of the king, and not as competitors or suitors for his daughter! This therefore answers the question ‘whether the good kings too were defeated’? The answer is: ‘no’.]

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Later on in the story we shall read how Ravana has boasted about the mighty strength of his muscular and invincible arms, in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 25; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 28.

Refer also to the note appended to verse no. 7 herein above.]

दो०. तहाँ राम रघुबंस मनि सुनिअ महा महिपाल ।

भंजेउ चाप प्रयास बिनु जिमि गज पंकज नाल ॥ २९२ ॥

dōhā.

tahām̐ rāma raghubansa mani suni'a mahā mahipāla.

bhanjē'u cāpa prayāsa binu jimi gaja paṅkaja nāla. 292.

Listen oh great king (“mahipāla”)! In that assembly (as mentioned in Chaupai line nos. 4-8 above), Lord Ram, who is a jewel in the dynasty of king Raghu, had broken the bow without any effort just like an elephant breaks the soft stem of the lotus flower. (Doha no. 292)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 255 that says a similar thing. In this reference, the citizens of Janakpur are praying to the gods etc. to make it possible that Lord Ram can break the bow as easily as if it was a soft stalk of the lotus flower.

An elephant obviously won’t have the slightest trouble in breaking the delicate and soft stem of the lotus flower when it is so mighty that it can uproot huge trees by

the immense strength of its muscular body. Likewise, Lord Ram had no problems lifting and breaking the bow of Lord Shiva.]

चौ०. सुनि सरोष भृगुनायकु आए । बहुत भाँति तिन्ह आँखि देखाए ॥ १ ॥
देखि राम बलु निज धनु दीन्हा । करि बहु बिनय गवनु बन कीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

suni sarōṣa bhrgunāyaku ā'ē. bahuta bhām̐ti tinha ām̐khi dēkhā'ē. 1.
dēkhi rāma balu nija dhanu dīnhā. kari bahu binaya gavanu bana kīnhā. 2.

Hearing about the breaking of the bow (of Lord Shiva), the chief in the family of sage Bhṛigu (i.e. sage Parashuram) came angrily to the venue to avenge the bow's breaking. He was furious and tried his best to brow-beat and scare them off (i.e. Lord Ram and Laxman) into submission. (1)

But by and by he (Parashuram) realised the innate strength, self-confidence, courage and invincibility of Lord Ram, and therefore he gave his own bow to the Lord, prayed to him in many ways (to ask for forgiveness), and finally retreated to the forest (to do penances). (2)

[Note—These two lines sum-up the entire episode related to sage Parashuram as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

Treating the version of the messengers as representative of the way the masses would remember the incident in future, we can safely say that only two points were important—one, that a furious sage Parashuram had come to punish anyone who had dared to break Lord Shiva's bow, and two, that he realised that the individual who broke the bow was not an ordinary person but someone with supreme powers inasmuch as it was not at all possible for a human being to play fools with the mighty bow of Lord Shiva who is known as a 'Maha-deva', a 'Great God'.

This leads us to an interesting conclusion: If sage Parashuram could not harm either of the two brothers, then it was established beyond doubt that they were indeed 'invincible and unconquerable' in this world. The might and strength of Parashuram was well-documented and well-known; he had spared none who ever dared to confront him. This was the first time in his career as a valiant and gallant warrior who had never understood the meaning of the words defeat or surrender that he not only had to submit himself unconditionally before his adversary but also had to 'pray for forgiveness'.

What more was needed to announce the arrival of the Supreme Lord on earth as this entire episode unfolded before the watchful eyes of the entire community of great kings and princes who ruled the earth and lorded over it at that time. What better opportunity could ever be found to declare to the whole world about the arrival of a Supreme Authority and Power on earth? The incident of sage Parashuram was deftly devised by the wise Creator to make this solemn declaration to the world at one go—that the Lord has finally arrived in flesh and blood to helm the affairs of the mortal world as the latter's Emperor and King, and therefore all the mischief mongers should be wary of their behaviour now as indiscipline and breaking of the laws of Nature would no longer be tolerated, and that a new era would emerge which would go down

in history as “Ram Rajya” which would be a stellar example of ideal good governance, good behaviour, good virtues, good character, ethics, morality, righteousness, propriety, probity and so on and so forth—in brief, the practical observance of the grand principles of ‘Dharma’. This is described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Doha no. 26.]

राजन रामु अतुलबल जैसे । तेज निधान लखनु पुनि तैसें ॥ ३ ॥
कंपहिं भूप बिलोकत जाकें । जिमि गज हरि किसोर के ताकें ॥ ४ ॥

rājana rāmu atulabala jaisēm. tēja nidhāna lakhanu puni taisēm. 3.
kampahim bhūpa bilōkata jākēm. jimi gaja hari kisōra kē tākēm. 4.

Oh King! Lord Ram has unparalleled dynamism, energy, strength, powers and valour, and Laxman too is a mine of equal glory and radiance. (3)

Laxman’s glory, courage, strength, self-confidence and dynamism are of such stupendous proportions that all the kings tremble when he looks at them just like the case of an elephant getting frightened when a young lion looks at it angrily.¹ (4)

[Note—¹This verse refers to two events: (i) The first was when all the frustrated kings who had failed to break the bow had stood up in revolt to capture Lord Ram and Laxman, grab Sita and fight Janak if he sides with the two brothers. At that time Laxman had looked at them with red angry eyes, prepared to face and punish them single-handedly like a lion fearlessly attacks a herd of wild elephants and kills any one of them who dares to fight the lion. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 267.

(ii) The other occasion was when king Janak had expressed his anguish and frustration by declaring that the earth seems to be devoid of real brave and strong warriors when none of the invited kings could as much as move the bow even a fraction of an inch let alone lifting it and breaking it. At that time also, Laxman had publicly used stern language to denounce king Janak and strongly objected to his uncalled-for observations that the earth was devoid of warriors when Lord Ram is personally present in the assembly and was not even given a chance to lift the bow. Normally this public display of disrespect for the host king was punishable by immediate imprisonment, but Janak did not have the courage to face Laxman, and so he humbly kept quiet. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 254.

That is, even as a junior king gets frightened when the emperor or another more powerful contemporary king looks at him with annoyance, the entire assembly of kings could not muster strength to stand up against the angry tirade of Laxman. Even king Janak, who was the host king and elderly, did not dare to reprimand Laxman for his impertinence for saying angry words in front of the whole assembly attended by a huge gathering of great and mighty kings of the time.

This metaphor of an elephant getting terrified at the sight of an angry lion looking at it—because the latter would surely kill the former if it decides to do so, notwithstanding the physical size and strength of the elephant—has also been used

earlier in the same context as it is used in the present verse. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 267.]

देव देखि तव बालक दोऊ । अब न आँखि तर आवत कोऊ ॥ ५ ॥
दूत बचन रचना प्रिय लागी । प्रेम प्रताप बीर रस पागी ॥ ६ ॥

dēva dēkhi tava bālaka dō'ū. aba na āṁkhi tara āvata kō'ū. 5.
dūta bacana racanā priya lāgī. prēma pratāpa bīra rasa pāgī. 6.

Oh Lord! Now that we have seen your two sons (Lord Ram and Laxman), no one catches our eyes (attention) any longer.

[During our travels across the world as messengers of king Janak, we have had the opportunity to see, observe, meet and interact with countless kings and princes of varied denomination and stature, but now we can say with certainty that we have never seen anyone who will match your two sons, Lord Ram and his brother Laxman. These two brothers are one of their only kind, being unparalleled and peerless in the whole world.]¹ (5)

The words of praise and the way the messengers extolled the virtues of the two brothers by using metaphors and laudatory words for Lord Ram and Laxman) were liked very much by everyone present there.

The messengers' cheerful expressions and the eloquent words used by them to praise the two brothers, lauding their exemplary glory and honouring them for their matchless qualities, were both sincere as well as deeply soaked in emotions of love, affection, respect and honour for the two brothers². (6)

[Note—¹The messengers have already told the kings how incomparable the two brothers were in Doha no. 291 and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it. They have been called 'the jewel of the world', 'a lion amongst men', as well as 'to the brilliant sun and the moon before which all other heavenly bodies fade into insignificance'.

The messengers had capped their observance by asking 'if anyone would need a earthen lamp to search for the sun whose presence is self-evident?'

²The messengers were not falsely flattering Lord Ram and Laxman just to please king Dasrath and his court. What they said came straight from their hearts. They were honest to the core in their observation about the two brothers.]

सभा समेत राउ अनुरागे । दूतन्ह देन निछावरि लागे ॥ ७ ॥
कहि अनीति ते मूदहिं काना । धरमु बिचारि सबहिं सुखु माना ॥ ८ ॥

sabhā samēta rā'u anurāgē. dūtanha dēna nichāvari lāgē. 7.
kahi anīti tē mūdahiṁ kānā. dharamu bicāri sabahiṁ sukhu mānā. 8.

The king (Dasrath), along with his entire court, was overwhelmed with gratitude towards the messengers for brining so good a news to them. All of them began

showering lavish gifts upon the messengers to express their happiness and joy as well as to honour these guests who have brought in good news. (7)

But the messengers, however, closed their ears¹, protesting that it was improper for them to be so honoured and gifted because they had simply answered the query of the king in a dispassionate and honest manner. Hence, they do not deserve any special treatment or honour.

When the messengers thus refused to accept the gifts and largesse, everyone liked their attitude because it was in line with the principles of Dharma². (8)

[Note—¹When the gifts were being showered and praises being heaped on the messengers, they raised their hands in astonishment because they, being ordinary messengers sent by one king to another to convey a message, had not expected such great honour that is generally reserved for special royal guests of the kingdom. They had also not expected such effulgent outburst of emotional affections when even the king himself joined his court to honour the messengers. So they raised their hands to avoid accepting any gift. It's like them exclaiming—“Oh my god! Please do not show such honour to us. We are not royals but ordinary messengers just carrying out our assigned duties. We told you the truth as we saw and witnessed it. It was not intended to gain honour or special treatment. We are overwhelmed with the warmth you are showing, but please refrain from honouring us because we are just doing our duties as messengers should.”

The expression “closed their ears” is a gesture that means two things here—(i) One is that the messengers were so taken aback by the unexpectedly grand and warm treatment that was accorded to them that they raised their hands to their ears or heads in utter astonishment. (ii) The other reason is that perhaps the king and his courtiers were simultaneously praising these messengers with laudatory words of honour along with the showering of material gifts so much so that the messengers felt very embarrassed and humbled. They expressed their surprise and gratitude by lifting their hands because messengers are not supposed to accept such honour.

²This is also the reason why no one took offense at their refusal to accept these gifts because this refusal was in accordance with the standard practice of messengers not accepting any honour or gift from the person whom they meet to convey a message on behalf of their master. If the messengers had accepted any gift then it would indicate that they were either greedy or ill-paid because it is only in these situations that any person would accept material things from anyone in spite of it being improper to do so.]

दो०. तब उठि भूप बसिष्ट कहँ दीन्हि पत्रिका जाइ ।
कथा सुनाई गुरहि सब सादर दूत बोलाइ ॥ २९३ ॥

dōhā.

taba uṭhi bhūpa basiṣṭa kahum̃ dīnhi patrikā jā'i.
kathā sunāī gurahi saba sādara dūta bōlā'i. 293.

The king got up from his seat and went to his royal priest, sage Vasistha, and gave him the letter (that was sent by Janak and countersigned by sage Vishwamitra).

He told his Guru (moral preceptor; royal priest Vasistha) the whole story (about the arrival of the messengers and the news they had brought about the two brothers).

Then he summoned the messengers with due respect. (Doha no. 293)

[Note—The “showing of respect to the messengers” means that the king treated them as royal guests instead of as servants of another king. These messengers were given the same respect and treatment that another royal guest would have been accorded.

It should be noted that the king has ‘given the letter’ to Vasistha instead of reading it aloud for him as he had done earlier on three occasions when he had read the letter aloud himself in his court. This is to show respect to his Guru, sage Vasistha. The Guru is learned and wise; he does not need anyone to explain to him the matter from a written text.

The king summed up the news in his own words and then called in the messengers so they can describe the details for the benefit of the Guru, besides answering any questions that the latter may ask.]

चौ०. सुनि बोले गुर अति सुखु पाई । पुन्य पुरुष कहूँ महि सुख छाई ॥ १ ॥
जिमि सरिता सागर महुँ जाहीं । जद्यपि ताहि कामना नाही ॥ २ ॥
तिमि सुख संपति बिनहिं बोलाएँ । धरमसील पहिं जाहिं सुभाएँ ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

suni bōlē gura ati sukhu pāī. pun'ya puruṣa kahum̃ mahi sukha chāī. 1.
jimi saritā sāgara mahum̃ jāhīm. jadyapi tāhi kāmanā nāhīm. 2.
timi sukha sampati binahim̃ bōlā'ēm̃. dharamasīla pahim̃ jāhim̃ subhā'ēm̃. 3.

The Guru (sage Vasistha) was highly pleased on hearing the wonderful news. He told king Dasrath—‘For a virtuous man (like you, oh king) who has accumulated religious merit by his noble life as well as righteous deeds and actions, one who is committed to upholding the laws of Dharma, the earth is rich with the boon of happiness, joy and pleasures; there is no shortage of this boon for such a man anywhere in this world¹.
(1)

Just as countless rivers voluntarily flow into the ocean though the latter does not ask them to come to it or has no desire to take-in their waters (to replenish its stock of water with that of the rivers’ as the ocean has an endless supply of it) [1], ---

--- Various types of happiness, joy, prosperity, affluence, success and well-being go un-invited and unasked for to a man who follows the path of Dharma, or the path of virtuousness, righteousness, auspiciousness, nobility, probity and propriety [2]². (1-2)

[Note—¹The sage praises king Dasrath for being a “Punya Purush”. The word “Punya” means merit that is accrued when a person does something good and righteous. It is opposite to doing “Paap”, which in effect means committing sins and indulging in unethical and unlawful activities that go against the principles of good conduct as envisioned in the scriptures.

The very fact that the Supreme Being decided to become a son of Dasrath in the form of Lord Ram proves that he was not an ordinary soul, not an ordinary king,

but one who had accumulated such a huge treasury of religious merit that the Lord could not refuse the king's wish to have him as his son. So in effect, sage Vasistha was merely stating a fact, and not flattering Dasrath. Refer Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that follow herein below.

Sage Vasistha has heaped praises on Dasrath once again later on in a different context. When he died and the royal assembly was called to anoint Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Ram, on the throne of Ayodhya (because Lord Ram had gone to the forest exile for fourteen years to honour his father's word-of-honour that was pending for redemption with Kaikeyi, the Lord's step-mother, which she had exploited to get her own son Bharat on the throne), Vasistha had minced no words in profusely praising king Dasrath while he tried to persuade Bharat to accept the crown in the absence of Lord Ram. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 172—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 174.

²This idea of rivers symbolising happiness, joy, prosperity, affluence, success and well-being flowing in constantly into the ocean represented by a man who follows the path of Dharma is also reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 1 which describes the glorious state of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram has come to live. It essentially says that “the fourteen divisions of the world were like a huge mountain with as many peaks, the clouds symbolising meritorious deeds showered rain symbolising all-round joy and happiness; and the water of this rain formed into gorgeous rivers overflowing with the water of happiness, joy, success, prosperity and well-being that cascaded down from the lofty heights of the mountain upon the plains of the earth, frothing and boiling over with these aforesaid virtues, to finally find its way into the ocean represented by the city of Ayodhya”.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, stanza no. 2 of Doha no. 39 Kha which refers to the fact that the days of a person who follows the path of Dharma are passed happily and cheerfully, with all sorts of successes and prosperity being accessible by him.]

तुह गुर बिप्र धेनु सुर सेबी । तसि पुनीत कौसल्या देबी ॥ ४ ॥
सुकृती तुह समान जग माहीं । भयउ न है कोउ होनेउ नाहीं ॥ ५ ॥
तुह ते अधिक पुन्य बड़ काकें । राजन राम सरिस सुत जाकें ॥ ६ ॥

tumha gura bipra dhēnu sura sēbī. tasi punīta kausalyā dēbī. 4.
sukṛtī tumha samāna jaga māhīm. bhaya'u na hai kō'u hōnē'u nāhīm. 5.
tumha tē adhika pun'ya baṛa kākēm. rājana rāma sarisa suta jākēm. 6.

You diligently and devotedly serve your Guru (moral preceptor)¹, Vipra (Brahmins and other elderly and learned members of the society), Dhenu (cows regarded as holy), and the Surs (gods). The honourable queen Kaushalya follows your example and is no less devout than you. (4)

A person has not taken birth till now nor would ever take birth in this world in the future also who has greater spiritual merit and religious credit than what you have gotten². (5)

Say indeed oh great king, who else can be said to be more spiritually meritorious, religiously creditworthy and fit for the highest honour reserved for a pious soul than you are because you have the good fortune to have Lord Ram (the Supreme Being in a personified form) as your son³! (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 129 in which sage Valmiki tells Lord Ram that he, in his original form as the cosmic Lord known as Brahm, the Supreme Being, should dwell in the Mana (heart and inner-self) of a person who, inter alia, adores his Guru more than the Lord himself.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6 and 8 that precede Doha no. 172 which say that a person who does not respect Brahmins and obeys his Guru is regrettable.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 173; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 209.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 291; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310; (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 209.]

बीर बिनीत धरम ब्रत धारी । गुन सागर बर बालक चारी ॥ ७ ॥
तुह कहुँ सर्ब काल कल्याना । सजहु बरात बजाइ निसाना ॥ ८ ॥

bīra binīta dharama brata dhārī. guna sāgara bara bālaka cārī. 7.
tumha kahum̐ sarba kāla kalyānā. sajahu barāta bajā'i nisānā. 8.

Who is more fortunate than you who has four sons (Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) who are epitomes of the grand virtues of valour, courage, strength, politeness and civility, and at the same time are diligent followers of the laws of Dharma (righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety, nobility, ethics and morality).

In fact, your four sons are like oceans of these grand and glorious virtues (i.e. they do not lack in any of these great qualities just like the ocean which does not have shortage of water in it)¹. (7)

Well-being and good fortunes are always yours in all phases of time and life!

Well now, first of all make arrangements for assembling a grand marriage party with proper fanfare, and secondly, order that the kettle-drums be played (to celebrate the auspicious news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita as well as the well-being of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman). (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 173.

Three great virtues have been listed in verse no. 7 as follows—(i) “bīra” meaning a person who is brave, strong, courageous and valiant; (ii) “binīta” meaning one who is polite, courteous and civil in spite of possessing great powers and authority; one who never shows himself or boasts of his authority, powers, strength, abilities, stature or prowess; and (iii) “dharama brata dhārī” meaning who has taken

the vow to uphold the laws of Dharma. In other words, all the four brothers possessed these auspicious and laudable qualities in them in great abundance like the ocean which has no dearth of water in it.]

दो०. चलहु बेगि सुनि गुर बचन भलेहिं नाथ सिरु नाइ ।
भूपति गवने भवन तब दूतन्ह बासु देवाइ ॥ २१४ ॥
dōhā.

calahu bēgi suni gura bacana bhalēhiṁ nātha siru nā'i.
bhūpati gavanē bhavana taba dūtanha bāsu dēvā'i. 294.

Hearing the instructions of the Guru (sage Vasistha) to proceed to Janakpur with the marriage party as soon as possible, the king thanked and bowed his head before him, saying—'Alright Lord, it will be done.'

The king then went to his palace after giving suitable lodging place to the messengers (of king Janak). (Doha no. 294)

[Note—The next series of verses will narrate the preparations for the grand marriage party that will leave Ayodhya for Janakpur to attend the royal marriage of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. राजा सबु रनिवास बोलाई । जनक पत्रिका बाचि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥
सुनि संदेसु सकल हरषानीं । अपर कथा सब भूप बखानीं ॥ २ ॥
caupā'i.

rājā sabu ranivāsa bōlā'i. janaka patrikā bāci sunā'i. 1.
suni sandēsu sakala haraṣānīm. apara kathā saba bhūpa bakhānīm. 2.

The king summoned all the ladies of the royal palace and read aloud the letter of king Janak to them. (1)

Hearing the message (contained in the letter), every one of them were overjoyed. The king then narrated other related good news that he had heard orally from the messengers. (2)

[Note—The messengers had arrived in the royal court where the invitation letter of king Janak was presented by them to king Dasrath. Obviously, no ladies of the royal household were present there.

The king has first read out the letter of invitation from Janak which contained the brief message that Lord Ram had broken the bow and was automatically selected as suitable groom for Sita, Janak's daughter. King Dasrath was invited to come and join in the celebrations. Other details of what had really happened, such as the incident of sage Parashuram, and the general news of the two brothers were narrated orally by the messengers.

It must be noted here that when Dasrath had met his Guru, sage Vasistha, the messengers were summoned in person to enable the Guru to interview them if he so wished and clarify any doubts he may have in his mind. It was necessary to do so as a

principle of state policy because a wise king always consulted his close advisors and allowed them to analyse any given situation before any decision is reached by him to ensure that no crucial point is missed. When the wise Guru was satisfied with the letter of king Janak as well as by his interaction with the messengers, and ordered Dasrath to make preparation for the marriage party, the king was doubly sure that everything was alright and there was no subterfuge in anything. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 293.

Thus assured of the authenticity of the letter and its contents, as well as of the integrity of the messengers, the king had given the guest messengers proper lodging place to relax and feel comfortable after the long journey they had travelled from the far away land of Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 294.

It is natural to assume that Dasrath had met the royal ladies, the queens and other members of the royal household, in his palace, rather than in the royal court, because ladies traditionally stayed inside palaces. A reading of the following verses will also endorse this view where we shall see that females are being referred to in the narration instead of males.

In Tulsidas' another classic book titled "Geetawali Ramayan" we read that the mothers were very worried about the well-being of Lord Ram ever since he had gone to the forest with sage Vishwamitra. So when the exceptionally good tidings were brought in by the messengers—that not only were the two brothers happy and fine but that Lord Ram has achieved a rare feat by breaking a formidable bow which none of the bravest and the mightiest of kings and princes that lived on earth at that time could move even an inch, and the icing on the cake was that this has entitled him to get the hand of Sita in marriage, an achievement for which all these kings and princes had staked their reputation and had failed—a spontaneous eruption of joy and exhilaration was natural and expected. Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 99—101.]

प्रेम प्रफुल्लित राजहिं रानी । मनहुँ सिखिनि सुनि बारिद बानी ॥ ३ ॥
मुदित असीस देहिं गुर नारीं । अति आनंद मगन महतारीं ॥ ४ ॥

prēma praphullita rājahim rānī. manahum̐ sikhini suni bārida bānī. 3.
mudita asīsa dēhim̐ gura nārīm̐. ati ānanda magana mahatārīm̐. 4.

The king and the queen(s)¹ were overjoyed and ecstatic with emotions of love and affection just like pea-hens feel exhilarated when they hear the rumblings of the rain-bearing cloud in the distant sky². (3)

The Guru's wife (named Arundhati) was very delighted and she liberally blessed them (the queens as well as the king), which in turn made the mother(s)³ exceedingly happy and cheerful (because blessings from one's Guru's wife is a harbinger of good fortunes and all round well-being) (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had many queens, but we read about only three who were the chief ones. They were—(i) Kaushalya who was the chief queen and the mother of Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers; (ii) Sumitra, the second queen and the mother of Laxman; and (iii) Kaikeyi, the third queen and the mother of Bharat and Shatrughan.

All these queens lived like sisters, and they treated all the four brothers equally as if all of them were their own sons. Later on unfortunately however, we shall read that Kaikeyi became selfish and prevailed on the king to send his eldest son, Lord Ram, to the forest so that her own elder son Bharat could ascend the throne. But that happened much later on in the story after the four brothers were married and settled down in Ayodhya, and hence it is not a matter to be discussed at this juncture when we are reading about the days when celebrations are underway and preparations are being undertaken for Lord Ram's marriage.

So, when the happy tidings arrived from the far away land of Janakpur, all the mothers were very jubilant with excitement. It is not that the king wasn't worried about the welfare of his two beloved sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, but he used to be so pre-occupied with affairs of the kingdom that he didn't find time to brood and unnecessarily disturb the peace of his mind because he knew very well the abilities and mystical powers of sage Vishwamitra in whose custody he had put the two brothers. Therefore, king Dasrath hadn't worried too much about the well-being of the two brothers because he was sure that they are well-protected under the patronage of the mighty sage Vishwamita. But the queens were a worried lot, like all mothers usually are, about the welfare of their sons Lord Ram and Laxman. While a father would rather be stern with his sons and prefer to train them to face the realities of the harsh life in this world, a mother would wince at such a thought and would rather like her son to be physically comfortable than endure any hardship. So we see here in Geetawali Ramayan verses referred to herein above that only the mothers are shown to be worried, and not king Dasrath.

²The peacock is so happy when it hears the rumbling of the clouds that it opens its plumes and begins to dance. The metaphor is so apt because the queen-mothers were eagerly waiting to hear some good news about the two brothers who had gone away to a distant land just like this bird, which keeps its ears open during the hot summer days, eagerly waiting to hear the sound of the rumbling cloud which would mean that rains are round the corner. Rains are harbingers of life, greenery and vibrancy on earth; they bring cheer to all the living beings because not only do they provide nectar in the form of rains to cool the hot surface of the earth but they also ensure that life is not extinguished for want of water, the elixir of life. The peacock celebrates this event on behalf of Mother Nature.

So, when the exceptionally good news about the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, arrived from a faraway land, the queen-mothers were as happy and exhilarated as the pea-hen when she hears the rumble of the rain-bearing clouds.

³The Guru's wife would bless the queens just as the Guru would bless the king. So, Arundhati, sage Vasistha's wife, blessed all the queens for their own happiness and the happiness of their beloved sons, which naturally made them feel grateful to the Guru's wife, and become cheerful.]

लेहिं परस्पर अति प्रिय पाती । हृदयँ लगाइ जुड़ावहिं छाती ॥ ५ ॥

राम लखन कै कीरति करनी । बारहिं बार भूपबर बरनी ॥ ६ ॥

lēhiṁ paraspara ati priya pātī. hṛdayam^ḥ lagā'i jurāvahiṁ chātī. 5.
rāma lakhana kai kīrati karanī. bārahiṁ bāra bhūpabara baranī. 6.

They took the lovable letter one by one, and held it close to their bosoms (as a token of their appreciation for the news it contained as well as the warmth of feeling and ecstasy that it ignited). By doing so, all of them felt contented. (5)

The king repeatedly narrated and lauded the great deeds of the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, and the resultant fame and reputation that they had acquired for themselves as a reward of their astounding successes and stupendous achievements. (6)

[Note—The letter of king Janak was a sort of a marriage invitation card, and therefore it had limited itself to mentioning only about the bow-breaking ceremony where Lord Ram had successfully broken the bow and had got the reward in the form of marriage with Sita, the daughter of king Janak.

The rest of the developments were narrated orally by the messengers. They told Dasrath about the liberation of Ahilya, the slaying of the ferocious demoness Tadka, and the successful protection of sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice which entailed the killing of other ferocious demons led by their chiefs Subahau and Marich. These incidents are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 209—to Doha no. 211.

Refer also to—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 264; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 293.

There are verses in “Geetawali Ramayan” which also say the same thing: refer—Baal Kand, verse nos. 102, stanza nos. 3-7.

The king was so overwhelmed with joy at the news of the great deeds and the stupendous achievements of his two noble sons that he couldn't have enough of it; he was so excited that he kept repeating the news again and again to express his boundless joy and unfettered happiness on receiving this good news. Like any other father, he felt exceedingly proud and exhilarated to learn of the magnificent achievements of his beloved sons that had established their glories throughout the world in a single go.]

मुनि प्रसादु कहि द्वार सिधाए । रानिन्ह तब महिदेव बोलाए ॥ ७ ॥
दिए दान आनंद समेता । चले बिप्रबर आसिष देता ॥ ८ ॥

muni prasādu kahi dvāra sidhā'ē. rāninha taba mahidēva bōlā'ē. 7.
di'ē dāna ānanda samētā. calē biprabara āsiṣa dētā. 8.

Thanking their Guru (sage Vasistha) for his blessings that has made this good fortune come true, the king proceeded towards the palace's gate (to give orders and start preparations for the marriage party, as well as to make an official announcement to start celebrations in the city of Ayodhya).

Meanwhile, the queens summoned the ‘Mahi-Devas’ (the “gods of the earth”, an epithet used for the Brahmins because they are shown the same respect that one reserves for the gods in the heaven) [7], and cheerfully made gifts to them (by way of

liberal donations). The Brahmins went away contented, blessing the queens liberally [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Giving alms and donations and making charities are regarded as meritorious and religious deeds, and when any good event takes place in a household or some good news comes, it is normal practice in Hindu households to make gifts to Brahmins.]

सो०. जाचक लिए हँकारि दीन्हि निछावरि कोटि बिधि ।
चिरु जीवहुँ सुत चारि चक्रबर्ति दसरत्थ के ॥ २९५ ॥

sōraṭhā.

jācaka li'ē hamkāri dīnhi nichāvari kōṭi bidhi.
ciru jīvahum' suta cāri cakrabarti dasarat'tha kē. 295.

[After the Brahmins were gone—] The beggars were the next to be summoned. Liberal alms of various types were given to them in abundance. All of them blessed the royal household of the king, saying in unison—‘Long live the four sons of Emperor Dasrath (“cakrabarti dasarat'tha”).’ (Sortha 295)

[Note—When one’s wishes are fulfilled one is inclined to open up his heart and loosen up his purse strings to celebrate the occasion, to commemorate the event. Even an ordinary man with limited means at his disposal would become very magnanimous and charitable on such rare occasions. And here we are talking about a ‘great king’ who was no less than an Emperor—“Chakravarti”.

So it is natural to expect huge and liberal donations and charities being made by Dasrath, largesse that should be befitting of his exalted stature as a great Emperor of the time, to celebrate the arrival of the wonderful news of the marriage of his eldest son Lord Ram along with the astounding deeds that he and his younger brother Laxman had done to bring great laurels and honour to Dasrath’s present family as well as to the dynasty to which he belonged. Any father would be proud of this development.]

चौ०. कहत चले पहिरें पट नाना । हरषि हने गहगहे निसाना ॥ १ ॥
समाचार सब लोगन्ह पाए । लागे घर घर होन बधाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahata calē pahirēm paṭa nānā. haraṣi hanē gahagahē nisānā. 1.
samācāra saba lōganha pā'ē. lāgē ghara ghara hōna badhā'ē. 2.

As they (i.e. the Brahmins as well as other alms-seekers who were invited by the queens and the king to accept gifts and donations) left the palace adorned in fine clothes and other decorations of various kinds that were given to them, they were jubilant and excited as they enthusiastically proclaimed the glory of the king and his sons in loud and cheerful voices.

As soon as the auspicious news spread in the city, there was a spontaneous eruption of the sound of musical instruments such as the kettle-drums¹. (1)

When the citizens (of Ayodhya) heard the auspicious news (of the forthcoming marriage of their beloved prince Lord Ram with Sita, the daughter of king Janak), festivities and thanks-giving started in each individual household of the city². (2)

[Note—¹The news of the arrival of the messengers and the letter they had brought from Janak, along with a summary of its contents, had already percolated down in the city. The air was filled with excitement as everyone waited for an official announcement of the good news from their king. So as soon as the Brahmins and alms-seekers returned from the palace, terribly excited and literally jumping with joy, showing off their newly acquired robes of honour and magnificent clothes and other decorations that the king and the queens had granted them, an uproarious cheer spread like the thunder of lightening throughout the city of Ayodhya, and the enthusiasm was so profound that the citizens could not desist themselves from playing the musical instruments even before the king could summon his official heralds and make any announcement to start celebrating.

This deduction will be very clear when we read the next verse no. 2 herein below which says that “when the people got the news, there was celebration in each household----”. In other words, the playing of the kettle-drums as mentioned in the present verse no. 1 was prior to the point of time when the news that the king has ordered to start celebrations had reached the common man.

There was a sudden surge of vibrant and pulsating energy of happiness and joy that was palpable throughout the city, and the thunderous roar of the kettle-drums that was sounded all of a sudden was an audible and an external sign of it.

²As soon as the kettle-drums started playing, their loud sound alerted even those who lived on the outskirts of the huge city that some good news has arrived because such musical instruments were played only during royal celebrations. Since there was no prior news of any special event that was to be organized by the king, and the word had already spread that some messengers have come with the news of the two princes, Lord Ram and Laxman, from some far away land, so the mere sound of the vigorous beating of the kettle-drums as mentioned in verse no. 1 was sufficient to make the citizens correctly guess that it definitely means that some good news about the two brothers has arrived. And this surely means that it is time to celebrate.

One will not miss this opportunity to observe that the entire population of the kingdom of Ayodhya had loved their king Dasrath as well as Lord Ram. The fact is that the people loved Lord Ram profoundly, passionately, and more than anything else in this world, even more than their own families and households. The extent of their dedication and love for the Lord will be starkly clear later on in Ayodhya Kand of this great epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ when we read how the whole city, overwhelmed with grief and its inability to live without their beloved Lord Ram, had followed the Lord from behind as he went out of the city for his forest exile. The citizens determined that their welfare lies only where Lord Ram is present, and that the wild forest would be more comfortable for them than the barren city of Ayodhya which the Lord has left. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 85.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 204 it is expressly stated that “the merciful Lord Ram was dearly loved by all the citizens of Ayodhya, whether they were old or young, men or women”.

This point is highlighted here to stress that the celebrations in Ayodhya to mark the marriage of Lord Ram were spontaneous, voluntary and enthusiastically undertaken by the citizens, rather than just to follow the orders of the king, Dasrath, and show loyalty to him as subjects of his kingdom. This is the reason that the festivities and celebrations were so full of colour, life and vibrancy because the people had enthusiastically and voluntarily participated in them.]

भुवन चारि दस भरा उछाहू । जनकसुता रघुबीर बिआहू ॥ ३ ॥
सुनि सुभ कथा लोग अनुरागे । मग गृह गलीं सँवारन लागे ॥ ४ ॥

bhuvana cāri dasa bharā uchāhū. janakasutā raghubīra bi'āhū. 3.
sunī subha kathā lōga anurāgē. maga gr̥ha galīm samvārana lāgē. 4.

As the auspicious good news spread far and wide about the forthcoming marriage of Raghubir (i.e. the brave warrior of the Raghu dynasty, Lord Ram) with the daughter of king Janak (i.e. with Sita), all the fourteen divisions of the world (known as the “14 Bhuvans”)¹ were filled with festivities, and there was mass celebration everywhere. (3)

The people were filled with exceptional joy upon hearing the auspicious good news so much so that they affectionately began to decorate and spruce-up their individual homes as well as the streets and lanes of the city enthusiastically².

[Does this line mean that the city of Ayodhya not properly kept and cleaned earlier in a routine manner? No, this is not so as would be clear in the next line.] (4)

[Note—¹The 14 Bhuvans—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, note appended to Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 261.

The heavenly world as well as the nether world is included in the term “14 Bhuvans”, and this obviously means that the gods and the inhabitants of the other side of the heaven, the nether world, too had joined in the celebrations that were taking place in Ayodhya which was located on earth.

Refer a similar observation in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²Good news may have been coming to Ayodhya on a regular basis because Dasrath was a noble and righteous Emperor in whose empire there was a perpetual atmosphere of all-round prosperity and well-being. But this was a different occasion—because a prince was getting married, and this marriage was not an ordinary one as it had simultaneously established the prince’s glory and fame throughout the world because it was made possible after success in a great feat that entailed the breaking of a formidable bow of Lord Shiva which none of the mighty kings and princes of that time could as much as move an inch. So this achievement gave the citizens a special reason to celebrate—as their beloved prince, Lord Ram, had been declared the winner in an open world-wide competition (like the modern-day Olympics) where even the strongest warriors in the whole world at that time had bitten the dust.

The festivities were all the more colourful and vibrant and undertaken with vigorous enthusiasm because the participants, the citizens of Ayodhya, loved Lord Ram from the deepest corners of their hearts. Refer note of Chaupai line no. 2 above that precedes this present verse.]

जद्यपि अवध सदैव सुहावनि । राम पुरी मंगलमय पावनि ॥ ५ ॥

तदपि प्रीति कै प्रीति सुहाई । मंगल रचना रची बनाई ॥ ६ ॥

jadyapi avadha sadaiva suhāvani. rāma purī maṅgalamaya pāvani. 5.
tadapi prīti kai prīti suhāī. maṅgala racanā racī banāī. 6.

Though the city of Ayodhya (known colloquially as “Avadh”) was always very pleasant and fine to behold because it was the eternally divine, holy and sacred city (abode) of Lord Ram (who was a personified form of the Supreme Being)¹ [5], ---

--- Yet it was especially decked up and colourfully adorned with special auspicious signs to depict in visible form the dimension of the extensive love and affection that the people had for their beloved Lord, Sri Ram [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹Ayodhya was deemed to be eternally divine, holy and sacred because it was here that the Supreme Lord of creation, Lord Vishnu, had decided to live when he took a human form as Lord Ram. For all practical purposes, the terrestrial city of Ayodhya had become a ‘Vaikuntha’, the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu, for the time when Lord Ram lived here.

Lord Ram has himself praised Ayodhya, saying it is very dear to him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 4.

The magnificence and grandeur of Ayodhya has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 27—Doha no. 29.

But the special decorations and celebrations underway in Ayodhya were a gracious gesture undertaken by the beloved devotees of the Lord, the citizens of Ayodhya in this case, to express, in an affectionate and practical manner, their strong bond of love, dedication and devotion for their loving Lord, Sri Ram.]

ध्वज पताक पट चामर चारू । छावा परम बिचित्र बजारू ॥ ७ ॥

कनक कलस तोरन मनि जाला । हरद दूब दधि अच्छत माला ॥ ८ ॥

dhvaja patāka paṭa cāmara cārū. chāvā parama bicitra bajārū. 7.
kanaka kalasa tōrana mani jālā. harada dūba dadhi acchata mālā. 8.

[Now we shall read how the city was decorated.]

Beautiful flags, banners, hangings, festoons, curtains and canopies of various designs and shapes were put up throughout the city and its market-places in a very fascinating and tasteful manner. (7)

Golden vases, festive arches, festoons and hangings with intricate nets interlaced with a wide variety of gems and precious stones along with the use of green grass, curd,

unbroken grains of rice and garlands or wreaths of flowers were used to colourfully deck-up the city. (8)

[Note—The golden vases and pots, festoons and hangings, and the garlands and wreaths were used not only to decorate public places but also for the individual households. The green grass, curd, unbroken rice grains and garlands are used during any kind of auspicious activity and religious ceremonies. In effect it means that religious functions were held both publicly as well as privately.

Earlier we have already read how the city of Janakpur was magnificently decorated when Lord Ram had broken the bow and married Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 289.

Meanwhile, the present Chaupai line no. 8 that we are currently reading can be linked to Doha no. 296 herein below as well to complete the picture of celebrations that assumed the dimensions of a religious event.]

दो०. मंगलमय निज निज भवन लोगन्ह रचे बनाइ ।
बीथीं सींचीं चतुरसम चौकें चारु पुराइ ॥ २९६ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgalamaya nija nija bhavana lōganha racē banā'i.
bīthīm sīncīm caturasama caukēm cāru purā'i. 296.

The people made their homes an abode of auspiciousness and celebrations even as the city as a whole was cleaned and liberally sprinkled with scented water in all its four directions (i.e. everywhere, in its northern, southern, eastern and western corners), and then ceremonial squares were designed (painted) on the ground at public places using colourful paste(s) made up of grounded sandalwood, saffron, musk and camphor. (Doha no. 296)

[Note—As has been observed in the note of verse no. 8 above, the auspicious things mentioned therein were used to decorate individual homes as well as public squares.

First the city was scrubbed clean and washed with scented water. Then colourful pastes made of individual items such as sandalwood, saffron, musk and camphor or a mixture of these things were used paint designs of ceremonial squares on the ground at various locations in the city. These painted squares were then decorated by the items mentioned in verse no. 8 that precedes this Doha, i.e. golden pots, festoons, hangings, wreaths, garlands, green grass, curd, and unbroken rice grains.

Taken all in all, the whole city took an image of a grand arena where some huge auspicious ceremony was being performed. Everyone participated as if it was his personal celebration.]

चौ०. जहँ तहँ जूथ जूथ मिलि भामिनि । सजि नव सप्त सकल दुति दामिनि ॥ १ ॥
बिधुबदनीं मृग सावक लोचनि । निज सरूप रति मानु बिमोचनि ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jaham̐ taham̐ jūtha jūtha mili bhāmini. saji nava sapta sakala duti dāmini. 1.
bidhubadanīm mrga sāvaka lōcani. nija sarūpa rati mānu bimōcani. 2.

Groups of beautiful ladies collected here and there, everywhere, in the city¹. They were well adorned by all the sixteen legendary adornments that noble ladies are supposed to sport (that make them respectable in a society)², and this made their presence as brilliant and outstanding as the dazzle of lightening.

[To wit, when the women-folk of the city stepped outside of their homes to gather together in different groups at various places, they looked wonderful and well groomed. All of them had properly cleaned and dressed themselves before they stepped out of their homes; all of them looked dignified and noble. They were decorated in their best finery with an adorned body wearing a young and fresh look; they sported new colourful clothes, beautiful ornaments, wreaths of flowers on their heads, coloured lips and glowing body. They were all very jubilant, bubbling over with youthful energy and enthusiasm. That is why their presence has been compared to the dazzle of lightening as they assembled in cheerful groups on the streets of the city of Ayodhya.] (1)

These women-folk had beautiful faces like that of the moon, and had eyes resembling that of the fawn³. They were literally putting to shame the beauty of Rati, the consort of Kamdeo, the patron god of passion and love, who is traditionally regarded as the most beautiful entity in creation. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286 that describes a similar scene at Janakpur when large groups of women-folk had joined hands to sing auspicious and laudatory songs to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 318.

According to ancient poetic tradition of India, the sixteen adornments with which a noble lady is supposed to adorn herself to get respect in the society are basically related to practicing principles of personal hygiene and grooming that would make her physical presence appealing and pleasant for others. She is expected to practice these sixteen steps in her daily life; they make her look naturally attractive and subtly beautiful.

These “sixteen adornments” of a woman are the following—(1) Rubbing and cleaning the body with a scented water to which herbs that refresh the skin are added (dissolved); (2) Ablution or taking a daily bath to clean the body thoroughly; (3) Changing clothes daily and dressing herself afresh with properly cleaned garments; (4) Applying a red-coloured ointment made from lac on the sides of the sole of the two feet; (5) Combing and properly pleating the hair on the head; (6) Applying ‘Sindoor’ or red vermilion powder on the head along the vertical line marking the partition of the hairs on either side of the skull, starting from the middle point of the hairline above the root of the nose and going upto the point on the top of the skull (the cranium); (7) Applying a thin paste of sandalwood on the forehead; (8) Making a dot on the tip of the chin with some pigment; (9) Colouring the palms of the hand and soles and sides of the feet with a paste made from the leaves of the Mehadi plant (the

myrtle plant); (10) Rubbing the body with a light massage of some scented ointment made of various condiments and spices to make the skin glow and look young; (11) Wearing ornaments that look sober on her body, instead of making her look pretentious and ugly; (12) Decorating the hairs with individual flowers or with small wreaths; (13) Keeping the mouth clean and refreshed by using mouth-freshners such as by chewing condiments and spices alone or by stuffing them in leaves of the betel plant; (14) Colouring the lips by chewing leaves of the betel plant stuffed with spices, instead of using artificial pigments; (15) Either keeping the teeth sparkling white by proper care, or if that is not feasible due to any reason then at least applying some colouring to the teeth to camouflage stains; and finally (16) Applying 'Kaajal' or collyrium on the edges of the eyelids.

Earlier on in this epic story of the Ram Charit Manas we have read that when Lord Ram was born, there was mass celebration in Ayodhya. At that time also the ladies of the city had formed big and small groups, and had decorated themselves in their best finery. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 194.

³It is a standard practice in ancient literature to compare the beauty of the face with the moon, and that of the eye with the eyes of a fawn.

An exactly similar comparison is made later on in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 318 when ladies of Janakpur had come out in hordes to offer Arti (ceremonial showing of lighted lamps to an honourable guest) to Lord Ram who arrived as the palace gates of Sita as a bridegroom.

Even Lord Ram has invoked the moon when he was praising the beauty of Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237.]

गावहिं मंगल मंजुल बानीं । सुनि कल रव कलकंठि लजानीं ॥ ३ ॥

भूप भवन किमि जाइ बखाना । बिस्व बिमोहन रचेउ बिताना ॥ ४ ॥

bhūpa bhavana kimi jā'i bakhānā. bisva bimōhana racē'u bitānā. 4.
gāvahim maṅgala maṅjula bānīm. suni kala rava kalakaṅṭhi lajānīm. 3.

These groups of beautiful women-folk sang equally beautiful and auspicious songs with a sweet voice and melodious tunes that were so wonderful and pleasing to hear that they put to shame the voice of the female cuckoo that is famed for its sweetness and charm¹. (3)

How can one describe the beauty and glory of the royal palace² where a fabulous pavilion had been erected that attracted the attention of the whole world by its magnificence and grandeur³? (4)

[Note—¹The voice of the cuckoo is so pleasing to hear that it is traditionally used as a bench-mark to determine the sweetness of the spoken word, whether it is a song and its tune, or a general talk.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286, (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 318, and (iii)

Chanda stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 322 that describe a similar scene at Janakpur when large groups of women-folk had joined hands to sing auspicious and laudatory songs to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 345 that also says that the palace of king Dasrath looked fabulous at the time of arrival of the marriage party from Janakpur with the four grooms and their brides.

Further, in Doha no. 213 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 the magnificence of king Janak's palace is narrated.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 289 where a 'pavilion' that was erected in Janakpur has been described in detail.

Now the question arises—why is the pavilion at Janakpur described in such fine detail whereas the one at Ayodhya is just briefly referred to in a single line? The answer is that the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita would be formalized under the pavilion at Janakpur and hence its glory and significance cannot be matched by any other pavilion. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 289 which is explicit on this point.]

मंगल द्रव्य मनोहर नाना । राजत बाजत बिपुल निसाना ॥ ५ ॥

कतहुँ बिरिद बंदी उच्चरहीं । कतहुँ बेद धुनि भूसुर करहीं ॥ ६ ॥

maṅgala drabya manōhara nānā. rājata bājata bipula nisānā. 5.

katahum^ṅ birida bandī uccarahīm. katahum^ṅ bēda dhuni bhūsura karahīm. 6.

Countless articles that are used during auspicious occasions and which portend good omen¹ were arranged at different locations in the pavilion, the palace, as well as all over in the city. Meanwhile, numerous kettle-drums and other musical instruments were played loudly and enthusiastically in the city². (5)

At some of the places the royal bards and minstrels were singing the glories of the royal dynasty, and at other places the Brahmins were chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas³. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 288 and its accompanying note which refer to the different auspicious things that are used during such celebrations.

²Refer Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296 herein above which also talks about the playing of the kettle-drums. But at that time the good and auspicious news of Lord Ram's and his younger brother Laxman's welfare as well as the Lord's marriage had just begun to spread in the city, so the drums were sounded in those parts of the city where this initial round of news arrived. By and by the news had spread to all the corners of the huge city, and therefore at the point of time this present verse refers to there was a clamour of countless kettle-drums and other sorts of musical instruments being played throughout the length and breadth of the extended

areas of the city, its different districts and boroughs, and individual households and community centers.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 286 where it is described that as soon as Lord Ram broke the bow there was a loud clamour of kettle-drums in the city of Janakpur.

³A similar situation prevailed in Ayodhya at the time of the birth of Lord Ram and his other three brothers. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 262, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265 where it is narrated that the bards and the minstrels sang the glories of king Janak along with that of Lord Ram, and the Brahmins chanted sacred hymns.

It was customary for Brahmins to chant sacred hymns of auspicious occasions as will be evident later on in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 where we shall read that the Brahmins uttered hymns from the scriptures from time to time when the suitable occasion arose.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 323, and Doha no. 324 in this context of Brahmins chanting hymns from the Vedas.]

गावहिं सुंदरि मंगल गीता । लै लै नामु रामु अरु सीता ॥ ७ ॥

बहुत उछाहु भवनु अति थोरा । मानहुँ उमगि चला चहु ओरा ॥ ८ ॥

gāvahim sundari maṅgala gītā. lai lai nāmu rāmu aru sītā. 7.

bahuta uchāhu bhavanu ati thōrā. mānahum̐ umagi calā cahu ōrā. 8.

They (i.e. the women-folk referred to in verse no. 3, and the bards and minstrels mentioned in verse no. 6) sang beautiful and auspicious songs befitting this celebratory occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita by lacing their verses repeatedly with the individual names of the groom and the bride, i.e. Lord Ram and Sita respectively.

[To wit, the auspicious songs that they sang were tailored to suit the happy occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita. To make the marriage-songs specific to the occasion that marked the celebrations that accompanied the royal marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, the names of the groom and the bride were incorporated in the lyrics of the songs themselves. The effect was that though the songs had been composed by song-writers and poets in a general way, the inclusion of the name of Lord Ram and Sita as part of the lyrics made the songs sound as if they were written specifically for this auspicious occasion.]¹ (7)

The abundance of joy and happiness was of such a huge dimension that the palace of the king and all the households of the city taken together were not sufficient to contain it as it seemed to heave and surge in every direction and overflowed everywhere². (8)

[Note—]It ought to be noted here that the ladies as well as the bards have put the name of Lord Ram before that of Sita. There are two reasons for it—(i) The first

reason is that they are citizens of Ayodhya which was the capital of Lord Ram and not of Sita, and hence the citizens decided to afford the Lord precedence over Sita to show their loyalty for the royal family of king Dasrath. (ii) The second reason is that the glory of Sita was based on the glory of her spouse, Lord Ram. The king always gets preference over the queen. Even in the cosmic context, Lord Vishnu gets precedence, is more revered, and occupies a senior position as compared to his consort goddess Laxmi.

²The city of Ayodhya was eternally full of joy and happiness because of the simple fact that the Supreme Lord of creation had taken birth there in a human form as Lord Ram. In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 195, and more specifically to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 296 which explicitly asserts this point.

This present verse no. 8 means that there was so much joy and ecstasy in Ayodhya that it spilled over onto the streets of the city in as much as the people danced and sang in merry abundance not only within their own homes and community centers but even in open public places like gardens, intersections of main avenues, stadiums, streets, lanes, by-lanes and market-places.]

दो०. सोभा दसरथ भवन कइ को कबि बरनै पार ।
जहाँ सकल सुर सीस मनि राम लीन्ह अवतार ॥ २९७ ॥

dōhā.

sōbhā dasaratha bhavana ka'i kō kabi baranai pāra.
jahām̃ sakala sura sīsa mani rāma linha avatāra. 297.

Say, which poet can be skilled enough to describe the glory, the greatness and the grandeur of the palace of king Dasrath where the Lord of the gods has incarnated himself in the form of Lord Ram?

[To wit, it is impossible to describe the glory of the household of king Dasrath where the Supreme Lord has decided to live in the human form of Lord Ram.] (Doha no. 297)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195 that says “even the goddess of speech known as Saraswati, and the thousand-tongued celestial serpent known as Seshnath, cannot narrate the abundance of glory and happiness of the time when Lord Ram had taken birth in the household of Dasrath”.]

चौ०. भूप भरत पुनि लिए बोलाई । हय गय स्यंदन साजहु जाई ॥ १ ॥
चलहु बेगि रघुबीर बराता । सुनत पुलक पूरे दोउ भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa bharata puni li'ē bōlāī. haya gaya syandana sājahu jāī. 1.
calahu bēgi raghubīra barātā. sunata pulaka pūrē dō'u bhrātā. 2.

The king then called Bharat and instructed him as follows—‘Go and get the elephants, the horses and the chariots decorated and readied. (1)

Be quick to make proper preparations for the departure of the marriage part of Lord Ram as soon as possible.’

Hearing these instructions (of their father), the two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan) became thrilled in their bodies. (2)

[Note—Prior to this verse we have read how celebrations were being undertaken in Ayodhya. Now, the king called his sons Bharat and Shatrughan, the younger brothers of Lord Ram, and instructed them to make preparations for the departure of a grand marriage party for Janakpur. This party should match the greatness of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and hence a large number of elephants, horses and chariots were to be decorated and got readied.

This news naturally made the two brothers excited.]

भरत सकल साहनी बोलाए । आयसु दीन्ह मुदित उठि धाए ॥ ३ ॥
 रचि रुचि जीन तुरग तिन्ह साजे । बरन बरन बर बाजि बिराजे ॥ ४ ॥
 सुभग सकल सुठि चंचल करनी । अय इव जरत धरत पग धरनी ॥ ५ ॥
 नाना जाति न जाहिं बखाने । निदरि पवनु जनु चहत उड़ाने ॥ ६ ॥

bharata sakala sāhanī bōlā'ē. āyasu dīnha mudita uṭhi dhā'ē. 3.
 raci ruci jīna turaga tinha sājē. barana barana bara bāji birājē. 4.
 subhaga sakala suṭhi cañcala karanī. aya iva jarata dharata paga dharanī. 5.
 nānā jāti na jāhiṃ bakhānē. nidari pavanu janu cahata uṛānē. 6.

On his part, Bharat summoned the chief officers in charge of royal stables and issued necessary instructions. These officers were exceedingly delighted to hear these instructions and immediately got up cheerfully to implement them. (3)

The stable hands (keepers of horses who were assigned the duty to look after the royal stables) decorated numerous breeds of wonderful horses with colourful saddles and magnificent bridles, and collected these majestic horses at a place where all other components of the marriage party (procession) were to assemble. (4)

All these horses were wonderful to behold and dynamic in their movements. They were so swift that when they galloped it appeared as if they foot didn't touch the ground because the latter was like hot iron. [When these horses ran, their hooves touched and left the ground so rapidly in quick succession that it appeared to an observer that the animal is feeling scorched by touching a hot surface and so it wishes not to make any contact with it, and is thus trying to fly in the air.] (5)

These steeds and stallions belonged to so many different breeds that it is not possible to list or describe them. Their strides were so swift that they appeared to fly in the air when they galloped. (6)

[Note—There were countless steeds and stallions of different breeds in the royal stables. Some were war-horses, others used for games and ceremonial occasions, and some others for the purposes of making gifts. The stable-hands decorated the horses colourfully, using saddles, bridles and reins of different colours and design that would best fit with the type of the animal.

Some of these horses were brought in from the royal stables and others from the royal stud-farms. The following verses shall qualify these horses further.]

तिन्ह सब छयल भए असवारा । भरत सरिस बय राजकुमारा ॥ ७ ॥

सब सुंदर सब भूषनधारी । कर सर चाप तून कटि भारी ॥ ८ ॥

tinha saba chayala bha'e asavāra. bharata sarisa baya rājakumārā. 7.

saba sundara saba bhūṣanadhārī. kara sara cāpa tūna kaṭi bhārī. 8.

Gallant princes, knights, grandees, nobles and other sundry members of the royalty in the kingdom¹, who were roughly of the same age as Bharat, mounted these fully decorated horses. (7)

All of them were handsome to look at. They were fully decorated with the best of ornaments, held a bow and an arrow in their hands, and had quivers tied to their waists. (8)

[Note—¹The “princes” referred to here may have been members of the extended royal family of king Dasrath, sons of other senior courtiers such as ministers and chiefs of the various wings of the army, as well as princes of nearby kingdoms who were friends of Bharat and Lord Ram. As soon as the news spread that Lord Ram is to be married and a grand party is preparing to leave for the bride’s place, all such princes and members of the royalty may have rushed to join the marriage party so that they can join it to attend the marriage ceremony.

Even in today’s time when the news spreads that the groom’s party is to leave for the bride’s place from a certain spot, all the friends of the groom assemble there and board the transport arranged by the groom’s family to ferry them to the venue of the marriage ceremony. In this particular instance however, the method of transport was the horses, the elephants and the chariots.]

दो०. छरे छबीले छयल सब सूर सुजान नबीन ।

जुग पदचर असवार प्रति जे असिकला प्रबीन ॥ २९८ ॥

dōhā.

charē chabilē chayala saba sūra sujāna nabīna.

juga padacara asavāra prati jē asikalā prabīna. 298.

All these princes, knights, grandees, nobles and other members of the royalty who had mounted the horses were not only handsome and magnificent to look at in all their fine attire and other royal ensembles and paraphernalia, but were also maverick, brave and gallant warriors in their own right. [They looked wonderful and well heeled; their

external appearances gave the impression that they since they lead a pampered life of comfort and pleasure they won't be able to stand against their enemies in the battle-field, but this was a wrong assumption as all of them were trained warriors known for their gallantry and valour.]

Each one of them was accompanied or attended by two foot-men (foot-soldiers) who held swords in their hands and were experts in wielding this weapon. (Doha no. 298)

[Note—Each horse-rider was attended by two helpers, one on each side. They were necessary to control the horses should the animals get distracted and go out of control due to the huge crowd and cacophony of musical instruments.

Besides this point, the riders needed their help to mount and alight from the horses—because one of the attendants would hold the horse and the other would assist his master to get down from the horse or mount it.

The third reason is that it was a matter of status for the princes and knights who were accustomed to being attended by servants at all times.]

चौ०. बाँधें बिरद बीर रन गाढ़े । निकसि भए पुर बाहेर ठाढ़े ॥ १ ॥

फेरहिं चतुर तुरग गति नाना । हरषहिं सुनि सुनि पनव निसाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bāṁdhēm birada bīra rana gāṛhē. nikasi bha'e pura bāhēra ṭhāṛhē. 1.

phērahiṁ catura turaga gati nānā. haraṣahiṁ suni suni panava nisānā. 2.

[The following verses would describe the marriage party of Lord Ram as it assembled outside Ayodhya in preparation for the departure of the procession for Janakpur.]

Brave and gallant warriors who prided themselves for their adherence to the vows of chivalry as well as for their bravery, gallantry and valour, had enthusiastically came out of the city and gathered together at a spot, readying themselves for departure¹. (1)

Expert horse-riders and cavalymen put their horses through different steps and made them display various maneuvers (such as making the horses dance and prance in various ways) to exhibit their skills in handling the horses. They feel exhilarated and excited upon hearing the vigorous sound of the beating of the drums and kettle-drums.² (2)

[Note—¹Remember: We are dealing with events of ancient times when chivalry and gallantry were honourable traits expected from the warrior class known as the 'Kshatriyas' to which the royal family of Dasrath belonged.

Royal showmanship, regal demeanours, pomp and pageantry were the norms of the day for courts of kings and emperors.

²These expert horsemen made their horses dance and prance to the rhythmic beat of the musical drums. The more vigorous the sound of the musical instruments the more enthusiastically they prodded the animals to dance and prance energetically.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 302 which also allude to the dancing of the horses to the beat of musical instruments.]

रथ सारथिन्ह बिचित्र बनाए । ध्वज पताक मनि भूषन लाए ॥ ३ ॥
चवँर चारु किंकिनि धुनि करहीं । भानु जान सोभा अपहरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

ratha sārathinha bicitra banā'ē. dhvaja patāka mani bhūṣana lā'ē. 3.
cavamāra cāru kiṅkini dhuni karahīm. bhānu jāna sōbhā apaharahīm. 4.

Meanwhile, the charioteers had fabulously decorated the numerous chariots with flags, banners, curtains, gems and other ornamentations which they had brought especially for this occasion¹. (3)

These chariots had beautiful canopies (under which the royal passenger would be seated) and were provided by elegant whisks (to fan them). The chariots were adorned with small tinkling bells (which made a pleasant sound resembling some musical instrument as the vehicle moved along).

The chariots were so gorgeous and opulent that they virtually stole (or put to shame; brushed aside; overrode; surpassed and eclipsed; made to pale into insignificance) the splendour and grandeur of the chariot of the Sun-God.² (4)

[Note—¹A king's army had the horse brigade on the foreground, which was followed by foot soldiers and the chariots, with the elephants on either flanks.

So, first the cavalry was described, and in this verse the chariots are being described.

²The young members of the royalty such as princes and brave knights would mount the horses, while the elders and other noble men would sit in these chariots.]

सावँकरन अगनित हय होते । ते तिन्ह रथन्ह सारथिन्ह जोते ॥ ५ ॥
सुंदर सकल अलंकृत सोहे । जिन्हहि बिलोकत मुनि मन मोहे ॥ ६ ॥

sāvamākarana aganita haya hōtē. tē tinha rathanha sārathinha jōtē. 5.
sundara sakala alaṅkṛta sōhē. jinhahi bilōkata muni mana mōhē. 6.

Numerous horses of a special breed that had dark ears¹, which were generally regarded as auspicious as they were used during horse-sacrifices, were yoked to the chariots. (5)

All these horses were magnificent to behold because they were beautifully decorated with a wide variety of ornamentations. They were so wonderful to behold that even sages and hermits became enchanted by their sight (though they are supposed to be immune to such worldly physical attractions). (6)

[Note—¹These horses normally had milk-white skin and long dark ears. They were used exclusively for fire sacrifices and other religious events.]

जे जल चलहिं थलहि की नाई । टाप न बूड़ बेग अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥
अज़ सज़ सबु साजु बनाई । रथी सारथिन्ह लिए बोलाई ॥ ८ ॥

jē jala calahiṁ thalahi kī nā'īm. ṭāpa na būṛa bēga adhikā'īm. 7.
astra sastra sabu sāju banā'ī. rathī sārathinha li'ē bōlā'ī. 8.

The swiftness and dynamism of these horses was so outstanding that when they moved on water (such as when crossing streams and rivulets) their foot touched the surface of the water as rapidly as they touched the ground when they galloped on dry land. They seemed to skim the surface of the water because they cantered away so fast that their hooves didn't seem to touch it¹. (7)

Meanwhile, the charioteers had armed their vehicles with different kinds of weapons and armaments, and having finished their jobs they invited their masters to board them². (8)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted that a lot of stress has been laid on the quality of the horses in these verses because mighty armies of those times were measured in their strength by the strength and ability of their cavalry wings.

²The natural query that comes to the mind is that this was supposed to be a “marriage procession” and not an army going to war. But it must be remembered that it was a party of a great king-emperor, and it had to match his stature. Wherever a king went he was always accompanied by a well-armed and equipped army. This was done to ensure that he is given due respect befitting his royal status wherever he goes, and also to provide for his security in case of an unexpected ambush.

After all, an Emperor can't be expected to arrive at the place where his son, the would-be emperor, is about to be married, astride on an ordinary chariot and accompanied by a mere handful of soldiers and servants. That would be a hilarious situation.]

दो०. चढ़ि चढ़ि रथ बाहेर नगर लागी जुरन बरात ।
होत सगुन सुंदर सबहि जो जेहि कारज जात ॥ २९९ ॥
dōhā.

caḍhi caḍhi ratha bāhēra nagara lāgī jurana barāta.
hōta saguna sundara sabahi jō jēhi kāraja jāta. 299.

The members of the marriage procession mounted the chariots and started collecting outside the city.

In the city itself, wherever anyone went to do any odd job, he would encounter auspicious omens. [To wit, the general atmosphere in the city of Ayodhya was one of auspiciousness, exuberance, vibrancy, joyfulness, delightfulness, cheer, festivities and celebrations.] (Doha no. 299)

चौ०. कलित करिबरन्हि परीं अँबारीं । कहि न जाहिं जेहि भाँति सँवारीं ॥ १ ॥

चले मत्त गज घंट बिराजी । मनहुँ सुभग सावन घन राजी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kalita karibaranhi parīm am̐bārīm. kahi na jāhim jēhi bhām̐ti sam̐vārīm. 1.
calē matta gaja ghaṇṭa birājī. manahum̐ subhaga sāvana ghana rājī. 2.

[After describing the horses, it is now the turn of the elephants.]

On the back of magnificent elephants of the best breeds were put elegant seats that had canopies and other accoutrements that made them look so regal and splendid that it is not possible to describe their beauty and elegance in words.

[On these seats would be seated the chiefs of the various wings of the king's own army as well as those of the knights who were accompanying the marriage procession.] (1)

These young elephants that were charged with dynamic energy and in a state of rut, who had been well decorated with chiming bells (and other decorative paraphernalia such as garlands of pearls, banners with the royal emblem, bracelets of gold studded with gems that were tied around their legs, and so on and so forth), moved ahead majestically in a procession as if huge banks of rumbling and thundering dark clouds start ascending the horizon during the rainy season. (2)

[Note—There were two types of elephants in the royal procession—one that were used in ceremonial processions or other auspicious occasions, and others that were used as war-elephants. They represented the might, majesty and dignity of the king's huge army. Elephants and horses, as well as the chariots, were the main components of a king's army in those days.

It should be noted that the procession had the horses in the vanguard, behind them followed the chariots, and then came the elephants. They were mounted by warriors, princes and knights. This was the pattern followed by the royal army in ancient days.

Behind this army came the civilian component of the marriage procession consisting of the Brahmins, royal bards, minstrels, genealogists, servants and other attendants, as well as mules, oxen, camels etc. that were used to carry ration and other innumerable things of daily use that were needed to support such a huge assembly of people and animals.]

बाहन अपर अनेक बिधाना । सिबिका सुभग सुखासन जाना ॥ ३ ॥

तिन्ह चढि चले बिप्रबर बृंदा । जनु तनु धरें सकल श्रुति छंदा ॥ ४ ॥

bāhana apara anēka bidhānā. sibikā subhaga sukhāsana jānā. 3.
tinha caḍhi calē biprabara bṛndā. janu tanu dharēm sakala śruti chandā. 4.

Besides the horses, the chariots and the elephants there were various kinds of other means of conveyance such as grand palanquins, elegant sedans, and other such seats that were all elaborately decorated in an elegant style. They were all very comfortable to sit upon. (3)

On these vehicles were seated the Brahmins, who were like personified forms of the verses of the Vedas¹, as they joined the other members of the marriage party. (4)

[Note—¹This is a metaphor to indicate two things—one, the Brahmins were revered men just like the scriptures known as the ‘Vedas’, and two, that they were in their thousands just like the countless numbers of the verses of the Vedas.]

मागध सूत बंदि गुनगायक । चले जान चढि जो जेहि लायक ॥ ५ ॥
बेसर ऊँट बृषभ बहु जाती । चले बस्तु भरि अगनित भाँती ॥ ६ ॥

māgadha sūta bandi gunagāyaka. calē jāna caḍhi jō jēhi lāyaka. 5.
bēsara ūm̃ṭa bṛṣabha bahu jātī. calē bastu bhari aganita bhāntī. 6.

The royal bards, heralds, minstrels and genealogists boarded different kinds of vehicles that were suited to their position in the social and royal hierarchy of the kingdom as they followed from behind the Brahmins. (5)

They were followed by animals such as mules, camels and oxen of various breeds that carried on their backs a huge supply of essential commodities of different kinds (that would be needed to sustain such a large party of men and animals for a long time). (6)

कोटिन्ह काँवरि चले कहारा । बिबिध बस्तु को बरनै पारा ॥ ७ ॥
चले सकल सेवक समुदाई । निज निज साजु समाजु बनाई ॥ ८ ॥

kōṭinha kām̃vari calē kahārā. bibidha bastu kō baranai pārā. 7.
calē sakala sēvaka samudāī. nija nija sāju samāju banāī. 8.

Behind these animals carting essential commodities came their keepers, as well as the porters and other bearers of goods of such a wide variety that no one can narrate or list them¹. (7)

All the servants, servitors and attendants formed a huge crowd as they followed from behind in the form of large groups². (8)

[Note—¹The animals mentioned in verse no. 6 were employed to carry heavier items such as ration and other raw materials needed for daily usage for the huge army and party of men, while the porters and bearers were employed to ferry other lighter things such as clothes, gifts, robes, ornaments, decorations, insignia and other royal paraphernalia that needed to be handled carefully by men.

²Amongst the servants, servitors and attendants there was a hierarchy, and each rung of this hierarchy had numerous members. So when they joined the marriage procession, they formed their own groups. And therefore, there must have been a large number of groups of servants, servitors and attendants of different status and designation that formed a huge crowd which followed from behind in the royal procession.]

दो०. सब कें उर निर्भर हरषु पूरित पुलक सरीर ।
कबहिं देखिबे नयन भरि रामु लखनु दोउ बीर ॥ ३०० ॥

dōhā.

saba kēm ura nirbhara haraṣu pūrīta pulaka sarīra.
kabahim dēkhibē nayana bhari rāmu lakhanu dō'u bīra. 300.

The hearts of all of them were bubbling over with excitement and their bodies were full of thrill, wondering when they will have the earliest chance to see to their eyes full the two brave warriors, Lord Ram and Laxman (who were very dear to them all). (Doha no. 300)

[Note—The citizens loved their princes from the depth of their hearts. Lord Ram had a special place in the heart of all men and women. This fact is explicitly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 204.

This will also be abundantly evident later on when we read in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 83, as well as in Doha no. 83 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that describe how the citizens were overwhelmed with profound sorrow and grief upon learning that Lord Ram was going to the forest to live in exile, and had decided at the time that they can't live without the Lord. So they all followed him from behind in a huge mass of lamenting men and women who refused to stay back at Ayodhya as they were determined to follow the Lord wherever he went.

Not only the humans, but even the animals of Ayodhya had loved their lord dearly as would be evident when we read Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 83 which describes how the elephants, the horses, the cattle and other four-footed animals, as well as the birds represented by the sparrow hawk, peacock, cuckoo, parrot, ruddy goose, crane, swan and partridge were submerged in grief at the time Lord Ram left Ayodhya for his forest exile.

Again we read in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 99 that when Lord Ram sent Sumantra, the chief minister of the kingdom of Ayodhya who was sent by king Dasrath with a chariot to try and bring the Lord back after some initial days in the forest, back, the horses of the chariot became exceedingly sorrowful and neighed soulfully as they repeatedly looked back to glance at their beloved Lord whom they were forced to leave behind when Sumantra turned the chariot round and forced them to move on in the direction of Ayodhya.

Well so, therefore, it is the same natural and unbound affection and love that the citizens as well as the animals had for their beloved Lord Ram that had made them so thrilled and highly exhilarated when they joined the marriage procession of the Lord. They are very eager to have a glimpse of their beloved Lord Ram as soon as possible, and they are so impatient because they hadn't seen the Lord for quite some time, ever since he had gone with sage Vishwamitra to protect the latter's fire sacrifice.

If it was allowed and possible, they would have literally run or flown, as it were, to Janakpur to be with Lord Ram in the shortest possible time.]

चौ०. गरजहिं गज घंटा धुनि घोरा । रथ रव बाजि हिंस चहु ओरा ॥ १ ॥
निदरि घनहि घुर्जरहिं निसाना । निज पराइ कछु सुनिअ न काना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

garajahim gaja ghaṅṭā dhuni ghōrā. ratha rava bāji himsa cahu ōrā. 1.
nidari ghanahi ghurmmarahim nisānā. nija parā'i kachu suni'a na kānā. 2.

There was a thunderous din that was caused by the trumpeting of elephants, the clanging of bells, the creaking sound of the wheels of chariots, and the neighing of horses in all the directions. (1)

To this cacophony was added the deafening sound of the vigorous beating of the kettle-drums that resembled the clap of thunder during the rainy season.

The combined effect of this loud din and clamour was that no one could hear anything, what others said or his own voice¹. (2)

[Note—¹There was an electrifying excitement that pervaded at the place outside the gates of the city of Ayodhya where the marriage party had started assembling. There were animals as well as humans, and everyone was terribly happy.

There are other places also in Ram Charit Manas where it is said that the clamour of the musical instruments etc. was so loud that the resultant din made it impossible for one to hear what others were speaking. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319, and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.]

महा भीर भूपति के द्वारें । रज होइ जाइ पषान पबारें ॥ ३ ॥
चढ़ी अटारिन्ह देखहिं नारीं । लिएँ आरती मंगल थारीं ॥ ४ ॥
गावहिं गीत मनोहर नाना । अति आनंदु न जाइ बखाना ॥ ५ ॥

mahā bhīra bhūpati kē dvārēm. raja hō'i jā'i paṣāna pabārēm. 3.
caṛhī aṭārinha dēkhahim nārīm. li'ēm' āratī maṅgala thārīm. 4.
gāvahim gīta manōhara nānā. ati ānandu na jā'i bakhānā. 5.

[The previous verses had described the scene where the marriage party had assembled on the outskirts of the city. Now in the following verses, the scene within the city is being narrated.]

There was a huge crowd at the gates of the royal palace. The crowd was so thick and excited that if a stone were to be thrown on the ground at that place then it would be crushed to dust by the pressure of the feet of those who had gathered there.¹
(3)

The women-folk² of the city went to the balconies and terraces of their homes to watch the exuberant celebrations below. They carried platters with auspicious items to perform the ritual of 'doing of the Arti' (showing of lighted earthen lamps) when the king and his family members would move out of the palace and proceed towards the spot where the rest of the marriage party had assembled on the outskirts. (4)

These women-folk were singing pleasantly different kinds of songs that were both melodious as well as auspicious in their content. They were overjoyed, being overwhelmed with emotions of happiness and ecstasy. (5)

[Note—¹The palace grounds were chock-a-block with a sea of citizens. Everyone wished to witness first hand the goings-on of that happy occasion.

²Whereas the men had moved out onto the streets and danced and sang in merry abundance, the women stayed behind as was the tradition of the time. They expressed their joy by singing and doing the Arti. A similar scene would be witnessed in Janakpur when Lord Ram would proceed towards the marriage venue. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 317—to Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 318.

Earlier we have already read that when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone on a sight-seeing visit of Janakpur prior to the breaking of the bow, a huge crowd of women-folk of the city had watched them from the balconies and terraces of their homes. They were overwhelmed to see these handsome prince and had invoked their deities and prayed to them fervently to make it so happen that Sita gets married with Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223.]

तब सुमंत्र दुइ स्यंदन साजी । जोते रबि हय निंदक बाजी ॥ ६ ॥
दोउ रथ रुचिर भूप पहिं आने । नहिं सारद पहिं जाहिं बखाने ॥ ७ ॥
राज समाजु एक रथ साजा । दूसर तेज पुंज अति भ्राजा ॥ ८ ॥

taba sumantra du'i syandana sājī. jōtē rabi haya nindaka bājī. 6.
dō'u ratha rucira bhūpa pahim ānē. nahim sārada pahim jāhim bakhānē. 7.
rāja samāju ēka ratha sājā. dūsara tēja puñja ati bhrājā. 8.

Then Sumantra, the chief minister of the kingdom, got two fabulous chariots ready. Horses that put to shame the wonderful horses of the celestial chariot of the Sun God, were yoked to these chariots¹. (6)

Two such fabulous chariots were brought before the king (Dasrath)². They were so magnificent and brilliant that even the patron goddess of speech and literary expertise, goddess Sarda (Saraswati), was unable to describe their beauty and magnificence. (7)

One of these chariots was bedecked with royal paraphernalia (such as whisks, arms, canopy, royal standard, a throne with its parasole and ceremonial umbrella, etc.), and the other was brilliant in its radiance as if it was a fount of splendour. (8)

[Note—¹The Sun God's chariot has seven horses. This allusion means that each of the two chariots that Sumantra got readied for king Dasrath and his royal family had at least seven horses, and these horses were handpicked after thorough training and testing. The sort of horses that Dasrath had in his stables can be gauged by reading the previous verses, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 298, and Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 299. If such wonderful horses were used by other

princes and knights then one can guess the magnificence of the horses that were kept aside for the personal use of the king-emperor, Dasrath himself.

The brilliance of these horses is stressed by comparing them to the horses of the chariot of the Sun God and saying that there were far better than the latter.

²It is easy to guess who will sit in which chariot. The first was occupied by king Dasrath himself, while his royal priest, sage Vasistha, would sit in the second one. It will be clear in Doha no. 301 below.]

दो०. तेहिं रथ रुचिर बसिष्ठ कहूँ हरषि चढ़ाइ नरेसु ।
आपु चढ़ेउ स्यंदन सुमिरि हर गुर गौरि गनेसु ॥ ३०१ ॥

dōhā.

tēhiṁ ratha rucira basiṣṭha kahum̃ haraṣi caṛhā'i narēsu.
āpu caṛhē'u syandana sumiri hara gura gauri ganēsu. 301.

Sage Vasistha was made to board this (second) chariot, while the king himself boarded the first one after remembering and invoking Lord Har (Shiva), Guru (his moral preceptor), Gauri (goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) and Ganesh (the son of Lord Shiva who provides auspiciousness and success in any endeavour, and is worshipped at the beginning of any exercise). (Doha no. 301)

[Note—It is a standard practice to invoke gods and one's personal deity before one embarks on a journey to ensure success in the objective of the trip as well as to remove any hurdles that may occur due to interference by malevolent stars. When Lord Ram had started on his journey for forest exile he too had prayed to Lords Ganesh and Shiva, and Sita had prayed to goddess Parvati to ensure their welfare and safety in the wilds. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Doha no. 79; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81; (iii) Doha no. 85; and (iv) Doha no. 103 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.]

चौ०. सहित बसिष्ठ सोह नृप कैसें । सुर गुर संग पुरंदर जैसें ॥ १ ॥
करि कुल रीति बेद बिधि राऊ । देखि सबहि सब भाँति बनाऊ ॥ २ ॥
सुमिरि रामु गुर आयसु पाई । चले महीपति संख बजाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sahita basiṣṭha sōha nr̥pa kaisēm̃. sura gura saṅga purandara jaisēm̃. 1.
kari kula rīti bēda bidhi rā'ū. dēkhi sabahi saba bhām̃ti banā'ū. 2.
sumiri rāmu gura āyasu pāī. calē mahīpati saṅkha bajāī. 3.

In the company of his Guru (sage Vasistha), the king (Dasrath) looked as majestic and grand as Indra (the king of gods) looks in the company of the Guru of the gods (known as Brihaspati)¹. (1)

The king cheerfully and diligently observed all the traditional formalities ordained for such auspicious occasions in the Vedas and other scriptures as well as those that were established by tradition in the royal family.

After having completed these formalities, the king observed that everything was ready and all arrangements were in place for the grand departure of the marriage procession for Janakpur. (2)

So, the king remembered Lord Ram², took final permission from his Guru (Vasistha), and announced his departure for Janakpur by blowing the conch shell with full blast³. (3)

[Note—¹A king's glory and majesty is enhanced when he is accompanied by his Guru. Both king Dasrath and Guru Vasistha were highly regarded in the world, the former having the rare distinction of being the worldly father of Lord Ram, an incarnation of the Supreme Being, and the latter being the Lord's preceptor and teacher, a privilege no one else got. In fact, it was this rare honour to become a Guru of the Lord in his human form that Vasistha, who was the son of the creator Brahma, had accepted to become a priest of the Raghu dynasty when his father, Brahma, explained this privilege to him. This has been specifically stated in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

Therefore, these two honourable gentlemen, king Dasrath and guru Vasistha, standing side by side, looked as if two suns were shining in their fully splendour simultaneously. In the present verse they have been likened to the Indra, the king of the gods, and Brihaspati, their Guru.

²This observation is very significant here. It clearly shows that Dasrath knew that Lord Ram, whom he calls his 'son', is none else but the Supreme Being in a human form. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193.

Therefore, at the time of departure of the huge marriage procession, king Dasrath had invoked the blessings of Lord Ram in the same manner as one would pray to his family deity or some universally worshipped deity such as Lord Shiva or Lord Ganesh.

It is also to be noted here that the wise king deemed that all other deities have been worshipped, and their blessings sought and received, if he had offered his prayers to one single deity in the form of Lord Ram—because Lord Ram, being the 'Supreme Being', incorporates all other forms of divinity in his single body. In fact, worshipping Lord Ram is equivalent to worshipping the entire pantheon of gods and goddesses. This notion is endorsed by sage Valmiki also when he says exactly this thing in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Doha no. 129 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-6; (ii) Doha no. 130 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5, 8.

Therefore, king Dasrath did not think it necessary to offer special prayers to any other traditional deity such as Lord Shiva or Lord Ganesh at the time of departure for Janakpur.

³The sound of the blowing of the conch shell is considered the most auspicious sound one can hear at the start of any endeavour. For instance, it is sounded at the start of all religious ceremonies and festivities, including the fire sacrifices and recitation of

hymns, at the time of commencement of a journey or any other enterprise, even at the time of the commencement of a battle.

We shall read a little later on in this narration that when the Lord Ram's marriage party started from Janakpur back on its journey for Ayodhya, many musical instruments were played, and the conch shell was one of them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 344.

Even on an earlier occasion we have read that when Lord Ram had broken the bow, a number of musical instruments were played, and at that time also the conch was blown. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263.

Then again, the conch was sounded when king Janak invited king Dasrath to come to the venue of the marriage ceremony in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313.]

हरषे बिबुध बिलोकि बराता । बरषहिं सुमन सुमंगल दाता ॥ ४ ॥
भयउ कोलाहल हय गय गाजे । ब्योम बरात बाजने बाजे ॥ ५ ॥
सुर नर नारि सुमंगल गाई । सरस राग बाजहिं सहनाई ॥ ६ ॥

haraṣē bibudha bilōki barātā. baraṣahim sumana sumaṅgala dātā. 4.
bhaya'u kōlāhala haya gaya gājē. byōma barāta bājanē bājē. 5.
sura nara nāri sumaṅgala gā'īm. sarasa rāga bājahim sahanā'īm. 6.

The gods were jubilant when they saw the marriage procession. They showered flowers from the heaven upon this procession, symbolising their blessings as well as the auspiciousness and the sanctity of the occasion¹. (4)

At that time (i.e. at the time of the departure of the marriage procession from Ayodhya) there was a loud din created by the neighing of horses, the trumpeting of elephants and the playing of different types of musical instruments, both in the heaven (played by the gods) as well as in the marriage procession itself (on the ground)². (5)

On that occasion, the gods, the men and the women sang auspicious songs in melodious voices. The clarionets were played melodiously, set to various sweet tunes³. (6)

[Note—¹There are countless instances of the gods showering flowers and giving blessings from the heaven. For instance, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194 at the time of birth of Lord Ram; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 262 when the gods have showered flowers upon Lord Ram when the Lord broke the bow of Shiva; (iii) Doha no. 264 when Sita had put the victory garland on Lord Ram; (iv) Doha no. 285 after the angry sage Parashuram had to concede defeat at the hands of Lord Ram and left for the forest after seeking forgiveness from the Lord; (v) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309 when the hosts, king Janak, had welcomed the guests, the marriage party of Lord Ram; (vi) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314 when king Dasrath proceeded towards the site of the marriage ceremony along with his royal retinue and his four sons; (vii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323, Doha no. 324 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7, and

Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327 when Sita came to the pavilion where the marriage rituals were to be held, as well as during the proceedings of the rituals.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 it is clearly stated that the “gods showered flowers from the sky, and the Brahmins chanted hymns invoking peace and prosperity on various occasions when they found it fit to do so”.

²Again, like the numerous instances of the blowing of the conch shell and the showering of flowers, there are other instances also when musical instruments were played so loud that the din and the cacophony of sound made it impossible for a person to hear what others were speaking—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 301.

On each happy point of time, the gods had played their musical instruments in the heaven, the sky, and the citizens had done so on earth. Some of the instances are the following—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262 when Lord Ram had broken the bow; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 265 when Sita had placed the victory garland on Lord Ram; (iii) Doha no. 285 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-3; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306 when the marriage party arrived at Janakpur; (v) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 317 at the time of Lord Ram riding the horse and going towards the venue of the marriage ceremony; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 318 at the time when the guests were welcomed at the venue; (vii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319 when the guests were seated in the pavilion; (viii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323 when Sita had arrived at the site to attend the marriage rituals; (ix) Doha no. 324 during the proceedings of the marriage rituals; and (x) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 344 when the marriage party arrived at Ayodhya.

³Some of the other places where a reference is made of the playing of the “clarinet” are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 263 when Lord Ram had broken the bow; (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 344 at the time of the arrival of the marriage procession at Ayodhya.]

घंट घंटी धुनि बरनि न जाहीं । सरव करहिं पाइक फहराहीं ॥ ७ ॥

करहिं बिदूषक कौतुक नाना । हास कुसल कल गान सुजाना ॥ ८ ॥

ghaṅṭa ghaṅṭī dhuni barani na jāhīm. sarava karahim pā'ika phaharāhīm. 7.
karahim bidūṣaka kautuka nānā. hāsa kusala kala gāna sujānā. 8.

There was a huge clamour of clinging of bells, small and big, that was accompanied by the boisterous noise made by acrobats and gymnasts who leapt and danced, showing their skills in such feats, as they moved alongside the procession. (7)

Jesters and clowns tried all the tricks of their trade in different ways.

There was cheer and merriment everywhere as auspicious songs were sung melodiously (as the procession wend its way to Janakpur). (8)

[Note—These skilled professional people, the clowns, the jesters, the acrobats and the gymnasts were taken along to keep everyone entertained during the long journey from Ayodhya to Janakpur.]

दो०. तुरग नचावहिं कुअँर बर अकनि मृदंग निसान ।
नागर नट चितवहिं चकित डगहिं न ताल बँधान ॥ ३०२ ॥

dōhā.

turaga nacāvahiṃ ku'amṛa bara akani mṛdaṅga nisāna.
nāgara naṭa citavahiṃ cakita ḍagahiṃ na tāla baṁdhāna. 302.

Gallant princes and brave knights astride horses made their respective animals dance in step with the beat of the tunes being played by the musical instruments such as the tabor and the kettle-drums.

They did this so expertly that professional dancers known as the “Nats”, who were well accomplished in the art of dancing to the rhythm of musical instruments, watched them in awe and were spell-bound by their expertise. (Doha no. 302)

[Note—We have already read about these gallant princes and knights riding magnificent horses that were young and swift to manauvere, making the animals dance and hop skillfully as they waited on the outskirts of Ayodhya in preparation for the departure of the marriage procession. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 299.

Now, when they watched the acrobats, the gymnasts, the clowns and the jesters perform tricks, they too joined in the celebrations, showing their skills in tackling the horses. Since making the animal dance perfectly in tune with the rhythm of the beat of the tabor and the kettle-drum was not a child's play but required expertise of the highest order, other professional dancers watched them in awe and amazement.

So we have a marriage procession where entertainment was galore—there was music, song and dance, there were jokers to crack wise jokes, there were acrobats and gymnasts performing great physical exercises, and there were elegantly attired princes and knights on horsebacks adding colour to the procession with their ostentious feats with the horses. In short, it was a scene resembling a great moving circus of sorts that kept all spectators fully engaged and entertained all along the long journey to Janakpur.]

चौ०. बनइ न बरनत बनी बराता । होहिं सगुन सुंदर सुभदाता ॥ १ ॥
चारा चाषु बाम दिसि लेई । मनहुँ सकल मंगल कहि देई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bana'i na baranata banī barātā. hōhiṃ saguna sundara subhadātā. 1.
cārā cāṣu bāma disi lēī. manahum̐ sakala maṅgala kahi dēī. 2.

The marriage party and the procession were so magnificent and grand that it is not feasible for anyone to describe them. Auspicious omens began to occur one after another. [These omens and signs would be described in the following verses.]¹ (1)

[Verse nos. 2-8 list the auspicious signs that appeared at that time as the marriage procession of Lord Ram moved away from Ayodhya on its onwards journey to Janakpur.]

The beautiful bird with the blue neck (i.e. the blue jay; “cārā cāṣu”) picked up its food that was on its left (i.e. by turning its face towards its left side instead of picking up the food on its right side) to indicate that everything is auspicious and fine. [This was the first auspicious omen.]² (2)

[Note—¹Remember: It was not an ordinary marriage procession, but one of the Lord of the world in his human incarnation. Besides this, it was a marriage procession of an Emperor’s son, so grandeur, magnificence, pomp and pageantry were naturally expected.

We have already read about the constituents of this marriage procession—chariots, horses, elephants, mules, oxen, camels, musicians, musical instruments and their sounds such as those of bells, kettle-drums and blowing of conch shells etc., elderly Brahmins, noble princes, gallant knights, expert acrobats, gymnasts and jesters, a huge retinue of faithful servants, palanquin bearers and porters, and so on and so forth.

Refer also to Tulsidas’ book “Kavitawali Ramayan”, Uttar Kand, verse no. 180 where a summary of signs that are considered auspicious has been given.

²It is believed, according to traditions, that when one sees a blue jay (or even a magpie) in the afternoon, it is a good sign, especially when one is about to start on a long journey or enterprise. This bird is habituated in making sweet calls with a pleasant voice. So, as it picked up its food on its left by turning the neck sideways and made a sweet call, whoever heard it regarded it as an auspicious sign.]

दाहिन काग सुखेत सुहावा । नकुल दरसु सब काहूँ पावा ॥ ३ ॥

सानुकूल बह त्रिबिध बयारी । सघट सबाल आव बर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

dāhina kāga sukhēta suhāvā. nakula darasu saba kāhūṁ pāvā. 3.
sānukūla baha tribidha bayārī. saghaṭa sabāla āva bara nārī. 4.

On the right-hand side of the procession one could see a crow (or, a group of crows; “kāga”) sitting quietly in a field that was pleasant to behold (i.e. the field where the crow was seen was green, cultivated, properly watered, had wonderful crops and was generally well kempt, instead of being a barren land that was infested with wild plants and shrubs). [This was the second auspicious omen.]

Everyone could see the mongoose (“nakula” which crossed the path of the marriage procession, and could also be seen running here and there in the fields). [This was the third auspicious omen.] (3)

A pleasant breeze blew that had all the three great qualities that are expected in a breeze to make a man feel happy, delighted, relaxed and comfortable during his good days—i.e. it was soft, it was fragrant, and it was cool. [This was the fourth auspicious omen.]

Then there came a beautiful, virtuous woman with a pitcher full of water and a child in her arms. [This was the fifth auspicious omen.] (4)

लोवा फिरि फिरि दरसु देखावा । सुरभी सनमुख सिसुहि पिआवा ॥ ५ ॥
मृगमाला फिरि दाहिनि आई । मंगल गन जनु दीन्हि देखाई ॥ ६ ॥

lōvā phiri phiri darasu dēkhāvā. surabhī sanamukha sisuhi pi'āvā. 5.
mṛgamālā phiri dāhini ā'ī. maṅgala gana janu dīnhi dēkhā'ī. 6.

A fox (lōvā) could be seen stopping midway while it ran to repeatedly look backwards over its shoulders at the marriage procession. [This was the sixth auspicious omen.]

A milch cow (surabhī) could be seen in the front, feeding its calf. [This was the seventh auspicious omen.] (5)

A group of deer, walking in a queue one behind the other just like the flowers are arranged one on the top of the other in a garland (mṛgamālā), went round the procession in a clockwise manner, and came to its right flank from the left side as if auspicious omens could be seen in a physical form in the guise of the herd of deer¹. [This was the eighth auspicious omen.] (6)

[Note—¹The deer went to the rear of the procession, came onto its left flank, ran ahead of the procession, and then crossed the road from the left side to the right-hand side. This was equivalent to the herd making a circumambulation of the procession, which is an auspicious sign.]

छेमकरी कह छेम बिसेषी । स्यामा बाम सुतरु पर देखी ॥ ७ ॥
सनमुख आयउ दधि अरु मीना । कर पुस्तक दुइ बिप्र प्रबीना ॥ ८ ॥

chēmakarī kaha chēma bisēṣī. syāmā bāma sutaru para dēkhī. 7.
sanamukha āya'u dadhi aru mīnā. kara pustaka du'i bipra prabīnā. 8.

The auspicious bird known as 'chēmakarī' (which is a kite with a white neck and a red-tinged body)¹ was making a call symbolising a declaration of auspiciousness and all sorts of well-being. [This was the ninth auspicious omen.]

The black bird (syāmā)² could be seen on a beautiful tree to the left-hand side of the procession, which again was an auspicious sighting. [This was the tenth auspicious omen.] (7)

Then came two men—one holding a pot containing curd, and the other held a fish in his hand (*dadhi aru mīnā*). [These were the eleventh and the twelfth auspicious omens respectively.]

And finally came two expert Brahmins holding books (scriptures) in their hands (*kara pustaka du'i bipra*). [This was the thirteenth auspicious omen.] (8)

[Note—¹The Kshemkari bird is considered auspicious because of the two colours on its body—white and red. It is believed to represent the holy river Ganges and goddess Gauri, the divine consort of Lord Shiva. Refer: Tulsidas' "Kavitawali Ramayan", Uttar Kand, verse no. 180.

²The black bird is heard to sing in a melodious voice in the early hours of dawn, before sun-rise.]

दो०. मंगलमय कल्याणमय अभिमत फल दातार ।

जनु सब साचे होन हित भए सगुन एक बार ॥ ३०३ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgalamaya kalyānamaya abhimata phala dātāra.
janu saba sēcē hōna hita bha'e saguna ēka bāra. 303.

All the omens that are harbingers of auspiciousness, welfare, well-beings and fulfilment of all desires decided to appear simultaneously so as to prove that their reputation and qualities are indeed true and trustworthy. (Doha no. 303)

[Note—In other words, these omens wished to tell the world that their reputation as being signs of good fortunes whenever they appear is true and trustworthy and not something based on imagination or superstition. They knew very well that since it is a marriage procession of Lord Ram, the incarnate Lord Vishnu, the best of good fortunes and the best of good tidings are taken for granted to happen irrespective of whether they appear or not. So they thought to themselves—'Why not make our presence felt on this happy occasion to prove ourselves true and effective, because auspiciousness and fortunate events will nevertheless occur whether or not we mark our presence felt there. If we miss this golden opportunity to prove our trustworthiness and truthfulness as harbingers of good fortunes and well-being, then we won't get another sure-shot chance to do so again and overcome those who are sceptical about our abilities and potentials as harbingers of good times. We are shown respect and welcome by the world because the people think that our presence would give them happiness and joy, so let us use this opportunity to reinforce the people's faith and trust in us and our abilities to provide them with cheer and auspiciousness.'

Therefore, all sorts of auspicious omens assumed a personified form as enumerated in the foregoing verses to prove themselves true, trustworthy and effective.]

चौ०. मंगल सगुन सुगम सब ताके । सगुन ब्रह्म सुंदर सुत जाके ॥ १ ॥

राम सरिस बरु दुलहिनि सीता । समधी दसरथु जनकु पुनीता ॥ २ ॥

सुनि अस ब्याहु सगुन सब नाचे । अब कीन्हे बिरंचि हम साँचे ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

maṅgala saguna sugama saba tākēṁ. saguna brahma sundara suta jākēṁ. 1.
rāma sarisa baru dulahini sītā. samadhī dasarathu janaku punītā. 2.
suni asa byāhu saguna saba nācē. aba kīnhē biran̄ci hama sām̄cē. 3.

It is expected that all sorts of auspiciousness and good omens would willingly appear for him (Dasrath) who is blessed and fortunate enough to beget the invisible, attributeless, subtle and all-pervading cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm' in a 'Sagun form' (i.e. a form of the Supreme Being that is visible, and has a gross physical form with attributes) as his son¹. (1)

In the marriage that was going to be solemnised soon, the groom would be none other than Lord Ram, an incarnate Lord of the world, the bride would be Sita, who is no one else but goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the Lord of the world, herself in a physical form, and the two kings, Dasrath and Janak, would be the parents of the groom and the bride respectively. (2)

When the personified forms of the good omens (visualised as different semi-gods who had assumed various forms as narrated above in Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 303) heard of this rarest of rare combination (as narrated in verse no. 2 herein above), they were so exhilarated and happy at their good luck that they danced with joy and excitement, thinking that finally a golden and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity has been created for them by 'Biran̄chi', the Creator Brahma, which would establish without doubt their reputation as true and effective harbingers of good fortunes and auspiciousness of all kinds.

So they exclaimed delightedly, 'It is now that the Creator has for once proved us, the Good Omens collectively, true to our names as harbingers of good fortunes and auspiciousness of all kinds.'² (3)

[Note—¹This 'Sagun form of Brahm' that is born as a 'son of king Dasrath' is known as Lord Ram. As to the question why the supreme Lord decided to become Dasrath's son, the answer is elaborately narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 141—to Doha no. 152; and (ii) from Sortha/Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 193.

Brahm is the cosmic Consciousness of creation as envisioned by the Upanishads, and is therefore the Absolute Truth of creation, the Reality of existence. Anything that is the ultimate 'truth' is pure and divine, and the glorious virtues of truth, purity and divinity are 'beautiful virtues'. Anything else is 'un-beautiful' or 'ugly and untrue'.

The adjective 'Sundar' means beautiful in simple terms. This beauty is measured at two levels—the physical level that is visible to the eye, and the subtle level that is not visible to the eye. Lord Ram's physical magnetic personality that enthralled the whole world and held its attention captive with its matchless charm is the grosser, the physical aspect of the beauty of the Lord. The divine qualities, sublime virtues, the principles of Dharma (probity, propriety, ethics, morality, righteousness and nobility) for which the Lord stood and held in high esteem by the world, virtues that are commonly known as the different noble 'Gunas' that the Lord possessed, were symbolic of the beauty of the Lord at a subtle level.

So in essence, the ‘beauty’ that is being referred to here when we talk of Lord Ram is not merely the physical charm of the Lord but also, and more importantly, the combined charm of his noble character, his noble thoughts, his noble qualities and his noble life and deeds that were meant to be an example for others to emulate.

²Since it was such a rare occurrence that marked a divine union of the cosmic Lord in the physical form of Lord Ram with his cosmic counterpart, the Shakti, in the form of Sita, in the presence of two exceptionally fortunate souls in the bodies of kings Dasrath and Janak, good tidings and good fortunes were bound to be there on that occasion. In this scenario when all happiness, all joy, all goodness and all auspiciousness were compulsorily obliged to be present whether or not the omens make their presence felt, the latter decided not to miss this opportunity and make it a point to appear in their full forms, with their full regalia and splendour—because they did not want to lose this rare and god-sent chance to convince the world that if they are present on any occasion then good tidings, auspiciousness, happiness and joy were bound to be there.

On the contrary, if any one of them missed this chance and failed to make their presence felt on the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram’s marriage then the world would be convinced that the earlier belief that it held about a particular omen standing for some specific good happening was merely a hearsay and a false presumption because in spite of the relevant omen’s absence during the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram, that specific good happening did occur nevertheless.

In other words, the world would be convinced that it was wrong to link the happening of something good to any particular omen; it was a merely a chance that both—the good happening and the omen—coincided with each other. The world would think that actually the omen has no special ability to bring good tidings or make good things happen. The result would be disastrous for that particular omen as it would become irrelevant for the people who would stop giving it its importance and value. No one would pay any regards to it in the future, and the omen would forfeit the right to be sought out and honoured by the people of the world in general.]

एहि बिधि कीन्ह बरात पयाना । हय गय गाजहिं हने निसाना ॥ ४ ॥
 आवत जानि भानुकुल केतू । सरितन्हि जनक बँधाए सेतू ॥ ५ ॥
 बीच बीच बर बास बनाए । सुरपुर सरिस संपदा छाए ॥ ६ ॥

ēhi bidhi kīnha barāta payānā. haya gaya gājahim hanē nisānā. 4.
 āvata jāni bhānukula kētū. saritanhi janaka bam’dhā’ē sētū. 5.
 bīca bīca bara bāsa banā’ē. surapura sarisa sampadā chā’ē. 6.

On this wise, amidst celebrations and festivities galore, the marriage party of Lord Ram proceeded from Ayodhya in a grand, royal procession that was attended by a thunderous noise created by the neighing of horses and the trumpeting of elephants as soon as the kettle-drums began to beat at the time of departure.

[To wit, as soon as the signal was given to start, musical instruments began playing, and their sound provoked the horses and the elephants to neigh and trumpet wildly, creating a cacophony of sound that was deafening. But everyone enjoyed this noise as it was a happy occasion.]¹ (4)

Meanwhile, when Janak heard the news that the chief of the solar race, i.e. king Dasrath, has embarked on his journey for Janakpur, he (hastily) ordered that all the rivers be bridged to facilitate their crossing by the huge marriage procession². (5)

At convenient places en-route, Janak had got inns and rest-houses constructed. These places were so well organised and furnished that they provided all possible comforts that vied with the ones found in the city of the gods.

[To wit, these way-side resting places were made so comfortable and pleasant that they resembled heaven on earth in every respect. All imaginable paraphernalia and accoutrements of physical comfort and pleasure were provided for in ample terms at these places.]³ (6)

[Note—¹In Chaupai line no. 3 that preceded Doha no. 302 we have read that “the king set forth from his palace to the accompaniment of the blowing of conch shells”. The marriage party had assembled outside the city, on its outskirts. Hence, this verse refers to the moment when the procession finally started off on its onwards journey to Janakpur from the suburbs of Ayodhya where everyone had collected independently to join the party.

²There is an interesting observation to be made here. This verse says that “Janak got the bridges constructed as soon as he heard that the marriage party was on its way to Janakpur”. This means that the bridges were not there till then. The rivers used to form natural boundaries between kingdoms, and also served as a natural barrier to prevent invasion from enemies. Janak had waited till the last moment because he was not sure how Dasrath, a senior king to him in stature, would treat the invitation to come down to Janakpur. The reason for this doubt was that Janak had not sent Dasrath an invitation to attend the bow ceremony, and now that the latter was being invited to the same place after the ceremony was over may not go down well with Dasrath, and though his son was successful in this competition and had won the hands of the kingdom’s princess in marriage but still his father may decline to come.

Should this happen there would be no need to construct the bridges, and the status quo would be maintained. Everything was kept ready, and as soon as the good news arrived through spies that the marriage party has departed from Ayodhya—or probably much earlier when the invitation was well-received by Dasrath and he had ordered the preparations to be made, the bridges were constructed on a ‘war-footing’.

Remember: Janak was a great king in his own right, and all kings maintained an army complete with its various wings. The ‘engineering corps’ responsible to maintain the army’s hardware and to look after other mechanical aspects, and to help the marching army overcome obstacles was obviously an integral part of any army worth its name. A great army on a campaign has to rapidly cross rivers and other natural barriers, and that wing of the army responsible to take care of logistics and other mechanical support is adept at tackling such things. So it’s not surprising that Janak’s army got the bridges over the rivers built ahead of the marriage procession of Lord Ram that was headed to Janakpur.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 307 that describes how Sita, the maverick goddess Laxmi that presides over all material comforts and worldly prosperity in this creation, the goddess that takes care of all material needs and well-being of the creatures in this creation, had employed her magical powers to create a

world resembling utopia and heaven-on-earth as soon as the party arrived at Janakpur. No one could understand the reality of the situation that the never-ending chain of grand royal comforts that were made available to them for their pleasure and convenience were super-human in nature, and hence were not the ones created by ordinary human beings but by the presiding goddess who is in-charge of providing material comfort to the world, i.e. by goddess Laxmi herself.

This being the case, it is easy to understand how and why these rest-houses were well-provided for with all imaginable items of physical comfort and convenience to make the marriage party as happy and comfortable as possible. The result was that no one felt the weariness of the long journey from Ayodhya to Janakpur.]

असन सयन बर बसन सुहाए । पावहिं सब निज निज मन भाए ॥ ७ ॥
नित नूतन सुख लखि अनुकूले । सकल बरातिन्ह मंदिर भूले ॥ ८ ॥

asana sayana bara basana suhā'ē. pāvahim̐ saba nija nija mana bhā'ē. 7.
nita nūtana sukha lakhi anukūlē. sakala barātin̐ha mandira bhūlē. 8.

These resting places provided excellent food, beds and clothings to all the guests according to their individual likings. [When anyone wished to have something, it was immediately made available to him.] (7)

When the members of the marriage party saw newer comforts being made available to them on each passing day, when they found that new pleasures of their individual liking readily available any time of the day when they wished, and for all the days en-route, they felt so delighted and contented that all of them forgot about the comforts and pleasures of their respective homes. (8)

[Note—It was a long journey, and as is usual with travelers, they could have felt weary and home-sick after a few days on the road. The citizens of Ayodhya were accustomed to enjoy the best of material comforts of the world, and so would have easily felt the discomfort of being away from home. But the rest houses constructed by king Janak were so exceptionally well-provided for that none of the members of the marriage party had anything to complain about; rather, all of them felt as if they had come out fresh of their homes to enjoy a pleasurable outing, or were going on some picnic to enjoy themselves.]

दो०. आवत जानि बरात बर सुनि गहगहे निसान ।
सजि गज रथ पदचर तुरग लेन चले अगवान ॥ ३०४ ॥

dōhā.

āvata jāni barāta bara suni gahagahē nisāna.
saji gaja ratha padacara turaga lēna calē agavāna. 304.

When it was heard in Janakpur that the grand marriage procession has arrived, the kettle-drums were sounded enthusiastically. Immediately thereafter, decorated

elephants, chariots and foot soldiers as well as attendants and horses proceeded forward to welcome the incoming guests. (Doha no. 304)

[Note—Royal messengers and lookouts were appointed at strategic locations all along the route within the territory of the kingdom of Janakpur. So, as soon as the marriage procession was near the city, celebrations started. The arrival of the marriage party was announced by the beating of the kettle-drums, and the advance party that was prepared before hand to go and receive the guests while they were still on the outer fringes of the sprawling city, was dispatched forthwith.

This advance welcoming party consisted of decorated elephants, horses and chariots, as well as foot soldiers and attendants in wonderful royal finery, and carrying the kingdom's insignia and other symbols of royalty to accord a warm welcome, with full state honours, to the privileged guests.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse no. 120—121.]

[PAUSE 10 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

चौ०. कनक कलस भरि कोपर थारा । भाजन ललित अनेक प्रकारा ॥ १ ॥

भरे सुधासम सब पकवाने । नाना भाँति न जाहिं बखाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kanaka kalasa bhari kōpara thārā. bhājana lalita anēka prakārā. 1.

bharē sudhāsama saba pakavānē. nānā bhām̐ti na jāhim̐ bakhānē. 2.

[Verse nos. 1-6 have to be read together to understand their meaning. All these verses collectively describe the refreshments and gifts that king Janak, the father of Sita, had sent to the arriving marriage party as a formal gesture of warm welcome.]

When the marriage party arrived, king Janak sent many types of delectable refreshments, both in the form of drinks that were sweet and cool and tasted like Amrit (ambrosia), as well as in the form of tasty and aromatic food (snacks) that were very delicious and cooked in a variety of ways (fried, baked, roasted, smoked, barbecued, boiled, steamed etc.). These drinks and eatables were contained in beautiful golden jars and large and small plates and platters respectively. The variety and form of these dishes and refreshing drinks were so huge and varied that it is not possible to describe them. (1-2)

[Note—These gifts and refreshments were carried by the advance party sent by king Janak to receive and welcome the guests as narrated in Doha no. 304.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 328 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that describe the elaborate feast that was organised to feed the marriage party after the marriage ceremony was over.]

फल अनेक बर बस्तु सुहाई । हरषि भेंट हित भूप पठाई ॥ ३ ॥

भूषन बसन महामनि नाना । खग मृग हय गय बहुबिधि जाना ॥ ४ ॥

phala anēka bara bastu suhā'īm. haraṣi bhēṅṭa hita bhūpa paṭhā'īm. 3.
bhūṣana basana mahāmani nānā. khaga mṛga haya gaya bahubidhi jānā. 4.

The king cheerfully sent as gifts many types of fruits (that were fresh and seasonal, as well as dry and had been canned for storage), as well as many other charming things (such as nuts, edible roots, leaves etc., both of the local variety as well as those that were exotic in nature). (3)

Many types of ceremonial robes and other wearing apparels and raiments suitable for the occasion, precious gems and stones, tamed animals such as birds, deer, horses and elephants etc. were also sent by the king as welcome-gifts for the marriage party. (4)

मंगल सगुन सुगंध सुहाए । बहुत भाँति महिपाल पठाए ॥ ५ ॥
दधि चिउरा उपहार अपारा । भरि भरि काँवरि चले कहारा ॥ ६ ॥

maṅgala saguna sugandha suhā'ē. bahuta bhāmṭi mahipāla paṭhā'ē. 5.
dadhi ci'urā upahāra apārā. bhari bhari kāṁvari calē kahārā. 6.

Besides the above items, the great king (“mahipāla”) sent various items that stood for good omens, such as different types of scents and perfumes that are usually used during all auspicious events¹. (5)

Other such items that stood for good omen which were sent by the king as gifts for the marriage party included curd and dried rice grains. All these gifts were carried by porters in palanquins and other vehicles. (6)

[Note—¹Some of these items were sandalwood, musk, camphor, saffron, incense, aromatic plants and their roots and extracts etc.]

अगवान्ह जब दीखि बराता । उर आनंदु पुलक भर गाता ॥ ७ ॥
देखि बनाव सहित अगवाना । मुदित बरातिन्ह हने निसाना ॥ ८ ॥

agavānanha jaba dīkhi barātā. ura ānandu pulaka bhara gātā. 7.
dēkhi banāva sahita agavānā. mudita barātinha hanē nisānā. 8.

When the members of the advance party deputed by king Janak to formally receive and welcome the arriving bridegroom's party saw the guests, all of them were filled with thrill and their hearts were overjoyed with delight. (7)

Similarly, when the bridegroom's party saw the deputation of hosts, who had arrived to meet and welcome them on behalf of the king of Janakpur, decked up in their best of finery and ceremonial regalia befitting the occasion, all of them were exhilarated and delighted beyond measure even as they started playing their kettle-drums enthusiastically in a loud cacophony of sound to signify their joy and happiness. (8)

[Note—The members of two great kingdoms have met each other for the first time, and there was a lot of bonhomie and celebration.

Another point to note is that the marriage procession of the bridegroom was already very huge, consisting of a large and varied numbers of animals and servants. To this huge number was added the gifts that Janak has sent now, and would be further increased manifold later on at the time of its departure back to Ayodhya when Janak would send more gifts in the form of servants, animals and costly gifts. Refer respectively to the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 300; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 305; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 334.

To wit, the length and breadth and the strength of the members of the marriage party increased manifold when it returned to its home city of Ayodhya. If it had stretched for miles at the time of departure from Ayodhya for Janakpur, it probably stretched from horizon to horizon on its return!]

दो०. हरषि परसपर मिलन हित कछुक चले बगमेल ।
जनु आनंद समुद्र दुइ मिलत बिहाइ सुबेल ॥ ३०५ ॥

dōhā.

haraṣi parasapara milana hita kachuka calē bagamēla.
janu ānanda samudra du'i milata bihā'i subēla. 305.

There was so much warmth and affection between of the two sides (i.e. the arriving party from Ayodhya representing the bridegroom's side, and the deputation sent by king Janak to receive and welcome the guests, representing the bride's side) that as soon as they were within sight of each other, some of the members from each side dashed forward enthusiastically to go and embrace their counterparts from the opposite side. The scene reminded one of two huge oceans meeting each other at a single place. (Doha no. 305)

[Note—There would be a thunderous roar when waters of two great oceans clash with each other, sending huge waves leaping up to touch the sky, and splurging and spraying of water for miles around. In other words, a thunderous roar of mutual congratulations and honour, of loud cheers of joy and happiness, a burst of ecstasy and exhilaration erupted when the two sides rushed to meet each other enthusiastically. It was a moment of celebration, but it could be compared to the uproarious cacophony created when two armies clashed with each other in battle, though this 'clash' was not to kill each other but to shower love, affection and thanksgiving as well as to congratulate and honour each other.

The two sides were so eager to meet each other that they forgot all formalities and decorum of royalty, but rushed to hug and embrace each other as if two fast friends have met each other after a long time.]

चौ०. बरषि सुमन सुर सुंदरि गावहिं । मुदित देव दुंदुभीं बजावहिं ॥ १ ॥

बस्तु सकल राखीं नृप आगें । बिनय कीन्हि तिन्ह अति अनुरागें ॥ २ ॥
 प्रेम समेत रायँ सबु लीन्हा । भै बकसीस जाचकन्हि दीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

baraṣi sumana sura sundari gāvahiṁ. mudita dēva dundubhīm bajāvahiṁ. 1.
 bastu sakala rākhīm nṛpa āgēm. binaya kīnhi tinha ati anurāgēm. 2.
 prēma samēta rāyam̐ sabu līnhā. bhai bakasīsa jācakanhi dīnhā. 3.

The celestial beauties and damsels (i.e. different goddesses and consorts of gods as well as the heavenly nymphs; “sura sundari”) showered flowers (from the heaven) and sang melodious songs to celebrate the occasion, while the gods themselves enthusiastically played the kettle-drums¹. (1)

Members of the advance reception party (deputed by king Janak to welcome king Dasrath and others in the marriage party) very politely placed all the gifts they had brought with them before the king (Dasrath), and prayed to him warmly to accept them gladly. (2)

The king in turn received the members of the deputation affectionately with great warmth, and accepted all the gifts cheerfully. The king then distributed these gifts to all alms-seekers and others as a gesture of generosity and magnanimity². (3)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309 below.

The sequence of narration clearly indicates that the gods beat their drums to synchronise their beats with the rhythm and melody of songs sung by the goddesses and nymphs.

Another interesting observation can be made here: when the marriage party had began its journey from Ayodhya, both the gods as well as the goddesses had joined hands to sing auspicious songs and play the clarionet (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 302), but here in this present verse it is said that only the goddesses have sung songs while the gods have sounded the kettle-drums. It clearly means that on the earlier occasion, i.e. at Ayodhya at the time of departure of the party, the gods were in the heaven to join their counterparts, the goddesses, but then they joined the marriage party in person and accompanied it to Janakpur. So now at present they are on earth along with the rest of the members of the marriage party. Hence, the goddesses shower flowers from the heaven and sing songs in the sky while the gods vigorously beat the musical drums below on earth.

²It was a standard practice for great kings and noble men to give liberally to others whenever the occasion arose. Such liberal attitude was deeply engrained in the society in general also so much so that even a man of humble resources gave back to others things that he possessed whenever the occasion arrived. This gesture of giving liberally and sharing everything with others was more striking during happy occasions and ceremonial events. It will be clear when we see how the citizens had shared all gifts they received when we read about the celebrations in Ayodhya at the time of Lord Ram’s birth (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194), then once again when there were wide-spread celebrations at

Janakput when Lord Ram had broken the bow (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 262; and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265) which are specific instances of this magnanimous attitude.]

करि पूजा मान्यता बड़ाई । जनवासे कहूँ चले लवाई ॥ ४ ॥
 बसन बिचित्र पाँवड़े परहीं । देखि धनदु धन महु परिहरहीं ॥ ५ ॥
 अति सुंदर दीन्हेउ जनवासा । जहँ सब कहूँ सब भाँति सुपासा ॥ ६ ॥

kari pūjā mān'yatā barā'ī. janavāsē kahum' calē lavā'ī. 4.
 basana bicitra pām'varē parahīm. dēkhi dhanadu dhana madu pariharahīm. 5.
 ati sundara dīnhē'u janavāsā. jaham' saba kahum' saba bhām'ti supāsā. 6.

After showing their reverence and paying due respect, obeisance and homage to the king (Dasrath)¹, the members of the deputation then escorted the marriage party to the 'Janwasa', a place that was especially earmarked for lodging and boarding the members of the bridegroom's party. (4)

Warm reception awaited the party at the lodging place where ceremonial mats made of marvelous materials were laid out for them. Even the god of wealth, known as Kuber who is regarded as the custodian of the wealth of heaven, felt shy and humbled when he saw the opulence, the pomp and the grandeur of the welcome that was extended to the marriage party of the groom². (5)

The members of the deputation gave the members of the bridegroom's party lodging places that were well equipped, pleasant, beautiful and glamorous in all possible ways, where all means of physical comfort and pleasure and joy were provided in abundance. (6)

[Note—¹The bridegroom's close relatives are always shown great respect by members of the bride's family in traditional Indian households. So, king Dasrath and other members of the marriage party were literally worshipped ('Pooja') by members of the advance reception party deputed to welcome them.

²Kuber is proud of the fact that he presides over the wealth of heaven, the richest treasury of creation. But when he saw the opulence of Janak he felt shy of his wealth. He had also felt shy when he observed the wealth of Ayodhya, the kingdom of king Dasrath and Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 324.]

जानी सियँ बरात पुर आई । कछु निज महिमा प्रगटि जनाई ॥ ७ ॥
 हृदयँ सुमिरि सब सिद्धि बोलाई । भूप पहनुई करन पठाई ॥ ८ ॥

jānī siyam' barāta pura ā'ī. kachu nija mahimā pragati janā'ī. 7.
 hṛdayam' sumiri saba sid'dhi bōlā'īm. bhūpa pahuna'ī karana paṭhā'īm. 8.

When Sita heard the news that the marriage party has arrived in Janakpur, she wished to exhibit some of her mystical powers¹. (7)

In order to do so, she remembered all the Siddhis (personified forms of mystical powers that can produce miracles which defy explanation and worldly logic) in her heart and invited (invoked; summoned) all of them. Then she asked them to go and serve the king (Dasrath). (8)

[Note—¹Ordinary people had not known that Sita was a divine Shakti (dynamic energy of creation that is an inseparable part of the cosmic Creator) in a personified form as a lady. Lord Ram's stupendous powers and his out-of-the-world abilities had come to be well-known by many of the recent developments such as liberation of Ahilya, killing of demons Subahu and his army while the Lord protected sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice, and the breaking of Lord Shiva's bow which had steadfastly defied the combined strength of all the human kings and emperors of the world. To break this bow was a super-human feat in its own right.

But till now there was not a single event in the public domain that would establish the mystical powers of Sita, that she was not an ordinary human princess but a divine Shakti that was about to be united with the cosmic Lord of creation in the form of Sri Ram. So, Sita wished to utilise this occasion to show-case her mystical powers.

She also wished to indicate to Lord Ram by this subtle hint that she indeed is the right choice for him.

It ought to be noted here that in ancient times even great sages had this power to invoke the Siddhis whenever they needed them. This is evident when sage Bharadwaj had invoked the same Siddhis to serve Bharat and the huge army that accompanied him when he was going to the forest to try and bring Lord Ram back to Ayodhya from his forest exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 213—to Doha no. 215.]

दो०. सिद्धि सब सिय आयसु अकनि गई जहाँ जनवास ।

लिऐँ संपदा सकल सुख सुरपुर भोग बिलास ॥ ३०६ ॥

dōhā.

sidhi saba siya āyasu akani ga'īm jahām' janavāsa.
li'ēm' sampadā sakala sukha surapura bhōga bilāsa. 306.

All the different Siddhis, who came at the call of Sita, accepted her orders (to serve the marriage party of Lord Ram) and went to the place where the bridegroom's party had been lodged. They carried with them all imaginable types of ingredients needed for providing the party with physical as well as material comforts and pleasures that compared favourably with those available to the gods in heaven. (Doha no. 306)

[Note—We have read above in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes this Doha no. 306 that the place where the marriage party of the groom was lodged was well-provided with all the amenities one can expect in this world to meet one's physical comforts and needs. But provision of these comforts was limited to the extent of human capabilities.

When Sita asked the various Siddhis to take care of the party, the amenities these Siddhis provided were of a heavenly dimension, i.e. they far exceeded what humans could arrange for because the Siddhis refer to super-natural mystical powers possessed by the gods.

Thus we see the difference between the facilities that were available to the members of the marriage party upon arrival at their respective places of lodging, and the sudden upgrading of these facilities to a much higher scale upon intervention of Sita.

The type of comforts and pleasures that were provided by these Siddhis has been described in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precedes Doha no. 215.]

चौ०. निज निज बास बिलोकि बराती । सुर सुख सकल सुलभ सब भाँती ॥ १ ॥
 बिभव भेद कछु कोउ न जाना । सकल जनक कर करहिं बखाना ॥ २ ॥
 सिय महिमा रघुनायक जानी । हरषे हृदयँ हेतु पहिचानी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

nija nija bāsa bilōki barātī. sura sukha sakala sulabha saba bhāmṭī. 1.
 bibhava bhēda kachu kō'u na jānā. sakala janaka kara karahim bakhānā. 2.
 siya mahimā raghunāyaka jānī. haraṣē hṛdayam̐ hētu pahicānī. 3.

Each member of the marriage party found in his own apartment all the amenities and accoutrements of immense comfort and pleasure that one would find in heaven. All the paraphernalia of heavenly comfort that are available to the gods were made available to all the members of the bridegroom's party. (1)

No one, however, could guess the source of such out-of-the-world facilities; no one had an inkling of the mystery surrounding the availability of such heavenly enjoyments. [No one could know who was behind this arrangement.] So, everyone praised king Janak for his gracious nature and richness of the royal treasury. (2)

However, it was only Raghunayak (Lord Ram, the chief of the Raghu dynasty) who could understand that this miracle was Sita's creation, and this realization about Sita's influences and mystical abilities made the Lord very happy in his heart. (3)

[Note—Every person in the groom's party thought that the heavenly facilities provided to them were arranged by king Janak, the bride's father. No one could even imagine that the real force that worked up this miracle was Sita.

When Lord Ram heard of the exceptionally wonderful arrangements made for the comfort of his marriage party, he immediately recognized that it was the miraculous affect of Sita's mystical powers. Sita was a personified form of 'Shakti', the dynamic power of creation that is so astonishingly powerful that it can do anything it wishes. The Lord felt glad because it showed to him that the princess whom he was about to marry was indeed goddess Laxmi, Lord Vishnu's cosmic consort, in a personified form. It must be noted here in this context that Lord Ram himself was Lord Vishnu in the form of a human being.

The remarkable point to note here is this: Lord Ram has not yet visited the place where the party was lodged, because the Lord was staying at the place where

sage Vishwamitra was staying, but still he could know about the sort of heavenly comforts that were provided for the marriage party. In other words, like Sita, Lord Ram too possessed mystical powers that transcended human abilities; the Lord could know about things and developments that were not immediately visible or apparent. Since Lord Ram was a manifestation of the Supreme Being, he had mystical powers that made him all-knowing and omnipresent; nothing was hidden or secret from him.

Lord Ram felt 'happy in his heart when he came to realize Sita's mystical powers' because they would come in handy for the Lord to fulfill his mission on earth—which was to eliminate the evil and cruel demon race. According to the master plan drawn by the Lord to eliminate the demons, Sita was to be abducted by Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, and held captive. Sita would need exceptional powers to survive the ordeal and overcome the threats posed by the demons. An ordinary woman would not have been in a position to stand against these ferocious demons. So when Lord Ram observed the mystical powers of Sita he felt reassured that he would be able to successfully complete his mission on earth and safely return to the heaven with Sita in her primary form as goddess Laxmi.]

पितु आगमनु सुनत दोउ भाई । हृदयं न अति आनंदु अमाई ॥ ४ ॥
सकुचन्ह कहि न सकत गुरु पाहीं । पितु दरसन लालचु मन माहीं ॥ ५ ॥

pitu āgamanu sunata dō'u bhā'ī. hṛdayam̃ na ati ānandu amā'ī. 4.

sakucanha kahi na sakata guru pāhīm. pitu darasana lālacu mana māhīm. 5.

When the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) heard about the arrival of their father (king Dasrath of Ayodhya), joy and delight overflowed in their hearts. (4)

They had a great desire to meet their father, but were hesitant to broach the subject with their Guru (sage Vishwamitra, with whom they were staying at the moment). (5)

[Note—It was the requirement of discipline and good manners that one does not disturb the Guru with petty desires. While in the company of a Guru, the disciple is expected to observe modesty in behaviour, self-restraint and discipline, not allowing oneself to be restless about worldly attractions and interactions. The arrival of king Dasrath was news that would surely be known to sage Vishwamitra in a short while, and then as surely enough the sage would go to meet him. The two brothers would naturally get an opportunity to meet their father then, so what was the hurry?

The two brothers had been away from their father for quite some time now. Dasrath was a doting father who loved his sons more dearly than his own life (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 and 10 that precede Doha no. 208). So it was natural that a great bond of affection, love and affinity existed between the two brothers and their father.

There are other instances as well where Lord Ram and Laxman had refrained from making bold requests to the sage to show respect to him and honour his dignity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218 where Lord Ram had been extremely hesitant to request sage Vishwamitra to give him permission so that he and Laxman can go and visit the city of Janakpur for sight-seeing; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 225 which say that the two brothers felt afraid that the sage would get annoyed because they were late in

returning to him after visiting Janakpur. These instances showed that the two brothers had the greatest respect for sage Vishwamitra and maintained the highest standards of discipline and modesty when dealing with the revered sage. They never behaved like spoilt princes of a mighty kingdom who become haughty and arrogant and do not give a dime to show respect to others.]

बिस्वामित्र बिनय बड़ि देखी । उपजा उर संतोषु बिसेषी ॥ ६ ॥
 हरषि बंधु दोउ हृदयँ लगाए । पुलक अंग अंबक जल छाए ॥ ७ ॥
 चले जहाँ दसरथु जनवासे । मनहुँ सरोबर तकेउ पिआसे ॥ ८ ॥

bisvāmitra binaya baḍi dēkhī. upajā ura santōṣu bisēṣī. 6.
 haraṣi bandhu dō'u hr̥dayam̐ lagā'ē. pulaka aṅga ambaka jala chā'ē. 7
 calē jahām̐ dasarathu janavāsē. manahum̐ sarōbara takē'u pi'āsē. 8.

The wise sage Vishwamitra was exceptionally happy and satisfied when he noted the exemplary level of modesty and politeness that the brothers exhibited¹. (6)

The sage was so glad that he embraced the brothers most affectionately in a bear-hug, his body thrilled and tears welled-up in his eyes². (7)

Thereafter, the sage, accompanied by the two brothers, set off towards the place where king Dasrath had been lodged to meet him with the eagerness of a thirsty man who rushes towards a pond to drink water to quench his thirst³. (8)

[Note—¹The sage expected such behaviour from them. Being in the company of a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra who was renowned for his self-discipline and modesty would be deemed fruitful if the person acquires some of the sage's virtues in the same way as something that is in touch with sandalwood would acquire some of the fragrance of the latter. If a disciple does not learn from his learned teacher, the Guru, then he is not eligible to be called a true disciple. So the sage felt happy that the two brothers were acting in a matured way, have learnt discipline, modesty and self-control, as well as the principles of good behaviour and politeness.

²At the time when Dasrath had sent Lord Ram and Laxman with Vishwamitra he had told the sage that from then onwards the latter would be deemed to be their father—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 208. Later on we read that the learned sage had taught the two brothers the science and art of use of mystical weapons and warfare. So in this sense the sage became their Guru—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

Therefore, for all practical purposes sage Vishwamitra was their father as well as their Guru; he combined the two roles in his self.

As far as fatherly affection was concerned, the sage had never let them feel that they were away from their natural father, king Dasrath. In fact, sage Vishwamitra's love and affection at least equalled if not surpassed that shown by their natural father. Tulsidas has liberally praised the sage's love for the two brothers in his another classic story of Lord Ram known as "Geetawali"—refer: Geetawali, Baal

Kand (i) verse no. 52, stanza no. 5; verse no. 55, stanza no. 7; and verse no. 56, stanza no. 6.

³The analogy of the thirsty man rushing towards the pond to drink water is used here to indicate that the sage and the two brothers walked very briskly and eagerly towards the place where king Dasrath had been put up. The sage was eager to meet Dasrath and thank him for lending his two dearest sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, who had helped the sage overcome the fear of demons as well as give liberation to Ahilya, the cursed wife of sage Gautam who had now become obliged to Vishwamitra for enabling this to happen. The sage wished to convey to the king his immense sense of gratitude and thankfulness that the latter had allowed his two dear sons to accompany the sage and fulfil his wishes, to subtly tell the king that he had taken great care of his two beloved sons, and that it is time now that he wanted to hand over the two brothers back to him, with a lot of thanks and gratitude.

The two brothers obviously were eager to meet their father after such a long time. Their journey with sage Vishwamitra to the forest was the first occasion in their lives when the two brothers had been away from the fond care of their beloved and doting father for such long, and nostalgia and filial emotions therefore overtook them.]

दो०. भूप बिलोके जबहिं मुनि आवत सुतन्ह समेत ।
उठे हरषि सुखसिंधु महँ चले थाह सी लेत ॥ ३०७ ॥

dōhā.

bhūpa bilōkē jabahim muni āvata sutanha samēta.
uṭhē haraṣi sukhasindhu mahum'calē thāha sī lēta. 307.

As soon as the king (Dasrath) saw the sage (Vishwamitra) coming to him along with the king's two sons (Lord Ram and Laxman), he immediately got up to welcome them, and walked towards them so eagerly that his steps seemed to fall unsteadily on the ground like a man who tries to walk into an ocean of bliss and happiness. (Doha no. 307)

[Note—When a man walks right into an ocean, he totters and stumbles each step of the way forward, barely able to keep his balance and hold his foot firmly on the water-soaked soft ground below. Likewise, when king Dasrath saw the sage and his two beloved sons coming to meet him, he rushed forward to receive them. So excited and overwhelmed with emotions was he that he stumbled and virtually fell over more than once in his hurry to meet them personally.

The sight of the sage and the two princes coming to meet him was like the cool, refreshing and invigorating wave arising from an ocean of love and affection that rapidly moved towards the king and swept him off his feet. This wave reached the king much before the sage and the two brothers could, so as the king rushed forward to take a plunge in the blissfully soothing water of this ocean, he lost his mental and physical balance in his eagerness, and tottered and stumbled many a times.]

चौ०. मुनिहि दंडवत कीन्ह महीसा । बार बार पद रज धरि सीसा ॥ १ ॥

कौसिक राउ लिए उर लाई । कहि असीस पूछी कुसलाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

munihi daṇḍavata kīnha mahīsā. bāra bāra pada raja dhari sīsā. 1.
kausika rā'u li'ē ura lāī. kahi asīsa pūchī kusalāī. 2.

The king prostrated before the sage, repeatedly placing his head on the dust of the blessed sage's feet (as a sign of showing great respect and reverence). (1)

Kausik (sage Vishwamitra) immediately lifted the king and embraced him most affectionately. He blessed the king and asked about his welfare. (2)

[Note—The meeting of sage Vishwamitra with king Dasrath here is in sharp contrast with their first meeting in Ayodhya when the sage had gone to ask him to lend Lord Ram and Laxman to him so that his fire sacrifice could be protected against the demons' wrath. Here the two have met enthusiastically and with exemplary warmth, whereas on the earlier occasion both these emotions were absent. The gestures of respect shown by Dasrath and blessings by Vishwamitra during their first meeting at Ayodhya were more in the nature of formalities rather than spontaneous show of affection and warmth for each other.

What is the reason for this? Well, when the two met for the first time, king Dasrath became apprehensive of the sage's intentions because the sage was not a frequent visitor to his kingdom and court. So the king became suspicious about the reason of his visit. The king had observed that the sage's face was grim, he had a serious air about him, and his countenance as well as demeanours were grave, indicating that things were not rosy and cosy. The sage, on the other hand, was apprehensive whether the king would meet his demands and send Lord Ram and Laxman with him to the forest.

Therefore, the general atmosphere at the time of their first meeting was very somber and formal. But the situation had undergone a drastic change by now. Lord Ram and Laxman had attained matchless fame under the patronage of the sage: they had vanquished the unconquerable demons while protecting the fire sacrifice of the sage, Lord Ram had then liberated Ahilya, and later on broken the formidable bow which had put to shame all the mightiest kings of that time. Besides this, the two brothers had acquired expertise in the art and science of weaponry and warfare as a blessing of the sage. None of these achievements would have been made possible if the sage hadn't taken them with him to the forest.

In other words, both the king and the sage felt greatly obliged and very thankful towards each other. This created an environment conducive for bubbly warmth, cordiality and bonhomie between the two.]

पुनि दंडवत करत दोउ भाई । देखि नृपति उर सुखु न समाई ॥ ३ ॥

सुत हियँ लाइ दुसह दुख मेटे । मृतक सरीर प्राण जनु भेंटे ॥ ४ ॥

puni daṇḍavata karata dō'u bhāī. dēkhi nrpati ura sukhu na samāī. 3.
suta hiyaṁ lā'i dusaha dukha mēṭē. mṛtaka sarīra prāna janu bhēṅṭē. 4.

Then (i.e. after Dasrath and Vishwamitra had met each other and exchanged pleasantries) when the king saw that the two brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) had prostrated before him, he felt overwhelmed with delight and happiness so much so that his joy could not be contained in his heart, it virtually spilled over. (3)

He immediately lifted his sons and embraced them to get rid of all the worries and grief from which he had been suffering all the while due to their absence. The king felt invigorated and energized as if a dead body had met life ('Pran') once again.

[To wit, just as a dead body becomes active and energized if new life is injected in it, the king felt rejuvenated and exceptionally cheerful upon meeting his two dear sons, Lord Ram and Laxman after a long gap of many days while they were away with sage Vishwamitra.] (4)

[Note—The king had always treated Lord Ram and Laxman as part of his 'Pran', a word meaning 'vital winds representing forces of life that keep the body of a creature alive'. This is clear when he said it expressly while handing them over to sage Vishwamitra in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208.

Hence, for all practical purposes, Dasrath had sent his 'Pran' with sage Vishwamitra, and had since then lived virtually like a man who has no energy and dynamism left in him, who is just managing to survive on external life-support system in the hope that one day his lost energy and dynamism would come back to him.

Thus, when the king met Lord Ram and Laxman once again it seemed that a dead body has been revived. The king's face beamed and glowed with joy; he breathed freely and his entire being seemed to be bubbling with new-found energy of life.]

पुनि बसिष्ठ पद सिर तिन्ह नाए । प्रेम मुदित मुनिबर उर लाए ॥ ५ ॥
बिप्र बृंद बंदे दुहुँ भाई । मनभावती असीसें पाई ॥ ६ ॥

puni basiṣṭha pada sira tinha nā'ē. prēma mudita munibara ura lā'ē. 5.
bipra bṛnda bandē duhum' bhā'īm. manabhāvatī asisēm pā'īm. 6.

[After meeting their father—] The two brothers bowed at the holy feet of sage Vasistha (the royal priest and the Guru of the family). The sage was overwhelmed with love and affection for them, and he lifted them and clasped them to his bosom. (5)

Then the two brothers paid their respects to all the others Brahmins and seniors present there, and in return they received liberal blessings from them that were in accordance to their wishes and liking.

[To wit, each individual Brahmin blessed the two brothers independently, and all of them blessed that whatever the two brothers desired in their hearts would be fulfilled.] (6)

[Note—The blessings of the elderly Brahmins were open-ended in the sense that that they blessed Lord Ram and Laxman that whatever they wished would be made available to them.

Earlier, such open-ended blessing was given to them by sage Vishwamitra in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 237 at the time when the brothers had come back after visiting the royal garden and meeting Sita there.]

भरत सहानुज कीन्ह प्रनामा । लिए उठाइ लाइ उर रामा ॥ ७ ॥
हरषे लखन देखि दोउ भ्राता । मिले प्रेम परिपूरित गाता ॥ ८ ॥

bharata sahānuja kīnha pranāmā. li'ē uṭhā'i lā'i ura rāmā. 7.
haraṣē lakhana dēkhi dō'u bhrātā. milē prēma paripūrīta gātā. 8.

Then Bharat, along with his younger brother (Shatrughan) bowed before Lord Ram who picked them up affectionately and clasped them to his heart. (7)

Laxman too felt exhilarated when he saw his two brothers (Bharat and Shatrughan), and they met each other enthusiastically. (8)

[Note—It ought to be noted here that when Bharat and Shatrughan were meeting Lord Ram, Laxman was watching, and he felt very happy. He was ready to meet Bharat and Shatrughan, so as soon as the two turned towards Laxman to pay their respects to him by bowing before him, Laxman immediately responded by holding them mid-way, and pulled them towards himself to hug them tightly.]

दो०. पुरजन परिजन जातिजन जाचक मंत्री मीत ।
मिले जथाबिधि सबहि प्रभु परम कृपाल बिनीत ॥ ३०८ ॥
dōhā.

purajana parijana jātijana jācaka mantrī mīta.
milē jathābidhi sabahi prabhu parama kṛpāla binīta. 308.

After that, the most gracious and merciful Lord (Sri Ram) affectionately met everyone else present on the occasion, such as the the citizens of Ayodhya, the attendants and other members of the royal entourage, kinsmen, family relations, alms-seekers, ministers and friends in a way that suited the stature and position of each individual. (Doha no. 308)

[Note—The Lord met everyone affectionately, but while doing so he maintained his dignity and traditional decorum of the society. For example, when he met Brahmins, his Guru and his father, he touched their feet or bowed before them to pay respect; when he met his brothers he embraced them; when he met his friends and companions he exchanged pleasant notes with them and asked what they had been doing these past days; when he met his family members he asked how they were and what the news was back at home; when he met his ministers he wished them good and exchanged some information about the affairs of the kingdom; when he met his attendants and other junior members of the royal household he asked them how they were all and if everything was fine with them; and so on and so forth.

Virtually the same thing has happened much later on in the story when Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after his 14-year forest exile. At that time also the Lord had met everyone according to his stature in the society. Refer— Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5—to Doha no. 6.]

चौ०. रामहि देखि बरात जुड़ानी । प्रीति कि रीति न जाति बखानी ॥ १ ॥

नृप समीप सोहहिं सुत चारी । जनु धन धरमादिक तनुधारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

rāmahi dēkhi barāta juṛānī. prīti ki rīti na jāti bakhānī. 1.

nṛpa samīpa sōhahim suta cārī. janu dhana dharamādika tanudhārī. 2.

All the members of bridegroom's party felt contented and delighted when they saw Lord Ram (once again after so many days). The ways of love and affection are so unique that it is not possible to define them or assign any criterion to them¹. (1)

The four brothers (Lord Ram and his three younger brothers Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) looked so marvelous near (or in the company of) the king (Dasrath) that they resembled personified forms of the four fruits (rewards) that one gets by leading a life of of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity and propriety. These four legendary fruits are 'Artha' (material and financial well-being), 'Dharma' (acclaim that comes with being able to lead an auspicious and righteous life), 'Kaam' (fulfillment of all desires), and 'Moksha' (liberation and deliverance from all sufferings associated with this world and one's body)². (2)

[Note—¹Every citizen of Ayodhya had a personal equation with the Lord—some treated him as their friend, some as their prince, some as their son, some as their brother, some as a personified form of the Supreme Being, and so on. The Lord has magical powers in the sense that he can assume as many forms as he wishes, and therefore he appeared differently to different persons to please each single individual according to his liking or in the way he or she bonded with the Lord. In other words, those who treated the Lord as their friend saw him as a dear friend; those who regarded him as their prince saw him as such; those who had loved him as their son found their beloved son standing in front; those who regarded Lord Ram as their brother saw him as their sibling whom they were meeting after so many days of separation, and still others who visualised Lord Ram as an incarnation of the Supreme Being could see their revered deity revealed in the image of the Lord, and so on and so forth.

Irrespective of the way the individual citizens perceived the image of the Lord, irrespective of their age and social standing, and irrespective of their personal interaction with the Lord during his days at Ayodhya, love, affection and devotion was the common denominator in their relationship with him. So, the Lord fulfilled the wishes of all the citizens by appearing to them in the form they had known him and loved him. We see the same thing happening later on in the story when the Lord had come back to Ayodhya after the conquest of Lanka, when he had met all the eager citizens individually by assuming countless forms that were in accordance with the way each individual perceived and loved his or her Lord. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 6.

All of them had longed to see their beloved Lord after so many days ever since he had gone away with sage Vishwamitra to protect his fire sacrifice. They were all worried and anxious about his well-being and safety because a forest is not a hospitable place for a prince to live in comfort in the first place, and then there was the special problem arising out of the presence of cruel demons.

Again, the notion that each individual had his or her personal view or perception of who Lord Ram was is endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 242.

The citizens were ‘delighted’ because they were seeing their beloved Lord after so many long days, and they were ‘contented’ because he was hale and hearty, unharmed, and as fine as they had last seen him at the time of his departure with sage Vishwamitra.

When the news of Lord Ram marrying Sita had reached Ayodhya through the messengers sent by king Janak, the entire city had erupted in joy and each citizen had been delighted to hear this good news—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 296.

All the people were highly excited, and as the marriage party assembled outside Ayodhya for departure for Jankapur, all the citizens wondered how soon would they see their beloved Lord once again—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 300. So naturally when the final moment arrived when their dream of seeing and meeting their Lord became a reality, their happiness and joy knew no bounds.] Another reason for the citizens becoming so exceptionally happy to see Lord Ram after so many days is that while the Lord was in Ayodhya they would see him and interact with him almost on a daily basis, and over time they had developed a personal bond of affection and love for the Lord because of his friendly, welcoming, amiable and affable nature. So when they could not see, meet and interact with the Lord over so many days after he had gone to the forest with sage Vishwamitra, they began to miss him very intensely. Therefore, when the opportunity came to see him personally once again and exchange greetings and pleasantries and notes, the bonhomie is expected to be spontaneous and marked.

²Here, the reference is to king Dasrath who has been rewarded with these four fruits for all the meritorious deeds he had done in his lifetime. The king was very blessed to have the four brothers as his son.

Remember: Lord Ram was not an ordinary ‘human son’ of a king; he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation. Dasrath had done severe Tapa (penance) and had requested the Lord to become his son because he wished to express his love, affection and devotion for the Lord more closely than anyone else could, and it is only possible if the Lord could live in close proximity with the king and be at his beck and call like a son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 148—to Doha no. 149.

Now, let us see what the four brothers stood for—(i) Shatrughan stood for ‘Artha’; (ii) Bharat stood for ‘Dharma’; (iii) Laxman stood for ‘Kaam’; and (iv) Lord Ram himself for ‘Moksha’.

Shatrughan managed the affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya so well and with great finasse during the period of absence of Lord Ram when he had gone to live for 14 years in the forest to honour the word of his father king Dasrath, and Bharat, who was supposed to take over the reigns of the kingdom during the Lord’s absence, was so remorseful and full of guilt that he bluntly refused to accept the crown and spent

the entire period of 14 long years as a reclusive hermit on the outskirts of the city of Ayodhya, that there was no dint in the prosperity and wealth of the kingdom during this period. Rather, when Lord Ram came back to Ayodhya at the end of the exile period he found that everything was absolutely fine and well-looked after, and that the legendary power and majesty of the kingdom was maintained in perfect order by Shatrughan during the Lord's absence. This simply means that Shatrughan was an expert administrator and excellent in handling the finances of the kingdom. Therefore he stood for the virtue of 'Artha'—financial well-being and meaningful management of the affairs of one's daily life.

Then we come to Bharat. He epitomised the virtues of 'Dharma' for the simple, obvious and straightforward reason that he refused to accept the crown of Ayodhya and its attendant attractions and benefits because it would have been an unrighteous, improper and unjust thing to do as the crown should have passed to his elder brother, Lord Ram, upon the death of their father, king Dasrath. Instead of this, unfortunately, Lord Ram had been sent to forest exile due to selfishness, ulterior motives and evil mechanisms of his own mother, Kaikeyi. In spite of all the efforts of the ministers of the kingdom, even his Guru sage Vaishista and mother of Lord Ram, Kaushalya, who had tried their best to persuade him to accept the crown of the kingdom, Bharat flatly refused, citing it to be a highly improper thing to do—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 171—to Doha no. 183.

Not only did he rescind the crown, but Bharat had also gone a step further by spending the next 14 years in self-imposed exile by living like a hermit on the outskirts of Ayodhya, and renouncing all comforts of the kingdom—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 323—to Sortha/Doha no. 326.

Laxman stood for 'Kaam' (meaning wish fulfilment) because he had always stood by Lord Ram and helped him, shoulder-to-shoulder and arm-in-arm, to help the Lord fulfill all his objectives in this world. To cite a few examples: (i) During the protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, while Lord Ram had dealt with the chief of the demon army, i.e. Subahu and Marich, it was Laxman who had killed the rest of the demon forces—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 210. (ii) Another instance is during the war at Lanka it was Laxman who had slayed Meghanad, the invincible son of the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 75—to Doha no. 76.

It ought to be noted here that Laxman's contribution in Lord Ram's divine mission on earth has been acknowledged by the Lord himself when Laxman lay wounded in the battle-field of Lanka and the Lord had grieved for him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-18 that precede Doha no. 61.

And finally we come to Lord Ram himself. There is no doubting the assertion that the Lord stood for the fruit of 'Moksha' or spiritual liberation of the creature. The holy name of the Lord, i.e. the word 'RAM', is deemed to be a "Tarak Mantra", a divine mystical formula that helps the soul to cross over this mundane world consisting of an endless cycle of birth and death. This fact is endorsed by the holiest of Hindu scriptures, i.e. the 'Upanishads' themselves. Refer: Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 1; Canto 4, verse no. 7; and Canto 6, verse nos. 1-29.

The access to the 'four fruits or rewards' by king Dasrath as well as his queens who were blessed enough to have the supreme Lord of the world as their son known

as Lord Ram has been referred to elsewhere also in the context of Lord Ram's marriage in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos. 325 and 345.]

सुतन्ह समेत दसरथहि देखी । मुदित नगर नर नारि बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥
सुमन बरिसि सुर हनहिं निसाना । नाकनटीं नाचहिं करि गाना ॥ ४ ॥

sutanha samēta dasarathahi dēkhī. mudita nagara nara nāri bisēṣī. 3.
sumana barisi sura hanahim nisānā. nākanaṭīṁ nācahim kari gānā. 4.

When the citizens of the city¹, both the males as well as the females, saw the king standing alongside his four sons, all of them were exceptionally delighted and felt very happy. (3)

When the gods saw this wonderful sight, they liberally showered flowers (from the sky, the heaven) and merrily played their kettle-drums enthusiastically even as the celestial dancers (i.e. the Apsaras; heavenly nymphs) danced in gay abundance to the accompaniment of melodious songs. (4)

[Note—¹Now, it is not clear which city and its inhabitants are being referred to here in this verse—is it Ayodhya or is it Janakpur?

Well, the answer is: 'both of them'. The citizens of Ayodhya were in the marriage party itself, while the citizens of Janakpur consisted of those who were sent by king Janak to welcome the party on the outskirts of the city, as well as those who were waiting eagerly to receive the party in the city itself.

The citizens of Janakpur were specially very happy and delighted because till this moment they had known only the two brothers, Lord Ram and Laxman, but now they saw that they were four brothers. Incidentally, Janak himself had two daughters, and his younger brother also had two daughters, bringing the number of eligible brides to four. The fascinated citizens visualized and hoped that all these four daughters would be married to the four brothers. Obviously it is a rare occasion when such a coincidence would occur. So this made them exceptionally delighted and happy.

The same thing can be applied to the citizens of Ayodhya. When they learnt that there were four princesses of marriageable age at Janakpur they wondered how nice would it be if all the four brothers could marry these four princesses? How wonderful and marvelous would it be to see the four couples getting married together under the same canopy, on the same dais, sitting in a row observing the rituals of the marriage ceremony together! The very idea made the citizens of the two cities ecstatic with joy.]

सतानंद अरु बिप्र सचिव गन । मागध सूत बिदुष बंदीजन ॥ ५ ॥
सहित बरात राउ सनमाना । आयसु मागि फिरे अगवाना ॥ ६ ॥

satānanda aru bipra saciva gana. māgadha sūta biduṣa bandījana. 5.
sahita barāta rā'u sanamānā. āyasu māgi phirē agavānā. 6.

Satanand (the royal priest of Janakpur), along with the Brahmins, the ministers, the minstrels, the bards and other wise men of the royal court of Janakpur who had been deputed by king Janak to receive the marriage party and extend a warm welcome to it, offered their greatest respect and heartiest welcome to king Dasrath and all other esteemed members of the party.

After paying their formal obeisance and extending a warm reception to the bridegroom's party, the members of Janak's delegation sought a polite permission from the honourable guests and returned back to the city. (5-6)

[Note—It is a tradition that the father of the bride would not go personally to meet the father of the groom upon the latter's arrival at the bride's place, but instead sends his emissary to receive and welcome the guests. Usually the priest of the bride's family is sent to represent the father of the bride at the head of the delegation that goes to meet the father of the groom and his companions.

Hence, Janak had sent Satanand as the head of the welcoming party that was sent to receive king Dasrath on the outskirts of Janakpur.

As we have already read earlier, they carried a lot of gifts with them as offerings to king Dasrath and other members of the entourage, and king Dasrath had graciously accepted everything as a token of his endorsement of this alliance between the two powerful kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 306.]

प्रथम बरात लगन तें आई । तातें पुर प्रमोदु अधिकाई ॥ ७ ॥

ब्रह्मानंदु लोग सब लहहीं । बढहुँ दिवस निसि बिधि सन कहहीं ॥ ८ ॥

prathama barāta lagana tēm āī. tātēm pura pramōdu adhikāī. 7.
brahmānandu lōga saba lahahīm. barḥahum' divasa nisi bidhi sana kahahīm.
8.

Since the bridegroom's party had arrived well ahead of the day fixed for the marriage (of Lord Ram with Sita), there was great joy and rejoicing in the city (of Janakpur)¹. (7)

The very thought (that there would be an extended stay of the marriage party and a lot of days to look forward for festivities and ceremonies), all the people were exceedingly exhilarated as if they have attained Brahm (i.e. as if they have obtained the highest degree of joy, bliss and happiness that is experienced by an ascetic when he has attained self-realisation).

They prayed to Vidhi (the Creator) that the days may be long and stretch to infinity (so that they may enjoy the wonderful time all the more)². (8)

[Note—¹This is because the citizens would have more time in their hands to celebrate, rejoice, and enjoy the festivities that were organised on this auspicious occasion. There was no rush for time; things could be taken in a relaxed manner. The citizens would have ample time to strike a rapport with the guests and forge relationships that would come in handy for future contacts, be it for trade and commerce, sport, defense, education, social exchanges such as tourism and mutual

friendship, or for establishing matrimonial alliances that would unite families and clans together.

The word 'Lagan' refers to a combination of astrological factors, such as arrangement of stars and planets in the horoscope-charts of all concerned, that are used to decide on auspicious hours during which any important thing could, and should, be done to ensure that the chances of success of the enterprise being undertaken are greater. On such occasions as marriages, many days of a particular month are counted as auspicious Lagan days to hold the ceremony, taking into account the horoscopes of both the groom's side and the bride's side. Hence, if the marriage party of the groom from a distant land arrives well in time, there is more time for holding elaborate ceremonies and festivities at the bride's place; if the party arrives late and little time is left before the auspicious time-slot for the marriage rituals ends, then the ceremonies and festivities have to be shortened accordingly.

In the case of Lord Ram's marriage, his father king Dasrath arrived with Lord Ram's three brothers, a large retinue of courtiers, ministers, attendants and detachment of army troops so well in advance that there was ample time to engage in extended celebrations and gaiety and hold mega events on a large scale in Janakpur.

The citizens looked forward to such occasions as a pleasant and welcome break from humdrums of otherwise routine life, and royal events such as a marriage or a birth in the king's household gave them a rare chance to shun worries of life, and enjoy life's pleasures and be merry. To wit, the earlier the celebrations started the longer they would last, and it was so much the better for the citizens as they would have chance to enjoy themselves for more numbers of days.

²The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 195—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 196 where it is said that at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers, the days of rejoicing and merriment seemed to stretch to eternity, and there was no sight of night.]

दो०. रामु सीय सोभा अवधि सुकृत अवधि दोउ राज ।
जहँ तहँ पुरजन कहहिं अस मिलि नर नारि समाज ॥ ३०९ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu śīya sōbhā avadhi sukṛta avadhi dō'u rāja.
jaham̐ taham̐ purajana kahahim̐ asa mili nara nāri samāja. 309.

The citizens (of Janakpur and Ayodhya) collect here and there in (separate) groups of men and women, discussing the events among themselves and asserting that there is no comparison in the world for the beautiful image consisting of the pair of Lord Ram and Sita on the one hand, and of the majesty and grandeur of the two great kings (Dasrath of Ayodhya, and Janak of Janakpur) on the other hand¹. (Doha no. 309)

[Note—¹The reason for this assertion is given below in Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 310.

Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 104, stanza no. 3 also.]

चौ०. जनक सुकृत मूरति बैदेही । दसरथ सुकृत रामु धरें देही ॥ १ ॥
 इन्ह सम काहुँ न सिव अवराधे । काहुँ न इन्ह समान फल लाधे ॥ २ ॥
 इन्ह सम कोउ न भयउ जग माहीं । है नहिं कतहुँ होनेउ नाहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

janaka sukr̥ta mūrati baidēhī. dasaratha sukr̥ta rāmu dharēm dēhī. 1.
 inha sama kāhum̃ na siva avarādhē. kāhum̃ na inha samāna phala lādhē. 2.
 inha sama kō'u na bhaya'u jaga māhīm. hai nahīm katahūm̃ hōnē'u nāhīm. 3.

All the good, auspicious, righteous and meritorious deeds done by king Janak in his lifetime have taken a personified form as Sita (his daughter), and likewise Lord Ram is an image of all the good, auspicious, meritorious and righteous deeds done by king Dasrath¹. (1)

No one has worshipped and pleased Lord Shiva more than have these two kings, nor has anyone else been rewarded more than them². (2)

Verily it is true and irrefutably certain that there has never been anyone anywhere in the world in the past who can be said to be as fortunate and privileged as these two kings, nor is there anyone in the present time, or would be in the future³. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Doha no. 325; and (b) Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 172; and (ii) Doha no. 173 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-7.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309 that says that the four sons of king Dasrath appeared like a personified form of the four rewards of Artha, Dharma, Kaam and Moksha that Dasrath has been rewarded with.

As regards Sita, it has been expressly stated in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas that Sita is the personified form of 'Yogmaya', the cosmic Shakti or dynamic powers of the Supreme Lord of creation, who has taken birth in the household of Janak. Refer: (i) Baal Kand, Canto 2, verse no. 28; (ii) Canto 4, verse no. 18; and (iii) Canto 6, verse nos. 58-70.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 294.]

हम सब सकल सुकृत कै रासी । भए जग जनमि जनकपुर बासी ॥ ४ ॥
 जिन्ह जानकी राम छबि देखी । को सुकृती हम सरिस बिसेषी ॥ ५ ॥
 पुनि देखब रघुबीर बिआहू । लेब भली बिधि लोचन लाहू ॥ ६ ॥

hama saba sakala sukr̥ta kai rāsī. bha'ē jaga janami janakapura bāsī. 4.
 jinha jānakī rāma chabi dēkhī. kō sukr̥tī hama sarisa bisēṣī. 5.
 puni dēkhaba raghubīra bi'āhū. lēba bhalī bidhi lōcana lāhū. 6.

The citizens of Janakpur consider themselves very fortunate and privileged themselves (like their king Janak, as well as king Dasrath of Ayodhya). They thanked their good luck and affirmed—‘We, the citizens of Janakpur, are like a treasury of accumulated good and meritorious deeds because we have been fortunate to take birth as citizens of Janakpur. [It is due to this good fortune that we have been able to enjoy these happy moments in our lives.] (4)

Say, who else is more fortunate and privileged in this world than us who have seen with our eyes the magnificent and divine image of Janki (Sita) and Lord Ram. (5)

We will get the full benefit of having our eye-sights when we would be personally witnessing and enjoying the happy and auspicious event of the marriage of the divine couple, Lord Ram and Sita.’ (6)

[Note—The citizens were thoroughly enjoying themselves, considered themselves very fortunate, and enthusiastically looked forward for the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita. They were of a unanimous view that no one is as lucky as them in this world that day.

They thanked their good luck and felt highly elated, saying—‘There are countless kingdoms and millions of citizens living in them, but none of them have this reward today, none have this privilege today of participating in the rarest of rare event when the personified form of the Supreme Lord of this world is getting united with his divine Shakti in the form of Sita. So we regard ourselves especially blessed and fortunate in every respect. Our eyes have enabled us to see the divine image of Lord Ram and Sita, and also would enable us to watch their marriage soon. What more or greater reward can one expect by way of having eyesight?

At present we have been able to have only fleeting instances when we were able to see the divine image of Lord Ram and Sita. We have seen them separately—we have seen Lord Ram when he came to visit the city along with his brother Laxman upon their arrival at Janakpur, and we have seen Sita only a few times when she stepped out of the palace. Then we had seen them at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony, but it was a somber occasion when there was a lot of uncertainty and tension in the air.

The only time we saw Lord Ram and Sita together was when she had gone to put the victory garland on Lord Ram after he had broken the bow and sealed his marriage with her. But this magnificent sight was short-lived because an angry sage Parashuram had arrived and created a ruckus. Our enjoyments were cut short. We also could not thoroughly enjoy ourselves because we had to watch the couple from our viewers’ gallery in the arena, and we could not come close and interact with them.

The situation would be different during the marriage ceremony when there would be an informal atmosphere marked by merry-making, festivities, celebrations and bonhomie when there would be no barriers of formalities and artificial distances created by social hierarchy. There would be close interactions and an informal atmosphere that would enable us to get up close to Lord Ram and Sita on one pretext or the other, such as to bless them ourselves on this auspicious occasion, and seek their blessings in return.’]

कहहिं परसपर कोकिलबयनीं । एहि बिआहँ बड़ लाभु सुनयनीं ॥ ७ ॥

बड़ें भाग बिधि बात बनाई । नयन अतिथि होइहहिं दोउ भाई ॥ ८ ॥

kahahim parasapara kōkilabayanīm. ēhi bi'āham̃ bara lābhu sunayanīm. 7.
barēm bhāga bidhi bāta banāī. nayana atithi hō'ihahim dō'u bhāī. 8.

Ladies with beautiful eyes (sunayanīm) and voices as sweet as that of the cuckoo (kōkilabayanīm) collected together in groups and said to each other: ‘Oh Friend! This marriage (of Lord Ram and Sita) is a harbinger of good fortunes that would bring great rewards to us¹.*

[*This verse can be read as follows too: “Ladies who had voices as sweet as the cuckoo (kōkilabayanīm) spoke to each other—‘Oh beautiful-eyed friends (sunayanīm)! There is great benefit and a huge reward for us in this marriage of Lord Ram with Sita.”] (7)

The Creator has been very gracious and magnanimous upon us that he has turned the events in such a way that we have been able to have the two brothers as guests of our eyes.

[To wit, we will be able to invite them and serve them in the best way we can in a symbolic way by watching them closely and intensely, and to the full satisfaction of our hearts and minds. The two brothers are the honoured guests of our kingdom, and while our king Janak is doing his own very best to serve them externally in physical terms, we can do our bit by serving them subtly in a symbolic manner in our hearts.] (8)

[Note—¹What is the reward or benefit that the ladies are speaking of here? Well, the answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223 wherein the ladies of Janakpur have expressed their heart-felt desire to see Lord Ram as a groom of Sita so that they will have repeated opportunity to see their Lord again and again in their lives for the simple reason that then he would be paying visits to the city as it would be his in-law’s place in future.

On the other hand, if Sita is married to someone else then the two brothers would go away to their kingdom at the end of the bow-breaking ceremony like the rest of the invited guests, and the ladies would never have a chance to see and interact with the Lord anytime again in their lives.]

दो०. बारहिं बार सनेह बस जनक बोलाउब सीय ।

लेन आइहहिं बंधु दोउ कोटि काम कमनीय ॥ ३१० ॥

dōhā.

bārahim bāra sanēha basa janaka bōlā'uba siya.

lēna ā'ihahim bandhu dō'u kōṭi kāma kamanīya. 310.

The ladies were submerged in a pleasant reverie, dreaming that king Janak would repeatedly call Sita back (because he would be overwhelmed by affection and grief of separation from her at the time of the departure of the marriage party for Ayodhya, accompanied by the newly wed couple, Lord Ram and Sita), and each time the two

brothers (Lord Ram and Laxman) would come back to request him to let Sita go with them. (Doha no. 310)

[Note—The charmed ladies were imagining that they would be able to see Lord Ram and Laxman again and again at the time of their departure for Ayodhya at the end of the marriage celebrations because Janak would be so overwhelmed with love and affection that he would be repeatedly calling Sita back to meet her one last time, and would like to spend as much last minutes with her as he possibly could do, forcing Lord Ram and Laxman to come back and asking the king to let Sita go as it was getting late for departure, and they have a long journey to cover on their way back to their kingdom of Ayodhya.

In the process, the ladies who were overwhelmed with affection for the Lord, closed their eyes and dreamt that they would have one extra and additional opportunity to see their beloved Lord for one last time more.]

चौ०. बिबिध भाँति होइहि पहुनाई । प्रिय न काहि अस सासुर माई ॥ १ ॥

तब तब राम लखनहि निहारी । होइहहिं सब पुर लोग सुखारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bibidha bhāmṭi hō'ihī pahunāī. priya na kāhi asa sāsura māī. 1.

taba taba rāma lakhanahi nihārī. hō'ihahim̄ saba pura lōga sukhārī. 2.

[The ladies of the city of Janakpur, overwhelmed with affection for Lord Ram and Laxman, were elated at the possibility of having an extended opportunity to interact with the two brothers when they would willingly like to stay longer at Janakpur than is customary for a groom's party so as to enjoy the elaborate, extensive and cordial hospitality that would be shown to them by the bride's side. They discussed this possibility and its rewards amongst themselves as follows—]

‘The groom and his marriage party would be shown elaborate hospitality of every imaginable kind by the hosts, the bride's side. Say, who would not like this pampering; who would not like to have such a caring, doting and affectionate father-in-law and mother-in-law?’¹ (1)

On all such occasions (when Lord Ram would seek Janak's permission to go back to Ayodhya, and would be lovingly requested by Janak to postpone the departure for some more days), all the citizens of Janakpur would feel very happy and delighted to see Lord Ram and Laxman². (2)

[Note—¹In other words, king Janak and his queen Sunayana would shower their love and affection upon their son-in-law Lord Ram so much that the latter would feel pampered and spoilt by their attention and care. The Lord would feel that they love him more than his own father, king Dasrath so much so that he (Lord Ram) would prefer to stay as long as it is practically possible at Janakpur so as to enjoy this privileged treatment and honour as much as he can. The result would be that he would be in no hurry to return to Ayodhya, thereby giving the citizens of Janakpur more time to spend in his august company.

²Lord Ram and Laxman and the rest of the marriage party would have prepared themselves to start on their journey back to Ayodhya. They would have assembled at a public place before their departure, and the two brothers would go to Janak to say good-bye to him and seek his blessings. As this news would spread in the city, all the people would hurry out and come to have a last glimpse of the Lord, before his departure. They would be craning their necks and jostling with each other to have a close-up view of the two brothers, and if possible have a brief chat with him to bid him farewell.

But then they imagined that the king (Janak) would not give Lord Ram permission to leave, but would rather politely and most pleadingly ask him to stay for some more time so that the desire of his heart to extend more of his love for the Lord can be realized. The merciful and compassionate Lord Ram would have no choice but to accept the king's request, and would return to his place of lodging, postponing his departure for some more days.

This cycle would be repeated again and again: the Lord seeking permission from Janak to leave, and Janak asking him to stay for some more days. Lord Ram would personally be very happy to find an excuse to stay as long as possible at Janakpur because of the warmth of hospitality and the intensity of affability and cordiality shown by Janak and the rest of the citizens to him. Janak's request would be the perfect excuse for Ram to keep on postponing his departure from Janakpur.

This is what the ladies, and for that matter everyone else in Janakpur were hoping for as is evident in these verses.]

सखि जस राम लखन कर जोटा । तैसेइ भूप संग दुइ ढोटा ॥ ३ ॥
स्याम गौर सब अंग सुहाए । ते सब कहहिं देखि जे आए ॥ ४ ॥

sakhi jasa rāma lakhana kara jōṭā. taisē'i bhūpa saṅga du'i ḍhōṭā. 3.
syāma gaura saba aṅga suhā'ē. tē saba kahahim dēkhi jē ā'ē. 4.

Oh friend! King Dasrath is accompanied by two other sons (Bharat and Shatrughan) who are exactly like Lord Ram and Laxman. (3)

Those who have gone to see them (a reference to the delegation sent by Janak to welcome the marriage party when it arrived on the outskirts of the city, as well as the huge crowd of citizens who had rushed to have a first-hand glimpse of the party as it entered the city with full royal regalia and proceeded towards the place designated for their stay at Janakpur) have come back and reported that these two sons are of dark and fair complexion respectively, and have a physique and personality that are charming and attractive in all possible manner¹. (4)

[Note—¹The same observation was made by these citizens for Lord Ram and Laxman earlier—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 220, and Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 221.]

कहा एक मैं आजु निहारे । जनु बिरंचि निज हाथ सँवारे ॥ ५ ॥
भरतु रामही की अनुहारी । सहसा लखि न सकहिं नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

लखनु सत्रुसूदनु एकरूपा । नख सिख ते सब अंग अनूपा ॥ ७ ॥
मन भावहिं मुख बरनि न जाहीं । उपमा कहूँ त्रिभुवन कोउ नाहीं ॥ ८ ॥

kahā ēka maim āju nihārē. janu biran̄ci nija hātha sam̄vārē. 5.
bharatu rāmahī kī anuhārī. sahasā lakhi na sakahim̄ nara nārī. 6.
lakhanu satrusūdanu ēkarūpā. nakha sikha tē saba aṅga anūpā. 7.
mana bhāvahim̄ mukha barani na jāhīm̄. upamā kahum̄ tribhuvana kō'u
nāhīm̄. 8.

While the enthused ladies were having this lively discussion, one of them said—‘I have seen them personally today. Surely it appears that the Creator known as ‘Vidhi’ has moulded them personally with his own hands.

[That is, the Creator took special interest and care to mould their bodies and inject exceptional charm and beauty in them. He did not create them in a run-of-mill routine sort of way, but took pains to use all his craftsmanship to give shape to their handsome personality and charming physique because the Creator wished to use them as a sample case to exhibit his expertise and skills as the supreme Craftsman.] (5)

Bharat is an exact replica of Lord Ram so much so that no man or woman would easily be able to distinguish between the two. (6)

Similarly, Laxman and Shatrughan (also known as Shatrusudan) are exactly like each other to look at.

All the four have perfectly charming physique, right from the tip of their toes up to the top of their heads¹. (7)

The four brothers are so exceptionally attractive and charming to behold that though one’s Mana (the heart and the mind) is enthralled and captivated by their view, it is not possible for one to describe them in words (because the words have their own limitations and they cannot do justice to the magnificence of the sight that one beholds before him).

Verily it can be said with surety that there is no one in the entire world known as ‘Tribhuvan’ (i.e. the world consisting of three levels or dimensions of existence)² with whom any comparison, even a remotest one, can be made or even imagined with these four brothers. (8)

[Note—¹How pleasant is the personalities of all the four brothers who form two pairs resembling each other in every fine manner is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

²The ‘Tribhuvan’ refers to the entire stretch of the living hospitable world. It consists of the heaven where the exalted gods live, the earth where ordinary creatures live, and the nether world where lower levels of life exist. It also refers to the past, the present and the future.]

छं०. उपमा न कोउ कह दास तुलसी कतहुँ कबि कोबिद कहैं । १ ।
बल बिनय बिद्या सील सोभा सिंधु इन्ह से एइ अहैं ॥ २ ॥

पुर नारि सकल पसारि अंचल बिधिहि बचन सुनावहीं । ३ ।
व्याहिअहुँ चारिउ भाइ एहिं पुर हम सुमंगल गावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

upamā na kō'u kaha dāsa tulasī katahum' kabi kōbida kahair̄m. 1.
bala binaya bidyā sīla sōbhā sindhu inha sē ē'i ahair̄m. 2.
pura nāri sakala pasāri aṅcala bidhihi bacana sunāvahīr̄m. 3.
byāhi'ahum' cāri'u bhā'i ēhir̄m pura hama sumaṅgala gāvahīr̄m. 4.

Poet Tulsidas (the narrator of this epic Ram Charit Manas), who is a humble servant of Lord Ram, asserts that even expert poets and wise men declare that there is no one with whom the four brothers can be ever compared.

All the virtues and qualities that they possess, such as strength and valour, politeness and etiquette, knowledge, skills and wisdom, courteousness and good manners, as well as beauty and charm, are unique and exclusive to them. They cannot be compared with anyone else with respect to this glorious virtues and qualities. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

All the women-folk of Janakpur spread out their garments before the Creator (just like a beggar would extend his hands and begging bowl to seek alms from a magnanimous donor) and pray to him most earnestly with these words—‘Oh dear Creator (Vidhi)! Let the four brothers be married here in Janakpur so that we can have a rare opportunity to sing auspicious songs to celebrate the event.’¹ (Chanda nos. 3-4)

[Note--1Till this point of time when the party had arrived from Ayodhya, the women-folk of Janakpur had seen only Lord Ram and Laxman. So they had prayed to the Creator that Lord Ram should marry Sita and become a royal groom of Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

But now that they have seen all the four noble princes, they long to see all of them married at Janakpur to the four princesses of the kingdom.

It will be pertinent to note here that their love for the Lord was so real and honest that the Creator could not defy their prayers and longings because finally it so happened that this wish of the citizens was granted—i.e. all the four brothers were indeed married to four princesses of Janakpur, viz. Sita and her sister who were daughters of king Janak, and her two cousins who were daughters of her uncle, the younger brother of Janak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 325.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 19.]

सो०. कहहिं परस्पर नारि बारि बिलोचन पुलक तन ।
सखि सबु करब पुरारि पुन्य पयोनिधि भूप दोउ ॥ ३११ ॥

sōraṭhā.

kahair̄m paraspara nāri bāri bilōcana pulaka tana.
sakhi sabu karaba purāri pun'ya payōnidhi bhūpa dō'u. 311.

Tears of affection welled-up in the eyes of all the ladies, and their bodies were thrilled. They reassured each other, saying—‘Oh friend, have courage and faith. Purari (Lord Shiva) will fulfill our wishes¹, because both the kings (Dasrath and Janak, the fathers of Lord Ram and Sita respectively) are like deep oceans of meritorious deeds (and their natural blessings, or the good fortunes that accompany such deeds)².’ (Sortha/Doha no. 311)

[Note—Refer also to Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 19.

¹Lord Shiva was the patron deity of both the kingdoms, Ayodhya as well as Janakpur. Lord Ram has clearly stated the importance and paramount nature of Lord Shiva while consecrating the Shiva Lingam (an image of Shiva) before he launched his campaign to liberate Sita from the clutches of the demon king of Lanka, Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, from Chaupai no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3.

Further, after returning from his forest exile and assuming the crown of Ayodhya, Lord Ram had established millions (i.e. countless) of Shiva Lingams throughout the kingdom. This fact is specifically mentioned in ‘Adhyatma Ramayan’ of sage Veda Vyas, Uttar Kand, Canto 4, verse no. 27, line no. 1.

As for king Janak, the very fact that Lord Shiva had chosen his ancestors for the safekeeping of his bow which was duly worshipped by the royal family of Janakpur ever since then, and then allowing it to be got broken and not getting angry or feeling insulted by this otherwise despicable act so that Janak’s daughter Sita could be married to Lord Ram are sufficient evidences of the Lord’s grace upon the kingdom of Janakpur and its blessed king Janak. Refer: (a) Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse no. 16, 69-79; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250; as well as Chaupai line nos. 6-8 and the following Chanda that precede Doha no. 261.

Now therefore, Lord Shiva would not want to do anything which would go against the wishes of these two noble kings, even if such fulfillment may not look too convenient for other devotees of Lord Shiva and they may take it as an affront to their worshipped deity, Lord Shiva, as is evident when sage Parashuram, an ardent devotee of the Lord, became extremely angry and wanted to punish Lord Ram for breaking the bow of his revered Lord, Shiva. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 269—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285; and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 293.

²Since both the kings have led a life of righteousness and auspiciousness, it is certain that Lord Shiva would fulfill their wishes. Obviously for Dasrath it would be to see all his four sons married as soon as possible as any father would naturally want, and what better chance would he get than to see them married with the princesses of Janakpur because this kingdom is as renowned, well-established and prosperous as his own kingdom of Ayodhya. Besides this fact, the princesses of this kingdom are of extreme beauty and of the right marriageable age to suit his four sons.

The two kings being ‘like an ocean of good deeds and its attendant blessings’ is a metaphoric way of stressing that like the ocean being a fathomless reservoir of water, the good and meritorious deeds of these two kings were also countless and so were the good affects of these deeds.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि सकल मनोरथ करहीं । आनँद उमगि उमगि उर भरहीं ॥ १ ॥
 जे नृप सीय स्वयंबर आए । देखि बंधु सब तिन्ह सुख पाए ॥ २ ॥
 कहत राम जसु बिसद बिसाला । निज निज भवन गए महिपाला ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi sakala manōratha karahīm. ānam̐da umagi umagi ura bharahīm. 1.
 jē nṛpa sīya svayambara ā'ē. dēkhi bandhu saba tinha sukha pā'ē. 2.
 kahata rāma jasu bisada bisālā. nija nija bhavana ga'ē mahipālā. 3.

In this way, all the women-folk prayed to the Lord for fulfillment of their hearts' inner-most desires. This thought and the hope of its certain realization overwhelmed them and inundated their heart and inner-being¹. (1)

All those kings who had come to attend Sita's 'Swayambar' (i.e. the competition of breaking of the bow that was organized to decide who would marry her) felt joyful and happy² to see the brothers. [Here the term 'brothers' means all the four of them—viz. Lord Ram and his three younger siblings, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.] (2)

Talking about the stupendous glory and achievement of Lord Ram (with reference to the formidable feat of the breaking of Shiva's bow and overcoming the wrath of sage Parashuram), and singing his praises all the while, all the kings went back to their respective kingdoms. (3)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255.

These above cited instances are clear indications of how intense were the desire of all the citizens of Janakpur, not only the women but the men as well, that Lord Ram should marry Sita at any cost, and for this all of them prayed to Lord Shiva and his divine consort Parvati.

²These kings were the good ones, those who had refrained from participating in the competition of breaking the bow. They had realized that Lord Ram was of the right age for the would-be bride, and that they themselves were much older than her and therefore unsuitable to marry her. Besides this, they had observed that a divine halo exuded from the Lord, and that he had the blessings and patronage of a renowned sage Vishwamitra with whom the two brothers had come to Janakpur. Then they had also observed how special treatment was given to them by their host, king Janak. So in short they had wisely and prudently decided to stay away from trying to break the bow, and had instead attempted to dissuade other kings to follow their example. In the event as it happened, the greedy and haughty kings didn't listen to their advice and got humiliated in the process because none of them was able to as much as move the bow even an inch.

These failed kings then tried to create a ruckus and revolted, even preparing to stage a bloody showdown (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 266). But when angry sage Parashuram intervened to seek retribution for the purported insult of Lord Shiva by breaking of the bow but was

finally pacified by Lord Ram, these coward kings quietly slid away from the venue and left Janakpur to save their face, prestige and dignity (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285).

Therefore, those amongst the invited kings who had refrained from attempting to break the bow had no fear of suffering loss of prestige and honour, so they stayed back as guests of king Janak. Since they had no personal friendship with the kingdom of Ayodhya and its king Dasrath, once the latter arrived they felt it prudent now to leave and go back to their own kingdoms.

Another reason for their decision to return home was that now all the attention of king Janak was diverted to attend and look after the marriage party, and these kings did not wish to give an impression of being a burden on Janak by overstaying beyond a reasonable time. That would be impolite and un-royal behaviour. Overstaying guests are not regarded with great respect, and beyond a certain time they become unwelcome and irritating even in modern days. So these wise and noble kings did not want to embarrass Janak, and left on their own accord.]

गए बीति कछु दिन एहि भाँती । प्रमुदित पुरजन सकल बराती ॥ ४ ॥
मंगल मूल लगन दिनु आवा । हिम रितु अगहनु मासु सुहावा ॥ ५ ॥

ga'ē bīti kachu dina ēhi bhām̐tī. pramudita purajana sakala barātī. 4.
maṅgala mūla lagana dinu āvā. hima ritu agahanu māsu suhāvā. 5.

Some pleasant days passed in this way when both the members of the bridegroom's party as well as the citizens of Janakpur thoroughly enjoyed themselves and felt merry¹. (4)

Finally, the auspicious day arrived when the wedding was to be solemnized. It was in the pleasant month of 'Agahan' (which is the ninth month according to the Hindu calendar, and is also known as 'Maarga-shirsha', corresponding to the English month of December), the month that marks the beginning of the cold (winter) season. (5)

[Note—¹The marriage party had arrived a number of days in advance of the day fixed for the marriage ceremony (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 309 and its accompanying note). So there was ample time for merriment and enjoyment. When one is happy and enjoying one's self, time seems to fly away and one does not seem to be bothered about the nitty-gritty of humdrum life.

A similar situation had prevailed at the time of the birth of Lord Ram and his brothers (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 197.)

Again, it is stated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 280 that the citizens of Ayodhya who had accompanied Bharat to Chitrakoot in an attempt to bring Lord Ram back from the forest had so thoroughly enjoyed their stay there that time flew away for them so fast that even a long time equivalent to seven Yugs (celestial eras of time) seemed to be as small as a minute.

Another instance is found in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 15 wherein it is described how the monkeys who had come to Ayodhya with Lord Ram when he returned to his capital after victory at Lanka were so thoroughly enjoying their time there that six months passed by and they did not realize that the days were

passing away. For them, this long period of time seemed as if it was merely a single day.]

ग्रह तिथि नखतु जोगु बर बारू । लगन सोधि बिधि कीन्ह बिचारू ॥ ६ ॥
पठै दीन्हि नारद सन सोई । गनी जनक के गनकन्ह जोई ॥ ७ ॥
सुनी सकल लोगन्ह यह बाता । कहहिं जोतिषी आहिं बिधाता ॥ ८ ॥

graha tithi nakhatu jōgu bara bārū. lagana sōdhi bidhi kīnha bicārū. 6.
paṭhai dīnhi nārada sana sōī. ganī janaka kē ganakanha jōī. 7.
sunī sakala lōganha yaha bātā. kahahim jōtiṣī āhim bidhātā. 8.

The Creator researched carefully and determined the most auspicious time and date when all the planets, asterisms, signs of the zodiac, and the constellation of stars and their individual members would be best placed and occupied the most beneficial place in the horoscope. (6)

Then the Creator sent sage Narad (his son and a famed celestial sage who had free access to heaven and earth) as his messenger who carried this message to Janak, who in his turn got it read and deciphered by his court astrologers and other wise men of the kingdom¹. (7)

When the people heard of this news (that the time and date of the marriage ceremony was decided by none else but the Creator himself, they marveled at it and exclaimed in astonishment—‘Say, the Creator has assumed the role of an astrologer!’²) (8)

[Note—¹The horoscope is in a coded form, and professional experts are needed to decode it and read the hidden message in it. Hence, the month of ‘Agahan’ and the actual time and day of the ceremonies and rituals were decided by the royal astrologers and horoscope readers of Janakpur.

²The people rejoiced at the prospect that not only their wishes to see Lord Ram happily marrying Sita would be fulfilled now but that the couple will lead a happy married life because the time and date has been determined by the Creator himself. Since the Creator determines the destiny of all living beings, if he has selected a particular time and date for the union of Lord Ram and Sita, then no power of earth can ever disrupt it or cause any harm to this bond.

The next Doha no. 312 tells us about the exact time selected by the Creator for the performance of wedding rituals.]

दो०. धेनुधूरि बेला बिमल सकल सुमंगल मूल ।
बिप्रन्ह कहेउ बिदेह सन जानि सगुन अनुकूल ॥ ३१२ ॥

dōhā.

dhēnudhūri bēlā bimala sakala sumaṅgala mūla.
bipranha kahē'u bidēha sana jāni saguna anukūla. 312.

When the designated most auspicious hour arrived, the time of the evening that is just before sunset when cows return after grazing in the field and a lot of dust is raised from their hooves, the learned Brahmins realized that the moment has come, and so they said to Janak (as narrated below in the following verses). (Doha no. 312)

[Note—All preparations were ready; they were just waiting for the correct arrangement of stars and planets. The time was deciphered after reading the chart sent by the Creator through sage Narad (pronounced Naarad) as narrated above in Chaupai line nos. 6-7.]

चौ०. उपरोहितहि कहेउ नरनाहा । अब बिलंब कर कारनु काहा ॥ १ ॥
सतानंद तब सचिव बोलाए । मंगल सकल साजि सब ल्याए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

uparōhitahi kahē'u naranāhā. aba bilamba kara kāranu kāhā. 1.
satānanda taba saciva bōlā'ē. maṅgala sakala sāji saba lyā'ē. 2.

The king (Janak) asked his royal priest (Satanand), 'Say, what is the cause of delay now? [That is, why are you wasting time and not going ahead with the wedding rituals though the auspicious time determined for the ceremony has arrived? So, please start the process immediately.]' (1)

Hearing these instructions of the king, Satanand immediately summoned the senior ministers of the royal court who arrived with all the auspicious paraphernalia needed for the wedding rituals and their accompanying ceremonies¹. (2)

[Note—¹What were these paraphernalia and how were they brought to the platform where the marriage ritual was to be performed? The answer is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 which we shall be reading below soon.]

संख निसान पनव बहु बाजे । मंगल कलस सगुन सुभ साजे ॥ ३ ॥
सुभग सुआसिनि गावहिं गीता । करहिं बेद धुनि बिप्र पुनीता ॥ ४ ॥

saṅkha nisāna panava bahu bājē. maṅgala kalasa saguna subha sājē. 3.
subhaga su'āsini gāvahiṁ gītā. karahiṁ bēda dhuni bipra punitā. 4.

As soon as it was known that the process of the wedding has been initiated, there was a spontaneous sounding of conches, drums and tabors¹. Accompanying them were displayed auspicious things such as pitchers (that are usually filled with curd or water from some holy river, and the mouth is covered with leaves of the mango tree on which is placed a coconut) and other articles that symbolise good omen². (3)

(Accompanying the playing of the musical instruments were the) Graceful women (whose husbands were alive; those who were not widows) sang melodious songs,

while the learned Vipras (Brahmins) chanted the holy sacred hymns from the Vedas (the ancient scriptures)³. (4)

[Note—¹Whenever there was some good news, musical instruments were played and the conch was blown. In olden days when there were no radio and television, the loud sound of these musical instruments sort of alerted the citizens of the city that some good tidings had arrived, and it is time to celebrate and rejoice. Hearing these sounds, the people used to rush out of their homes and work-places to enquire about the reason why the musical instruments were played, and then the celebrations began. Similarly, when the city was attacked by an intruder or an enemy's army, the bugle was sounded to alert the people.

This sounding of the bugle and playing of musical instruments was spontaneous and done on the spur of the moment as the good news arrived. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 193 when king Dasrath has ordered that musical instruments be played as soon as he learnt that he has been blessed by four sons.

Again we see the same thing happening on other occasions as well. For instance, (i) When the news arrived in Ayodhya that Lord Ram was to be married with Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 296; (ii) When Lord Ram had broken the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (iii) When Sita had put the victory garland around Lord Ram's neck—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 264.

²Earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304 that lists the auspicious and good omens which appeared when Lord Ram's marriage party departed from Ayodhya for Janakpur.

³Refer similar events of singing and chanting of the hymns of the Vedas that occurred earlier in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4, 6 that precede Doha no. 194, and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 195 when Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 265 when Lord Ram had broken the bow and Sita had put the victory garland on him; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 297, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 301, as well as Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 297 when the good tidings of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita arrived at Ayodhya.]

लेन चले सादर एहि भाँती । गएँ जहाँ जनवास बराती ॥ ५ ॥
कोसलपति कर देखि समाजू । अति लघु लाग तिन्हहि सुरराजू ॥ ६ ॥

lēna calē sādara ēhi bhāmṭī. ga'ē jahām' janavāsa barātī. 5.
kōsalapati kara dēkhi samājū. ati laghu lāga tinhahi surarājū. 6.

In this way (i.e. accompanied by auspicious things such as the pitcher filled with curd or water besides other items of good omen, singing ladies, playing musical instruments, and Brahmins chanting sacred hymns from the Vedas), he (Satanand)

along with other senior ministers of the royal court proceeded towards the place where the groom's party had been lodged. (5)

When he and others saw the majesty, the pomp, the grandeur and the magnificence of the king of Kaushal (i.e. king Dasrath) and his entourage, they felt that the royal court of the king of gods (Indra) would pale into insignificance when compared to the splendour of the court of Dasrath¹. (6)

[Note—¹A similar comparison is made elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance: (i) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 289 which describes the majesty of Janakpur; (ii) Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 319 which describes the majesty of king Dasrath as compared to the majesty of Indra and other custodians of the world; and (iii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 324 which describes the majesty of the kingdom of Ayodhya as compared to the kingdom of heaven.]

भयउ समउ अब धारिअ पाऊ । यह सुनि परा निसानहिं घाऊ ॥ ७ ॥
गुरहि पूछि करि कुल बिधि राजा । चले संग मुनि साधु समाजा ॥ ८ ॥

bhaya'u sama'u aba dhāri'a pā'ū. yaha suni parā nisānahim ghā'ū. 7.
gurahi pūchi kari kula bidhi rājā. calē saṅga muni sādhu samājā. 8.

All the members of the delegation led by Satanand, who were sent by king Janak to request king Dasrath to come to the venue of the marriage ceremony so that the rituals can started, submitted before the king, 'Oh respected King! The auspicious time has arrived, so please be kind to come forward and step into the venue where the marriage rituals are to be performed.'

As soon as this request was heard by the groom's party, musical instruments such as the kettle-drum etc. were sounded thunderously, with a lot of enthusiasm. (7)

The king (Dasrath) consulted and sought permission from his Guru (sage Vasistha), and after completing the traditional family rites ordained for such occasions, he cheerfully proceeded towards the venue of the marriage ceremony together with his royal entourage as well as his Guru and a host of other holy men and sages¹. (8)

[Note—¹The king's royal entourage consisted of his ministers, commanders of his army, senior citizens of Ayodhya as well as his attendants, while his Guru who accompanied him was surrounded by other sages and holy men.

Whenever a great king moved out in public, this was the usual pattern of his royal procession. We observe it when king Janak had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra upon his arrival at Janakpur along with Lord Ram and Laxman: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

Refer also to Janki Mangal, verse nos. 127-128; and Chanda no. 16 that follow these two verses.]

दो०. भाग्य बिभव अवधेस कर देखि देव ब्रह्मादि ।

लगे सराहन सहस मुख जानि जनम निज बादि ॥ ३१३ ॥

dōhā.

bhāgya bibhava avadhēsa kara dēkhi dēva brahmādi.
lagē sarāhana sahasa mukha jāni janama nija bādi. 313.

When the gods led by the creator Brahma and others observed the great luck, the good fortune, the glory and the magnificence of the king of Ayodhya, they began to praise him and extol his virtues with a thousand mouths. They considered themselves unlucky and their birth as fruitless (because they had merely enjoyed the comforts of heaven but had not been blessed enough to have such a close interaction with the Supreme Being as king Dasrath has had when the Lord took birth in his household as his son known as 'Ram' with whom the king played like a father would with his son and had spent a lot of time showering his undivided love and affection upon the Lord, a privilege that was denied to even the greatest of gods). (Doha no. 313)

चौ०. सुरन्ह सुमंगल अवसरु जाना । बरषहिं सुमन बजाइ निसाना ॥ १ ॥
सिव ब्रह्मादिक बिबुध बरूथा । चढ़े बिमानन्हि नाना जूथा ॥ २ ॥
प्रेम पुलक तन हृदयँ उछाहू । चले बिलोकन राम बिआहू ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

suranha sumaṅgala avasaru jānā. baraṣahim sumana bajā'i nisānā. 1.
siva brahmādika bibudha barūthā. carḥē bimānanhi nānā jūthā. 2.
prēma pulaka tana hṛdayam̃ uchāhū. calē bilōkana rāma bi'āhū. 3.

The gods realised that it was a very auspicious occasion, and hence they celebrated it by raining flowers from the heaven and beating their musical drums¹. (1)

Lord Shiva, the creator Brahma, as well as a host of other exalted gods mounted their aerial vehicles and proceeded with great enthusiasm and delight, euphoric and thrilled in their bodies thrilled with excitement and exhilaration, to witness the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram². (2-3)

[Note—¹We note that this happens quite frequently whenever there is a happy occasion to celebrate and rejoice. Refer for instance the following verses of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand which tell us the occasions when the gods had showered flowers from the sky and played their musical instruments:—

(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 191; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 262; (iv) Doha no. 264; (v) Doha no. 285; (vi) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 302; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 306; (viii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (ix) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319; (x) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; (xi) Doha no. 324 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 7; (xii) Chanda no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²These great gods were aware who Lord Ram actually was. They knew very well that he was not an ordinary human prince, but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu as they

themselves had prayed to the Lord to assume a human form to get rid of the demons who had been tyrannically tormenting the earth and its inhabitants, and destroying Dharma. The Lord had then obliged them and had told them that he will take birth as Lord Ram in the household of king Dasrath. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 187. So, when they got an opportunity to participate in the Lord's wedding, they felt ecstatic and privileged.

We note here that Lord Shiva and Brahma are mentioned, but Lord Vishnu is conspicuous by his name not being mentioned. The answer is obvious—Lord Vishnu is in the form of Lord Ram whose marriage these gods are going to attend.

Their bodies were thrilled and exhilarated because it was a rare occasion and auspicious as well when one is able to witness the union of two cosmic forces of creation—i.e. the Supreme Being known as 'Brahm' in the form of Lord Ram, and the 'Shakti' or dynamic cosmic powers of Brahm in the form of Sita. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha no. 361.]

देखि जनकपुरु सुर अनुरागे । निज निज लोक सबहिं लघु लागे ॥ ४ ॥
चितवहिं चकित बिचित्र बिताना । रचना सकल अलौकिक नाना ॥ ५ ॥

dēkhi janakapuru sura anurāgē. nija nija lōka sabahim laghu lāgē. 4.
citavahim cakita bicitra bitānā. racanā sakala alaukika nānā. 5.

When the gods saw the majesty, magnificence and opulence of the city of Janakpur, all of them felt that their own cities in the kingdom of heaven literally paled into insignificance¹. (4)

Their looked in awe and were stunned at the strange and out-of-the-world beauty of the marriage pavilion. All the arrangements and paraphernalia they saw were exceptionally wonderful and fabulous². (5)

[Note—¹Janakpur was not an ordinary city; it was the place where the cosmic Shakti of the Supreme Being lived in a personified form as Sita. Besides this fact, king Janak was a highly enlightened and righteous king of his time, and if a king is noble then all the good fortunes and prosperity are ever eager to bless his kingdom and its subjects.

It ought to be noted here that when Lord Ram's marriage party had arrived from Ayodhya, Sita had instructed the 'Siddhis' (mystical powers that she possessed) to go and serve the guests in the best possible way. These Siddhis can provide anything one wishes, and when they got a chance to serve Lord Ram and Sita, they felt honoured. Hence they went out of their way to decorate and deck-up the city to make it more glamorous than the city of Indra, the king of gods. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307.

Earlier we have already read that when Lord Ram had seen the natural beauty and magnificence of Janakpur when he arrived there with sage Vishwamitra, he too felt very happy and delighted at its sight. If anything can please the Lord then obviously it has to be of an excellent quality. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 214.

²We shall read below that when Lord Shiva found that the gods were dazed at the stunning magnificence of Janakpur, he told them that they must understand that they have come to attend the union of the Supreme Lord whose name is so holy and powerful that by merely saying it a person can have access to anything he or she desires. So there is no miracle or wonder in the sight they are observing on earth in the form of the city of Janakpur. Refer: Doha no. 314 and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that follow it.

Once again we have read earlier that when Lord Ram had gone to visit the city of Janakpur for the purpose of sight-seeing, he was astonished at the beauty and layout of the arena where the bow-breaking ceremony was to be held. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 225. Well, if its magnificence surprised the Lord who is the Master of the entire creation, the Lord of Nature, the beauty and diversity of which are beyond description and measure, then there is no wonder that it awed the gods who have a limited reach as compared to the Supreme Being.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320 specifically mention the glamour and magnificence of the pavilion where the wedding rituals were to be held.]

नगर नारि नर रूप निधाना । सुघर सुधरम सुसील सुजाना ॥ ६ ॥
तिन्हि देखि सब सुर सुरनारीं । भए नखत जनु बिधु उजिआरीं ॥ ७ ॥
बिधिहि भयउ आचरजु बिसेषी । निज करनी कछु कतहुँ न देखी ॥ ८ ॥

nagara nāri nara rūpa nidhānā. sughara sudharama susīla sujānā. 6.
tinhabi dēkhi saba sura suranārīm. bha'ē nakhata janu bidhu ujī'ārīm. 7.
bidhihi bhaya'u ācaraju bisēṣī. nija karanī kachu katahum'na dēkhī. 8.

The citizens of the city of Janakpur, both the males as well as the females, were very handsome and attractive to look at as if they were like treasuries of physical beauty and glamour. They lived in auspicious homes, followed the right path of Dharma (righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct), were courteous, cultured, amiable and wise¹. (6)

When the gods and their consorts saw them and sub-consciously compared them with themselves, all of them felt subdued just like the stars are in the presence of the light of the sun². (7)

The Creator known as Vidhi was astonished to see such a wonderful and outlandish city of exceptional magnificence and beauty that he was dumbstruck. He did not see anything that could ever imagine he has created; he was astounded at the sight because what he beheld was beyond his imagination and creative capabilities³. (8)

[Note—¹As has been noted earlier in the comment appended to verse nos. 4-5 herein above, when their king, Janak, was of a high stature and so blessed that Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity and the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, had taken the form of Sita to become his daughter, nothing short of the best and the most excellent can be expected from either the city where Janak lived, or its residents.

We shall be shortly reading below that countless gods and goddesses had assumed human forms and joined the citizens of Janakpur to rejoice and take part in the celebrations. When these gods and goddesses assumed human forms then naturally their forms must have been most attractive and divine to behold. They had mingled with the rest of the inhabitants of the city so much so that it was impossible to distinguish between who were actually humans on the one hand, and who were gods and goddesses in human forms on the other hand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 and Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 318.

Not only Janakpur, even the city of Ayodhya was more divine than the city of gods in heaven so much so that the goddess of speech, goddess Saraswati, and the thousand hooded serpent known as Seshnath could not describe its beauty and magnificence. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 195.

²The stars pale into insignificance as soon as the light of the sun floods the sky. All their pride of being glittering gems in the night sky vanish in the presence of the sun's light. Likewise, these gods and their consorts had been pride that they possessed divine bodies that did not grow old, showed signs of aging or disease, were handsome and attractive to look at, wore magnificent clothes and ornaments as depicted in Hindu iconography, etc. But when they saw the citizens of Janakpur, their pride and vanity were crushed as they observed that these humans were more likable and glamorous than they.

³This verse shows that the city of Janakpur was so perfect to look at that the Creator was astounded because everything he had created had some or the other flaw; nothing that he created was either perfect or so stunningly beautiful.]

दो०. सिवँ समुझाए देव सब जनि आचरज भुलाहु ।
हृदयँ बिचारहु धीर धरि सिय रघुबीर बिआहु ॥ ३१४ ॥

dōhā.

sivam̐ samujhā'ē dēva saba jani ācaraja bhulāhu.
hr̥dayam̐ bicārahu dhīra dhari siya raghubīra bi'āhu. 314.

When Lord Shiva (who was the wisest amongst them all, and who knew the supreme Truth of Lord Ram as a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being) observed that the gods were in a state of dazed stupor, he advised them not to be astonished and get lost in wonderment. He told them to think deeply in their hearts, to contemplate and realize whose marriage they have come to attend. It was the divine union of Lord Ram (the personified form of the Supreme Being who is the Lord of creation) and Sita (the personified form of the Shakti of the Lord). So they must become calm and not lose a grip on their senses. (Doha no. 314)

[Note—Lord Shiva reminded the gods of the earlier events when they had approached him to advise where to find Lord Vishnu so that they can plead with the Lord to protect them against the cruelty and tyranny unleashed by the demons. Shiva had told them to pray to Lord Vishnu at the place they were standing, and there was no need to go search the Lord anywhere as he manifests himself anywhere the devotee earnestly

prays to him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 185 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The gods had prayed fervently to Lord Vishnu who revealed himself before them and promised that he will manifest himself as Lord Ram on this earth to fulfill their wishes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 186—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 187.

Hence, Lord Shiva wisely reminded the gods of this event and alerted them to be careful and not get lost in a mirage created by the Lord's Maya Shakti, the magical powers of the Lord to create illusions. Instead, they should understand the truth and rejoice that they are privileged to take part in this celebration.

The gods were deluded by the physical world they saw because their knowledge is very limited. But Lord Shiva is a wise god who is regarded as the most enlightened and realized one in the entire pantheon of gods. Shiva always remained submerged in doing meditation, and he is the Lord with 'three eyes'—the third eye symbolising knowledge of the subtlest truth and reality of creation, a knowledge that escapes others. Lord Shiva is the one who has realized the true nature of the 'Self', the Truth of creation. He knows that the true essence of Lord Ram is not his gross body as the prince of Ayodhya, but as the Holy Spirit who had assumed a divine body to give joy to the creatures of this mortal world by living amongst them as one of them. See the verses that follow herein below.

What to talk of the gods, even Shiva's own consort, Parvati, got so deluded when she saw Lord Ram that inspite of Shiva's warning not to doubt him she decided to test the divine nature of Lord Ram, and had to pay an immense price for her delusions. This incident is narrated in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 60.]

चौ०. जिन्ह कर नामु लेत जग माहीं । सकल अमंगल मूल नसाहीं ॥ १ ॥

करतल होहिं पदारथ चारी । तेइ सिय रामु कहेउ कामारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jinha kara nāmu lēta jaga māhīm. sakala amaṅgala mūla nasāhīm. 1.

karatala hōhīm padāratha cārī. tē'i siya rāmu kahē'u kāmārī. 2.

Lord Shiva told the stunned gods—'Listen, oh gods! He whose name is so powerful, holy and divine that its mere utterance is enough to eliminate all evil, misfortunes and inauspiciousness from their very roots in this world [1], and one is able to have within one's easy grasp the four traditional rewards or fruits that one is entitled to for all good conduct and leading an auspicious and righteous life¹--verily, it is that supreme Lord whom you are all seeing in the form of Sri Ram, and Sita is the personified form of the divine Shakti (cosmic powers and authority) of that Lord [2].

[Hence, don't be surprised at or perplexed with what you behold and witness. This is not an ordinary prince or princess whose marriage you all have come to attend, rather it is a rarest of rare opportunity for all of us to be a part of this auspicious gathering and be witnessing the union of the Holy Lord with his cosmic Shakti. It's a phenomenon which we will not get another opportunity to witness again. So stop wondering and enjoy the moment, because your knowledge and understanding of this

endless creation is limited, and you cannot measure what is essentially measureless and beyond comprehension.] (1-2)

[Note—See a detailed note appended to Doha no. 314 herein above.

¹The four legendary rewards for meritorious life are the following—‘Artha’ or financial well-being, ‘Dharma’ or meritorious life, ‘Kaam’ or fulfilment of desires, and ‘Moksha’ or spiritual liberation and deliverance from this world consisting of an endless cycle of pain and miseries associated with birth and death.]

एहि बिधि संभु सुरन्ह समुझावा । पुनि आगें बर बसह चलावा ॥ ३ ॥
देवन्ह देखे दसरथु जाता । महामोद मन पुलकित गाता ॥ ४ ॥

ēhi bidhi sambhu suranha samujhāvā. puni āgēm bara basaha calāvā. 3.
dēvanha dēkhē dasarathu jātā. mahāmōda mana pulakita gātā. 4.

Lord Shiva advised the gods in the aforesaid manner and told them to abandon being sceptical or amazed, but rather make the best of this rare privilege that has come their way (by enjoying themselves and rejoicing).

Having done this, he moved his bull (i.e. his mount, named ‘Nandi’) ahead (so that he can move along with the bridegroom’s party that was slowly heading towards the venue of the wedding ceremonies). (3)

The gods saw king Dasrath going towards the palace of king Janak where the marriage was to be solemnised. His heart and mind were filled with euphoria, and his body was thrilled with ecstasy. (4)

साधु समाज संग महिदेवा । जनु तनु धरें करहिं सुख सेवा ॥ ५ ॥
सोहत साथ सुभग सुत चारी । जनु अपबरग सकल तनुधारी ॥ ६ ॥

sādhu samāja saṅga mahidēvā. janu tanu dharēm karahim sukha sēvā. 5.
sōhata sātha subhaga suta cārī. janu apabaraga sakala tanudhārī. 6.

He (Dasrath) was surrounded by sages and other holy men such as Brahmins etc. It appeared that all the joys and happiness that one expects in this world have personified themselves in their forms to serve (i.e. surround) the king. [In other words, since Brahmins and holy men represent all auspicious virtues in this world, their presence around Dasrath gave the impression that all the goodness that exists in this world have assembled to serve him because he was blessed enough to have the supreme Lord of creation as his dear son. This was a privilege and honour that no one else got in this creation.]¹ (5)

All the four sons were with Dasrath. They represented personified forms of spiritual bliss, beatitude and felicity that a soul yearns for.² (6)

[Note—¹We have already read how all the good omens and signs of good fortunes had collected together at the time of departure of Lord Ram's marriage party from Ayodhya. Refer: Ram Charit Mana, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304.

Refer also to Ram Charit Mana, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 302 which says that Dasrath alongside sage Vasistha, his royal priest, looked as majestic and grand as Indra, the king of gods, looked in the company of the guru of the gods known as Brihaspati (Jupiter).

²The four type of spiritual liberation that a creature's soul wishes to have are the following—Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya.

Salokya Mukti means to obtain the abode of the chosen deity which the worshipper worships.

Samipya Mukti means to reside close to the deity worshipped in its abode.

Sarupya Mukti means to attain a divine form which is similar to the deity worshipped.

Sayujya Mukti means to become one with the deity worshipped. In other words it means to merge oneself with the Lord God.

Any of these four types of Muktis give the creature's soul its much desired peace and bliss.]

मरकत कनक बरन बर जोरी । देखि सुरन्ह भै प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि रामहि बिलोकि हियँ हरषे । नृपहि सराहि सुमन तिन्ह बरषे ॥ ८ ॥

marakata kanaka barana bara jōrī. dēkhi suranha bhai prīti na thōrī. 7.
puni rāmahi bilōki hiyam̐ haraṣē. nr̥pahi sarāhi sumana tinha baraṣē. 8.

The affection that sprouted in (the heart of) the gods when they saw the two pairs of princes—one of the hue of emerald (i.e. dark-hued Lord Ram and his younger brother Bharat) and the other with the glow of gold (fair-complexioned Laxman and his younger brother Shatrughan)—was not of a small measure.

[In other words, the gods felt a huge wave of love and affection for the four forms of the Supreme Being that they beheld right in their front. The surge of love and affection was of an intense dimension, so deep and fathomless that it could not be measured; it was of 'no small measure'.] (7)

After watching all the four brothers, they looked at Lord Ram once again. And the Lord's divine sight filled them with delight and euphoria. They (the gods) praised the king (Dasrath) in glowing terms, and showered flowers (upon him).

[The gods looked at all the four brothers and were extremely pleased at this sight. But then they focused their attention on Lord Ram who was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the supreme Lord of creation. Lord Ram was the 'hero' of the occasion, and the cynosure of all eyes that were fixed on him. The Lord was so charming to behold that his form captivated the mind and the heart of the beholder.] (8)

दो०. राम रूपु नख सिख सुभग बारहिं बार निहारि ।

पुलक गात लोचन सजल उमा समेत पुरारि ॥ ३१५ ॥

dōhā.

rāma rūpu nakha sikha subhaga bārahim̄ bāra nihāri.
pulaka gāta lōcana sajala umā samēta purāri. 315.

When Lord Purari (Shiva) and his divine consort Uma watched the most enchanting and beauteous form of Lord Ram from head to foot, they were so charmed and enthralled with this image that they looked at it repeatedly with a thrilled body that was overcome with exhilaration and eyes that were filled with tears (of love, affection, devotion and attraction for the Lord).

[This is because they were not contented by looking at the Lord's most endearing form. So, even after seeing it so many times, they continued to look at it again and again repeatedly.] (Doha no. 315)

[Note—When king Manu and his wife Satrupa had done severe penance to get a divine vision of Lord Vishnu, and the Lord had finally revealed himself before them, the couple was awe-struck by the Lord's divine beauty and charm so much so that no matter how intently they looked at him, they did not find it enough and wished to continue to see the Lord for an infinite period of time. It is with this purpose in mind—that they can watch the Lord from up close, and as much as their heart and eyes wanted—that they requested him to become their son. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 148—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 150.

Another instance is in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 260 where Bharat tells Lord Ram that he has never been contented by looking at the divine form of the Lord.]

चौ०. केकि कंठ दुति स्यामल अंगा । तड़ित बिनिदक बसन सुरंगा ॥ १ ॥

ब्याह बिभूषन बिबिध बनाए । मंगल सब सब भाँति सुहाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kēki kaṅṭha duti syāmala aṅgā. taḍita binindaka basana suraṅgā. 1.
byāha bibhūṣana bibidha banā'ē. maṅgala saba saba bhāmṭi suhā'ē. 2.

[These four verses describe the stunning beauty of the image or form of Lord Ram as he headed towards the venue of the wedding ceremony to be solemnised in the palace of king Janak. This description should be compared with the one that describes the Lord's beautiful form at the time he came to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chuapai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243—to Chuapai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 244.]

Lord Ram's glowing complexion was of a radiant dark hue that resembled the glow of a peacock's neck¹, while the clothes that he wore were of different colours and dazzled like the brilliance of lightning². (1)

His entire body had been gracefully decorated with fabulous ornaments especially crafted in numerous designs and patterns especially for the occasion of the Lord's marriage, and all of them bore auspicious signs, were most pleasant and wonderful to look at. (2)

[Note—¹The peacock is enamoured of the rain-bearing clouds because as soon as this bird hears the distant rumbling of the approaching clouds, or sees them overhead in the sky, it becomes ecstatic and begins to dance. The complexion of Lord Ram's body is universally depicted in all the versions of the Ramayan as being 'blue or azure' like the colour of the sky. The basic philosophy behind this choice of colour is that Lord Ram is a personified form of 'Brahm', the all-pervading, all-encompassing, cosmic, invisible and attribute-less form of the Supreme Being. This form of Brahm that surrounds everything and permeates everywhere in this creation is best manifested in the form of the 'sky element' which is the subtlest of the five basic elements of creation. The other elements are air, fire, water and earth.

A true lover gets so submerged in the thoughts of his or her beloved that he or she becomes one with the latter—i.e. there remains no distinction between the lover and the beloved. This emotional state of affairs is metaphorically depicted by way of saying that they become alike in colour.

Here, the narrator of Lord Ram's divine story is none else but Lord Shiva himself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35. And it well established that Lord Shiva has a blue or purple tinged throat. This is why he is also known as 'Neel-Kantha', the Lord with a blue throat. Lord Shiva is a great admirer and devotee of Lord Ram, and therefore he, being the one who is narrating this divine story, has used the metaphor of the peacock's neck to indicate that when he (i.e. Lord Shiva) was watching Lord Ram at that moment, he (Shiva) was so lost in the huge waves of love and affection that heaved in his heart for his beloved Lord (Ram) that he could see no other colour but the one of his 'own self' being reflected in the complexion of Lord Ram.

²Usually Lord Ram is depicted as wearing a 'Pitambar' which is a long, yellow body-wrapping one-piece silk cloth that is worn by Lord Vishnu whose incarnation he was. But the last word used in this verse is 'Suranga', which means multiple colours that are auspicious and charming, but not necessarily yellow. This is justified because this is the occasion of the Lord's marriage, and a groom is decked up in all finery for this once-in-his-life-time occasion. The best of cloth and the best of combination of colours were used to make the garments and robes of Lord Ram for this most happy moment of his life. This will be clearly hinted in the next verse no. 2 that deals with the Lord's ornaments.]

सरद बिमल बिधु बदन सुहावन । नयन नवल राजीव लजावन ॥ ३ ॥

सकल अलौकिक सुंदरताई । कहि न जाइ मनहीं मन भाई ॥ ४ ॥

sarada bimala bidhu badanu suhāvana. nayana navala rājīva lajāvana. 3.
sakala alaukika sundaratā'ī. kahi na jā'i manahīm mana bhā'ī. 4.

His (Lord Ram's) countenance and appearance were as charming, enthralling and captivating in their charm, enthrallment and bewitching beauty as the full moon is in a cloudless night of autumn.

His eyes were of a pink hue that reminded one of a pair of fully blooming lotus flowers of this colour¹. (3)

Taken all-in-all, the Lord's glamorous form was so exceptionally magnificent and fabulous that it was simply incomparable and beyond description as if it was out of this world and had an heavenly dimension to it. It enchanted the Mana (mind and heart) of the beholder, but since the Mana lacked eyes to see and a mouth to speak about it, it felt unable to describe the astounding beauty and charm of the countenance and image of Lord Ram². (4)

[Note—¹When the sky is cloudless in autumn, the full disc of the moon appears the most beautiful as compared to other nights throughout the year. Hence, this analogy is used to stress that since this day was a very special day in the life of Lord Ram, as he was going to be married that day, his face glowed with a radiance that had a special splendour to it. It does not mean at all that the glory of the Lord's face dimmed on other occasions or days, but it is a poet's way of giving importance to a particular event in the Lord's life—which is the day of his marriage.

Meanwhile, the Lord's eyes are compared to a pink lotus which is regarded as the most healthy and attractive form of this flower.

²The eyes that beheld the Lord's beauty had no power to speak, and the mouth that could describe had no eyes, so none of them were fully equipped and competent to narrate what they saw or spoke about. Emotions of affection and love have their seat in the heart, while the mind controls all the sense organs and their conscious functions. Unfortunately, neither the heart nor the mind themselves have their own powers to see and speak, and the body of a living being has to depend upon the eye to see and the mouth to speak. The eye and the mouth are separate and independent units of the body like the heart and the mind. Hence, the 'Mana' (mind-heart complex) could not describe what it saw in terms of the fabulously magnificent view of the image of Lord Ram decked up in all finery as a groom heading to the venue of his wedding ceremony.]

बंधु मनोहर सोहहिं संग। जात नचावत चपल तुरंगा ॥ ५ ॥

राजकुअँर बर बाजि देखावहिं । बंस प्रसंसक बिरिद सुनावहिं ॥ ६ ॥

bandhu manōhara sōhahim saṅgā. jāta nacāvata capala turāṅgā. 5.

rājaku'amra bara bāji dēkhāvahim. bansa prasansaka birida sunāvahim. 6.

[The next four verses, i.e. nos. 5-8, describe the horses upon which the four brothers rode.]

The (four) brothers looked elegant as they moved ahead together on their agile steeds whom they made to dance lively and prance with sprightly steps. (5)

The other princes who were accompanying them (i.e. the many friends of Lord Ram who had come from Ayodhya and other kingdoms to participate in the Lord's

marriage function) also showed their respective well-groomed horses and their skills, while the royal bards who accompanied these princes recited verses in their honour, praising their respective families and their glories and achievements¹. (6)

[Note—¹Refer also: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249.]

जेहि तुरंग पर रामु बिराजे । गति बिलोकि खगनायकु लाजे ॥ ७ ॥
कहि न जाइ सब भाँति सुहावा । बाजि बेषु जनु काम बनावा ॥ ८ ॥

jēhi turaṅga para rāmu birājē. gati bilōki khaganāyaku lājē. 7.
kahi na jā'i saba bhāmṭi suhāvā. bāji bēṣu janu kāma banāvā. 8.

Even the king of birds, i.e. 'Garud', the Eagle who is regarded as a vehicle of Lord Vishnu, felt ashamed when he saw the speed and agility and nimbleness of the horse on which Lord Ram rode¹. (7)

The horse on which Lord Ram rode was so astonishingly wonderful and charming to behold that it is not possible to describe its beauty and magnificence. It looked as if Kamdeo, the god of beauty and charm, has himself assumed the form of a horse to serve the Lord personally². (8)

[Note—¹Traditionally Garud is regarded as the fastest creature in creation. Whenever Lord Vishnu wishes to go anywhere he summons Garud, and the latter takes the Lord to his desired destination in a fraction of a second. But when Garud watched the way the horse of Lord Ram moved with quick, sprightly and nimble steps that had a spring-action in them, his pride of being the fastest mover in this creation was crushed. Garud realized for once that it is the Lord who empowers him (Garud) to move with lightening speed, and this quality of moving with such phenomenally quick speed is not something over which Garud had any personal right as is proved now when the horse upon which Lord Ram was sitting was also able to move with equally quick steps like the ones for which Garud was so falsely proud of.]

²Lord Ram is a personified form of the Supreme Being, and thus he represents the best of everything, the best of qualities and virtues in this creation. This fact is clearly hinted in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 19.

'Beauty' is a word that symbolises the best things in this world, for its opposite word is 'ugly' that would stand for everything that is unworthy, unholy and bad. This being the case, it is naturally expected that the horse the Lord rode should also be a match for the beauty of the Lord; it should be the best of all the horses in creation. Since 'beauty' is used as a measurement for the good virtues of life, and since the god who personifies this quality in its physical form is Kamdeo, so the latter decided not to delegate this duty of beautifying the Lord's mount to anybody else but to do it himself. And hence he became a horse to serve Lord Ram.

Refer also to the Chanda that follows herein below.]

छं०. जनु बाजि बेषु बनाइ मनसिजु राम हित अति सोहई । १ ।
 आपनें बय बल रूप गुन गति सकल भुवन बिमोहई ॥ २ ॥
 जगमगत जीनु जराव जोति सुमोति मनि मानिक लगे । ३ ।
 किंकिनि ललाम लगामु ललित बिलोकि सुर नर मुनि ठगे ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

janu bāji bēṣu banā'i manasiju rāma hita ati sōhaī. 1.
 āpanēm baya bala rūpa guna gati sakala bhuvana bimōhaī. 2.
 jagamagata jīnu jarāva jōti sumōti mani mānika lagē. 3.
 kiṅkini lālāma lagāmu lalita bilōki sura nara muni ṭhagē. 4.

It appears that the god of beauty and charm (known as 'Kamdeo') has himself assumed the form of a steed in order to serve Lord Ram, and in the process acquire acclaim and honour for himself. (1)

In this physical form, he (Kamdeo as the horse) appears to enthrall and fascinate the entire world with his youthfulness, his strength and vigour, his astounding beauty and charm, and his excellent qualities and virtues as well as personality. (2)

The horse's saddle is bejeweled and glittering with the illumination emanating from the pearls, the precious gems and the rubies that are embedded on all its sides. (3)

The magnificent bridle is adorned with small tinkling bells, and it looks so fabulous that the exalted gods, the ordinary men and the great sages who saw it were dazed and awe-struck by its beauty and the soft sound made by its tiny bells (as the horse danced, swayed and moved forward). (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4]

[Note—Kamdeo is eternally beautiful and is the only god whose physically attractive and captivating form that has an exceptional charm is cited by way of an example whenever the concepts of beauty, magnificence, attractiveness, passion and charm are to be depicted.

So, though he is inherently beautiful and charming, being closely associated with the Supreme Lord of this creation in the form of Lord Ram and making the Lord sit on his back on a very special event when all the gods, the humans and the sages are in attendance, closely observing the beauty of the Lord to fill their eyes with this magnificent sight, gave Kamdeo a special occasion, a special chance to show-case his own beauty and draw attention of the world towards himself.

Kamdeo was very clever for he had very wisely realized that if he joined the ranks of the other gods and watched the Lord's marriage function along with them, then he will be lost in the sea of so many handsome, good-looking gods and beautiful, bewitching goddesses, all of them dressed in their finest and presenting themselves in the best manner possible. No one will pay any attention to him. But now when he became a horse and Lord Ram sat on his back, Kamdeo became the cynosure of all eyes; he became the center of attention as well as attraction. And to this was added the rare honour of being able to serve the Lord during a happy event during his sojourn on earth.

Remember: All the other gods would get an opportunity to serve the Lord in their forms as monkeys and bears as directed by the old patriarch Brahma, the creator, who had advised them to assume these forms and serve Lord Vishnu when he manifests himself on earth as Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 187 and Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that follow it.

But unfortunately for Kamdeo, he was apparently not assigned any duty. Not to be outdone, he decided to serve Lord Ram in the happiest moment of his life—that of his marriage.

Now, come to think of it—Kamdeo had overtaken the other gods hands down to serve the Lord in a very special way, and in this he was very privileged and blessed. Well, this is because while the other gods would serve Lord Ram in the forest during a sad and unpleasant phase in the Lord’s life, when he was grieving at having lost his dear wife Sita who was abducted by the demon king Ravana, by helping him to collect a huge army of monkeys and bears, crossing the mighty ocean and conquering Lanka by defeating Ravana, Kamdeo, on the other hand, had served the Lord when he was enjoying every moment of the time that passed because it was a happy occasion of his marriage.]

दो०. प्रभु मनसहिं लयलीन मनु चलत बाजि छबि पाव ।

भूषित उड़गन तड़ित घनु बर बरहि नचाव ॥ ३१६ ॥

dōhā.

prabhu manasahim layalīna manu calata bāji chabi pāva.

bhūṣita uḍāgana taḍita ghanu janu bara barahi nacāva. 316.

The beauty of the horse was magnified manifold by the fact that its ‘Mana’ (mind and heart) was completely in sync with that of Lord Ram so much so that the former could understand what the Lord wanted, and it danced and moved in accordance to the Lord’s wishes even without the Lord giving any overt instructions to it.

This complete compatibility, coordination and synchronization between the moves of the horse and the wish of the Lord reminded one of the way the rain-bearing dark cloud that is illuminated by the dazzle of lightening in the sky that is studded with twinkling stars is able to make a charmed peacock dance voluntarily and merrily on its own in step with the rumble and thunder of the cloud. (Doha no. 316)

[Note—Here, Lord Ram is compared to the dark rain-bearing cloud because of his dark complexion. The horse is likened to the peacock that looks very beautiful when it opens its feathers and dances as soon as it sights this cloud. The sound emanating from the tiny tinkling bells attached to the bridle is like the gentle rumble of the cloud; the gems, rubies and pearls attached to the saddle are like the countless stars in the sky; and the way they dazzle and shine reminds one of the frequent streaks of lightening that pass through the cloud.

The remarkable thing to note in this imagery is this: When dark clouds appear in the sky, the stars vanish from sight; only lightening and rumble of the cloud remain. It will be noted here that the gems and pearls are embedded in the saddle upon which Lord Ram sits, and obviously when the horse moves and dances these gems would be hidden from sight as the body of the Lord shifts on the saddle and the ceremonial robes that he wears covers the sides of the saddle completely.

On the other hand, the bridle and its reins are not hidden from view, and the Lord holds the rein in his hands. The bells are attached to it, and it is also bejeweled. So this long rein and decorated bridle would represent the streak of lightning, and the soft sound of the tiny bells attached to them would be like the rumble of the cloud.]

चौ०. जेहिं बर बाजि रामु असवारा । तेहि सारदउ न बरनै पारा ॥ १ ॥
 संकरु राम रूप अनुरागे । नयन पंचदस अति प्रिय लागे ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

jēhim bara bāji rāmu asavārā. tēhi sārada'u na baranai pārā. 1.
 saṅkaru rāma rūpa anurāgē. nayana pañcadasa ati priya lāgē. 2.

[Summarizing the beauty and the good luck of the horse on which Lord Ram was sitting, the horse who actually was the god named Kamdeo in its physical form, Tulsidas says—] Even Sarda, the goddess of speech and knowledge, would not be able to describe the horse on which Lord Ram rode (as the Lord proceeded towards the pavilion where his marriage was to be solemnised)¹. (1)

Lord Shiva was completely enthralled by the beautiful image of Lord Ram, and he loved to have fifteen eyes (which enabled him to see the divine image of the Lord more clearly and intensely)². (2)

[Note—¹The discussion about the horse of Lord Ram commenced in Chaupai line no. 7 that preceded Doha no. 316, and the present verse concludes this description.

Another important point to note here is that the horse on which Lord Ram rode has been singled out to be the one whose beauty and good luck cannot be described by Sarda. This is important because otherwise it would be construed that all the horses—such as the ones on which Lord Ram's other brothers rode as well as those on which their friends and other princes who had come to attend the marriage ceremony rode—were of equal beauty and magnificence. This was not the case simply because the god of beauty and magnificence, i.e. Kamdeo, had himself assumed the form of a horse to serve Lord Ram, whereas all the other horses were ordinary animals, though they were all thoroughbreds and chosen with great perfection. A distinction had to be made.

²Lord Shiva has three eyes—two conventional eyes and one additional eye in the center of the forehead above the root of the nose. This third eye is known as the eye of wisdom, and it symbolizes Shiva's most exalted spiritual stature as the god who has realized the supreme truth of his own 'self'. The three-eyed Shiva is known as 'Trayambak'.

The *Brihajjabal Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Brahman 4, verse no. 29 says that the Lord has three eyes, and hence called 'Trinetrum'. This third eye represents the 'fire element'. Refer: The *Yogtattva Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse nos. 92-94 which say that Lord Shiva, in his form as Rudra, is the patron deity and personification of the fire element.

The *Tripura Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 4, verse no. 11 says that Shiva represents the third state of consciousness known as the Sushupta state, and this is symbolized by the third eye which burns all delusions.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 92 which reiterates that Shiva has ‘three eyes’.

Shiva is also said to have five heads, thereby giving him the name ‘Panch Mukhi’. This fact is mentioned in Yogtattva Upanishad, verse no. 100 which says that “as the deity of the sky element, Lord Shiva has a moon tucked in his lock of hairs, besides having five mouths, ten arms and three eyes.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 220 which reiterates that Shiva has ‘five heads’.

This being the case, the total number of eyes are 5 heads x 3 eyes in each head = 15 eyes.

There are instances in Ram Charit Manas where we find Lord Shiva being completely captivated and enchanted by the beauteous image of Lord Ram whom he adores and worships as his revered deity. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 50 when Lord Shiva saw Lord Ram while he was returning home after paying a visit to the hermitage of sage Agastya; (ii) Chanda line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 511 where Ahilya has acknowledged this fact of Shiva loving the sight of Lord Ram’s beautiful image when she was offering her prayers to the latter; (iii) Doha no. 315 above which also says the same thing.]

हरि हित सहित रामु जब जोहे । रमा समेत रमापति मोहे ॥ ३ ॥

निरखि राम छबि बिधि हरषाने । आठइ नयन जानि पछिताने ॥ ४ ॥

hari hita sahita rāmu jaba jōhē. ramā samēta ramāpati mōhē. 3.

nirakhi rāma chabi bidhi haraṣānē. āṭha'i nayana jāni pachitānē. 4.

When both Ramapati (“ramāpati”; i.e. Lord Vishnu) and his divine consort Rama (“ramā”; i.e. goddess Laxmi) watched Lord Ram along with his wonderful horse (“Hari”), they were so enthralled at this fascinating and beautiful sight that both of them gazed at it intently, feeling amazed and dazed¹. (3)

Watching intently the beauteous image of Lord Ram, the creator Bidhi (Brahma) was exhilarated, but he regretted that he has only eight eyes (as compared to Shiva who could enjoy this beautiful image of Lord Ram with his fifteen eyes)². (4)

[Note—¹The word “Hari” has many connotations—such as a horse, the sun, a monkey, and of course Lord Vishnu. Now, this is very interesting: Lord Vishnu has himself manifested in the form of Lord Ram on the request of the gods and mother earth so that the cruel demons can be eliminated—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 187.

Therefore, the meaning of this verse has a profound metaphysical import—it succinctly brings into focus the great metaphysical and spiritual philosophy as propounded by the Upanishads. Lord Vishnu represents the ‘super Consciousness’ that is also known as the ‘Parmatma’, the supreme Atma or the supreme Soul or the supreme Holy Spirit of creation, while Lord Ram is an image of this very Parmatma that is seen in a gross world that is unable to perceive anything that is subtle and sublime but can easily see that which is gross. The Atma or the soul that resides in the physical gross body of someone that the ignorant world likes to recognize as ‘Ram’, the prince of Ayodhya, is the same cosmic Atma or the supreme Consciousness that is

a universal and all-pervading entity which has a subtle and sublime dimension. Vishnu is the cosmic form of the super Consciousness, while Lord Ram is the gross form of the same Consciousness that reveals it's self in a physical gross body of a prince. Lord Ram embodies the universal Holy Spirit that is revealed in his form.

In simple terms this verse means that Vishnu, who is the primary Parmatma, was watching his own image in the form of Lord Ram, and the former was stunned at the beauty of his own image which made him wonder how beautiful he actually was. Let us take an example to understand this phenomenon. We cannot see our own selves without the help of a reflecting surface such as a mirror upon which an image can be formed. So, Vishnu did not know hitherto how beautiful was his cosmic form, known as the Viraat Purush in the Upanishads, until he saw it being reflected in the image of Lord Ram!

It is such a wonderful idea depicted in such a wonderful way that one is left dumbfounded and with all praises for the intellectual maturity of the poet Tulsidas who has written this holy book Ram Charit Manas.

Now, the next question is: why was Rama (Laxmi) captivated by the beautiful image of Lord Ram? Well, the answer is obvious and simple: it was for the first time she was seeing her own divine consort Lord Vishnu in a physical form that can be viewed with eyes, because hitherto she could not see how beautiful Vishnu was as he lived in his primary cosmic form as the Viraat Purush that is invisible. In other words, since Lord Ram was the 'visible' form of the primarily 'invisible' Vishnu, Laxmi was stunned at her Lord's beauty.

²Brahma, the creator, has four heads, and therefore eight eyes. 4 heads x 2 eyes in each head = 8 eyes.

In iconography, Brahma is depicted as an old sage with four heads or mouths that represent the four Vedas (Rik, Sam, Yajur and Atharva), the four Yugs (eras or epochs—Sata, Treta, Dwapar and Kali), the four main directions (north, east, south and west), the four Varanas (classes of the society—Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra), and the four Ashrams (phases of life—Brahmacharya, Grishastya, Vaanprastha and Sanyas).

He regretted that he is unable to enjoy the divine sight of Lord Ram as much as Shiva who has fifteen eyes, Lord Kartikeya who has twelve eyes, and even Indra, the king of gods, who is said to have thousands of eyes on his body that are represented by the holes created on it by a curse of sage Gautam.]

सुर सेनप उर बहुत उछाहू । बिधि ते डेवढ़ लोचन लाहू ॥ ५ ॥

रामहि चितव सुरेस सुजाना । गौतम श्रापु परम हित माना ॥ ६ ॥

sura sēnapa ura bahuta uchāhū. bidhi tē dēvar̥ha lōcana lāhū. 5.
rāmahi citava surēsa sujānā. gautama śrāpu parama hita mānā. 6.

The commander of the army of gods (i.e. Lord Kartikeya¹ who is also known as 'Shadanan', the one with six heads) felt very happy that he has one-and-a-half times more eyes than Bidhi (Brahma), and so is able to take in the visual delight of viewing the magnificent image of Lord Ram by that enhanced number. (5)

When the king of gods (i.e. Indra) gazed at Lord Ram, he was so glad (to be able to view the stunning beauty of the Lord) that for once he felt blessed for the curse of sage Gautam². (6)

[Note—¹Kartikeya is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati, and he has six heads. This gives him another name of ‘Shadaanan’—the Lord with six heads. Each head has two eyes, and hence the total numbers of eyes are: 6 heads x 2 eyes each = 12 eyes.

According to legends, he was reared by six divine celestial mothers who personified the constellation called Krittikaa (or Pleiades), hence the name ‘Kartikeya’. He assumed six faces to suckle milk from all these six mothers, hence called ‘Shadaanan’—one with six heads or mouths.

²The story goes that once sage Gautam found Indra, who was very lascivious and sexually pervert by nature inspite of being the king of gods, in an uncompromising state with his wife Ahilya. The sage was so infuriated that he cursed Ahilya to become a stone, and Indra to have his body perforated with thousands of holes that would enable him to look at women with them.

Now, though this curse made Indra look ugly and unable to hide his evil deed because wherever he went everyone could see those holes and remember how pervert and sinful he had been, this curse proved to be a blessing in disguise for him now as he was able to watch Lord Ram with all these thousands of eyes.]

देव सकल सुरपतिहि सिहाहीं । आजु पुरंदर सम कोउ नाहीं ॥ ७ ॥
मुदित देवगन रामहि देखी । नृपसमाज दुहुँ हरषु बिसेषी ॥ ८ ॥

dēva sakala surapatihi sihāhīm. āju purandara sama kō'u nāhīm. 7.
mudita dēvagana rāmahi dēkhī. nrpasamāja duhum' haraṣu bisēṣī. 8.

All the gods were in full praise for their king (Indra), saying—‘Today, no one is as lucky and fortunate as ‘Purandar’ (i.e. the one who demolishes the city of his enemies; their king Indra who defeats the enemies of gods).¹’ (7)

Verily, all the gods (Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, Kartikeya, Indra and the rest of them) were euphoric and rejoiced at the sight of Lord Ram (who looked fabulous and magnificent in his fully bejeweled and decorated form as a groom astride a magnificent horse).

Likewise, all the members of the royal courts of the two kingdoms (of Ayodhya and Janakpur) were also exhilarated beyond measure. (8)

[Note—¹The gods were virtually jealous of Indra because none of them had ‘thousands’ of eyes as he so that they could enjoy the divine view of Lord Ram as much as he could. Brahma had eight eyes, Shiva had fifteen eyes, Kartikeya had twelve eyes, and the rest of the gods had two eyes each. So in this context, Indra was the luckiest one.]

छं०. अति हरषु राजसमाज दुहु दिसि दुंदुभीं बाजहिं घनी । १ ।

बरषहिं सुमन सुर हरषि कहि जय जयति जय रघुकुलमनी ॥ २ ॥
 एहि भाँति जानि बरात आवत बाजने बहु बाजहीं । ३ ।
 रानी सुआसिनि बोलि परिछनि हेतु मंगल साजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

ati haraṣu rājasamāja duhu disi dundubhīm bājahim ghanī. 1.
 baraṣahim sumana sura haraṣi kahi jaya jayati jaya raghukulamanī. 2.
 ēhi bhāmṭi jāni barāta āvata bājanē bahu bājahim. 3.
 rānī su'āsini bōli parichani hētu maṅgala sājahim. 4.

There was exceptionally great amount of euphoria and happiness among the members of the two royal courts as well as the subjects of the two kingdoms (of Ayodhya and Janakpur). Kettle drums were played loudly and enthusiastically on both the sides. (1)

The exhilarated gods showered flowers (from the sky) to celebrate the occasion, exclaiming in ecstasy, 'Hail, Hail; Glory to the Lord who is like a jewel (the best, the most exalted and an excellent member) of king Raghu's family (or dynasty).' (2)

In this way, amid rejoicings and merriment, when it became known within the city (of Janakpur) that the marriage procession has arrived and is approaching the venue of the wedding ceremony, many sorts of musical instruments started playing. (3)

Meanwhile, as soon as queen Sunayana (the mother of Sita) heard of this good news, she summoned well-decked up ladies whose husbands were alive, and began arranging auspicious items to prepare to welcome the groom when he arrives¹. (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—¹The auspicious items were arranged on large plates and kept ready. Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3 describes what these were supposed to be—fresh curd, blades of dark grass known as Durva (pronounced "Durvaa"), a paste made from cow's dung, urine and bile, fresh leaves of the Basil plant, lighted earthen lamps, rice and other cereals, and so on.]

दो०. सजि आरती अनेक बिधि मंगल सकल सँवारि ।
 चलीं मुदित परिछनि करन गजगामिनि बर नारि ॥ ३१७ ॥

dōhā.

saji āratī anēka bidhi maṅgala sakala samvāri.
 calīm mudita parichani karana gajagāmini bara nāri. 317.

Having arranged, in a variety of ways, all the auspicious items needed to perform the ritual of the Aarti¹ (showing of lighted lamps to the honoured guest who in this case was Lord Ram, the groom), these beautiful and charming ladies, who walked with an elegance and majesty of a healthy adult elephant, moved forward cheerfully to welcome the groom, perform his Aarti, and make their offerings to him. (Doha no. 317)

[Note—¹There were many ladies in the group headed by queen Sunayana that went out to receive Lord Ram and his party. Each of these ladies held a plate decorated with auspicious paraphernalia needed to do the Aarti. They arranged the items needed for this ritual in different ways according to their liking. This shows that there was a lot of freedom and an informal environment of rejoicing when everyone had the freedom to enjoy the occasion in the best way he or she wished.]

चौ०. बिधुबदनीं सब सब मृगलोचनि । सब निज तन छबि रति मद्दु मोचनि । १ ।
 पहिरेँ बरन बरन बर चीरा । सकल बिभूषन सजेँ सरीरा ॥ २ ॥
 सकल सुमंगल अंग बनाएँ । करहिँ गान कलकंठि लजाएँ । ३ ।
 कंकन किंकिनि नूपुर बाजहिँ । चालि बिलोकि काम गज लाजहिँ ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bidhubadanīm saba saba mṛgalōcani. saba nija tana chabi rati madu mōcani.

1.

pahirēm barana barana bara cīrā. sakala bibhūṣana sajeṁ sarīrā. 2.

sakala sumaṅgala aṅga banā'ēm. karahim gāna kalakaṅṭhi lajā'ēm. 3.

kaṅkana kiṅkini nūpura bājahim. cāli bilōki kāma gaja lājahim. 4.

[Verse nos. 1-4 describe the ladies who had gone to extend a ceremonial welcome to Lord Ram by doing his Aarti and offering auspicious gifts to him. These verses are a natural flow from Doha no. 317 and its preceding verses.]

All the ladies who had gone with decorated plates full of auspicious items to ceremonially welcome the groom, Lord Ram, were pretty to look at, had young and handsome bodies with doe eyes. They were so good-looking and elegant in their demeanours and bearings that they trounced the pride of Rati, the consort of the god of beauty (known as Kamdeo), as being the most beautiful, elegant, attractive and handsome lady in creation. (1)

These charming ladies wore magnificent clothes of varying colours, designs and textures. Their entire bodies were decorated with ornaments of different varieties. [Ladies wore an assortment of ornaments such as earrings, nose-rings, bracelets, armlets, neck-bands, necklaces, waist-bands, anklets, toe-rings and so on.] (2)

Their limbs were further beautified by marks of auspicious signs and special ornamentations (showing that they are of noble birth, belong to the higher strata of society, are married with husbands who were still alive, and other such signs that women sport during auspicious moments)#. They sang melodious songs in a pleasant and sweet voice that would put to shame the sweet voice of the cuckoo*.

[#Some of the common marks are application of vermilion powder on the head, a 'dot' painted in the middle of the forehead, the 'Mangal Sutra' worn around the neck signifying that the ladies are married with a living husband, palms of hands and soles of legs painted with a dye, and so on.

*The girls who had accompanied Sita at the time of her appearing at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony had also sung sweet songs. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 248.] (3)

As they moved, a pleasant sound emanated from the bristling of bracelets they wore, as well as from the chiming of tiny bells attached to their waist-bands and anklets.

They moved with such a majestic gait that the elephant of Kamdeo* (the god who prides himself as being the most elegant, handsome and dignified in this creation) felt that it has been humiliated for being falsely proud of its majestic gait and bearing.

[*Kamdeo rides an elephant, and the manner in which a healthy young elephant walks is usually cited by poets and bards when they need to describe the majestic way a person of high stature and position moves—a series of swaying, robust, confident steps, overstepping obstacles easily.] (4)

[Note—When the word was sent out from the royal palace that ladies were to be selected to represent the kingdom of Janakpur at the time of the formal welcoming ceremony where an Aarti of the groom, Lord Ram, was to be done, a number of candidates must have appeared for the so-called selection process, and out of them those who were the most charming with a pleasant personality were selected to accompany queen Sunayana.

We can assume that a similar situation must have prevailed when young girls were to be selected to accompany Sita to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony. The girls who would accompany Sita were expected to be not only of having astounding beauty but also possessing intelligence and wit. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 246.

Great diligence was exerted in this selection process because these ladies would represent the women-folk of the entire kingdom of Janakpur in the eyes of the guests coming from Ayodhya which was another great kingdom known for its handsome citizens. In other words, the best ladies had accompanied queen Sunayana when she went to welcome Lord Ram and other guests of the marriage party.]

बाजहिं बाजने बिबिध प्रकारा । नभ अरु नगर सुमंगलचारा ॥ ५ ॥
 सची सारदा रमा भवानी । जे सुरतिय सुचि सहज सयानी ॥ ६ ॥
 कपट नारि बर बेष बनाई । मिलीं सकल रनिवासहिं जाई ॥ ७ ॥
 करहिं गान कल मंगल बानी । हरष बिबस सब काहुँ न जानीं ॥ ८ ॥

bājahim bājanē bibidha prakārā. nabha aru nagara sumaṅgalacārā. 5.

sacī sārādā ramā bhavānī. jē suratiya suci sahaja sayānī. 6.

kapaṭa nāri bara bēṣa banā'ī. milim sakala ranivāsahim jā'ī. 7.

karahim gāna kala maṅgala bānīm. haraṣa bibasa saba kāhum'na jānīm. 8.

Musical instruments of varying kinds were played, and auspicious hymns were chanted both on the ground as well as in the sky (heaven)¹. (5)

[Verse nos. 6-8 narrate how the different goddesses had assumed human forms to join in the celebrations. They mingled with other ladies so much so that it was impossible to distinguish between them.]

Sachi (the consort of Indra, the king of gods), Sarda (also known as Saraswati, the consort of Brahma the creator), Rama (also known as Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu), and Bhavani (also known as Uma or Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva), along with other consorts of exalted gods who were chaste, wise and intelligent [6], assumed the illusionary form of a human female, and all of them mingled indistinguishably with other members of the royal household (of king Janak) [7]. (6-7)

They (i.e. the goddesses in human forms) too joined in the singing of auspicious melodious songs in a sweet voice. Everyone (i.e. all the members of the royal family as well as other ladies of the kingdom) was so overwhelmed with joy and euphoria at that time that none of them could realize who these ladies were². (8)

[Note—¹On the ground, hymns and laudatory verses were recited by the Brahmins and bards, while in the sky it was done by the gods and celestial singers such as Kinnars.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319.

²The atmosphere of celebration and rejoicing was so overpowering that no human lady could realize that great goddesses were personally present amongst them and participating in the ceremonies like ordinary women-folk, as their close friends and compatriots. It was a wonder of astounding proportions, and the presence of these divine goddesses lent a special air of divinity, holiness, splendour and unqualified magnificence to the existing atmosphere of celebrations, euphoria and rejoicing.]

छं०. को जान केहि आनंद बस सब ब्रह्म बर परिछन चली । १ ।
कल गान मधुर निसान बरषहिं सुमन सुर सोभा भली ॥ २ ॥
आनंदकंदु बिलोकि दूलहु सकल हियँ हरषित भई । ३ ।
अंभोज अंबक अंबु उमगि सुअंग पुलकावलि छई ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kō jāna kēhi ānanda basa saba brahmu bara parichana calī. 1.
kala gāna madhura nisāna baraṣahim sumana sura sōbhā bhalī. 2.
ānandakandu bilōki dūlahu sakala hiyaṃ haraṣita bha'ī. 3.
ambhōja ambaka ambu umagi su'aṅga pulakāvali cha'ī. 4.

Who would bother to scrutinize or worry about others and their identities as everyone was overwhelmed with ecstasy and submerged in euphoria marking the happy occasion? All the ladies moved forward to offer their greetings and obeisance to Brahm, the Supreme Being in the form of the groom Lord Ram. (Chanda line no. 1)

Sweet and melodious songs were being sung, kettle-drums were being played with a soft sound, and the gods were showering flowers from the sky to make the event very charming and auspicious. (Chanda line no. 2)

All the ladies were overwhelmed with a sense of immense happiness and contentedness in their hearts when they saw the groom (Lord Ram) who was like a treasury of bliss and happiness in a personified form. (Chanda line no. 3)

Their lotus-like eyes welled-up with tears of love and affection for the Lord (of their heart and dream), and their bodies were thrilled beyond measure. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—Refer: Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 131—136 which also describe these events.]

दो०. जो सुखु भा सिय मातु मन देखि राम बर बेषु ।
सो न सकहिं कहि कलप सत सहस सारदा सेषु ॥ ३१८ ॥

dōhā.

jō sukhu bhā siya mātu mana dēkhi rāma bara bēṣu.
sō na sakahiṁ kahi kalapa sata sahasa sārada sēṣu. 318.

The extent and dimension of happiness and joy that sprouted in the heart of the mother of Sita when she saw Lord Ram dressed as a groom was so profound and intense¹ that this feeling defied description by either Sarda (goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of speech) or the thousand-tongued Seshnath even if they had tried for a thousand years to attempt to narrate it². (Doha no. 318)

[Note—¹The mother of Sita, Sunayana, was always longing to have Lord Ram as the groom for her daughter Sita. This is clearly pointed out in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257 which describe her anxiety before Lord Ram had broken the bow, and in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 263 which describes her sense of relief and great happiness after the Lord had broken the bow to ensure his marriage with Sita.

²It is a usual practice with poets that when they want to stress that something is very great and profound so much so that they cannot find words to adequately describe it, they employ this method of citing the inability of Saraswati and Seshnath to do it, because it means that if these two deities cannot narrate certain thing or event then it is impossible for humans to do so.

To cite an example of this symbolic way of showing that a scene is exceptionally beautiful so much so that words cannot do justice for it, we can refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 317 which deals with the horse on which Lord Ram is riding.

We shall read below that when Lord Ram and his three brothers returned to Ayodhya with their brides, the sight of the four couples were so fabulous that Sarda had tried to find a comparison but had failed inspite of her best efforts. So she decided to abandon her scholarship and instead enjoy the divine sight—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 349.]

चौ०. नयन नीरु हटि मंगल जानी । परिछनि करहिं मुदित मन रानी ॥ १ ॥

बेद बिहित अरु कुल आचारू । कीन्ह भली बिधि सब व्यवहारू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nayana nīru haṭi maṅgala jānī. parichani karahim mudita mana rānī. 1.
bēda bihita aru kula ācārū. kīnha bhalī bidhi saba byavahārū. 2.

Realising that it was a most auspicious time, the queen restrained the tears (of affection and love) swelling-up in her eyes¹ and performed the ritual of offering Aarti (waving of lights in ceremonial earthen lamps) and other rites that are suitable for such occasions with an euphoric heart and mind ('Mana'). (1)

She did everything with due diligence and completed all the rituals as prescribed by the Vedas² for such occasions and traditionally observed in her family (i.e. the kingdom of Janakpur)³, properly and enthusiastically. (2)

[Note—¹It has already been said above in Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 318 that tears of love and affection welled-up in the lotus-like eyes of the queen. So this line completes the idea by saying that though ordinarily tears would have rolled down the queen's eyes, she managed to restrain them, because their rolling down could be misconstrued as her weeping in sorrow whereas the fact is that she was exceedingly happy and euphoric and not at all regretful. It was a joyous occasion and a broad smile was gracing her lips. She was singing auspicious songs befitting such occasions along with the other ladies who were accompanying her.

The queen's heart and mind were overwhelmed with surging love and affection, and it was that one moment in her life for which she was so eagerly waiting for all along. And naturally when her wishes were fulfilled, when her desires bore fruit she was swept off her feet with emotions.

Allowing tears to fall on an auspicious occasion is not a good thing to do. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 7. Here the occasion was the return of Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita from their 14-year forest exile when all the mothers were meeting them at Ayodhya. Though tears would have gushed out from their eyes under ordinary situation but they managed to hold them back as it was not the proper time to shed tears even if they were tears of joy.

²Performing of Aarti along with showering of flowers, rice grains, coloured powder and other auspicious items are a part of the ritual of formally welcoming a guest. And Lord Ram was not an ordinary guest; he was the beloved groom of Sita, and so all the rites were done carefully and diligently.

Though the overall rituals are the same as sanctioned in the Vedas, every society nevertheless has its own unique set of rites that sets it apart from the others. There were some specific rituals observed in Janakpur which may not have been prevalent in Ayodhya, and this is observed even in modern times today.

³All the rites were done in accordance with the sanction of the Vedas and as established in the society by tradition. There are other instances where the same idea is conveyed—that due diligence was practiced in doing the rituals properly in accordance with the prescription of the scriptures and established norms of the society: refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 352 which repeats this assertion at the time when religious

ceremonies were being done to formally welcome the four brothers when they had returned to Ayodhya with their brides.]

पंच सबद धुनि मंगल गाना । पट पाँवड़े परहिं बिधि नाना ॥ ३ ॥

करि आरती अरघु तिन्ह दीन्हा । राम गमनु मंडप तब कीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥

pañca sabada dhuni maṅgala gānā. paṭa pām̃vaṛē parahim̃ bidhi nānā. 3.
kari āratī araghu tinha dīnhā. rāma gamanu maṅḍapa taba kīnhā. 4.

Meanwhile, there were five types of auspicious sounds that were heard on that occasion¹ besides the sound of melodious singing of auspicious songs that accompanied the rituals, while carpets of different kinds were being spread (as the groom and his companions moved forward towards the marriage pavilion)². (3)

After performing the Aarti (waving of lighted earthen lamps) of Lord Ram, the queen offered oblations to him and offered water so that the Lord could wash his hands and feet before proceeding ahead. Then, Lord Ram moved ahead and proceeded towards the pavilion where the wedding ceremony was to be solemnized³. (4)

[Note—¹‘Five sounds’ refer to the following:--

(i) The sound of music produced by five types of musical instruments such as the Indian lute (Veena), the clapping of hands and the clashing of cymbals, the beating of kettle-drums, playing of the clarinet, and the blowing of the trumpet or any other wind instrument such as the conch.

(ii) The chanting of the hymns of the five branches of the Vedas by the Brahmins. These five branches are the following—Rig Veda, Sam Veda, Shukla Yajur Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda, and the Atharva Veda. This is known as ‘Veda-vani’, the words of the Vedas.

(iii) Besides this loud chanting of the Vedas, there was the singing of laudatory verses, known as ‘Bridaawali’, by family bards and minstrels who were known as royal Bandijans’, loud cheers of joy and applause, known as ‘Jaya-vani’, by the citizens and others present on the occasion, the sound of conch shells, known as ‘Shankha-dhwani’, which are blown during auspicious occasions, as well as the sound created by the vigorous beating of drums, which is known as ‘Dundubhi-vani’.

All these sounds erupted simultaneously, creating a tumultuous and a heady cacophony of music, applause, singing and cheers.

Remember: Brahmins always played an important role in all auspicious functions, and therefore it is impossible to say that they weren’t present to chant the sacred hymns from the scriptures on this occasion. While songs were being sung by the ladies, the sacred hymns were being recited by the Brahmins. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 313 which is specific for this purpose.

²The spreading of carpets and the groom moving towards the marriage pavilion on them shows that Lord Ram had by now alighted from his horse and had walked on foot to the designated place where the wedding was to take place.

³The Aarti, the offering of oblations and flowers, and the washing of hands and feet were done after he had got-off the horse.

Another interpretation can be that the Aarti was performed while Lord Ram was still astride the horse, and as soon as he got down from it, flowers were showered on him, and water was offered to him to wash his hands and feet. Then the Lord moved slowly on the carpets that were rolled out before him as he walked forward.

These carpets were not spread before hand, but rolled out before him one after another as he moved forward.]

दसरथु सहित समाज बिराजे । बिभव बिलोकि लोकपति लाजे ॥ ५ ॥

समयँ समयँ सुर बरषहिं फूला । सांति पढ़हिं महिसुर अनुकूला ॥ ६ ॥

dasarathu sahita samāja birājē. bibhava bilōki lōkapati lājē. 5.
samayam̐ samayam̐ sura baraṣahim̐ phūlā. sānti paṛhahim̐ mahisura anukūlā.
6.

King Dasrath looked majestic and glorious along with his royal entourage so much so that his majesty and glory put to shame all the other custodians of the world¹ (the ‘Lokpatis’)¹. (5)

The gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven) from time to time², while on the ground the Brahmins (who are known as “the gods’ representative on earth”) recited the sacred hymns from the Vedas and other scriptures (known as “Shanti Paath”)³. (6)

[Note—¹The choice of word ‘Lokpati’ by Tulsidas is remarkable. ‘Lok’ means ‘world’, and ‘Pati’ means its ‘lord’ or ‘master’. Therefore, this single word ‘Lokpati’ would cover all the kings of this terrestrial world, as well as Indra, the king of gods, who rules over heaven.

Now it must be noted here that all the kings and princes who had come to attend the bow-breaking ceremony had already gone back home—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 312. Hence, comparison with them is out of place. Only the gods were present on the occasion.

Therefore, the word ‘Lokpati’ clearly hints at Indra, the king of gods. This fact has been reiterated elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 313 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 6.]

²It must be noted here that the gods had showered flowers on every occasion that was to be celebrated. For instance, when Lord Ram and his brothers were born (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 194), when Lord Ram had broken the bow (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 262), when Sita had put the victory garland on Lord Ram (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 264), when the marriage party left Ayodhya for Janakpur (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 302), when king Dasrath was invited to come with Lord Ram so that the marriage rituals could commence (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314), and again when the gods saw Lord Ram on the horse (Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 315), and so on.

³The symbolism of the Brahmins reciting the hymns of the Vedas alongside the gods showering flowers from the sky is clear when the former are called ‘Mahisurs’, literally meaning the ‘gods of earth’. It signifies that while the gods showed their joy by showering flowers from the heaven, their counterparts or representatives on earth, the Brahmins, showed their happiness by chanting the hymns of the Vedas as a symbolic gesture of blessing and joy.

It will be noted in Chanda line no. 3 herein below that ‘Brahma, the creator, and other gods had assumed the physical forms of Brahmins to enjoy the ceremonies’. Well, this clearly establishes why the Brahmins are honoured as being ‘Mahisurs’, the gods on earth. We have already read that the gods and goddesses had assumed human forms and mingled with the citizens of Janakpur to enjoy the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram, and they blended perfectly with other humans. So it was not possible to distinguish between actual human beings and gods in the form of humans. Therefore, all Brahmins were collectively called ‘Mahisurs’.]

नभ अरु नगर कोलाहल होई । आपनि पर कछु सुनइ न कोई ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि रामु मंडपहिं आए । अरघु देइ आसन बैठाए ॥ ८ ॥

nabha aru nagara kōlāhala hō'ī. āpani para kachu suna'i na kō'ī. 7.
ēhi bidhi rāmu maṇḍapahim ā'ē. araghu dē'i āsana baiṭhā'ē. 8.

As a result of this thunderous sound of joy and happiness emanating from the sky as well as the ground (i.e. by the applause of the gods and playing of their musical instruments as well as singing of celestial singers in the heaven, and singing of auspicious songs, playing of musical instruments and recitation of the hymns of the scriptures by the Brahmins on earth), there was a loud cacophony of sounds in the city (of Janakpur) so much so that no one could hear even their own words as well as what the others said¹. (7)

On this wise Lord Ram arrived at the wedding pavilion. He was made to sit down on his seat after water was sprinkled on him and his feet were washed ceremoniously². (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 318.

²Washed by whom? Well, the answer is ‘by the bride’s mother, queen Sunayana’. The ladies of the household escort the groom to the pavilion and perform initial rites before the elaborate rituals that are performed by Brahmins get under way. The gentlemen enter the pavilion after the ladies retire.

King Janak was still at the door with his counterpart, king Dasrath, and the rest of the party who had not entered the pavilion till this point of time. This will be absolutely clear in the verses that follow Doha no. 319 herein below.

Refer specially “Janaki Mangal”, verse no. 137-138 which specifically state that the friends of Sita brought Lord Ram to the pavilion while offering oblations and sprinkling water at his feet.]

छं०. बैठारि आसन आरती करि निरखि बरु सुखु पावहीं । १ ।
 मनि बसन भूषन भूरि वारहिं नारि मंगल गावहीं ॥ २ ॥
 ब्रह्मादि सुरबर बिप्र बेष बनाइ कौतुक देखहीं । ३ ।
 अवलोकि रघुकुल कमल रबि छबि सुफल जीवन लेखहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

baiṭhāri āsana āratī kari nirakhi baru sukhu pāvahīm. 1.
 mani basana bhūṣana bhūri vārahim nāri maṅgala gāvahīm. 2.
 brahmādi surabara bipra bēṣa banā'i kautuka dēkhahīm. 3.
 avalōki raghukula kamala rabi chabi suphala jīvana lēkhahīm. 4.

The bridegroom (Lord Ram) was made to sit on a seat after his Aarti was done. As they watched the Lord closely, they (the ladies along with the queen) felt very happy and blissful. (Chanda line no. 1)

The ladies first offered to the Lord numerous gems, clothes and ornaments, and then scattered them around him in abundant quantities (as a established gesture to show their immense pleasure at having him as their honoured guest of special importance as he was the groom of Sita, the princess of the kingdom), all the while singing auspicious songs in a melodious voice. (Chanda line no. 2)

Brahma, the creator, along with other exalted gods had assumed the form of Brahmins¹ as they cheerfully watched in amazement² the happy events unfolding before their eyes. (Chanda line no. 3)

All of them (i.e. all the gods) consider themselves most lucky as they affectionately gazed at the beautiful form of Lord Ram who brings delight to the race of king Raghu just as the sun makes the lotus cheerful so much so that the latter blooms at its sight². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹This is why the Brahmins were called 'Mahi-surs', the 'gods on earth', in Chaupai line no. 6 herein above. It was not possible to distinguish between human Brahmins and gods who were present on the occasion as Brahmins.

²The gods were amazed and dumbfounded because they could not imagine that Lord Vishnu whom they had known as the Viraat Purush without any form could actually be so beautiful and wonderful to look at. Prior to this they had thought that Vishnu was one like them, but now they realized that the Lord's beauty far surpassed their imagination.]

दो०. नाऊ बारी भाट नट राम निछावरि पाइ ।
 मुदित असीसहिं नाइ सिर हरषु न हृदयँ समाइ ॥ ३१९ ॥

dōhā.

nā'ū bārī bhāṭa naṭa rāma nichāvāri pā'i.
mudita asīsaḥim nā'i sira haraṣu na hṛdayam̐ samā'i. 319.

As the barbers, the heralds and the torch-bearers, the royal family bards and the dancers, et al, cheerfully and joyously collected the precious offerings that lay scattered around Lord Ram (as described in Chanda line no. 2 herein above), their hearts were overwhelmed with delight even as they profusely blessed the Lord and reverentially bowed before him. (Doha no. 319)

[Note—Refer also to “Geetawali Ramayan”, Baal Kand, verse no. 6, stanza no. 23-24. These verses essentially say that everyone felt privileged and honoured to accept anything as gift that was related to Lord Ram even if they had to become a beggar to beg for it. In other words, no one felt ashamed at picking up the offerings that lay scattered around the Lord; rather they vied with each other for the honour of possessing even one item of the scatterings as a cherished memorabilia of the happy occasion that they would pass down their descendants from one generation to another.]

चौ०. मिले जनकु दसरथु अति प्रीतीं । करि बैदिक लौकिक सब रीतीं ॥ १ ॥
मिलत महा दोउ राज बिराजे । उपमा खोजि खोजि कबि लाजे ॥ २ ॥
लही न कतहुँ हारि हियँ मानी । इन्ह सम एइ उपमा उर आनी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

milē janaku dasarathu ati prīṭim̐. kari baidika laukika saba rīṭim̐. 1.
milata mahā dō'u rāja birājē. upamā khōji khōji kabi lājē. 2.
lahī na katahum̐ hāri hiyam̐ mānī. inha sama ē'i upamā ura ānī. 3.

[In the following verses we shall about the most cordial way king Janak met king Dasrath.]

King Janak met and embraced king Dasrath most cordially and with the greatest of affection. Janak observed all the formalities and customs required to be observed according to the edicts of the Vedas and established by convention when the bride's father met for the groom's father for the first time prior to the wedding ceremony¹. (1)

When two great monarchs met each other affectionately, they presented a spectacle so magnificent that even acclaimed poets and bards who are very adept at describing such rare spectacles and citing suitable analogies to suit such occasions failed to do so even after they tried their best to find a suitable analogy or metaphor. And having thus failed, they felt ashamed at their incompetence² (and the false honour that they had of being experts in their respective fields, an assumed expertise by virtue of which they had been appointed as court poets and bards by the two monarchs). (2)

Finally, when they were unable to find a suitable analogy or metaphor (that would even closely relate to the grandeur and magnificence of the glorious occasion), they felt baffled, accepting defeat in their Mana (heart and mind) and gave up, unanimously proclaiming that the meeting between these two great monarchs was of such astounding magnificence attended by scintillating joy and bubbly euphoria that it

was better not to compare this meeting with anything else, but to let it be a unique event. So they declared that this meeting could be best described by saying that the pair (of king Janak and king Dasrath) is unique and likened to themselves alone³. (3)

[Note—¹(i) We have read in Doha no. 319 and its preceding verses how Lord Ram was welcomed by the ladies of the royal household and escorted to the pavilion where the marriage rituals were to be performed. Now here we read how king Dasrath was welcomed by his counterpart, king Janak. Genuine cordiality, immense warmth, high degree of affection, sincere bonhomie and a spontaneous bond of friendship that was forged at that time were literally infective and were the overriding emotions at that time.

Two renowned and great kingdoms had come together by a stroke of unexpected good luck to forge an alliance that would make them not only a powerful military force to reckon with but compliment each other when it came to splendour, glory and majesty in the community of great kingdoms and empires of the time. Both the kings were highly reputed and their respective kingdoms were equally prosperous and powerful, and therefore none of them felt any sort of complex vis-à-vis the other. King Janak was all the more happy because he did not see any trace of unhappiness in the behaviour of king Dasrath that would indicate that the latter had felt insulted at not being invited to attend the bow-breaking ceremony, something that may have been nagging at Janak's conscience till now. On his part, king Dasrath felt exhilarated to realize that his son Lord Ram has married into an established family ruling over a great kingdom of Janakpur that is no less powerful and prosperous than his own kingdom of Ayodhya.

(ii) Both the royal families were upholders of religious traditions and duly observed all the rules and customs as prescribed by the Vedas and other scriptures. Even small details point out to this practice—for instance, Dasrath always gave prominence to his guru, sage Vasistha, as did Janak who showed respects to his guru, sage Satanand. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 197 at the time of the naming ceremony of Lord Ram and his other brothers; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208 at the time when sage Vishwamitra had gone to bring Lord Ram to the forest to protect his fire sacrifice; (iii) Doha no. 214 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 that narrates king Janak going with his guru and other Brahmins to meet sage Vishwamitra when the latter arrived at Janakpur; (iv) Doha no. 293 when the letter announcing the good news of Lord Ram's marriage was taken by Dasrath himself to his guru Vasistha to seek his blessings even before the rest of the royal household was informed; (v) Doha no. 310, and Chaupai line no. 3 that follows this Doha when Vasistha was given precedence at the time when the marriage party departed from Ayodhya for Janakpur and the king sought his blessings prior to departure.

Again we read at various places in Ram Charit Manas that the edicts of the Vedas and customs of the society were duly observed by both the kings from time to time. For instance we read in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 302 that “king Dasrath had followed all the rituals as ordained by the Vedas and required to be done by tradition and family custom at the time of departure of the marriage party for Janakpur from Ayodhya”.

Another instance is in Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319 where exactly the same idea in the same words is expressed when it is narrated how queen Sunayana has duly welcomed the groom, Lord Ram, at the time of

performing his Aarti and making oblations and offering gifts upon his arrival at the venue astride a horse.

A little later on we shall read how all the customs and traditions were diligently observed at the time of the actual performance of marriage rituals in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chanda line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 323; and (ii) Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 327.

In “Janki Mangal” of Tulsidas, we read about the same observance of Veda traditions and customs of the society in verse no. 139.

²There are other instances also where we read that expert poets and bards had failed to cite an appropriate example or analogy to describe certain events, and having thus failed they felt ashamed at themselves and their false pretension of expertise. For instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 288—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289 that relate to describing the immensity of the glory of Bharat, Lord Ram’s younger brother.

³Refer to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 129 that says that there is no comparison of the pair consisting of king Janak and king Dasrath anywhere in the three world, i.e. in the heaven, the earth and the subterranean world.

Refer also to line nos. 3-4 of Chanda no. 16 of “Janaki Mangal” that says—‘When the two kings Dasrath and Janak who were now related to each other due to the marriage of their son and daughter respectively, and who were alike in glories and virtues, met each other, both felt extremely delighted. Watching them, the humans, the gods and the sages alike applauded them and raised their voice to praise them in a unanimous way.’]

सामध देखि देव अनुरागे । सुमन बरषि जसु गावन लागे ॥ ४ ॥
जगु बिरंचि उपजावा जब तें । देखे सुने ब्याह बहु तब तें ॥ ५ ॥
सकल भाँति सम साजु समाजू । सम समधी देखे हम आजू ॥ ६ ॥

sāmadha dēkhi dēva anurāgē. sumana baraṣi jasu gāvana lāgē. 4.
jagu birañci upajāvā jaba tēm. dēkhē sunē byāha bahu taba tēm. 5.
sakala bhām̐ti sama sāju samājū. sama samadhī dēkhē hama ājū. 6.

When the gods saw the two fathers-in-law developing fondness for each other, they too felt delighted. To celebrate the occasion, they (the gods) showered flowers from the sky and applauded them by singing their glories. (4)

The gods proclaimed, ‘We have seen many marriages and alliances between great families ever since the creator created this creation [5], but it is for the first time today that we have witnessed two great families of equal glory, greatness and grandeur getting united in a marriage alliance. [6]’ (5-6)

[Note—Indeed the two families were equal in their glory—because in one, i.e. the kingdom of Ayodhya represented by the family of king Dasrath, Lord Vishnu had taken birth as Lord Ram, and in another, i.e. the kingdom of Janakpur represented by the family of king Janak, Vishnu’s divine consort Laxmi had taken birth as Sita.]

देव गिरा सुनि सुंदर साँची । प्रीति अलौकिक दुहु दिसि माची ॥ ७ ॥
देत पाँवडे अरघु सुहाए । सादर जनकु मंडपहिं ल्याए ॥ ८ ॥

dēva girā suni sundara sām̐cī. prīti alaukika duhu disī mācī. 7.
dēta pām̐vaṛē araghu suhā'ē. sādara janaku maṇḍapahim̐ lyā'ē. 8.

*When everyone heard the words of the gods which were very true and most pleasant to hear, there was a flood of affection and rejoicing everywhere.

[*This verse can also be read as follows—When the word spread that the gods have endorsed this alliance, and the fact that what the gods say is always true and pleasant, there was a surge of affectionate feeling amongst the subjects of the two great kingdoms who rejoiced at this declaration by the gods.]¹ (7)

King Janak offered oblations and water to king Dasrath for washing his hands and feet, and then escorted the latter to the pavilion where the wedding was to be solemnized even as carpets were spread before Dasrath, one after another, as he moved forward towards the pavilion². (8)

[Note—¹Gods never tell a lie, and when the subjects of both the kingdoms heard that the gods have unequivocally supported and endorsed this alliance, all of them felt exceptionally happy. It was obviously a time to celebrate and rejoice.

²The same procedure was followed while Lord Ram was escorted to the pavilion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4, 8 that precede Doha no. 319.

We shall read a little later on that when a grand feast was organized for the grooms and their father king Dasrath along with all other members of the marriage party, carpets were spread all along the ground from their residences to the venue of the banquet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 328.]

छं०. मंडपु बिलोकि बिचित्र रचनाँ रुचिरताँ मुनि मन हरे । १ ।
निज पानि जनक सुजान सब कहुँ आनि सिंघासन धरे ॥ २ ॥
कुल इष्ट सरिस बसिष्ट पूजे बिनय करि आसिष लही । ३ ।
कौसिकहि पूजत परम प्रीति कि रीति तौ न परै कही ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

maṇḍapu bilōki bicitra racanām̐ ruciratām̐ muni mana harē. 1.
nija pāni janaka sujāna saba kahum̐ āni siṅghāsana dharē. 2.
kula iṣṭa sarisa basiṣṭa pūjē binaya kari āsiṣa lahī. 3.
kausikahi pūjata parama prīti ki rīti tau na parai kahī. 4.

The pavilion was astoundingly wonderful to behold and tastefully decorated. It was so magnificent and artfully decked up that its beauty stole (i.e. enchanted and captivated)

even the minds of sages (who are supposed to be immune to such worldly attractions). (Chanda line no. 1)

The wise and prudent king Janak had decorated thrones (seats or chairs that were specially designed and decorated for this occasion, had exquisite upholstery, and were very comfortable) brought in, and he placed them before the honoured guests himself¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Janak then worshipped and offered his obeisance to sage Vasistha the same way as he would have worshipped his family deity, seeking the sage's blessings which he got in unequivocal terms. (Chanda line no. 3)

After that, when he worshipped and offered his obeisance to sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), the intensity of his sense of gratitude and thankfulness for the sage was so intense that it cannot be described². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The king is called 'wise and prudent' because he knew royal protocol well as he laid out the chairs in proper order so that the guests were seated in accordance with their importance and place in the hierarchy of the royal family as well as the society. For instance, king Dasrath and his royal priest sage Vasistha, along with sage Vishwamitra and Vamdeo (pronounced "Vaamdeo") etc. were seated in the front row at the center, followed by the brothers of Lord Ram, senior members of the royal court including ministers, courtiers, Brahmins, other noble-men of Ayodhya and its principle citizens, and so on and so forth.

Another reason of calling Janak 'wise and prudent' is that he knows that one should personally serve sages and seers besides guests of honour such as king Dasrath and his close associates instead of delegating such service to servants and other attendants. This is the reason why Janak stood himself and supervised the laying out of chairs, and then personally escorting the guests to their respective seats according to standard practice of royal protocol of the kingdom of Janakpur.

Now, from the practical point of view it seems highly unlikely that no seat or chair was placed at the venue before the guests started arriving. It would be absurd and highly incredulous to imagine it. Then what is the meaning of Chanda line no. 2 that says that Janak himself brought the thrones and made the guests sit on them? Well, it simply means that he may have shifted the chairs a bit forward or sideways to make it easy to escort the guests to their respective seats and as a gesture that he was personally clearing the way for them. May be also that he had removed some seats to make more space between adjacent chairs so that the more important amongst the guests could sit more comfortably with more leg-space between them.

²Janak was overwhelmed with gratitude for Vishwamitra because it was he who had come to his rescue by ordering Lord Ram to break the bow so as to remove the dark cloud of gloom and desperation that had overpowered Janak when none of the kings could break the bow and a dark future for his beloved daughter Sita stared right on his face. Had it not been for sage Vishwamitra's proactive stand and decision to order Lord Ram to break the bow, the present environment of joy and happiness would have been non-existent. Instead, there would have been grief and lamentations all around.

It was sage Vishwamitra who had been instrumental in bringing Lord Ram, the personified form of Lord Vishnu, to the doorstep of Janak, something for which

great ascetics, hermits, sages and saints did severe Tapa (austerity and penance) but still would find difficult to achieve.]

दो०. बामदेव आदिक रिषय पूजे मुदित महीस ।
दिए दिव्य आसन सबहि सब सन लही असीस ॥ ३२० ॥

dōhā.

bāmadēva ādika riṣaya pūjē mudita mahīsa.
di'ē dibya āsana sabahi saba sana lahī asīsa. 320.

Then the king (Janak), who was euphoric with joy, duly worshipped and offered his obeisance to sage Vamdeo and other sages and seers who were present on the occasion. He gave them all magnificent seats befitting their stature, and got blessings from all of them in return. (Doha no. 320)

[Note—The king was very happy, or ‘euphoric with joy’, because great sages had collected to bless the occasion. Amongst them were great names such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra and Vamdeo. This was a rare privilege.

This Doha also indicates that Janak had first worshipped the two great sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra independently because they had a special relationship with Lord Ram, and then he worshipped the rest of the guest sages and seers led by Vamdeo together. After that, he ushered them to their respective seats.]

चौ०. बहुरि कीन्हि कोसलपति पूजा । जानि ईस सम भाउ न दूजा ॥ १ ॥
कीन्हि जोरि कर बिनय बड़ाई । कहि निज भाग्य बिभव बहुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahuri kīnhi kōsalapati pūjā. jāni īsa sama bhā'u na dūjā. 1.
kīnhi jōri kara binaya baṛāī. kahi nija bhāgya bibhava bahutāī. 2.

After offering his obeisance to the sages, Janak paid his respects to king Dasrath by duly worshipping him in a formal way and offering oblations to him with the same sincerity and reverence as he (Janak) would have offered to his family deity¹ (which in Janak’s case was Lord Shiva—“īsa”). Janak had no other thoughts in his mind while offering his respects to Dasrath². (1)

Janak humbly joined his palms in prayer and as a mark of respect for Dasrath, praising the latter’s high stature and extolling his glories, and acknowledging that his own honour, stature, rank and fortunes have been enhanced manifold by his association with the latter (Dasrath)³. (2)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is “Ish” which has two main meanings—Lord Shiva, as well as a revered God that a man worships. Hence, the verse means that Janak offered his respects to Dasrath with the same reverence with which he would have worshipped his family deity, or Lord Shiva who was also worshipped in the family of Janak.

In ancient societies, Lord Shiva was worshipped as a universal deity, and that is why Shiva has been honoured with the epithet 'Maha-Deva', the Great God, the God who supercedes all the others.

²Janak did not regard Dasrath to be an ordinary king or emperor, but as being equivalent to Lord Shiva himself. Why? It is because Shiva is the only deity, the only godhead who takes the creature away from entanglements of the mortal world and provides his soul with liberation and deliverance. Dasrath was the worldly father of Lord Ram, the incarnate Supreme Being, and hence he deserves being praised as the one who became instrumental in bringing the invisible Lord on this earth so that he becomes visible in the form of Lord Ram so that ordinary creatures who do not have access to high spiritual knowledge and wisdom, those who lack the wherewithal for liberation and salvation of their souls can at least now find deliverance from their worldly spiritual sufferings in a easy way by worshipping and having devotion for Lord Ram with whom they can easily identify themselves as opposed to the abstract and invisible form of the Supreme Being that goes beyond their comprehension.

Since Dasrath was the worldly father of Lord Ram who was an incarnation of the Supreme Being, the former's permission to the Lord to accept the alliance with Janak so that the latter could be in close proximity with a human form of the Lord was like fulfilling the desire of the soul of Janak to enjoy the bliss and happiness that comes with being near to the Lord, with being closely related and associated with the Lord. What more would Janak want than to have Lord Ram as his son-in-law, and for this he surely must treat Dasrath as being equivalent to Shiva who also takes the soul of the creature near to the Lord.

Remember: Lord Shiva provides the 'Tarak Mantra' to the dying man so that his soul finds liberation and deliverance from this body as well as the chance of rebirth in this world. And this 'Tarak Mantra' is the holy name of the Lord, which is the word "RAM" (pronounced as "Raam"). Dasrath has made this possible for Janak in physical and practical terms, and so he deserves no less respect and honour than that reserved for Lord Shiva.

³Janak has praised Dasrath by saying that his own reputation and stature has been enhanced by his association with the latter. This acknowledgement by Janak also goes to prove the point that Dasrath was a bigger and more powerful king than Janak. In other words, whereas Dasrath was a 'Charkravarti King' who was like an Emperor because his realm and reign spread in all the directions of the earth, covering a large circular area ("Chakra" = a circle) that constituted his kingdom (or empire), Janak's kingdom had a limited spread.

When a smaller or less important king manages to establish an alliance with a great emperor, naturally it is a matter of great pride and honour for the former. In this case the honour was all the more marked because it was a matrimonial alliance, and the emperor had come to the doorstep of the king instead of the other way round. So, Janak had felt humbled and grateful towards Dasrath.

Dasrath could have refused his permission to his son Lord Ram to marry into a junior family of king Janak because while Dasrath was a Chakravarti king, Janak wasn't. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 which explicitly honours Dasrath as being a 'Chakravarti King'. That he didn't and instead had himself come to attend the marriage at Janakpur made Janak overwhelmed with gratitude and exceptionally obliged and honoured.

In this context, please refer to the notes appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 286 as well as Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.]

पूजे भूपति सकल बराती । समधी सम सादर सब भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
 आसन उचित दिए सब काहू । कहौं काह मुख एक उछाहू ॥ ४ ॥
 सकल बरात जनक सनमानी । दान मान बिनती बर बानी ॥ ५ ॥

pūjē bhūpati sakala barātī. samadhī sama sādara saba bhāmṭī. 3.
 āsana ucita di'ē saba kāhū. kahaurṁ kāha mukha ēka uchāhū. 4.
 sakala barāta janaka sanamānī. dāna māna binatī bara bānī. 5.

After this, the king (Janak) duly offered his respects and worshipped all the rest of the members of the marriage party in all possible ways, with the same sincerity and diligence as he had offered to his son-in-law's father (i.e. king Dasrath). [In other words, every member of the bridegroom's party felt equally honoured as they were given equal treatment by Janak who did not allow even one of them to feel that he has been neglected or discriminated on account of rank or status in society.] (3)

He offered each one of them an appropriate seat¹. [Tulsidas says—] How can I describe the happiness and joy of those moments with a single mouth²? (4)

Janak honoured the whole of the marriage party with ample gifts, showing of respect, offering of prayers to them, and exchanging pleasantries and sweet words with all its members, attending to each of them individually³. (5)

[Note—¹We see here that though Janak had shown equal respect to every member of the marriage party as clearly said in verse no. 2, he chose to give them 'appropriate seats', i.e. seats that were in accordance to their stature and position in the royal hierarchy and society. This was necessary because showing equal respect to them was to honour all of them as welcome guests, but it was impractical to seat the king and his close family members with the ministers and courtiers and other members of his staff. That would be incredulous even to imagine, and tantamount to insulting and undermining the high stature of the king as well as blatant violation of royal protocol. That is why Janak has been called a 'wise and prudent' king in Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 320 herein above.

We shall read below that when the marriage party was invited by Janak to the grand wedding feast, there also he had first shown great respect to them by laying out a red-carpet welcome for them and washing their feet, and after that escorting them to their seats which were arranged in accordance to strict norms of social protocol—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 328.

²Earlier, Tulsidas has used the instance of the happiness and joy that surged in the heart of Sunayana, the mother of Sita, when she saw Lord Ram dressed up as a groom to say that she was so delighted and euphoric that even Seshnath, the legendary serpent with a thousand hoods, and therefore a thousand mouths and tongues, and goddess Sarda, the patron goddess of speech, would be unable to describe it even in thousands of years. Refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 318.

This is a standard practice adopted by Tulsidas—that when he wants to emphasise the immensity of some event or situation he says that one mouth or one tongue is insufficient to describe it. In simple words it means that words cannot narrate the truth and reality of a certain happening, they cannot fully transcribe the depth and dimension of the event because words have their own lingual limitations.

³Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.]

बिधि हरि हरु दिसिपति दिनराऊ । जे जानहिं रघुबीर प्रभाऊ ॥ ६ ॥
कपट बिप्र बर बेष बनाएँ । कौतुक देखहिं अति सचु पाएँ ॥ ७ ॥
पूजे जनक देव सम जानें । दिए सुआसन बिनु पहिचानें ॥ ८ ॥

bidhi hari haru disipati dinarā'ū. jē jānahim raghubīra prabhā'ū. 6.
kapaṭa bipra bara bēṣa banā'ēm̃. kautuka dēkhahim̃ ati sacu pā'ēm̃. 7.
pūjē janaka dēva sama jānēm̃. di'ē su'āsana binu pahicānēm̃. 8.

The Creator Vidhi (or Bidhi; i.e. Brahma), Hari (Vishnu), Har (Shiva), the Dikpals (custodians of all the ten directions of the world¹), and the Sun God—these gods and the rest of the gods who knew about the divine glories of Lord Ram (and the fact that he was an incarnate supreme Lord of creation) [6]—all of them assumed illusionary human forms as Brahmins to witness the divine spectacle and derive immense delight from it [7]. (6-7)

King Janak duly worshipped and honoured all these Brahmins, treating them to be equivalent to gods (though he did not realize that they were not ordinary Brahmins but actual gods in their forms). Janak worshipped them equally (because he was unaware of their true identity), and then he gave all of them comfortable seats#@². (8)

[Note—¹The 'Dikpals' are the following—Indra who is the king of Gods and who has a thousand eyes on his body, and is therefore called 'Sahastraaksha', Agni or the Fire God, Yam or the God of Dharma (i.e. the God responsible to ensure that the great tenets of righteousness and proper conduct are observed by the creatures, and to punish those who violate these laws), Niritiya (also known as Nairitya), Varun or the Water God, Anil or the Wind God, Indu or the Moon God, Ishan or Lord Shiva, Brahma the creator, and Anant or Lord Seshnath, the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its hoods and upon whom the supreme Lord Vishnu reclines in the celestial ocean (the word also refers to Vishnu himself in his infinite form as the Viraat Purush). Refer: *Ram Purva Tapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, Canto 4, verse nos. 38-39.

²All the gods had assumed illusionary forms of Brahmins, and all of them looked exactly alike. So, Janak could not know about their true identity, but nonetheless he worshipped all of them equally with due diligence. Then he seated them on seats that were all alike. In other words, Janak treated all the Brahmins equally, treating them as personified forms of gods, and therefore he neither discriminated in showing his respects to them, nor in the way he seated them.

Janak had not realized that the Brahmins he was worshipping and praying were not human beings, but were actually all the great gods in their forms. This was indeed a rare privilege for Janak because when one does any religious activity, he invokes the gods to come and accept his worship and offerings, but it is rare that the gods would actually come personally in physical form to accept the offerings and worship. If the worshipper's devotion, sincerity and spiritual level are high, the gods do come, but they do so in an invisible and subtle form, not actual physical form. But in the case of Janak this came to happen—the gods came down from the heaven personally to witness the events and participate in them, and to give Janak the honour of physically worshipping them personally.

We will read shortly that the goddesses who had assumed female forms and had also entered the household of Janak to be with Sita and accompany her to the marriage pavilion and throughout the marriage ceremony were also not recognized by anyone present there—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 322 below.

We have already read above that Janak had not distinguished between anyone while offering his respects to each member of the groom's party. When one worships, he usually keeps his sight low and concentrates his attention on the process of worshipping instead of looking up and staring at the face of the person or the deity honoured, because if he does so it would be wrong and equivalent to showing disrespect to the person or the deity worshipped. So, Janak could not realize, and neither did he had the time to scrutinize each member's identity to decide as to who was a human and who was a god amongst the large group of members of the marriage party whom he had to show individual attention and offer formal respects before the marriage rituals could get underway. Time was passing away fast, so he wanted to be done with this formal process of welcoming as quickly as possible so that the main function could start.

#An interesting principle emerges in this narration. When one shows his respects to the elders, the learned ones and honourable people in the society, one should not distinguish between them on the basis of caste, religion or creed. One must respect their excellent qualities, characters, knowledge, skills and good virtues rather than in which class they are born, or the colour of their skin, or their financial status, and so on.

The same thing applies to guests: all of them are equal and should be equally treated. No guest should be regarded as being inconsequential and less important than the others because one can never know which of these guests will be so pleased by his hospitality and feel obliged to him that later on in life when the host falls on bad times and needs some kind of help, the same humblest-amongst-the-guests would come forward to repay his moral debt to his former host by extending him support and giving him aid to the best of his ability and means at a time when the former host needs it most.

@Another interesting observation is this: Janak had not distinguished between the sages and seers when he worshipped them and seated them as narrated in Doha no. 320 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4. Once again he has worshipped and seated all the Brahmins equally as narrated in the present Chaupai line nos. 7-8 herein above. But though Janak had shown equal respect to all the members of the royal family of king Dasrath and the rest of the entourage consisting of the members of the marriage party, but when it came to allotting them seats he was very careful, and all

the members were allotted seats that were individually appropriate for them. This is clear in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 321.

Now, what does this mean? It simply means that Janak was a very wise and intelligent king (refer: Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 320) who knew very well the royal protocol, as well as the established customs and traditions of the society. He knew that all the members of a group of sages and seers as well as Brahmins should be treated equally, and that when each group is seated a similar seat is to be given to all the members of that group. But this does not apply to others. For members of the royal marriage party care was to be taken to respect royal hierarchy and position of the concerned person in the kingdom. For instance, it would be nonsense to seat a junior minister of the royal court alongside the king while his chief minister is given a seat far away! Likewise, a servant of the royal household cannot be expected to be seated alongside the master whom he serves.]

छं०. पहिचान को केहि जान सबहि अपान सुधि भोरी भई । १ ।
 आनंद कंदु बिलोकि दूलहु उभय दिसि आनंद मई ॥ २ ॥
 सुर लखे राम सुजान पूजे मानसिक आसन दए । ३ ।
 अवलोकि सीलु सुभाउ प्रभु को बिबुध मन प्रमुदित भए ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

pahicāna kō kēhi jāna sabahi apāna sudhi bhōrī bha'ī. 1.
 ānanda kandu bilōki dūlahu ubhaya disi ānamḍa ma'ī. 2.
 sura lakhē rāma sujāna pūjē mānasika āsana da'ē. 3.
 avalōki sīlu subhā'u prabhu kō bibudha mana pramudita bha'ē. 4.

Who had the inclination or the time to find out about others and recognize who they were when everyone was so ecstatic and lost in surging joy that they had lost awareness of their own selves? (1)

[This is because—] Both the sides (i.e. the bridegroom's side and the bride's side) were very jubilant and euphoric as they watched the groom (Lord Ram) who was a personified form of bliss and happiness. (2)

When the wise Lord Ram saw and recognized the gods (who were disguised as Brahmins and seated with other members of the marriage party), he mentally worshipped them all, and then offered them symbolic seats to show respect to them^{#1}. (3)

When the gods observed how Lord Ram had mentally worshipped and showed his respects to them, all of them felt delighted and praised the gentle manners, the courteous nature and the congenial temperament of the Lord². (4) [Chanda line nos. 1-4.]

[Note—¹Lord Ram could recognize the gods because he was the Supreme God to whom all the rest of the gods paid their obeisance. It was on their request that he had decided to become a human being to free the earth of its burden of cruel demons. Lord Ram had divine penetrating sight that was able to transcend human boundaries

and limitations of vision. So the Lord could see who the Brahmins actually were, that they were gods in their forms, whereas Janak could not recognize them.

We have already read that goddesses had also assumed the form of women-folk and quietly slipped in to mingle with the female members of Janak's household to closely enjoy and participate in the marriage rituals of Sita and Lord Ram. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 318.

When one worships one's deity, he prays to the latter, and then offers the deity a seat so that it can be seated respectfully. Lord Ram mentally worshipped all the gods who were present on the occasion in the form of Brahmins, and then he offered them symbolic seats to show his respects to them. The occasion was formal, and the Lord could not get up from his seat to overtly welcome the gods. So he welcomed them in a symbolic way at the mental level.

#A very interesting thing is to be noted here. Lord Ram has offered his mental respects to the gods who had come to attend his marriage ceremony in the form of Brahmins as narrated in the present Chanda no. 3, but the Lord did not do so with the other sages and seers such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra and Vamdeo etc. This would be clear if we read relevant verses once again, viz. Doha no. 320 along with Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede it. The question is—why did Lord Ram not pay his respects to these sages and seers as he had done with the gods? The answer is to be found earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 308. Lord Ram pays his due respect to sage Vasistha and all the other sages, seers and Brahmins who had come with the marriage party along with his father Dasrath at the time the Lord had met them when he had gone to meet his father. The gods had not accompanied Dasrath from Ayodhya, but they came directly to the marriage pavilion. Hence, there was actually no necessity for showing respect to these sages and seers again because they had already been duly respected. Repeating the same process would be too superfluous. On the other hand, since the gods had come for the first time, the Lord felt it necessary to show them his respects, which he does in the present verse.

²Lord Ram was the lord of the world, and as such there was no real necessity for him to offer his worship to these gods who were much junior to him in the hierarchy of the heaven and of creation at large. But the Lord did it because of his polite nature, to show to the world that anyone in the form of a Brahmin must be shown respect, and also because he thought that he must thank the gods for coming to his marriage function.]

दो०. रामचंद्र मुख चंद्र छबि लोचन चारु चकोर ।
करत पान सादर सकल प्रेमु प्रमोदु न थोर ॥ ३२१ ॥

dōhā.

rāmacandra mukha candra chabi lōcana cāru cakōra.
karata pāna sādara sakala prēmu pramōdu na thōra. 321.

Everyone present on the occasion gazed unblinkingly at the beautiful and graceful moon-like face of Sri Ram-Chandra¹, drinking cheerfully and with the greatest of affection drank the nectar of beauty that dripped from it and deriving immense

pleasure from it just as the Chakor bird watches enraptured at the moon and derives intense happiness from it. (Doha no. 321)

[Note—¹The selection of the name ‘Ram-Chandra’ for Lord Ram fits in excellently with the metaphor of the moon and the bird Chakor used in this Doha. The word “Chandra” prepares the reader to visualize the Lord’s face as being equivalent to the moon. Just as this bird Chakor gazes with great affection at the full moon, all those present at the venue watched Lord Ram most lovingly. Again, just as the Chakor not willing to look at anything else as long as the moon shines in the sky, and following the course of the moon as it traverses across the sky from the eastern to the western horizon, all those who were present at the venue kept their eyes fixed on Lord Ram, following each of his movements so transfixed were they as they watched the beautiful and charming form of the Lord that enthralled the mind and captivated the heart of the beholder.]

चौ०. समउ बिलोकि बसिष्ठ बोलाए । सादर सतानंदु सुनि आए ॥ १ ॥
बेगि कुअँरि अब आनहु जाई । चले मुदित मुनि आयसु पाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sama'u bilōki basiṣṭha bōlā'ē. sādara satānandu suni ā'ē. 1.
bēgi ku'amri aba ānahu jāī. calē mudita muni āyasu pāī. 2.

When Vasistha (the royal priest of king Dasrath and the one who presided over the marriage rituals, representing the groom’s side) saw that the auspicious time for the wedding rituals has arrived, he respectfully called in Satanand (the royal priest of king Janak, who would assist Vasistha and represent the bride’s family during the rituals). When Satanand heard the call (that he is being summoned by Vasistha), he came there, showing due respect too (to Vasistha). (1)

Vasistha requested him—‘Bring the bride soon (as the time for the performance of the rites has arrived)’.

When Satanand heard this instruction of the sage, he immediately went from there with a gladdened heart (to go and usher in the bride, Sita). (2)

[Note—After everyone was duly seated and the auspicious moment arrived, sage Vasistha summoned his counterpart, sage Satanand, and requested him to bring the bride to the pavilion at the earliest so the rituals of the marriage can be commenced. Satanand was waiting for this instruction, so he felt very happy.]

रानी सुनि उपरोहित बानी । प्रमुदित सखिन्ह समेत सयानी ॥ ३ ॥
बिप्र बधू कुलबृद्ध बोलाई । करि कुल रीति सुमंगल गाई ॥ ४ ॥

rānī suni uparōhita bānī. pramudita sakhinha samēta sayānī. 3.
bipra badhū kulabṛd'dha bōlā'īm. kari kula rīti sumaṅgala gā'īm. 4.

When the wise and intelligent queen¹ heard the words of the royal priest (Satanand), she, along with her companions, was exuberant with joy. (3)

She summoned wives of Brahmins (of the kingdom) and elder female members of the family. All joined together in properly completing the different customs and traditional rites of the family and the society even as they sang auspicious songs befitting the joyful occasion. (2)

[Note—¹As with the case of king Janak, queen Sunayan is also ‘wise and intelligent’. She knows the way such occasions are to be properly handled. She maintains her calm and poise; she summons not only the Brahmin wives but also the elders of the family, neglecting none. All of them joined hands in completing the formalities and rituals so that nothing was missed out. If one lady forgot something, others stepped in to complete the process.

There is another reason for calling the queen ‘wise and intelligent’. We shall read in the next couple of verses (Chaupai line nos. 5-7 herein below) how the different consorts of gods, known as the ‘Shaktis’, had assumed the form of human females and entered the royal household imperceptibly to join in the celebrations and participate in the performance of rituals that are exclusively done by the female members of the bride’s family. At that time the queen had recognized these divine consorts of various gods, and had honoured them with the same respect as she would have extended to the senior goddesses such Uma, Rama and Sarada, though others present on the occasion could not recognize them. This clearly indicates that the queen was intelligent and wise enough to quickly recognize some divine traits in some of the ladies in her group and determine that they were not human beings but some divine Being in human form. So, in spite of not knowing the identity of each single goddess, she nevertheless decided to honour all of them equally and with the same reverence as she would show to senior goddesses.]

नारि बेष जे सुर बर बामा । सकल सुभायँ सुंदरी स्यामा ॥ ५ ॥
तिन्हहि देखि सुखु पावहिं नारीं । बिनु पहिचानि प्रानहु ते प्यारीं ॥ ६ ॥
बार बार सनमानहिं रानी । उमा रमा सारद सम जानी ॥ ७ ॥
सीय सँवारि समाजु बनाई । मुदित मंडपहिं चलीं लवाई ॥ ८ ॥

nāri bēṣa jē sura bara bāmā. sakala subhāyam̐ sundarī syāmā. 5.
tinahi dēkhi sukhu pāvahim̐ nārīm̐. binu pahicāni prānahu tē pyārīm̐. 6.
bāra bāra sanamānahim̐ rānī. umā ramā sārada sama jānī. 7.
sīya samvāri samāju banāī. mudita maṇḍapahim̐ calīm̐ lavāī. 8.

All the different Shaktis (i.e. the goddesses; the consorts) of gods who had assumed the form of human females (like the gods themselves who had also assumed the form of Brahmins) to join in the celebrations, looked naturally lovely and youthful to behold¹. (5)

The women-folk of the royal household, including the elders, as well as the wives of Brahmins (who had been invited by the queen to participate in the marriage ceremony) felt delighted to see them (i.e. the Shaktis in human forms) in their midst.

Though they could not recognize these Shaktis², they nevertheless developed a natural bond of love and affection for them so much so that began to hold them dearer than their own lives. (6)

The queen repeatedly showed her respects to them and regarded them as being equivalent to personified forms of Uma (the divine consort of Lord Shiva), Rama (goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu) and Sarada (pronounced 'Saardaa'; i.e. goddess Saraswati), the divine consort of Brahma, the creator)³. (7)

These female friends decorated Sita beautifully in fine bridal gear, adorning her in all the best of finery, and in all possible ways. Then they formed a group around her and cheerfully escorted her to the marriage pavilion⁴. (8)

[Note—¹When the gods descended upon earth in the form of humans, disguised as Brahmins, to join in the celebrations accompanying Lord Ram's marriage, their counterparts, the 'Shaktis' or the different goddesses, too decided to join them. So these Shaktis assumed the form of females and entered the household of Janak.

Remember: The senior goddesses such as Uma, Rama and Sarada had already come to join the royal family as clearly said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 318. These senior goddesses had accompanied the queen when she escorted Lord Ram to the pavilion—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4 and 8 that precede Doha no. 319.

So this means that these goddesses were present in the marriage pavilion to attend to the groom because it is a tradition that once the groom enters the pavilion and gets seated, he is not left alone but is attended by some of the female members of the bride's side. Therefore, when Satanand asked the queen to get Sita ready and send her to the pavilion, the rites that were to be performed prior to Sita going to the pavilion were immediately, and the junior goddesses helped the queen complete them. These goddesses would then not only escort Sita to the pavilion but accompany her throughout the ceremony because they decided to assume the role of the bride's friends.

²Besides these Shaktis in human forms, there was a large number of ladies present on the occasion, such as wives of Brahmins, both young and elderly female members of the royal household, and other ladies who had been invited as guests. None of them could recognize these goddesses; none could know that some of the members of the crowd are not humans but divine Beings.

³The fact that the queen could realize that some members of the ladies' group are consorts of various gods, something others could not, is the reason why she has been honoured as being 'wise and intelligent' in Chaupai line no. 3 herein above. Once she recognized these special members of the group, she honoured them and treated them with the same respect as she would have done with Uma, Laxmi and Saraswati who are the three senior-most goddesses in the heavenly hierarchy of goddesses because they are the divine consorts of senior gods Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma respectively.

⁴Who were these friends of Sita who adorned her and accompanied her to the marriage pavilion? Well, the answer is obvious—'the Shaktis of the various gods who had assumed human female forms' as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 above.

Elderly ladies are not expected to accompany a bride to her marriage pavilion, and so are the wives of Brahmins who too are not expected to do so. Brahmin women are respected but they cannot act as ‘friends’ of the bride because this role is like an attendant who has to take care of everything related to bride, such as holding her hands, picking up her garments if they drag on the ground or get stuck somewhere, helping her with the manual tasks associated with the elaborate rituals, and so on.

Hence, the group of ladies that escorted Sita to the pavilion consisted of the goddesses who had come to attend the ceremony disguised as human beings.]

छं०. चलि ल्याइ सीतहि सखीं सादर सजि सुमंगल भामिनीं । १ ।
 नवसप्त साजें सुंदरीं सब मत्त कुंजर गामिनीं ॥ २ ॥
 कल गान सुनि मुनि ध्यान त्यागहिं काम कोकिल लाजहीं । ३ ।
 मंजीर नूपुर कलित कंकन ताल गति बर बाजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

cali lyā'i sītahi sakhīm sādara saji sumaṅgala bhāminīm. 1.
 navasapta sājērṁ sundarīm saba matta kuṅjara gāminīm. 2.
 kala gāna suni muni dhyāna tyāgahim kāma kōkila lājahim. 3.
 maṅjīra nūpura kalita kaṅkana tāla gati bara bājahim. 4.

Sita’s friends and other ladies collected auspicious materials needed for the occasion and respectfully escorted Sita to the pavilion. (Chanda line no. 1)

All of them, the friends as well as the ladies who had accompanied Sita, were fully decorated in all the sixteen types of adornments traditionally regarded as complete decoration of a female body¹. All of them were lovely to look at and walked with a graceful gait that resembled the confident majestic swagger with which an adult healthy elephant walks. (Chanda line no. 2)

They sang with such a sweet voice and melodious tone that when sages and hermits heard them their meditation was disturbed (i.e. they could not remain aloof to such charming songs and attractive voices, and failed to maintain their concentration during meditation)².

Likewise, the cuckoo³ that represented Kamdeo or cupid (the god who excelled in casting his spell of charm and passion on others by a variety of means, and singing sweet songs was one of the methods he used) felt shamed and humbled by the sweetness and the mellifluous nature of the songs that these ladies sang. (Chanda line no. 3)

As these ladies walked, the pleasant sound of tinkling and clinking that emanated from their anklets, their waist-bands, and the bangles that they wore worn around their wrists, resonated perfectly with the tune of their songs⁴. (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 297 in this context.

²We can read this part of the verse as follows—“When the sages and hermits heard these ladies singing in a sweet and mellifluous tone, they found it hard to maintain their concentration and remain indifferent to the inherent charm of the songs. As a result they felt obliged to forego their meditation and listen to the songs instead.”

Well, this is just a way to highlight the sweetness and the beauty of the way the marriage songs were being sung, and not to actually refer to any sage or hermit whose meditation was disturbed at that time by hearing of these songs. Remember that it was the marriage pavilion, and not a hermitage in the forest where any sage or hermit could be imagined to be meditating! It’s simply a figure of speech to describe the pleasant environment of the occasion where the sound of soft music and sweet songs wafted soothingly through the atmosphere much like the case of sweet fragrance of flowers in full bloom that completely permeates the surroundings in a garden to welcome a guest warmly.

³The cuckoo is reputed to be a bird with a sweet voice. The companions of Sita sang so melodiously that even the cuckoo felt humbled and abashed because it was no match for the way these ladies sang. All its pride and reputation as the bird with the sweetest voice was crushed and set aside.

⁴It appeared that these ornaments took up the role of musical instruments as no such instrument is mentioned here. Music and song go hand-in-hand, and if one is absent the other loses its charm. They are complimentary to each other. When the ladies walked, these ornaments shook and rubbed against each other, producing a rustling sound. Tiny bells that were attached to the anklets, the waist bands and the bangles also chimed sweetly. The net affect was that together they produced a sound that filled in the vacuum created by the absence of formal musical instruments.

Hence, the soft sound coming out of the ornaments worn by the ladies complimented the songs they sang, and for all practical purposes they provided the music component of the songs.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 230 where the ornaments of Sita are described when she came to the garden where Lord Ram and Laxman had first seen her.

Similarly, when the ladies of Janakpur had gone to welcome Lord Ram as he arrived on his horse for the wedding ceremonies, the same type of ornaments are mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 318.

Refer also to “Geetawali Ramayan”, Uttar Kand, verse no. 18, stanza no. 5, line no. 2.]

दो०. सोहति बनिता बृंद महँ सहज सुहावनि सीय ।
छबि ललना गन मध्य जनु सुषमा तिय कमनीय ॥ ३२२ ॥

dōhā.

sōhati banitā bṛnda mahum̐ sahaja suhāvani sīya.
chabi lalanā gana madhya janu suṣamā tiya kamanīya. 322.

Sita, who was inherently endowed with natural beauty of exceptional finesse, looked most magnificent and fabulous in the midst of lovely ladies who were themselves

most charming and attractive as if the virtues of beauty, finesse, refinement, grace and magnificence have personified themselves in the form of Sita to take a pride of place amongst a horde of such glorious qualities which too had taken human forms as the companions of Sita. (Doha no. 322)

[Note—What an excellent analogy indeed. All virtues are excellent in themselves, but each individual person possesses them in varying degrees, and no two individuals in this mortal gross world can be expected to have exactly the same degree of excellence and divine virtues in them. So this Doha means that all the companions of Sita were beautiful—remember, they were personified forms of goddesses and other divine Beings as clearly indicated in Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede this Doha no. 322, and therefore there is no doubt that they were beautiful—but their beauty and magnificence was a notch inferior to that of Sita. Remember that Sita was a personified form of the Shakti of Brahm, the Supreme Being and the Lord of all gods and creation. She therefore personified the best of all virtues in their finest forms.

Let us understand this verse with an example. It is like the case of a collection of golden ornaments—one piece has 24 carate gold of the finest variety, the finest refinement with no impurities, while the other samples also have gold but of slightly low fineness besides having traces of impurities. Now, externally one would not be able to distinguish between these samples, but an expert would know the difference. When the ornament of the purest gold is kept in a collection of golden ornaments of varying qualities and purities of the metal, how would an expert describe this collection? He would use the same method employed by Tulsidas here to point out the piece of ornament that has the best quality of gold in it.

In simple terms it means that all the ladies were very charming and attractive to look at, but Sita stood out amongst them as being special. This is expected from a practical point of view also—after all, she was the bride, and a bride is especially decorated for such occasions; special attention is obviously paid to her and she is at the center of all activities. The bride looks special in the group of ladies that accompanies her because of her unique bridal adornment and the way she is given special attention and ceremoniously conducted by others.

Thus, Sita looked special in the group of magnificent ladies who escorted her to the marriage pavilion; she became the cynosure of all eyes.]

चौ०. सिय सुंदरता बरनि न जाई । लघु मति बहुत मनोहरताई ॥ १ ॥
 आवत दीखि बरातिन्ह सीता । रूप रासि सब भाँति पुनीता ॥ २ ॥
 सबहि मनहिं मन किए प्रनामा । देखि राम भए पूरनकामा ॥ ३ ॥
 हरषे दसरथ सुतन्ह समेता । कहि न जाइ उर आनँदु जेता ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

siya sundaratā barani na jā'ī. laghu mati bahuta manōharatā'ī. 1.
 āvata dīkhi barātinha sītā. rūpa rāsi saba bhām'ti punītā. 2.
 sabahi manahim mana ki'ē pranāmā. dēkhi rāma bha'e pūranakāmā. 3.
 haraṣē dasaratha sutanha samētā. kahi na jā'ī ura ānam'du jētā. 4.

[Verse nos. 1-8 describe the moments when Sita was escorted to the wedding pavilion by her companions.]

The beauty, majesty, elegance, charm and glamour of Sita were so astounding and profound in nature that they defy description. My wit and abilities are very limited and insufficient while her beauty and elegance were so great that it is beyond me to as much as even hint at them in words, let alone describe them and do justice to them¹. (1)

The members of the groom's party watched her mesmerised as she arrived at the venue, in all her royal regalia and finesse. She was an epitome of purity and a treasury of the virtues of beauty, charm, elegance, majesty and glamour of the highest quality. (2)

All of them bowed to her mentally and paid their obeisance to her. Meanwhile, Lord Ram felt fulfilled and happy in his heart when he saw her². (3)

King Dasrath, along with his other sons (i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan), felt very happy, and the extent of joy in his heart was so immense that it is not possible to describe it in words³. (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 230 which say that when Lord Ram had first seen Sita in the royal garden he was stunned by her beauty and charm. (ii) Again, everyone was dumbfounded by her beauty when she came to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 247 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Later on in the story of the Ram Charit Manas we will read that Lord Ram had himself acknowledged that Sita was a treasury of Gunas (excellent qualities and virtues) as well as of Sundartaa (beauty)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 30. This verse refers to the time when Sita was abducted by Ravana and Lord Ram grieved for her.

²Lord Ram felt contented and happy in his heart because he had fulfilled the desire in the heart of Sita to marry him. The Lord, left to his own self, is neutral and dispassionate and very conscientious about his behaviour (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 231, and (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 237; (c) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 48; as well as (d) Ayodhya Kand, line no. 1 of Doha no. 31). But he feels that it is his duty to oblige those who love him and have surrendered themselves to him—and he prefers to go the extra mile for his devotee and those who love him.

Sita had decided that if she has to marry then she will marry Lord Ram and no one else. She had mentally surrendered herself to the Lord and had fervently prayed to goddess Parvati to let this happen—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 235—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 236; (b) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 259 which are very explicit on this subject.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 103—104.

Lord Ram had to honour her determination because the Lord had himself declared that if one surrenders to him completely then he is bound to accept him or her irrespective of all other considerations—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 48 in the context of Vibhishan when he had come to surrendered to the Lord and seek his protection, and (ii) Uttar

Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 46 where Lord Ram preaches his subjects about the importance of Bhakti or devotion.

³The king and Lord Ram's other two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, were seeing Sita for the first time. Laxman had already seen her closely every time Lord Ram had the opportunity to see her. Dasrath was happy to see that his daughter-in-law is so holy, pure and beautiful to look at as any father would be, and Bharat and Shatrughan were pleased to have such a nice sister-in-law.

Dasrath's sons were the most beautiful and handsome princes of the time, and so naturally he expected that his daughter-in-law would also be equally beautiful and charming so that she looks a fitting companion for his beloved son Ram.]

सुर प्रनामु करि बरिसहिं फूला । मुनि असीस धुनि मंगल मूला ॥ ५ ॥
गान निसान कोलाहलु भारी । प्रेम प्रमोद मगन नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

sura pranāmu kari barisahim phūlā. muni asīsa dhuni maṅgala mūlā. 5.
gāna nisāna kōlāhalu bhārī. prēma pramōda magana nara nārī. 6.

Meanwhile, the gods bowed their heads in reverence and showered flowers upon her. There was a loud chorus of auspicious words of benediction and expression of satisfaction as the learned sages and seers too blessed her simultaneously¹. (5)

There was a loud symphony of music from melodious songs being sung and kettle-drums being played simultaneously. All the citizens, both the males and the females², were overwhelmed with joy and rejoiced at those happy moments. (6)

[Note—¹When the gods feel delighted, they express their happiness by showering flowers and playing their musical instruments in the heaven, while the elderly sages and seers do so by blessing those with whom they are pleased.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 that describe the scenario at the time when Lord Ram was escorted to the pavilion and made to sit down on the designated seat. Here also the gods have showered flowers and the sages and seers have chanted auspicious blessings.

²The words used in the text are 'males and females'—'Nar' and 'Naari'. The males included the residents of Janakpur as well as those guests who had come from Ayodhya with the marriage party. The females were only those who lived in Janakpur—because females do not accompany marriage parties that go from the groom's place to the bride's place.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 319 that describe the scenario at the time when Lord Ram was escorted to the pavilion and made to sit down on the designated seat. We observe that both the moments have been described by Tulsidas using similar language to emphasise that the celebrations and rejoicings had continued uninterrupted from the moment Lord Ram stepped into the pavilion till this moment when Sita came, and they continued henceforth also.

There was dancing and singing in the city. Everyone rejoiced, and the happiness seemed to be infective and all-pervading. The sound was so deafening that one could not hear what others were saying.]

एहि बिधि सीय मंडपहिं आई । प्रमुदित सांति पढ़हिं मुनिराई ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि अवसर कर बिधि व्यवहारू । दुहुँ कुलगुर सब कीन्ह अचारू ॥ ८ ॥

ēhi bidhi sīya maṇḍapahim āī. pramudita sānti paṛhahim munirāī. 7.
tēhi avasara kara bidhi byavahārū. duhum^o kulagura saba kīnha acārū. 8.

In this way, Sita arrived at the marriage pavilion even as the sages and seers read (chanted; read aloud in chorus) the hymns of the Vedas, known as ‘Shanti Paath’¹. (7)

During those moments, the two Gurus (preceptors) of the two royal families (i.e. sages Vasistha and Satanand who were the royal priests of the kingdoms of Ayodhya and Janakpur respectively, and who were presiding over the rituals on behalf of the two families) performed all the necessary rituals and ceremonies as required to be done in accordance to tradition and custom of the society as well as ordained by the scriptures². (8).

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 that describe exactly the same thing when Lord Ram had arrived at the pavilion.

This verse concludes the narration that started in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 322.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 302. The entire formal process is detailed in Valmiki’s version of the Ramayana, in its Baal Kand, Canto 73, verse nos. 19—24.

Let us read what these verses say—“The great sage and ascetic Vasistha prepared a sacrificial altar at the center of the pavilion in accordance to the prescription of the scriptures regarding its construction, location and preparation. This altar was duly decorated on all the four sides with flowers and plastered with a paste of sandalwood. After this, fresh sprouts were placed in golden plates, jars of varying colours, and earthen pots and placed around this altar. Other things that were placed around the sacred altar were the following—vessels containing incense and other fragrances, conch-shells that would be sounded at strategic moments as well to be used to place sprouts, wooden spatulas and ladles that would be used to offer libations of clarified butter etc. to the sacred fire during the rituals, other vessels some of which were filled with water to offer as oblations to the different deities who would be worshipped, while others that contained parched paddy flakes, grains of rice and dried grass upon which the fire would be placed once it is lit.”

Since the rituals are headed by the priest of the groom’s side, sage Vasistha led the ceremonies, and sage Satanand helped him along.]

छं०. आचारू करि गुर गौरि गनपति मुदित बिप्र पुजावहीं । १ ।

सुर प्रगटि पूजा लेहिं देहिं असीस अति सुखु पावहीं ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

ācāru kari gura gauri ganapati mudita bipra pujāvahīm. 1.
sura pragaṭi pūjā lēhīm dēhīm asīsa ati sukhu pāvahīm. 2.

*The Gurus (Vasistha and Satanand) performed all the rituals according to established custom. The Brahmins (who were helping him in the process as his assistants) cheerfully helped him conduct the worship of Gauri (goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) and Ganesh (the son of Lord Shiva and the god who is offered first worship during any religious ceremony).

[*This line can be read in a different way as follows—“After the two Gurus completed the initial formalities that are done at the beginning of such ceremonies as marriage, they made the couple, Lord Ram and Sita, worship goddess Gauri, god Ganesh, and other Brahmins who were present there.”

The Brahmins are regarded as being equivalent to gods-on-earth, as the ‘Mahi-surs’ = earth + god, so they are universally worshipped with the same reverence as shown to gods of the heaven. Worshipping Brahmins is treated as offering obeisance to personified gods.^{1]} (Chanda line no. 1)

The gods who were invoked for the purpose of worship actually manifested themselves to personally accept the offerings. While doing so, they profusely blessed and showered their benediction (on the couple, Lord Ram and Sita)². (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—¹Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 295 where we have read how the queen-mothers had offered their respects to the Brahmins at Ayodhya when they learnt about Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita; and (i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321 where king Janak has offered his worship to the gods who were disguised as Brahmins.

These Brahmins are referred to as being personified forms of Gods on earth, the “Mahi-surs”—refer: Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319. This is based on the fact that when the gods and goddesses wished to assume human forms to come down to earth to participate in the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, they chose to become Brahmins—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318; and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321.

We shall read below in Doha no. 323 that even the Vedas had assumed the form of Brahmins to take active part in the ceremonies.

²We have already read that the three chief gods, i.e. Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, along with the patron gods of all the directions as well as the Sun God had disguised themselves as Brahmins who were worshipped by Janak. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321.

The gods were willing to accept the worship and the offering as they felt very honoured and lucky to be a part of the celebrations that marked the union of the cosmic Lord in the human form of Lord Ram with his Shakti in the form of Sita. It was a rare conjunction and a rare phenomenon. Everyone wanted to be part of this history-in-the-making.]

मधुपर्क मंगल द्रव्य जो जेहि समय मुनि मन महँ चहैं । ३ ।
भरे कनक कोपर कलस सो तब लिएहिं परिचारक रहैं ॥ ४ ॥

madhuparka maṅgala drabya jō jēhi samaya muni mana mahum̐ cahaim̐. 3.
bharē kanaka kōpara kalasa sō taba li'ēhim̐ paricāraka rahaim̐. 4.

Whatever sweets (known as “Madhu-purk”¹) and auspicious items that were needed for the rituals² by the sages (Vasistha and Satanand who were performing the marriage rites) were instantly made available to them whenever they asked for them by the attendants who stood ready with golden pots and pitchers filled with such requirements. (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹“Madhu-purk” = This is a sweet concoction made from curd, honey, clarified butter, water and sugar, a total of 5 ingredients. This mixture is offered to deities during worship, and to honourable guests when they arrive at the host’s doorstep.

²Many things are needed during the course of the rituals—such as water from different pilgrim places and holy rivers, various other assorted offerings that are to be made to the fire sacrifice, such as sandalwood, fragrances and incense, Kush grass, clarified butter, honey, herbs of different kinds, firewood and so on. All these things were kept ready and dedicated attendants stood at attention to provide them to the two priests as and when they were required.]

कुल रीति प्रीति समेत रबि कहि देत सबु सादर कियो । ५ ।
एहि भाँति देव पुजाइ सीतहि सुभग सिंघासनु दियो ॥ ६ ॥

kula rīti prīti samēta rabi kahi dēta sabu sādara kiyō. 5.
ēhi bhām̐ti dēva pujā'i sītahi subhaga siṅghāsanu diyō. 6.

The Sun God (who was the patron deity of the Solar Race to which Lord Ram belonged) himself directed the rituals by giving advice and pointing out which rite was to be performed when, and how it was to be done. The priests obeyed his instructions and performed the rituals as directed by the Sun God. (Chanda line no. 5)

In this way, after the sages (Vasistha and Satanand who were presiding the ceremony) made Sita offer worship to the gods, she was made to sit down on the designated magnificent throne (seat) that was reserved for her. (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—Verse no. 6 implies that till this point, the rituals that were done were the initial ones that are performed when the bride enters the pavilion, and they were all done while she was standing. Once this was completed, Sita was escorted to the seat reserved for her.]

सिय राम अवलोकनि परसपर प्रेमु काहु न लखि परै । ७ ।

मन बुद्धि बर बानी अगोचर प्रगट कबि कैसें करै ॥ ८ ॥

siya rāma avalōkani parasapara prēmu kāhu na lakhi parai. 7.
mana bud'dhi bara bānī agōcara pragaṭa kabi kaisēm karai. 8.

The subtle love that flowed between Lord Ram and Sita as they affectionately glanced at each other was so sublime in dimension that it was imperceptible to others (i.e. those present on the occasion could not realise that they were looking at each other secretly, by the corners of their eyes, and these glances filled both of them with love and affection of the purest kind for each other). (Chanda line no. 7)

It was beyond the grasp and understanding of the best of mind, intellect and speech. Say then, how can a humble poet ever describe it or even as much as come near to its depth, intensity, purity and dimension. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—In other words, even the wisest men present on that occasion could not fathom the dimension, the depth and the intensity of the sublime quality of love and affection that existed between Lord Ram and Sita at that time. This being the case, Tulsidas says that he is unable to narrate it because he is merely an ordinary poet of no great expertise with words or intelligent enough to fathom it. This observation of Tulsidas points to his sense of humility and modesty.

Besides this aspect of his character, he also refrains from describing the love and affection between Lord Ram and Sita because he treats the Lord as his revered deity and god, and so would not like to say anything that may be indecent, look immodest, and violative of norms of the society which require that love and affection between married couples are their private and personal affair, and should not be the subject of public scrutiny or comment as it would be indecent and uncivilised by nature to do so, and intrusive as well.]

दो०. होम समय तनु धरि अनलु अति सुख आहुति लेहिं ।
बिप्र बेष धरि बेद सब कहि बिबाह बिधि देहिं ॥ ३२३ ॥
dōhā.

hōma samaya tanu dhari analu ati sukha āhuti lēhim.
bipra bēṣa dhari bēda saba kahi bibāha bidhi dēhim. 323.

At the time of offering libations to the sacred fire, the Fire God revealed himself personally to accept the offerings very cheerfully.

Meanwhile, the Vedas assumed the form of Brahmins to give detailed instructions and help conduct all the rituals personally. (Doha no. 323)

[Note—So we see here that besides the gods, even the Vedas and other scriptures had personified themselves as Brahmins to help with the rituals.

While the other gods who had assumed human forms had done so participate in the divine ceremony and rejoice the events, the Vedas assumed the role of priests that actually do the rituals. This ensured that every step was done to perfection.]

चौ०. जनक पाटमहिषी जग जानी । सीय मातु किमि जाइ बखानी ॥ १ ॥
 सुजसु सुकृत सुख सुंदरताई । सब समेटि बिधि रची बनाई ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

janaka pāṭamahīṣī jaga jānī. sīya mātu kimi jā'i bakhānī. 1.
 sujasu sukṛta sukha sundaratāī. saba samēṭi bidhi racī banāī. 2.

The queen¹ of king Janak (named Sunayana) is well-known in the world (for her virtuousness and excellent qualities). Say, who can describe her glories, especially when she has the rare honour to be the mother of Sita². (1)

It appears that Vidhi (the Creator) had collected all the glories, all the meritorious deeds, all the happiness and bliss, as well as beauty and majesty that he had created in this world and moulded them in her form. [In other words, the queen was a personified form of all these qualities.]³ (2)

[Note—¹The word used in the text for Sita's mother is "pāṭamahīṣī", which means the queen who sits with the king on the throne, and who is the 2nd in line of command after the king himself. The word technically means a 'chief queen', but no account is available that Janak had more than one wife as compared to his counterpart, king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram and son-in-law of Janak, who had three senior queens—Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. In the case of Dasrath, the position of the "Paat-Mahisi" belonged to Kaushalya, the mother of Lord Ram.

²Sita is a personified form of 'Shakti', the dynamic cosmic powers of the supreme Lord. To be known as the 'mother of this Shakti' is indeed a rare honour. Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 16 which praises Kaushalya in similar terms for getting the honour to become the 'mother of Lord Ram', the Lord of creation. Even Janak, the worldly father of Sita, has this unique privilege, and is duly acknowledged in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310.

³Similar praise has been given to the parents of Lord Ram in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 16 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.]

समउ जानि मुनिबरन्ह बोलाई । सुनत सुआसिनि सादर ल्याई ॥ ३ ॥
 जनक बाम दिसि सोह सुनयना । हिमगिरि संग बनी जनु मयना ॥ ४ ॥

sama'u jāni munibaranha bōlā'īm. sunata su'āsini sādara lyā'īm. 3.
 janaka bāma disi sōha sunayanā. himagiri saṅga banī janu mayanā. 4.

When the appropriate time arrived (i.e. when the mother of the bride's presence was felt necessary in the conduction of the rituals), the sages (Vasistha and Satanand who were conducting these rituals as presiding priests) called for her. When the virtuous companions and friends of the queen got this summon, they cheerfully escorted her to the pavilion. (3)

Sunayana sat by the left side of Janak, and the couple looked as glorious and majestic as when Mayana had sat by the side of Himgiri (during the wedding of Lord Shiva with Parvati, the divine Mother of creation)¹. (4)

[Note—¹This entire episode of Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati) is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 65—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 103.

More specific verses that describe exclusively the divine marriage of Shiva with Parvati appear in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 99—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 101.

Mayana was Parvati's mother, and Himgiri, the king of the snow-covered Mountains, was her father. During the process of the wedding rites, both the parents of the bride must sit together at the time of the crucial phase known as “Kanyaa-Daan”, which literally means ‘donating or giving away the girl’. A detailed note on this ritual is appended to Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 324 herein below.]

कनक कलस मनि कोपर रूरे । सुचि सुगंध मंगल जल पूरे ॥ ५ ॥
निज कर मुदित रायँ अरु रानी । धरे राम के आगें आनी ॥ ६ ॥

kanaka kalasa mani kōpara rūrē. suci sugandha maṅgala jala pūrē. 5.
nija kara mudita rāyam' aru rānī. dharē rāma kē āgēm ānī. 6.

Golden pitchers that were filled with auspicious water that was scented and had been brought from pilgrim places, and were covered on the mouths with plates full to the top with priceless gems¹ [5], were brought by the king and queen with their own hands and placed before Lord Ram (as part of the rituals) [6]. (5-6)

[Note—¹The plates full of gems were used as lids for the pitchers filled with holy water brought from pilgrim places and scented by addition of fragrances.

There is another way of interpreting and reading verse no. 5. The plates were studded with gems and made of gold. These were to be used to wash the feet of the groom as part of the rituals. The scented water in the golden pitchers was to be used for this washing. The plates were used as lids to cover the mouths of the pitchers, but when the washing was to start they would be placed below the feet of the groom and the water from the nozzle or the spout of the pitcher would be poured on the feet. The water that flowed would be collected in the plates with high rims. In this interpretation, this verse no. 5 would read as follows—“Golden pitchers were filled with auspicious water that was scented and had been brought from pilgrim places, and they were covered on their mouths with golden plates that were studded with gems [5]”.]

पढ़हिं बेद मुनि मंगल बानी । गगन सुमन झरि अवसरु जानी ॥ ७ ॥
बरु बिलोकि दंपति अनुरागे । पाय पुनीत पखारन लागे ॥ ८ ॥

[Note—¹How lucky was Janak indeed! He had this once-in-a-lifetime rarest-of-rare opportunity to wash the holy and revered feet of the supreme Lord of creation which the greatest of sages, seers, ascetics and hermits would die to do but never get the chance. Come to think of it, even Dasrath who was so profoundly blessed as to have the Lord as his son did not do this in his lifetime. Well, what is the reason; what can be the cause?

The answer is this—in terms of spiritual enlightenment, wisdom regarding the ultimate Truth that leads to self-realisation, in-depth knowledge of the principles of metaphysics and spirituality, Janak was very highly elevated and had reached the pinnacle of realization, and Dasrath was no match for him. This will be very clear if we analyse the events narrated in the story of the Ramayana.

When Janak had first met Lord Ram while welcoming sage Vishwamitra, he had expressed his astonishment at his mental and emotional condition when he saw the Lord. He was surprised how his mind that was supposed to be neutral to all worldly attractions and remain eternally dispassionate and detached had suddenly developed a strong bond of love and affection for Lord Ram at first sight. He had then unable to suppress his amazement and had openly asked Vishwamitra why was it that his Mana (mind and heart) that was immersed in the bliss of Brahm-realisation had become so attracted by the charm of Lord Ram, something that was not in his nature, and therefore it was surely something that had more in it than what met the eye. Though sage Vishwamitra did not give a direct reply but his agreeing with the king was enough of a hint that Janak was right to deduce that Lord Ram was not an ordinary prince but a personified form of Brahm, the Supreme Being. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Doha no. 216. This approval of the sage made Janak very satisfied.

This is one of the reasons why he did not felt angry or offended when Laxman had embarked on an angry tirade against him in open court when Janak had declared that since no competitor had been able to break the bow he considers that the earth is devoid of brave and strong warriors, inspite of the fact that Lord Ram had not even been invited to go and try his hand at the bow, and the mighty sage Vishwamitra was present at the venue. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Doha no. 253. Why? Because Janak knew that Laxman was not a human prince, but a personified form of Seshnath, the legendary serpent on whose coiled body Lord Vishnu reclines on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as 'Kshir Sagar', and who holds the earth on his thousand hoods. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 197.

The irony of the matter is that Dasrath was so overwhelmed by the dark shadow of Maya of the Lord, i.e. the Lord's delusion creating powers, that prevented Dasrath from realizing the truth about the Lord and remaining mired in worldly ignorance, thinking the Lord to be his 'son' like an ordinary human father would. Dasrath had forgotten that Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu who had descended upon earth with a clear divine mission of clearing the menace of demons from the world. Dasrath thought that Ram was his son, his heir who should ascend the throne of Ayodhya, rule over the kingdom, produce sons to carry over the family line, spread the fame of the family and so on and so forth like an ordinary father would expect. This would be crystal clear at two points of time—

(i) When sage Vishwamitra had gone to request him to send Lord Ram to the forest to eliminate the demons so that the fire sacrifices of sages could be completed unhindered, Dasrath had bluntly refused. Like an ordinary man, he would not allow

his sons to go to the forest to face the cruel demons and suffer harm. He did not realize that Lord Ram's chief mission in this world was to eliminate the demons, and this was the first step. It was then that sage Vasistha had to intervene and make him change his mind. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 208.

(ii) The second time when we find Dasrath showing his ignorance of who Lord Ram actually was is when he was on his death-bed and wailing for 'his son' who had gone to the forest. Dasrath wailed and grieved, repeatedly calling out the name of Ram, his 'son', and declaring that he cannot live without seeing him like an ordinary father. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155. If the king had realized that he whom he calls his 'son' is not a human prince but the Lord of the world who has many more important things to do than to be at his beck-and-call at Ayodhya so that the old king can see him daily by his side, Dasrath would not have lamented the way he did, but would have rather waited patiently for the Lord to finish off his assignment for which he had descended from heaven upon the earth.

²If we understand the importance and significance of this occasion as explained above, we will also understand the reason for the exuberant celebrations, in the heaven as well as on the earth. Everyone praised Janak and Sunayana and applauded their good fortune that they were able to wash the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Vishnu in the form of Lord Ram. This will be evident immediately below in the following verse nos. 3-8 below.]

जे पद सरोज मनोज अरि उर सर सदैव बिराजहीं । ३ ।

जे सकृत् सुमिरत बिमलता मन सकल कलि मल भाजहीं ॥ ४ ॥

जे परसि मुनिबनिता लही गति रही जो पातकमई । ५ ।

jē pada sarōja manōja ari ura sara sadaiva birājahīm. 3.

jē sakṛta sumirata bimalatā mana sakala kali mala bhājahīm. 4.

jē parasi munibanitā lahī gati rahī jō pātakamaī. 5.

[The following verse nos. 3-8 build up on the first verse that says that king Janak and queen Sunayana had begun washing the feet of Lord Ram. Were these ordinary feet they were washing? Well, to answer this question, these verses outline the glories, divinity and importance of the holy feet of the Lord, and in a way praise the immense good fortune and rare luck that Janak and Sunayana had that they had been able to hold in their hands and wash the holy feet of the supreme Lord of creation for which every living being would sacrifice everything if they had been given this rare chance, a chance which eludes even the greatest of sages, saints, hermits and ascetics.]

The holy and divine feet (of Lord Ram) which eternally bloom like a beautiful lotus flower in the lake-like heart of Lord Shiva who has conquered 'Manoj', the god of passions (and therefore is deemed to practice exemplary self-control over his sense organs as well as his emotions and thoughts having their center in the heart and the mind respectively)¹, ----(Chanda line no. 3)

The Mana (mind and heart) becomes purified and cleaned of all worldly taints and delusions associated by the current age of Kali-yug by remembering these holy feet (of Lord Ram) even once------(Chand line no. 4)

By touching this holy and divine feet (of Lord Ram), even the sinful wife of the sage (i.e. Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam) attained liberation for her self.²------(Chanda line no. 5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 328.

Lord Shiva has many names, and ‘the Lord who had conquered, the Lord who had overcome the wild inciting gestures of the god of passion, known as Kamdeo (cupid; “*manōja ari*”)', is one of them. This entire episode of why and how this happened is narrated while describing the story of Lord Shiva’s marriage with Parvati in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 82—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 88.

The heart of Shiva—or, for that matter, of all living beings—is envisioned as a lake in which numerous desires and yearnings live like aquatic animals living in water. These animals continuously keep churning the water, never letting it rest so that the dirt floating in it cannot have any chance to settle down at the bottom and make the surface of the water clean. The very presence of these aquatic animals makes the water of the lake polluted and dirty. The same thing applies to the creature—as long as he is not able to control his natural desires, yearnings, tendencies, emotions and inclinations, his heart can never find peace and rest.

The greatest turbulence in the water of this lake-like heart is created by Kamdeo, the personified form of a creature’s natural impulses, inclinations and passions, the desire for self-gratification and satisfying the urges and the needs of the sense organs. The only possible way is to consciously subdue Kamdeo, overcome his enticements and allurements, and rebuff him and his gestures by practicing self-control and keeping a tight leash on one’s own self. One who has conquered Kamdeo is the greatest conqueror in this world because Kamdeo is the most formidable enemy for the creature’s peace of mind and happiness.

The metaphor of the lotus is universally used in the ancient scriptures to describe something that is very pure and clean inspite of living in an unclean environment. This is because the dirty water of the pond or the lake does not cling to the petals of the lotus flower inspite of the latter living in this surrounding; the lotus always remains clean and pure irrespective of the pollution of the water of its habitat, the lake or the pond.

Living of Lord Ram in the form of a lotus flower in the lake-like heart of Lord Shiva who is a conqueror of Kamdeo means that both Lord Ram and Lord Shiva are free from the corruptions associated with this world. Lord Ram is eternally divine and holy as symbolized by the purity and cleanliness of the lotus flower, and Lord Shiva too is holy and clean because he has been able to conquer Kamdeo, the chief polluter of the Mana (heart and mind).

Lord Shiva is the greatest devotee of Lord Ram. This fact has been acknowledged by Lord Ram himself and the Lord has reciprocated Shiva’s dedication and devotion by declaring that if anyone wants to have Bhakti (devotional access) for Lord Ram then he must first have Bhakti for Lord Shiva, because without the blessings of Shiva it is not possible to have Bhakti for Lord Ram. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, (i) Lanka Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that

precedes Doha no. 2—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 45.

This divine story known as Ram Charit Manas which describes the worldly deeds of Lord Ram who was a personified form of the Supreme Being was in fact conceived or revealed first in the heart of Lord Shiva. He had then divulged it to his divine consort Parvati as well as to Kaag-Bhusund (the saint-crow) from whom it passed down to sage Yagyawalkya, Bharadwaj and other sages living on earth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 30.

Lord Shiva constantly repeats the holy name “RAM” (pronounced ‘Raam’) in his heart as the only Mantra, a spiritual formula, which can provide eternal bliss, peace and happiness, a formula that provides liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation, a formula that gives beatitude and felicity to the soul of the creature. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 8 that precede Doha no. 19.

²This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211. Please refer to the relevant verses and the notes accompanying them.]

मकरंदु जिन्ह को संभु सिर सुचिता अवधि सुर बरनई ॥ ६ ॥
करि मधुप मन मुनि जोगिजन जे सेइ अभिमत गति लहैं । ७ ।
ते पद पखारत भाग्यभाजनु जनकु जय जय सब कहैं ॥ ८ ॥

makarandu jinha kō sambhu sira sucitā avadhi sura barana'ī. 6.
kari madhupa mana muni jōgijana jē sē'i abhimata gati lahaiṁ. 7.
tē pada pakhārata bhāgyabhājanu janaku jaya jaya saba kahaiṁ. 8.

The gods have praised and adored the holiness and the purity of the nectar (i.e. the water of the holy river Ganges) flowing out of these lotus-like feet (of Lord Ram) that was shown so much reverence by Lord Shiva that he decided to keep it on his head (as a mark of showing the greatest of respect to it).¹------(Chanda line no. 6)

Sages and hermits transform their Mana (mind and heart) into a black-bee so as to be able to drink (soak-in; remain submerged and engrossed in the thoughts of) the nectar of these holy feet (of Lord Ram), while ascetics attain anything they want or achieve their desired spiritual goals and objectives by serving them (i.e. having devotion for and meditating upon them).²------(Chanda line no. 7)

It is the same holy and divine feet (of Lord Ram) that Janak was holding today and affectionately washing them with his own hands with the greatest of reverence. How fortunate and lucky was he! Everyone¹ (the gods as well as the humans) acknowledged this in a unanimous voice, repeatedly hailing him and his good luck (as well as the accumulated effects of his meritorious deeds that had made this happen)³. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹The ‘nectar’ flowing out of the lotus representing Lord Ram’s holy feet refers to the river Ganges which is also called the ‘river of gods’. The gods revere it so much that when Ganges descended upon the earth from heaven, Lord Shiva

decided to keep it on his head as a mark of showing respect to it and prevent it from getting dirty or polluted by coming in touch with earth which is gross and dirty.

Sage Vishwamitra had told the story of river Ganges to Lord Ram and Laxman when they were on their way to Janakpur. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 212, along with their accompanying notes.

²The sages concentrate their minds and focus their thoughts on the holy feet of Lord Ram to derive immense spiritual bliss, felicity and beatitude from it just like the bee that first hovers over the lotus flower and then slowly settles on it to enjoy drinking its sweet nectar. Once the bee is attracted to the lotus flower and tastes the nectar, it does not like being disturbed; it becomes oblivious to the world outside. Similar condition prevails with the sages and the hermits: once they hitch their mind on the holy feet of Lord Ram even by conscious effort, the rest becomes very easy for them. The intensity and depth of the bliss and ecstasy that they get is so magnetic and profound that they don't have to prod their mind and heart any further to love Lord Ram and remain focused on his holy feet. It becomes natural and a latent habit with them.

The same principle applies to the ascetics. They follow the path of Yoga and Dhyan which entails intense meditation and concentration respectively. These paths are rigorous and need a lot of effort. But if they focus their attention on the holy feet of Lord Ram as a means of doing Yoga and Dhyan, the path becomes very easy for them, because whereas pure Yoga and Dhyan are tough exercises requiring a lot of practice and being alert against their many pitfalls and dangers, having devotion for the holy feet of Lord Ram serves the same purpose but without its attendant hassles.

³Refer Chanda line nos. 1-2 herein above in this context, and the meaning becomes clear. When Janak had started washing the feet of Lord Ram, there was a symphony of songs, music and loud applause in 'the city and the sky or heaven'. It means both the 'humans' and the 'gods' had joined in praising him in the 'city' and the 'heaven' respectively.]

बर कुअँरि करतल जोरि साखोचारु दोउ कुलगुर करैं । ९ ।

भयो पानिगहनु बिलोकि बिधि सुर मनुज मुनि आनँद भरैं ॥ १० ॥

bara ku'am̐ri karatala jōri sākhōcāru dō'u kulagura karaim̐. 9.

bhayō pānigahanu bilōki bidhi sura manuja muni ānam̐da bharaīm̐. 10.

As part of the wedding ritual, the two family Gurus (i.e. sages Vasistha and Sadanand acting on behalf of kings Dasrath and Janak respectively) made the groom and the bride join the palms of their hands with each other while they (the Gurus) read the family genealogy of the two sides¹. (Chanda line no. 9)

When the groom and the bride had touched each other's palms (as a token or gesture of 'union, closeness, obliteration of distance between the two, and equal partnership in thick and thin of future life')², everyone who saw this glorious event—the creator Vidhi, the gods, and the humans who were present on the auspicious occasion—was filled with great happiness and euphoria. (Chanda line no. 10)

[Note—¹This process is called “Saakho-chaar”—a ritual that involves reciting the names of prominent members of the two families of the groom and the bride while they hold hands or touch each other’s palms in a symbolic gesture of union or closeness. This gesture symbolically establishes a union between the two families by virtue of this marriage. This unification is done with all the guests as witnesses, and they are deemed to have ratified this union.

²The ritual when the groom accepts the hands of the bride is called “Paani-grahan”—‘accepting’ her ‘hands’. It is a symbolic gesture that implies that the boy has accepted the girl as his life-time partner and both of them will share the joys and sorrows of life equally.

In the context of Lord Ram and Sita, it was a union of Brahm with his Shakti represented by Lord Ram and Sita respectively. The touching of their hands also meant that now-onwards they will jointly strive to fulfill the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the gods and mother earth that he will free them from the horrors of the demons. Therefore, it was now their joint responsibility, and not only that of Lord Ram.

This is why the Creator and the gods rejoiced, and the sages and other humans joined them in rejoicing as they represented the earth.]

सुखमूल दूलहु देखि दंपति पुलक तन हुलस्यो हियो । ११ ।
करि लोक बेद बिधानु कन्यादानु नृपभूषन कियो ॥ १२ ॥

sukhamūla dūlahu dēkhi dampati pulaka tana hulasyō hiyō. 11.
kari lōka bēda bidhānu kan'yādānu nrpabhūṣana kiyō. 12.

When the royal couple (i.e. king Janak and queen Sunayana) saw the groom who was like a root from which all happiness and bliss originated (and then sprouted into a huge tree to benefit the whole world), they were very thrilled in their bodies and their hearts were overwhelmed (with love, affection, bliss and euphoria)¹. (Chanda line no. 11)

Then the king (Janak) who was like a gem in the community of kings (i.e. who had excellent qualities and was most virtuous amongst all the kings), observed all the social customs and norms dictated by the Vedas to formally hand over the bride to the groom in a ritual called ‘Kanyaa-Daan’². (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—¹Another way of reading this verse is: “When the royal couple watched the groom who was a fountain of happiness and bliss, their bodies were thrilled and their hearts heaved with the emotions of love, affection and ecstasy.”

King Janak had conceded that Lord Ram was so charming to look at that it seems he empowers the virtue of ‘Anand’ (bliss, joy and happiness) itself to enable it to give bliss and happiness to others. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 217. In other words, Lord Ram is a ‘root’ from which the tree of bliss and happiness grows.

²“kan'yādāna”—During the process of the wedding rites known as “Kanyaa-Daan”, which literally means ‘donating or giving away the girl’, both the parents of the bride

must sit together at the time of the crucial phase. It's called a "Daan" because once when someone 'donates' something, or gives a "Daan", he relinquishes all his rights over the item donated or given away to other in charity. The bride's parents have no right over their daughter after marriage. She even has to forgo her ancestral family name and instead assume the title of her husband, creating an absolutely new identity for herself. This is the greatest sacrifice one can make—to part with the daughter forever is like cutting-off one fraction of their own being as far as the parents of the bride is concerned. The girl has the genes of her parents running in her bloodstream, and so she symbolically is a 'part of her parent's existence in this world'. But suddenly she—as well as her parents—has to snap this tie. Imagine how painful would it be for you if any part of your being is suddenly cut-off? The great king Dadhichi had 'donated' his bones to the gods for making their weapons, especially the Vajra of Indra, with which they defeated the demons. Giving away of the beloved daughter whom the parents have reared from day one of her birth with all care and love a parent can only give, is not a mean sacrifice to do, and this is why this step of the wedding is known as "Kanyaa Daan".

The presence of both the partners, the mother and the father of the girl, is obligatory to ensure that both their consent is given for this ritual.

The ritual of Kanyaa-daan and Paani-grahan are undertaken simultaneously and compliment each other. While 'Paani-grahan' means the bride's hand and responsibility for her well-being has been willingly accepted by the groom, 'Kanyaa-daan' means that her father has willingly given her to the groom forever, and he will never claim any right over her or any material wealth that she would inherit from the side of the groom's family in future.

Refer also to another of Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal" that is exclusively dedicated to this theme of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita. Kanyaa Daan is narrated in brief in its verse no. 144.]

हिमवंत जिमि गिरिजा महेसहि हरिहि श्री सागर दई । १३ ।

तिमि जनक रामहि सिय समरपी बिस्व कल कीरति नई ॥ १४ ॥

himavanta jimi girijā mahēsahi harihi śrī sāgara da'ī. 13.

timi janaka rāmahi siya samarapī bisva kala kīrati na'ī. 14.

In the manner Himwant (the king of the Mountains) had given his daughter Girija (Parvati) in marriage to Lord Mahesh (Shiva)¹, and Sagar (the celestial ocean) had given Sri (Laxmi) to Hari (Lord Vishnu)² (Chanda line no. 13), ---

--- Janak submitted (or gave) his daughter Sita to Lord Ram in marriage³, an event which bestowed upon him unprecedented glory and fame that spread world-wide⁴ (Chanda line no.14).

[Note—¹This is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precedes Doha no. 101. During the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati, who was also known as "Girija" because she was the daughter of Giri, the king of Mountains, the same process as narrated while Lord Ram was married to Sita was followed then. Since there is a similarity between the two marriages, Lord Shiva's marriage is recalled here.

²This incident refers to the time when the celestial ocean was churned by the gods and the demons in search of Amrit, the nectar of eternal life. Amongst other items that were produced by this churning was Laxmi. She was the daughter of Sagar, the ocean, because she emerged from it. Later on, Laxmi was married to Lord Vishnu. This incident is referred to in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas, in its Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 54—54½ .

³Refer Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", line nos. 1-2 of Chanda no. 18 where exactly the same idea is conveyed.

⁴Just as Himwan got world-wide fame that has lasted from time immemorial by being the father-in-law of Lord Shiva, and Sagar due to being Lord Vishnu's father-in-law, king Janak acquired world-wide eternal fame of an unprecedented nature by becoming the father-in-law of Lord Ram.

Lord Ram's glory and fame was well-established by now. He had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva in an assembly that was attended by thousands of kings and princes where none of them was able to as much as move the bow even an inch in spite of their best of efforts, what to imagine of breaking it. Immediately after that, sage Parashuram had come angrily to wreak revenge for this breaking of the bow, but not only could he not harm Lord Ram but in the end had to submit before the Lord, surrender his own bow to him, and ask for forgiveness. All these incidents have already been narrated earlier in this Kand. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262; and from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285 respectively.)

The fame and glory of Lord Ram was no less than that of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. While on the one hand Lord Ram resides in the heart of Lord Shiva as the latter's revered deity, on the other hand he is a manifested form of Lord Vishnu himself. Therefore, marrying his daughter to such a famous and glorious prince as Lord Ram naturally helped to spread king Janak's own fame along with that of the Lord's because of the ties created by this marriage.

The parents of Sita (i.e. king Janak and queen Sunayana) knew very well about the glories and divine mission of Lord Ram on this earth as proclaimed by the famous sage Yagyawalkya who was a frequent visitor to the court of king Janak and also happened to be the latter's Guru, and was repeated by the queen herself by citing the sage. These two facts are clearly available in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 285; and (ii) Brihad Aranyak Upanishad of Shukla Yajur Veda, Canto 4, Brahmans 1-2.

Further, Janak has declared the fact that he knows everything about who Lord Ram was and why did he marry Sita in Adhyatma Ramayan at the time of departure of the marriage party from Janakpur for Ayodhya after the marriage ceremonies were over. Refer: Veda Vyas' "Adhyatma Ramayan", Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 63-66.]

क्यों करै बिनय बिदेहु कियो बिदेहु मूरति सावँरीं । १५ ।

करि होमु बिधिवत गाँठि जेरी होन लागीं भावँरीं ॥ १६ ॥

kyōm̄ karai binaya bidēhu kiyō bidēhu mūrati sāvam̄rīm̄. 15.
kari hōmu bidhivata gām̄ṭhi jōrī hōna lāgīm̄ bhāvam̄rīm̄. 16.

Janak was so enchanted and overwhelmed by the beguiling beauty of the dark-complexioned form of the Lord (Sri Ram) that he was dazed so much that he lost awareness of his surroundings and forgot that it was the time to offer formal prayers or respects to the groom.

[The king continued gazing at the bewitching beauty of the face of Lord Ram and was so enamoured by it that he virtually forgot that time was passing away and he was expected to perform the next step in the wedding rituals, which was to offer prayers or respects to the groom. However, he recovered himself after some time and continued with the ceremonies as follows—] (Chanda line no. 15)

Oblations and libations were duly offered to the sacred fire (a process known as “Homa”) in the proper traditional way as sanctioned in the Vedas and other scriptures.

When these were completed, the ends of the marriage robes of the bride and the groom were tied together, and the couple went around the sacred fire several times (i.e. did circumambulation of the sacred fire in a rite known as “Bhaanwari”). (Chanda line no. 16)

[Note—Bhhanwari is also narrated by Tulsidas in his other books describing the story of the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita—viz. (i) “Geetawali” of Tulsidas describes this rite of ‘Bhaanwari’ in its Baal Kand, verse no. 105, stanza no. 3; and (ii) “Janki Mangal”, a book exclusively dedicated to this theme of Lord Ram’s marriage, in its Chanda no. 18, line no. 3.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 325 that appear herein below.

Circumambulation of the sacred fire is done so as to make it a witness to this union of the boy and the girl as well as the marriage vows both of them take. ‘Fire’ is the most potent and the purest of all the deities, and it is able to burn all that is dirty and impure while leaving untouched the pure and the truthful. In this material world it is evident when a goldsmith puts a sample of gold in the fire—the fire burns all the impurities that may be present in the sample, but it does not touch the raw metal or affect its purity.

The process of Bhaanwari is a warning to the couple that both of them are obliged to adhere to the vows they have taken in the presence and witness of the sacred fire, and be warned that this powerful fire element is very dangerous and unforgiving as it does not tolerate nuisance of any kind. Let them be warned that they would be scorched to death should they take this warning lightly in their lives and play fools with this sacred witness of the Fire God!

From the perspective of metaphysics, this process when applied to Lord Ram and Sita assumes a profound meaning. Lord Ram was a personified form of ‘Brahm’, the Supreme Being who is also known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, the all-encompassing, all-pervading and immanent macrocosmic invisible form of the Super Consciousness—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 72 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.

Now, according to the Upanishads, Brahm does not do anything himself, but he employs his ‘Maya Shakti’, which is Brahm’s dynamic, almighty, cosmic power that is also responsible for creation of delusions, to do whatever he wishes. It is this Maya Shakti of Brahm that keeps the wheel of creation rotating endlessly. It is also

said that Maya is a maidservant of Brahm and follows the instructions of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 71. The servant cannot be superior to the Master, and a loyal and faithful servant is one who always ‘follows’ his Lord.

Another important point to remember is that Brahm and Maya are inseparable because if Brahm wishes to ‘do anything’ he will have to take recourse of seeking help from Maya who obediently obeys him—an euphuism for ‘following Brahm’.

Then again, the ‘tying of the ends of the wedding robe of Lord Ram and Sita’ prior to the Bhaanwari procession as mentioned in Chanda line no. 16 here also symbolizes this relationship between Brahm and Maya—‘they are tied and invariably associated with each other; Brahm cannot do his worldly duties without an explicit support of Maya, and neither would Maya have any existence and value without being associated with Brahm’.

As we progress with the story of Ramyana we discover the importance of this association and the role it plays in the fulfillment of the divine mission of Lord Ram. It was Sita’s abduction by Ravana that led to the final elimination of the cruel demons by Lord Ram. Without Sita the story would have been completely different.

Besides the elimination of the demons, Sita played a stellar role in establishing the glory and fame of Lord Ram. It was during the bow-breaking ceremony related to her marriage that the world came to know who Ram was. It was in her marriage ceremony that the Lord had broken the formidable bow of Lord Shiva which not even the mightiest and strongest of other kings or princes who had come from all corners of the world could do, thereby establishing the Lord’s glory and dynamic abilities in this world in an irrefutable way. The world then began to recognize that Lord Ram was the most able and strongest warrior with no one to match him in this world. His glory was further enhanced when he had as easily and comfortably vanquished the haughtiness of sage Parashuram who was renowned as the killer of the warrior race.

So we see that Sita had been instrumental in establishing Lord Ram’s fame and glory in this gross world even as Maya had helped Brahm at the cosmic level to unfold his potentials and miraculous abilities by creating magic-like delusions and the world of infinite variations.

This Maya is very powerful, and once it was let loose by Brahm it became a virtual Frankenstein Monster because it got hold of Brahm himself. This development is metaphorically depicted in the process of ‘Bhaanwari’. So we discover that a reversal of roles takes place once this Brahm decides to assume a gross form like any other living being of this world by employing his own Maya to hide the truth of his form. That is, only a few enlightened and self-realised persons knew who Ram actually was, for the majority of the population he was the son of Dasrath, the prince of Ayodhya and the groom and the husband of Sita.

The fine distinction between Brahm in his subtle and sublime cosmic form, and in his gross worldly form as Lord Ram becomes evident once we closely examine this single process of ‘Bhaanwari’. Whereas Maya is the one who follows Brahm in the Lord’s cosmic form, the process is reversed when the same Brahm assumes a gross body and steps into this gross world of delusions to become a human being in the form of Sri Ram, the prince of Ayodhya, who got married to the princess of Janakpur, known as Sita. As a human he is the one who follows Maya—symbolised by the bride that leads this circumambulation process with the groom following her from behind during the first four rounds around the sacred fire while doing Bhaanwari.

But after the first four rounds, the groom takes the lead with the bride following him from behind during the last three rounds. There are a total of seven rounds around the sacred fire.

That is, first it was Sita who was followed by Lord Ram during the first four rounds, and then the places were reversed and Lord Ram led the circumambulation. This implies that after Brahm realized that his Maya has started to get the better of him, he ordered Maya to go behind him. That is, Brahm stepped in and brought Maya under his control before the things got out of control.

From practical point of view this process of Bhaanwari tells us that even if we are deluded in the early phases of our existence in this world because we are overcome by the influence of Maya as soon as we get involved in the affairs of this gross world symbolized by marriage which robs the man and the woman of their independence, the sooner we wake up to the truth and reality and overcome the effects of Maya the better it is for us. Though Maya has forced us to follow it in the beginning of our worldly existence, we can always put it behind us and force it to follow us should we decide to become wise and enlightened by shunning delusions and worldly attachments.]

दो०. जय धुनि बंदी बेद धुनि मंगल गान निसान ।
सुनि हरषहिं बरषहिं बिबुध सुरतरु सुमन सुजान ॥ ३२४ ॥

dōhā.

jaya dhuni bandī bēda dhuni maṅgala gāna nisāna.
suni haraṣahim̐ baraṣahim̐ bibudha surataru sumana sujāna. 324.

At that time there was a loud cacophony of sounds consisting of praises and hailings from royal minstrels and bards, the chanting of the verses from the Vedas (by the Brahmins), the singing of auspicious songs befitting the occasion (by professional singers as well as women-folk of the kingdom), and the playing of musical instruments such as the kettle-drums.

When the immortal gods (who were watching the proceedings from the heaven) heard this symphony of sounds from their position in the sky (heaven)¹, they felt exhilarated, and showered the best of flowers² plucked from the evergreen tree that grows in heaven (which is known as the “Sur-Taru²”; the tree of paradise; Sur = god; Taru = tree). (Doha no. 324)

[Note—¹We have read that the gods had assembled in the sky in their aerial vehicles to watch the divine spectacle of the union of Lord Ram with Sita in a formal ritual that is known as ‘marriage’ in this world. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 314.

²At that time also they had showered flowers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 142.]

चौ०. कुअँरु कुअँरि कल भावँरि देहीं । नयन लाभु सब सादर लेहीं ॥ १ ॥
जाइ न बरनि मनोहर जोरी । जो उपमा कछु कहौं सो थोरी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

ku'amŗu ku'amŗi kala bhāvamŗi dēhīm. nayana lābhu saba sādara lēhīm. 1.
jā'i na barani manōhara jōrī. jō upamā kachu kahauṁ sō thōrī. 2.

As the distinguished groom (“Kunwar; ku'amŗu”) and the bride (“Kunwari; ku'amŗi”) performed the ritual of ‘Bhaanwari’ (“bhāvamŗi”) with graceful steps (as described above in note of Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 324 herein above), all those present on the occasion enjoyed the wonderful sight with great affection, and felt honoured to be able to witness it¹. (1)

[Tulsidas says—] ‘The divine couple (i.e. Lord Ram and Sita) was so beguilingly beautiful to behold and enchanting to look at that it mesmerized the onlooker and held him in thrall. Whatever comparisons I may try to make will fall short of expectations and cannot do justice to the reality.’² (2)

[Note—¹It was a divine spectacle of extraordinary beauty when the supreme Lord of creation in the form of Sri Ram was followed by his Shakti in the form of Sita as they went around the sacred fire in a rite of marriage known as “Bhaanwari”.

It was not always that one could witness such a rare and wonderful spectacle. Therefore, all those who watched it regarded themselves as very fortunate. And to see anything one has to have ‘eyes’, so this is the reason why the ‘eye’ has been singled out in this verse for thanksgiving. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 317 which describe how the different gods had felt lucky themselves and had envied each other’s ability to watch the beauty of Lord Ram more clearly and with extra eyes as the Lord was going to the marriage pavilion astride his horse.

²Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse nos. 105—106.

Tulsidas breaks from the narrative to add a comment from his own side. A poet or author would use a metaphor or simile to try to give an idea about the thing, person or event he or she is describing by comparing it with some other entity or thing or event that is well known and universal so that the reader can get a rough picture about what is being said of the subject under discussion. For instance, we say ‘white as milk’, ‘brave as a lion’, ‘bright as daylight’, ‘chirpy as a bird’, ‘tall as a mountain’, or ‘beautiful as a garden of fresh, blooming flowers’, ‘beautiful as the sky seen during the sunset or sunrise’, ‘beautiful as a rose flower’, ‘cold as ice’, ‘fresh as the morning dew’, and so on.

What Tulsidas means here is that the sight of Lord Ram and Sita standing together in all their fine wedding robes, displaying finesse and grace of the highest degree, was astoundingly fabulous and marvelous to look so much so that it enamoured the mind and the heart of all those who watched them, keeping everyone dazed and amazed. The view was so beautiful that it defied description, and it is impossible therefore to compare it with anything known to this world because there is nothing in this gross mortal world that can be used to compare the sublime and subtle beauty of the couple. In terms of beauty, grandeur, glamour, charm and magnificence, Lord Ram and Sita were matchless, unique and one of their own kind. The best of metaphors and similes would fall short of the expected mark and would give a wrong impression of the intensity and depth of the heavenly beauty of Lord Ram and Sita as it appeared at that time.

However, Tulsidas attempts to try to give an idea of the beauty of the couple in the following verse nos. 3-4 herein below, but immediately follows it by pointing out its flaws or shortcomings in next verse no. 5.]

राम सीय सुंदर प्रतिछाहीं । जगमगात मनि खंभन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
मनहुँ मदन रति धरि बहु रूपा । देखत राम बिआहु अनूपा ॥ ४ ॥
दरस लालसा सकुच न थोरी । प्रगटत दुरत बहोरि बहोरी ॥ ५ ॥

rāma sīya sundara pratichāhīm. jagamagāta mani khambhana māhīm. 3.
manahum̐ madana rati dhari bahu rūpā. dēkhata rāma bi'āhu anūpā. 4.
darasa lālasā sakuca na thōrī. pragaṭata durata bahōri bahōrī. 5.

Exceptionally beautiful images of Lord Ram and Sita were reflected from the glittering bejeweled pillars of the pavilion.

[The moment that is being described is that of 'Bhaanwari' when Lord Ram and Sita were moving around the sacred fire. The pillars were well-polished and shining. Thus, the image of the couple was reflected from different angles on the many pillars of the pavilion. In other words, the images were many, as many as the pillars, and they kept on changing as the couple moved.] (3)

These images reminded one of Kamdeo (cupid) and his wife Rati who appeared to have personally come down to witness the divine marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita, a glamorous occasion that was rare and most magnificent to watch¹. (4)

They, Kamdeo and Rati, have a strong desire to come up front and watch the divine spectacle from up close, but they are very hesitant and bashful to do so. Hence, they keep on appearing and disappearing from view repeatedly², as if playing a game of hide-and-seek. (5)

[Note—¹We have read in verse no. 2 above that Tulsidas says that the view of Lord Ram and Sita is so magnificent that he fails to find an apt comparison. Then he gave a second thought: perhaps his readers would like him to at least hint at the beauty of the sight, even if this hint would not give any idea of the reality of the situation. So, Tulsidas thought, 'What's the harm; let me tell them. Then I'll show its drawback.'

Many gods and goddesses were present on the occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, but Tulsidas chose Kamdeo and Rati because as far as gods and goddesses are concerned, this couple is the most beautiful of the entire pantheon. Kamdeo (cupid) is the patron god of passion, love and beauty. The word 'Kaam' is used as a synonym for these emotions, and the word 'Deo' of course means 'god'. Hence, the best choice to compare Lord Ram with was 'Kamdeo', and 'Rati', Kamdeo's consort, was the best choice for comparison with Sita.

All other gods and goddesses had assumed human forms to mingle with others as clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321, and (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318 respectively. But Kamdeo and Rati decided not to do so. What may have been the reason for this? This couple was proud of its fabulous beauty and matchless glamour, and thought that if they became humans like their other counterpart gods and goddesses, they will not be noticed in the huge crowd that milled around the pavilion.

So they decided to come in their original form as invisible ‘god and goddess’, instead of as a human.

They found that in their original invisible form no one would recognize them, and they would be marked as being absent in the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita in the annals of history. So what should they do now? Well, they thought that they will reveal themselves in the form of images that appear on the glittering pillars made of gems and priceless stones. It is now that the clever poet Tulsidas picks up the cue and says that ‘the images of Kamdeo and Rati that appeared on the pillars were actually those of Lord Ram and Sita respectively’.

Tulsidas has in one stroke served two purposes—one, he has acknowledged the attendance of Kamdeo and Rati on this auspicious occasion, and two, he has debunked Kamdeo and Rati for their false pride of being the most glamorous couple in creation by saying that what was seen on the pillars and thought to be Kamdeo and Rati were actually images of Lord Ram and Sita! If the ‘reflected image’ is so stupendously beautiful, one can imagine how beautiful the ‘principal object’ must be. Thus, the adroit poet Tulsidas is able to satisfy his eager readers who want to have some kind of comparison nevertheless by citing this instance of images being reflected on the pillar to give the readers an idea of the glamour and beauty of the form of Lord Ram and Sita as they appeared during their marriage ceremony, while at the same time upholding his observation that they were so fabulously magnificent to look at that no comparison can be made as asserted by him in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above.

²The next question is ‘what was the flaw in this image of Kamdeo and Rati that was seen in the pillars that it could not be an ideal comparison with Lord Ram and Sita’?

Well, for one it was an ‘image that was a mere reflection’. A reflected image cannot replace the original; after all it is merely a copy of the original. The second reason is that ‘this image seen on the pillars seemed to change every now and then, appearing now and vanishing the next moment, or looking attractive now and distorted the next moment, as Lord Ram and Sita moved from one point to another’. This constant change in the images on the pillars was due to many reasons—such as the angle from which they were viewed, the position and angle of Lord Ram and Sita vis-à-vis the individual pillar, the surface polish, deformities and curvature of the pillars themselves, and the light and other extraneous factors that intervened to give a final effect to the images.

Now, whereas there was no consistency in shape and uniformity in the beauty of the images reflected from the pillars, the sight of the original form of Lord Ram and Sita inside the pavilion was consistently brilliant and uniformly beautiful to behold.

Therefore, there can be no comparison between the image of Lord Ram and Sita seen in the pillars to symbolize the presence of Kamdeo and Rati, and their original form as seen directly in the pavilion.

Another question is: ‘Why were Kamdeo and Rati shy of appearing in person like other gods and goddesses?’ The answer is simple: It is because Lord Shiva was present there. Lord Shiva is a renowned enemy of Kamdeo (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324), and had even burnt the latter’s physical form when he once got angry at him (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 87). At that time, when Rati had begged Shiva to show mercy, the Lord had blessed her by saying that henceforth her

husband, Kamdeo, would live in an invisible form, without a visible body—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 87.

Therefore, Kamdeo and Rati were terrified at the prospect of assuming a visible form as humans on the one hand, and played ‘hide-and-see’ by repeatedly appearing and disappearing on the pillars on the other hand, to avoid being noticed by Lord Shiva and inviting his wrath.]

भए मगन सब देखनिहारे । जनक समान अपान बिसारे ॥ ६ ॥
प्रमुदित मुनिन्ह भाँवरीं फेरीं । नेगसहित सब रीति निबेरीं ॥ ७ ॥

bha'e magana saba dēkhanihārē. janaka samāna apāna bisārē. 6.
pramudita muninha bhām̐varīṁ phērīṁ. nēgasahita saba rīti nibērīṁ. 7.

These two sights (of Lord Ram and Sita in person, and their images that simmered on the pillars to remind one of Kamdeo and Rati) were so fascinating that everyone was amazed and dazed. All those who watched them were as enchanted and enraptured as king Janak had been (as described in Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 324 herein above)¹. (6)

The sages (Vasistha and Satanand as the presiding priests) helped the couple to go around (circumambulate) the sacred fire to complete the ritual of ‘Bhaanwari’, and then they completed all the other rites according to established tradition and customs of the society and their respective families². (7)

[Note—¹The word ‘everyone’ includes the gods and the goddesses who were present to witness the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, both in their forms of human beings which they had assumed to participate in this auspicious occasion, as well as in their primary invisible form in the sky. Remember: Both these forms were there—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318 which deals with the goddesses assuming human forms; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321 which deals with the gods assuming human forms; and (iii) numerous instances which show that the gods have showered flowers from the sky—viz. Doha no. 324, and Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319.

²The process of ‘Bhaanwari’ that had commenced in Chanda no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 324 is completed here. While the newly married couple moves around the sacred fire, the presiding priests recite auspicious hymns from the scriptures and undertake all other rites and rituals associated with it.

A very interesting thing is to be noted here. The process of ‘Bhaanwari’ involves going seven times around the sacred fire. We will note here that exactly ‘seven lines’ have been written here about Bhaanwari (from Chaupai line no. 1 to 7) by the clever poet Tulsidas to indicate these ‘seven rounds’.

Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 105, stanza no. 4 also.]

राम सीय सिर सेंदुर देहीं । सोभा कहि न जाति बिधि केहीं ॥ ८ ॥
अरुन पराग जलजु भरि नीकें । ससिहि भूष अहि लोभ अमी कें ॥ ९ ॥

बहुरि बसिष्ठ दीन्हि अनुसासन । बरु दुलहिनि बैठे एक आसन ॥ १० ॥

rāma sīya sira sēndura dēhīm. sōbhā kahi na jāti bidhi kēhīm. 8.
aruna parāga jalaju bhari nīkēm. sasihi bhūṣa ahi lōbha amī kēm. 9.
bahuri basiṣṭha dīnhi anusāsana. baru dulahini baiṭhē ēka āsana. 10.

Lord Ram applied ‘Sindoor’¹ (vermillion powder) on the forehead of Sita along the hairline and on the hair on the top of the head. This sight was so wonderful, so beautiful and graceful to look at that even the creator Vidhi (i.e. Brahma) did not understand how to describe it*.

[*This verse can be interpreted to mean that ‘The sight of Lord Ram applying Sindoor on the head of Sita was so wonderful, so beautiful and graceful to watch that it is not possible to describe it by any means; it defied all description’.] (8)

This scene is reminiscent of a serpent, which is thirsty for nectar, picking up a young lotus flower of reddish hue and full of pollen, to appease the moon by offering this flower to it (so that the moon feels obliged to let the thirsty serpent quench its thirst by allowing it to drink or suck at the nectar that is stored in the moon which is regarded as the heavenly pitcher in which the gods have stored their Amrit, the elixir of blissful life)³. (9)

After this rite was completed, sage Vasistha instructed the groom and the bride to sit together on the same seat³. (10)

[Note—¹Refer also to Tulsidas’ book titled “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 18, line no. 3.

²In this remarkable metaphor, the arms of Lord Ram is likened to the serpent, the red-coloured cup made from gems that contained the red vermillion powder to the red lotus full of pollen, and the face of Sita to the moon. This comparison of the face of Sita to the moon has been done earlier also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 230 when Lord Ram first meets Sita in the royal garden.

Another instance where Lord Ram and Sita stand face-to-face and the moon has been invoked as a comparison is when Sita puts the victory garland around the neck of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264. The similarity between these two instances is remarkable indeed and it is like a symphony in verses.

³The boy and the girl become a husband and wife once this rite of applying of the vermillion powder is finished. Prior to this they sit on separate seats, but now they are made to sit together. It implies that now onwards, they would share the ups and downs of life together on equal terms.]

छं०. बैठे बरासन रामु जानकि मुदित मन दसरथु भए । १ ।

तनु पुलक पुनि पुनि देखि अपनें सुकृत सुरतरु फल नए ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

baiṭhē barāsana rāmu jānaki mudita mana dasarathu bha'ē. 1.
tanu pulaka puni puni dēkhi apanēm sukṛta surataru phala na'ē. 2.

When king Dasrath saw Lord Ram and Sita sitting together on the same seat (as husband and wife), his Mana (heart and mind) was euphoric with joy¹. (Chanda line no. 1)

His (Dasrath's) body was thrilled with joy and happiness as he watched his good deeds take shape and fructify in the form of fruits of the evergreen tree of gods represented by Lord Ram (his meritorious and gracious son) and Sita (his beautiful and virtuous daughter-in-law)*².

[*This line can read as follows also—“When Dasrath watched the couple sitting together on the same seat (as husband and wife), his body was thrilled with the joy that came with the thought that all his good deeds, which he compared to the evergreen tree of gods, have produced new fruits (in the sense that his son has been married to a beautiful, meritorious and virtuous princesses from another great kingdom of immense repute). What more would a father want.”] (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—¹Janak was fascinated by Lord Ram because he had recognized who “Ram” actually was, something that eluded Dasrath. Janak had also been thrilled, but not because he was watching or honouring a handsome prince who he has been fortunate enough to have as a groom for his daughter, but as a personified form of Brahm.

Janak's level of spiritual enlightenment had immediately warned him at first sight of the Lord that he was not an ordinary prince but some divine Being. This is clear in the reading of Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

But Dasrath was so overcome with delusions created by the Lord's Maya (delusion creating powers) that he had merely treated Ram as his 'son', and had died wailing for him and calling out his name with a mental image of a son—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ahodhya Kand, Doha no. 155.

Even at the time when sage Vishwamitra had asked him to send Lord Ram with him to help eliminate the terror of demons, Dasrath had not realized that it was a part of the divine mission for which Lord Ram had come down to earth from heaven, but refused to oblige the sage fearing for the safety of his son—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 207—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 208.

So, in all the earlier verses which deal with Janak (Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 324) it has been said that he was enthralled by the beautiful form of Lord Ram, and not of 'the couple'. When a reference to the 'couple' (i.e. Lord Ram and Sita) is made in Chaupai line no. 2 herein above, Janak is cited merely as an example of the joy that others felt (refer: Chaupai line no. 6 herein above).

The picture of Lord Ram and Sita together is absolutely stunning as endorsed elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas. For instance, refer to Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²On the other hand, when the turn of describing Dasrath came, Tulsidas chose the moment when Lord Ram and Sita sat together as husband and wife. And then he says that “Dasrath was happy that all his meritorious deeds have taken the form of the couple, Lord Ram his son, and Sita his daughter-in-law”. Even a causal reading of the concerned verses will make this observation clear.

It is said here that he was happy because ‘new fruits have been produced by the tree of his good deeds’. What is ‘new’ about it? Earlier his son was unmarried, and now he is married, and the icing on the cake is that the bride he has got is the most beautiful girl in the whole world (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251). Added to this good fortune is the fact that he acquired great fame and got himself recognized in the whole world by breaking the bow of Lord Shiva and overcoming the wrath of the vengeful sage Parashuram, two achievements that made Lord Ram stand apart from all the so-called brave and mighty princes and kings of the time. What more would a father want in this world—Dasrath is so happy that his son has acquired for himself matchless glory and acclaim that not only established him as a strong and powerful prince but also brought laurels to his family, the dynasty of king Raghu. Another fruit is that his son has married a beautiful princess of great grace, virtues and beauty, and who belongs to another great kingdom of Janakpur that is as renowned as his own kingdom of Ayodhya.

This is the ‘new fruit’ that has given so much happiness to Dasrath. With the arrival of a bride, Sita, in the household, a new member has come—and it is the same as having another wonderful fruit in addition to the fruits he already has in the form of his beloved son Lord Ram and his other three sons Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman. So if previously he had ‘four divine fruits’, now he has ‘five’ such fruits with the addition of Sita in the family.

King Dasrath had no daughter, and he longed to have one. By the grace of God and the good effects of his meritorious religious deeds and righteous life he has got his wish fulfilled in the form of Sita. The ‘daughter-in-law’, by the virtue of her marrying and adopting her husband’s family as her new home, becomes a ‘daughter’ of her adopted family in the eyes of the ‘law’. So, this was akin to Dasrath getting new fruits from the tree of his good deeds.]

भरि भुवन रहा उछाहु राम बिबाहु भा सबहीं कहा । ३ ।
केहि भाँति बरनि सिरात रसना एक यहु मंगलु महा ॥ ४ ॥

bhari bhuvana rahā uchāhu rāma bibāhu bhā sabahīm kahā. 3.
kēhi bhāmṭi barani sirāta rasanā ēka yahu maṅgalu mahā. 4.

There was universal rejoicing in all the corners of the world (“Bhuvan”). Everyone said that Lord Ram has been married (and it is therefore time to celebrate)¹. (Chanda line no. 3)

How can the lone tongue praise (or describe) this auspicious happening which is of a huge dimension and so grand that it defies description². (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹The same idea is expressed when Lord Ram had broken the bow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262.

Another instance is when Sita put the victory garland on Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265.

²Once again, the same idea of a single tongue being unable to describe the glory of a certain event or situation is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha nos. 289 and 318 earlier in the context of this episode of Lord Ram’s marriage with Sita.]

तब जनक पाइ बसिष्ठ आयसु ब्याह साज सँवारि कै । ५ ।
मांडवी श्रुतकीरति उरमिला कुअँरि लई हँकारि कै ॥ ६ ॥

taba janaka pā'i basiṣṭha āyasu byāha sāja samvāri kai. 5.
māṇḍavī śrutakīrati uramilā ku'amri la'im hamkāri kai. 6.

[Chanda line nos. 5-12 narrate that Janak took permission from sage Vasistha and married all the other three remaining princesses of the family who were sisters and cousins of Sita to the three brothers of Lord Ram. It means that all the four brothers were married together in the same ceremony and in the same family.]

After the wedding ceremony of Lord Ram and Sita was over, Janak took permission from sage Vasistha¹ and ordered that the other three princesses (daughters) of the family, i.e. Maandavi, Srutkirti and Urmila², should be properly decked up in full bridal attire and be brought to the marriage pavilion³. (5-6)

[Note—¹Janak did not wish to miss this golden and once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see all the princesses of the family married. Fortunately for him, by a stroke of good luck and the good effects of his own righteous deeds and meritorious life, and of course by the grace of God, he has not only come in contact with the most famous family of the time, the royal family of Ayodhya that had acquired so much acclaim and had established itself as a righteous and law-abiding dynasty that even the Purans and Itihasas (ancient histories of India) mentioned it, but has already established an unbreakable bond created by marrying of his daughter Sita with the eldest son of the family, i.e. Lord Ram.

Now, Janak was shy of asking Dasrath that it is his desire to marry all the other three sisters of Sita to the other three sons of Dasrath if he would permit. He did not want to create any unsavoury situation should Dasrath dither and express his reservations. After all, even if Janak had asked Dasrath directly, the latter would have sought the opinion and permission of his royal Guru, sage Vasistha, before giving an answer. So why not seek permission from Vasistha directly instead, thought Janak—because if Vasistha agreed then there was no fear of Dasrath refusing.

So, he wisely and correctly thought that it would be best for him to seek permission from sage Vasistha.

Now the question is 'why did Janak wish to get all the daughters married into the same family?' There were many probable reasons for this decision of Janak as discussed below.

Sita and her other sisters, i.e. her own sister Urmila, and her cousin sisters Maandavi and Srutkirti, were very close to each other. They loved each other extremely dearly, and the very notion that they would be separated forever after Sita's marriage had made the other three princesses plunge into deep depression. These three princesses had shared each moment of their lives and so Janak thought that it would be prudent if they stayed together for the rest of their lives also.

Besides this, the royal family of Dasrath was highly reputed, disciplined and righteous, and all the four daughters were ensured a comfortable life in the future. Janak thought that there was no certainty what kind of family and husband the other three daughters would get if they were married elsewhere. Therefore, it was wise not to take the risk and marry them into the royal family of Ayodhya.

This marriage had the blessing of two great sages of the time—sage Vishwamitra and sage Vasistha, each no less exalted and powerful than the other. In a way they stood guarantors of happiness and well-being for all the four daughters of Janak who were getting married with the four sons of king Dasrath, and the resultant relationship and bond of friendship and family ties that were being now established.

Janak had got news through his spies that every one of the subjects in his kingdom of Janakpur wanted that all the four princesses should be married to the four wonderful princes of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 311 along with its preceding Chanda line no. 3-4. Hence he thought that his decision would also be endorsed by his subjects. Every noble king ensures that all his actions and decisions are endorsed and liked by his subjects; this ensures that everyone is happy and there is no chance of rumour mongering and scandalous gossip in the kingdom. Even if something went wrong, the king would have support and sympathy of his subjects.

²Urmila was the younger sibling of Sita and the second daughter of Janak, while Maandavi and Srutkriti were the two daughters of Janak's younger brother named Kusketu or Kushdhwaj. Maandavi was the elder of the two.

The sequence in which the three princesses are mentioned is significant. Janak was the king, and so it is expected that his own daughter Urmila's name should be placed first. But instead of that, Maandavi and Srutkriti are mentioned first, followed by Urmila at the end. This implies two things—

(i) In terms of age, Maandavi was senior to both Srutkriti and Urmila, so she was named first. Srutkriti was Maandavi's sibling because both were the daughters of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of Janak. So, Srutkriti was named second. The third place was left for Urmila. Hence, they are named in this sequence.

(ii) Janak was a very conscientious king, and he did not want his younger brother Kushdhwaj to feel belittled or offended by giving the latter's two daughters Maandavi and Srutkriti less importance than his own daughter Urmila. So the wise king Janak decided that Maandavi and Srutkriti should be given precedence over Urmila when summon was sent for them.

³Janak had made his intentions clear that he wanted all of them to be married right then by ordering that they be decorated in bridal attire and then brought to the pavilion. This also shows that they hadn't accompanied Sita when she was brought for her wedding rites. Sita was accompanied by other girls and ladies, but not her three sisters. They had stayed in the palace. This was in accordance with the custom of the society and royal protocol of the time that required that unmarried daughters should not come out in the public during open ceremonies.

The marriage of all the four lovely princesses of Janakpur with the four noble princes of Ayodhya as described in the present verses of Ram Charit Manas, have also been described by Tulsidas in his book "Janki Mangal" in its verse nos. 153-154. This latter book is entirely dedicated to the subject of Lord Ram's marriage.]

कुसकेतु कन्या प्रथम जो गुन सील सुख सोभामई । ७ ।

सब रीति प्रीति समेत करि सो ब्याहि नृप भरतहि दई ॥ ८ ॥

kusakētu kan'yā prathama jō guna sīla sukha sōbhāmaī. 7.
saba rīti prīti samēta kari sō byāhi nṛpa bhāratahi daī. 8.

The first (elder) daughter of Kusketu (also known by the name of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of Janak) who has been named first or was summoned to the pavilion first (as mentioned in verse no. 6 herein above), was very virtuous, very courteous, gave happiness to others by her presence and amiable nature, and was a personified form of beauty and elegance. (7)

The king¹ performed all the necessary rites and duly observed all the customs before affectionately marrying her to Bharat² (the younger brother of Lord Ram). (8)

[Note—¹The ‘first or elder’ daughter, or ‘the one who was named first amongst the three daughters called for the purpose of marriage’, was Maandavi.

Though it is not clear here who had done the rites, whether it was Janak, Maandavi’s elder uncle, or Maandavi’s father Kushhwaj, but in all probability it was Kushdhwaj who did it because he was the father. According to the established procedure, it is always the father who does the ‘Kanyaa-daan’ ritual, i.e. he is the one who formally hands over his daughter to the groom as the final step during the wedding rites. In case the bride’s father is not alive or unable to undertake the duty himself then only the next-of-kin, say an uncle or someone else in order of kinship and blood-line of the bride would perform Kanyaa-daan.

This means one more thing also—both Janak and Kushdhwaj were seated side by side during the entire procedure. This conclusion is obvious because four girls were married simultaneously—two were the daughters of Janak (Sita and Urmila), and two of Kushdhwaj (Maandavi and Srutkirti). It also means that the four brothers, i.e. Lord Ram and his three brothers Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman, were also seated on the same platform so that the rituals could be done together.

Lord Ram and Sita were finished with their part, but they continued to sit alongside the others to create a wonderful sight of immeasurable and indescribable beauty as narrated in Chanda line no. 13-16 that follow below.

²It is prohibited in the scriptures that two or more blood-sisters (i.e. two or more sisters having the same mother) cannot be married to blood-brothers (brothers having the same mother). This restriction is very cleverly observed in the marriage of the four princesses of Janakpur with the four princes of Ayodhya.

Let’s see how: Sita was married to Lord Ram, and now we read that Maandavi was married to Bharat. Sita’s mother was Sunayana, the queen of Janak, and Lord Ram’s mother was the senior queen of Dasrath, queen mother Kaushalya. But Maandavi’s mother was the queen of Kushdhwaj, while that of Bharat was Kaikeyi, the second queen of Dasrath. Hence, this scriptural sanction was duly observed.

Another wonderful thing to observe is that Lord Ram and Bharat looked alike—both were dark-complexioned. Likewise, the two princesses, Sita and Maandavi, looked very much like twins. Like their husbands, Lord Ram and Bharat, these two princesses too had great affinity for each other.

And by the criterion of age also, these two pairs were perfect match—because Lord Ram was the eldest of the four brothers, and Bharat was the second eldest, and likewise Sita was the eldest and Maandavi next in terms of age.]

जानकी लघु भगिनी सकल सुंदरि सिरोमनि जानि कै । ९ ।
सो तनय दीन्ही व्याहि लखनहि सकल बिधि सनमानि कै ॥ १० ॥

jānakī laghu bhaginī sakala sundari sirōmani jāni kai. 9.
sō tanaya dīnhī byāhi lakhanahi sakala bidhi sanamāni kai. 10.

[The third in line to be married were Laxman and Urmila.]

Janki's (Sita's) younger sister, whom the king (Janak) knew to be like a crown-jewel in terms of beauty and elegance, was married to Laxman with great affection and honour after all rites and customs were duly completed. (Chanda line nos. 9-10)

[Note—Urmila, the blood-sister of Sita, was married to Laxman whose mother was Sumitra, the third queen of Dasrath.

Laxman was of a fair complexion like that of Urmila, and so they made a perfect pair.

One very important factor that played a major role in Janak marrying Sita's own sister with Laxman was that he had carefully observed that both these two brothers stayed together very closely and had immense love for each other. They were more like dear friends than mere brothers, sharing each other's views and emotions openly and without reservations. This will be very clear when we recall the conversation between Lord Ram and Laxman in the garden where they met Sita, and later on when they had gone to do their evening prayers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Doha no. 230—to Doha no. 231; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 237; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 237—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239.

The above verses will clearly show the level of openness and frankness with which the two brothers shared each other's views and the little joys of life. Later on in the story also we learn that when Lord Ram had gone to exile, Laxman followed him and served him very affectionately throughout.

Since Sita and Urmila were blood-sisters, and Lord Ram and Laxman shared such close relationship of affection and love, the wise king Janak thought that by virtue of this marriage of Urmila with Laxman she will have a better chance to stay in close proximity with her own sister Sita who was already married to Lord Ram. The two pairs would bond well with each other because of the natural affinity between its members.]

जेहि नामु श्रुतकीरति सुलोचनि सुमुखि सब गुन आगरी । ११ ।
सो दई रिपुसूदनहि भूपति रूप सील उजागरी ॥ १२ ॥

jēhi nāmu śrutakīrati sulōcani sumukhi saba guna āgarī. 11.
sō daī ripusūdanahi bhūpati rūpa sīla ujāgarī. 12.

She whose name was Srutkirti who had beautiful eyes (like that of a doe), an attractive face, was a mine of good virtues, and was well-known for her beauty and amiable nature, was given in marriage by the king to Ripusudan* (another name of

Shatrughan, the younger brother of Lord Ram and a sibling of Laxman). (Chanda line nos. 11-12)

[Note—The younger blood-sister of Maandavi was Srutkirti. Maandavi was married to Bharat, and her own younger sister Srutkirti was married to Shatrughan, the younger blood-brother of Laxman.

Thus, we have the following pairs: (i) Lord Ram, the eldest of the four brothers, was married to Sita, the eldest of the four sisters. (ii) Bharat, the second oldest of the 4 brothers, was married to Maandavi, the second oldest of the 4 sisters. (iii) Laxman, the third in line in terms of age, was married to Urmila, the third in terms of age amongst the sisters. And (iv) Shatrughan, the youngest of the 4 brothers, was married to Srutkirti who was the youngest amongst the sisters.

Besides this, all care was taken to adhere to the edict of the scriptures as outlined in a note appended to verse no. 8 herein above and explained in subsequent verses in relation to each couple.

*Shatrughan is also called “Ripusudan” which means one who trounces, one who vanquishes the enemy—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 197.]

अनुरूप बर दुलहिनि परस्पर लखि सकुच हियँ हरषहीं । १३ ।
सब मुदित सुंदरता सराहहिं सुमन सुर गन बरषहीं ॥ १४ ॥

anurūpa bara dulahini paraspara lakhi sakuca hiyam̐ haraṣahīm̐. 13.
saba mudita sundaratā sarāhahim̐ sumana sura gana baraṣahīm̐. 14.

When the four pairs of brides and their respective grooms looked shyly at each other and their partners, and observed that each pair was perfectly matched, they blushed exceedingly even as they felt delighted in their hearts¹. (Chanda line no. 13)

Everyone present on the occasion was euphoric, and all of them unanimously praised the magnificent beauty of the four pairs even as the assembly of gods showered flowers on them². (Chanda line no. 14)

[Note—¹The four brothers and the four sisters blushed and felt shy because everyone was closely watching them, and when their eyes met their siblings they smiled in acknowledgement as well as in embarrassment because they all felt self-conscious and awkward.

²We have seen on many previous occasions that the gods have showered flowers at every instant when it was an occasion to rejoice and celebrate. The celebrated moment now was that all the four brothers had been married.]

सुंदरी सुंदर बरन्ह सह सब एक मंडप राजहीं । १५ ।
जनु जीव उर चारिउ अवस्था बिभुन सहित बिराजहीं ॥ १६ ॥

sundarīm sundara baranha saha saba ēka maṇḍapa rājahīm. 15.
janu jīva ura cāri'u avasthā bibhuna sahita birājahīm. 16.

All the lovely brides looked very adorable in the same marriage pavilion and under the same canopy alongside their respective handsome grooms just as the Jiva (the living being, the creature) and his soul (the Jiva's Atma, the consciousness that is his true 'self'), which is also known as 'Bibhu'¹, exhibits four states of conscious existence in this world². (Chanda line nos. 15-16)

[Note—¹The word "Bibhu" or "Vibhu"—This term applies to the Supreme Being. It means one who is almighty, omnipresent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, magnanimous, eternal, infinite, all-powerful, immovable, constant and immutable. In the context of the Jiva, the living being, the Vibhu is his Atma or soul that is pure consciousness which lives in the subtle space of his heart inside his gross physical body.

The word "Jiva" means a living being. The soul of the living being is known as the Atma. According to metaphysical concept, the Atma is nothing but the pure consciousness that lives in the subtle space of the heart of the Jiva. This consciousness is the defacto Lord or the Master of the creature, because if there is no 'consciousness' the creature would be dead and useless. The gross body will be there, but the Jiva is deemed to be dead if he loses consciousness in this body. This consciousness is invisible and very subtle, but the hard fact is that it is the real 'life and soul' of the Jiva instead of his gross body. But the ignorant world that can't see beyond the gross things that are visible to it erroneously treats the gross inane body as the identity of the Jiva instead of the Atma or the soul which is the pure subtle consciousness that resides in the subtle space of the heart that lives inside the gross body of the Jiva.

²The pure conscious self of the Jiva is his Atma or soul which is said to have four states of existence: viz. Turiya, Sushupta, Swapna and Jagrat. The Jiva and the Atma are inseparable from one another, and in essence their truthful identity is nothing but pure consciousness that is uniform and unchanging. But in the context of the physical world in which the Jiva lives, the Atma displays four states of existence with varying degrees of awareness and attachment with the world. In the 'Jagrat' state the Jiva is fully involved physically in the affairs of the world and is affected by them. The same Jiva finds a bit of peace when he sleeps and dreams, as in this stage called 'Swapna' his physical body is at rest and only the mind and subconscious are busy and active. In the third stage known as 'Sushupta', even the mind becomes inactive and therefore the rest is complete. But this stage is short-lived as the Jiva reverts back to the Swapna and the Jagrat stages soon. In certain cases when the Jiva is enlightened and wise, he crosses the threshold and reaches the fourth stage of existence known as 'Turiya' when the bliss obtained in the Sushupta stage becomes more sustainable and permanent.

This great metaphysical concept of the Upanishads is cited here to emphasise that all the four brothers and their respective brides were like the same Jiva living in four states of consciousness. The brides and the grooms loved each other so much as if their were different bodies with the same heart. Or, it was like the same soul living in two bodies. Applied in a more holistic sense it may mean that though in physical terms there were four brothers and four brides but in essence they were the same Divine Lord who has manifested himself in their individual forms.

The four states of Consciousness and its relationship with the Jiva—According to the concepts of metaphysics, the ‘consciousness’ exists in four primary states within the body of the creature. These in descending order are the following—(i) the highest level known as ‘Turiya’ which is the transcendental state of existence, (ii) the next lower level known as ‘Sushupta’ which is equivalent to deep sleep state of consciousness, (iii) the third lower level and the second from the lowest as ‘Swapna’ which means dreaming state of consciousness, and (iv) the lowest level as ‘Jagrat’ which means the waking state of consciousness. Each state has its own unique virtues, characters and dynamism.

Therefore, from the perspective of metaphysics, Lord Ram and Sita represent the Turiya state, Bharat and Maandavi the Sushupta state, Shatrughan and Srutkirti the Swapna state, and Laxman and Urmila the Jagrat state.

The reason for this association is this: Lord Ram is the Supreme Being known as Brahm or Super Consciousness, and his dynamic Shakti or power of action is Sita. Brahm is recognized in the transcendental state of consciousness, and not in its gross level. An ascetic is said to live in this Turiya state of meditative trance where he may appear to be going about his normal duties of the world but actually he remains aloof from everything and sees everything with utmost detachment and neutrality like the case of Lord Ram. So, Lord Ram represents the ‘Turiya state’.

The Turiya state and Sushupta state are closely linked with only a hair-line distinction between the two. Bharat and Lord Ram resembled each other in all matters—physical looks as well as at the temperamental level. Bharat was as calm and wise as Lord Ram. Even in the story we will read that while Lord Ram lived like a hermit in the forest, Bharat copied him in Ayodhya by living like a hermit in exile. Therefore, Bharat represents the ‘Sushupta state’, the state having close links with the Turiya state and resembling the latter. In the Sushupta state, the mind is unaware of the external world and remains in a blissful state of calmness and tranquility like the case of Bharat.

Laxman had accompanied Lord Ram to the forest and not only helped the Lord do all his daily chores but also was his comrade-in-arm in the epic war of Lanka and the rest of the story from start to finish. In other words, like the creature doing his duties in this mundane gross world during his waking state of life when all his organs of perceptions and actions interact with the world, Laxman helped Lord Ram in his worldly duties. Therefore, he represents the ‘Jagrat state’ or the waking state.

And finally we have Shatrughan who represented the ‘Swapna state’ as he remained active in this world but only in a symbolic and perfunctory way like a man remaining active in a world of dreams. He carried out the daily grind of the administrative affairs of the huge kingdom of Ayodhya because Bharat had taken voluntary exile and Laxman had gone with Lord Ram to actively help the Lord in the forest—but it was in a sanitized environment of the city of Ayodhya that was already in a state of gloom and grief due to the exile of Lord Ram; there was no excitement. Aside of routine work and daily chores, there was no excitement for Shatrughan unlike Laxman who had to face the daily uncertainty of the cruel environment of the unknown and unchartered forest.

Whatever Shatrughan did during the long 14 years of Lord Ram’s exile remained unsung and unacknowledged by all—no where do we find any applause for Shatrughan and his skillful handling of the affairs of the kingdom during the Lord’s absence. On the other hand, Laxman has been praised by everyone as he served Lord Ram in the forest and helped in winning the war of Lanka, but the role of Shatrughan was no less important in taking care of the kingdom of Ayodhya with as much

diligence and effort as Lord Ram would have himself done. But like the case where a man does so many great deeds in his dream but these deeds remain unacknowledged and unrecognized in the physical world, Shatrughan remained unacknowledged and unrecognized by this gross world. It must not be forgotten that often a man finds solutions for his greatest problems related to the physical world while he sleeps and dreams of them, but when he implements the ideas that he got in his dream to overcome the problems of the physical world, only his actions that are taken in practice are observed and recognized by the external world which remains oblivious of the back-ground channel of the 'dream' where the solution and the direction for action was actually found or discovered by the concerned person.

That is why while Laxman's deeds were openly acknowledged and praised by all, Shatrughan, who maintained a very low profile and worked behind the curtains as it were, remained obscure. Hence, coming to our discussion, he is said to represent the 'Swapna or dreaming state' which is a combination of activity at the subtle level, and non-activity at the gross level of existence.

The four states of existence of the consciousness have been described in detail in the following Upanishads—(a) Shukla Yajur Veda—Trishikhi Brahman Upanishad, Canto 2, verse nos. 149-150; Brihad Aranyak Upanishad 2/1/16-20, 4/3/9-38; Subalo-panishad, Canto 4 full as well as Canto 9, verse no. 1-7; Paingalopanishad, 2/11-16; Mandal Brahmin Upanishad, 2/4-2/5; Turiyateet Upanishad. (b) Krishna Yajur Veda tradition—Varaaha Upanishad, Canto 2, verse no. 59-64, 72; Canto 4, verse no. 11-20; Brahmo-panishad, verse no. 1, 20-21; Kaivalya Upanishad, verse no. 12-14; Dhyan Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 93/12-93/15; Sarwasaar Upanishad, verse no. 4; Shaarirak Upanishad, verse no. 14; Brahm/Amrit Bindu Upanishad, verse no. 11. (c) Atharva Veda tradition—Mandukya Upanishad, verse nos. 3-7; Atharvashikha Upanishad; Nrisingh Tapini Upanishad, Canto 4, verse no. 4-7; Naradparivrajak Upanishad, Canto 5, verse nos. 1, 24-26; Canto 6, verse no. 3-4, Canto 8, verse nos. 9-16, 19-20; Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-4 (in relation with Sri Ram and others), and verse nos. 5-8 (in relation with the Atma); Param Hans Parivarjak Upanishad, paragraph no. 6; Annapurna Upanishad, Canto 1, verse nos. 25; Canto 2, verse nos. 12-16; Canto 3, verse nos. 10, 13, 16-18; Canto 5, verse nos. 16, 46, 84-85, 88-89, 109-111.

The Atma or the soul which is pure consciousness and true self of the creature has many states of existence according to metaphysics—e.g. the 1st state called the waking state or 'Jagrat', the 2nd state called the dreaming or 'Swapna', and the 3rd called the deep sleep state of consciousness or 'Sushupta'. There is a 4th state also, and it is called 'Turiya', which is obtained as a result of going beyond the 3rd stage of deep sleep, and it is a permanent state of bliss and felicity in which the conscious Atma usually lives in ordinary people who are said to be self-realised. Beyond this 4th state is the Turiyateet, literally the state which is beyond the Turiya state and in which the Atma (pure consciousness) is free from all the encumbrances and characters displayed by it during the other four states. Therefore, Turiyateet would be the 5th state of existence of the Atma, and the higher transcendental state when the spiritual aspirant experiences oneness with Brahm. The Turiyateet state is the state of existence of 'super-consciousness' on a perpetual basis. Whereas the Turiya state is the hallmark of those who are self-realised, the Turiyateet state is the benchmark for those who are Brahm-realised. The Turiya state is the preliminary ground which paves the way for attaining the Turiyateet state.

To start with the understanding of these different states of existences of the consciousness, we have to begin with the fundamental two states in which the creature

lives in this world. These two are the following—(1) the waking and (2) the sleeping states. For the purposes of analyzing the behaviour and existential states of the creature during these two fundamental stages, they have been classified into three distinct states as follows—the waking state called ‘Jagrat’, the dream state called ‘Swapna’, and the deep sleep state called ‘Sushupta. Beyond these three, there are two transcendental states called Turiya and Turiyateet states of existence of the consciousness in which self-realisation and Brahm-realisation are possible, or which mark the state in which those who are self-realised and Brahm-realised exist. We will now endeavour to analyse all these five states of existence of the conscious Atma in simple terms in brief.

According to the *Varaaha Upanishad* of Krishna Yajur Veda, Canto 1, verse no. 11, there are three types of world that the Jiva lives in. They pertain to the three states of consciousness in this world. They are Vishwa (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its waking state of consciousness), Taijas (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its dreaming state of consciousness), and Pragya (the world as the individual creature perceives it in its deep sleep state of consciousness).

The Atharva Veda’s *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 5 says that the four states of existence of consciousness, viz. the Jagrat or waking state, the Swapna or the dreaming state, the Sushupta or the deep sleep state, and the Turiya or the post-Sushupta state, correspond to the four forms of divinity as represented by Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, Rudra the concluder and the patron god of ascetics, and the Atma which is pure consciousness representing the supreme transcendental Brahm.

This notion of four states of consciousness vis-à-vis Lord Ram and his three brothers has been elaborately dealt with in Atharva Veda’s *Ram Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, Canto 3, verse nos. 1-4.]

दो०. मुदित अवधपति सकल सुत बधुन्ह समेत निहारि ।

जनु पाए महिपाल मनि क्रियन्ह सहित फल चारि ॥ ३२५ ॥

dōhā.

mudita avadhapati sakala suta badhunha samēta nihāri.
janu pā'ē mahipāla mani kriyanha sahita phala cāri. 325.

The king of Ayodhya (Dasrath) was jubilant as he watched his four sons alongside their respective brides. They appeared to symbolize the four fruits that the king got as rewards for his righteous and noble deeds and leading an auspicious life marked by probity and propriety. (Doha no. 325)

[Note-Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 158.

Earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309 we have read about the four great rewards for meritorious deeds that one does in his life. They are ‘Artha’ or financial well-being, ‘Dharma’ or fulfillment of all religious obligation, ‘Kaam’ or fulfillment of one’s desires, and ‘Moksha’ or spiritual liberation and emancipation. These four divine fruits are represented by the four glorious sons of king Dasrath.

Lord Ram stands for Moksha because he is a personified form of the Supreme Being who is the target for all spiritual aspirants who seek to find eternal liberation and freedom from the cycle of birth and death in this gross mundane world. Bharat stands for the ideals of Dharma because by his deeds and actions he had set a stellar example of a life of auspiciousness, righteousness, probity, propriety and noble conduct. Shatrughan stands for Artha because he had managed the finances and other affairs of the kingdom of Ayodhya extremely well during the long time of 14 years when his other three brothers were absent from the city because of Lord Ram's forest exile. And finally Laxman stood for Kaam as he is the one who had helped Lord Ram fulfill his desire of eliminating the cruel demons.

Their wives have been likened to their respective Shaktis or inherent strengths because all of them had contributed their might in helping their respective husbands fulfill their obligations and duties without creating any hindrance for them. Imagine the situation if Sita had not agreed with Lord Ram to let Ravana, the king of Lanka, abduct her so that the Lord can go and kill the entire lot of tyrannical demons, inspite of having to suffer a lot in the process.

Similarly, when Laxman decided to accompany Lord Ram to the forest, his wife Urmila did not come in the way and insist that he change his decision. Likewise, Bharat's wife suffered loneliness and forced separation from her husband all through the 14 years of exile because Bharat chose to live like a hermit on the outskirts of Ayodhya for the entire duration of the period; she did not complain. And Shatrughan's wife too helped her husband to carry on with his duties without instigating him to usurp the powers of the kingdom and misuse his authority for selfish gains and enjoyments.

The access to the 'four fruits or rewards' by king Dasrath as well as his queens who were blessed enough to have the supreme Lord of the world as their son known as Lord Ram has been referred to elsewhere also in the context of Lord Ram's marriage in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309, and in Doha no. 345.]

चौ०. जसि रघुबीर ब्याह बिधि बरनी । सकल कुँअर ब्याहे तेहिं करनी ॥ १ ॥
 कहि न जाइ कछु दाइज भूरी । रहा कनक मनि मंडपु पूरी ॥ २ ॥
 कंबल बसन बिचित्र पटोरे । भाँति भाँति बहु मोल न थोरे ॥ ३ ॥
 गज रथ तुरग दास अरु दासी । धेनु अलंकृत कामदुहा सी ॥ ४ ॥
 बस्तु अनेक करिअ किमि लेखा । कहि न जाइ जानहिं जिन्ह देखा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

jasi raghubīra byāha bidhi baranī. sakala kumāra byāhē tēhim karani. 1.
 kahi na jā'i kachu dā'ija bhūrī. rahā kanaka mani maṇḍapu pūrī. 2.
 kambala basana bicitra paṭōrē. bhāmṭi bhāmṭi bahu mōla na thōrē. 3.
 gaja ratha turaga dāsa aru dāsī. dhēnu alaṅkṛta kāmāduhā sī. 4.
 bastu anēka kari'a kimi lēkhā. kahi na jā'i jānahim jinha dēkhā. 5.

All the princes were married in the same way and following the same rites as had been observed for the marriage of Lord Ram ("Raghubir")¹. (1)

[Verse nos. 2-5 describe the marriage gifts, known as ‘Dahej’ (dā'ija)², that was given by king Janak to all the grooms at the end of the marriage ceremony.]

It is not possible to describe the sort, the quality and the quantity of ‘Dahej’ or the marriage gifts that were collected at the pavilion to be given to the grooms. *The entire pavilion was full of gold, gems and other precious things.

[*This 2nd part of the verse can be read as follows also: “The golden pavilion was full of gems (and other things mentioned in verse no. 3) that were collected for the purpose of giving as Dahej on the occasion of the marriage.”] (2)

Different varieties of woolen blankets, cotton garments and ceremonial silk robes that were valuable and especially made for the occasion were there in abundance.³ (3)

Besides these things (that were collected in huge heaps under the canopy of the main pavilion), there were elephants, chariots, horses and servants, both male and female (that collected outside and around the main pavilion)*. Then there were fully decorated milch cows that were like the Kamdhenu cow of the gods which is famous for giving an endless supply of milk.⁴ (4)

There were countless other things so innumerable in number and diverse in quality that it is not possible to account for them or list them. It is not possible to describe them either; only those who saw them knew how immense the gifts were, and even they failed to fully appreciate their quality, quantity and value. (5)

[Note—¹An exactly the same idea in the same words have been conveyed by Tulsidas in “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 155.

While narrating the marriage of the three brothers of Lord Ram, i.e. Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman, no details have been given in Chanda line nos. 7-12 that precede Doha no. 325 herein above. So this verse is included by Tulsidas to remove all doubts regarding the way they were married—“they were all married in the same way as Lord Ram”.

It ought to be noted here that Lord Ram was so gracious that he had always shared all the pleasures of life, small or big, with his brothers. There are abundant examples of it. The marriage of all the four brothers simultaneously at the same venue and in the same family epitomizes this desire of the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 4 that precedes Doha no. 205; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 10.

²The “Dahej” (dā'ija) is an age-old tradition wherein the bride’s father gives gifts to the newly married couple. Basically the idea is that the bride’s father gives all those things that a newly-wed couple would need to start a home—things of daily need such as clothes, utensils etc. Then he gives some jewellery to the bride to ensure her financial security. Other costly items include gems and things made of gold and silver. These also serve the same long-term purpose of financial security. Since this marriage was in a royal family, so items befitting a king were included—such as elephants, horses, chariots and servants. The idea is the same—that the newly wed couple can start a new home independently as a king and queen.

Amongst the various reasons behind this custom is that the bride’s father wished to tell the groom’s family that he is well-off and prosperous, and that therefore they shouldn’t taunt his daughter or her family on pecuniary grounds. His daughter has lived in comfort in her father’s home, and so she should be allowed the comfortable life she is accustomed to, and not to treat her as a maid.

The girl's father wishes to convey the hint that he is giving his daughter in marriage to the groom not because he cannot sustain her financially or that she is any kind of burden on him, but because it is the custom of the society and sanctioned by the scriptures as this was the way the creator had devised the things in his plan to perpetuate life in this world.

³Pearls, gems and other precious metals such as gold and silver in the form of coins and ornaments etc. were collected in big bejeweled jars made of jade, sapphire and ruby and the like. Clothes, robes and blankets etc. of various denominations that were made of fine material with embroidery work done in golden and silver threads, and well decorated by an assortment of pearls and different types of gems and precious stones were arranged in huge bundles and stacked in the pavilion.

⁴The were assembled around the main platform where the marriage rituals were done, while the animals and the chariots were collected outside the pavilion.

Not only the cows, but all the other animals were also decorated. It was a usual practice for those who could afford it to adorn the gifted cow with gold on its horns and hooves, and embroidered clothes draped on its back. Since this was a marriage in a royal family it is natural to conclude that all the other animals such as the elephants and the horses were also likewise decorated. And obviously by extension, the chariots must also have been adequately adorned. The servants too were fully decked up in fine clothes and ornaments that would make them look dignified when they stood next to their respective masters.

*Amongst the servants, both males and females, who were sent by Janak with his four daughters, were those who had been serving the royal household for a long time and were personal attendants of the princesses. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 339. This was done to ensure that the daughters did not feel home-sick, were well-cared for and well-attended. These attendants knew about their preferences and habits, and would help the four princesses feel comfortable and at-home in a completely new environment at their in-law's place.

There is another hidden reason behind this tradition of sending servants to accompany the bride. They would owe allegiance to her more than anyone else, and would virtually act as spies on the behalf of the bride's father to keep a close watch on her safety and well-being. Should anything go wrong and the girl feels the need to confide with someone with whom she is comfortable, these maid-servants and other attendants who had been serving her in her father's home will come to her aide and act as a safety-valve for her. They can even send a secret message to her father if the need arises.]

लोकपाल अवलोकि सिहाने । लीन्ह अवधपति सबु सुखु माने ॥ ६ ॥
दीन्ह जाचकन्हि जो जेहि भावा । उबरा सो जनवासेहि आवा ॥ ७ ॥
तब कर जोरि जनकु मृदु बानी । बोले सब बरात सनमानी ॥ ८ ॥

lōkapāla avalōki sihānē. līnha avadhapati sabu sukhu mānē. 6.
dīnha jācakanhi jō jēhi bhāvā. ubarā sō janavāsēhirā āvā. 7.

taba kara jōri janaku mṛdu bānī. bōlē saba barāta sanamānī. 8.

All these marriage gifts (i.e. the Dahej) were appreciated and praised by all the Lokpals (custodians of the world—here meaning the many gods who were watching the marriage proceedings both in human forms who mingled with the crowd in the pavilion, as well as in their invisible form in the sky). King Dasrath of Ayodhya felt happy and accepted these gifts with grace¹. (6)

Whatever was asked of king Dasrath by the (countless) alms-seekers, he gave them liberally, and without reservations². After these formalities were over, he (Dasrath) came to the palace where the marriage party had been lodged. (7)

Then (i.e. after king Dasrath was duly honoured and marriage gifts were handed over to him on behalf of the grooms, and he left the venue for his residence as stated in Chaupai line nos. 2-7 herein above), king Janak joined his palms as a sign of showing great respect to all other members of the marriage party and spoke to them sweetly, exchanging greetings and pleasantries with them³. (8)

[Note—¹Dasrath wished to say “most welcome” to Janak, and this verse in effect means exactly this. When someone gives a gift it is good manners and courteous to accept it graciously with a smile and say thanks. It was not that Dasrath lacked anything; the kingdom of Ayodhya was very prosperous and well-to-do. His treasury was full to the brim. But he accepted whatever was given as Dahej in deference to Janak’s sentiments and as a sign of showing great respect to him.

The fact that Ayodhya was a very prosperous kingdom comes to the fore on countless occasions as we read the story. For instance, one can read the following verses to get an idea of its wealth and prosperity: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) at the time of Lord Ram’s birth in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; (b) at the time the auspicious news of marriage of Lord Ram with Sita arrived in Ayodhya from Janakpur in Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297; (c) at the time the marriage party arrived in Ayodhya with the four brides as described from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 324 it is said that Ayodhya was a kingdom whose majesty and glory was praised by even the king of gods, and its wealth and prosperity made the treasurer of gods ashamed of his own wealth.

The idea is that Dasrath did not accept these gifts because he was greedy for easy wealth, but as gesture of respect for Janak. Obviously it would be highly uncivilized, impolite, rude and uncourteous for Dasrath if he had refused to accept anything that Janak gave.

We will read in the next line no. 7 that soon after accepting the gifts, Dasrath liberally gave away whatever was asked by alms-seekers who flocked around him to accept gifts that the groom’s father gives as a token of his joy.

²Whenever there was a happy occasion, alms-seekers used to assemble around the chief patron to get gifts. Not that these alms-seekers were paupers or beggars, but they sought gifts as a token of rejoicing and celebration when one gives and accepts gifts, such as during festivals and other ceremonial events. These alms-seekers then themselves liberally donated and cheerfully gave away to others what they had got as

gifts. This is very clear when we read Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194.

Dasrath was a charitable person with a broad, magnanimous heart who enjoyed giving liberally whatever anyone wanted and whatever came his way as is clear elsewhere also—refer for instance: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 196 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; and Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 351.

Even his queens followed his example and gave away liberally and with open hands—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

³The father-in-law of the bride, i.e. king Dasrath was the chief guest on the occasion of the marriage ceremony. He was shown full attention. When he left the venue and retired to his place of lodging, king Janak duly honoured the rest of the marriage party by meeting each individual member and exchanging sweet pleasantries with them.

The following Chanda verses continue with this exchange of pleasantries and the events that followed them.]

छं०. सनमानि सकल बरात आदर दान बिनय बड़ाइ कै । १ ।
प्रमुदित महा मुनि बृंद बंदे पूजि प्रेम लड़ाइ कै ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

sanamāni sakala barāta ādara dāna binaya barā'i kai. 1.
pramudita mahā muni bṛnda bandē pūji prēma laṛā'i kai. 2.

[The previous Chaupai verses have dealt primarily with the conduct of the marriage rites and the accompanying formality of giving of marriage gifts known in local parlance as Dahej-giving at the end of them. Now in these following Chanda verses we read that Janak has shown respect to all the members of the marriage party and made them all happy by his courteousness, good manners, simplicity and affection for all of them.]

He (king Janak) duly honoured the entire marriage party by showing great respect to all its members individually by way of polite prayers and giving abundant gifts to them.¹ (Chanda line no. 1)

The great sages present there felt very delighted at the way the marriage ceremony was conducted with great grace, honour and dignity by Janak, and by the most courteous and polite way he showed his respect to the entire marriage party as well as to these sages themselves.

Then the king worshipped and paid his obeisance to all the other Brahmins and elders of the groom's party with great expression of affection towards all of them.² (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—¹We have read in earlier Chaupai line no. 8 that Janak faced the members of the groom's party, speaking politely with them and exchanging pleasantries. These Chanda verses build upon that premise and describe how he pleased each member of the marriage party individually as well as in the form of their groups.]

²The marriage party consisted not only of noble men, courtiers, ministers and senior and prominent citizens of Ayodhya but also of great sages and Brahmins as well as elders of the society. So Janak had attended to each one of them individually in accordance with his standing and position in the hierarchy of the society and royalty. Since sages, Brahmins and elders should be shown special respect and their blessings sought by the host, Janak took care to address this aspect of hospitality by worshipping them and paying his obeisance to them in a special manner befitting their stature. This would obviously make them pleased.]

सिरु नाइ देव मनाइ सब सन कहत कर संपुट किएँ । ३ ।
सुर साधु चाहत भाउ सिंधु कि तोष जल अंजलि दिएँ ॥ ४ ॥

siru nā'i dēva manā'i saba sana kahata kara sampuṭa ki'ēm̃. 3.
sura sādhu cāhata bhā'u sindhuki tōṣa jala anjali di'ēm̃. 4.

After that, king Janak offered his obeisance to the gods by bowing his head reverentially before them. He joined his palms in prayer and submitted [3]—‘Gods and holy men seek nothing but love and submission (i.e. they are fully contented and want nothing else but respect and affection from others). Say, is it ever possible to actually fill the ocean by offering a palm-full cup of water as done when one offers performs his daily ritual of offering oblations to it? [4]¹’ (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹To wit, though the mighty ocean, which is the largest reservoir of water on earth, does not need any more water to make it full, but still it expects that others at least show their respect to its greatness by offering oblations to it. A mere cup-full of water is like a speck of sand on the vast stretch of the desert or the shore line covered with tons and tons of sand, but it still satisfies the ocean because it is a token of respect that the worshipper offers to the ocean to acknowledge the fact that the water which is brought down to him in the form of rain that sustains life on earth and is likened to the elixir of life known as Amrit owes its origin to the ocean.

The ocean that gulps down endless flows of great rivers gushing down into it from the time the earth was created but still never overflows its bank, and neither does it say that it is full and so it does not need any more water from these rivers, the same ocean feels contented by a mere cup of water offered to it by a worshipper. In other words, the only thing the ocean expects is respect, and nothing else.

Similarly, the only thing the great gods and holy men expect is respect and honourable treatment. They are not hungry or thirsty for anything else.

Hence, when king Janak offered his obeisance to the sages, the Brahmins and other elders present on the occasion (as in Chanda line no. 2), as well as the gods and holy men (as in Chanda line no. 3), all of them felt extremely delighted and blessed the king. In this sense, Chanda line nos. 2-3 can be combined to give a greater effect to their broader meaning.]

कर जोरि जनकु बहोरि बंधु समेत कोसलराय सों । ५ ।
बोले मनोहर बयन सानि सनेह सील सुभाय सों ॥ ६ ॥
संबंध राजन रावरें हम बड़े अब सब बिधि भए । ७ ।

एहि राज साज समेत सेवक जानिबे बिनु गथ लए ॥ ८ ॥
 ए दारिका परिचारिका करि पालिबीं करुना नई । ९ ।
 अपराधु छमिबो बोलि पठए बहुत हौं ढीट्यो कई ॥ १० ॥

kara jōri janaku bahōri bandhu samēta kōsalarāya sōm. 5.
 bōlē manōhara bayana sāni sanēha sīla subhāya sōm. 6.
 sambandha rājana rāvarēm hama barē aba saba bidhi bha'e. 7.
 ēhi rāja sāja samēta sēvaka jānibē binu gatha la'e. 8.
 ē dārikā paricārikā kari pālibīm karunā na'ī. 9.
 aparādhu chamibō bōli paṭha'e bahuta haum ḍhīṭyō ka'ī. 10.

[After having paid his obeisance to the sage, Brahmins, elders, gods and holy men present on the occasion, king Janak turned to king Dasrath, the father of his son-in-laws, and offered his due respects to him in Chanda line nos. 5-10.]

Then king Janak, along with his brother (i.e. younger brother Kushdhvaj), stood most gracefully and humbly before the king of Kaushal (which is another name for Ayodhya; i.e. king Dasrath) [5], and paid his tribute to him by submitting himself before him and speaking very sweetly, using polite words that were very courteous and full of affection as follows—[6]

‘Your great Majesty! We have been immensely honoured in all possible ways by the virtue of our connection, our association and our ties with your honourable self [7].

All of us, i.e. at our individual level as well as at the level of the kingdom at large, submit ourselves unconditionally before you. From now onwards you can treat all of us as your humble and obedient servants. [That is, we are ready to serve you in any way you please, without obligations!] [8]

Treat these innocent and inexperienced girls (our daughters) with the greatest of kindness and love [9], and forgive them for any mistakes of commission and omission that they may make. Besides this, please excuse me for giving you the trouble of calling you from such a great distance to this place* [10].’ (Chanda line nos. 5-10)

[Note—In these verses, king Janak has offered his respects to king Dasrath and has politely requested him to treat the four newly wed girls, who are now onwards his daughters-in-law, with the greatest of love and care as he would have shown to his own daughters. These four brides, i.e. Sita and her sister Urmila, as well as her cousins Maandavi and Srutkirti, are going to a new home of which they have no idea. They are unaware of its customs, routine and ways of life and expectations from them. The brides would be far away from home and surrounded by complete strangers in the initial days of their life in Ayodhya before they become fully acquainted with their new relations and become accustomed to their in-laws’ household and the way of life there.

So Dasrath was requested by Janak to be extra careful and be diligent in acting the part of a loving father-in-law who is expected to make his daughter-in-law feel fully comfortable and at ease in the new home as if it was her original parent’s home.

*Janak was extremely polite, and it is evident in this statement of his. What he means is this—

“Ordinarily, a junior king goes to pay his respects or tributes to the senior king, or the emperor. The process of marriage that was chosen for marrying my daughter Sita was a ‘Swayambar’, which literally means ‘self-chosen bride or groom’, in which the qualified candidate marries the girl in a very brief ceremony without the necessity of having to go through the elaborate process that is required under the traditional system of marriage which entails a lot of formalities such as elaborate rituals and their accompanying ceremonies, as well as the requirement of the presence of the groom’s parents amongst other things.

So, formally I could have avoided giving you the trouble of coming all the way from Ayodhya to Janakpur to attend the marriage of Sita with your son Ram. I could have solemnised the marriage and send the couple with my senior priest and other senior citizens to Ayodhya. Or better still, I could have accompanied the newly married couple myself and paid a visit to Ayodhya.

But sir, I had to give you the trouble to come to Janakpur as it was the express order of sage Vishwamitra (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 286—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287).

Nevertheless, I am extremely glad that you came as it not only gave me the honour and privilege of serving you personally but also of strengthening the bond of affection and friendship between the two of us at the individual level as well as between our two great kingdoms by getting all my daughters, mine and my brother’s, married to your excellent sons. What more would I want; what more could I have prayed for? I feel that today, I am the most blessed king on the face of earth!”]

पुनि भानुकुलभूषण सकल सनमान निधि समधी किए । ११ ।
कहि जाति नहिं बिनती परस्पर प्रेम परिपूरन हिए ॥ १२ ॥

puni bhānukulabhūṣana sakala sanamāna nidhi samadhī ki'ē. 11.
kahi jāti nahim binatī paraspara prēma paripūrana hi'ē. 12.

After king Janak had shown his respect and courtesy to king Dasrath who was a gem in the glorious solar race¹, the latter reciprocated the warm gestures of king Janak by being immensely courteous and extremely polite towards him in all possible ways as he had been to Dasrath². (Chanda line no. 11)

They were so affectionate and polite towards each other, and the reciprocal way they prayed and offered their respects to each other with their hearts brimming over with love and affection that it is not possible to describe any part of it³. (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—¹King Dasrath is compared to the ‘sun’ in the solar race. This is a metaphor to mean that out of so many kings in this race, Dasrath was the most fortunate and glorious king. He had the Supreme Being as his son in the form of Lord Ram, and this fact in itself lifts him to the highest stature of human existence. Like the sun that shines bright and clear in the sky and outshines the rest of the celestial bodies, including the moon that is the king of the night sky, Dasrath’s glory and fame outshone the rest of the kings of this race.

²Dasrath was well-versed with the ways of protocol as he was a great emperor who had been welcoming and showing respects to great kings, sages, Brahmins and gods all through his life. In the case of Janak he took special care to express his friendship and affection by being extremely courteous and polite because all his sons have now been married to all the daughters of Janak and his brother Kushdhvaj. This marriage had created a special inviolable relationship between these two great kings and their kingdoms. Being the senior of the two, Dasrath went out of his way to make Janak comfortable and happy. For all practical purposes, Dasrath was now the de-facto elder brother of Janak, and the two vowed to stand by each other in thick and thin.

Dasrath showed so much affection, honour and respect for Janak that the latter was virtually swept of his feet with these expressions; Janak was overwhelmed by Dasrath's politeness and affectionate gestures.

³This mutual show of respect and honour must have gone on for some time and become progressively intense so much so that each one of them seemed overwhelmed by the affection of the other.]

बृदारका गन सुमन बरिसहिं राउ जनवासेहि चले । १३ ।
दुदुभी जय धुनि बेद धुनि नभ नगर कौतूहल भले ॥ १४ ॥

br̥ndārakā gana sumana barisahim̃ rā'u janavāsēhi calē. 13.
dundubhī jaya dhuni bēda dhuni nabha nagara kautūhala bhalē. 14.

The gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven) as the king (Dasrath) made his way to his lodging place. (Chanda line no. 13)

There was a cacophony of sounds created by the beating of the kettle-drums, exclamatory loud applause of cheer, and the chanting of the hymns of the Vedas. There was a tumult in the sky (the heaven from where the gods were watching the proceeding on the ground) as well as in the city (of Janakpur). (Chanda line no. 14)

[Note—After the formalities and exchange of greetings and pleasantries were over, Dasrath took his leave and proceeded towards the palace where he and other members of the marriage party were lodged.

At that time, there was all-round celebration—both in the heaven as well as in the city.]

तब सखीं मंगल गान करत मुनीस आयसु पाइ कै । १५ ।
दूलह दुलहिनिन्ह सहित सुंदरि चलीं कोहबर ल्याइ कै ॥ १६ ॥

taba sakhim̃ maṅgala gāna karata munīsa āyasu pā'i kai. 15.
dūlahā dulahininha sahita sundari calim̃ kōhabara lyā'i kai. 16.

Then, upon receiving orders from the chief sage (i.e. sage Vasistha), the pretty companions of the brides began singing auspicious songs befitting the occasion. They then escorted the brides and their respective grooms to the room where the family

deities had been kept for offering of worship by the newly wed couples at the end of the marriage ceremony. [This ritual is known as “Kohabar”.] (Chanda line nos. 15-16)

[Note—When the marriage rituals are finished, the groom’s father and other family members as well as the rest of the marriage party go back to the place where they are lodged. But the groom and the bride are brought to the room in the bride’s home where the couple offer worship to the family deities. This is “Kohabar”.

Remember: All the four brothers have been married simultaneously here, so when the time for doing the ritual of Kohabar arrived, all of them were escorted by the lady-friends of the four princesses from the marriage pavilion to the palace of king Janak where the family deities would be worshipped by the four couples. Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 146.

An interesting development occurs now. On the way from the platform where the main marriage rituals were done, to the room where the Kohabar is to be done, Tulsidas has taken a pause. He now takes a break from the narration of events associated with the wedding ceremony to describe the personal chemistry between Lord Ram and Sita in Doha no. 326 that follows herein below. The poet-devotee heart of Tulsidas got the better of him for some moments as this great saint forgot for a moment what he was describing a while ago, i.e. he forgot to go ahead with the narration of the Kohabar and other rituals that followed it, but paused and began describing the wonderful, out-of-the-world and fabulously beautiful image of Lord Ram who was the Lord he adored and worshipped in his heart and mind.

Therefore, we pause for a while now in our reading of the events and formal rituals associated with the marriage, and instead read about the eye-catching, bewitching beauty of Lord Ram ‘through the eyes of Sita’.

This is a fantastic moment—Tulsidas is describing the beauty of Lord Ram as a groom not in the manner he wishes to describe, but in the way Sita herself saw the Lord. The wise Tulsidas has made Sita a witness of his description of Lord Ram’s glamorous beauty as a groom. This is absolutely clear when we consider the fact that Doha no. 326, which says that Sita repeatedly glances at Lord Ram and is overwhelmed by the fabulous sight she saw, acts as a prelude of the actual description of the beauty of the form of Lord Ram as narrated in the verses, i.e. Chaupai line nos. 1-10, immediately following this Doha.

After he is finished with describing the beauty of the form of his Lord, Tulsidas virtually wakes up from his sentimental reverie and resumes his narration of the marriage rituals from Chanda line no. 1 that follows the last line no. 10 of the set of Chaupais of ten verses herein below that describe the Lord’s exquisite beauty.]

दो०. पुनि पुनि रामहि चितव सिय सकुचति मनु सकुचै न ।
हरत मनोहर मीन छबि प्रेम पिआसे नैन ॥ ३२६ ॥

dōhā.

puni puni rāmahī citava siya sakucati manu sakucaī na.
harata manōhara mīna chabi prēma pi’āsē naina. 326.

Sita repeatedly glanced at Lord Ram in a shy and surreptitious manner, though her heart kept her inspiring to keep her gaze fixed on the Lord. [In other words, Sita wanted to keep her eyes fixed on her beloved, Lord Ram, but out of modesty she

could not look at him with a fixed stare though her heart egged her to do so. So, she once looked at him, then looked away, and once again glanced back at him.]

Her persistent efforts to watch the Lord with intense love and affection in her eyes reminded one of the fish whose eyes are constantly open in the water (because the fish derives immense and unbound satisfaction by seeing the water all around it, as it loves the water intensely and does not seem to have enough of its sight, so much so that it continues to gaze at the water with unblinking eyes, although this effort might be causing physical discomfort to the enamoured fish).¹ (Doha no. 236)

[Note—¹The fish does not remain static in water; it is constantly moving from one point to another. Likewise, Sita is moving towards the place where the family deities are to be worshipped. All along the way, she sheepishly casts sideways glances at Lord Ram, but cannot fix her eyes steadily on the Lord because she has to keep walking under the constant vigil of her friends who are accompanying her and have surrounded her on all sides as they escort the couple towards the ritual of doing Kohabar. Even once she has reached there, she has to do so many worship rituals that she can't stand with peace and look straight at Lord Ram. Therefore, her situation is akin to the fish.

Even when the fish is in water it keeps its eyes wide open unlike us who would be forced to close ours when we are under water. Hence, Sita had kept her eyes open and focused on Lord Ram though she had to walk and keep her attention on the ground in order to avoid tripping and falling over. Even in the Kohabar room she engaged in doing physical rituals with her eyes focused on Lord Ram.

Another idea in using the metaphor of the fish is that Sita did not as much as blink her eyes in order not to miss even a second of looking at Lord Ram.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 327 herein below.]

चौ०. स्याम सरीरु सुभायँ सुहावन । सोभा कोटि मनोज लजावन ॥ १ ॥

जावक जुत पद कमल सुहाए । मुनि मन मधुप रहत जिन्ह छाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

syāma sarīru subhāyam' suhāvana. sōbhā kōṭi manōja lajāvana. 1.

jāvaka juta pada kamala suhā'ē. muni mana madhupa rahata jinha chā'ē. 2.

[The entire set of 10 lines in this Chaupai describes the beautiful form of Lord Ram as a bridegroom.]

He (Lord Ram) had a dark complexion¹ which was inherently most beautiful and so bewitchingly charming to behold that it put to shame the beauty and charm of countless Kamdeos (cupids) who prides himself for his physical glamour and attractiveness². (1)

His lotus-like feet that were coloured red by application of a dye³ looked as wonderful as a blooming and healthy lotus flower that is brimming-over with nectar over which the thirsty bees representing the Mana (mind and heart) of great sages and hermits are hovering to get a chance to drink it⁴. (2)

[Note—The out-of-the-world magnificent beauty of Lord Ram as a groom has also been elaborately described by Tulsidas in his book “Geetawali” in its Baal Kand, verse no. 1/108. Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/68, stanza no. 10.

Lord Ram’s extraordinary beauty and charm as a prince who is most suitable to marry Sita who herself was the most beautiful girl of her time (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 251) has been described elsewhere also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8 at the time the two brothers had gone to see the sights of the city of Janakpur when they had first arrived there, and once again as Sita saw them in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 233 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 221; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 316.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 220; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243.

It must be remembered that Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and the latter possesses this wonderful swarthy-complexioned form that would put countless Kamdeos to shame as endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 146.

In this context it ought to be noted that the divine form of Lord Vishnu that is described in Ram Charit Manas (Baal Kand, from Doha no. 146—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 148) fits in perfectly, point to point, with the glorious form of Lord Ram that is being described in these current verses as well as anywhere else in the entire spread of Ram Charit Manas.

³The feet of the groom as well as the bride are painted with a red dye made of melted lac.

⁴Refer similar views are expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 221; (ii) line no. 2 of Doha no. 231.

It is said in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 17 that Bharat always kept his mind and heart devoted to Lord Ram’s feet just like the honey-bee that does not wish to move away from the nectar that is present in the lotus flower.]

पीत पुनीत मनोहर धोती । हरति बाल रबि दामिनि जोती ॥ ३ ॥

कल किंकिनि कटि सूत्र मनोहर । बाहु बिसाल बिभूषन सुंदर ॥ ४ ॥

pīta punīta manōhara dhōtī. harati bāla rabi dāmini jōtī. 3.

kala kinkini kaṭi sūtra manōhara. bāhu bisāla bibhūṣana sundara. 4.

The yellow-coloured clean ‘Dhoti’ (a single-piece body wrapping garment worn by males) made of silk that he wore was glistening with radiance so much that it virtually outshone the colour and beauty of the nascent sun as it rises in the eastern horizon as well as the splendour and the dazzle of lightening (as it streaks across the sky)¹. (3)

The waist-band with small chiming bells that he wore around his hip, as well as his long muscular arms that were adorned with beautiful ornaments together looked absolutely charming². (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 219; (iii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 244.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 147; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219.]

पीत जनेउ महाछबि देई । कर मुद्रिका चोरि चितु लेई ॥ ५ ॥
सोहत ब्याह साज सब साजे । उर आयत उरभूषन राजे ॥ ६ ॥

pīta janē'u mahāchabi dē'ī. kara mudrikā cōri citu lē'ī. 5.
sōhata byāha sāja saba sājē. ura āyata urabhūṣana rājē. 6.

The sacred thread of a yellow colour (pīta janē'u) that he wore across his chest gave his divine form a sense of enhanced beauty and dignity (because not only this yellow colour of the thread matched with the yellow colour of the Dhoti that the Lord wore, but it also showed that he belonged to a noble race and had been duly initiated or baptised in accordance with the custom of the higher echelons of the society).¹

The ring that he wore on his finger*² appeared to steal (i.e. enchant, captivate, enthrall) the mind of the beholder³. (5)

He (Lord Ram) looked most adorable and charming with all the wedding decorations and paraphernalia with which he was adorned⁴.

His chest was broad, and it was adorned with wonderful ornaments⁵. (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 147; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244.

²This is the marriage-ring that the groom is offered by the bride at the time of formalisation of their marriage. This is the reason why there has been no mention of a 'ring' earlier while the physical beauty and charm of Lord Ram has been described in Baal Kand of Ram Charit Manas.

*Some very interesting observations can be made in connection with this 'ring' at this juncture. As is the custom, the bride and the groom exchange rings during the marriage rituals as a token of exchanging vows to remain tied to each other permanently and bonded with each other in an unbreakable seamless bond like the ring whose two ends are so carefully forged and melded into each other that no one can say where the first end begins and the last end ends. Likewise, the relationship that has been created as a result of this marriage would also remove the distinction between the two individual identities of the boy and the girl, and therefore hence forward they should not only be treated by the world as being 'one', but they should also treat each other without any distinction whatsoever.

The ring that Lord Ram gave Sita bore the insignia of the royal kingdom of Ayodhya as well as the initials of the Lord, viz. the single letter 'Ra' with an

‘anuswar’ (dot) on the top. This is pronounced as ‘Raang’, and it is the Beej Mantra (seed Mantra or basic spiritual formula) that enables the spiritual aspirant to meditate upon the cosmic form of Lord Ram as Brahm, the supreme liberator as well as the ultimate destination of the soul of the creature the attainment of which stature leads to the final emancipation and salvation of the soul.

Similarly, the one which Sita exchanged with him bore the symbol of the kingdom of Janakpur and the initials of Sita, which is the letter ‘Sa’. This letter is the 2nd part of the eclectic Baaj Mantra “Hans” which ascetics use for meditation. This letter means ‘It’ or ‘That is’, and the letter ‘Han’ means ‘Me’. In totality this Mantra means ‘it is me’, i.e. the ultimate truth of existence is my soul known as the pure conscious Atma, and it is my true identity. Therefore, this letter ‘Sa’ representing Sita and etched on the ring that she gave to Lord Ram during the exchange of rings as a part of the wedding custom implied that she wishes to tell the Lord that now onwards her true identity is the Lord himself. And simultaneously reminding the Lord that she, Sita, is as close to him as his own soul—‘It is me’.

We read in the story that when Lord Ram was going to the forest and had crossed the river Ganges, he wanted to give some reward to the boatman (Kewat) who rowed him, Sita and Laxman across the river. But the problem was that he had left Ayodhya dressed as a hermit, and even Sita had discarded all her ornaments when she accompanied the Lord. They didn’t have anything of material value to give the boatman. So then Sita took-off her ring and gave it to Lord Ram so that he can in turn give it to the boatman. But the boatman refused to accept it out of his empathy for the Lord’s present condition that he was going to the forest as a hermit without possessions and had nothing to give, as well as a mark of his devotion and surrender for the Lord whom he recognised as the Supreme Lord in a human form. The boatman had wisely observed that Sita had taken her own ring out from her finger and the Lord was giving it to him. It would have been very greedy and inhuman for the boatman had he even shown a trace of willingness to take it. He would have been like a greedy vulture who feeds upon flesh of those who are lying wounded in the battle-field and already suffering intensely. Or like a greedy money-lender who would not hesitate to suck the last drop of blood from unfortunate people who are unable to pay him back, if this drop of blood could transform into money by sale in the market! Or like those greedy men roaming in the cremation ground who would extract a gold-plated tooth from a dead body or rob corpses of the little bit of jewellery that they can find on them.

Now, when the wise boatman refused to accept the ring, Sita did not take it back. Why? This is because once something has been given to someone as a token of service rendered by the latter, or even as a gift or charity, its ownership ends with the giver, and then it would be highly wrong for the giver to take it back right then and there. Therefore, this ring was kept by Lord Ram. There was no problem in this—because the ring did not belong to Lord Ram, but to Sita. Lord Ram was merely a medium that was used by Sita to give it to the boatman. And since it could not be thrown away or given to someone else because it was the marriage ring that was given to her at the time of wedding, so the Lord decided to keep it. This incident of Sita giving the ring to Lord Ram for giving it to Kevat, the boatman, and his refusal to accept it is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 102 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

Later on in the story we read that when the search party of monkeys and bears was sent in search of Sita, Lord Ram had given a ring to Hanuman to take it to Sita as a token of identification so that she would be able to recognise him as the Lord’s

messenger. Refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 13 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The next question is—which ring was it? It was either of the two rings—the one that Lord Ram had kept with him when the boatman refused to accept it at the time of crossing of the river Ganges, and the other could have been the one that Lord Ram was given by Sita at the time of marriage and he had been wearing it ever since. The answer is that it was the marriage ring of Lord Ram bearing his signature that was sent to Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 13.

Though Lord Ram had discarded all his royal ornaments while donning the robes of a hermit at the time of departure for the forest from Ayodhya, in all probabilities he had retained his marriage ring. It was obligatory for him to keep wearing the marriage ring, and it is also sanctioned by the scriptures because his wife was with him; they hadn't divorced in which eventuality he would have been expected to remove the marriage ring. Even Sita and Laxman had discarded all their royal ornaments and paraphernalia at the time of departure for the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 29; and (ii) Doha no. 33.

In all probability, Lord Ram had given Hanuman the ring of Sita so that she could recognise it very easily. Besides this 'recognition' factor, the ring bore the initials of Lord Ram which would serve as a great morale booster and a source of moral support for the forlorn Sita during her lonely and pitiful days in captivity at Lanka.

Now, what was the message that Lord Ram wished to convey through this ring to Sita aside of it being a sort of identification for Hanuman to help her know he was an authentic messenger of the Lord?

It was a sort of reprimand for Sita and a subtle warning to her to overcome ego first if she desires redemption by Lord Ram. The ring would remind her of her stubborn nature when she had declined to take back it back when the boatman had refused to accept it, forcing Lord Ram to keep it with him: she had pretended to be too righteous to take back a thing which was assigned to or given to someone else as a gift. She had learnt a bitter lesson in the meanwhile, and therefore she has now accepted, with great affection, the same ring that she had refused earlier. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 13.

At the time of taking the ring back when the boatman had declined to accept it from Lord Ram, Sita had not realized one mistake she was making: that since this ring was the 'marriage ring', by not accepting it she was virtually breaking her ties with the Lord. But that was not her intention at all, and the Lord was aware of it. Her idea was noble—not to take back anything that is given to someone once. So, he politely kept the ring with him for some later day opportunity to return it to Sita. And this opportunity came when he had to give something to Hanuman as a sign of his being a messenger from the Lord and not some cunning imposter sent by Ravana to deceive Sita. That is why Lord Ram chose to give this ring to Hanuman to return it to Sita.

The Lord also wished to convey a message to Sita that he would come to her rescue only if she accepts this 'marriage ring' as a reaffirmation of her loyalty and allegiance to the Lord. Sita got the hint, and that is why she accepted it with the greatest of affection and with tears of affection and remembrance in her eyes—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 13.

Now, how would Lord Ram know that Sita had reaffirmed her submission to the Lord and it was time he acted to free her from the captivity of the demons? The answer is found in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 27.

The other connotation and spin to this episode related to the “ring” is this: Lord Ram is the supreme Brahm, the Lord of creation whose cosmic form is Lord Vishnu. Brahm does not do anything himself, but it is his dynamic powers known as Shakti that does it for him. This Shakti has revealed itself as Sita. Sita had come down to earth to help Lord Ram accomplish his divine mission of freeing the earth from the tyranny of the cruel demons. We read in Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas that when Lord Ram was reluctant to go to the forest in order to embark on his mission of eliminating the demons and their ruler Ravana of Lanka because he could not bear the sight of grieving and weeping citizens of Ayodhya being left behind him to suffer grief of separation from their beloved Lord, it was Sita who had climbed the chariot, that was brought by Sumanta, the chief charioteer of the kingdom, first, and then caught hold of Lord Ram’s hand and pulled him on board. Laxman followed behind Lord Ram. This is clearly narrated in Adhyatma Ramayan, Ayodhya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 43-44.

The idea is that Sita virtually told Lord Ram—“Look Lord, you have not come down to earth to get entangled in worldly attachments to become mired in emotions and trapped by sentiments. For you a greater mission is pending ahead. It has to be done. How can we finish our divine mission if you allow yourself to be overcome with worldly emotions and forget that you are expected to be neutral and detached from all grossness associated with this world? Tell me, if you become so emotional and sentimental, what would happen when the time comes for the elimination of demons at Lanka; you will start showing mercy on them and their wailing families. Say then, how will the demons be eliminated? So come on and desist from being emotional. Get on the chariot and let’s move ahead to the forest.”

Sita, being the ‘Shakti’ of the supreme Brahm, knew her task clearly and what was to be done. So, in the intervening period from the time of leaving Ayodhya and crossing of river Ganges, she observed that Lord Ram was sad and remorseful when he remembered how the citizens of Ayodhya were gravely grieving for him, how king Dasrath was wailing and lamenting, how Bharat would burst out in grief when he learns that his beloved brother Lord Ram has gone to the forest for enduring hardship for fourteen long years because of him, and so on. Though Lord Ram maintained an exterior of calmness and poise, internally a storm of grief had overcome him. Sita was closely observing all this. So she decided to step in: she, being Brahm’s Shakti and a part of Brahm, thought that maybe Lord Ram would not allow her to be kidnapped by Ravana, the demon king, and hear her wailing. If this is not allowed by the Lord then the entire mission of slaying the cruel demons would fail even before it started—because it was imperative that Sita is taken hostage by Ravana so that an excuse is found by the Lord to go to Lanka in order to rescue her, and kill the ferocious and immoral demons in the process.

So what should be done now, thought Sita. She got an opportunity when something was to be given to the boatman. She decided to give her marriage ring and indicate to the Lord that all his worldly relationships with her—that she was his beloved wife—are snapped forthwith! Lord Ram should stop treating her as his ‘wife’ now onwards, but concentrate on the divine mission of the gods for which he and she have come down to earth. Since the formal relationship of a husband and wife is symbolized by the ‘marriage ring’ that they wear, with Sita discarding this ring she

indicated to Lord Ram that she is no longer his worldly wife but the cosmic Shakti who is accompanying him to fulfill the divine mission of the gods.

Therefore, the Lord should remember that when the time comes for her abduction by Ravana, he should let it proceed in accordance to plan and not create an unnecessary hindrance because Sita was his wife and she can't be separated from him at any cost. Well, the 'separation' is done now when the marriage ring was returned to the Lord by Sita herself, so there was no question of regrets and reluctance in allowing her being kidnapped by Ravana.

The next question in this context is: Why then was the ring sent by Lord Ram to Sita during her captivity in Lanka? It was to tell her that if she did not accept it with affection, Lord Ram will take it that she does not wish to restore the old ties once again. It was alright to break the relationship at the time of commencement of the forest journey by returning the ring on the banks of the river Ganges because it helped the Lord to become wise and overcome his emotional attachments with Sita so that the job at hand can be done in a clinical, efficient manner without any sentimental tampering. But that intention of Sita is accomplished: she has reached inside the fortress of the demons. Now it is the time to reiterate the eternal, unbreakable and inviolable bond that exists between Brahm and Shakti. So, Lord Ram, the personified form of Brahm, reiterates this eternal relationship by sending the ring to Sita, the personified form of Shakti, and this is why she gladly accepts it.

We read that Sita not only accepts the ring but reaffirms her loyalty and allegiance to Lord Ram by sending her 'Chudaamani' (a hairpin that was studded with gems and given to her at the time of marriage when vermilion powder was applied on her head by Lord Ram during the marriage rituals in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 325) to him through Hanuman (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 27).

Sending of this hair-pin is a symbolic gesture by Sita to indicate to the Lord that she is bowing her head before him and surrendering herself to him. Lord Ram gladly accepts this hair-pin with the greatest of affection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 32.

³This is a wonderful and fascinating metaphor that would make a discerning reader done his thinking-cap and ponder on its metaphysical and spiritual import. The 'ring' is round in shape just like a circular enclosure. This particular ring was worn by Lord Ram when he married Sita, it was a 'marriage ring', implying that he has voluntarily got himself permanently tied to the affairs of this world and responsibilities of a married life. From the perspective of the philosophy of the Upanishads that emphasise detachment from all things related to this gross world, this ring symbolically implies that the Lord has got himself trapped in a snare of worldly responsibilities and their attendant chain of miseries and grief, of joy and sorrows.

We find that this is what exactly happened with Lord Ram. After marriage he had to go to exile in the forest where his wife Sita was abducted by the demon king Ravana, which plunged the Lord as well as Sita in grief for a long time. This was followed by the difficult phase when Lord Ram had to trek all the way to Kishkindha where he met the monkey friends, and then from there he had to go to the southern ocean to cross it and launch a bloody assault on Lanka to free Sita which resulted in the epic war. In his final days on earth he had to abandon Sita once again, and finally depart from the world grieving for her.

In short, all his worries, troubles and entanglements with the world were symbolised by this 'ring'. In other words, those who watched the beautiful image of

Lord Ram going through the steps of the ritual of marriage also got deluded to think that the Supreme Being ‘has married’, a proposition that is as ludicrous as it is false. The supreme Brahm is formless; he has no attributes as are being described in relation with Lord Ram. Brahm did not marry anyone; this ‘marriage’ was a ploy of the Lord so that his cosmic Shakti in the form of Sita could join hands with him to successfully accomplish the divine mandate for which the Lord had to come down to earth as a human prince whom the ignorant world recognised as ‘Sri Ram’.

The world, in its utter ignorance, thought that the Supreme Being has ‘married’, and that ‘his wife’ is Sita, and that she was ‘abducted by the demon king’, and that Lord Ram ‘grieved for her and had to wage a bloody war to free her from the clutches of the demons’. All this is a play of the Lord’s Maya or his power to create delusions.

This ‘ring’ stands for this ‘circle of delusions’ that the Lord voluntarily created around himself so that his truth and reality remains hidden. It was not hidden from the great sages, seers and even those who were blessed devotees of the Lord as is absolutely clear from many instances where they had shown clear knowledge of who Lord Ram was. Examples are sage Vasisthaa, sage Vishwamitrab, sage Sutikshanc, sage Agastyad, sage Bharadwaje, Ahilyaf who was freed from her cursed body of a stone and resumed her original form as wife of sage Gautam, Sabarig who had waited for long years to have a divine glimpse of Lord Ram and achieve salvation, and so on. {References: ^aRam Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 50.

^bRam Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 206; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 4 and 7 that precede Doha no. 209.

^cRam Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 12.

^dRam Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 12—to Chaupai line no. 13 that precedes Doha no. 13.

^eRam Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 210.

^fRam Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211.

^gRam Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.}

A deluded person’s mind is a ‘captive mind’, a mind that can’t think freely and intelligently to correctly arrive at the truth after diligent analysis and thought. This phenomenon is metaphorically depicted in these lines by saying that “the mind of those who beheld Lord Ram’s ring was captivated by its charm and beauty”. Yes it is the ‘charm and beauty’ of the power of Lord’s Maya that it ensnares even the gods who were watching the proceedings. Say, did the gods not know who Lord Ram and Sita were, and if they knew then there should have been no cause for these gods to be enchanted by the physical beauty of Lord Ram. Did they not know that the virtue of ‘beauty and charm’ itself was powered by the Lord’s wish; did they not know that all the artificial things of this world, such as this gem-studded marriage ring, had no attraction for the Lord of creation, and that the Supreme Lord does not ‘marry and wear a marriage ring’? Therefore, there was no cause to be charmed by this ring. It was a snare that trapped the ignorant mind of the beholder.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 316.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 243, line no. 1 that says that the Lord wore a garland made of Tulsi leaves, i.e. freshly plucked leaves of the holy Basil plant; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 219 says that on his broad chest he wore a garland made of ‘Naagmani’ which is the solidified sap of the size and shape of a pearl that is found on the hood of a special family of serpents; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 147 that says that he, in his cosmic form as Lord Vishnu, wore the sign of the footprints of sage Bhrigu as well as a magnificent garland of fragrant flowers of a special kind of tree that grows in the forest.]

पिअर उपरना काखासोती । दुहुँ आँचरन्हि लगे मनि मोती ॥ ७ ॥

नयन कमल कल कुंडल काना । बदनु सकल सौंदर्ज निधाना ॥ ८ ॥

pi'ara uparanā kākhāsōtī. duhum' ām'caranhi lagē mani mōtī. 7.
nayana kamala kala kuṇḍala kānā. badanu sakala saundarja nidhānā. 8.

A length of yellow-coloured ceremonial cloth, which had strings of gems and pearls intricately embroidered on its fringes, adorned the upper part of his body. It was slung across his broad chest, with one end passing under his right armpit and the other end hung across his left shoulder¹. (7)

His eyes were like lotus flowers², and rings hung from his ears³.

Taken all in all, the body of Lord Ram was like a treasury of beauty, glamour, magnificence and charm⁴. (8)

[Note—¹Yellow is regarded as an auspicious colour, especially during marriage ceremonies. Hence all the cloth-pieces that Lord Ram wore on this occasion were coloured yellow.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 219; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 243; and (iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 316.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 243.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Doha no. 242, line no. 2; (iii) Doha no. 315; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 316.]

सुंदर भृकुटि मनोहर नासा । भाल तिलकु रुचिरता निवासा ॥ ९ ॥

सोहत मौरु मनोहर माथे । मंगलमय मुकुता मनि गाथे ॥ १० ॥

sundara bhṛkuṭi manōhara nāsā. bhāla tilaku ruciratā nivāsā. 9.
sōhata mauru manōhara māthē. maṅgalamaya mukutā mani gāthē. 10.

The Lord's eyebrows¹ were charming, and so was his nose². The Tilak mark³ on his forehead appeared to be a treasury of loveliness. (9)

A tiara studded with precious gems and pearls adorned the ceremonial wedding crown on his (Lord Ram's) head⁴. (10)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 243.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2 that precedes Doha no. 147.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 243.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 147; (ii) Doha no. 219; and (iii) Chanda line no. 1 that follows herein below.]

छं०. गाथे महामनि मौर मंजुल अंग सब चित चोरहीं । १ ।

पुर नारि सुर सुंदरीं बरहि बिलोकि सब तिन तोरहीं ॥ २ ॥

chanda.

gāthē mahāmani maura mañjula aṅga saba cita cōrahīm. 1.
pura nāri sura sundarīm barahi bilōki saba tina tōrahīm. 2.

The enchanting tiara stuck in the ceremonial wedding crown placed on the Lord's head was studded with precious gems.

All the organs of the Lord were so attractive that they captivated the mind and held its undivided attention.¹ (Chanda line no. 1)

The women-folk of the city of Janakpur as well as the pretty celestial ladies of the gods watched the glamorous, lovely form of the groom (Lord Ram) and broke blades of grass as a magic formula (or a talisman) that would prevent evil eyes of any kind from harming the Lord. (Chanda line no. 2)

[Note—¹This verse concludes the narration of the physical beauty of Lord Ram as a groom that was commenced in Chaupai line no. 1 that followed immediately after Doha no. 326 herein above.]

मनि बसन भूषन वारि आरति करहिं मंगल गावहीं । ३ ।

सुर सुमन बरिसहिं सूत मागध बंदि सुजसु सुनावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

mani basana bhūṣana vāri ārati karahim maṅgala gāvahim. 3.
sura sumana barisahim sūta māgadha bandi sujasa sunāvahim. 4.

These ladies scattered precious gems around the Lord, and offered ceremonial clothes and ornaments to him as a gesture to show their immense joy and pleasure to see the Lord as a groom, as well as a sign that they are blessing him and offering their respect to him.

After this, they did the ceremonial Aarti of the Lord to honour him and pay their obeisance to him.

[That is, the ladies first expressed their joy by scattering gems etc. before the Lord. This is a social custom that is observed during auspicious and happy events, such as marriages, as a token of expression of happiness and pleasure. Then they offered clothes and ornaments to the Lord as gifts on the occasion of his marriage. Finally, they did his Aarti, i.e. they waved lighted lamps, arranged on a decorated platter, in front of Lord Ram to honour him and pay their obeisance to him.] (Chanda line no. 3)

The gods showered flowers from the sky, while the bards, the minstrels and other professional singers sang laudatory songs praising the Lord's glories and those of his royal family. (Chanda line no. 4)

कोहबरहिं आने कुअँर कुअँरि सुआसिनिह सुख पाइ कै । ५ ।
अति प्रीति लौकिक रीति लागीं करन मंगल गाइ कै ॥ ६ ॥

kōhabarahim ānē ku'amra ku'amri su'āsininha sukha pā'i kai. 5.
ati prīti laukika rīti lāgim karana maṅgala gā'i kai. 6.

The honourable ladies¹ who had accompanied the prince (Lord Ram) and the princess (Sita), cheerfully brought them to the room where the family deities of the bride's family were placed to be worshipped by the newly-wed couple. [This ritual is known as "kōhabara".]² (Chanda line no. 5)

Once there, they affectionately sang auspicious songs befitting this occasion along side undertaking the various social rites that are associated with this part of the wedding ceremony (that is known as the "kōhabara")*. (Chanda line no. 6)

[Note—¹The word used in the text is "su'āsininha" which literally means those ladies whose husbands were still alive; the opposite of a widow. During auspicious events, only those women whose husbands were alive were allowed to participate.

²Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326 above; and (b) Janki Mangal, verse no. 146.

An interesting observation can be made at this juncture. Please refer also to the note appended to Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326.

We have read that all the four brothers were married together in the same pavilion. So, when the lady-friends of the four brides escorted the four pairs of couples inside the palace to do the ritual of Kohabar, all of them were together. This

fact is clear when we read Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326. But when they reached the spot, the actual worship of the family deities was done by the four couples separately.

*Tulsidas had paused his narration of the events associated with the marriage in Chanda line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 326, and had started describing the physical beauty of the Lord's divine form through the fish-eye lens of Sita—refer: Doha no. 326 and Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that follow it.

Now, when there was a loud chorus of applause and cheering by the crowd of exuberant gods in the sky and the people on the ground, Tulsidas suddenly woke up from his day-dreaming in which he was lost while describing the Lord's beauty to pick up the threads of his narration and resume it once again from these verses, Chanda line no. 5 that describes the ritual of Kohabar that was kept in pause mode earlier.]

लहकौरि गौरि सिखाव रामहि सीय सन सारद कहैं । ७ ।

रनिवासु हास बिलास रस बस जन्म को फलु सब लहैं ॥ ८ ॥

lahakauri gauri sikhāva rāmahī sīya sana sārada kahair̥. 7.

ranivāsu hāsa bilāsa rasa basa janma kō phalu saba lahair̥. 8.

During the next ritual known as “Lahakouri”¹, goddess Gauri (Parvati, the divine consort of Lord Shiva) herself taught Lord Ram what to do, and likewise Sita was advised by Sarada (the goddess of knowledge and divine consort of Brahma, the creator). (Chanda line no. 7)

The entire part of the palace where the female members of the royal household lived (known as “ranivāsa”; technically the ‘royal gynaeceum’) was brimming over with enthusiasm and merriment as all its members thoroughly enjoyed the celebrations that accompanied the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram. Everyone said that their birth and life have been fully rewarded and has been worthwhile as they had been able to witness this glorious moment first hand and enjoy it fully.² (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹“Lahakouri” is a ritual when the bride and the groom feed sweets to each other by putting the morsels directly in each other's mouth. This rite is observed to break the wall of shyness and formality between the groom and the bride, and to enable them to overcome inhibitions of all kinds. The lady-friends of the bride poke jokes and tease the couple amid an informal environment of bonhomie and laughter. Refer also to: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 149.

²We have read previously that the women-folk of Janakpur had very eagerly wanted that Lord Ram should marry Sita and thereby establish a permanent bond or relationship with this city and its inhabitants so that all of them would get more chances to see and interact with the Lord in future when he comes to pay an occasional visit to his in-law's place. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223.]

निज पानि मनि महुँ देखिअति मूरति सुरूपनिधान की । ९ ।
चालति न भुजबल्ली बिलोकनि बिरह भय बस जानकी ॥ १० ॥

nija pāni mani mahum' dēkhi'ati mūrati surūpanidhāna kī. 9.
cālati na bhujaballī bilōkani biraha bhaya basa jānakī. 10.

Sita saw the enchanting image of her beloved Lord being reflected in the gems and other precious stones on the ornaments that she wore on her hands (finger-rings, bangles, bracelets, armlets etc.). (Chanda line no. 9)

She did not move her hands even slightly and it appeared that they were made of wood (i.e. she was completely immobilised) for fear of losing the chance of uninterruptedly seeing the beautiful images of the Lord that were reflected from the gems she wore on her hands if these images got disrupted when the hand was moved. (Chanda line no. 10)

[Note—Sita was shy to look at her beloved Lord Ram directly in the presence of so many of her friends. So she watched Lord Ram's images as they got reflected from the gems and precious stones studded on the ornaments she wore on her hands. Even a slight movement of the hand would change the angle of reflection and disrupt the image. She was so enthralled and captivated that she became rigid and her hands become immobile like logs of wood—"Bhuj-balli".

The same idea is expressed in Doha no. 326 herein above, as well as earlier when Sita had been so immobilised out of shyness that she could not raise her hands to put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram after the bow was broken—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 264.

The situation has become piquant now: The ritual of "Lahakouri" is being done when the bride and the groom feed sweets to each other personally by directly using their hands and fingers, instead of a spoon, to put morsels of it into the mouth of their partner (refer: Chanda line no. 7 herein above). But Sita is so immobilised that she refuses to move her hand and put sweets into the mouth of Lord Ram. Sita was extremely shy to look up and see Lord Ram directly in the face which would be necessary if she was to feed him as required during the ritual of Lahakouri. But at the same time she wanted to see the beautiful and charming face of her beloved Lord without losing a moment's chance. Trapped in this dilemma, she decided to see Lord Ram's image as it was reflected from the many ornaments she was wearing on her hands—such as the finger rings, the bangles, the bracelets and the armlets. She kept her eyes riveted on them, giving the impression that her hands had become as rigid as a log of wood.]

कौतुक बिनोद प्रमोदु प्रेमु न जाइ कहि जानहिं अलीं । ११ ।
बर कुअँरि सुंदर सकल सखीं लवाइ जनवासेहि चलीं ॥ १२ ॥

kautuka binōda pramōdu prēmu na jā'i kahi jānahim̃ alīm̃. 11.
bara ku'am̃ri sundara sakala sakhim̃ lavā'i janavāsēhi calīm̃. 12.

The atmosphere of joyous celebrations and gaiety, of mirth and rejoicing, of euphoria and exhilaration, of happiness and gladness exceedingly, that prevailed everywhere at that time is beyond narration (even as it is beyond imagination). Only the friends of the brides who were present on that occasion could know it (because they witnessed it and enjoyed it). (Chanda line no. 11)

After the rituals were over, the female friends cheerfully escorted the wonderful pairs of the grooms and their brides to the palace where the groom's marriage party headed by king Dasrath was lodged.¹ (Chanda line no. 12)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had already left the venue of the marriage functions and gone to his residence as narrated herein above in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 326.

The grooms and their brides were then led inside the palace of king Janak where the two rituals of Kohabar and Lahakouri were undertaken as described in Chanda line nos. 5 and 7 above.

Having finished with all the rituals, the ladies now escorted the four couples to the place where the guests from Ayodhya, i.e. the grooms' marriage party, were lodged.]

तेहि समय सुनिअ असीस जहँ तहँ नगर नभ आनँदु महा । १३ ।
चिरु जिअहुँ जोरीं चारु चारुओ मुदित मन सबहीं कहा ॥ १४ ॥

tēhi samaya suni'a asīsa jaham̃ taham̃ nagara nabha ānam̃du mahā. 13.
ciru ji'ahum̃ jōrīm̃ cāru cāryō mudita mana sabahim̃ kahā. 14.

At that time, loud exclamations of profuse blessings (from elders, Brahmins, gods etc.) could be heard from all the directions even as there was great exultation and euphoria both in the city of Janakpur as well as in the sky (i.e. the heaven from where the gods were watching the proceedings). (Chanda line no. 13)

Everyone present on that auspicious occasion whole-heartedly blessed the four couples, saying affectionately: 'Let the four pairs live a long and happy life'. (Chanda line no. 14)

[Note—The four pairs of brides and grooms were heading for the place where king Dasrath and the rest of the marriage party was lodged. The royal procession with the four newly-wed couples passed through the streets of the city, wending its way slowly, majestically, with all the royal grandeur and fanfare, from the palace of king Janak to the palace where king Dasrath was staying. The exuberant rejoicings, the loud applause and profuse blessings pouring in from all the sides came from the citizens who had lined on both sides of the street to cheer at the four royal couples as they proceeded in a procession towards the place where the marriage party was lodged. The gods, however, cheered from the sky.]

जोगींद्र सिद्ध मुनीस देव बिलोकि प्रभु दुंदुभि हनी । १५ ।
चले हरषि बरषि प्रसून निज निज लोक जय जय जय भनी ॥ १६ ॥

jōgīndra sid'dha munīsa dēva bilōki prabhu dundubhi hanī. 15.
calē haraṣi baraṣi prasūna nija nija lōka jaya jaya jaya bhanī. 16.

When the great ascetics, the mystics, the sages and the gods saw Lord Ram dressed as a groom, they were ecstatic with joy and delight. The kettle-drums were played enthusiastically by them to celebrate this divine sight and the auspicious occasion. (Chanda line no. 15)

After that (i.e. when the marriage ceremonies were over and the four couples had reached the palace where king Dasrath waited for their arrival), all of them (i.e. the ascetics, the mystics, the sages and the gods) showered flowers (for the last time) and departed from there to go back to the respective places from where they had come to witness and participate in this wedding ceremony. Before finally departing for their respective destinations¹, they erupted in a thunderous applause of praise and honour for all the four couples, cheering them and exclaiming delightedly, 'Hail, Hail; Glory to you all. You all be blessed!' (Chanda line no. 16)

[Note—¹The ascetics, mystics and sages had come from their far-flung hermitages spread in all the corners of the world to attend the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram. How did they come to know of this event? Well, the answer is this—when Lord Shiva's bow broke, there was a thunderous roar, the earth shook, and the sound of the breaking of the bow along with the shudder of the earth rumbled across its surface to reach its farthest corners. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262.

The sages, hermits and ascetics realized that Shiva's bow had been broken, and they also realized that this indicated that Lord Vishnu had fulfilled his promise made to the gods and mother earth on some earlier occasion that he will come down to earth as Lord Ram to eliminate the demons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

So this was an ideal opportunity for them to have a divine glimpse of their Lord and get the reward of being born as a human being. They felt that this rare opportunity won't come again in their lives and so all of them came to attend the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, alone and in groups.

Having witnessed the holy events and partaking of this divine nectar-like sight of watching the Supreme Lord up so close, they showered flowers upon him, blessed him and then retired back to their hermitages and forests to continue with their spiritual endeavours.]

दो०. सहित बधूटिन्ह कुअँर सब तब आए पितु पास ।
सोभा मंगल मोद भरि उमगेउ जनु जनवास ॥ ३२७ ॥

dōhā.

sahita badhūṭinha ku'amṛa saba taba ā'ē pitu pāsa.
sōbhā maṅgala mōda bhari umagē'u janu janavāsa. 327.

Then all the four princes, the grooms, came to their father along with their respective brides. It appeared at that time that the entire place of residence of the marriage party overflowed with waves of joy, delight, euphoria and happiness. (Doha no. 327)

[Note—This Doha concludes the narration of the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram with Sita with its customary rituals that commenced with the sending of an invitation to king Dasrath by Janak to come to the marriage venue with the groom, Lord Ram, and the subsequent events that followed, as narrated from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 313 onwards.]

चौ०. पुनि जेवनार भई बहु भाँती । पठए जनक बोलाइ बराती ॥ १ ॥
परत पाँवड़े बसन अनूपा । सुतन्ह समेत गवन कियो भूपा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

puni jēvanāra bhaī bahu bhāmṭī. paṭha'ē janaka bōlā'i barātī. 1.
parata pām̐vaṛē basana anūpā. sutanha samēta gavana kiyō bhūpā. 2.

Then an elaborate marriage banquet (the post-wedding feast) was organised in which a wide variety of delectable dishes of all imaginable types were served. King Janak invited all the members of the groom's party to come to this feast¹. (1)

Carpets made of exquisite materials were spread all along the way as king Dasrath left his place of residence with his four sons (to participate in this banquet)². (2)

[Note—¹The type of food served and the elaborate arrangements for this feast are described below from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 328—to Doha no. 329.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 159.

²These carpets were spread as a warm and affectionate gesture to welcome the king and his sons as well as the rest of the marriage party to the grand feast.

Earlier also we read that such carpets were spread on two special occasions—
(i) one was when Lord Ram had come to the pavilion where the marriage rituals were to be done—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 319; and (ii) once again when Dasrath had come to attend the marriage ceremony such carpets were spread for him and his retinue—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 320.]

सादर सब के पाय पखारे । जथाजोगु पीढ़न्ह बैठारे ॥ ३ ॥
धोए जनक अवधपति चरना । सीलु सनेहु जाइ नहिं बरना ॥ ४ ॥

sādara saba kē pāya pakhārē. jathājōgu pīrhanha baiṭhārē. 3.
dhō'ē janaka avadhapati caranā. sīlu sanēhu jā'i nahim baranā. 4.

Janak courteously washed the feet of everyone as a gesture of showing warm welcome as well as respect for them¹. He then escorted the guests to their respective seats that were arranged for them in accordance to their position and status in the royal and social hierarchy². (3)

*Janak respectfully washed the feet of Dasrath, the king of Ayodhya. It is not possible to narrate how affectionately and courteously Janak did it.

[*We can read this verse as follows also—“When Janak washed the feet of the king of Ayodhya (i.e. Dasrath, who was now related to him by the virtue of the marriage of his four daughters with the latter’s four sons), he did it so affectionately and showed so much courtesy that it is not possible to either measure his happiness and joy, or to describe their intensity in words.”]³ (4)

[Note—¹It should be noted that this verse telling us that Janak washed the feet of the guests refers to the all the members of the marriage party except king Dasrath whose feet Janak washes in Chaupai line no. 4 herein below.

However, we must note here that broadly speaking, the same procedure of showing respect to the guests was followed when king Dasrath and the rest of the groom’s party had arrived at the wedding pavilion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 321.

²The seating arrangement was strictly according to royal protocol and in line with the prevalent norms of the society. For instance, all the close relatives of the grooms were given central seats that were specially marked for the members of the royal family, then there were seats especially ear-marked for the guest sages and seers, then there were seats for the senior ministers, commanders of the army, the royal attendants in accordance to their position in the royal hierarchy, and so on and so forth.

³Janak had shown great and special affection and respect for Dasrath when he washed the latter’s feet. The way Janak washed Dasrath’s feet was different from the way the feet of others were washed by him. Whereas the feet of the other members of the marriage party were washed merely as a custom of the society and a polite expression of welcome, the situation was different when the turn of Dasrath came. Janak and Dasrath were now equal in terms of stature by the virtue of the marriage of all the four princesses of Janakpur with all the four princes of Ayodhya. The two kings now shared a bond of family relationship that has been forged as a result of this marriage. Now onwards, they were like brothers, and not merely friendly kings.

Janak regarded Dasrath as the more fortunate king of the two of them because the Lord of the creation has come down on earth to become his son in the form of Lord Ram. Besides this, Dasrath would now enjoy the company of the Lord as well as his divine Shakti in the form of Sita, a luck that Janak could not get.

Then again, Janak recalled how he was enthralled by the enchanting view of the divine form of Lord Ram when he had first seen him at the time of welcoming sage Vishwamitra (refer: Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216). He mused over the fact that Dasrath had the rare opportunity of interacting with the Lord at all times of the day, and as much as he wished, because the Lord was his son and he lived in close

proximity of his father. So, Janak reveled at the joy king Dasrath derived everyday of his life and every moment of that day—Janak wondered how lucky and blessed Dasrath was!

That is why when Janak washed Dasrath's feet, he had done it with the greatest of respect and reverence as if he was washing the holy feet of a great soul—because Dasrath was not an ordinary king, but the most fortunate one in the entire human race as to have the Supreme Being as his son with whom he could play when the Lord was a child, and with whom he could share close moments of love and affection that naturally exists between a doting father and his loving son. Say, who else had this lovely opportunity and rare privilege!

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 320.]

बहुरि राम पद पंकज धोए । जे हर हृदय कमल महँ गोए ॥ ५ ॥
तीनिउ भाइ राम सम जानी । धोए चरन जनक निज पानी ॥ ६ ॥

bahuri rāma pada paṅkaja dhō'ē. jē hara hṛdaya kamala mahum̃ gō'ē. 5.
tini'u bhā'i rāma sama jānī. dhō'ē carana janaka nija pānī. 6.

Then, Janak washed the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram that are enshrined in the lotus-like heart of Lord Shiva¹. (5)

Janak then washed the feet of all the other three brothers of Lord Ram (i.e. of Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) with the same affection as he had washed the feet of the Lord himself because he treated all the three brothers alike and with the same affection and respect with which he had treated Lord Ram². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 318; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 along with Chanda line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 324, especially Chanda line no. 3 of this set of Chanda-verses which specifically refers to Lord Shiva and Lord Ram's holy feet being enshrined in his heart.

²It has been said earlier that when the three brothers were married, the same procedure that was followed for the wedding of Lord Ram and Sita was also followed for them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.

This shows that Janak treated all the four sons-in-law equally.]

आसन उचित सबहि नृप दीन्हे । बोलि सूपकारी सब लीन्हे ॥ ७ ॥
सादर लगे परन पनवारे । कनक कील मनि पान सँवारे ॥ ८ ॥

āsana ucita sabahi nṛpa dīnhē. bōli sūpakārī saba līnhē. 7.
sādara lagē parana panavārē. kanaka kīla mani pāna samvārē. 8.

The king (Janak) gave everyone an appropriate seat to sit upon. [“Appropriate” in the sense that everyone was seated according to his rank, position, status and standing in the social and royal hierarchy.]

Then he called all the servers to come and start serving meal to the guests. [These servers were the many attendants, the table-hands, the waiters etc. who would serve the guests and wait on them, and the cooks to take specialized orders and serve food according to the taste of the individual.] (7)

As soon as the orders were issued to start the service, all the attendants and servers started laying plates before the guests. These plates were made of leaves studded with precious gems and stitched together with golden pins.

[The plates themselves were made from broad leaves of the plantain plant which are universally used as plates to serve food to guests. These leaves were stitched together with pins made of gold, and were decorated with gems.] (8)

दो०. सूपोदन सुरभी सरपि सुंदर स्वादु पुनीत ।
छन महुँ सब केँ परुसि गे चतुर सुआर बिनीत ॥ ३२८ ॥
dōhā.

sūpōdana surabhī sarapi sundara svādu punīta.
chana mahum̐ saba kēm̐ parusi gē catura su'āra binīta. 328.

Veteran cooks and servers who were experts and skilled in their respective fields quickly went around, politely serving the guests with food consisting of boiled rice, spiced curry made from pulses of varying kinds, and topped-up with dollops of clarified butter made from pure cow's milk. The food served was very delicious and prepared hygienically with the highest standards of purity in mind. The service was very efficient because it was done in a very short time. [None of the guests had to wait for food to be served, and as soon as the signal was given by Janak, the efficient servers served all the guests in a jiffy.] (Doha no. 328)

चौ०. पंच कवल करि जेवन लागे । गारि गान सुनि अति अनुरागे ॥ १ ॥
भाँति अनेक परे पकवाने । सुधा सरिस नहिं जाहिं बखाने ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

pañca kavala kari jēvana lāgē. gāri gāna suni ati anurāgē. 1.
bhām̐ti anēka parē pakavānē. sudhā sarisa nahim̐ jāhim̐ bakhānē. 2.

The guests offered the first five morsels of food as symbolic offerings to the five vital winds known as the ‘Panch Pran’ that live inside the body and keep it alive¹, and then they commenced to eat and relish the delectable meal.

Meanwhile, songs having lyrics of good-intentioned and good-humoured teasing (banter; jokes) were being sung to entertain the guests, and all of them enjoyed the songs as they continued eating². (1)

Countless and endless varieties of delicious and dainty victuals and confectionaries, each as sweet and delectable as ambrosia, and each one of them more lip-smacking and tongue-tickling than the other, were served to the guests³. (2)

[Note—¹The “Panch Prans” are the five vital winds that support life inside the body of the living being. Without these five winds, no creature can survive. These winds are regarded as subtle forms of Brahm, the Supreme Being who lives inside the body of the creature and controls all his functioning from within. These five winds control different functions of the body as briefly outlined below. If any of the five vital winds withdraw or refuse to carry on its duty, the body of the creature suffers to that extent. Hence, from the metaphysical point of view, the first five offerings of food are symbolically offered to these five vital winds so that they keep the ‘fire of life’ burning inside the body of the creature.

This is the proper and holistic way of eating food. When food is eaten with the idea that it is meant to support the body and keep it fully nourished, health, productive and active, it leads to all-round growth, prosperity and welfare of the creature. Otherwise, if the food is eaten to gratify the natural urges of the different gross organs of the body—such as the desire for tasty food to appease the tongue, food that is attractive to look at and is appealing for the organ of sight which is the eye, food that is nice to touch so that it gratifies the sense of touch residing in the skin, and enticing for the sense of smell that lives in the nose—then the same body becomes diseased and unable to cope with the stress and strain of existence.

This approach, this attitude of eating food as an offering to the sacred fire burning inside the body which is a symbolic abode of Brahm at the micro level of creation gives eating a holistic dimension, and prevents this basic requirement of life from degenerating into glutinous gorging of junk food that would ultimately douse the fire inside the body and snuff out life from it. This would obviously lead to ill-health, lack of vitality and stamina in the body, which would in turn make life a burden for the creature.

According to the philosophy of metaphysics as enunciated in the Upanishads, the body of the creature is like a sacred fire-pit of the sacrificial fire. Just like oblations are offered to the sacred fire during the ritual of doing a fire sacrifice with the idea that these oblations are accepted by the Fire God on behalf of all other Gods who control and preside over this creation, the first five morsels of food eaten are symbolic offerings to the fire burning inside the gross body of the creature so that the food is ‘burnt’ (digested) and its essential elements offered to the gods who live in the body of the creature in a subtle form known as the ‘five vital winds’, the “Panch Prans”. This philosophy envisions that the individual body of the living being is a microcosm of the entire creation when it is considered at the macrocosmic level.

If the sacred fire burning inside the body is kept alive and healthy with the patron gods who too live inside the body pleased and contented, the creature can lead a productive, happy and healthy life just like the case of the oblations made to the sacred fire of the fire sacrifice that keeps the gods in the heaven pleased and remain benevolent upon the creatures of this world, thereby ensuring all-round happiness and well-being for all in the world.

Now, let us see what this ‘five vital winds’ are, and what are their chief functions. This will help us to understand why it is so important to keep the five vital winds healthy and active by eating properly.

Dictionary defines ‘Pran’ as breath, inhaled and exhaled wind, the breath of life, life itself, one of the five chief vital winds or airs that sustain life, strength,

valour, courage, energy, vitality, vigour. It is also synonymous with the fire element as well as with the supreme soul or Atma. It is the 'fire element' because both the fire as well as the Pran inject and infuse life into the otherwise lifeless and inane gross body of a creature, enabling it to get up and perform its functions and carry on with its activities. A dead body from which 'life' has exited becomes cold and lifeless, thereby indicating that the fire element that is inherently present in it has been extinguished—we then declare that the man is dead.

The word Pran literally means the life of all living beings, so called because the Pran injects life and consciousness in the otherwise lifeless body of the organism. It is the vital life-consciousness present in the body of an individual creature. It is represented by the vital winds and life impulses present in the body which keep the body alive, and distinguishes a living body from a dead one. The word 'Pran' is usually associated with the vital winds of the body as it is these winds that keep the body active and alive. The Pran is sometimes used synonymously with the Atma or soul of the creature because both are equally important for a creature's existence. Whereas Pran is a synonym of life and vitality, Atma stands for the consciousness present in the body. Hence both are like the two sides of the same coin called the living being.

Though technically Atma or soul is pure consciousness while Pran is a vital wind or air element, practically they are synonymous with each other. An illustration will clear this point. Suppose a man has lost senses in his limbs—they have been paralysed, or he is lying unconscious due to some serious disease. We regard such a man as alive and not as dead as long as he continues to breathe, and as long as he breathes, or as long as he is technically 'alive' his Atma is deemed to be inside his body, because the true identity or the true self of a man is not his physical body but his Atma. Therefore we do not regard the 'unconscious' body as dead. But when he actually dies, that is, when he stops to breathe, we say that 'his Pran' has left the body, and that 'he' has died. Now, who has died? It is the person whose Pran has left the body; and the person is the 'self' or the Atma which has left the body when the Pran made its exit from it at the time of death. This is because Pran and Atma depend on each other so much so that as soon as the Pran leaves the body, the Atma also leaves the body and we say that the person is no more. Why do we say that the 'person is no more' when the body is actually lying in front of us? It is because the 'person' is the Atma and not the body, and this Atma has left the body with the Pran at the time of death. When the proper time comes, the Atma leaves the body astride the Pran, riding piggy back on it.

The five main vital winds are Pran, Apan, Vyan, Udan and Samaan. Amongst them, the Pran refers to the breath which injects the vital spark of life in a body to keep it alive and active, thereby providing it with the necessary impetus, the energy, vitality and strength to perform its designated functions and duties as a living entity. All the other vital winds are of any relevance and significance only as long as there is Pran in the body for the simple reason that if the body stops breathing it would die, and the dead body has neither the need for the other winds nor are they competent enough to keep it alive relying on their own strength. At the same time, all these vital winds are collectively called Pran because they work in tandem with each other to enable the main Pran, the breath, to actually carry out its function. These vital winds do not exist in separate so-called water tight compartments, as this is an incredulous proposition because air is an element that cannot be compartmentalized into separate entities having distinct existences, but they are named as separate winds just for the academic purpose of studying the way the vital wind or air functions

differently in the body to enable it to carry on with its functions. So these other 'Prans' or vital winds besides the breath, both inhaled and exhaled, are the following—Apaan, Vyan, Udaan and Samaan.

So we see that the term 'Pran' is usually applied to breath because it is the vital wind force that injects and sustains life and vitality in a creature. It is synonymous with life, Atma and soul of a living creature. The presence of Pran determines whether a creature is dead or alive; it is a distinguishing factor between the animate and inanimate world. Pran is the essential vibrations of life; it is the rhythm of life; it is the essential characteristic that defines life.

The inherent tendency of the Pran, which is the vital wind residing in the upper part of the body between the heart-lungs and the nose, is to lift the creature to a higher state of noble, righteous, virtuous, auspicious and spiritual existence, to become wise and enlightened. On the contrary, the Apaan winds lives in the intestine and passes down through the anus. It symbolises the downward drag on the creature's spiritual upliftment, pulling it down towards the grosser aspects of creation and the materialistic world which is not only gross but also filthy and worthless like the excretory matters present in the intestine. It also symbolises passions, evils, vices, perversion and attachments to the worldly things at large, and their accompanying perplexities, bewilderments and hassles leading to restlessness and moral turpitude and degradation. This oscillation between the spiritual upliftment and moving upwards towards goodness, and spiritual degradation, moving downwards towards the gross world of sensual pleasures, leads a creature to a continuous cycle of birth and death—this oscillation is like the bouncing of a ball upwards and downwards from the surface of the earth. One must remember that a lot of symbolism, metaphors and allegories have been used in the Upanishad texts to explain things. One should be wise not to lose the spirit while getting bogged down by the literal meaning of the words; one should not lose the wood while searching for the tree. The 'Pran' wind here symbolises the upward drift which the pure consciousness is inherently inclined to, while the 'Apaan' winds pulls it down towards the attractions of the world. The creature remains trapped between the two forces.

This 'vital wind' called Pran is one of the five elements of creation, called the Panch Bhuts, the others being earth, water, fire and sky.

The Atharva Veda's *Par Brahm Upanishad*, verse no. 2 explicitly asserts that Pran is a synonym for 'consciousness', and therefore for the Atma which is also the pure consciousness residing in the gross body of the living being. Since the cosmic aspect of the 'consciousness' is known as Brahm, Pran is also synonym for Brahm.

The Atharva Veda's *Gopal Uttar Tapini Upanishad*, verse nos. 47/1, 3, 5, 7, 9 assert that the various vital winds are revelations of Brahm.

According to *Subalo-panishad*, Canto 9, verse no. 1-5 of the Shukla Yajur Veda tradition, the main five vital winds are the following:--

(1) Pran—this controls eyes and the faculty of sight (verse 1); (2) Apaan—this controls ears and the faculty of hearing (verse 2); (3) Vyan—this controls nose and the faculty of smell (verse 3); (4) Udaan—this controls the tongue and the faculty of taste (verse 4); (5) Samaan—this controls the skin and the faculty of touch (verse 5).

The *Shandilya Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 1, section 4, verse no. 3 describes these winds, their locations and functions as follows:--

“Verse no. 13 = The Pran (i.e. the chief vital wind) moves or is located chiefly in the mouth, the nose, the throat, the navel, the big toes of the feet, and below and above the Kundalini.

The Vyaan moves or is located chiefly in the ears, the eyes, the waist region, the thighs, the nostrils, the throat, and the hip region.

The Apaan moves or is located chiefly in the anus, the genitals, the thighs, the stomach, the testicles, the hip area, the navel, and the midriff where the fire is present (refer verse no. 4 above).

The Udaan is present and moves about in all the joints of the body.

The Samaan is present and moves about in the hands and legs (limbs) and all other appendages of the body. It also helps in equal distribution of the nutrients of the food that has been digested inside the body by the help of the fire element to all parts of the body through the network of seventy-two thousand Naadis. Hence, the Samaan wind also moves in all the seventy-two thousand Naadis and works in close association with the fire element.

The vital winds that live in the stomach and middle part of the abdomen (i.e. the Apaan and the Samaan) help to separate the water (fluids, enzymes, digestive juices etc.) present in the stomach from the nutrients of the food eaten (after the food is digested), and then take the nutrients through the Naadis to all the parts of the body (while the fluid portion and the grosser aspect of the food left after digestion and extraction of nutrients are taken to the organs of excretion, i.e. to the kidneys and the rectum respectively).

The Apaan Vayu keeps the internal fire responsible for cooking and digesting of food eaten burning. The food eaten is literally placed on the top of the water, and the water is placed on the fire which is stoked from below so as to heat this water which in turn cooks or digests the food eaten. This is a simple kitchen of the body. The fire of the hearth represented by the abdomen is the triangular fire area mentioned in verse no. 4. The air needed to keep the fire burning and the grate of the oven ventilated is the Apaan wind. The stomach is the pot. The fluids present in it are the water. And the chewed or pulverized food that is put in the stomach is the raw material from which the nutrients are needed to be extracted. Once this is done, the Samaan wind would take these nutrients to the different parts of the body, while the waste matter is taken to the kidneys and the anus for excretion.

The fire element present in the body is protected by the Apaan wind as the latter helps to keep it lighted and prevents it from being extinguished. As in the instance of the cooking of the food cited above, the Apaan wind, which is predominantly present in the lower part of the abdomen, keeps the fire alive by fanning it from the below.

This fire when stoked by the Pran Vayu (the vital winds) gathers heat and brings to a boil the water element present in the middle part of the body (i.e. the stomach) so that the vegetables and cereals that enter the stomach are properly cooked by it—i.e. the food is properly digested and its nutrients separated from the grosser aspects of the food such as the sweat, the urine, the blood, the semen, the various juices and other fluids present in the body (viz. the bile, the pancreatic juices, the various digestive enzymes, the mucous, the hormones etc.).

Once the process of digestion and separation of the subtle aspect of the food (i.e. its life-sustaining nutrients) from the grosser aspects (e.g. the sweat, urine, blood etc.) is complete, the Samaan wind takes over. In association with the Pran wind (i.e. the breath), it takes the vital nutrients thus segregated to all the corners of the body via the medium of the Naadis. The Pran wind meanwhile moves in and out of the body in the form of the breath. It will be noticed here that the Pran wind, or the breath, acts like a pump that works from the surface and provides the other winds the necessary suction power to move against the forces of gravity and lift the nutrients as well as

certain of the grosser parts of the food that are important for the body, such as the blood, the mucous, the bile and other juices, the hormones etc. to the upper parts of the body against the usual downward pull of gravity. This upward pull exerted by the Pran wind also helps the Apaana wind, whose natural inclination is to move downwards and out of the body, to remain inside the body and even move upwards to keep the fire element lighted, besides being able to activate the Kundalini during the process of Yoga.

The vital winds eliminate the wastes present inside the body, such as the stool, urine, sweat etc., through the nine openings of the body into the space outside it. The nine openings of the body are called its Doors, and they are the following—two nostrils, two ears, the hair follicles, the pores of the body, one mouth, one anus and one urinary organ which doubles up as the reproductive organ as well.

²Such songs are sung in a light-hearted manner as banter and joke to entertain the guests during marriage functions. Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 329 below.

³The first round of food that was served was essentially meant for offering to the five vital winds as noted in verse no. 1 above. Hence, it consisted of plain boiled rice, curry of pulses, and clarified butter—refer: Doha no. 328 herein above. When these three items are mixed together, they form a thick gruel or pudding-like heap that closely resembles the offerings that are made to the sacred fire during formal fire sacrifices. The offerings that are made at the fire sacrifice too consist basically of mixed cereals, pulses and clarified butter in addition to milk and curd.

That done, the time came to actually enjoy food and satisfy the taste buds—not to appease them or indulge in them but to celebrate the auspicious occasion and the happy event of the marriage of the four brothers. It is a well established custom in society that a grand feast is organised at the end of a marriage.]

परुसन लगे सुआर सुजाना । बिंजन बिबिध नाम को जाना ॥ ३ ॥
चारि भाँति भोजन बिधि गाई । एक एक बिधि बरनि न जाई ॥ ४ ॥
छरस रुचिर बिंजन बहु जाती । एक एक रस अगनित भाँती ॥ ५ ॥

parusana lagē su'āra sujānā. binjana bibidha nāma kō jānā. 3.
cāri bhāmṭi bhōjana bidhi gā'ī. ēka ēka bidhi barani na jā'ī. 4.
charasa rucira binjana bahu jā'tī. ēka ēka rasa aganita bhāmṭī. 5.

Efficient servers and expert cooks began serving the guests with countless varieties of tasteful dishes which were so numerous in number and varied in taste and form that no one knew either their names or their varieties. (3)

[Elaborating on verse no. 3, we now get a hint of the type of food served in that grand feast.]

Ancient culinary texts describe that there are four chief categories of food¹ that a person can partake of. The food served at the grand banquet had countless varieties of each category of dish so much so that it is not possible to narrate (or list) them. (4)

Similarly, there were numerous dishes of seasoned food prepared in a variety of ways that had all the six types of basic tastes² in different combinations.

In fact, the dishes were so numerous and varied that each single category of food and each single type of taste or flavour was represented in many forms and offered in different combinations. (5)

[Note—¹The four basic categories of food that a living being eats are the following—(i) Bhakshya—that which is eaten by tearing and lacerating with the help of teeth, that which requires proper chewing and mastication before it can enter the food pipe, e.g. bread, fruits, vegetables, chewing of sugarcane; (ii) Bhojya—that which is cooked and eaten with fingers or spoons, requiring least chewing or masticating and can be easily swallowed down the gullet, e.g. rice, curry; (iii) Lehya—that which is licked with the tongue, e.g. eating pickles or honey; and (iv) Choshya—that which is sipped or sucked, e.g. water, milk, tea.

The *Garbho-panishad* of the Krishna Yajur Veda tradition, verse no. 5 however classifies the four basic types of foods as—(i) Lehya: that which is licked; (ii) Peya: that which is drunk; (iii) Khaadya: that which is chewed or masticated; and (iv) Choshya: that which is sucked.

²The six tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.]

जेवँत देहिं मधुर धुनि गारी । लै लै नाम पुरुष अरु नारी ॥ ६ ॥
समय सुहावनि गारि बिराजा । हँसत राउ सुनि सहित समाजा ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि सबहीं भोजनु कीन्हा । आदर सहित आचमनु दीन्हा ॥ ८ ॥

jēvamṭa dēhim madhura dhuni gārī. lai lai nāma puruṣa aru nārī. 6.
samaya suhāvani gāri birājā. haṁsata rā'u suni sahita samājā. 7.
ēhi bidhi sabahīm bhōjanu kīnhā. ādara sahita ācamanu dīnhā. 8.

*At the time the guests were eating, melodious songs having teasing lyrics that contained light-hearted banter targeting the males and females of the groom's side were sung by the members of the bride's side to lighten-up the atmosphere and induce laughter and mirth.

[*This verse can be read as follows also—“At the time the guests were enjoying their meal, men and women folk of Janakpur, representing the bride's side, sang melodious songs that contained teasing lyrics targeting individual members of the groom's side by their names, as a custom that is observed during marriage feasts to cheer everyone up and induce laughter and mirth so as to lighten up the atmosphere of the otherwise formal event of a grand feast.”] (6)

It was a happy occasion and so everyone enjoyed the songs and their taunting lyrics without feeling annoyed or taking offence at the teasing language used. On the contrary, the king (Dasrath) laughed along with other members of his entourage.¹ (7)

On this wise, everyone ate his meal in a cheerful and pleasant environment marked with abundance of joy, mirth and rejoicing. Then everyone was offered water to wash (rinse) their mouths². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 328 herein above.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 160.

²It is customary for the host to offer water from a jug to all his guests after the meal is over so that they can wash their hands and rinse their mouths. Janak himself helped Dasrath and his close family members to clean their hands and mouths, while Janak’s chief ministers and courtiers attended other members of the marriage party.]

दो०. देइ पान पूजे जनक दसरथु सहित समाज ।
जनवासेहि गवने मुदित सकल भूप सिरताज ॥ ३२९ ॥

dōhā.

dē'i pāna pūjē janaka dasarathu sahita samāja.
janavāsēhi gavanē mudita sakala bhūpa siratāja. 329.

Then, Janak first offered betel leaves as mouth freshner to king Dasrath and other members of the marriage party, and then paid his obeisance to them.

After that, the chief amongst kings, i.e. king Dasrath, proceeded cheerfully to the place where he and other members of the marriage party had been lodged¹. (Doha no. 329)

[Note—¹This Doha concludes the narration of the reception and feast hosted by Janak for the marriage party which commenced in Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 328.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 20.]

चौ०. नित नूतन मंगल पुर माहीं । निमिष सरिस दिन जामिनि जाहीं ॥ १ ॥
बड़े भोर भूपतिमनि जागे । जाचक गुन गन गावन लागे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nita nūtana maṅgala pura māhīm. nimiṣa sarisa dina jāmini jāhīm. 1.
baṛē bhōra bhūpatimani jāgē. jācaka guna gana gāvana lāgē. 2.

[The groom’s party stayed in Janakpur for many more days after the wedding was over. The following verses describe the joy and merriment that pervaded the atmosphere of the city during those days.]

Everyday there was renewed celebration and festivity in the city of Janakpur. Time passed unnoticed as if days and nights were like moments. [To wit, many days passed after the end of the wedding ceremony and its accompanying feast, but no one was bothered about time and the number of days the marriage party stayed in Janakpur after that.]¹ (1)

The king, who was like a gem in the community of kings (i.e. Dasrath), woke up very early the next morning (i.e. the morning that followed the grand feast). Minstrels and alms-seekers began singing his glories in a loud chorus². (2)

[Note—¹Happy days pass too fast and no one notices them flying away because of their excitement, exuberance, joy and happiness, as compared to bad days that seem like burden, and a single day of sadness and despondency seems to extend endlessly into the horizon till the end of life itself as if it was an eternal curse marked by gloom and despair.

A similar idea is expressed earlier when the birth of Lord Ram and his brothers is being narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8 which say that “the insects were confused because there was continuous daylight as the month was reduced to a single day, and the Sun God was stunned that though his chariot continued to move in the sky yet there was no night in Ayodhya”.

In other words, everybody thoroughly enjoyed the presence of king Dasrath and his royal retinue in Janakpur. No one wanted them to go away, and this will be clear when we read Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 332 below.

²This and other verses that follow below describe the events of the day following the marriage feast.]

देखि कुअँर बर बधुन्ह समेता । किमि कहि जात मोदु मन जेता ॥ ३ ॥
प्रातक्रिया करि गे गुरु पाहीं । महाप्रमोदु प्रेमु मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

dēkhi ku'amra bara badhunha samētā. kimi kahi jāta mōdu mana jētā. 3.
prātakriyā kari gē guru pāhīm. mahāpramōdu prēmu mana māhīm. 4.

Who can describe the extent of happiness and joy that prevailed in his (Dasrath's) heart when he watched the grooms with their respective brides? [To wit, no one can describe how happy and glad Dasrath felt watching his sons with their lovely brides. Like any father, it was the culmination of his desires and fruition of his dreams.]¹ (3)

The king finished his morning routine (praying, bathing etc.) and went to meet his Guru (sage Vasistha). His heart and mind (together called the “Mana”) were full of bliss and ecstasy². (4)

[Note—¹The reason why Dasrath woke up very early the next morning is that he was exceptionally happy and excited, and so probably could not sleep the previous night. So, he woke up early.

Besides this aspect of his being happy and excited at the marriage of all his four sons and they getting pretty brides fully in accordance to their expectations, it

was also a habit of Dasrath that he woke up early as ordained by the scriptures. He woke up before sunrise. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 37 along Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it, and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it.

²We find that on other occasions also, Dasrath had gone to meet his Guru to make special requests to him:--

(i) The first was when he was worried that he was growing old and still had no heirs—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 181.

(ii) The second occasion was when the news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita arrived from Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 293.

(iii) The third occasion was when Dasrath wished to anoint Lord Ram as the regent of the kingdom of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 2.

However, presently his has gone to meet Vasistha to say thanks to him and request him to call all the elders and Brahmins so that gifts can be given to them and charities can be made as is clear in the following verses.]

करि प्रनामु पूजा कर जोरी । बोले गिरा अमिअँ जनु बोरी ॥ ५ ॥
 तुहरी कृपाँ सुनुहु मुनिराजा । भयउँ आजु मैँ पूरनकाजा ॥ ६ ॥
 अब सब बिप्र बोलाइ गोसाईँ । देहु धेनु सब भाँति बनाईँ ॥ ७ ॥
 सुनि गुर करि महिपाल बड़ाईँ । पुनि पठए मुनि बृंद बोलाईँ ॥ ८ ॥

kari pranāmu pūjā kara jōrī. bōlē girā ami'am' janu bōrī. 5.
 tumharī kṛpām' sunahu munirājā. bhaya'um' āju maim pūranakājā. 6.
 aba saba bipra bōlā'i gōsā'īm. dēhu dhēnu saba bhām'ti banā'īm. 7.
 suni gura kari mahipāla barā'ī. puni paṭha'e muni bṛnda bōlā'ī. 8.

The king reverentially bowed his head before his Guru (Vasistha) and duly worshipped him. Then he spoke so sweetly that his words appeared to be soaked in nectar¹. (5)

The king said—‘Oh the king amongst great sage! It is due to your grace, benevolence and kindness that all my wishes have been fulfilled and I feel fully contented today. (6)

Now oh Lord, please oblige me by summoning all the Brahmins and elders (“Vipra”), and gift all of them cows that are fully decorated.² (7)

When the Guru heard this request from the king, he first praised him (for his courteousness and sweet words, and also for his charitable nature because he wished to make donations). Then he (Guru Vasistha) sent for (invited) all the elders and Brahmins³. (8)

[Note—¹This was a very happy day of Dasrath's life, and so he was exceptionally cheerful. This is why he “spoke so sweetly as if his words were soaked in nectar”.

²Decorating the cows meant decorating them with costly clothes, putting garlands made of precious gems and pearls around their necks, and adorning their horns and hooves with plated gold or silver.

³We have read earlier that when Dasrath had gone to convey the good news of Lord Ram's marriage to sage Vasistha, the sage had praised the king then also, giving reasons for his praises—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 294.]

दो०. बामदेउ अरु देवरिषि बालमीकि जाबालि ।

आए मुनिबर निकर तब कौसिकादि तपसालि ॥ ३३० ॥

dōhā.

bāmadē'u aru dēvariṣi bālamiki jābāli.
ā'ē munibara nikara taba kausikādi tapasāli. 330.

Sage Vamdeo, the celestial sage Narad, sage Valmiki and sage Jabal, as also sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) who was endowed with a divine halo that comes with extensive Tapa (doing severe penances and observance of strict austerities)—all of them came there cheerfully (to accept gifts to mark the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita). (Doha no. 330)

[Note—Sages Vaamdeo etc. were present in Janakpur on the occasion of Lord Ram's marriage as is evident in Baal Kand, Doha no. 320 and its preceding Chanda line no. 4 herein above where it is said that at the time of the start of the wedding rites, king Janak had offered his worship to sages Kaushik (Vishwamitra), Vaamdeo etc.

Another important point to note here is that though king Dasrath had requested Vasistha to call 'Vipras', meaning Brahmins and elders of the society, but Vasistha called in 'great sages', and the wonder is that they did not hesitate in coming and accepting gifts. This is because this was not an ordinary marriage, and the gift was not from someone ordinary to celebrate something routine.

It was the marriage that marked the union of the visible form of the supreme Lord of the world in the form of Lord Ram with his cosmic Shakti in the form of Sita. It was a cosmic union of two great forces of creation that was played out at the micro level of creation in the form of the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita. So these great sages named above had no compunctions or reservations in coming and accepting gifts. It is a matter of honour and privilege when a person is invited to accept gifts from someone who occupies a very high stature in the society. Even in today's world people vie with each other to get themselves photographed with the high and the mighty, and if an invitation to attend some state function where dignitaries are present is received by someone he would frame it and hang it on his wall to show others how special he is, and thus boast of his newly discovered stature in society.

Vasistha decided to call these sages because he wisely thought that they must be given the honour to accept gifts to mark the auspicious occasion of Lord Ram's marriage. On the other hand, if they had not been invited, perhaps they could have felt neglected, let-down or even insulted.

Another reason for calling them was they would bless king Dasrath, and their blessings would stand in good stead for the king and his four sons as well as the

kingdom of Ayodhya. This is exactly what happened—we shall read below that all the invited sages have profusely blessed king Dasrath and he would consider himself very fortunate—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 331 below.

And what about the Brahmins and other alms-seekers; did they not come? Yes, they also came—it will be clear below in Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 331.]

चौ०. दंड प्रनाम सबहि नृप कीन्हे । पूजि सप्रेम बरासन दीन्हे ॥ १ ॥
 चारि लच्छ बर धेनु मगाई । कामसुरभि सम सील सुहाई ॥ २ ॥
 सब बिधि सकल अलंकृत कीन्हीं । मुदित महिप महिदेवन्ह दीन्हीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

daṇḍa pranāma sabahi nṛpa kīnhē. pūji saprēma barāsana dīnhē. 1.
 cāri laccha bara dhēnu magāīṁ. kāmasurabhi sama sīla suhāīṁ. 2.
 saba bidhi sakala alaṅkṛta kīnhīm. mudita mahipa mahidēvanha dīnhīm. 3.

When they (i.e. the invited sages as well as Brahmins) arrived, the king (Dasrath) paid his obeisance to all of them by prostrating before them on the ground. Then he worshipped them and excellent seats to sit.¹ (1)

The king called for four lakh (1 lakh = 1,00,000) excellent cows² who were all like the legendary Kamdhenu cow (the all-wish fulfilling cow) in their gentle manners and beauty. (2)

The cows were fully decorated in every possible way³, and then the delighted king gave (donated) them cheerfully to the ‘Mahi-devas’⁴ (literally, the ‘gods on earth’; meaning the sages as well as the Brahmins). (3)

[Note—¹Prostrating before sages and elders is the best way of showing respect to them. Another alternative method of equal importance is bowing before them and putting one’s head on their feet. But the latter method suits when there are one, two or more sages and Brahmins of a limited number when a person can attend to each of them. But when there are a large number of such elders then the best option is to prostrate before all of them from a distance as they approach as a group. In the latter case, there would be no need for individually touching each sage’s feet or bowing before him.

Prostrating before a group of sages and Brahmins also ensures that all the members of the group are shown equal respect and honour irrespective of the fact that the person showing such respect may not know the individual members of the group personally. Since the sages and Brahmins had similar external appearances, it was often difficult to distinguish one from the other unless one had the chance to look them up closely, or was well acquainted with a person because of frequent interaction with him, or when someone tells him who the guest was.

So, Dasrath took no chances and prostrated before the entire group of sages, Brahmins and other elders who came to him to accept gifts commemorating the auspicious marriage of Lord Ram and his other brothers.

²The cows were excellent in the sense that they were all healthy, of ripe age, gave abundant milk, looked attractive, and could grant wishes if one serves them faithfully. These are the salient characteristics of the Kamdhenu cow.

³Their horns and hooves were either gold or silver plated, garlands of pearls and other precious gems were put around their necks, their backs were draped with exquisitely embroidered garments, and their tails were manicured and scented oiled and decorated with strings of pearls and gems.

⁴We have read in Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 330 above that the king had requested sage Vasistha to call all the ‘Vipras’, which usually means Brahmins. But Vasistha summoned even the sages listed in Doha no. 330 along with the elderly Brahmins. So the word ‘Mahi-Deva’ is used here to cover all of them—the sages as well as the Brahmins because all of them are as revered on earth as the gods are in heaven.]

करत बिनय बहु बिधि नरनाहू । लहेउँ आजु जग जीवन लाहू ॥ ४ ॥
पाइ असीस महीसु अनंदा । लिए बोलि पुनि जाचक बृंदा ॥ ५ ॥
कनक बसन मनि हय गय स्यंदन । दिए बूझि रुचि रबिकुलनंदन ॥ ६ ॥

karata binaya bahu bidhi naranāhū. lahē'um' āju jaga jīvana lāhū. 4.

pā'i asisa mahīsu anandā. li'ē bōli puni jācaka bṛndā. 5.

kanaka basana mani haya gaya syandana. di'ē būjhi ruci rabikulanandana. 6.

The great king offered his prayers to them in a variety of ways (i.e. he offered his respects to the invited sages and Brahmins in different ways, repeatedly using different words and different gestures), and said—‘I have got the reward (fruit) of taking birth and of all the good deeds that I have done in my life.’¹ (4)

The king (“mahīsu”; the lord of the earth)² was very delighted and felt exhilarated when he received blessings from them (the invited sages and Brahmins, the “Mahi-Devas”).

Then he summoned other alms-seekers and members of the laity (the “jācaka bṛndā”) who were waiting for their turn to receive gifts from the king to mark the marriage of his four sons. (5)

The ‘great son of the Solar Race’ (“rabikulanandana”—i.e. king Dasrath) liberally gave them gold, clothes, gems, horses, elephants and chariots according to their desires and needs.³ (6)

[Note—¹The king was very humble and overjoyed as he praised his good fortune and the cumulative affect of all his good deeds that he has witnessed such a happy moment in his life today—all his dear sons were married to magnificent brides who belonged to one of the greatest kingdoms on earth, the kingdom of Janakpur that rivals the kingdom of Ayodhya in its riches, prosperity, power, strength and fame. Then the king praised his good luck that he has had the opportunity to pay his respects to such great sages as Vaamdeo, Narad, Valmiki, Jabal and Vishwamitra together at

one place, and that too during the marriage of his sons. It was an excellent combination of stars and grace of the gods that had made this possible.

It is a polite way of showing respect to the sages and Brahmins when one says that he is so fortunate and blessed to meet them, to serve them, and to have them as his guest.

The guest sages and Brahmins accept gifts given and honours shown to them, and in their turn they feel obliged to reciprocate this gesture of respect by blessing the host. This is exactly what happens now—they collectively blessed king Dasrath as is clear in the next line no. 5.

²We must note the careful selection of words by Tulsidas, the author-poet of this classic book. He has addressed the sages and Brahmins with the epithet “Mahi-Devas”, the gods of the earth, and so he used the word “Mahisa”, meaning the lord of the earth, when referring to king Dasrath. A man of high stature such as the great sages and the exalted Brahmins referred to above would accept only if something is given to them by someone of an equally high stature in society. Remember: the sages and Brahmins were not ‘beggars’ or ‘alms-seekers’ who would queue to get anything that is doled out as charity. They were men of high respect and dignity, and were possessed with powers that would never let them face shortage of material things that they would spread their arms for anything. They accepted anything just to honour the wishes of the giver, and not because they needed the thing.

In other words, the ‘giver was the lord of the earth’, and the ‘receiver was the god of earth’—i.e. they were of equal stature.

When a senior person is given something as gift, it is merely as a ‘token’ of respect from the giver. The ‘cow’ was the standard gift that was given to sages and Brahmins in earlier times. The cow had its practical use also. The sages maintained hermitages where disciples lived, and so was also the case with elderly Brahmins who spent their time studying the scriptures and teaching them to others. This meant that a large number of ‘students’ lived with them, and the cow used to provide milk for their dietary needs, dung that was dried and baked to serve as fuel for the fire, and so on.

These cows were decorated with precious things such as gems and gold in an indirect method to give material wealth to the sages and Brahmins who could sell them off to meet their financial needs.

³When the word had gone out that king Dasrath has summoned Brahmins (the “Vipras”) because he wishes to give gifts to them to mark the marriage of his sons, all those who were expecting some reward on this occasion also collected voluntarily. No one actually needed anything, but it was a moment to rejoice the marriage in the royal household, and therefore accepting and giving gifts would not mean that a person was a beggar or was suffering financially. It is merely a gesture of joy and happiness that one gives gifts and another accepts them whenever there is an occasion to celebrate some great event.

At the time when Lord Ram and his brothers were born in Ayodhya, similar gifts were given liberally, and whatever one got as a gift he immediately gave it to others with a free spirit—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194.

We also read that at that time, Dasrath had given liberally to alms-seekers whatever they wished—elephants, chariots, horses, gems, cows and diamonds: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 196.

Another occasion is when the good news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived in Ayodhya. On that occasion the gifts were given to the Brahmins by the queen-mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi together)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

चले पढ़त गावत गुन गाथा । जय जय जय दिनकर कुल नाथा ॥ ७ ॥
एहि बिधि राम बिआह उछाहू । सकइ न बरनि सहस मुख जाहू ॥ ८ ॥

calē paṛhata gāvata guna gāthā. jaya jaya jaya dinakara kula nāthā. 7.
ēhi bidhi rāma bi'āha uchāhū. saka'i na barani sahasa mukha jāhū. 8.

After receiving gifts and honours, all of them (the sages, the Brahmins, the alms-seekers etc.) departed cheerfully and fully contented. They left the place singing and praising the glories of the noble king, repeatedly cheering at him and applauding him loudly—'Glory to the Lord of the Solar Race ("dinakara kula nāthā").'¹ (7)

In this way, the festivities and celebrations that accompanied the marriage of Lord Ram were so profound and glorious that they cannot be narrated even by someone who has a thousand mouths to describe them². (8)

[Note—¹Similar instances of cheering crowd of gift-recipients are noticed earlier when gifts were given. (i) First, at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 196; and (ii) then at the time of arrival of news of the Lord's marriage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

²Similar idea is expressed elsewhere also: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 361.

It is a poetic way of highlighting the glorious and divine moments when the Lord of the world, Lord Ram, got united with the cosmic Shakti in the form of Sita in a ceremony that the mundane world calls 'marriage'. It is like saying that words fall short of expectations, they are insufficient and incompetent to give even an iota of idea of the extent of happiness and joy, of the dimension of celebrations and festivities, of the intensity of rejoicing and exuberance, of the divine atmosphere and an environment of all-round welfare and well-being that was generated at the time of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita.

Verily, it was an event that can't be captured in words because the word has its own limitations. The word is like a bird that cannot measure the depth and length of the sky no matter how high and long it flies.]

दो०. बार बार कौसिक चरन सीसु नाइ कह राउ ।
यह सबु सुखु मुनिराज तव कृपा कटाच्छ पसाउ ॥ ३३१ ॥
dōhā.

bāra bāra kausika carana sīsu nā'i kaha rā'u.
yaha sabu sukhu munirāja tava kṛpā kaṭāccha pasā'u. 331.

The king was overwhelmed with gratitude and thankfulness towards sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), and so he repeatedly bowed his head at the feet of the sage and said most humbly, with an immense sense of gratefulness in his voice—‘Oh gracious sage! All this happiness and bliss that I have been fortunate enough to enjoy today are the result of you looking at me with favour, being kind upon me, and are the cumulative result of your blessings, benevolence, mercy and grace that you have shown to me.’ (Doha no. 331)

[Note—The king (Dasrath) felt highly obliged of sage Vishwamitra, and he could not contend himself and sufficiently express his gratitude to the sage because it was he who had been instrumental in getting Lord Ram married to Sita, it was he who brought the Lord to Janakpur and ordered him to break the bow, and it was he who had summoned the king to come and attend the marriage. When the king came, his other sons also accompanied him, and as it turned out all of them got married. The king felt he owed a lot of gratitude to sage Vishwamitra, and so he chose to pay special attention and reverence to the sage in this verse.]

चौ०. जनक सनेहु सीलु करतूती । नृपु सब भाँति सराह बिभूती ॥ १ ॥
दिन उठि बिदा अवधपति मागा । राखहिं जनकु सहित अनुरागा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

janaka sanēhu sīlu karatūtī. nṛpu saba bhāmṭi sarāha bibhūtī. 1.
dina uṭhi bidā avadhapati māgā. rākhahim janaku sahita anurāgā. 2.

The king (Dasrath) liberally praised his counterpart king Janak for his affectionate and courteous nature, his amiability and friendliness, his gracious deeds and actions, and the overall graceful way he had conducted himself and gone about to complete everything in an efficient and judicious manner¹. (1)

The king of Ayodhya (Dasrath) got up everyday and requested king Janak to give him permission to go back to his kingdom, but the most gracious host (Janak) was reluctant to grant him leave, politely asking him to tarry at Janakpur for some more time². (2)

[Note—¹Dasrath had witnessed the most dignified and courteous way king Janak had received the members of the marriage party in general and Dasrath himself at the wedding pavilion when they had gone to attend the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 321.

Janak’s courteousness and polite ways are evident once again at the end of the wedding feast as described earlier in Chaupai line no. 8 and its following Chanda line nos. 1-12 that precede Doha no. 326; and in Doha no. 329.

²This showed that Janak was not getting fed-up with serving king Dasrath and the rest of the marriage party. When the host requests the guest to stay for some more time, it

shows that the latter is thoroughly enjoying the former's stay. Otherwise, the host would seize on the chance when the guest asks his permission to go, and would immediately accept the request and let the guest leave.

Janak was therefore playing the role of a perfect, graceful and obliging host. Refer Chaupai line no. 5 below.

In the context of the narrative here, from Chaupai line nos. 2—7, the reader can also refer to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse no. 161.]

नित नूतन आदरु अधिकाई । दिन प्रति सहस भँति पहुनाई ॥ ३ ॥

नित नव नगर अनंद उछाहू । दसरथ गवनु सोहाइ न काहू ॥ ४ ॥

nita nūтана ādaru adhikā'ī. dina prati sahasa bhām̐ti pahunā'ī. 3.

nita nava nagara ananda uchāhū. dasaratha gavanu sōhā'i na kāhū. 4.

The royal guest (king Dasrath) was shown newer forms of respect and honour during each of the days of his stay at Janakpur, and he was served most diligently and cheerfully in all possible manners to make him exceptionally comfortable and his stay extremely pleasant every day of the days of his stay even as he was entertained in thousands of ways with greater and enhanced attention with the passage of time, without any let-up or negligence¹. (3)

There were newer festivities and celebrations every day in the city (of Janakpur), and the citizens thoroughly enjoyed the stay of the marriage party so much so that no one liked that the guests should go back (to Ayodhya). (4)

[Note—¹It is not clear whether this verse no. 3 refers only to king Dasrath or to all other members of the marriage party. In all probabilities, all the members of the marriage party were shown the same respect as king Dasrath, for otherwise it would seem odd and un-courteous on the part of Janak to neglect others in the same group of guests. Earlier also it has been said that Janak had shown the same respect to others in the marriage party as he had shown to Dasrath—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 321 which expressly makes this point.

So therefore, we can safely read this verse as follows also—"The guests (king Dasrath and other members of the marriage party) were shown newer forms of respect from day to day, and all of them were entertained in thousands of ways with greater and enhanced attention with the passage of time."]

बहुत दिवस बीते एहि भाँती । जनु सनेह रजु बँधे बराती ॥ ५ ॥

कौसिक सतानंद तब जाई । कहा बिदेह नृपहि समुझाई ॥ ६ ॥

अब दसरथ कहँ आयसु देहू । जद्यपि छाड़ि न सकहु सनेहू ॥ ७ ॥

भलेहिं नाथ कहि सचिव बोलाए । कहि जय जीव सीस तिन्ह नाए ॥ ८ ॥

bahuta divasa bītē ēhi bhām̐ti. janu sanēha raju bam̐dhē barātī. 5.

kausika satānanda taba jā'ī. kahā bidēha nṛpahi samujhā'ī. 6.

aba dasaratha kaham̐ āyasu dēhū. jadyapi chāḍi na sakahu sanēhū. 7.

bhalēhiṁ nātha kahi saciva bōlā'ē. kahi jaya jīva sīsa tinha nā'ē. 8.

Many happy days passed in the aforesaid way in an atmosphere of joyous merriment and abundant enjoyment, with king Dasrath repeatedly seeking permission to leave and king Janak asking him to stay for some more time. It appeared that the groom's party was tied in a strong thread of love and affection that prevented them from leaving the city of Janakpur, the bride's place. So they tarried there cheerfully and gladly for a time longer than expected.¹ (5)

Then, realising that there was an inordinate delay for the marriage party to leave Janakpur and proceed to its kingdom of Ayodhya, sages Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and Satanand, the royal priest of Janakpur, went to Janak and advised him thus—[6]

'Now you must grant leave to Dasrath and allow him to proceed to his place² even though you don't like it and would prefer that he continues to stay here for some more days out of your affection for him and the bond of mutual respect and endearment that you have forged with him as well as the rest of the groom's party. [But oh king, this is not practical, for after all the groom's party cannot stay at the bride's place indefinitely. All guests, no matter how loving they may be, have to leave the host's place sooner or later, and every good thing has to come to an end one day. A sovereign of one kingdom feels very uneasy and odd if he has to stay at another sovereign's place for more time than it is absolutely necessary. Dasrath has to attend to the state affairs of his own kingdom of Ayodhya, and many important issues requiring his personal attention must be piling up there in his absence. So it is wise and prudent and advisable now that you must grant Dasrath permission to leave.]' [7] (6-7)

Janak agreed reluctantly, saying, 'Alright Lords, I will do as you say'.

Then he summoned his chief minister who came forthwith, saluted the king and bowed his head before him³. (8)

[Note—¹Refer Chaupai line no. 2 herein above.

²Surely it was sage Vishwamitra who said it. Satanand accompanied Vishwamitra because he was the kingdom's chief priest, but he would not have addressed king Dasrath by his name because it would be impolite for him to do so by the virtue of his being Janak's priest and on his payroll. If it was Satanand who spoke to Janak, then he would have used the title of a 'king' as a prefix to Dasrath, and not merely as 'Dasrath'.

It is important to note here that out of the two sages, Vishwamitra was the senior one, and a senior person is the one who gives advice to the king.

Another reason for Vishwamitra speaking instead of Satanand was that they consulted each other before hand and decided that if Satanand spoke, the chances were that Janak would overlook his advice simply because Satanand, after all, was his employee, but Janak will certainly not disobey Vishwamitra for the latter was an independent sage. Besides this, both Janak and Dasrath were highly obliged to Vishwamitra and held him in high esteem, so they could never think of not doing what this sage asked.

The third reason was that Vishwamitra had easy access to king Dasrath as opposed to Satanand as the latter had to observe a lot of formal protocol because he was on the payroll of the kingdom of Janakpur and represented king Janak. Dasrath

would confide with Vishwamitra and not with Satanand. So when Vishwamitra said that Dasrath wants to leave, Janak understood that the sage is speaking on behalf of king Dasrath who was so overwhelmed by Janak's affection, politeness and hospitality that he could not muster courage to insist on going back to Ayodhya on the face of Janak. So Janak would think that Dasrath had chosen sage Vishwamitra to act as his emissary and request the host king to grant him permission to leave.

³Whenever the chief minister came to his king, this was the standard way he showed his respect to the latter. This has similarities elsewhere also—for instance, when Dasrath's chief minister known as Sumantra came to him, he also followed the same procedure—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 5; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38; and (ii) Doha no. 148.]

दो०. अवधनाथु चाहत चलन भीतर करहु जनाउ ।
भए प्रेमबस सचिव सुनि बिप्र सभासद राउ ॥ ३३२ ॥

dōhā.

avadhanāthu cāhata calana bhītara karahu janā'u.
bha'ē prēmabasa saciva suni bipra sabhāsada rā'u. 332.

King Janak instructed his chief minister—‘The lord of Ayodhya (king Dasrath) wishes to leave. So go to the interior of the palace (where the queens and other female members of the royal household live) and inform them of this.’

When the chief minister heard this, he was overcome with emotions, and so were the Brahmins and other courtiers present there, as well as the king himself. (Doha no. 332)

चौ०. पुरबासी सुनि चलिहि बराता । बूझत बिकल परस्पर बाता ॥ १ ॥
सत्य गवनु सुनि सब बिलखाने । मनहुँ साँझ सरसिज सकुचाने ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

purabāsī suni calihi barātā. būjhata bikala paraspara bātā. 1.
satya gavanu suni saba bilakhānē. manahum̐ sām̐jha sarasija sakucānē. 2.

As the word spread and the citizens of Janakpur came to know that the groom's party would be leaving shortly, they became sorrowful and anxiously asked each other if the news was indeed true. (1)

When they learnt that it was the truth, all of them lamented and felt very sad and regretful. They became sorrowful and depressed just like the lotus that shrivels up when dusk falls.

[As soon as the news spread in the city that Lord Ram's marriage party was preparing to leave, a pall of gloom descended upon Janakpur. The celebrations and rejoicing were cut short, and the atmosphere suddenly became frosty and heavy as if

there was some great loss in the offering. All the singing, dancing, music and merriment ended, and they were replaced by a somber mood.] (2)

जहँ जहँ आवत बसे बराती । तहँ तहँ सिद्ध चला बहु भाँती ॥ ३ ॥
बिबिध भाँति मेवा पकवाना । भोजन साजु न जाइ बखाना ॥ ४ ॥
भरि भरि बसहँ अपार कहारा । पठई जनक अनेक सुसारा ॥ ५ ॥

jaham̃ jaham̃ āvata basē barātī. taham̃ taham̃ sid'dha calā bahu bhām̃tī. 3.
bibidha bhām̃tī mēvā pakavānā. bhōjana sāju na jā'i bakhānā. 4.
bhari bhari basaham̃ apāra kahārā. paṭha'īm janaka anēka susārā. 5.

Countless varieties of provisions and grocery items were sent by Janak to all those places where the marriage party had halted on its way from Ayodhya to Janakpur¹. (3)

Janak ordered that seasoned food and sweets of countless varieties be prepared. It is not possible to describe either the food or the royal paraphernalia (i.e. the numerous items given as marriage gift to the newly married couple by the bride's father—such as robes, garments, ornaments, household items such as bedsteads, mattresses etc.) that were arranged to be sent with the marriage party. (4)

All these countless things were put on the back of oxen or were carried by porters who were sent by Janak to the in-law's (Dasrath's) place. (5)

[Note—¹Janak understood the need for making arrangement for adequate supply of food, drinks, grocery items other things of daily need which the marriage party would need for the long-haul journey back from Janakpur to Ayodhya. So, as soon as it was decided that the marriage party would leave, Janak sent these provisions in advance so that the party does not face any inconvenience on the way back home.]

तुरग लाख रथ सहस पचीसा । सकल सँवारे नख अरु सीसा ॥ ६ ॥
मत्त सहस दस सिंधुर साजे । जिन्हहि देखि दिसिकुंजर लाजे ॥ ७ ॥
कनक बसन मनि भरि भरि जाना । महिषीं धेनु बस्तु बिधि नाना ॥ ८ ॥

turaga lākha ratha sahasa pacīsā. sakala sam̃vārē nakha aru sīsā. 6.
matta sahasa dasa sindhura sājē. jinhahi dēkhi disikuñjara lājē. 7.
kanaka basana mani bhari bhari jānā. mahiṣīm dhēnu bastu bidhi nānā. 8.

[Verse nos. 6-8 list some of the items that were gifted by Janak.]

One lakh horses (1 lakh = 1,00,000) and twenty-five thousand gilded chariots were fully decorated from bottom to top (nakha aru sīsā)¹. (6)

Similarly, ten thousand robust, strong, rugged and healthy elephants were beautifully decorated. Even the elephants that support the eight quarters of the world² on their muscular backs felt abashed when they saw these fully adorned elephants (that were gifted by Janak to king Dasrath). (7)

Gold, clothes and precious gems were sent in huge containers loaded on carts. Then there were she-buffaloes, cows and countless other items of different kinds. (8)

[Note—¹The horses' hooves were plated with foils of gold or silver; their girdles, harness, bridles and saddles etc. were too made of precious metals studded with priceless gems and pearls. Their backs were draped with costly embroidered cloth. The chariots were similarly decked up beautifully. All their parts were polished and oiled and gold or silver plated; the seats were upholstered with the finest of cloth; the royal standard was gold embroidered; and the wood-work was exquisitely carved, and inlaid with ivory and precious metals and stones.

The numbers of horses, chariots and elephants that Janak gifted to Dasrath as mentioned in this and other similar verses seem to be highly exaggerated. It is in all probability because poets and bards of ancient times had the habit of using hyperbolic and decorative language to lavish praises on their patrons, who were usually great kings and emperors, to show how grand and extensive their pomp and ceremony used to be, to bring to the fore their majesty and grandeur, to emphasise that Janak gifted Dasrath with an open heart and a most liberal mind, a way to show his host that he was overwhelmed with gratitude for his gracious acceptance of his service and hospitality. Janak literally piled Dasrath with so many gifts that the latter would always remember the warmth and affection that was offered to him by his brother-king, and it would go a long way in cementing mutual bond of friendship and brotherhood between two great kingdoms of that time, with each going out of its way to honour and praise the other.

Dasrath was the king of a very prosperous and wealthy kingdom of Ayodhya, and so Janak wished to give gifts befitting the stature of his guest as well as to show that he is not behind the former in prosperity and wealth.

Use of the terms 'millions or hundreds of thousands (lakhs and crores)' for any given entity or thing simply meant that they were in large numbers, or were so huge in numbers that it was difficult to actually count them and specify their numerical strength.

²These eight elephants are called "Diggajs". They support the heavy world on their backs at eight points—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

दो०. दाइज अमित न सकिअ कहि दीन्ह बिदेहँ बहोरि ।
जो अवलोकत लोकपति लोक संपदा थोरि ॥ ३३३ ॥
dōhā.

dā'ija amita na saki'a kahi dīnha bidēham̃ bahōri.
jō avalōkata lōkapati lōka sampadā thōri. 333.

Janak was not contented with what he had sent in advance, so he gave more marriage gifts which were so huge in quantity and varied in quality that it is not possible for anyone to say what they were, how many they were, or of what quality they were.

In fact, when the king of the world, i.e. Indra, the king of the gods, saw them he felt that the entire wealth of his kingdom (the world; the heaven) was only a trifle as compared to these gifts that Janak sent with the marriage party. (Doha no. 333)

चौ०. सबु समाजु एहि भाँति बनाई । जनक अवधपुर दीन्ह पठाई ॥ १ ॥
 चलिहि बरात सुनत सब रानीं । बिकल मीनगन जनु लघु पानीं ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

sabu samāju ēhi bhām̐ti banāī. janaka avadhapura dīnha paṭhāī. 1.
 calihi barāta sunata saba rānīm̐. bikala mīnagana janu laghu pānīm̐. 2.

In this above-mentioned way, Janak arranged for all the things at a grand scale and sent them to Ayodhya¹. (1)

[This verse picks up the narration from the end of Doha no. 332.]

When the queens² heard that the grooms³ party was preparing to leave, they became anxious and distressed like the fish that faces the prospect of having to live with scarcity of water⁴. (2)

[Note—¹This verse clearly tells us that whatever gifts Janak arranged for king Dasrath as well as his son-in-laws and other members of the marriage party were sent by him directly to Ayodhya. These gifts were sent with an advance party that also took care of arrangements all along the way from the city of Janakpur till the outer fringes of the kingdom to ensure that when the marriage party arrived at these spots they will find all arrangements in place and will not face any inconvenience.

Though it is not mentioned here, contingents of Janakpur's army must have accompanied this advance party carrying costly gifts because of the fear of loot on the way. This sending of gifts ahead of the actual marriage party was a strategic move to ensure that the road was cleared and secured in advance to pre-empt any untoward incident when the marriage party passed through that way a little behind.

²The pleural term “queens” refers to the queen of Janak, named Sunayana, and the queen of his younger brother, Kushdhvaj. Besides them, Janak had other cousins and family relations, and all their wives were collectively treated as members of the royal household, and hence addressed as ‘queens’.

³Similarly, the pleural term “grooms” refers to Lord Ram and his other three brothers, i.e. Bharat, Shatrughan and Laxman, all of whom were married to cousin sisters in Janakpur.

⁴Tulsidas had chosen this example very cleverly. The fish would die if there was no water, but when it faces the prospect of living in a limited supply of water it is scared because it will have to lead a tormented life for as long as it lives. The fish would feel the agony of death only for an instant and for once if it had to die for complete lack of water, but when that water is in short-supply, say only a half-dry puddle as compared to a large pond or river, the fish is neither able to die and get rid of the torments, nor can it live happily and contentedly as it would do when the water is in abundance.

Thus, the queens would have to spend the rest of their lives suffering the pain of separation from their beloved daughters and their equally beloved sons-in-law whom they will not be able to meet quite often for the rest of their lives as they have been doing for the past many days while the marriage party had camped at Janakpur.

Their condition is like that fish which is forced to live in constrained conditions due to bad luck.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 162.]

पुनि पुनि सीय गोद करि लेहीं । देइ असीस सिखावनु देहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 होएहु संतत पियहि पिआरी । चिरु अहिबात असीस हमारी ॥ ४ ॥
 सासु ससुर गुर सेवा करेहू । पति रुख लखि आयसु अनुसरेहू ॥ ५ ॥

puni puni sīya gōda kari lēhīm. dē'i asīsa sikhāvanu dēhīm. 3.
 hō'ēhu santata piyahi pi'ārī. ciru ahibāta asīsa hamārī. 4.
 sāsū sasura gura sēvā karēhū. pati rukha lakhi āyasu anusarēhū. 5.

They (the queen-mothers) repeatedly picked up Sita on to their laps, affectionately embracing her, blessing her and giving her motherly advice¹. (3)

The mothers blessed Sita, saying, ‘May you enjoy the love and affection of your dear husband for a life-time, and may you live happily with him for an eternity. This is our blessing for you. (4)

Be diligent in serving your mother-and-father in-law, as well as your Guru². Always pay attention to what your husband wants, and act accordingly³. [That is, always obey your husband and keep him pleased.]’ (5)

[Note—¹The loving mothers were overcome with emotions as the final hour of departure of the marriage party arrived. Sita was exceptionally dear to them. So they embraced her and consoled her in many ways, blessing her and teaching her what to do and how to behave in her new home with her in-laws. Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 170.

These verses tell us what advice the queen-mothers gave Sita.

²The Guru of Sita after her marriage with Lord Ram would be sage Vasistha because he is the Guru of the royal family of Ayodhya.

³As we move on with this classical story, we read later on that when Sita met the wife of sage Atri named Anusuiya during her journey through the forest with her husband Lord Ram while he was spending fourteen years of time in forest exile, she was also advised by the learned hermitress that a woman who serves her husband faithfully and diligently is blessed with a long and happy life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 5 ‘ka’ along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-19.

In other words, serving the husband and being faithful to him is the sacrosanct rule for a married lady.]

अति सनेह बस सखीं सयानी । नारि धरम सिखवहिं मृदु बानी ॥ ६ ॥
 सादर सकल कुअँरि समुझाई । रानिन्ह बार बार उर लाई ॥ ७ ॥
 बहुरि बहुरि भेटहिं महतारीं । कहहिं बिरंचि रचीं कत नारीं ॥ ८ ॥

ati sanēha basa sakhīm sayānī. nāri dharama sikhavahim mṛdu bānī. 6.
sādara sakala ku'amṛi samujhā'īm. rāninha bāra bāra ura lā'īm. 7.
bahuri bahuri bhēṭahim mahatārīm. kahahim birañci racīm kata nārīm. 8.

Sita's friends were also overwhelmed with emotions and affection for her. They also taught her sweetly the duties of a married woman and how she can be happy in her married life (like her mother had done earlier)¹. (6)

All of them explained the various duties and norms of a married life to Sita as well as other princesses (i.e. Maandavi, Srutkirti and Urmila).

The queen-mothers repeatedly clasped the princesses (Sita and her other three sisters) to their bosoms as waves of love and emotions surged through their hearts for all of them (as this was the final time they were meeting their beloved daughters, and they did not know when this chance would come again in life). (7)

The mothers repeatedly met and embraced them (the four princesses) and lamented at the fate of a woman, exclaiming, 'Why did the creator Brahma ever create a woman (because one day she has to get married and leave her parental home and grieving parents for all times to come; she has to abandon her home and her acquaintances, leaving everyone in grief, to go and live with strangers in a new home to which she has to adjust herself against all odds)!'² (8)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 102 while narrating the divine marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati. At that time also, Parvati's mother and friends had taught her the customs of the society and family as well as norms of behaviour she should follow in her married life.

²A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102 while narrating the divine marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati. At that time also, Parvati's mother had lamented at the fate of a woman who has leave her parent's home to go and live at her in-law's place which is quite alien to her.]

दो०. तेहि अवसर भाइन्ह सहित रामु भानु कुल केतु ।
चले जनक मंदिर मुदित बिदा करावन हेतु ॥ ३३४ ॥

dōhā.

tēhi avasara bhā'inha sahita rāmu bhānu kula kētu.
calē janaka mandira mudita bidā karāvana hētu. 334.

At that moment, Lord Ram, who is like the shining star of the solar race, accompanied by his brothers, cheerfully proceeded to the palace of king Janak to take permission from him to depart from Janakpur. (Doha no. 334)

चौ०. चारिउ भाइ सुभायँ सुहाए । नगर नारि नर देखन धाए ॥ १ ॥
 कोउ कह चलन चहत हहिं आजू । कीन्ह बिदेह बिदा कर साजू ॥ २ ॥
 लेहु नयन भरि रूप निहारी । प्रिय पाहुने भूप सुत चारी ॥ ३ ॥
 को जानै केहिं सुकृत सयानी । नयन अतिथि कीन्हे बिधि आनी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

cāri'u bhā'i subhāyam' suhā'ē. nagara nāri nara dēkhana dhā'ē. 1.
 kō'u kaha calana cahata hahim ājū. kīnha bidēha bidā kara sājū. 2.
 lēhu nayana bhari rūpa nihārī. priya pāhunē bhūpa suta cārī. 3.
 kō jānai kēhim sukr̥ta sayānī. nayana atithi kīnhē bidhi ānī. 4.

The people of the city of Janakpur, both the males as well as the females, ran out to see the four brothers who were naturally pleasing and charming to look at¹. (1)

Someone in the crowd said—‘They want start on their return journey today, and this has become apparent because Janak has already prepared all the paraphernalia required to see the marriage party off and bid the four brothers good bye. [Besides this, he has already dispatched the advance party with marriage gifts etc. to Ayodhya.] (2)

So this is the ripe time for us to reap the rewards of seeing the beautiful image of the four brothers till our eyes are contented (because soon this chance would be lost forever). Indeed, these four noble sons of the great king (i.e. Lord Ram and his other brothers who were sons of king Dasrath) are like honoured guests for our eyes! (3)

Oh come to think of it dear friends, god knows what good deeds we have done that the creator Vidhi (who decides what rewards or punishments should be given to the creatures of this world) decided to bring them (the four brothers) to become the lovable guests-of-honour for our eyes.

[The citizens talked amongst themselves thus—“Just as one goes out of one’s way to serve an honourable guest, and no matter how good the service is the host always thinks that he could have done more to please the guest, let us show our greatest of affection, love and respect to these four noble brothers for the last time before their departure for their home by rushing out to meet them, exchanging pleasantries and greetings, and telling them to remember us forever. Let us have our eye-fill of their pleasant sight from up close, let’s get close and touch them and shake their hands to say good bye at the personal level, and if possible keep some souvenirs as token of our meeting them, to be kept as a cherished memorabilia for our own generation and for the next generations to come.”]² (4)

[Note—¹We have read in Doha no. 334 that the four brothers left the place where they were staying with their father Dasrath for the palace of king Janak to take formal permission from their in-laws to go back to their own kingdom of Ayodhya. Meanwhile, word had already spread that the marriage party was preparing to leave—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333.

So when Lord Ram and his other three brothers came on the road leading to the royal palace of Janak, the citizens came out in hordes to have a look at them and if

possible interact with them and say their good bye to them. The citizens knew by experience how obliging, kind, friendly and amiable Lord Ram and Laxman were, and also that their charismatic sight was exceedingly pleasing for the beholder's eyes because they had already met the two brothers when they had gone to visit the city when they arrived there with sage Vishwamitra—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 224.

The citizens also knew that the other two brothers, i.e. Bharat and Shatrughan, were similar to Lord Ram and Laxman in their charm and friendly nature—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 and Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 311.

The citizens therefore decided that when the four brothers were on their way to Janak's place, it was the most opportune moment and probably their last chance to meet them and say good bye—because later on there would be lot of royal formalities and observance of protocol which would prevent them from coming close to the brothers in an informal way and bid good bye to them at the personal level.

²As soon as the word was out that the marriage party was preparing to leave and Lord Ram and his brothers were going to take final leave from the royal household of Janak, the citizens poured out on the streets in hordes. The streets were literally flooded with them, a scene reminiscent of the time when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to visit the city for the first time—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 220.

Lord Ram had won the heart and the mind of the entire citizenry of Janakpur with his charm-offensive so much so that he had become dearer to the citizens more than their own lives and families—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 221; and (ii) Doha no. 223.

At that time also the citizens had thanked their benevolent stars and the result of their good deeds that had made it possible for them to get an opportunity to have Lord Ram as the guest-of-honour for their eyes, for otherwise it was a distant dream for them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222.]

मरनसीलु जिमि पाव पिऊषा । सुरतरु लहै जनम कर भूखा ॥ ५ ॥

पाव नारकी हरिपदु जैसें । इन्ह कर दरसनु हम कहँ तैसें ॥ ६ ॥

निरखि राम सोभा उर धरहू । निज मन फनि मूरति मनि करहू ॥ ७ ॥

एहि बिधि सबहि नयन फलु देता । गए कुअँर सब राज निकेता ॥ ८ ॥

maranasīlu jimi pāva pi'ūṣā. surataru lahai janama kara bhūkhā. 5.

pāva nārakī haripadu jaisēṁ. inha kara darasanu hama kaham̐ taisēṁ. 6.

nirakhi rāma sōbhā ura dharahū. nija mana phani mūrati mani karahū. 7.

ēhi bidhi sabahi nayana phalu dētā. da'ē ku'am̐ra saba rāja nikētā. 8.

[These three verses give us an idea of the eagerness with which the citizens saw the charming image of Lord Ram, as well as the intensity of their longing for his image to be firmly enshrined in their hearts and etched in their memories for all times to come.]

Just as a dying person suddenly gets to drink the ambrosia of life; just as a person who has been hungry for a lifetime suddenly finds the evergreen tree of the gods that provides succulent fruits that fulfills all his desires [5];---

---Just as a sinful person destined to go to hell suddenly attains heaven and the exalted stature of the Lord's divine abode—similarly for us, the opportunity to have a divine sight of Lord Ram was unimaginable to have ever come true in this lifetime! [6] (5-6)

Therefore oh dear friends, watch Lord Ram closely and enshrine his beautiful image in your hearts, making it a 'Mani' (the serpent's gem) and your heart as a hooded serpent that closely guards this Mani.' (7)

On this wise, giving all the citizens the fruit (reward) of their eyes, the four princes went to the palace of the king (Janak—to seek permission from him to depart from the city of Janakpur and proceed to their own kingdom of Ayodhya). (8)

[Note—It is believed in mythology that there is a hooded serpent, and a luminescent sac, the size of a small gem or pearl, is present on its raised hood. This sac gives out light, and the serpent sees its way in the dark due to this light. This sac is filled with a gelly that is effervescent with light, and hence it is known as a 'Mani' because it is shaped like a precious gem, is self-illuminated like a gem, and is so precious for the serpent that it guards it with its life because it would be blind without it.

The citizens invoke this metaphor to emphasise that just as the Mani is very dear for the serpent who bears it, Lord Ram's divine image is also very dear for them, and just as the serpent would die if the Mani is stolen, they too would die if for some cause they happen to forget the divine Lord Ram.

The view of Lord Ram evoked undiluted love and devotion in the hearts and minds of the citizens of Janakpur. Their emotions were all the more intense and their fire of their love for Lord Ram so intensively stoked because the time of departure had arrived, and they did not know when they would get another chance to meet Lord Ram and interact with him in their lives. So they encourage each other to see him intensively for the last time and firmly etch his magnificent image in their hearts and minds so much so that it becomes a part of their beings, a part of their inner-self without which they would be virtually dismembered.

Another idea is that when a man is scorched by the heat of the sun, it is only then that he realizes the comfort that is got under the shade of a tree—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 69.

When Lord Ram was going to the forest during his 14-year exile, the villagers on the way had also rushed out to have a glimpse of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman like the citizens of Janakpur here have done. All those who saw the Lord on the way to the forest then also expressed similar emotions of their being extremely lucky to have had the chance to see the Lord which they could not have imagined in their lives. There are countless verses to this effect in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. For instance—(i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 89; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 111; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 113; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 114; (v) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 116; (vi) Doha no. 118 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8; and (vii) Doha no. 122 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

The great sage Bharadwaj has asserted that “to have a chance to see Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita is the best fruit for all spiritual endeavours”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Lord Ram was very gracious and obliging by nature. So he did not deny anyone the chance to have an eye-contact with him, if it was not possible for all the citizens to personally meet him and have a word with him. For those who could not come close due to the huge crowd, he waved his hands as a gesture of saying farewell. The gracious Lord made eye-contact with each individual, giving each person the benefit of feeling that Lord Ram has given him his personal attention. This was a charming initiative of the Lord that bowled-over all the citizens of Janakpur, and they would all cherish these wonderful moments that would remain carved in their memories for their lifetime. This ‘charm-initiative’ began when Lord Ram and Laxman had gone to visit Janakpur for the first time after they arrived in the city with sage Vishwamitra and it continues till this day.

The hungry and eager eyes of the love-struck citizens of Janakpur devoured each moment of their viewing of Lord Ram just in the way that a dying man eyes a pot of ambrosia of life, a hungry man the fruits of the evergreen tree of the gods, and the sinful man who is being dragged to hell, the gates of heaven—refer: Chaupai line nos. 5-7 herein above.]

दो०. रूप सिंधु सब बंधु लखि हरषि उठा रनिवासु ।
करहिं निछावरि आरती महा मुदित मन सासु ॥ ३३५ ॥

dōhā.

rūpa sindhu saba bandhu lakhi haraṣi uṭhā ranivāsu.
karaḥiṁ nichāvāri āratī mahā mudita mana sāsu. 335.

As soon as the ladies of the royal household (of Janak) saw the four brothers, who were like oceans of beauty and charm, arrive, they got up excitedly, full of delight.

The mother-in-law (queen Sunayana) scattered gifts around the brothers and performed their Arti (i.e. she welcomed them by showering gifts and showing of lighted lamps which is a standard practice to welcome an honoured guest). (Doha no. 335)

चौ०. देखि राम छबि अति अनुरागीं । प्रेमबिबस पुनि पुनि पद लागीं ॥ १ ॥
रही न लाज प्रीति उर छाई । सहज सनेहु बरनि किमि जाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēkhi rāma chabi ati anurāgīṁ. prēmabibasa puni puni pada lāgīṁ. 1.
rahī na lāja prīti ura chāī. sahaja sanēhu barani kimi jāī. 2.

The more the mothers-in-law watched the beautiful image of Lord Ram, the more overwhelmed with love and affection they became, and were so much moved by their emotions that they repeatedly fell down at the holy feet of the Lord*. (1)

The love and affection for the Lord was so overpowering for them that this emotion clouded all their sense of protocol that they were expected to observe as queens in this mundane world, and the feeling of shyness virtually abandoned them. How is it possible to describe the natural affection and love for the Lord that surged in their inner-beings (which compelled them to shed all hesitation or inhibitions when they fell at Lord Ram's feet though they were his mothers-in-law and should have blessed him instead of touching his feet)? (2)

[Note—When one is overcome with love for anyone, all sense of rationality takes a back-seat. The queen-mothers knew that this was the last chance to meet Lord Ram, and they could not control their natural urge to fall at the Lord's feet as a mark of total surrender before the Lord, and hinting to the Lord that he should always be kind towards them and remember them as those who have sought his blessings.

There is another connotation in this gesture of falling at the feet of one's son-in-law. The mother-in-law, most humbly and pleadingly, requests her son-in-law by this gesture to be kind towards her daughter who is now the latter's wife but is unaccustomed to his ways of life. So he must be kind towards the innocent girl, and overlook as well as forgive all the mistakes that she may make in life. In effect, the mother-in-law pleads to the groom on behalf of her daughter to be kind towards the latter.

Now, another interesting thing to note is that though it is not specifically mentioned in the verses that the mothers-in-law were more charmed by Lord Ram as compared to his other brothers, but elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas it has been expressly affirmed that though the four brothers were equally lovable, but Lord Ram was more so, and he was like an ocean of bliss, beatitude, felicity and happiness—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 198.

When one is overcome with positive emotions for someone, and develops an immense sense of honour and respect for him, one would like to express his appreciation and sense of adoration by repeatedly undertaking gestures that would show how happy and joyous one feels by meeting the object of his admiration. Embracing, holding hands, or falling at the feet are some of the ways of expressing the sense of excessive happiness and joy. One 'repeats' the gestures again and again to tell the object of one's adoration that doing it once is not enough, and so one wishes to repeat it over and over again.

There are other instances in Ram Charit Manas where one has fallen repeatedly at the feet of Lord Ram to express the immensity of happiness and gratitude as well as the feeling of blessedness at meeting the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 15 that precedes Doha no. 211 where Ahilya has repeatedly fallen at the holy feet of Lord Ram; (ii) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 49 that tells us Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, has fallen repeatedly at the feet of the Lord when the latter had granted him refuge.

Sometimes it has happened that the devotee has fallen at the feet of Lord Ram and clasped it so affectionately that in spite of repeated attempts the Lord could not lift him from the ground—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 33 which describes how Hanuman has clasped the Lord's feet, and the Lord repeatedly trying to lift him but Hanuman refuses to get up.

*We shall read later on the story that when Lord Ram had gone to his mother Kaushalya to seek her permission to go to the forest, she has also fallen at the Lord's feet and clasped it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 57. But that was a time of sorrow and Kaushalya had fell at the Lord's feet in distress as compared to the Lord's mothers-in-law who fall at his feet out of joy in the present verse.

Refer also to: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 165.]

भाइन्ह सहित उबटि अन्हवाए । छरस असन अति हेतु जेवाँए ॥ ३ ॥
 बोले रामु सुअवसरु जानी । सील सनेह सकुचमय बानी ॥ ४ ॥
 राउ अवधपुर चहत सिधाए । बिदा होन हम इहाँ पठाए ॥ ५ ॥
 मातु मुदित मन आयसु देहू । बालक जानि करब नित नेहू ॥ ६ ॥

bhā'inha sahita ubaṭi anhavā'ē. charasa asana ati hētu jēvā'mē. 3.
 bōlē rāmu su'avasaru jānī. sīla sanēha sakucamaya bānī. 4.
 rā'u avadhapura cahata sidhā'ē. bidā hōna hama ihām' paṭhā'ē. 5.
 mātu mudita mana āyasu dēhū. bālaka jāni karaba nita nēhū. 6.

The four brothers were given ceremonial bath by first rubbing cosmetics on their bodies and then washing it off with scented water. Then they were affectionately entertained by serving them mouth-watering dishes having all the six types of tastes¹. (3)

As soon as he got an opportunity, Lord Ram spoke sweetly, in a tone indicating extreme courteousness and affection but hesitant in nature, because the Lord was well aware that what he was about to say would not be something that his audience, i.e. his in-laws, would like to hear and welcome². (4)

He requested his mothers-in-law—‘The king (our father Dasrath) wishes to leave for his kingdom of Ayodhya, and he has sent us to take leave from you³. (5)

So oh mothers, please grant us permission with a cheerful mind to leave. Treat us like your own children⁴, and have an enduring affection for us.’ (6)

[Note—¹Refer note of Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 329 herein above. This was the first time the four grooms have gone to meet their mothers-in-law. It is customary for the mother-in-law to feed her son-in-law when he comes to meet her for the first time after marriage.

As we shall note below in verse nos. 4-6, the mothers-in-law were not yet aware that the four brothers have come to seek permission to leave for Ayodhya. They thought that they have come to pay a routine courtesy call. So, the mothers-in-law asked to take their baths and get fresh, and then they fed the four grooms with the choicest of delectable dishes.

²This is proved in verse no. 7 that follow herein below.

Lord Ram was of a very decent, amiable and kind nature, as well as good mannered. So, whenever he had to speak he was careful to be sweet and courteous as

much as possible. This is clear in the entire episode of sage Parashuram at the time of the breaking of the bow as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 271—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 283. Lord Ram had even admonished his younger brother Laxman and asked him to refrain from answering back to the sage when Laxman had shown his annoyance at the angry outburst of Parashuram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 278.

Then later on in the story we shall read that when the Lord found that his step-mother Kaikeyi was fretting and fuming for sending him to forest exile and his father was overcome with sorrows and dilemma, he had shown exemplary self-control and spoke very politely to both of them, even comforting his own mother Kaushalya in most polite terms to bear with the circumstances for some time. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 40; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Doha no. 42; (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43; (iv) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 45—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 53.

Still later on we read that Lord Ram was full of hesitation when he was faced with the prospect of having to resolutely refuse to go back to Ayodhya at the time when Bharat and the rest of the assembly had been insisting on the Lord's return from the forest during the conclave held at Chitrakoot—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313.

³As noted in verse no. 3 above, this is the first time the queens came to know that the four brothers have come to seek permission to leave for their home, the kingdom of Ayodhya.

⁴A mother has natural love for her children, and she treats them equally. Lord Ram spoke on the behalf of all his brothers, and it was a polite way of saying that just as the queen mothers had been treating all the four princesses equally, they should also treat their four sons-in-law equally, with equal affection. This was a polite way of exchanging pleasantries before saying a final good bye to their mothers-in-law.]

सुनत बचन बिलखेउ रनिवासू । बोलि न सकहिं प्रेमबस सासू ॥ ७ ॥
हृदयँ लगाइ कुअँरि सब लीन्ही । पतिन्ह सौँपि बिनती अति कीन्ही ॥ ८ ॥

sunata bacana bilakhē'u ranivāsū. bōli na sakahim prēmabasa sāsū. 7.
hṛdayam'lagā'i ku'amṛi saba līnhī. patinha saumpi binatī ati kīnhī. 8.

As soon as they heard these words (that the beloved grooms were leaving), the ladies of the royal household were extremely distressed. The mothers-in-law were so overwhelmed with emotions of love and affection that they were dumb-founded, unable to speak a word.¹ (7)

They (the queen mothers) embraced all the four princesses, and while affectionately handing them over to their respective husbands they respectfully prayed to them (or made humble submission to the four brothers).² (8)

[Note—¹The ladies of the royal household of king Janak were distressed because they won't get a chance to see and interact with the four brothers, and especially with Lord Ram, again. It must be remembered that in olden times, communication was difficult, and once the bride went to her husband's place, she almost had to snap her contacts with her parents who lived far away. It was not common that the bridegroom would visit his in-laws place too often, and such a visit was usually a rare occurrence, taking place on some very special occasion. This separation of a girl from her parents was permanent, and obviously the moment when she would depart with her husband for his home was a moment of great sadness and grief on the part of her parents. This sadness and grief was more marked in the present case as Lord Ram had made himself very dear to one and all in Janakpur, so much so that the very thought of his going away pained the citizens and members of king Janak's family in a way similar to a dear son going away to a distant land from his father's place. The going away of Lord Ram was effectually more painful to all than was the grief of separation from Sita and her sisters.

The mothers-in-law however were overcome with emotions of love because they treated the four brothers as their 'sons'. We have already seen in the previous verse no. 6 that Lord Ram has asked the mothers-in-law, the queens, to treat him and his brothers as their children.

The ladies of the city as well as the royal household had a different attitude towards Lord Ram and his brothers as compared to the queen mothers: whereas the queen mothers treated the four brothers as their 'sons' because they were married to their daughters, the other ladies obviously would not do so. These ladies were charmed by the magnetic personality of the Lord and his brothers, and they now regretted that they would be denied the opportunity of frequent interaction with them once they leave Janakpur.

²Refer also to: "Janki Mangal", verse nos. 167-168, and Chanda no. 21 in this context. After the wedding ceremony was over, the grooms went to the place where the marriage party was lodged, and the brides came back to their palace. What the mother-in-law said is narrated below.]

छं०. करि बिनय सिय रामहि समरपी जोरि कर पुनि पुनि कहै । १ ।
 बलि जाउँ तात सुजान तुह कहँ बिदित गति सब की अहै ॥ २ ॥
 परिवार पुरजन मोहि राजहि प्रानप्रिय सिय जानिबी । ३ ।
 तुलसीस सीलु सनेहु लखि निज किंकरी करि मानिबी ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kari binaya siya rāmahī samarapī jōri kara puni puni kahai. 1.
 bali jā'um̃ tāta sujāna tumha kahum̃ bidita gati saba kī ahai. 2.
 parivāra purajana mōhi rājahi prānapriya siya jānibī. 3.
 tulasīsa sīlu sanēhu lakhi nija kiṅkarī kari mānibī. 4.

The queen-mother Sunayana joined her palms as a token of submission and great respect for Lord Ram, submitted Sita to him and earnestly prayed to him repeatedly (i.e. she repeated her submission and request again and again) [Chanda line no. 1],---

--- ‘Oh my dear son (“tāta”), I submit myself before your honourable self (“bali jā’um’ sujāna”), and I understand that you know what I wish to speak and what is in my mind as you know the inner feelings and thoughts of all living beings (“bidita gati saba kī ahai”). [Chanda line no. 2]

You may know that Janki (Sita) is dearer than life for all of us—for our entire family, all the citizens of Janakpur, myself, as well as the king (Janak).

[In other words, Since you, oh my dear son-in-law Sri Ram, know the inner thoughts and feelings of all living beings because you are all-knowing and omniscient, it is sure that you are also aware of the amount of love and affection we all have for Sita; she is very dear to all of us.] [Chanda line no. 3]

Therefore, oh Lord of Tulsidas (tulasīsa)¹, have love for her and be courteous to her, and treating her as your maid (kiṅkarī), you should forgive all her shortcomings and mistakes². [Chanda line no. 4] (Chanda line nos. 1-4)

[Note—¹There is a clever play of words here, and this verse also clearly shows that the events that are being narrated here by poet-author of this classical story, Goswami Tulsidas, are in the way he visualised them on the canvas of his mind. It is obvious that Sunayana cannot refer to Lord Ram as the “lord of Tulsidas”—for the simple reason that Tulsidas wasn’t even born then!

Tulsidas uses this opportunity to stress that his Lord, Sri Ram, is very gracious and benevolent upon him; the Lord forgives all misdemeanours of Tulsidas and overlooks his mistakes. That is why the queen-mother refers to him to stress upon Lord Ram to be gracious and benevolent towards Sita just like he has been towards his ‘servant’ (“Daas”) named Tulsi (“Tulsi + Daas” = Tulsidas).

But the play on the word ‘Tulsi’ also has another connotation: ‘Tulsi’ is the Hindi word for the Basil plant which is very dear to Lord Vishnu, and there is a legendary story behind it which says that when Lord Vishnu had to cheat the chaste wife named Brinda of the demon named Jaalandhar so as to kill him, she had cursed the Lord to become a stone. So Lord Vishnu transformed into the Shaaligram stone which is like a rounded pebble. But instead of getting angry at Brinda for cursing him, he realised that she was right to be angry at him, and so the Lord blessed her that she would always accompany him in the form of a leaf of the Basil plant. Thus, it is said that all forms of offerings to Lord Vishnu are sanctified only when leaves of Tulsi plant are added to them because Tulsi is dearer to Vishnu than anything else.

In other words, Lord Vishnu became the eternal ‘Lord of Tulsi’ ever since the event narrated above. And since Lord Ram is an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, mother Sunayana invokes this incident to remind him that he must love Sita with the same affection and eternal commitment with which Lord Vishnu had accepted Tulsi.

²We shall read later on in the story that Lord Ram has declared that he loves his ‘sevak’ more than anyone or anything else—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 16. The word “sevak” literally means a servant who selflessly serves the Lord, but for all practical purposes it refers to a devotee of the Lord and one who has submitted oneself before the Lord so much so that he or she has no other succour and refuge anywhere in this world.

Now, for a married woman her husband is the only Lord whom she should serve diligently and be loyal to. Sita was totally devoted and submitted to her dear

husband Lord Ram, and therefore the Lord was obliged to shower all his affection and attention upon her.

The word “kiṅkarī” means a maid, but it’s a simple literal meaning. The idea is that Sita would serve her lord Sri Ram as faithfully, honestly, sincerely and diligently as a loyal maid serves her master. So therefore it would be obligatory for the Lord to reciprocate her emotions and reward her for services by being very kind, gracious, forgiving and compassionate towards her, overlooking her shortcomings and mistakes and giving her so much love and affection that she does not miss her parents and family members.

By saying that Sita is loved by all the citizens of Janakpur as much as she is loved by her close family members, mother Sunayana wishes to request Lord Ram that he should treat her with so much kindness and show public respect and affection for her so that the citizens of Ayodhya begin to respect her and treat her with her with the greatest of dignity and honour.

This request was essential—for it indirectly hinted to Lord Ram that there may arise some instances in life when unfortunately he may be annoyed with Sita for any reason whatsoever, but he should never publicly display his annoyance at her because the subjects of the kingdom would pick a wrong hint and begin to show disrespect to Sita. Instead, the Lord should politely tell her what he didn’t like about her so that she can mend her ways.

Refer also to: “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 167-168, and Chanda no. 21 in this context.]

सो०. तुह्म परिपूरन काम जान सिरोमनि भावप्रिय ।

जन गुन गाहक राम दोष दलन करुनायतन ॥ ३३६ ॥

sōraṭhā.

tumha paripūrana kāma jāna sirōmani bhāvapriya.

jana guna gāhaka rāma dōṣa dalana karunāyatana. 336.

[Sunayana continues with her prayerful submission—]

‘You are eternally self-contented and fulfilled. [That is, even the smallest service that Sita would render to you would make you happy with her, I am sure of that. You do not have an un-ending train of desires that would be difficult for her to fulfill. In the broader perspective, even the smallest service your devotees render upon you is sufficient to please you.]

You are the most exalted amongst the wise and knowledgable. [I do not intend to preach you or give advice to you because you know more than I can ever advice. But still it is out of affection that I am saying all this. Being the Lord of creation you are also the lord of all knowledge that is present in this creation.]

You are only attracted by positive emotions of affection, love and devotion. [The best way to please you is to have love and devotion for you. You cannot be pleased by material wealth or external pretensions of any kind because you are all-knowing and omniscient, and therefore can’t be cheated. It is only the virtue of having positive emotions of affection, love and devotion that sprouts in one’s heart that can please you.]

You pay attention to and consider only the good points in your devotees and followers (“Jana”). [That is, you value the good qualities, characters, behaviour and

deeds of your devotees, and neglect their shortcomings and faults. This nature of yours makes it possible for you to be always kind with your followers, and never be angry or annoyed with them because you don't pay attention to their shortcomings and misdemeanours.]

You eliminate or eradicate the negative qualities, the weaknesses and the shortcomings in your devotees and followers. [That is, you do not condone their negativities and misdemeanours, but instead of getting irritated and cruelly punishing them you endeavour to initiate measures to improve your devotees and followers so as to bring about a complete transformation in them and help them overcome evil to become noble souls. Therefore I am sure that even if my beloved daughter Sita has any shortcomings or faults, you will help her to overcome them and become perfect in life, instead of getting angry at her.]

Oh Lord, indeed you are an abode of mercy and compassion. [And therefore I am certain that you will be merciful and compassionate towards Sita.]' (Sortha/Doha no. 336)

[Note—Refer also to Tulsidas' book "Janki Mangal", verse nos. 167-168 and Chanda no. 21 which summarise what has been said in these verses.]

चौ०. अस कहि रही चरन गहि रानी । प्रेम पंक जनु गिरा समानी ॥ १ ॥

सुनि सनेहसानी बर बानी । बहुबिधि राम सासु सनमानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi rahī carana gahi rānī. prēma pañka janu girā samānī. 1.
suni sanēhasānī bara bānī. bahubidhi rāma sāsū sanamānī. 2.

Saying so, the queen (i.e. the mother-in-law of Lord Ram, queen-mother Sunayana) remained clinging to the feet of Lord Ram (i.e. she did not get up but remained sitting on the floor, clasping the holy feet of the Lord)¹. It appeared that her voice was lost in the quicksand of love and affection for the Lord². (1)

Lord Ram realised that the queen had become overwhelmed with emotions when he heard her utter words that were soaked in love and affections. So he reassured her in many ways, honoured her and comforted her.³ (2)

[Note—¹This verse concludes the narration that commenced in Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 336 which essentially says that the queen had fallen at the feet of Lord Ram because she was overwhelmed with love and affection for the Lord when she saw his bewitchingly beautiful form.

We have read in the previous verses, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 336 herein above that the queen-mother had lovingly prayed to Lord Ram and handed over Sita to him. After saying one's prayer, the worshipper bows at the feet of the deity, or in more mundane terms, the petitioner bows before the master or lord to whom he has submitted his petition in order to express his humility and to impress upon the master or the lord that he, the petitioner, has surrendered himself before the latter and expects graceful consideration of his petition, that his request may please be accepted.

When the petitioner submits himself before the master or the lord by bowing before him or falling at his feet and clasping it, the master or the lord develops a soft feeling for the petitioner and feels morally obliged to reciprocate the gracious gestures of the petitioner by accommodating the latter and honouring his requests as far as it is possible and feasible to do so, at least on compassionate grounds, if nothing else.

In general terms, falling at the feet of someone, touching his feet or bowing before him are gestures of humility that not only express great respect on the part of the petitioner for the master or the lord, but also a high degree of earnestness and expectation with which one has made the request that accompanies these gestures so much so that it becomes difficult for the senior person, before whom the junior has submitted himself, to neglect the request and not oblige the petitioner, no matter what the petition is about.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 165-166.

²Refer: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 336 herein above. Here also we find that the queen had become speechless when she learnt that the grooms and their marriage party were planning to return home to Ayodhya.

³The queen-mother’s throat was so choked with emotions that she could not perhaps say anything clearly and articulately, except to make some guttural words that may have been incoherent and incomprehensible. But Lord Ram was very wise and he realised what the situation was. He could fathom the pain and grief in the heart of the queen because the time for saying good-bye has arrived, and this meant that the queen-mother would have to suffer the agony of separation from her beloved daughter Sita.

In those days when there were no communication facilities such as the telephone or the mail service as they exist today, once the daughter went away after marriage it meant that her family members would lose contact with her for the rest of her life. So, the queen-mother’s heart felt very sad and heavy that the time for saying good-bye to her beloved daughter Sita has finally arrived. Therefore, the queen was overcome with grief and sorrow when she heard that Lord Ram and the rest of the marriage party were leaving—because that meant that Sita would have to go as well. As a mother, this very thought was very painful for her.

Lord Ram realised her dilemma and the sadness of her heart. She could not say “no, don’t go”, and at the same time she would have preferred that the Lord as well as Sita continued to stay at Janakpur. No clear, articulately spoken words were needed to explain the situation to him, to tell him how despondent and forlorn the queen-mother was feeling during those moments. So, Lord Ram spoke very affectionately with his mother-in-law, showed her his greatest respect as a reciprocating gesture for her own expression of love and respect for the Lord, and reassured her that her request that Sita be well looked after and given lots of love will be fully honoured and respected. Remember, this is what the queen had wished—refer: Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 336 herein above.

So in essence Lord Ram reassured his mother-in-law that she need not worry at all for Sita and her welfare, and that Sita will be given full respect and honour in her in-law’s home as she was being given in her parent’s home.]

राम बिदा मागत कर जोरी । कीन्ह प्रनामु बहोरि बहोरी ॥ ३ ॥

पाइ असीस बहुरि सिरु नाई । भाइन्ह सहित चले रघुराई ॥ ४ ॥

rāma bidā māgata kara jōrī. kīnha pranāmu bahōri bahōrī. 3.
pā'i asīsa bahuri siru nā'ī. bhā'inha sahita calē raghurā'ī. 4.

Lord Ram joined his palms as a sign of showing respect and bowed repeatedly before his mother-in-law (the queen-mother Sunayana), requesting her to give him (and his other brothers) permission to leave for home (i.e. for Ayodhya). (3)

He received her blessings (as well as permission), and bowed once again before her as he, along with his brothers, finally took leave of her. (4)

[Note—Lord Ram was the eldest of the four brothers, so he spoke on their behalf. It is not that the other brothers did not show gestures of respect by bowing or joining their palms before their mothers-in-law, queen Sunayana and her sister-queen, the consort of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of king Janak, but since Lord Ram was the eldest of them it is he who has been named here in these verses to represent all of them.

We have read earlier in Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes these verses that Lord Ram had shown his respect to queen Sunayana in various ways when she had brought and handed over Sita to him. Repetition of such gestures is done to lay stress on one's enduring respect and honour for the other person; it is a method to show great and sincere courteousness for the person being honoured.

We have also read in Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 336 that Lord Ram had requested the queen to treat him, and by inference all his other brothers, as her son, and therefore always have love for them in her heart. Now verse nos. 3-4 build-up on these emotions and say that not only did the four brothers showed their respects to the queen-mother, their mother-in-law, like they would have shown to their own mother, but she too reciprocated by blessing them abundantly.]

मंजु मधुर मूरति उर आनी । भईं सनेह सिथिल सब रानी ॥ ५ ॥

पुनि धीरजु धरि कुअँरि हँकारी । बार बार भेटहिं महतारीं ॥ ६ ॥

manju madhura mūrati ura ānī. bha'īm sanēha sithila saba rānī. 5.
puni dhīrajū dhari ku'amri hamkārim. bāra bāra bhēṭahim mahatārim. 6.

All the queens (the chief queen-mother Sunayana, and her sister-queens such as the wife of Kushdhwaj, the younger brother of king Janak) watched the charming form of Lord Ram, and as they lovingly enshrined this image in their hearts, they became benumbed and overcome with emotion.¹ (5)

Then the queen-mothers recovered themselves and called the princesses (Sita and her sister as well as her cousins—i.e. Urmila, Mandavi and Sukriti respectively), and repeatedly embraced them affectionately (for the last time before their departure with their husbands for their in-law's place).² (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was so charming and handsome to look at, with such a magnetic personality that anyone who once saw the Lord became mesmerised by him. Earlier we have read that when Sita and other friends of hers had seen Lord Ram in the royal

garden of Janakpur, they too were enchanted by the Lord's beauty and charm so much so that Sita had closed her eyes as a subtle gesture of installing the Lord's image in the temple of her heart and closing the door shut so that this image remains present inside for all times to come. For outsiders it appeared that Sita was meditating upon the form of Lord Ram as she stood motionless with her eyes shut, oblivious of her surroundings and the passage of time so much so that the girls who accompanied her became alarmed at her behaviour, and had to cajole her to wake up and finish the worship of goddess Parvati for which she was sent by her mother to the garden temple. This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 232—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 235.

So there is no wonder now that the queens too were fascinated by the Lord's exceptional charm.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 165.

²Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 21.

This verse reflects on the narration in Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 334 above that basically say that as soon as the news spread that the marriage party was making preparations to leave for Ayodhya, the queen-mothers called Sita and expressed their enduring love for her, teaching her the customs of the family and the basic norms of behaviour that she should follow at her in-law's place.

Now the time has come to bid the final good-bye, and so the queen-mothers repeatedly embrace Sita and her sisters for one last time. Their hearts were heavy from the pain of separation, but this pain had to be endured because the married princesses had to go away with their grooms.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 102 which tell us how Parvati, the newly wed bride of Lord Shiva, and her mother had repeatedly embraced each other at the time of departure of the marriage party of Lord Shiva.]

पहुँचावहिं फिरि मिलहिं बहोरी । बढी परस्पर प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ७ ॥

पुनि पुनि मिलत सखिन्ह बिलगाई । बाल बच्छ जिमि धेनु लवाई ॥ ८ ॥

pahumčāvahim phiri milahim bahōrī. baṛhī paraspara prīti na thōrī. 7.
puni puni milata sakhinha bilagāī. bāla baccha jimi dhēnu lavāī. 8.

The mothers escorted them (the grooms and their brides) for some distance, turned back to return, demurred and hesitated (because they could not bear with the pain of separation from their beloved daughters), went back to meet and embrace their daughters again and again, and this continued to happen repeatedly for quite some time. Mutual affection and love for each other went on increasing with each passing moment, and there was no measurement of it. (7)

When the lady friends (of Sita as well as of the queens) saw this happening repeatedly (and they discovered that the queens are finding it extremely difficult to turn back and bid good-bye to the princesses because they were overwhelmed with love and grief of separation), they intervened and politely separated the mothers from their daughters, which was like separating a cow from her young calf. [Just as the cow needs some

force to be applied and a lot of cajoling if she is to be separated from her calf which is being taken away by someone to be kept and looked after at his own place, the lady friends used polite force as well as a lot of cajoling and persuasion to separate the grieving mothers from their daughters.] (8)

[Note—A similar situation prevailed when Parvati was married to Lord Shiva. At that time also Parvati’s mother had repeatedly embraced her, and during the final moments of separation Parvati had repeatedly turned back to glance at her grieving mother—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 102.]

दो०. प्रेमबिबस नर नारि सब सखिन्ह सहित रनिवासु ।
मानहुँ कीन्ह बिदेहपुर करुनाँ बिरहँ निवासु ॥ ३३७ ॥

dōhā.

prēmabibasa nara nāri saba sakhinha sahita ranivāsu.
mānahum̃ kīnha bidēhapura karunām̃ biraham̃ nivāsu. 337.

During those moments of departure of the princesses with their grooms, all the men and women as well as the friends of the princesses and other members of the female quarters of the royal household became overcome with emotions of love and grief of separation. It appeared that the city of Videhapur (which was another name of Janakpur) was indeed an abode of grief, pain and agony that comes from being separated by one’s beloved. (Doha no. 337)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 22.

The word “Videha” literally means a situation when one becomes unaware of the senses of the body. This is a clever play with words by the author Tulsidas. He means that the entire city of Janakpur, the city of king Janak, was so overwhelmed with grief and sorrow of separation that came with the four princesses going away forever with their grooms after their marriage that all the city’s inhabitants became numb and unable to think of anything. They moved around as if in a daze, forlorn, remorseful and heavy at heart, unconcerned about their surroundings and their own affairs. The overriding emotion now was one of intense sadness, gloom, despondency and despair which replaced the joyous atmosphere of a few hours back, prior to the declaration that the marriage party was packing up to leave, when the city was full of merriment and rejoicings.

Separation from Lord Ram was a prospect that made anyone who came in contact with him even once, sad, gloomy, distressed and despondent. The citizens of Janakpur had been enjoying interaction with the Lord for quite sometime now, and when the time came that the Lord will have to leave for Ayodhya, the citizens became very sad. Refer also to Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333 above.

This situation was not limited to the citizens of Janakpur, for even the subjects of the Lord’s own kingdom loved him so dearly that when the Lord had to go to forest to spend some of his days in exile, the people of the city of Ayodhya too had been dazed into numbness, and had spent their days gloomily, going about their daily chores like a puppet, not taking interest in anything and remaining submerged in the

thoughts of the Lord on a perpetual basis—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 83—to Doha no. 86.

We find the same situation repeat itself once again in Chitrakoot when Lord Ram persuaded Bharat not to force the Lord to return to Ayodhya but wait patiently till the time of the Lord's forest exile ended in the next 14 years, and Bharat and his party took their leave of the Lord and started on their way back to Ayodhya. All the people were walking like a puppet and were in a state of utter distress and absolute despondency—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 320; (ii) Doha no. 322 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-2.]

चौ०. सुक सारिका जानकी ज्याए । कनक पिंजरन्हि राखि पढ़ाए ॥ १ ॥
 व्याकुल कहहिं कहाँ बैदेही । सुनि धीरजु परिहरइ न केही ॥ २ ॥
 भए बिकल खग मृग एहि भाँती । मनुज दसा कैसें कहि जाती ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

suka sārikā jānakī jyā'ē. kanaka pinjaranhi rākhi parhā'ē. 1.
 byākula kahahim kahām' baidēhī. suni dhīraju parihara'i na kēhī. 2.
 bha'ē bikala khaga mṛga ēhi bhām'tī. manuja dasā kaisēm kahi jātī. 3.

Sita had affectionately reared a pair of birds, a parrot and a maina bird, whom she had kept in a golden cage and had taught them to speak. When these two birds learnt that Sita was going away, they were extremely perturbed and agonised. [This is because, being caged, they could not do anything, they could fly out and accompany Sita on her journey away from home. The poor birds could only flutter madly inside their cage, utterly distressed and flabbergasted at having to see Sita going away and leaving them alone to forcefully face a bleak future without their patron princess. They did not understand what the reason was, but were hopping madly to be let off so that they can fly along with Sita to wherever she was going.] (1)

The two helpless and hapless birds cried out in dismay—‘Where is the daughter of Videha (i.e. Sita)?’ Their soulful cries were so sad and lamentful that whoever heard them felt extremely despondent and gloomy¹. (2)

Why, when even the birds and animals became so distressed, sad and gloomy at the prospect of having to live without Sita, one cannot imagine the condition of human beings—the immensity of their sadness, distress and despondency, as well as their sense of helplessness. [They were all feeling an utter sense of ‘helplessness’ because a daughter is bound to go away to her husband's home after marriage, and this is an age-old tradition which cannot be avoided. The citizens and other inhabitants of Janakpur were ‘helpless’ that they cannot make Sita stay with them after marriage though they all wanted it to be so.] (3)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, Chanda no. 21, stanza line nos. 3-4.

When we move ahead in our reading of this epic story we shall read that when Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had reached the banks of river Ganges on their to the forest and made their charioteer Sumant return back to Ayodhya, a similar situation prevailed because the horses of the chariot neighed agonisingly and cried in grave

distress when they were forced to turn back with the chariot after leaving the Lord for his onwards journey into the wild forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 99 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

The main idea of these verses is that when animals and birds were so extremely distressed at being forced to separate themselves from Lord Ram and Sita, their loving patrons, one can imagine the pain in the hearts of human beings who are more sensitive and emotional by nature as compared to the birds and animals who are lowly creatures in the hierarchy of evolution.

¹A question arises here—what happened to these birds; were they taken by Sita to her new home at Ayodhya or not? Though it is not expressly mentioned here, but in all probability the answer is ‘yes’, she did. This is because we read a little later that her father king Janak had sent all her favourite attendants, both males and females, along with her at the time of her departure for Ayodhya with the marriage party—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 339. Hence it is easy to deduce that the king had also gifted these two birds to Sita because she had fondly raised them herself.]

बंधु समेत जनकु तब आए । प्रेम उमगि लोचन जल छाए ॥ ४ ॥
सीय बिलोकि धीरता भागी । रहे कहावत परम बिरागी ॥ ५ ॥
लीन्हि रायँ उर लाइ जानकी । मिटी महामरजाद ग्यान की ॥ ६ ॥

bandhu samēta janaku taba ā'ē. prēma umagi lōcana jala chā'ē. 4.
siya bilōki dhīratā bhāgī. rahē kahāvata parama birāgī. 5.
līnhi rāyam'ura lā'i jānakī. miṭī mahāmarajāda gyāna kī. 6.

Then (i.e. when the four brothers had left the female quarters of the royal palace, accompanied by their respective brides), king Janak came alongside his brother (Kushdhwaj).

When he saw them (Lord Ram and Sita especially), love and affection surged in his heart and tears filled his eyes.¹ (4)

[But the Lord's "Maya", or his powers of enchanting is so great and powerful that even the otherwise neutral and dispassionate king Janak became a victim of emotions of sadness and grief at the separation from his daughter Sita as narrated in these four verses, nos. 5-8. For some fleeting moments he forgot who he was, and who Sita really was—i.e. that he was a hermit-king immune to worldly relations, and that Sita was a personified form of goddess Laxmi who had simply come to his home to oblige him. No one is anyone's father, and no one is anybody's daughter!]

When Janak saw Sita, his famed patience abandoned him and he forgot about his reputation of being self-restrained and a controller of emotions. He forgot for once about his vows of renunciation, that he is renowned for his sense of detachment and dispassion, because at this moment (when he saw and met Sita) emotions held the better of him and took him virtually a hostage. (5)

Janak affectionately embraced Janki (Sita, his daughter), and for some moments his mind and wisdom took leave of him, leaving him sentimental and submerged in

emotions of love and affections that in turn created a sense of agony of separation in his heart because his dearest daughter Sita would now go away far from him.² (6)

[Note—¹It is important to note that Janak was a highly enlightened and self-realised king of his time. Remember: When he had first seen Lord Ram at the time of sage Vishwamitra's arrival at Janakpur, at that time too Janak's heart had melted at the sight of the Lord and he had acknowledged this fact openly when he asked the sage the reason why this has happened because he was a hermit at heart and not easily moved by anyone's charm. So therefore he argued that there must be something special with Lord Ram and he was sure that the Lord was not a mere human prince as he appears to be for others—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 216.

Janak was not moved by worldly charms as he was immune to delusions and grosser aspects of the eclectic virtue of 'beauty'. It was the divinity of Lord Ram that evoked such strong emotions of love in him as to make his eyes get filled with tears and his body become thrilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 286.]

²Janak was a wise and enlightened king, and he knew very well that a daughter is bound to go away from her parent's home after marriage. He should be rather happy that she has found such a brilliant and glorious groom, and this was a happy occasion when the bride was being escorted to her husband's home, not a moment to lament or grieve. In other words, ideally speaking, there was no reason why Janak should weep and lament, but this is the irony of life and a showcase of the stupendity of the Lord's "Maya" that compels even the highly wise and enlightened of men, such as Janak in this case, to lose his patience, wisdom and powers of reasoning for sometime and act like an ordinary man who is indulgent in the gross world, who gets trapped in and jostled by its numerous tugs and pulls, is buffeted by its countless attractions and charms, its sorrows and joys, and so on.

So, for once, Janak behaved like an ordinary man—when he saw Sita, he lost control over himself, became emotional, and affectionately embraced her as grief of separation overtook him.

A similar situation has prevailed at Chitrakoot when Janak met Sita in the attire of a forest-dwelling hermitress—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 286.]

समुझावत सब सचिव सयाने । कीन्ह बिचारु न अवसर जाने ॥ ७ ॥
बारहिं बार सुता उर लाई । सजि सुंदर पालकीं मगाई ॥ ८ ॥

samujhāvata saba saciva sayānē. kīnha bicāru na avasara jānē. 7.
bārahim bāra sutā ura lā'īm. saji sundara pālakīm magā'īm. 8.

All the wise ministers and advisors of the king consoled him and gave him wise council. The king then realised that it was not the opportunity to wail and lament, and so he recovered himself and restrained his emotions¹. (7)

He repeatedly embraced his daughter and clasped her to his heart. Then he called for a beautiful palanquins² that had been already well-equipped and decked up for the

occasion. [It was in these palanquins that the four brides would be sent-off to their in-law's place.] (8)

[Note—¹It is a duty of a king's ministers and senior advisors to give him wise council when he becomes emotionally upset, and is unable to apply his mind. People were watching Janak very closely, and his becoming sentimental beyond a reasonable limit was not consistent with his reputation as a self-controlled, prudent, dispassionate and wise king who is immune to personal emotions and sentiments. It will send a wrong signal to his subjects that he was a sentimental king who is prone to be driven by his emotions rather than being practical and objective in a given situation. He will be regarded as being weak and emotionally malleable rather than being strong-willed, objective and self-restrained. So it would be judicious now on his part to overcome his emotions and show exemplary neutrality and objectiveness that behoves of a great king who sits in judgement over the fate of others. Say, how would he react when he sits on the judgement throne in his royal court and a case involving family matters comes before him for decision?

Janak must realize that if he starts wailing and grieving himself, it would have an extremely negative effect on Sita who would also start to weep and lament. After all, she has to go away to her husband's home, and so it is wiser to see her off with a smile and laughter instead of in an atmosphere of gloom and grief. It is this last moment which Sita would remember for a long time to come, so it is prudent to make it joyful, cheerful, and worth remembering so that she leaves Janakpur and her parent's home with lovely memories of joy and happiness, with the faces of smiling parents etched in her memory rather than a picture of distressed and weeping parents which would add to her own distress and agony of separation from which she must be already suffering. It is the duty of her wise father to alleviate her emotional suffering instead of adding to it.

After all, this was an auspicious moment, a moment for which any father waits because it is the time his daughter is going away to her chosen groom's home with all the pomp and ceremony that accompany such occasions. It was not a moment to grieve but to celebrate.

²There are four brides—Sita, Mandavi, Sutkriti and Urmila. So, four palanquins were brought in, one for each bride.]

दो०. प्रेमबिबस परिवारु सबु जानि सुलगन नरेस ।

कुअँरि चढाई पालकिन्ह सुमिरे सिद्धि गनेस ॥ ३३८ ॥

dōhā.

prēmabibasa parivāru sabu jāni sulagana narēsa.

ku'amṛi caṛhā'īm pālakinha sumirē sid'dhi ganēsa. 338.

The entire royal family was overcome with affection for the daughters (Sita and her sisters). When the king realized that the auspicious moment has arrived, when all the stars and signs of the zodiac were in the right place in the horoscope, he invoked Lord Ganesh and his divine consort named Siddhi as he helped the princesses to get on the palanquins. (Doha no. 338)

[Note—Lord Ganesh is invoked when one embarks on a long journey or starts a new venture. When Lord Ram started for the forest from Ayodhya, he too had done the same—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.

We shall read below that when the marriage party made its final departure from Janakpur, king Dasrath has invoked and worshipped Lord Ganesh—refer: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 339.

Refer also to Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 1 of Baal Kand in Ram Charit Manas.]

चौ०. बहुबिधि भूप सुता समुझाई । नारिधरमु कुलरीति सिखाई ॥ १ ॥
दासीं दास दिए बहुतेरे । सुचिं सेवक जे प्रिय सिय केरे ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bahubidhi bhūpa sutā samujhā'īm. nāridharamu kularīti sikhā'īm. 1.
dāsīm dāsa di'ē bahutērē. suci sēvaka jē priya siya kērē. 2.

At the final moments of farewell, the king advised his daughter(s) the basic principles of behaviour that govern a married woman's life as well as her duties as a housewife, the traditions of the family, and the customs of royalty¹. (1)

Janak sent with Sita, as marriage gift to her, countless male and female aides, servants and attendants whom she had always liked and was fond of their company². (2)

[Note—¹Earlier we have read that the queen-mother as well as the friends of Sita had also given such advice to her. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-7 that precede Doha no. 334.

²Refer also to Doha no. 333 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that describe the lavish marriage gifts which Janak sent in advance to Ayodhya. Now he sent Sita's close attendants and servants. This practice was to ensure that the bride did not feel lonely and homesick in an alien environment in her new home at the in-law's place which would be a foreign country with a new culture for her. When Sita was accompanied by her old trusted servants and maids she would have familiar faces all around her, and they would be at her beck and call to give her company and solace her should she ever feel homesick, forlorn and sad.

Besides this, the custom of sending local well-known people with the bride was to ensure that she was comfortable and safe in her new home, for god forbid if anything goes wrong then these close confidantes of the bride's parents would inform them by some means about the unhappy developments, and remedial steps can be forthwith initiated before the situation goes out of hand.]

सीय चलत ब्याकुल पुरबासी । होहिं सगुन सुभ मंगल रासी ॥ ३ ॥
भूसुर सचिव समेत समाजा । संग चले पहुँचावन राजा ॥ ४ ॥
समय बिलोकि बाजने बाजे । रथ गज बाजि बरातिन्ह साजे ॥ ५ ॥

sīya calata byākula purabāsī. hōhirṁ saguna subha maṅgala rāsī. 3.
bhūsura saciva samēta samājā. saṅga calē pahumčāvana rājā. 4.
samaya bilōki bājanē bājē. ratha gaja bāji barātinha sājē. 5.

As Sita proceeded forward for her in-law's place, all the citizens of Janakpur were overwhelmed with grief and felt wretched and miserable.

Meanwhile, all the auspicious signs and good omens manifested themselves during those moments as if to shower their blessings upon her.¹ (3)

Accompanied by Brahmins (“bhūsura”), ministers and other senior members of the society and the royal court, the king followed his daughters to escort them for some distance.² (4)

The marriage party was ready for departure but was waiting for Lord Ram and his brothers, who had gone to meet their mothers-in-law and seek their permission to return home along with their respective brides, to come back.

So, as soon as the news arrived that the brides are coming, and Janak is accompanying them to finally see them off, musical instruments began playing at the place where the marriage party was lodged as the chariots, elephants and horses were readied for departure. (5)

[Note—¹Compare the time when the marriage procession of Lord Ram had started from Ayodhya; at that time also all the good omens and auspicious signs had revealed themselves in great numbers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 303 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.

²When sage Vishwamitra had come to visit Janakpur, at that time too Janak had taken along Brahmins, ministers and other seniors of the society when he went to meet the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no.170.]

दसरथ बिप्र बोलि सब लीन्हे । दान मान परिपूरन कीन्हे ॥ ६ ॥
चरन सरोज धूरि धरि सीसा । मुदित महीपति पाइ असीसा ॥ ७ ॥
सुमिरि गजाननु कीन्हे पयाना । मंगलमूल सगुन भए नाना ॥ ८ ॥

dasaratha bipra bōli saba līnhē. dāna māna paripūrana kīnhē. 6.
carana sarōja dhūri dhari sīsā. mudita mahīpati pā'i asīsā. 7.
sumiri gajānanu kīnha payānā. maṅgalamūla saguna bha'e nānā. 8.

King Dasrath summoned all the Brahmins of Janakpur, duly honoured them and gave them liberal largesse so much so that all of them were contented¹. (6)

The king placed his head on the dust of their feet as a sign of showing great respect to them (the Brahmins), and he felt delighted when they all blessed him profusely. (7)

Invoking Lord Ganesh (“gajānanu”), the king finally proceeded for his kingdom of Ayodhya². At that time, all the good omens and various types of auspicious signs appeared so as to mark this happy occasion³. (8)

[Note—¹This answers the question: What happened to the countless gifts that Janak had given to Dasrath on two occasions—once when Dasrath had arrived at Janakpur (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 306), and the second time after the marriage rituals were over (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 326).

Though Dasrath had given away these gifts liberally on the spot to all those who came to bless him or seek gifts from him as mementos, but the quantity of gifts was so huge that much was left over. Hence, Dasrath gave everything back at the time of departure for Ayodhya by way of donating them to the Brahmins.

In other words, only those things that were directly sent by Janak to Ayodhya (as narrated from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 334) had reached Ayodhya, while all the rest were given away by Dasrath to local Brahmins and other seekers in Janakpur itself.]

²As has been said earlier in Doha no. 338 herein above, Lord Ganesh is worshipped when one embarks on a journey.

³We have read earlier that when the marriage party had started from Ayodhya, all the good omens had similarly appeared at that time also to celebrate the moment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 303 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

दो०. सुर प्रसून बरषहिं हरषि करहिं अपछरा गान ।
चले अवधपति अवधपुर मुदित बजाइ निसान ॥ ३३९ ॥

dōhā.

sura prasūna baraṣahim haraṣi karahim apacharā gāna.
calē avadhapati avadhapura mudita bajā'i nisāna. 339.

The ecstatic gods rained flowers cheerfully from the heaven even as the celestial nymphs danced in merriment as the king of Ayodhya delightfully proceeded towards his capital city to the accompaniment of music of the kettle-drums. (339)

[Note—The marriage procession was kept ready at the time Lord Ram and his brothers had gone to the royal palace of king Janak to seek permission to leave and bring their brides along. Then we read that king Janak had himself accompanied the brothers and their brides as they moved out of the palace. The group reached the place where king Dasrath had been lodged. Since everything was ready for departure and preparations were complete for the journey, so as soon as the palanquins carrying the brides arrived the marriage party started off on its return journey to Ayodhya.]

चौ०. नृप करि बिनय महाजन फेरे । सादर सकल मागने टेरे ॥ १ ॥

भूषन बसन बाजि गज दीन्हे । प्रेम पोषि ठाढ़े सब कीन्हे ॥ २ ॥
बार बार बिरिदावलि भाषी । फिरे सकल रामहि उर राखी ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

nṛpa kari binaya mahājana phērē. sādara sakala māganē ṭērē. 1.
bhūṣana basana bāji gaja dīnhē. prēma pōṣi ṭhāṛhē saba kīnhē. 2.
bāra bāra biridāvali bhāṣī. phirē sakala rāmahi ura rākhī. 3.

The king (Dasrath) politely persuaded the respectable citizens of Janakpur (known as the “Mahaajans”, a term including the members of the aristocracy as well as the business families) to return home (because they had already come quite a distance to see the king off, and now they must go back).

Then he respectfully called all the alms-seekers [1], and when they had assembled and stood affectionately before him, the king bestowed upon them liberal largesse of ornaments, clothes, horses and elephants [2]. (1-2)

These alms-seekers were fully contented and they repeatedly praised the king and his royal lineage, lauding their glory and honour unanimously. Then they all returned homewards, enshrining Lord Ram in their hearts. (3)

[Note—King Janak and senior citizens of Janakpur such as the Brahmins and the members of the royalty and the aristocratic class, as well as the bards, the minstrels and the alms-seekers—all had gone a long distance to see-off the marriage party. Perhaps they had gone to the outskirts of the city, or even further on. This was a massive display of affection and courteousness on part of the people of Janakpur. But at a point of time, king Dasrath had to send them back, so he halted the procession and politely pleaded with them to return back to their city.

As for the gifts, such as ornaments, clothes, horses and elephants, these were the ones that were either left-overs from what Dasrath had given away before his departure from Janakpur (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 339), or the ones that Janak had sent as gifts in advance of Dasrath’s departure (refer: Doha no. 333 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8).

Another point to note here is that Lord Ram is the focal point of attention and adoration for all the citizens, here as well as on all earlier occasions. The phrase “enshrining Lord Ram in their hearts” means that the Lord’s beautiful image got permanently etched in the hearts of the citizens and they would remember the Lord for the rest of their lives. For all practical purposes, they began worshipping the image of the Lord in a subtle manner inside the shrine of their hearts by remembering him and remaining submerged in his thoughts for the rest of their lives.]

बहुरि बहुरि कोसलपति कहहीं । जनकु प्रेमबस फिरै न चहहीं ॥ ४ ॥
पुनि कह भूपति बचन सुहाए । फिरिअ महीस दूरि बड़ि आए ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri bahuri kōsalapati kahahīm. janaku prēmabasa phirai na cahahīm. 4.
puni kaha bhūpati bacana suhā'ē. phiri'a mahīsa dūri baḍi ā'ē. 5.

The lord (king) of Kaushal (the kingdom of Ayodhya) repeatedly asked king Janak to return, but the latter did not want to go back out of his emotions of (brotherly; friendly) affection for the former.

[Just as two loving brothers or two dearest friends find it difficult to part with each other, Janak found it emotionally heavy on his part to bear with the burden of grief that accompanied the prospect of separation from Dasrath whom he had begun to respect and treat as a dear friend and a brotherly king by now. The two kings had forged an enduring bond of love and mutual respect for each other by this time.] (4)

The king (Dasrath) once again said to king Janak, ‘Oh revered king, please go back now for you have already come a very long distance.’ (5)

[Note—A while back we have read that Dasrath managed to persuade the senior citizens and other noble men to return home. But king Janak continued to move ahead with the marriage procession for a very long distance from the city of Janakpur as he was reluctant to return and wished to see-off the marriage party at the kingdom’s boarder. So in all probabilities, Janak had gone to the outer fringes of his kingdom when Dasrath insisted that it was enough and now he must go back.

Another interesting deduction is that Janak had come such a long distance not due to any formal obligation to do so, but due to his affection for and friendship with Dasrath—this is clear in verse no. 4 which says that Janak was reluctant to return out of his affection (“prēmabasa”) for Dasrath.]

राउ बहोरि उतरि भए ठाढे । प्रेम प्रबाह बिलोचन बाढे ॥ ६ ॥
 तब बिदेह बोले कर जोरी । बचन सनेह सुधाँ जनु बोरी ॥ ७ ॥
 करौँ कवन बिधि बिनय बनाई । महाराज मोहि दीन्हि बड़ाई ॥ ८ ॥

rā'u bahōri utari bha'e ṭhārḥē. prēma prabāha bilōcana bārḥē. 6.
 taba bidēha bōlē kara jōrī. bacana sanēha sudhām̃ janu bōrī. 7.
 karaur̃ kavana bidhi binaya banā'ī. mahārāja mōhi dīnhi baṛā'ī. 8.

When Dasrath found that Janak was very reluctant to return to the city of Janakpur and would continue to move ahead with the marriage procession if he was not stopped, he (Dasrath) stepped down from his chariot and stood on the ground. Mutual love and affection for each other surged in the hearts of both the kings as they became highly emotional and their eyes were filled with tears. (6)

Then Videha (king Janak) brought his palms together as a token of high respect for Dasrath as he politely spoke words that seemed to be soaked in the nectar of love and affection—(7)

‘Oh great king (Dasrath)! How can I pray to you or show my respect and thanks to you in adequate terms? You have graciously given me great honour, for which I am extremely obliged and grateful to you.

[Oh great king! Words fail to express my emotions and sense of gratefulness and thanks for you, but nevertheless I hope you understand what is in my heart irrespective of my inability to express myself properly. I don’t wish to part with you, but of course I understand as much as you do that this is not feasible. You have to go

to your own kingdom, and so would I have to. But this moment of parting is a great burden on my heart, and I know it to be the same with you. But however, since we have to separate now and go our own ways in life, I wish to once again reiterate my deep respect and affection as well as allegiance for you. I am extremely grateful to you that you took the trouble to come all the way from Ayodhya to my humble kingdom to oblige me, and I feel highly honoured by this gesture of yours. You are a great king, and to have you as a family relation now that your honourable sons have married my daughters is a rare privilege that has enhanced my own stature in this world. I find myself lost for words to sufficiently express my gratitude and thanks for you.]’ (8)

दो०. कोसलपति समधी सजन सनमाने सब भाँति ।
मिलनि परसपर बिनय अति प्रीति न हृदयँ समाति ॥ ३४० ॥

dōhā.

kōsalapati samadhī sajana sanamānē saba bhām̐ti.
milani parasapara binaya ati prīti na hṛdayam̐ samāti. 340.

Moved by the humility and affection of the father of the bride and his new relative by the virtue of this relationship (i.e. king Janak), the king of Kaushal (i.e. king Dasrath) duly honoured and showed his respects to him in a variety of ways.

They embraced each other most endearingly, prayed to each other with the greatest of humility, and the mutual sense of love and affection between them was so great that their hearts could not contain this sentiment as they became overwhelmed with surging emotions. (Doha no. 340)

चौ०. मुनि मंडलिहि जनक सिरु नावा । आसिरबादु सबहि सन पावा ॥ १ ॥
सादर पुनि भेंटे जामाता । रूप सील गुन निधि सब भ्राता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

muni maṇḍalihi janaka siru nāvā. āsirabādu sabahi sana pāvā. 1.
sādara puni bhēṅṭē jāmatā. rūpa sila guna nidhi saba bhrātā. 2.

King Janak bowed his head before the group of sages (who were accompanying king Dasrath, such as Vasistha, Vishwamitra and the rest), and received blessings from all of them¹. (1)

Then Janak affectionately and respectfully met all his sons-in-law (Lord Ram and his other three brothers) who were all treasuries of such eclectic qualities as beauty, charm, good manners, courteousness, and all other excellent virtues. [That is, all the four brothers were equally charming, virtuous and glorious.]² (2)

[Note—¹This indicates that when both the kings, Janak as well as Dasrath, moved out of their places, they were always accompanied by elders, Brahmins and sages present in the kingdom. We have had many occasions to read about this. For instance, when Dasrath headed for the venue of the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram at Janakpur, he

first sought permission from his guru sage Vasistha, and then moved out with a group of sages and saintly people accompanying him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 315.

We also read that the honourable Brahmins of Ayodhya had come with the marriage party—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 300.

Though the word “Muni” technically does not refer to a Brahmin, but for all practical purposes here it covers all pious people who were accompanying Dasrath to whom Janak had paid his due respects.

Earlier we have read that when Janak had gone out to meet and welcome sage Vishwamitra when the latter arrived at his kingdom with Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman, he too was accompanied by a large retinue of sages, Brahmins and elders of the kingdom—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313.

To receive blessings from sages and elderly Brahmins is a good thing as reiterated elsewhere also. Whenever a chance came to pay obeisance to the Brahmins and sages, and the latter blessed the king, he felt delighted. For instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 331; Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 339.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 174 also.

²This observation that Janak met “all his sons-in-law who were equally virtuous and charming” assumes importance in the context of the general way Lord Ram has been honoured throughout the narration as being exemplarily beautiful, charming and virtuous. It simply means that the Lord has been singled out for honour only for the purpose of narration, and he represented all his other brothers when he was praised by someone.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 175--176 also.]

जोरि पंकरुह पानि सुहाए । बोले बचन प्रेम जनु जाए ॥ ३ ॥

राम करौं केहि भाँति प्रसंसा । मुनि महेस मन मानस हंसा ॥ ४ ॥

jōri paṅkaruha pāni suhā'ē. bōlē bacana prēma janu jā'ē. 3.

rāma karaurṁ kēhi bhāmṭi prasansā. muni mahēsa mana mānasa hansā. 4.

[King Janak showed his spiritual trait when paying his homage to Lord Ram whom he did not praise as his son-in-law but as the Lord of the world who is adored even by great ascetics as well as their patron god, Lord Shiva who is the third god of the Trinity; the Lord who has a cosmic presence as Brahm, the all-pervading super Consciousness and the Supreme Being in creation.]

Janak joined his palms as a token of great respect and also as if he was offering two lotuses to honour Lord Ram, and then he said words that appeared to have been born out of his love for the Lord. [That is, when Janak spoke, his words were soaked in affection for Lord Ram, were sincerely imbued with love, and were spoken from his heart.]

Janak said—(3)

‘Oh Ram! Say, how can I sufficiently praise and honour you. You live like a majestic Swan in the lake-like hearts of sages and Lord Shiva. [That is, just like a swan lives in the placid and clean waters of a serene lake, floating on its surface and giving majesty and beauty to the charm of the lake, you constantly dwell in the hearts of sages and Lord Shiva who constantly meditate upon you and remain submerged in your thoughts.]¹ (4)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 11 where sage Sutikshan had offered his prayers to Lord Ram.

Lord Shiva has also reiterated this fact that Lord Ram lives like a majestic Swan in the lake-like heart of sages—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 17 that precedes Doha no. 14.]

करहिं जोग जोगी जेहि लागी । कोहु मोहु ममता महु त्यागी ॥ ५ ॥
व्यापकु ब्रह्म अलखु अबिनासी । चिदानंदु निरगुन गुनरासी ॥ ६ ॥

karahim̐ jōga jōgī jēhi lāgī. kōhu mōhu mamatā madu tyāgī. 5.
byāpaku brahmu alakhu abināsī. cidānandu niraguna gunarāsī. 6.

You are the one for whose sake great ascetics undertake so many spiritual practices such as doing contemplation and meditation (“Yoga”) after having conquered all sorts of worldly taints such as anger and wrathfulness, attachments and infatuations, arrogance and ego (that are hurdles in one’s spiritual pursuit). [The ascetic meditates and contemplates on the ‘self’ which is pure conscious soul. Therefore, Janak means that Lord is the ‘soul’ and ‘life’ of creation; the Lord is a personified form of the supreme Consciousness that lives in the heart of all living beings as their true ‘self’.]¹ (5)

Indeed, you are Brahm, the cosmic supreme Consciousness that is immanent, all-pervading, all-encompassing, omnipresent (‘Vyaapak’), invisible (‘Alakha’), imperishable (as it is eternal—‘Abinashi’), eternally blissful (‘Chidaanand’), without attributes and forms (‘Nirguna’), and a treasury of all the goodness and virtuousness that exist in this creation (‘Guna-raasi’).² (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 10 where the vulture Jatau has also reiterated the same thing.

Sage Sutikshan had told Lord Ram while offering his prayers to the Lord that vices such as anger, greed, desires, attachments, arrogance and ego cannot survive wherever Lord Ram lives, and his holy and divine name is chanted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 13 and 15 that precede Doha no. 11.

A similar idea is expressed by Lord Shiva when he came to offer his obeisance to Lord Ram at the end of the war at Lanka—refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 115; and (ii) Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14.

When mother Earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them protection against the tyranny of demons, they had said the same thing—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 186.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12, and 17 that precede Doha no. 11 where sage Sutikshan has prayed to Lord Ram.

Refer also to the prayers of Lord Brahma, the creator, at the time when the war ends in Lanka and Lord stood victorious in the battle-field—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line nos. 7, 9 and 15 that precede Doha no. 111.

Even the Vedas themselves have lauded Lord Ram as a personification of Brahm—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chanda line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 13.

When mother Earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them protection against the tyranny of demons, they had said the same thing—that the Lord is all-pervading and immanent in creation. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 186.]

मन समेत जेहि जान न बानी । तरकि न सकहिं सकल अनुमानी ॥ ७ ॥

महिमा निगमु नेति कहि कहई । जो तिहुँ काल एकरस रहई ॥ ८ ॥

mana samēta jēhi jāna na bānī. taraki na sakahim sakala anumānī. 7.
mahimā nigamu nēti kahi kahaī. jō tihum̃ kāla ēkarasa rahaī. 8.

You are so mysterious and mystical that neither the Mana (mind and heart) nor the faculty of speech can ever know about you. You are beyond all logics and arguments that one can ever imagine of.

[That is, it is useless to try to debate about you and either attempt to prove your existence or disapprove of it based on worldly logic and arguments that one usually applies to other grosser things. Similarly, words are incapable and insufficient to describe even a fraction of truth about you no matter how hard one tries and how much learned he may be. That is why of course the wise ascetic prefers to keep aloof from such attempts of debating and arguing about you or trying to find the truth of you by listening to others and preaching it to others—for the best way to learn about you is by ‘self-realisation’ that comes with meditation and contemplation upon the truthful ‘self’ which is the Atma, the pure consciousness and the soul of all living beings.]¹ (7)

Verily, your glories and virtues are so immense and profound that the scriptures (‘Nigam’) only say a part of them, finally concluding that it is not enough².

You maintain your evenness and equanimity, and remain the same (because you are eternal and unchanging) in all the three phases of time and eras³. [That is, though the world is ever changing, you remain constant and unchanging. You are the only factor that remains steady in the otherwise ever-changing face of the sand dune of time. In other words, you are the only ‘Absolute Truth’ that does not change with the passage of time.] (8)

[Note—¹When mother Earth and the gods had prayed to Lord Vishnu to provide them protection against the tyranny of demons, they had said the same thing—that the Lord is beyond the reach of speech and understanding by words. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3 and 12 that precede Doha no. 186.]

²When mother Kaushalya had prayed to Lord Ram at the time of the Lord's manifestation as a human being, she has also said that even the Vedas and other scriptures are unable to know the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 192.

³The three phases of time and era are the past, the present and the future.

It ought to be noted carefully that the characteristics noted in these verses are unique for Brahm, a term used to refer to the Supreme Being.]

दो०. नयन बिषय मो कहूँ भयउ सो समस्त सुख मूल ।
सबइ लाभु जग जीव कहँ भएँ ईसु अनुकूल ॥ ३४१ ॥

dōhā.

nayana biṣaya mō kahum' bhaya'u sō samasta sukha mūla.
saba'i lābhu jaga jīva kham' bha'em' īsu anukūla. 341.

I am so extremely lucky that the same root of all bliss, joy and happiness has appeared before my eyes so that I can see these virtues personified right in front of me.

Every good thing and all the best of fruits become easily accessible for a creature when the gods become pleased with him and benevolent upon him. [That is, I feel that the gods have been very kind towards me because they have made it possible for me to see the Supreme Being who is otherwise 'invisible and beyond understanding'. This is the best 'fruit' or reward that a living being can ever hope to acquire or get by doing meritorious deeds in his life.] (Doha no. 341)

चौ०. सबहि भाँति मोहि दीन्हि बड़ाई । निज जन जानि लीन्हि अपनाई ॥ १ ॥
होहिं सहस दस सारद सेषा । करहिं कल्प कोटिक भरि लेखा ॥ २ ॥
मोर भाग्य राउर गुन गाथा । कहि न सिराहिं सुनुहु रघुनाथा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sabahi bhāmṭi mōhi dīnhi baṛā'ī. nija jana jāni līnha apanā'ī. 1.
hōhim sahasa dasa sārada sēṣā. karahim kalapa kōṭika bhari lēkhā. 2.
mōra bhāgya rā'ura guna gāthā. kahi na sirāhim sunahu raghunāthā. 3.

You have honoured me and given me importance in all possible ways, and you have also accepted me as one of your own devotees¹. [And for this I am very grateful to you.] (1)

If there were ten thousand Sardas (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of speech and knowledge) and an equal number of Seshas (the thousand tongued celestial serpent), and they were to simultaneously count my luck as well as your glories and virtues for millions of Kalpas (eras; a long period of time) [2], verily I say to you oh Raghunath (the lord of king Raghu's race) that still they won't be able to do it. [That is, both my good luck as well as your glories and virtues are endless.] [3]² (2-3)

[Note—¹We have to understand the text in the proper context and perspective. This is a devotional rendering of the story of Lord Ram, and not merely a historical narration. A word has many connotations and therefore should be interpreted according to the context in which it is used. The words “Nija Jana” literally mean “one’s kin and close associate; a person very close to someone; a member of an extended family”. King Janak meant was that since he has realised that Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince but a manifested form of Brahm, the cosmic Lord of creation and the Supreme Being in a personified form as is absolutely clear in the preceding verses, he regards himself as being very privileged and feels honoured that the Lord chose to become his son-in-law just like the case of the Lord obliging king Dasrath by becoming his son. It’s a rare privilege and the best of honours one can get in this world. Therefore, Janak requests the Lord to treat him at par with his own father Dasrath.

Janak treats himself as the Lord’s devotee and not merely as a father-in-law. This is in sharp contrast to Dasrath who had been so overcome by the Lord’s Maya (delusion creating powers) that he had forgotten who actually Lord Ram was, and hence had begun to regard the Lord as being merely as his ‘son’. Thus, Dasrath had fallen short of the high spiritual stature achieved by Janak as the former had failed to regard himself as the Lord’s “devotee” with the same fervour as had Janak. This is evident when Dasrath died from the grief of Lord Ram’s separation when the Lord was sent to exile due to family intrigue. We will read that at the time of his death, Dasrath had repeatedly uttered Lord Ram’s holy name “RAM” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 155 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8)—a name that is the best and the most refined spiritual formula for one’s Moksha (emancipation and salvation, liberation and deliverance—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 19—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 28)—but still he did not get salvation but became a ghost, and lived in a ‘spirit’ form. The proof lies in the fact that at the end of the war of Lanka, the spirit or ghost of Dasrath had come to the battle-field to bless Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 112.

Hence, we come to the conclusion that from the spiritual perspective, Janak was more enlightened and realised than was Dasrath. Nevertheless, Janak had shown great respect for Dasrath (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 340)—because Dasrath was more fortunate and had done more meritorious deeds in the past that the Lord had decided to oblige him and fulfill his wishes by becoming his son, while Janak had to be contented by being merely the Lord’s ‘father-in-law’, a relationship that is not as close as that of being one’s father.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 215 in this context which also cites these two—goddess Sarda and Seshnath—being unable to describe the beauty and glory of Lord Ram.]

मैं कछु कहउँ एक बल मोरें । तुझ रीझहु सनेह सुठि थोरें ॥ ४ ॥
बार बार मागउँ कर जोरें । मनु परिहारै चरन जनि भोरें ॥ ५ ॥

mair̥m kachu kaha'um̃ ēka bala mōrēm̃. tumha rījhahu sanēha suṭhi thōrēm̃. 4.
bāra bāra māga'um̃ kara jōrēm̃. manu pariharai carana jani bhōrēm̃. 5.

Oh Lord, I have gathered courage to be bold enough to say what I have said because of my conviction that you are easily pleased with even the slightest expression of devotion and love that one has for you. [And that is why I have taken the liberty not only to praise you so much but also to praise my own good fortunes that I have been able to acquire by the virtue of my association with you.] (4)

Now therefore oh exalted Lord, I repeatedly beg of you and pray to you by joining both my palms as a token of my humble submission before you and also as a sign of earnestness of my words that let my Mana (mind and heart) never forget its devotion for your holy feet, let my Mana ever remain tied to your holy feet, let my Mana remember your holy feet for the rest of my life!' (5)

[Note—(i) The greatest compliment to the glory of Lord Ram's holy feet comes from the Lord's own guru, sage Vasistha, who was not only the Lord's moral preceptor and a priest of the royal family but also a son of the creator Brahma. In other words, Vasistha was exceptionally exalted and a very senior person. He had prayed to Lord Ram in the same way as Janak has done here: Vasistha requests Lord Ram that he bless the former that for all future generations he (Vasistha) may have unstinted devotion for the holy lotus-like feet of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48.

Even Sita has made the same request in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 259.

All the devotees of Lord Ram have sought this blessing. For instance, Ahilya had done so in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 11-14 that precede Doha no. 211; the vulture Jatayu had done so as narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30.

When Lord Ram asked the learned sage Valmiki to list the places where he can live, the sage has said that “the Lord should live in the Mana (heart and mind; the inner-self) of anyone who worships the Lord's feet regularly and feels that he has undertaken a voyage to a holy pilgrim place when he worships the Lord's feet” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 129); and “the Lord should live in the inner-self of those who request that they should have devotion for the holy feet of the Lord as a reward for all the good and meritorious deeds they do” (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 129).

We read at many places in this wonderful story of devotion for Lord Ram that whenever a devotee met the Lord, he or she has fallen at the Lord's feet as the best sign of submission and showing his respect for the Lord. For instance, when sage Sutikshan had met Lord Ram, this is exactly what he did—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 20-21 that precede Doha no. 10. Further on we find Sabari, the old lady hermit, falling at the feet of the Lord when he visited her—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 34.

Later on in the story we find that when Lord Ram had first met his monkey friends, Hanuman and Sugriv, they too had shown their respects to the Lord by falling at his holy feet, as does Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana, who had come to take refuge with the Lord upon being cast out of the kingdom by his brother. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 2 with respect to Hanuman; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 4 with respect to Sugriv; and (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 46 with respect to Vibhishan.

(ii) Every devotee knows that the Lord will fulfill his wishes as this is the wont and natural habit of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 28 Ka and its preceding Chaupai line no. 11.]

सुनि बर बचन प्रेम जनु पोषे । पूरनकाम रामु परितोषे ॥ ६ ॥
 करि बर बिनय ससुर सनमाने । पितु कौसिक बसिष्ठ सम जाने ॥ ७ ॥
 बिनती बहुरि भरत सन कीन्ही । मिलि सप्रेमु पुनि आसिष दीन्ही ॥ ८ ॥

suni bara bacana prēma janu pōṣē. pūranakāma rāmu paritōṣē. 6.
 kari bara binaya sasura sanamānē. pitu kausika basiṣṭha sama jānē. 7.
 binatī bahuri bharata sana kīnhī. mili saprēmu puni āsiṣa dīnhī. 8.

When Lord Ram heard these pleasant, polite and courteous words of Janak, words that were soaked in emotions of love and sincere affection for the Lord, he (Lord Ram) who was always contented, felt obliged and happy.

[In other words, though Lord Ram did not need any praises from someone to make him happy by highlighting the Lord's glories and virtues because he was eternally fulfilled, contented and blissful, but still when king Janak praised him he felt obliged towards him by way of saying 'thank you very much'. Lord Ram was grateful to Janak for being so extremely courteous and polite to him.] (6)

Lord Ram reciprocated his father-in-law's (Janak's) polite gestures by showing the same respect to him, and expressing his gratitude to him by treating him at par with his own father (Dasrath), sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and sage Vasistha (the Lord's guru—moral preceptor and priest of the family).

[The three gentlemen named here were the senior most members present on the occasion. Lord Ram paid his sincere respects to king Janak in the same way as he would have paid to all of these three gentlemen.]¹ (7)

The king then approached Bharat and politely prayed to him (in the same way as he had prayed to Lord Ram). Then he affectionately embraced Bharat and blessed him.² (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram honoured his father-in-law Janak with the greatest of respect by bringing him to the same level as his own father Dasrath, as well as that of sage Vishwamitra whom the Lord also respected as his father as well as his guru, and sage Vasistha who was of course his family priest and guru since his childhood days.

To wit, Janak was made exceptionally privileged and honoured by the Lord by bestowing upon him the combined honour of his father Dasrath, and two of the greatest sages of the time, sage Vishwamitra and sage Vasistha.

There is a subtle message in this honour. Lord Ram honoured Janak for his love and affection for him by treating the latter at par with his own father Dasrath. Then, Lord Ram acknowledged the level of spiritual knowledge, enlightenment and erudition of Janak by treating him at par with two great sages, Vishwamitra and Vasistha.]

²The contrast is obvious: Janak had sought Lord Ram's blessings, but he blessed Bharat in this verse, and the other brothers too as we shall read below in Doha no. 342. This clearly indicates that though Janak had regarded all the brothers equally, he had had special respect and great devotion for Lord Ram as he knew that the real identity of the Lord was Brahm, the Supreme Being and Lord of creation—refer: Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 349 herein above. Hence, Lord Ram was worthy of such respect as one would show to one's deity whom one worships.]

दो०. मिले लखन रिपुसूदनहि दीन्हि असीस महीस ।
भए परसपर प्रेमबस फिरि फिरि नावहिं सीस ॥ ३४२ ॥

dōhā.

milē lakhana ripusūdanahi dīnhi asīsa mahīsa.
bha'e parasapara prēmabasa phiri phiri nāvahim sīsa. 342.

Next, the king met and embraced Laxman and Ripusudan (Shatrughan), and blessed them. All of them were overcome with emotions, bowing their heads repeatedly to one another as a sign of showing great respect for each other. (Doha no. 342)

[Note—We have read that a gesture is repeated to emphasise its earnestness and the depth of emotions. It's a polite way of making a request, showing honour and gratitude, or simply saying 'thank you'.

Refer: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342 when Janak has 'repeatedly' prayed to Lord Ram with joined palms. Prior to this, Dasrath had also 'repeatedly' asked Janak to return home as he had come very far from the city to bid farewell to the marriage party—refer: Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 340. Again we read that when Lord Ram and his brothers had gone to their mothers-in-law to take permission to leave for Ayodhya, then also the Lord had bowed before them 'repeatedly' to pay his respects—refer: Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 337.

When king Dasrath met sage Vishwamitra upon the former's arrival at Janakpur, he had also 'repeatedly' bowed his head before the sage to express his greatest of thanks to him for being instrumental in his son's (Lord Ram's) marriage and establishing his glory throughout the world motivating and enabling him (Lord Ram) to break the formidable bow which none of the other kings and princes could even move—refer: Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 308.]

चौ०. बार बार करि बिनय बड़ाई । रघुपति चले संग सब भाई ॥ १ ॥
जनक गहे कौसिक पद जाई । चरन रेनु सिर नयनन्ह लाई ॥ २ ॥
सुनु मुनीस बर दरसन तोरें । अगमु न कछु प्रतीति मन मोरें ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

bāra bāra kari binaya barāī. raghupati calē saṅga saba bhāī. 1.
janaka gahē kausika pada jāī. carana rēnu sira nayananha lāī. 2.
sunu munīsa bara darasana tōrēm. agamu na kachu pratīti mana mōrēm. 3.

After repeatedly paying his respects and honouring his father-in-law king Janak, Lord Ram (“Raghupati”) proceeded ahead, along with his brothers, on his onward journey¹.
(1)

[Verse nos. 2-6 narrate Janak paying his deep respects to sage Vishwamitra at the time of bidding him farewell, and receiving the sage’s blessings before returning back.]

Janak went to meet sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra), and falling at the latter’s feet, he grasped it reverentially. He showed his greatest respect to the sage by picking up the dust of the sage’s feet and putting it on his head as well as applying it on his eyes (eye-lids). (2)

Then he said to sage Vishwamitra, ‘Listen oh revered sage! It is a firm conviction of my Mana (mind and heart) that your divine sight is very auspicious and wish-fulfilling. Nothing is inaccessible when one is fortunate to have this sight. [That is, everything one expects can be realised and all his wishes are fulfilled if he is fortunate enough to meet you and have your ‘Darshan’ or holy sight. I have had a first-hand experience of this fact because my wish to have a glorious groom for my daughter Sita was fulfilled when I met you and paid my obeisance to you. What more can be said that let alone Sita, I have been able to marry all my daughters to equally noble grooms. Say, what more would a father want than to see all his daughters married to noble and glorious grooms who stand out in this world for their unique virtues and stupendous qualities. All this was made possible due to you and your blessings. Whatever happiness that I have today is the fruit of my having seen your divine feet and receiving your patronage and blessings.]² (3)

[Note—¹The four brothers were well-bonded with each other; they were fond of each other and preferred to stay together. There are many instances of this brotherly love between them. For instance, when the Lord had gone to bid farewell to his mother-in-law in the palace of king Janak, and later on when he returned from there after receiving blessings, he was accompanied by his other three brothers: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 334; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 337.

Earlier on, even during their childhood days, the four brothers had shown affinity, love and attachment for each other: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 198.

Once again we read that whenever Lord Ram went to hunt in the royal forest, he was accompanied by his brothers and friends: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 205. Similarly, when the Lord ate his meals, the four brothers sat together and were joined by their friends: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 205.

When Lord Ram had gone with sage Vishwamitra to the latter’s hermitage to protect his fire sacrifice, he was accompanied by Laxman throughout the journey: refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8, and similarly when the Lord had gone for his 14-year exile he was joined by Laxman: refer Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 73; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 76; and Doha no. 79.

²Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 174 also.]

जो सुखु सुजसु लोकपति चहहीं । करत मनोरथ सकुचत अहहीं ॥ ४ ॥
सो सुखु सुजसु सुलभ मोहि स्वामी । सब सिधि तव दरसन अनुगामी ॥ ५ ॥

jō sukhu sujasu lōkapati cahahīm. karata manōratha sakucata ahahīm. 4.
sō sukhu sujasu sulabha mōhi svāmī. saba sidhi tava darasana anugāmī. 5.

That happiness and joy, that of fame, glory and honour which even the Lokpatis (the guardian of the world; the regional lords of the world; and even Indra, the king of gods and the world) yearn for, but are reluctant to express the desire for their fulfilment because these virtues are very difficult for them to access or realise in practical terms [4]—today, oh lord, the same eclectic happiness and joy, the same immensity of fame, glory and honour has been made accessible to me, they have been put within my reach. Verily, it has been made possible for me due to your divine sight, as all sorts of ‘Siddhis’ (fulfilments; acquisitions; achievements) follow in the wake of one being able to see you and have communion with you [5]. (4-5)

[Note—The happiness of Janak and the intensity of his joy have been narrated elsewhere also—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 286.

Janak has given all credits for his happiness and sense of fulfilment to sage Vishwamitra to show his great respect for the sage as well as a token of his thanksgiving to him. Janak is overwhelmed with gratitude for the sage, because he realises that had the sage not come with Lord Ram and Laxman, and had he not ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow, none of the dreams of Janak would have borne fruits. The chance to marry Sita and her other sisters to such noble princes as Lord Ram and his three brothers who belonged to a renowned royal family of Ayodhya, which was one of the most famous and glorious families of the time, and who were themselves excellent princes, being like treasuries of eclectic virtues and excellent qualities—was made possible because of sage Vishwamitra’s intervention and motivation. It was he who had brought Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur, it was he who had ordered Lord Ram to break the bow, it was he who had ordered that Dasrath be invited with his entourage to Janakpur so that all the four brothers could assemble at one place and get married. Refer respectively to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254; and (iii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 286—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it.

Refer: “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 174 also.]

कीन्हि बिनय पुनि पुनि सिरु नाई । फिरे महीसु आसिषा पाई ॥ ६ ॥
चली बरात निसान बजाई । मुदित छोट बड़ सब समुदाई ॥ ७ ॥
रामहि निरखि ग्राम नर नारी । पाइ नयन फलु होहिं सुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

kīnhi binaya puni puni siru nāī. phirē mahīsu āsiṣā pāī. 6.
calī barāta nisāna bajāī. mudita chōṭa baṛa saba samudāī. 7.
rāmahi nirakhi grāma nara nārī. pāī nayana phalu hōhīm sukhārī. 8.

The king (Janak) repeatedly bowed his head at the feet of sage Vishwamitra and prayed to him. Then, having received the sage's blessings, the king returned home¹. (6)

Finally, the bridegrooms' party started earnestly on its return journey for Ayodhya to the accompaniment of sound of the kettle-drums. Everyone amongst its members, the young and the old, were delighted and euphoric, individually as well as in a group². (7)

The men and the women who lived in the roadside villages enroute to Ayodhya were very delighted at the opportunity to see Lord Ram (decked up like a groom) as he strode ahead with the marriage party. They felt that they have got their reward of having an eyesight when they gazed at Lord Ram (because it is this faculty of sight that enabled them to enjoy the beauty of the Lord's magnificent and divine form)³. (8)

[Note—¹Sage Vishwamitra was the last one whom king Janak met before the marriage party finally proceeded to Ayodhya with full speed.

Refer: "Janki Mangal", Chanda no. 22 also.

²Refer also to: (a) "Janki Mangal", verse no. 169 and Chanda no. 22; (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 339; Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Doha no. 343; Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 263.

³When Lord Ram will go to the 14-year forest exile, we shall read about the same delight and sentiments of the wayside villagers—refer for instance, Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 114 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

दो०. बीच बीच बर बास करि मग लोगन्ह सुख देत ।
अवध समीप पुनीत दिन पहुँची आइ जनेत ॥ ३४३ ॥

dōhā.

bīca bīca bara bāsa kari maga lōganha sukha dēta.
avadha samīpa punīta dina pahum̐cī ā'i janēta. 343.

Halting at convenient places on their way back, and in the process providing great delight and joy to the people who lived alongside the way (in the numerous villages and hamlets lying en-route), the marriage procession arrived near the city of Ayodhya on an auspicious day. (Doha no. 343)

[Note—We have read earlier that king Janak had already sent advance parties to prepare convenient spots on the road to Ayodhya, and make all arrangements for the basic comforts of the marriage party when it halted at these locations. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha.]

चौ०. हने निसान पनव बर बाजे । भेरि संख धुनि हय गय गाजे ॥ १ ॥

झाँझि बिरव डिंडिमीं सुहाई । सरस राग बाजहिं सहनाई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

hanē nisāna panava bara bājē. bhēri saṅkha dhuni haya gaya gājē. 1.
jhām̃jhi birava ḍiṇḍimīm̃ suhāī. sarasa rāga bājahim̃ sahanāī. 2.

As the marriage procession moved ahead on its onward journey to Ayodhya, it was accompanied by a constant playing of various musical instruments. Different varieties of kettle-drums known as Nishan, Panav and Bheri were played all along the way, and so were the conchs that accompanied the loud neighing of horses, the trumpeting of elephants [1], the clash of cymbals and tabors, and pleasant music from the clarionet [2]. (1-2)

[Note—The marriage procession did not move silently and in a disciplined manner like a marching army, but it wend its way back to Ayodhya in an atmosphere of merriment and revelry, enjoying every mile of the way of the long journey back home, with music and dance and celebrations galore. This is the way it had come from Ayodhya to Janakpur, and it is the same way it went back. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 302 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.]

पुर जन आवत अकनि बराता । मुदित सकल पुलकावलि गाता ॥ ३ ॥

निज निज सुंदर सदन सँवारे । हाट बाट चौहट पुर द्वारे ॥ ४ ॥

गलीं सकल अरगजाँ सिंचाई । जहँ तहँ चौकें चारु पुराई ॥ ५ ॥

pura jana āvata akani barātā. mudita sakala pulakāvali gātā. 3.
nija nija sundara sadana sam̃vārē. hāṭa bāṭa cauhaṭa pura dvārē. 4.
galīm̃ sakala aragajām̃ siṅcāīm̃. jaham̃ taham̃ caukēm̃ cāru purāīm̃. 5.

When the inhabitants of Ayodhya heard the sound of this music from a distance, they concluded that the marriage procession has arrived. Everyone was delighted and euphoric with joy, and their bodies were thrilled with excitement.¹ (3)

The citizens of Ayodhya decorated their own homes beautifully and colourfully, as also were the market places, the streets, the squares and the gates of the city were all decked up with the best of décor and finery². (4)

All the lanes and by-lanes of the city were washed with scented water, and ceremonial squares³ were made and filled with auspicious things all over the city. (5)

[Note—¹The musical instruments that were played were so loud that the arrival of the party was heralded by this sound from a great distance. The people were waiting for this sound, and as soon as they heard it there was an immediate celebration in the city of Ayodhya.

A similar thing has happened when the marriage party had gone to Janakpur: its arrival was announced by the sound of musical instruments from a great distance, and it was reciprocated by similar playing of musical instruments in the city of

Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304, and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes it.

²There are references of similar decorations being made in the cities of Janakpur and Ayodhya on earlier occasions also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 287 where it is said that Janak had ordered that the entire city of Janakpur be decorated to celebrate the marriage of Sita with Lord Ram; (ii) Doha no. 296 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4, 7-8 that narrate how the city of Ayodhya was decorated when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived there.

³These squares were made, or rather drawn on the ground by using a mixture of coloured powder and flour of wheat and rice, and such things as lighted lamps, stems of the banana trees, canopies, festoons and hangings were placed around them for the purpose of decoration.

Such squares are made on auspicious occasions even today in India, both at public places as well as in the front and the inside of private properties.

Refer also to: "Janki Mangal", verse nos. 1181—184, and Chanda no. 23 with respect to the decoration and celebrations in Ayodhya when the marriage party returned.]

बना बजारु न जाइ बखाना । तोरन केतु पताक बिताना ॥ ६ ॥
सफल पूगफल कदलि रसाला । रोपे बकुल कदंब तमाला ॥ ७ ॥
लगे सुभग तरु परसत धरनी । मनिमय आलबाल कल करनी ॥ ८ ॥

banā bajāru na jā'i bakhānā. tōrana kētu patāka bitānā. 6.
saphala pūgaphala kadali rasālā. rōpē bakula kadamba tamālā. 7.
lagē subhaga taru parasata dharanī. manimaya ālabāla kala karani. 8.

The markets were so wonderfully decorated that one cannot describe their beauty and attractiveness. They were adorned with ceremonial arches, flags, banners, festoons, parasols and canopies of varying shapes and forms.¹ (6)

Fruit laden trees of the areca-nut (or the betel-nut; "Poogphal"), the plantain ("Kadali"), the mango ("Rasaal"), the Bakul ("mimusops slengi" plant), the Kadamba ("neulea orientalis" plant), and the black catechu ("Tamaal"; the evergreen "xanthocymus epictorius" plant) were transplanted at different places in the city, all along its avenues, squares and other public places. (7)

These beautiful trees were so abundantly laden with their respective fruits that their branches seemed to touch the ground. The bowl-shaped fences that were made at the place where these trees were transplanted on the ground were expertly crafted by artisans and were magnificently decorated with precious gems embedded on their sides.² (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to other instances of such decorations in Ram Charit Manas: (a) Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 296; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 289; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 213;

(iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 194; and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 6 which say that king Dasrath had ordered that the city of Ayodhya should be beautifully decked up for the coronation ceremony of Lord Ram which was however aborted due to the tantrums created by Kaikeyi, the step-mother of Lord Ram who wanted her own son Bharat to be put on the throne.

Later on in this epic story we read that when Lord Ram came back to Ayodhya at the end of his 14-years forest exile and the successful Lanka campaign, the city of Ayodhya was decorated in the same manner as it is being done now when the Lord's marriage procession has reached it. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 9.

²An exactly similar narration is found in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand when the city was being decorated for the coronation ceremony of Lord Ram, which was however aborted due to intrigue created by his step-mother Kaikeyi. Refer: Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 6.

The beauty of a tree lies in its ability to produce abundant fruits, flowers and leaves so much so that its branches bend by their weight. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 227 where the royal garden of king Janak is being described.

A similar idea is expressed when the beauty of the forest through which Lord Ram passed is being described in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 38, and once again in Doha no. 40 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-7.]

दो०. बिबिध भॉति मंगल कलस गृह गृह रचे सँवारि ।
सुर ब्रह्मादि सिहाहिं सब रघुबर पुरी निहारि ॥ ३४४ ॥

dōhā.

bibidha bhāmṭi maṅgala kalasa gr̥ha gr̥ha racē samvāri.
sura brahmādi sihāhiṁ saba raghubara purī nihāri. 344.

Each home of the city was beautifully decorated with auspicious pitchers of various kinds (i.e. of different colours, shapes and sizes as well as materials such as clay, brass, gold, silver, platinum etc.).

The city of Lord Ram ("Raghubar", literally meaning the most exalted member of king Raghu's lineage) was so astoundingly and stunningly beautiful that even the gods, including Brahma the creator and other senior gods, praised it abundantly. (Doha no. 344)

[Note—This idea has been expressed elsewhere also. For instance, when Lord Ram was born, the city of Ayodhya was so fascinating and wonderful to look at that the gods were not only charmed, but stunned as well, with its magnificence and grandeur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 195; and Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 296.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 296, and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 9 where it is said that golden pitchers were put up by the citizens which refer to putting up auspicious pitchers for the purpose of decoration.

Tulsidas' another book titled "Janaki Mangal" which exclusively deals with the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita also describes the wonderful beauty of Ayodhya at the time the marriage party arrived with the four grooms and their respective brides in its verse nos. 181—184 and Chanda no. 23.

Later on in the story we will read that after Lord Ram ascended the throne of Ayodhya, the city and the kingdom as a whole were so wonderfully looked after that even the goddess of speech known as Sarda, and the thousand tongued serpent named Seshnath could not describe their magnificence and beauty—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 22.]

चौ०. भूप भवनु तेहि अवसर सोहा । रचना देखि मदन मनु मोहा ॥ १ ॥
मंगल सगुन मनोहरताई । रिधि सिधि सुख संपदा सुहाई ॥ २ ॥
जनु उछाह सब सहज सुहाए । तनु धरि धरि दसरथ गृहँ छाए ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

bhūpa bhavanu tēhi avasara sōhā. racanā dēkhi madana manu mōhā. 1.
maṅgala saguna manōharatāī. ridhi sidhi sukha sampadā suhāī. 2.
janu uchāha saba sahaja suhā'ē. tanu dhari dhari dasaratha gṛham' chā'ē. 3.

The king's (i.e. Dasrath's) palace looked most charming on that occasion. Its magnificence was such that it captivated the Mana (mind and heart) of even Kamdeo (cupid).¹ (1)

[Why was the king's palace so fabulous to look at? This question is answered now:-]

It appeared that all forms of auspiciousness, all sorts of good omens, all types of beauty and magnificence, along with all the Riddhis and Siddhis symbolising prosperity, affluence, well-being, happiness, joys and mystical achievements, as well as all festivities and celebrations have collectively assumed a personified, physical form, and taken up their residence in the palace of Dasrath.² (2-3)

[Note—¹A similar idea is expressed when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 4.

²A similar idea is expressed when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8.]

देखन हेतु राम बैदेही । कहहु लालसा होहि न केही ॥ ४ ॥
जूथ जूथ मिलि चलीं सुआसिनि । निज छबि निदरहिं मदन बिलासिनि ॥ ५ ॥
सकल सुमंगल सजें आरती । गावहिं जनु बहु बेष भारती ॥ ६ ॥

dēkhana hētu rāma baidēhī. kahahu lālasā hōhi na kēhī. 4.
jūtha jūtha mili calīṁ su'āsini. nija chabi nidarahiṁ madana bilāsini. 5.

sakala sumāṅgala sajēṁ āratī. gāvahiṁ janu bahu bēṣa bhāratī. 6.

Say, who will not have a desire to closely watch Lord Ram and Sita?¹ [This verse answers the question why all the good and auspicious things in this world, as listed herein above, felt it was their golden opportunity to have a close interaction and viewing of the divine couple, Lord Ram and Sita. So they decided to assume some physical form and enter the royal palace.] (4)

Women of noble character formed large groups and moved forward² (to welcome the marriage party and to have the first chance to see Lord Ram with Sita). These women-folk were so beautiful to look at that they put to shame the pride of Rati (the consort of Kamdeo/cupid) with respect to her own beauty and charm.³

[That is, the women were all exceptionally charming and beautiful to look at, and their magnificence was much more than the charm of Rati who thought that she was the most attractive and beautiful woman in creation. Her pride was trounced when she saw the women of Ayodhya.] (5)

They arranged the necessary items for doing the ‘Aarti’⁴ (of Lord Ram and his bride Sita, as also of all other members of the marriage party such as the king himself and the Lord’s other three brothers). All of them sang melodious songs of felicitation as if goddess Bharti (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron goddess of voice and arts) has herself personified in the form of these ladies to sing such sweet and auspicious songs.⁵ (6)

[Note—¹To wit, everyone wished to avail of the opportunity to be in close proximity of the divine couple, Lord Ram and Sita, so that a close-up view of the Lord and his divine consort can be had. Therefore, all the virtues listed here assumed some form or the other and entered the royal palace so as to see Lord Ram and Sita from close quarters.

We have already read that at the time of marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, as well as all the other three brothers of the Lord at Janakpur, the gods and goddesses too had assumed human forms and entered the royal palace of king Janak precisely for this reason—that they will have a golden chance to see the Lord and Sita from up close and also to mark their presence and participate in this eventful historical occasion that is not to come again in their lifetimes. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 318, and Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321.

²Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 297 which describes the same thing happening in Ayodhya when the news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 194 which describes how the women-folk cheerfully proceeded towards the palace of king Dasrath when the news of the birth of Lord Ram and his other three brothers spread in the city of Ayodhya; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286 which tells us how groups of charming ladies began singing like the cuckoo when sage Parashuram had asked for forgiveness from Lord Ram and went to the forest, thereby ending the stalemate and allowing the resumption of celebrations.

³This observation is based on the fact that the news of the marriage of Lord Ram’s other three brothers hadn’t reached Ayodhya till this point of time.

⁴“Aarti” is showing of lighted earthen lamps as a gesture of warm and ceremonial welcome of an honoured person. These lamps are placed on a decorated platter which also contains other auspicious items considered auspicious, such as rice grains, blades of grass, scented water, coloured powder of herbs, etc. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 297; and (ii) Doha no. 346 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that tell us how the Aarti is arranged.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 194 which describes how the women-folk cheerfully performed the “Aarti” of the newly born four divine brothers, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan. At the time of departure of the marriage party from Ayodhya for Janakpur, the ladies of the city had gone on the roof-tops of their homes to perform the Aarti of the procession as it passed through the streets of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 301.

Then we read that when Lord Ram had broken the bow and Sita had put the victory garland on the Lord, all the ladies and the men of Janakpur had performed their Aarti at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony itself—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265.

⁵Refer also to the following instance where songs were sung by the charming ladies in honour of Lord Ram and Sita: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 297 which is very specific on this subject.

Besides the above, the women-folk had sung songs when they were going to the palace of king Dasrath to perform the Aarti of the newly born four brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 194.

Even at the time of the departure of the marriage party for Janakpur, the ladies of Ayodhya had gathered on their roof-tops to sing songs—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 301.]

भूपति भवन कोलाहलु होई । जाइ न बरनि समउ सुखु सोई ॥ ७ ॥
कौसल्यादि राम महतारीं । प्रेमबिबस तन दसा बिसारीं ॥ ८ ॥

bhūpati bhavana kōlāhalu hō'ī. jā'i na barani sama'u sukhu sō'ī. 7.
kausalyādi rāma mahatārīm. prēmabibasa tana dasā bisārīm. 8.

There was a lot of rejoicing, revelry and celebrations in the royal palace so much so that the whole place was filled with rapturous sound of joy and merry-making as the entire household erupted in an outburst of cheer, exhilaration and ecstasy.

Verily indeed, it is not possible to describe the level of happiness and joy, of ecstasy and exhilaration, and the atmosphere of revelry and celebrations that prevailed at that time.¹ (7)

Mother Kaushalya (the eldest queen-mother) and the other mothers of Lord Ram (i.e. Sumitra and Kaikeyi) were overwhelmed with love and affection so much so that they lost awareness of the condition of their bodies (because they were highly thrilled and ecstatic with joy so as to lose awareness of their surroundings).² (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to similar rapturous sounds of joy and celebrations that erupted emotions as narrated elsewhere in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 302 that describe the situation at the time of the departure of Lord Ram's marriage party for Janakpur.

Once again we read that when Sita arrives at the venue where the marriage rituals were to be performed, there was an eruption of joy and a thunderous that accompanied the playing of musical instruments, singing of songs, chanting of scriptural hymns and cheering by the citizens—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 295 which describe the mothers' happiness when king Dasrath read aloud the invitation letter that had come from Janakpur with the announcement that Lord Ram had married Sita by breaking the bow.

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 345 below which expressly states that the mothers were numbed with emotions and their legs refused to move.]

दो०. दिए दान बिप्रन्ह बिपुल पूजि गनेस पुरारि ।
प्रमुदित परम दरिद्र जनु पाइ पदारथ चारि ॥ ३४५ ॥

dōhā.

di'ē dāna bipranha bipula pūji ganēsa purāri.
pramudita parama daridra janu pā'i padāratha cāri. 345.

The mothers liberally gave away abundant quantities of donations and gifts to the Brahmins¹, and they also prayed to Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva².

The mothers were so exceptionally happy as if a highly impoverished person is able to lay his hands on the four excellent fruits that are regarded as the best of rewards for one's meritorious deeds, fulfilling all his desires and leaving him fully contented³. (Doha no. 345)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 295 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follows it. They describe the same thing, when the queens had liberally given away alms and gifts to Brahmins and other seekers when they learnt about the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita.

²Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva, as well as goddess Parvati who is the mother of Ganesh and the divine consort of Lord Shiva are always worshipped when any good event happens or at the time of starting some auspicious deed. There are many instances supporting this. Some of the instances are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 301 that says that king Dasrath had offered his prayers to Lord Ganesh and Gauri (Parvati) at the time of departure of the marriage procession for Janakpur; (ii) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 which describes how Gauri and Ganesh were offered worship by the priests at the commencement of the marriage rituals of Lord Ram and Sita.

We shall be reading shortly that when Lord Ram enters the city of Ayodhya, he has invoked and offered his respects to Lord Shiva, Parvati and Ganesh to seek their blessings: refer—Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 347 herein below.

Similarly, when the Lord had started on his journey for the forest later on in the story, he has once again offered similar prayers to these deities: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81.

³Refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 309; and (ii) Doha no. 325 along with notes appended to them.]

चौ०. मोद प्रमोद बिबस सब माता । चलहिं न चरन सिथिल भए गाता ॥ १ ॥

राम दरस हित अति अनुरागीं । परिछनि साजु सजन सब लागीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mōda pramōda bibasa saba mātā. calahim na carana sithila bha'e gātā. 1.
rāma darasa hita ati anurāgīm. parichani sāju sajana saba lāgīm. 2.

All the mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) were overwhelmed with emotions of joy and ecstasy so much so that their legs felt heavy and refused to move¹ as their bodies became numbed out of surging emotions². (1)

All the mothers were very eager to have 'Darshan' (holy viewing; to see someone who is revered) of Lord Ram, and in order to warmly welcome him as well as to honour the Lord and pay their obeisance to him, they began to make preparations by collecting and arranging auspicious things needed for such occasions³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263 that tells us that king Janak's legs also felt as heavy like a man who was tired of swimming but fortunately finds land.

Similarly, we shall read later on in the story that when Lord Ram met sage Sutikshan in the forest, the sage was so dumbstruck that he became immobile with disbelief that the Lord of the world is standing right in his front, before his eyes. The sage stood motionless like in a portrait. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 21-24 that precede Doha no. 10.

Further on we read that when the Lord went to meet the old hermitess named Sabari, she too was dumbstruck and unable to speak a word for sometime—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 34.

²Refer Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345 herein above which states that the mothers were so overcome with emotions that they lost awareness of their bodies, i.e. their bodies became numbed from surging emotions.

A person loses awareness of his own self and his surroundings on two occasions—either when he is overcome with extreme grief, or from extreme happiness. In the present case, it is 'extreme happiness'.

When the crow saint Kaagbhusund had accompanied Lord Shiva, both having assumed human forms, to go and visit Ayodhya to participate in the celebrations at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his other brothers there, they too had become so ecstatic that they lost awareness of themselves and their surroundings. This is clearly

narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precedes Doha no. 196.

Similarly we read that when Sita first saw Lord Ram in the royal garden where he had gone to pluck flowers for his guru's worship rituals, she had been overwhelmed by the most enchanting sight of the Lord so much so that she also lost awareness of her body and her surroundings, and even that she must not become infatuated with a stranger but perform her worshipping of goddess Parvati for which she had come to the garden in the first place, and return home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 232.

At the time Sita was brought to the venue of the marriage rituals, he sight also filled all those who saw here with so much joy that all of them lost senses of their own self and their surroundings—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.

As observed herein above, one loses the sense of the existence of his physical body and its feelings either when one is exceedingly happy as in all the cases referred to herein above, or when one is struck by extreme sorrow or grief as it happened to Dasrath when Kaikeyi asked him to send Lord Ram to 14 years of forest exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 35. Similarly we see Lord Ram's mother Kaushalya was struck with grief and her body shook with shock when she came to know about her beloved son going to the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 54.

³These things are described below in Doha no. 346 and its preceding verse nos. 4-8.]

बिबिध बिधान बाजने बाजे । मंगल मुदित सुमित्राँ साजे ॥ ३ ॥
 हरद दूब दधि पल्लव फूला । पान पूगफल मंगल मूला ॥ ४ ॥
 अच्छत अंकुर लोचन लाजा । मंजुल मंजरि तुलसि बिराजा ॥ ५ ॥

bibidha bidhāna bājanē bājē. maṅgala mudita sumitrām̐ sājē. 3.
 harada dūba dadhi pallava phūlā. pāna pūgaphala maṅgala mūlā. 4.
 acchata aṅkura lōcana lājā. maṅjula maṅjari tulasi birājā. 5.

Musical instruments of different kinds began playing melodious music of all notes. Meanwhile, Sumitra cheerfully collected all the auspicious items of good omen (needed to welcome the arriving marriage party). [What these items were are described in the verses that follow below.] (3)

[Verse nos. 4-7 tell us the auspicious items of good omen that Sumitra, Lord Ram's step-mother and the mother of Laxman, had collected and arranged on a plate with which she and other mothers would perform the "Aarti ritual", mentioned in verse no. 8, of the four grooms and their brides.]

Things that are considered as harbingers of good omen and used for auspicious ceremonies that were collected by Sumitra were the following—Harada (literally meaning "yellow", a reference to turmeric because it is deep yellow), blades of Durba grass (a special family of grass that is dark in colour), Dadhi (curd), Pallav (leaves, especially of the mango tree), Phool (flowers of various kinds), Paan (betel leaves),

Poog-phal (betel-nuts), Mangal Mool (roots of certain plants that are regarded as auspicious) [4]----

-----Akshat (unbroken rice grains), Ankur (sprouts of barley and other grains), Gorochan (a yellow pigment extracted from the bile of cows), Lava (parched and dried flakes of paddy), and Manjul Manjari (lovely blossoms) of the Tulsi (Basil) plant, [5]¹ (4-5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos 2 that precedes Doha no. 313.]

छुहे पुरट घट सहज सुहाए । मदन सकुन जनु नीड़ बनाए ॥ ६ ॥
सगुन सुगंध न जाहिं बखानी । मंगल सकल सजहिं सब रानी ॥ ७ ॥
रचीं आरतीं बहुत बिधाना । मुदित करहिं कल मंगल गाना ॥ ८ ॥

chuhē puraṭa ghaṭa sahaja suhā'ē. madana sakuna janu nīra banā'ē. 6.
saguna sugandha na jāhiṃ bakhānī. maṅgala sakala sajahiṃ saba rānī. 7.
raciṃ āratīṃ bahuta bidhānā. mudita karahiṃ kala maṅgala gānā. 8.

[Besides the above things, Sumitra also arranged for the following items—] Golden pitchers were coloured so beautifully and looked so captivating as if birds symbolising Kamdeo (cupid) had decided to make them their nests.¹ (6)

In addition to the items mentioned above, there were different perfumes of so many varieties that they cannot be described.

In this way, the queens collected various auspicious things indicating good omens as they prepared themselves to formally welcome the marriage party when it would arrive shortly at the gates of the royal palace. (7)

Having thus made diverse and all possible arrangements for doing the Aarti (at the time of arrival of the marriage procession at the gates of the royal palace by showing of lighted lamps and sprinkling other auspicious items enumerated above), the queens joyfully sang auspicious songs befitting the festive atmosphere and the happy occasion (as they waited for the arrival of the procession at the palace).² (8)

[Note—¹To wit, amidst the other paraphernalia collected for the formal welcoming ceremony of the marriage party, there were small coloured golden pots which looked as if small beautiful birds representing the god of beauty and charm, known as Kamdeo, have come to sit down amongst the other items so as to mingle with them and get an opportunity to worship and see Lord Ram and Sita, as well as the other brothers and their brides, from close quarters when these auspicious items would be used by the mothers to welcome the Lord and do his Aarti.

Whenever the magnificence, charm, attractiveness and beauty of something are to be emphasised, Tulsidas invokes Kamdeo as he is the patron deity of these virtues. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 350 which describes that the four thrones upon which the four grooms (Lord Ram and his three brothers) and their respective brides (Sita and her

sisters) were seated were so magnificent to behold that it appeared that these thrones were made by Kamdeo himself with his own hands.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 317 which describe the similar performance of Aarti when Lord Ram arrived at the venue of the marriage ceremony dressed as a groom.

Similarly, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 345 we read about the women-folk of Ayodhya preparing to perform the Aarti of the four brothers and their brides when they returned home.]

दो०. कनक थार भरि मंगलन्हि कमल करन्हि लिएँ मात ।
चलीं मुदित परिछनि करन पुलक पल्लवित गात ॥ ३४६ ॥
dōhā.

kanaka thāra bhari maṅgalanhi kamala karanhi li'ēm̃ māta.
calīm mudita parichani karana pulaka pallavita gāta. 346.

Holding golden plates filled with all the items of good omen that they had collected (and enumerated in the above verses), the queen-mothers proceeded ahead cheerfully, with their bodies thrilled with pleasant emotions, to welcome their sons and the marriage party upon their arrival at the gates of the royal palace. (Doha no. 346)

[Note—The queen-mothers were very eager to see Lord Ram return home with his bride. In fact, it was a universal refrain with everyone that they were all eager to have a divine sight of the Lord—refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 300.]

चौ०. धूप धूम नभु मेचक भयऊ । सावन घन घमंडु जनु ठयऊ ॥ १ ॥
सुरतरु सुमन माल सुर बरषहिं । मनहुँ बलाक अवलि मनु करषहिं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

dhūpa dhūma nabhu mēcaka bhaya'ū. sāvana ghana ghamaṇḍu janu ṭhaya'ū.
1.
surataru sumana māla sura baraṣahim̃. manahum̃ balāka avalī manu
karaṣahim̃. 2.

[In the following verses, the celebrations and festivities of Ayodhya at the time of the arrival of the marriage procession are being described. A great resemblance is to be found between this description and the one that follows the birth of the four brothers in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

It ought to be noted here that these verses have liberally employed wonderful metaphors to describe the festive atmosphere in Ayodhya at that time—that of the rainy season with its dark rain-bearing clouds, rainbows, lightening and rows of birds flying across the sky against the backdrop of the clouds, the thunder and clap, the falling of rain and the scent that is created when it falls on the ground, the loud sound

of croaking frogs, singing larks, screaming peacocks, and the citizens feeling happy just like the farmer feels when it rains to save his crops and when he has had a rich harvest—all these have been employed here.]

The whole sky was covered with a thick veil formed by smoke arising from burning of incense and by the spraying of perfumes as if dark rain-bearing clouds of the rainy season have arisen from the horizon and spread all across the canopy of the sky.¹ (1)

The gods rained down garlands made of flowers from the evergreen tree of heaven, known as the 'Surtaru' (literally meaning the "tree of gods")². They looked like rows of herons flying in the sky, a sight that captivates the 'Mana' (mind and heart) of the beholder³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 195 which refers to the sky being filled with flying coloured powder and smoke from burning incense at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers in Ayodhya.

²We have read on many earlier occasions that the gods have showered flowers from the heaven. Some of the instances are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 297; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323; (iii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 324; (iv) Doha no. 324 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7; and (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 323.

The only difference is that at all the above places the gods have showered 'flowers', but here they have showered 'garlands'.

³When Sita had raised her arms to put the victory garland around the neck of Lord Ram, a similar metaphor of rows of birds has been used, but with a little variance. There the garland in the hands of Sita is compared to a lotus flower with its stalk, but here the comparison is made to the row of herons. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264.

However, in 'Geetawali Ramayan' (one of the other wonderful books of Tulsidas), Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4, the metaphor that is used to describe the beautiful sight of Lord Ram wearing the victory garland around his neck is that of a row of swans coming down to settle down on the branches of the Tamaal tree (the black catechu plant).]

मंजुल मनिमय बंदनिवारे । मनहुँ पाकरिपु चाप सँवारे ॥ ३ ॥

प्रगटहिं दुरहिं अटन्ह पर भामिनि । चारु चपल जनु दमकहिं दामिनि ॥ ४ ॥

mañjula manimaya bandanivārē. manahum̐ pākaripu cāpa sam̐vārē. 3.
pragaṭahim̐ durahim̐ aṭanha para bhāmini. cāru capala janu damakahim̐
dāmini. 4.

Colourful and beautifully decorated festoons and buntings, richly embroidered with precious stones and priceless gems, were hung up everywhere as if many rainbows had appeared in the sky simultaneously.¹ (3)

The sight of lovely ladies appearing and disappearing repeatedly on the roof-tops of houses (as they excitedly peered over from the roof-top balconies and railings to look at the crowd and celebrations down on the streets) resembled a dazzle of lightening that appears and disappears quickly in the sky (when rain-bearing clouds appear during the rainy season).² (4)

[Note—¹The metaphor of the rainbow implies that the entire city was decorated with countless festive banners put up high above the ground so that they were visible from all the corners of the city. Against the dark cloud formed by the smoke of burning incense, these colourful banners and festoons simmered in the reflected light of the city so as to resemble many rainbows appearing simultaneously.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 289; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 296.

The use of the metaphor of the ‘rainbow’ indicates that the houses of Ayodhya were reasonably high-rise because some of the banners may have been strung across the breadth of the streets, tied to two rooftops on either side of the street. This observation finds proof in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 27.

Another place where the “rainbow” has been used as a metaphor is in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chanda line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 100 when the war scene is being described in the battle-field of Lanka. But here, the rainbow refers to the numerous bent tails of countless illusionary Hanumans that Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, had created using his magical powers to create confusion in the army of Lord Ram.

The book “Janki Mangal” of Tulsidas also refers to the colourful festoons and buntings in its verse no. 184.

²Not all the ladies were able to join the celebrations on the streets. Some stayed back home, and these ladies climbed to the terraces of their homes to crane their necks to get a glimpse of the celebrations in the city. The roof-tops were jam-packed with excited women even as they jostled with each other to have a better view of the happenings. All these ladies wore sparkling ornaments and clothes, and therefore from the streets below their quick appearance and disappearance over the edges of the terraces and balconies of their homes reminded one of the scene of appearance and disappearance of quick and rapid flashes of lightening in the cloud during the rainy season.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 297 that compares the beauty of the fully adorned ladies of Ayodhya with dazzle of lightening.]

दुंदुभि धुनि घन गरजनि घोरा । जाचक चातक दादुर मोरा ॥ ५ ॥

सुर सुगंध सुचि बरषहिं बारी । सुखी सकल ससि पुर नर नारी ॥ ६ ॥

dundubhi dhuni ghana garajani ghōrā. jācaka cātaka dādura mōrā. 5.

sura sugandha suci baraṣahiṁ bārī. sukhī sakala sasi pura nara nārī. 6.

The clamour of the sound produced by enthusiastic beating of the kettle-drums resembled the reverberation created by the clap of thunder and its echoing sound.

Similarly, the babble of sounds created by alms-seekers was like the cacophony created by croaking frogs, sighing Chatak bird (sparrow hawk), and the screaming of peacocks (during the rainy season).¹ (5)

The gods showered scented perfumes from the sky that resembled rain water filled with a pleasant and exotic scent. [When the rain falls on the ground, a pleasant scent emanates from the soil, and the whole environment is filled with its earthen fragrance.]

All the men and the women of the city (Ayodhya) were happy like the crop that blooms when the rain falls. [Here, the citizens are like the crop, and when the gods showered perfumes on the city, these citizens felt exhilarated and rejuvenated like the crop does when rain falls on the ground. In other words, all the citizens of Ayodhya were very happy and joyous at the news that Lord Ram and his marriage party have arrived.] (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 296; and Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38.

During the rainy season, these three creatures are usually heard when the cloud appears in the sky. The frog croaks, the peacock screams, and the sparrow hawk begins to ‘sigh’ because it is very much in love with the rain and hopes the cloud will oblige it by putting a drop of rain-water into its beak directly to finally quench its thirst.

The sound of the kettle-drum is very loud, and it resembles the rumbling and thundering of the clouds. The kettle-drum was the standard instrument used in those days to announce some important moment or event precisely because of its quality to produce a loud reverberating sound, louder and deeper than the conventional drum. When the kettle-drum was beaten, its sound could be heard for long distances. Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 286; (iii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 301; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304; (v) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313; (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343; (vii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 344.]

समउ जानि गुर आयसु दीन्हा । पुर प्रबेसु रघुकुलमनि कीन्हा ॥ ७ ॥

सुमिरि संभु गिरिजा गनराजा । मुदित महीपति सहित समाजा ॥ ८ ॥

sama'u jāni gura āyasu dīnhā. pura prabēsu raghukulamani kīnhā. 7.
sumiri sambhu girijā ganarājā. mudita mahīpati sahita samājā. 8.

When the right time arrived (i.e. when the time was auspicious), the guru (sage Vasistha) ordered the king to enter the city. At his commands, the king (Dasrath) who was like a gem in the dynasty of king Raghu (“Raghu-kul-mani”) entered the city.¹ (7)

[At the time of entering the city of Ayodhya—] The king invoked (reverentially remembered) Lord Shiva, goddess Girija (Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva) and

Ganaraaj (Lord Ganesh, the chief of the attendants of Shiva)² and felt very euphoric and happy along with the rest of the members of the marriage party. (8)

[Note—¹The Guru's orders were always taken before doing anything, and the guru gave his consent only when the time was right and opportune. There are many instances supporting this. For example: Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 218 when Lord Ram has sought the permission of sage Vishwamitra before going to visit the city of Janakpur for sight-seeing; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 227 where we read that when the time came, Lord Ram took permission from his guru, sage Vishwamitra, to go and bring flowers for the worship rituals of the sage; (iii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 237 which narrates that Lord Ram took orders from his to do his evening prayers; (iv) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (v) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 254 when sage Vishwamitra found that the opportune moment had arrived and he ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow.

Further we read that Janak has called Sita to the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony when the right moment arrived—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 246. Similarly, even at the time of the final marriage rituals, Sita was called only when the two gurus, sages Vasistha and Satanand, had decided that the right moment had arrived and had ordered king Janak to call Sita to the venue—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 322.

Janak had sought and obtained the permission of guru sage Vasistha when he decided to marry all the princesses of Janakpur to the four princes of Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 325.

²Once again we see here that invoking Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesh and goddess Parvati was a standard practice before leaving or entering any place.

For instance, when king Dasrath boarded his chariot to leave for Janakpur with the marriage party of Lord Ram, he had prayed to these deities—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 301.

Later on in the story we shall read that at the time of departure for the forest, Lord Ram had too offered his obeisance to these deities in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 81.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323, and (ii) Doha no. 345.]

दो०. होहिं सगुन बरषहिं सुमन सुर दुंदुभीं बजाइ ।
बिबुध बधू नाचहिं मुदित मंजुल मंगल गाइ ॥ ३४७ ॥

dōhā.

hōhim saguna baraṣahim sumana sura dundubhīm bajā'i.
bibudha badhū nācahim mudita mañjula maṅgala gā'i. 347.

Many auspicious and good omens occurred at those moments. The gods showered flowers from the sky and played the kettle-drums to celebrate the occasion (of the marriage procession entering the city of Ayodhya).

The consort of the gods as well as other celestial nymphs danced merrily in gay abundance as they sang melodious songs befitting the happy moments. (347)

[Note—Similar narration of gods showering flowers and playing their kettle-drums, as well as their consorts and celestial nymphs dancing and singing appear elsewhere also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 285; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262; (iii) Doha no. 264 and its following Chaupai line no. 1; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319; (vi) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 323; (vii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262.]

चौ०. मागध सूत बंदि नट नागर । गावहिं जसु तिहु लोक उजागर ॥ १ ॥
जय धुनि बिमल बेद बर बानी । दस दिसि सुनिअ सुमंगल सानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

māgadha sūta bandi naṭa nāgara. gāvahiṃ jasu tihu lōka ujāgara. 1.
jaya dhuni bimala bēda bara bānī. dasa disi suni'a sumaṅgala sānī. 2.

The city's bards, minstrels, singers and dancers sang the glories of the family (i.e. of king Dasrath and his four sons, Lord Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan) that was well-established and renowned in all the three divisions of the world (i.e. in the heaven, the earth and the nether world)¹. (1)

The cacophonous sound of enthusiastic applause and joyful cheering, as well as of the chanting of the hymns of the Vedas (the scriptures) could be heard in all the ten directions of the world². (2)

[Note—¹These bards, minstrels, singers and dancers had joined the marriage party when it left Ayodhya for Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 300.

Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 265, and Doha no. 262 which say that when Lord Ram broke the bow and married Sita, the minstrels and bards began praising the Lord's glory and fame that had spread to all the three divisions of the world—i.e. all over the earth, in the nether world (the subterranean world) and the heaven—by the virtue of this remarkable feat.

They also praised Dasrath because there was no one more praise-worthy than him in the three worlds because he was fortunate to have the supreme Lord as his son in the form of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294; and Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 2; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 173—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 209.

²The ten directions are the following—north, north-east, east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, zenith and nadir.]

बिपुल बाजने बाजन लागे । नभ सुर नगर लोग अनुरागे ॥ ३ ॥
बने बराती बरनि न जाहीं । महा मुदित मन सुख न समाहीं ॥ ४ ॥
पुरबासिन्ह तब राय जोहारे । देखत रामहि भए सुखारे ॥ ५ ॥

bipula bājanē bājana lāgē. nabha sura nagara lōga anurāgē. 3.
 banē barātī barani na jāhīm. mahā mudita mana sukha na samāhīm. 4.
 purabāsinha taba rāya jōhārē. dēkhata rāmahi bha'ē sukhārē. 5.

Multiple types of musical instruments of different denominations began playing in large numbers simultaneously, while the gods in the heaven and the citizens in the city were all equally euphoric with joy and happiness¹. (3)

The members of the bridegroom's party were looking very smart and handsome. All of them were exceedingly cheerful and were so happy that their happiness could not be contained in their hearts. [The demeanours, the facial expressions and the bodily gestures indicated that all the members of the marriage party were exceptionally happy and euphoric. Happiness and joy had overwhelmed them.]² (4)

Then (when the marriage procession had entered the city filled with exuberant and excited citizens who had lined the city's thoroughfare to welcome the groom and the bride, the king, and the rest of the marriage party), when the citizens saw the king (Dasrath), they paid their obeisance to him, and when they saw Lord Ram they felt exceptionally happy, elated and excited³. (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 344; and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 346.

²We have read earlier that when the marriage function of all the brothers was over and Janak had shown his warm respects to the members of the marriage party, all of them were very happy and delighted—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 326.

The enthusiasm of the members of the marriage party and the remarkable sense of happiness and joy that they exhibited is vividly depicted in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 298—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304 which deal with the assembly and departure of the groom's party from Ayodhya.

³The king was leading the procession, and it was customary for the citizens to first pay their respect to their king before they showed respect to others. Then their eyes turned to their favourite prince, Lord Ram, who looked wonderful dressed as a groom. He was the cynosure of all eyes; everyone was gazing at him. But it should be remembered here that it does not mean that they neglected the other brothers: they loved all of them equally, but still Lord Ram was dearest to their hearts amongst the four brothers. It is just like the case of a parent having four children. He or she will love all the children equally, but out of the four siblings one is his or her favourite.

It is to be noted here that the marriage party which had gone to Janakpur to attend the wedding ceremony of Lord Ram consisted of selected senior citizens and elders of the kingdom, royal family members, ministers, courtiers, commanders of various army units, as well as elderly Brahmins. This is obvious, because it is impractical and impossible that everyone could go to Janakpur. So in the city of Ayodhya, everyone was eagerly watching for the news of the arrival of the marriage party with the groom and the bride. Heralds who reached the city ahead of the main procession informed the people that all the four brothers have been married, and they

are coming back with their brides. This news spread like wildfire, and the city erupted in joy. The citizens waited eagerly for the actual arrival of the marriage procession, and as soon as sound of musical instruments, playing at the vanguard of the fast approaching procession, was heard from a distance, the whole city poured out on the streets, filling it chock-a-block with exuberant citizens. Ladies and old gentlemen who could not come out onto the streets went to the terraces and balconies of their homes. Children, babbling and shouting excitedly, joined the crowd on the streets or elbowed their way between their mothers and elderly ladies who had jam-packed the terraces and balconies.

Remember: Preparations were in full swing in the city of Ayodhya ever since the marriage party had left the city for Janakpur. So at the time of arrival, every manner of welcome sign was ready, and the citizens lost no time to fill the streets. The whole atmosphere in Ayodhya was electrifying, and it looked that this day was the best day for the citizens in their lives.

One thing more is to be noted here: As the story unfolds, we will see how the same city was plunged in a dark well of gloom, despondency, dismay and helplessness when, due to the dictates of Providence, Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman had to go to the forest, which is the subject matter of the next Canto called 'Ayodhya Kand'*. Later on we shall read that a day would come when they returned back home. That day was another day written in golden letters and time for mass celebrations, and the citizens found themselves once again celebrating, but this time it was the return of Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman from the forest, in almost the same way and with the same enthusiasm and exuberance as they displayed today when Lord Ram and his brothers came to Ayodhya with their respective brides. The celebrations marking the return of the Lord from the forest has been described in the beginning of the last Canto of this Book, and it is called 'Uttar Kand'#. {Refer: *(i) Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 81—to Doha no. 86; #(ii) Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 3 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede it; Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.}

When we compare the mass celebrations and exhilaration of the two events, arrival of Lord Ram's marriage party now, and the Lord's return from the forest, we will notice a striking similarity.

This Book "Ram Charit Manas" is dedicated to Lord Ram, and he is the central figure in the story, the hero of the story, the protagonist. Therefore, all attention revolves around him. But nevertheless, they were equally charmed by the sight of the four brothers, and they had shown equal respect and warm welcome to all the four as would be clear in verse no. 7 herein below.]

करहिं निछावरि मनिगन चीरा । बारि बिलोचन पुलक सरीरा ॥ ६ ॥
 आरति करहिं मुदित पुर नारी । हरषहिं निरखि कुअँर बर चारी ॥ ७ ॥
 सिबिका सुभग ओहार उघारी । देखि दुलहिनिन्ह होहिं सुखारी ॥ ८ ॥

karahim nichāvāri manigana cīrā. bāri bilōcana pulaka sarīrā. 6.
 ārati karahim mudita pura nārī. haraṣahim nirakhi ku'amra bara cārī. 7.
 sibikā subhaga ōhāra ughārī. dēkhi dulahininha hōhim sukhārī. 8.

The citizens warmly and enthusiastically welcomed the grooms (the four princes) and the king (Dasrath) by liberally scattering gifts consisting of gems, clothes etc. around them (to show their happiness and delight). Their eyes were filled with tears of joy and happiness, and their bodies were thrilled with exhilaration. (6)

The men and the women folk of the city performed the “Aarti” of the four princes (Lord Ram, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan) with a delighted heart, and they felt exhilarated when they gazed at the magnificent sight of the four princes (dressed in all their finery as four noble grooms). (7)

Besides feeling delighted at seeing the four grooms, they (the women folk) felt very happy when they courteously lifted or moved aside the curtains covering the windows of the palanquins in which the brides were seated¹, and beheld the latter. (8)

[Note—¹An important deduction can be made here, and it is very obvious from verse no. 8: it is that the ordinary people could get close to the members of the royalty without fear of punishment or rebuke. Though formal protocol was maintained, but the king always ensured that he does not alienate his subjects. Formalities were observed in formal situations such as attendance in the royal court or royal processions, but on other occasions, such as festivals and ceremonies or any other especial occasion in the kingdom and the royal family, the ordinary people were free to mingle with the members of the royal family of the king. This was a great system that created a voluntary sense of loyalty, faithfulness and belonging amongst the subjects of a king. The people felt that their king was very easily accessible, and he was one of them. The king was like the head of a large extended family, and allegiance and loyalty to him was spontaneous and voluntary, not something that was forced upon the citizens by threat of punishment or coercion of any kind. The king was not to be feared but loved and respected.

On earlier occasions too we read that the citizens of Ayodhya had free access to the palace of the king during celebratory times—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 194 at the time of Lord Ram’s birth; and Doha no. 297 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that describes how the citizens continuously flowed in and out of the royal palace of Ayodhya in jubilant mood to celebrate and congratulate the royal family when the news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived in the city.

In spite of the general atmosphere of merriment and informal nature of the interaction between the king’s family and the ordinary citizens at the time when the marriage procession entered the city of Ayodhya, the basic requirements of good manners and customs of the society were observed. So, while the “Aarti” of the four grooms were performed by the men and the women alike, it was only the women-folk who were allowed to come close to the palanquins carrying the four brides, lift the curtains, and see them.]

दो०. एहि बिधि सबही देत सुखु आए राजदुआर ।

मुदित मातु परिछनि करहिं बधुन्ह समेत कुमार ॥ ३४८ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi sabahī dēta sukhu ā'ē rājadu'āra.
mudita mātu parichani karahim badhunha samēta kumāra. 348.

On this wise, the four princes came to the gates of the royal palace all the while bestowing happiness and joy to all the citizens who had assembled on either side of the road to welcome them.

As soon as they reached the gates of the palace, the euphoric mothers (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) welcomed the four princes and their respective brides¹ most warmly and very affectionately. (Doha no. 348)

[Note—¹How were they welcomed? Well, the answer is in the next verse nos. 1-2 that follow below: by doing their Aarti repeatedly, and giving away different kinds of valuable gifts to whosoever came to receive them.]

चौ०. करहिं आरती बारहिं बारा । प्रेमु प्रमोदु कहै को पारा ॥ १ ॥
भूषन मनि पट नाना जाती । करहिं निछावरि अगनित भाँती ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

karahim āratī bārahim bārā. prēmu pramōdu kahai kō pārā. 1.
bhūṣana mani paṭa nānā jāṭī. karahim nichāvari aganita bhāmṭī. 2.

The mothers performed the Aarti of the grooms repeatedly. Who can completely describe the extent of their happiness and joy? [To wit, the mothers were not contented by doing the Aarti, waving of lighted lamps in the front of the grooms as a good omen, once. So they did it again and again. They felt so happy and delighted that it is impossible to properly describe their emotions in words.]¹ (1)

They (the jubilant mothers) offered countless varieties of ornaments, gems, clothes and robes as gifts² (to celebrate the home-coming of the four brothers accompanied with their brides). (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109, stanza no. 5 also.

When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after his 14-year forest exile, the mother (Kaushalya) was thrilled when she saw him and had then performed his Aarti in the same way—repeatedly, and filled with joy. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 12.

Earlier in our present narration it has been said that when the bridegrooms' party arrived at Ayodhya, the mothers were so exuberant with joy that they lost awareness of the senses of the physical body so much so that their legs gave way and refused to move though they had wanted to rush forward to embrace their beloved sons—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha.

²The exact word used in the verse is “Nichaawari”. It is a custom where gifts are waved in the front of the person who is shown respect and honour, just like doing his Aarti, and then these gifts are scattered all around him. Friends, attendants, and even guests pick these gifts and keep them as memorabilia. Sometimes the people who collect these gifts give them to others or share them amongst themselves. Some of the

gifts are scattered on the ground to be picked up at random by alms-seekers, servants and other attendants lower down in the rung of the hierarchy.

Giving of gifts consisting of ornaments and clothes was a standard practice at that time. We have read that Janak had given such gifts at the end of the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 326, and Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 333.

Earlier, such gifts were given and shared by the citizens of Janakpur at the time when Lord Ram had broken the bow to marry Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, line no. 2 of Doha no. 262.

More often than not, such gifts were immediately shared by the recipient of the gift with others who could not come at the time when the gift was being given, or because the recipient wishes to share this gift as a token of rejoicing the happy and auspicious moment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 194.]

बधुन्ह समेत देखि सुत चारी । परमानंद मगन महतारी ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि पुनि सीय राम छबि देखी । मुदित सफल जग जीवन लेखी ॥ ४ ॥

badhunha samēta dēkhi suta cārī. paramānanda magana mahatārī. 3.
puni puni sīya rāma chabi dēkhī. mudita saphala jaga jīvana lēkhī. 4.

Seeing the four sons with their respective brides, the mothers were euphoric with joy so much so that they became overwhelmed with emotions of happiness and ecstasy¹. (3)

They repeatedly glanced at the lovely face of Lord Ram and the pretty face of Sita, and this view made them so delighted that they felt that they were seeing the fruits of all their meritorious deeds in life in a personified form as Lord Ram and Sita². (4)

[Note—¹Refer also to: (a) Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 109; and (b) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 345—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha. These latter verses also describe how greatly the mothers were happy and delighted—they had lost awareness of the senses of their bodies and their legs froze because their bodies were exceedingly thrilled.

It ought to be noted that these three things mentioned in these verse nos. 1-3 here—i.e. doing of Aarti, offering of gifts and then scattering them around the four grooms and their brides, and the happiness of the mothers—have happened when the couples had reached the gates of the palace. We shall read below that the same process is repeated once again when the mothers escort them inside the palace and make them sit on thrones for formal offering of respect and worship—refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 350 herein below.

²Refer also to: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 109.

When the marriage party had arrived in Ayodhya, the women-folk of the city had similarly gazed at the charming face of Lord Ram and of Sita by lifting the curtain of the palanquin in which she was sitting—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 348.

Refer also to Chaupai line no. 5 herein below.]

सखीं सीय मुख पुनि पुनि चाही । गान करहिं निज सुकृत सराही ॥ ५ ॥
बरषहिं सुमन छनहिं छन देवा । नाचहिं गावहिं लावहिं सेवा ॥ ६ ॥

sakhīm siya mukha puni puni cāhī. gāna karahim nija sukṛta sarāhī. 5.
baraṣahim sumana chanahim chana dēvā. nācahim gāvahim lāvahim sēvā. 6.

Not only the mothers, their friends and companions too felt delighted and loved to see the pretty face of Sita repeatedly even as they sang felicitous songs and thanked their good luck as well as the meritorious deeds they may have done in their lives that bestowed them with this reward or privilege¹. (5)

The gods in the heaven celebrated the occasion by showering flowers every other moment. They and the other celestial damsels danced and sang in the sky to render their service to the Lord in their own unique way². (6)

[Note—¹Refer Chaupai line no. 4 above.

²The people on earth danced and sang to celebrate the occasion, so the gods did their bit by dancing and singing in the heaven.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 319 which says that the gods showered flowers from the sky whenever they found a chance.

All throughout the time the marriage rituals were being performed, the gods had been showering flowers. On many an occasion they had played their musical instruments, especially the kettle-drum—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 347.

This was their way of expressing their happiness to see Lord Ram getting married to Sita.]

देखि मनोहर चारिउ जोरीं । सारद उपमा सकल ढँढोरीं ॥ ७ ॥
देत न बनहिं निपट लघु लागीं । एकटक रहीं रूप अनुरागीं ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi manōhara cāri'u jōrīm. sārada upamā sakala ḍhamḍhōrīm. 7.
dēta na banahim nipaṭa laghu lāgīm. ēkaṭaka rahim rūpa anurāgīm. 8.

Watching the four pairs of brides and their grooms, goddess Sarada (i.e. goddess Saraswati, the patron deity of knowledge and spoken word) searched everywhere in the world to find a suitable comparison [7], but she failed miserably as she could not find a single example with which to compare the magnificent view she beheld in her front (of the four couples). So finally she gave up and decided to abandon her scholarship, and instead concentrate upon enjoying the sight of the beautiful image before her. So she fixed her gaze on the pretty image of the four pairs of brides and their grooms [8]. (7-8)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 318 that reiterates that Sarda had failed to describe the delight in the heart of the mother-in-law of Lord Ram when she saw the Lord dressed as a groom.]

दो०. निगम नीति कुल रीति करि अरघ पाँवड़े देत ।
बधुन्ह सहित सुत परिछि सब चलीं लवाइ निकेत ॥ ३४९ ॥
dōhā.

nigama nīti kula rīti kari aragha pām̐varē dēta.
badhunha sahita suta parichi saba calīṁ lavā'i nikēta. 349.

After doing all the rituals as prescribed in the Vedas and traditionally observed in the family, the mothers escorted the princes and their brides inside the royal palace, offering oblations of water in their front as they walked, and spreading carpets before them as a mark of warm welcome and respect. (Doha no. 349)

[Note—Similar welcome and respect was shown to Lord Ram at the time he had entered the venue of the marriage ceremony—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 319. However, it was the Lord's mother-in-law who had done it at that time.]

चौ०. चारि सिंघासन सहज सुहाए । जनु मनोज निज हाथ बनाए ॥ १ ॥
तिन्ह पर कुअँरि कुअँर बैठारे । सादर पाय पुनीत पखारे ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

cāri siṅghāsana sahaja suhā'ē. janu manōja nija hātha banā'ē. 1.
tinha para ku'am̐ri ku'am̐ra baiṭhārē. sādara pāya punīta pakhārē. 2.

There were four exquisitely crafted thrones that appeared as if they were made by Kamdeo (cupid) with his own hands. (1)

The four princes and princesses were made to sit on them. Then their holy feet were respectfully washed (by the mothers). (2)

[Note—This is a custom in every household that when the son comes home after marriage, his mother and other female relatives wash his feet as well as that of his bride as a sign of their respect for them.

Kamdeo is the patron deity of beauty and glamour, and so when he designs and makes any thing with his own hands he takes care that the product matches his own reputation. He makes sure that whatever he crafts is excellent and the best product as far as its beauty, charm and attractiveness are concerned. In this context, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 346.]

धूप दीप नैबेद बेद बिधि । पूजे बर दुलहिनि मंगलनिधि ॥ ३ ॥
बारहिं बार आरती करहीं । ब्यजन चारु चामर सिर ढरहीं ॥ ४ ॥

बस्तु अनेक निछावरि होहीं । भरीं प्रमोद मातु सब सोहीं ॥ ५ ॥

dhūpa dīpa naibēda bēda bidhi. pūjē bara dulahini maṅgalanidhi. 3.
bārahīm bāra āratī karahīm. byajana cāru cāmara sira ḍharahīm. 4.
bastu anēka nichāvāri hōhīm. bharīm pramōda mātu saba sōhīm. 5.

The four grooms and their respective brides, who were treasuries of all the good virtues and excellent qualities, were duly worshipped in accordance with the method prescribed by the Vedas by offering incense, showing lighted lamps, and oblations consisting of sweets and fruits. (3)

The mothers did their Aarti (waved lighted lamps at them) repeatedly. Hand-held fans and whisks were simultaneously waved near their heads. (4)

A wide variety of things (gifts) were ceremonially offered to the four couples and then scattered around them (so that those present on the occasion could pick these things up as token gifts to celebrate the auspicious occasion). The mothers were overwhelmed with exultation, happiness and joy. (5)

[Note—The same ceremonial welcome by doing Aarti and offering of gifts, and the same happiness of the mothers, has been described a little earlier when the four couples had reached the gates of the royal palace—refer: Doha no. 348 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-3 herein above.]

पावा परम तत्व जनु जोगीं । अमृतु लहेउ जनु संतत रोगीं ॥ ६ ॥
जनम रंक जनु पारस पावा । अंधहि लोचन लाभु सुहावा ॥ ७ ॥
मूक बदन जनु सारद छाई । मानहुँ समर सूर जय पाई ॥ ८ ॥

pāvā parama tatva janu jōgīm. amṛtu lahē'u janu santata rōgīm. 6.
janama raṅka janu pārasa pāvā. andhahi lōcana lābhu suhāvā. 7.
mūka badana janu sārada chāī. mānahum̐ samara sūra jaya pāī. 8.

[These three verses describe the extent of happiness and joy of the mothers by making comparisons with other instances which gives immense sense of satisfaction, ecstasy and bliss to the concerned person.]

The mothers were so exceptionally happy and joyous as if an ascetic has attained the ultimate Truth and Essence of all spiritual endeavours (i.e. the ascetic feels ecstatic and exhilarated at having attained the goal of his spiritual pursuit)¹, or as if a chronically ill patient lays his hands on Amrit, the ambrosia of healthy life [6],---

---Or as if a person who is impoverished since birth suddenly finds the magical stone that can convert base metal into gold (the 'Paaras Mani' or the philosopher's stone)², or as if a blind person gets the reward of eyesight³ [7],---

---Or as if a born-dumb person is blessed by the goddess of fine speech so that he can speak excellently⁴, or as if a warrior becomes victorious in a battle [8]. (6-8)

[Note—¹Tulsidas has used metaphors extensively to stress any point. An abundance of metaphors and similes are found in Ram Charit Manas, Kiskindha Kand, from Doha no. 13—to Doha no. 17 which describe the natural beauty of the mountain where Lord Ram and Laxman lived during the four months of the rainy season in the kingdom of Kishkindha before the monkey messengers were sent in all the directions to search for Sita.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 69 that says that the cooling effect of the shadow of a tree is experienced and enjoyed only by a person who is scorched and tormented by the heat of the sun.

¹Earlier, when Lord Ram had stepped inside the arena where the bow-breaking ceremony was to be held, Tulsidas has said that some of the invited kings who were wise and spiritually inclined had drawn the same kind of immense bliss and joy when they saw the Lord that an ascetic finds upon the realization of the ultimate spiritual Truth. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 69

Another reference is in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 239 which describes how Bharat felt exceedingly contented and happy when he entered the hermitage of Lord Ram in Chitrakoot as if a hermit or an ascetic has found the ultimate goal of his spiritual pursuit.

²Some of the other instances where attainment of immense happiness is compared to a pauper getting rich are: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 102 that says Kewat, the boatman, told Lord Ram when the latter tried to pay the boatman the charges of ferrying him across river Ganges that he (the boatman) has found such immense wealth of happiness that day as if all his poverty down the ages has vanished in an instant, and therefore he does not want anything more. (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 238 which says that when Bharat saw the footprints of Lord Ram on the ground as he was going in search of the Lord in the forest, Bharat felt as happy as if a pauper has found the “Paaras Mani”.

³When Laxman was given permission by Lord Ram to accompany the latter to the forest, he (Laxman) felt as happy as a blind man getting vision—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 73.

⁴When Bharat found that Lord Ram was pleased with him, the former felt as happy as a dumb man who is blessed with the ability to speak—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 307.]

दो०. एहि सुख ते सत कोटि गुन पावहिं मातु अनंदु ।
 भाइन्ह सहित बिआहि घर आए रघुकुलचंदु ॥ ३५० (क) ॥
 लोक रीति जननीं करहिं बर दुलहिनि सकुचाहिं ।
 मोदु बिनोदु बिलोकि बड़ रामु मनहिं मुसुकाहिं ॥ ३५० (ख) ॥

dōhā.

ēhi sukha tē sata kōṭi guna pāvahim mātu anandu.
 bhā'inha sahita bi'āhi ghara ā'ē raghukulacandu. 350 (a).

lōka rīti jananiṁ karahiṁ bara dulahini sakucāhiṁ.
mōdu binōdu bilōki baṛa rāmu manahiṁ musukāhiṁ. 350 (b).

The mothers derived happiness that was thousands of times more than the joys described above (in verse nos. 6-8). The reason for this exclusive happiness of the mothers, however, was of course that Lord Ram—who was like a moon (i.e. most glorious and eminent member) in the family of king Raghu (i.e. the royal dynasty of Ayodhya)—had come home with his brothers after all of them had been married. (Doha no. 350 a)

The mothers were doing all the customary rites that were to be done according to established traditions even as the grooms and the brides felt abashed and shyful during the proceedings. [These rites were intended to create an informal friendly atmosphere, and remove shyness and inhibitions between the groom and the bride. This helped the newly arrived girl to integrate easily with the groom's family, to feel at home and become friendly with all the members of her in-law's family.]

Meanwhile, Lord Ram subtly smiled to himself wryly as he watched the merriment and and ecstasy of the occasion. (Doha no. 350 b.)

[Note—Lord Ram was a personified form of the Supreme Being. He was actually above such worldly emotions of being happy and ecstatic, for the Lord remained dispassionate, detached and neutral. He smiled wryly because he marveled at the power of his Maya (delusion creating powers of the Lord) that had made the mothers think that their sons have 'married'. In fact, Lord Ram, who was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, had never separated from his divine consort goddess Laxmi who had revealed herself as Sita when the Lord decided to come down to earth to serve the cause of the gods, which was to eliminate the demons and to end their cruelty. It was simply a "re-union", and not a "new relationship".

Another reason for Lord Ram smiling wryly is that he knew that all this happiness and merriment was short-lived because shortly the developments would take a turn when he would have to go to the forest when all this happiness would turn into grief and sorrow.

The happiness of the mothers was superficial and not deep-seated. It was limited to the happenings of the gross world. This is because when the Lord would go to the forest, the same mother Kaushalya would start grieving and lamenting—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 57. On the other hand, the news that king Dasrath was compelled to send Lord Ram to the forest for 14 years due to some earlier promise he had made to his queen Kaikeyi had had no effect on the Lord—the reason being that the Lord was naturally blissful and happy, he was internally neutral to all emotions of either joy or sorrow—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 41, and Doha no. 51. Lord Ram had subtly smiled on this occasion also—refer specifically to Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 41.]

चौ०. देव पितर पूजे बिधि नीकी । पूजीं सकल बासना जी की ॥ १ ॥

सबहि बंदि मागहिं बरदाना । भाइन्ह सहित राम कल्याना ॥ २ ॥

अंतरहित सुर आसिष देहीं । मुदित मातु अंचल भरि लेहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

dēva pitara pūjē bidhi nīkī. pūjīm sakala bāsanā jī kī. 1.
 sabahi bandi māgahim̄ baradānā. bhā'inha sahita rāma kalyānā. 2.
 antarahita sura āsiṣa dēhīm̄. mudita mātu anācala bhari lēhīm̄. 3.

The mothers affectionately offered their worship and respect to the gods and spirits of ancestors by whose blessings all the desires of their hearts were fulfilled¹. (1)

They prayed to all of them (i.e. all the gods and ancestors) to seek their blessings, requesting them to be benevolent, kind and munificent towards Lord Ram and his brothers (Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan). (2)

The gods and holy spirits obliged the mothers by sincerely blessings the four brothers profusely even as the mothers accepted these blessings in a symbolic manner by spreading the ends of their garments². (3)

[Note—Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 190.

¹A mother’s most cherished dream is to see her beloved son married to a suitable girl. In this case, by the grace of the gods and the blessings of the spirits of ancestors, not only Lord Ram but all his other three brothers too were married to the most beautiful princesses of that time. It was like a boon multiplied many times over. This filled the heart of the three mothers, Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi, with exultation and euphoria of the highest kind. They wished to profusely thank and express their heart-felt gratitude to the gods and the ancestors by worshipping them and praying to them.

²When someone begs for something he spreads his hands before the giver. Similarly, when the mothers sought blessings from the gods and spirits of ancestors for their four sons they spread the end of their garments as a symbolic gesture of accepting these blessings.]

भूपति बोलि बराती लीन्हे । जान बसन मनि भूषन दीन्हे ॥ ४ ॥
 आयसु पाइ राखि उर रामहि । मुदित गए सब निज निज धामहि ॥ ५ ॥

bhūpati bōli barātī līnhē. jāna basana mani bhūṣana dīnhē. 4.
 āyasu pā'i rākhi ura rāmahi. mudita ga'e saba nija nija dhāmahi. 5.

Meanwhile, the king (Dasrath) invited all the members of the marriage party to thank them and honouring them with gifts of vehicles, clothes, ceremonial robes, gems and ornaments¹. (4)

After that (i.e. after receiving gifts and honours from the king as a token of formal farewell) all of them enshrined the beautiful image of Lord Ram in their hearts and went back to their homes joyfully. (5)

[Note—¹Refer also to: Janki Mangal, verse no. 191.

It was, and still is, customary to say good-bye to guests by giving them gifts. We see the same procedure in Uttar Kand when Lord Ram had bid good-bye to his friends, the senior monkeys such as Angad and Sugriv, the bear king Jamvant, the

demon king Vibhishan, and the head of the boatmen community called Nishad, who all had come to Ayodhya with the Lord when he returned at the end of his 14 years of forest exile and his successful campaign at Lanka. We also see that at the time of their departure for their homes, Lord Ram had requested all of them to keep him in their hearts as a token of remembrance and a bond of eternal friendship. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 16—to Doha no. 17 Ka; and Doha no. 18 Kha.]

पुर नर नारि सकल पहिराए । घर घर बाजन लगे बधाए ॥ ६ ॥
जाचक जन जाचहिं जोड़ जोड़ । प्रमुदित राउ देहिं सोड़ सोड़ ॥ ७ ॥
सेवक सकल बजनिआ नाना । पूरन किए दान सनमाना ॥ ८ ॥

pura nara nāri sakala pahirā'ē. ghara ghara bājana lagē badhā'ē. 6.
jācaka jana jācahiṁ jō'i jō'i. pramudita rā'u dēhiṁ sō'i sō'i. 7.
sēvaka sakala bajani'ā nānā. pūrana ki'ē dāna sanamānā. 8.

Not only were the invited guests who had gone with the marriage party (to Janakpur) honoured by gifting of robes and clothes, the kings had also honoured the men and the women of the city by giving them robes of honour¹.

Musical instruments were played and felicitous songs were sung in each household of the city to celebrate² the occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram and his three brothers. (6)

Whatever was desired by those who came to accept gifts from the king were cheerfully and liberally given whatever they had wanted. The king did not hesitate in satisfying any of them³. (7)

The king satiated all the servants, attendants and musicians by giving away whatever gifts they wanted and bestowing upon them honours in accordance to their ranks and services so much so that all of them were fully contented and happy. (8)

[Note—¹The king was very generous and magnanimous because whenever he decided to give gifts, he did it liberally with an open heart and without distinction. He ensured that his subjects were kept happy and contented, and they never felt discriminated against or alienated from the higher echelons of the society or from the royal family. There are ample instances of the citizens receiving gifts from the king or the queens directly and personally—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 196 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 295—to Chaupai line no. 1 that follows this Doha at the time when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya.

²Playing of musical instruments and singing of auspicious songs in every household whenever there was any good development is narrated on many other occasions also. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 194 at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his brothers; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 296 at the time when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived at Ayodhya.

This showed that all the citizens of the kingdom shared the joys of the royal family equally, and there was a sort of community feeling and bonhomies amongst the

people. After all, the happiness of the people was what a good king wanted, and the subjects of a noble king loved him so much and reciprocated the king's love for them by sharing the king's sorrow and happiness as if it was their own affair. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 100; Doha no. 37 and Chaupai line no. 1 that follow it; from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 46—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 49; and Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 156 (at the time of Dasrath's death).

³A similar idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 326 which says that king Dasrath had liberally given away whatever was sought as gifts by all those who came to seek them from him at the end of the marriage rituals of the four brothers at Janakpur.

Refer also to Baal Kand, Doha no. 196 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 where a similar idea is expressed, and the occasion was the birth of Lord Ram at Ayodhya.]

दो०. देहिं असीस जोहारि सब गावहिं गुन गन गाथ ।
तब गुर भूसुर सहित गृहँ गवनु कीन्ह नरनाथ ॥ ३५१ ॥

dōhā.

dēhiṁ asīsa jōhāri saba gāvahiṁ guna gana gātha.
taba gura bhūsura sahita gṛham̐ gavanu kīnha naranātha. 351.

All those who received gifts and honours saluted the king, blessed him and praised his glories with a loud chorus.

After that, the king proceeded to the palace, accompanied by his guru (sage Vasistha) and other Brahmins¹. (Doha no. 351.)

[Note—¹The gifts and other honours were given by the king to the guests, the alms-seekers, the servants, the attendants and the musicians etc. outside the gates of the royal palace. When the king entered the palace, he was accompanied by his guru and many other Brahmins. Though it is not specifically mentioned here, one of them was sage Vishwamitra. It will be clear later on when the sage is singled out for special thanks and honours by the king as well as Lord Ram personally in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 359; and Chaupai line nos. 3-10 that precede Doha no. 360.]

चौ०. जो बसिष्ट अनुसासन दीन्ही । लोक बेद बिधि सादर कीन्ही ॥ १ ॥
भूसुर भीर देखि सब रानी । सादर उठीं भाग्य बड़ जानी ॥ २ ॥
पाय पखारि सकल अन्हवाए । पूजि भली बिधि भूप जेवाँए ॥ ३ ॥
आदर दान प्रेम परिपोषे । देत असीस चले मन तोषे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jō basiṣṭa anusāsana dīnhī. lōka bēda bidhi sādara kīnhī. 1.
bhūsura bhīra dēkhi saba rānī. sādara uṭhīm bhāgya baṛa jānī. 2.
pāya pakhāri sakala anhavā'ē. pūji bhalī bidhi bhūpa jēvām'ē. 3.

ādara dāna prēma paripōṣē. dēta asīsa calē mana tōṣē. 4.

Whatever instructions were given by sage Vasistha, all were diligently and respectfully followed (by the king, Dasrath) in accordance with the laid-down procedure established by tradition in the society and prescribed by the Vedas (scriptures)¹. (1)

When the queens saw the crowd of Brahmins, literally the “honourable gods of earth” (who had accompanied the king when he had entered the inner part of the palace as narrated in Doha no. 351), they got up to greet these Brahmins and to show their respects to them, regarding their (Brahmin’s) visit as their (queens’) good fortune. (2)

Then they (the queens as well as the king) duly washed the feet of these respected Brahmins (as a gesture of showing respect to them), and helped them to do their ablutions. After that, the king duly worshipped them (the Brahmins) in all possible ways, and then served them food so that they could be fully satisfied with their meal. (3)

The Brahmins were fully satisfied with the respect and honour, the gifts and donations, as well as the love and affections that was shown to them (by the king and the queens), and thus contented and happy, they profusely blessed the royals and went their ways.² (4)

[Note—¹King Dasrath had consulted his guru, sage Vasistha, on every important occasion. Since the sage was the royal priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya, he had presided over all the rituals of marriage at Janakpur on behalf of the royal family of Ayodhya, and oversaw the rites when the grooms returned home. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precedes Doha no. 359; and Chaupai line no. 10 that precede Doha no. 325.

All the rituals were done in accordance with the established norms and traditions of the society as well as in the way prescribed in the Veda—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 349.

Earlier, during the actual marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and his brothers, the same system of obeying the edicts of the Vedas and following established traditions was observed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line no. 5 that precede Doha no. 323; (iii) Chanda line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 324; and (iv) Chanda line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²Refer also to Tulsidas’ book “Janki Mangal”, verse no. 189.

We have read earlier in Doha no. 351 that after seeing off the rest of the guests who had accompanied the marriage party of Lord Ram, as well as the citizens of Ayodhya at the gates of the palace, the king had entered the palace along with the Brahmins and his guru. When the queens saw the king coming inside the palace with the honourable Brahmins, they immediately got up and paid their obeisance to the Brahmins. It is customary to first honour the Brahmins by washing their feet with the idea that they represent the gods of heaven on earth. Worshipping them is regarded as being equivalent to worshipping the gods. This is done by washing the feet of the Brahmins, and then helping them in their ritualistic ablutions. This usually involves a symbolic sprinkling of water on the body and changing into new or washed clothes.

After this is done, the Brahmins are fed properly with the best of food that the host can offer. Finally, the Brahmins are given gifts before they are seen off. The Brahmins, on their part, bless the host.

Another important point is that usually these Brahmins came to the king in groups and were accompanied by their chief, sage Vasistha—for instance, refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193.

Whenever the Brahmins were invited by the king, they were duly worshipped—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 197 where we read that when king Dasrath invited sage Vasistha to baptise and give names to the four sons, the king had duly worshipped the sage.

This worship included “washing of the feet” and “feeding the guest”. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 207 when king Dasrath had washed the feet of sage Vishwamitra and fed him excellent meal at the time when the great sage had gone to the king with a request that Lord Ram and Laxman be sent with him to his hermitage so that the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice could be eliminated.

Washing of feet of an honoured guest, repeatedly bowing the head before him to show one’s respect, and offering something to eat as a means of refreshment is an old tradition and method of hospitality since time immemorial. When Lord Ram had visited the old woman devotee Sabari in the forest, she too had brought water and washed the Lord’s feet, and then offered fruits for refreshment—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 34 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-10.

Another tradition was to call a large group of Brahmins whenever there was some good event or news, and give liberal gifts to them. The satisfied Brahmins on their part profusely blessed the giver of gifts. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 295 which describes that at the time the news of Lord Ram’s marriage arrived in Ayodhya, the queens summoned all the Brahmins and gave them abundant gifts.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 330—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 331.

This practice of a king moving with a group of Brahmins was followed in Janakpur also as we read that when king Janak had gone to meet sage Vishwamitra when the latter arrived at Janakpur, the king was accompanied by a large delegation of Brahmins—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 214.

We also read in this context that king Janak had showed his respects to all the sages who accompanied sage Vishwamitra by bowing his head to them, and the sages had blessed him, which made the king feel exceptionally blessed—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 215.]

बहु बिधि कीन्हि गाधिसुत पूजा । नाथ मोहि सम धन्य न दूजा ॥ ५ ॥

कीन्हि प्रसंसा भूपति भूरी । रानिन्ह सहित लीन्हि पग धूरी ॥ ६ ॥

bahu bidhi kīnhi gādhisuta pūjā. nātha mōhi sama dhan'ya na dūjā. 5.

kīnhi prasansā bhūpati bhūrī. rāninha sahita līnhi paga dhūrī. 6.

[The king felt especially obliged and grateful to sage Vishwamitra because all the happiness and joy associated with the marriage of the four princes was due to this sage. Had Vishwamitra not taken Lord Ram and Laxman to Janakpur to attend the

bow-breaking ceremony, had he not given permission to Lord Ram to go to the royal garden where the Lord met Sita for the first time, had he not blessed Lord Ram that his internal desire to marry Sita would be fulfilled, had he not ordered Lord Ram to break the bow when all other kings and princes had failed, and once the bow was broken and the marriage of Lord Ram and Sita finalised, had he not ordered that king Dasrath be invited with his other sons, the wave of happiness that has today submerged the city of Ayodhya and overwhelmed the royal family would not have come to happen.

Therefore, the king wished to show his special regards for sage Vishwamitra and offer his personal obeisance to him separately as narrated in these three verses.]

The obliged king offered his special regards and thanks to sage Vishwamitra (known as “Gaadhi-sut” as he was the son of sage Gaadhi) by worshipping him in many different ways. [To wit, the king repeatedly worshipped the sage as he did not feel satisfied by a single formal worship. It was done to express the king’s heart-felt emotions of thanks and a sense of profound obligations towards the sage.]

The king then politely submitted—‘Oh revered sage! No one else is as lucky and privileged in the world as I am today. [It is because for two primary reasons: one, I am able to personally worship you today, and secondly, all my sons have been married not due to any efforts made by me or their own efforts, but as a blessing of a sage of your repute and mystical powers. Who else in this world is so lucky that you would be so kind upon him? I had not even invited you to come to Ayodhya, but you came to me voluntarily to take Ram away to your hermitage. The events that followed—liberation of Ahilya, and the killing of Tadka and other demons named Marich and Subahu who were defiling your fire sacrifice, and finally the breaking of the formidable bow which put to shame the strength and valour of all the mighty kings and princes of the world—helped establish the fame and reputation of my son Ram in the world, and all this happened due to your mercy and graciousness. Besides this, you have taught my sons, Sri Ram and Laxman, certain martial skills that are only known by you, and how could my sons have learnt them if you hadn’t taught these to them?

Oh respected sage, to be frank, these marvelous achievements wouldn’t have been possible at all had you not been exceptionally gracious upon me and my sons. How can I not recognise this blessing of yours? Who else has got this blessing anywhere else in this creation? So, am I not exceptionally blessed and lucky?

A sage of your reputation and mystical powers first took the trouble to come down walking all the way from your far-away hermitage to my kingdom, then you had showered fatherly love upon my two beloved sons, Sri Ram and Laxman, and then you had taught them excellent skills of warfare and use of weapons as well as how to conquer hunger and thirst during the long ordeal of the battle-field, and then got my sons married, and finally took time off from your spiritual pursuits to come to Ayodhya instead of going back to your hermitage directly from Janakpur. How can I not acknowledge all this?’¹ (5)

The king profusely praised the sage in manifold ways, and then he, along with his queens, accepted the dust of the revered sage’s feet (to show his greatest respect and reverence for the great sage)². (6)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 32 where king Janak had too worshipped sage Vishwamitra with special attention.

²Accepting the dust of a sage's feet, especially if the sage happened to be one's guru, is a great way of achieving all sorts of successes in this world. King Dasrath has acknowledged this clearly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 3.]

भीतर भवन दीन्ह बर बासू । मन जोगवत रह नृपु रनिवासू ॥ ७ ॥

पूजे गुर पद कमल बहोरी । कीन्हि बिनय उर प्रीति न थोरी ॥ ८ ॥

bhītara bhavana dīnha bara bāsū. mana jōgavata raha nrpu ranivāsū. 7.

pūjē gura pada kamala bahōrī. kīnhi binaya ura prīti na thōrī. 8.

The king lodged the sage (Vishwamitra) in an excellent quarter inside his own palace, and all the members of the king's family, including his queens and other relatives, were on their toes to take care of the wishes and comforts of the revered guest-sage (for as long as he wished to stay there)¹. (7)

The king then worshipped the lotus-like (i.e. revered) feet of his guru, sage Vasistha, and prayed to him with affection that was no less than the affection that the king had for sage Vishwamitra². (8)

[Note—¹As we have observed above in the note accompanying verse nos. 4-6 herin above, the king was highly obliged to sage Vishwamitra, and the sage was his special guest-of-honour. So it is natural that all the best of royal care and services were extended for the comfort of the sage.

Another important point to note is that king Dasrath had first worshipped sage Vishwamitra, and only after that did he worship his own guru sage Vasistha as will be clear in the next verse no. 8. This clearly shows that the king wished to say a special “thanks” to sage Vishwamitra.

The sage was given residence inside the royal palace of the king to stress that he was a special guest-of-honour whom the king and the queens wanted to serve personally, and not leave this service to other royal attendants. When a close friend or relative or someone who is very close and dear comes to visit, the guest is accommodated in one's own house and not in a hotel. Hence, sage Vishwamitra was given residence in the king's personal home, the palace, instead of the royal guest-house.

Besides this consideration, another reason to lodge the sage inside the palace was that he was an outsider who lived in a far-away hermitage, and was not a resident of Ayodhya like sage Vasistha. Perhaps the official royal guest-house's rooms were occupied by other sages, Brahmins and elders who were invited by the king on the occasion of the marriage of his sons, which is quite probable and practical. Hence, the king decided to lodge sage Vishwamitra inside his own palace to show special respect to him and to tell the sage that he is a distinguished guest.

²It was very vital for the king to emphasise upon his guru, sage Vasistha, that he has great respect for the latter, and that the guru should not take umbrage at the king first worshipping sage Vishwamitra. The king and his family had the greatest of regards for sage Vasistha—this is clear in Doha no. 352 below.

Sage Vasistha was a ‘resident’ guru whom the king could meet as many times as he wanted, while sage Vishwamitra was a ‘visiting’ guru who would go away soon and the king would not be able to meet him for a long time again. So therefore, the ‘guest guru’ needed to be shown special privileges, but this does not mean that the king has any lesser regard for guru Vasistha.

Sage Vasistha was a wise man, and so he fully understood the stand of the king. This will be clear when he blessed the entire royal family—refer Doha no. 352, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that follow it herein below.]

दो०. बधुन्ह समेत कुमार सब रानिन्ह सहित महीसु ।
पुनि पुनि बंदत गुर चरन देत असीस मुनीसु ॥ ३५२ ॥

dōhā.

badhunha samēta kumāra saba rāninha sahita mahīsu.
puni puni bandata gura carana dēta asīsa munīsu. 352.

All the princes (Lord Ram and his brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan) and their respective brides (Sita, Maandavi, Urmila and Srutkirti respectively), as well as the king (Dasrath) along with all his queens (Kaushaly, Sumitra and Kaikeyi) repeatedly offered their respects at the feet of the guru (sage Vasistha) even as the sage liberally blessed all of them in return. (Doha no. 352)

[Note—As has been observed in a note appended to verse no. 8 herein above, the king ensured that his guru, sage Vasistha, did not feel offended by the king first worshipping the guest sage Vishwamitra. So, while it is not mentioned that the four princes and their brides had offered their worship to sage Vishwamitra, when the turn of worshipping sage Vasistha came, the entire royal family took part. This pleased Vasistha and he reciprocated by blessing the royal family. Refer also verse nos. 1-2 below.

The importance of honouring one’s guru and holding him in high regards is emphasised by sage Valmiki when he told Lord Ram that the Lord should live in the heart of a person who respects his guru more than anyone else—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chanda line nos. 3 and 8 that precede Doha no. 129.

Even king Janak had the greatest of respect for sage Vasistha, and revered him like a family deity—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 320.

Repeatedly bowing the head before the guru or any senior person is a sign of showing the highest respect to him and expecting blessings in return—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 34.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 359 below in this narrative where we shall read that when the two sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra arrived in the court of king Dasrath, he had worshipped their feet and paid his obeisance to them along with his four sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers.]

चौ०. बिनय कीन्हि उर अति अनुरागें । सुत संपदा राखि सब आगें ॥ १ ॥

नेगु मागि मुनिनायक लीन्हा । आसिरबादु बहुत बिधि दीन्हा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

binaya kīnhi ura ati anurāgēm. suta sampadā rākhi saba āgēm. 1.
nēgu māgi munināyaka līnhā. āsirabādu bahuta bidhi dīnhā. 2.

The king prayed to sage Vasistha with a lot of affection overflowing in his heart, and symbolically submitted himself to the grace of the great sage by placing all his sons and the wealth of the kingdom (in a token manner) before him¹. (1)

The chief amongst the sages (“munināyaka”; i.e. sage Vasistha) however asked for and accepted only his formal share of gifts that are traditionally given to celebrate and commemorate an auspicious occasion (which in this case is the marriage of the four princes).

Having received these gifts, the gracious sage blessed them (the king, the queens, and their four sons with their brides) in many a ways. (2)

[Note—¹The king has shown the same gesture for sage Vishwamitra at the time of the latter’s departure for his hermitage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 360.

The king wished to give many things as gift, but both these sages, i.e. Vishwamitra and Vasistha, only accepted token gifts because they were not greedy.]

उर धरि रामहि सीय समेता । हरषि कीन्ह गुर गवनु निकेता ॥ ३ ॥

बिप्रबधू सब भूप बोलाई । चैल चारु भूषन पहिराई ॥ ४ ॥

ura dhari rāmahi sīya samētā. haraṣi kīnha gura gavanu nikētā. 3.
biprabadhū saba bhūpa bōlāī. caila cāru bhūṣana pahirāī. 4.

The guru (sage Vasistha) enshrined the image of Lord Ram along with Sita in his heart, and then cheerfully went home¹. (3)

The king next called all the wives of the Brahmins, and duly honoured them by giving them wonderful robes and wearing apparels. (4)

[Note—¹There is a remarkable angle to this verse when viewed from the perspective of devotion and spiritualism. When the two verse nos. 2-3 are read together, the meaning that comes out clearly is that sage Vasistha was cheerful only when he enshrined the image of Lord Ram and Sita in his heart, and not because the king had shown him great respect by placing his wealth before him. The reason is that sage Vasistha was the son of Brahma, the creator, and he knew that Lord Ram was in fact Lord Vishnu in a human form, and Sita was goddess Laxmi. Vasistha was not at all interested in material wealth, but his sole pursuit was spiritual bliss. He has clearly told Lord Ram that initially he had declined to become a priest, but when his father, Brahma the creator, told him that if he did so he will have the rarest of rare privilege to serve the Supreme Being incarnated as Lord Ram, he had gladly accepted this job—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 48 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

That is why the enlightened sage Vasistha felt delighted when he enshrined the image of Lord Ram and Sita in his heart.]

बहुरि बोलाइ सुआसिनि लीन्हीं । रुचि बिचारि पहिरावनि दीन्हीं ॥ ५ ॥
नेगी नेग जोग सब लेहीं । रुचि अनुरूप भूपमनि देहीं ॥ ६ ॥

bahuri bōlā'i su'āsini līnhīm. ruci bicāri pahirāvani dīnhīm. 5.
nēgī nēga jōga saba lēhīm. ruci anurūpa bhūpamani dēhīm. 6.

After them, the king summoned all other honourable ladies of the city and gave them clothes according to their choices and wishes. (5)

All of them requested the king to give them gifts that are traditionally given on the occasion of ceremonies, and the king gladly gave them whatever they wished¹. (6)

[Note—¹We have read earlier that the king gave away gold, clothes, gems, horses, elephants and chariots according to the desire of the recipient—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 331.]

प्रिय पाहुने पूज्य जे जाने । भूपति भली भाँति सनमाने ॥ ७ ॥
देव देखि रघुबीर बिबाहू । बरषि प्रसून प्रसंसि उछाहू ॥ ८ ॥

priya pāhunē pūjya jē jānē. bhūpati bhalī bhāmṭi sanamānē. 7.
dēva dēkhi raghubīra bibāhū. barāṣi prasūna prasansi uchāhū. 8.

Then the king properly honoured the rest of the guests whom he thought were qualified for special respect. [Who were they? These guests were the junior Brahmins or sages who had come from all the corners of the great kingdom, from far and near, when they had heard that the marriage party has arrived at Ayodhya. So the king honoured all of them.]¹ (7)

The gods watched the marriage ceremony of Lord Ram and rained flowers (from the heaven), praising the celebrations, the happiness and the ecstasy that accompanied it. (8)

[Note—¹Thus we see that king Dasrath honoured everyone who came to meet him and bless the newly married princes.

Refer also to “Janki Mangal”, verse nos. 189—192.]

दो०. चले निसान बजाइ सुर निज निज पुर सुख पाइ ।
कहत परसपर राम जसु प्रेम न हृदयँ समाइ ॥ ३५३ ॥

dōhā.

calē nisāna bajā'i sura nija nija pura sukha pā'i.
kahata parasapara rāma jasu prēma na hṛdayam̐ samā'i. 353.

The gods played their kettle-drums and went to their respective heavenly abodes. All along the way they animatedly talked about and lauded the glories of Lord Ram with an immense amount of love and affection in their hearts so much so that this emotion could not be contained in and it virtually overflowed from their hearts. (Doha no. 353)

[Note—The gods were the last ones to take leave and return home. They were all overwhelmed with emotions, were ecstatic with joy, and felt nostalgic all the way back to their heavenly abodes. They could not refrain themselves from praising the glories of Lord Ram, animatedly discussing amongst themselves the fine qualities of the Lord, and were lost in the memory of the great events that they had witnessed and would cherish for the rest of their lives in heaven.]

चौ०. सब बिधि सबहि समदि नरनाहू । रहा हृदयँ भरि पूरि उछाहू ॥ १ ॥
जहँ रनिवासु तहाँ पगु धारे । सहित बहूटिन्ह कुअँर निहारे ॥ २ ॥
लिए गोद करि मोद समेता । को कहि सकइ भयउ सुखु जेता ॥ ३ ॥
बधू सप्रेम गोद बैठारीं । बार बार हियँ हरषि दुलारीं ॥ ४ ॥

caupā'i.

saba bidhi sabahi samadi naranāhū. rahā hṛdayam̐ bhari pūri uchāhū. 1.
jaham̐ ranivāsu tahām̐ pagu dhārē. sahita bahūṭinha ku'am̐ra nihārē. 2.
li'ē gōda kari mōda samētā. kō kahi saka'i bhaya'u sukhu jētā. 3.
badhū saprēma gōda baiṭhārīm̐. bāra bāra hiyam̐ haraṣi dulārīm̐. 4.

Having shown everyone all possible respects and honours, the king's heart felt contented and overjoyed¹. (1)

Then the king stepped inside the private quarters of his palace (where the queens and the newly arrived brides lived)². There he beheld the four princes (his sons) alongside their respective brides. (2)

Feeling blessed and exhilarated, he sat the four young princes affectionately on his lap³. Say, who can ever narrate the degree of satisfaction and joys the king experienced at that time. [That is, when the king showed his love and affection for his newly married sons by making them sit on his lap, there was no limit of his happiness, joy and contentedness, and it is not possible to assign any measurement to it.] (3)

The king also made his daughters-in-law⁴ sit with their respective grooms on his lap (to show equal affection and love for them). Feeling exhilarated in his heart, the overjoyed king (the father of the sons and the father-in-law of the brides) expressed his affection for all of them by various gestures of endearment. (4)

[Note—¹We shall read below that till this point of time, the king was engaged in formalities that were to be done—receiving and honouring guests, the ordinary citizens as well as the sages and Brahmins. Once this was over, he retired to his

private quarters of the palace to sit with his family and enjoy some private moments of peace and relaxation. The following verse nos. 2-8 and Doha no. 354 that follow them narrate these moments.

²This shows that the residential quarters of the queens were separate from the rest of the royal palace. All formal functions and receptions were done in the front part of the palace or a separate palace where the king lived, while the female members lived in a separate or adjacent part of the sprawling complex. The newly married brides were lodged under the care of their mothers-in-law, the three queens (Kaushalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi). This is why the king saw his “daughters-in-law” here, and not earlier when the queens had worshipped the Brahmins etc. as narrated in Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 352.

This deduction—that the king’s personal residential quarter was separate from that of his queens—is also based on Baal Kand’s Doha no. 355 below where it is said that after giving instructions that the children be allowed to retire and go to bed as they are feeling sleepy (because they must be tired), the king went away to his “own” palace.

²⁻³A father sits his son and daughter on his lap as a gesture of great love and affection for his children, and there is nothing wrong in it. For Dasrath, the brides were like his daughters, and since he did not have any daughter of his own (because he had only four sons, Lord Ram and his three brothers, Bharat, Laxman and Shatrughan), the four young brides filled this gap in his life and he got a god-sent opportunity to shower his love on them to fulfill his heart’s desire that longed for a daughter.

Dasrath felt very blessed as now he has four loving sons and four equally loving daughters. He doted upon them with diligence, and “sitting on the lap” is a gesture of extreme affection that a parent exhibits for his or her child.]

देखि समाजु मुदित रनिवासू । सब कें उर अनंद कियो बासू ॥ ५ ॥
 कहेउ भूप जिमि भयउ बिबाहू । सुनि सुनि हरषु होत सब काहू ॥ ६ ॥
 जनक राज गुन सीलु बड़ाई । प्रीति रीति संपदा सुहाई ॥ ७ ॥
 बहुबिधि भूप भाट जिमि बरनी । रानीं सब प्रमुदित सुनि करनी ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi samāju mudita ranivāsū. saba kēm ura ananda kiyō bāsū. 5.
 kahē'u bhūpa jimi bhaya'u bibāhū. suni suni haraṣu hōta saba kāhū. 6.
 janaka rāja guna sīlu baṛā'ī. prīti rīti sampadā suhā'ī. 7.
 bahubidhi bhūpa bhāṭa jimi baranī. rānīm saba pramudita suni karanī. 8.

The ladies of the palace were delighted to behold this spectacle (of the king sitting on a throne with his four sons and four daughters-in-law seated affectionately on his lap, and he fondly expressing his affection for the four couples). Everyone’s heart became an abode of happiness and joy. (5)

The overwhelmed and overjoyed king described to the queens and other female members of the royal household (who had stayed back at Ayodhya and were eager to hear how the marriage function was held at Janakpur) the details of the way the

marriage ceremony was organised. All of them (the queens and other members) became thrilled and exhilarated as they heard the detailed narration. (6)

King Dasrath was so overwhelmed by the intensity of affection shown by king Janak as well as by the friendly, amiable and courteous nature of the latter that he paid rich tributes to Janak by enthusiastically describing his excellent qualities, his fine virtues, his good manners, his magnificence and glories, his expression of affection and friendliness, his wealth, prosperity and opulence, and everything that was beautiful about him (as a gesture of expressing his own gratitude, respect and honour for king Janak, and simultaneously narrating the events at Janakpur for the benefit of the queens and other members of the royal household who did not accompany the marriage party to Janakpur, but were nevertheless very eager to hear what had happened there). (7)

The glowing tributes that Dasrath enthusiastically paid to honour Janak and laud his noble virtues and great glories in flowering terms made it appear as the former was a bard and a minstrel of Janak, and was on the pay-roll of the latter!

The queens felt delighted when they heard all that had happened in the course of the marriage ceremony of the four brothers, as well as of the glorious deeds of king Janak. (8)

[Note—It is certainly a sincere and honest praise when one praises another person behind his back. King Dasrath did not praise Janak in public because it would seem merely a formal expression of honour from one king for another. This was a private moment, and his lauding Janak and his excellent qualities before the members of his family showed that Dasrath was indeed overwhelmed by Janak's lovable nature and excellent qualities. This also shows that Dasrath did not regret this relationship with Janak.

Other aspects of this praise are these:-

(a) The four daughters-in-law were seated very near to Dasrath (refer: Chaupai line no. 4 herein above), and they were hearing all that Dasrath said. Praising Janak profusely and expressing great satisfaction at the reception accorded to the marriage party at Janakpur as well as the conduct of the entire marriage ceremony signalled to the brides that they are warmly welcome in their new homes, and that their in-laws were very happy and satisfied with this new relationship. This was essential to build self-confidence in the four young brides who had stepped out of their homes for the first time in their lives, and who longed for love and affection that their own father, king Janak and his bother Kushdhwaj, had shown them all along. Praising Janak in great abundance not only instilled a sense of confidence in the brides and made them feel that they are amongst friendly people who cherish the new relationship and are satisfied with it, but also that their adopted family is honourable and knows how to show respect to others. They aren't selfish, rude or snobbish by nature—criticising others behind their backs and sneering at things that are done and finished.

(b) The wise king subtly hinted to all the members of the royal household, the queens as well as the rest of them that he was extremely happy with this alliance, and that king Janak was a reputed and well-established king. Therefore, the four brides should be treated with great respect and dignity that they deserve as princesses of a great kingdom, and they should never be allowed to feel insulted or home-sick. This will be clear below in Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 355.]

दो०. सुतन्ह समेत नहाइ नृप बोलि बिप्र गुर ग्याति ।
भोजन कीन्ह अनेक बिधि घरी पंच गइ राति ॥ ३५४ ॥

dōhā.

sutanha samēta nahā'i nrpa bōli bipra gura gyāti.
bhōjana kīnha anēka bidhi gharī pañca ga'i rāti. 354.

After this narration (as described in the forgoing verses), the king and his sons bathed. Then the king summoned the Brahmins, his guru (sage Vasistha), and elders of the society. He sat down together with them and ate a sumptuous meal consisting of a large variety of delectable dishes till 'five Gharis' of the night passed. [Technically, 1 Ghari = approximately 24 minutes; but generally the word means "a suitable time". Hence, "five Gharis" means 5 x 24 minutes = 120 minutes = 2 hours. Or that a suitable time of the night passed in feasting.] (Doha no. 354)

[Noted—The "five Gharis of the night" indicates that roughly 2 hours were spent by the king and his four sons in eating their first meal after returning from Janakpur, and that the feast was held late in the night, and not in the evening hours. This conclusion is based on the fact that soon we shall read that the king had ordered that proper arrangements must be made to let the "children" go to bed and sleep as they were sleepy, and therefore must be tired—refer: Doha no. 355. Then the king himself went away to his palace.

It ought to be noted here that this meal is the only one mentioned after the marriage party returned from Janakpur. It was therefore a formal feast that the king organized for the Brahmins, his guru and other elders of the kingdom. The proof of this meal being a formal feast organized by the king to celebrate the occasion of the return of the marriage party with the brides and the grooms lies in the fact that felicitous songs were sung by female members of the royal household as the feast was underway—refer Chaupai line no. 1 herein below.]

चौ०. मंगलगान करहिं बर भामिनि । भै सुखमूल मनोहर जामिनि ॥ १ ॥
अँचइ पान सब काहूँ पाए । स्रग सुगंध भूषित छबि छाए ॥ २ ॥
रामहि देखि रजायसु पाई । निज निज भवन चले सिर नाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

maṅgalaḡāna karahim̄ bara bhāmini. bhai sukhamūla manōhara jāmini. 1.
am̄ca'i pāna saba kāhūm̄ pā'ē. sraga sugandha bhūṣita chabi chā'ē. 2.
rāmahi dēkhi rajāyasu pāī. nija nija bhavana calē sira nāī. 3.

As the feast was underway, the lovely female members of the royal household sang auspicious songs of felicitation. This gave the night an aura of enchantment and merriment as if it was a receptacle of happiness and joy. (1)

Everyone (i.e. the king, his four sons, and the invited guests—the Brahmins, the guru and the elders of the society) was offered water to wash their hands and rinse their mouths. Betel-leaves were then served as mouth-freshner. Then they were all adorned

with garlands and honoured by offering perfumes such as sandalwood and other types of scents. (2)

The invited guest at the meal once again looked at their beloved Lord Ram and taking permission from the king all of them went away to their respective homes. (3)

[Note—This was a private feast and not a public banquet as the one that was held at Janakpur where all the members of the marriage party were invited and fed a sumptuous meal—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 328—to Doha no. 329.

Excepting this, the rest was the same—the variety of dishes served and the singing of songs.]

प्रेमु प्रमोदु बिनोदु बड़ाई । समउ समाजु मनोहरताई ॥ ४ ॥

कहि न सकहिं सत सारद सेसू । बेद बिरंचि महेस गनेसू ॥ ५ ॥

सो मैं कहौं कवन बिधि बरनी । भूमिनागु सिर धरइ कि धरनी ॥ ६ ॥

prēmu pramōdu binōdu barā'ī. sama'u samāju manōharatā'ī. 4.

kahi na sakahim sata sārada sēsū. bēda biranči mahēsa ganēsū. 5.

sō main kahaurṁ kavana bidhi baranī. bhūmināgu sira dhara'i ki dharanī. 6.

The flow of love and affection, the intensity of happiness and joy, the atmosphere of merriment and informal bonhomie, the praises that were sung (of the king, his sons, their glories, and the general conduct of the entire marriage ceremony), the auspiciousness of the time and the grandeur of the assembly, as well as the general environment of cheerfulness and exhilaration that prevailed at that time [4] was so profound and infectious that hundreds of Saradas (goddess of speech), Seshnaths (the thousand-tongued serpent), the Vedas (scriptures), the Creator known as Biranchi (Brahma), Lord Mahesh (Shiva) and Lord Ganesh (who is an expert in language and grammar) cannot describe them independently and even if they try it together¹ [5]. (4-5)

Well then say, how can I (the author of this book Ram Charit Manas, the great poet-saint Goswami Tulsidas) even imagine doing it in any possible way? How can it be expected that a terrestrial serpent or a tortoise can hold the earth from below on its hood or on its back respectively². (6)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 12 where all these entities have been cited in the same context but with a different use of language when Tulsidas says that how can he ever narrate the divine story of Lord Ram which defies being described even by Sarada, Seshnath, Lord Shiva, Brahma, the Vedas and Purans so much so that they threw up their hands in failure and incompetence to declare that the Lord's story is "Neti-Neti", i.e. 'not this not this'. That is, the story cannot be subjected to any limits of words and their connotations and interpretations. In other words, this timeless story is both "this that has been said", as well as "that which has not been said"! It is infinite and unlimited in its meaning and interpretations.

This is a standard method adopted by Tulsidas to basically say that the thing or situation he wants to describe is so astoundingly wonderful and so immensely great

that it is beyond his means to sufficiently describe it in its entirety or find words that would convey the exact meaning of what he wants to say with perfect fineness. He can only give a general idea of what happened at the cited moment or the magnificence and grandeur of the occasion.

²‘Seshnath’ is a celestial serpent who is supposed to hold the earth on its thousand hoods; he is the favourite of Lord Vishnu and helps the Lord recline blissfully on his coiled body as he floats on the surface of the celestial ocean of milk known as “Kshir-saagar”. But this does not mean that an ordinary serpent can hold the earth on its hood.

Similarly, Lord Kurma, the “tortoise” incarnation of Lord Vishnu, had held the earth on his back to prevent it from sinking into the nether-world and the void of the cosmos when the gods and the demons had used a huge mountain as a churning-rod to churn the celestial ocean in search of Amrit, the elixir of eternity and bliss. But that does not mean that any ordinary tortoise would be able to hold the earth on its back.

This shows the humbleness and modesty of Tulsidas because it is not that he was not competent to write an excellent prose or poetry as is proved by the magnificent books that he wrote as masterpieces of Hindi literature that has not seen their parallel ever since his time, but still he did not wish to seem pretentious and boastful.

Remember: more than writing a classic story he was actually journeying on his spiritual pursuit by narrating the divine story of the Lord of his soul, Lord Ram. He was not writing to show-off his talent or skills, but for the peace of his own self and as a token of his service for his beloved and dearest Lord Ram. Tulsidas has made this abundantly clear himself in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, in extensive verses extending from (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8—right upto to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 14; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 28—right upto Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31; and (iii) finally Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 34.]

नृप सब भाँति सबहि सनमानी । कहि मृदु बचन बोलाई रानी ॥ ७ ॥
बधू लरिकनीं पर घर आई । राखेहु नयन पलक की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

nṛpa saba bhāmṭi sabahi sanamānī. kahi mṛdu bacana bōlā’īm rānī. 7.
badhū larikanīm para ghara ā’īm. rākhēhu nayana palaka kī nā’īm. 8.

In this way, the king duly honoured all those who were invited for the meal. [Refer: Doha no. 354 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-2 herein above.]

After the guest departed, he called the queens and told them in a sweet voice (politely)—(7)

‘The brides are still young (and inexperienced) girls, and they have come to another (person’s) home. Therefore be careful to take proper care of them just like the eyelids diligently protect the eyes¹. (8)

[Note—¹The eyelids cover the delicate eyes and protect them from all harm at all times. Even when there is no apparent harmful situation, the eyelids constantly flap open and shut to tell the eyes that they are on alert and ever vigilant to extend their

shield of protection to the eyes at all times of the day and night. The same metaphor of the eyelids protecting the eyes has been cited in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 59 where mother Kaushalya says that she has been loving Sita and taking care of her like the eyelids do for the eyes, and that she should stay back in Ayodhya instead of going to the forest with Lord Ram so that she (Kaushalya) can survive by showering her love on Sita and embracing her whenever she remembered her son Lord Ram; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 142 which says that Lord Ram took extra care of Laxman in the forest just like the eyelids protect the eye.

Presently, the king asks the queen-mothers to be extra vigilant for the happiness and comfort of the four princesses, and to take all necessary steps so that they feel at home.

We shall read below in Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 358 below that the mothers slept with their daughters-in-law clasped in their arms (as if they were infants) just like a serpent sleeps clasping the gem that emerges from its hood.

This verse is remarkable in the sense that it shows how sensitive, practical and wise Dasrath was, for he did not want to leave anything to chance. He realized that the four girls were feeling uneasy in an alien home, and so specifically mentions this to ensure that all-out efforts are made to integrate them in their new homes and they are made comfortable.]

दो०. लरिका श्रमित उनीद बस सयन करावहु जाइ ।
अस कहि गे बिश्रामगृहँ राम चरन चितु लाइ ॥ ३५५ ॥

dōhā.

larikā śramita unīda basa sayana karāvahu jā'i.
asa kahi gē biśrāmagṛham' rāma carana citu lā'i. 355.

The children are tired and sleepy, so put them to bed (i.e. let them go and sleep).'

Saying this, the king went to his own palace's bedroom to retire for the night, enshrining the holy feet of Lord Ram in his sub-conscious mind. [To wit, the king had his mind fixed on the holy feet of Lord Ram, and even as he slept his sub-conscious mind remembered the Lord and his divine form as well as his holy lotus-like feet.] (Doha no. 355)

[Note—In his previous life, king Dasrath was Manu, the first male on earth. He had done severe Tapa (penance) to have a divine glimpse of Lord Vishnu. When the Lord revealed himself before Manu, the latter told the Lord that he feels fully contented by seeing the Lord's holy feet—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 149. In other words, though Manu saw the entire divine form of Lord Vishnu, his mind was focused on the Lord's divine feet. It is this holy feet that every devotee of the Lord wishes to serve. Hence, when Dasrath left to retire for the night, and even as he slept, his attention was fixed on Lord Ram's holy feet because the Lord was none else but Lord Vishnu himself in this form.]

चौ०. भूप बचन सुनि सहज सुहाए । जरित कनक मनि पलंग डसाए ॥ १ ॥

सुभग सुरभि पय फेन समाना । कोमल कलित सुपेतीं नाना ॥ २ ॥
 उपबरहन बर बरनि न जाहीं । स्रग सुगंध मनिमंदिर माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
 रतनदीप सुठि चारु चँदोवा । कहत न बनइ जान जेहिं जोवा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa bacana suni sahaja suhā'ē. jarita kanaka mani palamṅga ḍasā'ē. 1.
 subhaga surabhi paya phēna samānā. kōmala kalita supētīm nānā. 2.
 upabarahana bara barani na jāhīm. sraga sugandha manimandira māhīm. 3.
 ratanadīpa suṭhi cāru camḍōvā. kahata na bana'i jāna jēhīm jōvā. 4.

[Verse nos. 1-4 describe the beds that were prepared for the grooms.]

Hearing the naturally pleasant and sweet words of the king, the mothers arranged beds (on which the four sons would retire for the night). The bedsteads were made of gold and studded with precious gems. (1)

On these bedsteads were spread beautiful soft mattresses which had magnificent covers that were as soft and fluffy-white as the froth of a cow's milk. (2)

On top of them were the pillows so wonderful that they defied description. The 'Mandir'¹ (the decorated bedroom) which was especially prepared for the purpose was adorned with jewels, and was full of fragrance emanating from the garlands made of fresh blooming flowers that were hung all around this room, as well as from the different scents that were either sprayed in the room or kept there (in containers). (3)

There were lamps made out of gems, and the canopy was most marvelous to behold. Taken all-in-all, the sight was so fabulously beautiful that even those who saw it were unable to describe it. (4)

[Note—¹The word "Mandir" has many connotation, such as a temple, a home, a residence, a room etc., depending upon the context in which it is used. The devotee's heart where he enshrines an image of his revered deity is also called a "Mandir" because it is here that the Lord's image lives in the same way as it is consecrated externally in a temple made of brick and mortar. The room where Lord Ram would sleep was also a "Mandir" because Ram was not an ordinary prince but Lord Vishnu himself in a personified form.

Remember: Mother Kaushalya was well aware of who her 'son' actually was, that he was not an ordinary human but an incarnation of the Viraat Purush, one of the many names of Lord Vishnu—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 201, and Doha no. 202 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

So therefore, when Kaushalya arranged for a room where Lord Ram would retire and take rest, she had the concept of a "temple" in her mind rather than a 'bedroom'.

There is a clever use of this word "Mandir" here by the author Tulsidas because it can be interpreted in the way a reader wishes to read it, and at the same time it covers all the other three bedrooms that were simultaneously prepared for the other brothers also.

It is also possible that there were four beds arranged independently for the four brothers to sleep upon in the same "Mandir" or room. This last interpretation seems most plausible as we shall find out below in verse nos. 5-6 where a reading would

give a clear idea that all the brothers had slept on independent beds that were placed in the same room.]

सेज रुचिर रचि रामु उठाए । प्रेम समेत पलंग पौढ़ाए ॥ ५ ॥

अग्या पुनि पुनि भाइन्ह दीन्ही । निज निज सेज सयन तिन्ह कीन्ही ॥ ६ ॥

sēja rucira raci rāmu uṭhā'ē. prēma samēta palamṅga pauṛhā'ē. 5.
agyā puni puni bhā'inha dīnhī. nija nija sēja sayana tinha kīnhī. 6.

The mothers lifted Lord Ram and lovingly escorted him to the bed prepared for him, and made him lie down on it. (5)

Then the Lord repeatedly instructed (in a polite manner; or rather “requested”) his brothers¹ to go and lie down to sleep on their respective beds. (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had to “repeatedly” tell his younger brothers to go and sleep because they had kept standing before him as a mark of great respect.

We have read earlier also that Laxman had to be told repeatedly by Lord Ram to go and sleep when the two brothers had retired after serving their guru sage Vishwamitra in Janakpur during the first night of their stay—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 226.

Similarly, sage Vishwamitra had to repeatedly tell Lord Ram and Laxman to go and sleep when the two brothers were massaging the feet of the sage as he lied down to rest for the night—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 226.]

देखि स्याम मृदु मंजुल गाता । कहहिं सप्रेम बचन सब माता ॥ ७ ॥

मारग जात भयावनि भारी । केहि बिधि तात ताड़का मारी ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi syāma mṛdu maṅjula gātā. kahahim saprēma bacana saba mātā. 7.
māraga jāta bhayāvani bhārī. kēhi bidhi tāta tāṛakā mārī. 8.

As the mothers watched Lord Ram with his dark-complexioned body that looked so fine and delicate, they were all amazed and awe-struck by the astounding deeds that the Lord had done¹. (7)

Wondering how the Lord could achieve all this, the mothers lovingly asked him—‘Oh dear son! Say, how did (or could) you kill Tadka², the fierce and colossus demoness, with your delicate frame? (8)

[Note—Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 109 also.

¹The mothers were dazed and amazed as to how Lord Ram could achieve such astounding feats as fighting with and killing of ferocious and blood-thirsty demons. They had thought that Lord Ram was very young, with a delicate and tender body, and being a pampered prince who had never faced hardships or had never been taught

to engage in war, it was simply nigh impossible for him to do what he actually did—such as killing the demoness Tadaka and the demon Subahu, as well as the huge blood-thirsty demon army, and that too single-handedly! They wondered in astonishment how the Lord did it; how he managed it?

The question is: how did the mothers come to know about these feats of Lord Ram? Well, we have read a little earlier that king Dasrath had narrated all the developments and events while he sat with his queens to tell them everything from the beginning to end—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 354.

So surely, the king must have told the mothers about these events—the killing of Tadaka and Subahu, the banishment of Marich to the island in the far-away ocean, the elimination of the demon army, the protection of the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra, the liberation of Ahilya, and of course, the breaking of the bow and its resultant marriage of Sita with Lord Ram.

We will also recall that when the messengers had arrived from Janakpur with the news of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita, they had narrated to king Dasrath all the great deeds done by Lord Ram that had made the Lord famous throughout the world. Though it is not mentioned that these messengers had specifically said anything about the slaying of the demons or liberation of Ahilya or the protection of the sage's fire sacrifice, but it is a common-sense assumption that they must have surely done it. This deduction is also based on the fact that Dasrath told them that “ever since Lord Ram had gone from Ayodhya with sage Vishwamitra, it was the first time that a true account of the Lord had arrived”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 291.

The way the messengers had answered the king in Doha no. 291 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-3 clearly indicate that they must have told the king of these developments besides narrating how Lord Ram and Sita were married and how the Lord overcame the anger of sage Parashuram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 292—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293.

²This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209. It relates to the time when Lord Ram and Laxman were going with sage Vishwamitra to his hermitage in the forest to protect the sage's fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons.]

दो० घोर निसाचर बिकट भट समर गनहिं नहिं काहु ।
मारे सहित सहाय किमि खल मारीच सुबाहु ॥ ३५६ ॥

dōhā.

ghōra nisācara bikaṭa bhaṭa samara ganahim nahim kāhu.
mārē sahita sahāya kimi khala mārīca subāhu. 356.

The demons were ferocious and cruel to the extreme; they were formidable warriors who counted no one as worthy of obstruction in their path. Say, how could you (Lord Ram) kill such fierce and wicked demons as Marich and Subahu along with their companions? (Doha no. 356)

[Note—This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 210. It relates to the time when Lord Ram had protected the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra.

Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 109, stanza no. 2 also.]

चौ०. मुनि प्रसाद बलि तात तुझारी । ईस अनेक करवरें टारी ॥ १ ॥
मख रखवारी करि दुहुँ भाई । गुरु प्रसाद सब बिद्या पाई ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

muni prasāda bali tāta tumhārī. īsa anēka karavarēm tārī. 1.
makha rakhavārī kari duhum̐ bhā'īm. guru prasāda saba bidyā pā'īm. 2.

Oh my dear son! I offer all my good deeds as a sacrifice for your sake and your well-being. Indeed it was due to the blessing of the sage (Vishwamitra) and the grace of the Lord God (or Lord Shiva—“īsa”) that all the adversities and obstacles were swept aside for your benefit¹. (1)

Well, the two brothers had protected the fire sacrifice of the sage², and had obtained “Vidya” (esoteric knowledge and rare skills)³ due to the blessing of the guru (sage Vishwamitra)⁴. (2)

[Note—¹There were so many unforeseen and unpredictable difficulties that may have arisen and caused so many problems for Lord Ram that were avoided because of the blessing of the powerful sage Vishwamitra who possessed great mystical powers, as well as by the grace of Lord God. The word used in the text is “Eesh” (ṣūā) which has two basic meanings—one is the God worshipped by a person as his favourite deity, and the other is Lord Shiva. Both these meanings fit in well here.

In this context, refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 240. It was the time when sage Satanand, the royal priest of Janak, had come to sage Vishwamitra to invite him, along with the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman, to come with him to attend the bow-breaking ceremony which will decide who marries Sita. Sage Vishwamitra told the brothers that they should come along and see whom the “Eesh” chooses to be the lucky one who will break the bow and marry Sita. Then Laxman had replied that the Eesh would favour that person upon whom he, i.e. sage Vishwamitra, is favourable and gracious. And as it happened, this ‘chosen one’ favoured by the Ish (Lord Shiva) was Lord Ram because the sage had already blessed the Lord that his wishes would be fulfilled—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 237.

Presently, the mothers are reiterating the same sentiment—saying in effect that since sage Vishwamitra was kind and gracious upon Lord Ram and had blessed him, the Lord God also favoured the Lord by removing all hurdles from his path and help him attain glory and fame.

²This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210.

³This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

⁴A person from whom one learns anything, any skill or knowledge of any kind whatsoever, is a “guru” for that person. The word means a ‘teacher’. Since sage Viswamitra had taught the two brothers the esoteric knowledge pertaining to secret use of powerful mystical weapons and how to conquer thirst and hunger, he was a ‘guru’ of Lord Ram and Laxman. It is to be noted that since the time this knowledge was imparted by the sage to the two brothers, he was constantly addressed as a “guru”. There are umpteen numbers of instances for this: for example, refer Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 218; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1, 6 that precede Doha no. 237; (iii) Doha no. 239; (iv) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 254; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 261; (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 267; (v) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 307.

It is interesting to note here that in the entire story of Ramayan, Lord Ram has addressed only two sages as his “guru”—one was of course sage Vasistha, the royal priest and preceptor of the ruling family of Ayodhya, and the other was sage Vishwamitra. Both had taught Lord Ram—sage Vasistha was the first guru because the four brothers were sent to his hermitage to study when they were old enough for education—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 204. Sage Vishwamitra was the second guru as narrated above.]

मुनितिय तरी लगत पग धूरी । कीरति रही भुवन भरि पूरी ॥ ३ ॥
 कमठ पीठि पबि कूट कठोरा । नृप समाज महँ सिव धनु तोरा ॥ ४ ॥
 बिस्व बिजय जसु जानकि पाई । आए भवन ब्याहि सब भाई ॥ ५ ॥

munitiya tarī lagata paga dhūrī. kīrati rahī bhuvana bhari pūrī. 3.
 kamāṭha pīṭhi pabi kūṭa kaṭhōrā. nr̥pa samāja mahum̐ siva dhanu tōrā. 4.
 bisva bijaya jasu jānaki pāī. āē bhavana byāhi saba bhāī. 5.

The wife of the sage (i.e. Ahilya) was liberated from her curse as soon as the dust of your (Lord Ram’s) feet touched her¹.

Indeed, your fame and glories have filled all the directions of the world². (3)

In the middle of a society of great warriors³, you (Lord Ram) had easily broken the bow of Lord Shiva which was sturdier and stronger than the hardest entities in this world⁴, such as the shell of the tortoise, the Vajra (the strong weapon of Indra, the king of gods, which is said to be made of the hardest material in existence), and the mightiest of mountains. (4)

This achievement gave you the honour of attaining world-wide fame and glory as well as the hand of Sita in marriage. It is so fortunate for all of us and glorifying for the whole family that all the four brothers have got married simultaneously and returned home with their respective brides⁵. (5)

[Note—¹This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12, and Chanda line nos. 1-16 that precede Doha no. 211.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 262 that proclaim the Lord's glory at the time the Lord had broken the formidable bow; and (ii) from Doha no. 291—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 293 that narrate the praises heaped upon Lord Ram by the messengers of king Janak while they were describing the achievements of the Lord to king Dasrath.

Refer also to Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 109, stanza no. 3.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 292 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250; and from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252.

⁵Refer: Geetawali Ramayan, Baal Kand, verse no. 1/109, stanza no. 3 also.]

सकल अमानुष करम तुहारे । केवल कौसिक कृपाँ सुधारे ॥ ६ ॥
 आजु सुफल जग जनमु हमारा । देखि तात बिधुबदन तुहारा ॥ ७ ॥
 जे दिन गए तुहहि बिनु देखें । ते बिरंचि जनि पारहिं लेखें ॥ ८ ॥

sakala amānuṣa karama tumhārē. kēvala kausika kṛpām̐ sudhārē. 6.
 āju suphala jaga janamu hamārā. dēkhi tāta bidhubadana tumhārā. 7.
 jē dina ga'e tumhahi binu dēkhēm̐. tē biran̄ci jani pārahim̐ lēkhēm̐. 8.

Indeed, all your deeds are essentially super-human by nature, and not possible to be replicated by anyone else. It is only that sage Vishwamitra's grace have made these astounding and super-human deeds of yours appear to be more human by nature because the world thinks that they were made possible by the grace and blessing of the sage. [To wit, the sage's blessings and grace have camouflaged the reality of the super-human nature of your mystical deeds.]¹ (6)

Oh dear son. Today we regard our lives as being fruitful and rewarded as we watch your divine form with our own eyes². [To wit, how lucky are we that we are able to see so closely the Supreme Lord of creation with our own eyes. Not only this, we are also able to shower our personal care and love upon him. Say, who else has this good fortune?] (7)

Let the Creator (biran̄ci) not count those days of ours which had gone by without seeing you. [To wit, let us be able to see you every day of our lives; let not even one day pass when we are not able to see your divine form.]³ (8)

[Note—¹This observation has wider ramifications. It means that though Lord Ram's worldly life seemed to be like that of any other human being—he was born like an ordinary human child, studied and played like a child, grew up to become a warrior prince who would fight and kill enemies represented by the demons, who would marry and get sucked in family intrigue which made him go to the forest and suffer its travails, have his wife stolen and then woefully lament her loss, but determined to retrieve her he waged a fierce war at Lanka and finally won it, returned home to

ascend the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya, and ruled for thousand of years like a noble king, produced two sons, named Lav and Kush, and finally exited from the earth grieving for his beloved wife Sita whom he had to abandon due to aspersions cast on her character by someone of his subject—he nevertheless was above all this gross form of worldly drama, and did everything he did to hide his real indentity from the demons. This was to ensure that the demons did not run away from him upon realising Lord Vishnu has finally come down to earth to eliminate them, but on the other hand take the Lord as an ordinary human prince and battle with him so that the Lord gets an opportunity to finish them off.

Hence, the camouflage that the Lord adopted was to hide his real intentions and the secret job on earth, which was to eliminate the demons. This conceit helped him to succeed in his mission.

His form was like any other human being, but his deeds were beyond the abilities of a human. This had created doubts even in the mind of the demon king Ravana too as is evident in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 22 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-6. Here we shall read that Ravana was stunned and dumbfounded when he came to know of the marvelous deeds and the unparalleled valour of Lord Ram that led to the killing of so many of the greatest demons of his race. He wondered how it was ever possible for any human to do this. In any case, Ravana thought that if Lord Ram was indeed the Supreme Being who had come to earth as prophesised by the scriptures, then this was a golden chance for him to find salvation and emancipation, and if he was an ordinary prince then Ravana would kidnap and enslave the Lord's wife Sita as this was the wont and the natural habit of the demon race to take away other people's women by force.

A little later we read in this context that Marich had tried to convince Ravana about the divinity of Lord Ram by arguing that all the stupendous deeds that the Lord had done—such as the killing of the demons Subahu and Tadaka—was impossible for any human to do. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 25.

²The same sentiment was expressed by the crow saint Kaagbhusund in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand—(i) Doha no. 75 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 110.

Earlier in the story we read that when Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, had decided to take refuge with Lord Ram, the same emotions were expressed by him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 42 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

³Lord Ram was very dear to all living beings—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 56.

This loving assertion of the mothers, including of course Kaikeyi, that “let not a single day pass without them not seeing Lord Ram's divine form”, would come to a naught in a few days' time when Kaikeyi's stubbornness would force Lord Ram to go to the forest for 14 years of exile—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 29; and (ii) Doha no. 33.

This is the way the Lord's “Maya”, his delusion-creating powers, holds the world in its sway. This is the very reason why the Lord had smiled wryly in line no. 2 of Doha no. 350 Kha of this present chapter known as Baal Kand. He smirked because he knew that all this expression of love and affection by the mothers and his father would vanish in a few days' time when he would be asked to go to the forest with his wife and his younger brother Laxman.]

दो०. राम प्रतोषीं मातु सब कहि बिनीत बर बैन ।
सुमिरि संभु गुर बिप्र पद किए नीदबस नैन ॥ ३५७ ॥

dōhā.

rāma pratōṣīm mātu saba kahi binīta bara baina.
sumiri sambhu gura bipra pada ki'ē nīdabasa naina. 357.

Lord Ram most politely gratified his mothers and said 'thank you' to them. Then he fixed his attention on Lord Shiva, his guru and Brahmins in general as he gradually fell asleep. (Doha no. 357)

[Note—The mothers were babbling excitedly and preventing the Lord from falling asleep by their constant chatter. The Lord was feeling distracted, so after a while he politely told them 'thank you and good night'. Then in order to calm his senses and fall asleep he concentrated his attention on Lord Shiva etc. so that his mind becomes calm.]

चौ०. नीदउँ बदन सोह सुठि लोना । मनहुँ साँझ सरसीरुह सोना ॥ १ ॥
घर घर करहिं जागरन नारीं । देहिं परसपर मंगल गारीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

nīda'um̃ badana sōha suṭhi lōnā. manahum̃ sām̃jha sarasīruha sōnā. 1.
ghara ghara karahim̃ jāgarana nārīm̃. dēhim̃ parasapara maṅgala gārīm̃. 2.

The countenance and form of Lord Ram looked magnificent even while he slept just like the case of the red-tinged lotus flower that retains its beauty even during the twilight hours¹. (1)

In every household of the city, the women-folk kept awake (or kept vigil) throughout the night, merrily singing songs that are usually sung during such occasions; these songs had lyrics that were laced with words that seemed to be teasing, but it was purposely done to tickle the senses and make everyone laugh, enjoy their time, and celebrate the happy occasion². (2)

[Note—¹The lotus flower usually shrivels up, losing its beauty and sheen when the sun sets in the evening. This applies to the lotus with a blue colour. But, the lotus flower with red petals retains its beauty even during the twilight hours, perhaps because of an abundance of infra-red rays in the light of the setting sun. The light of the setting sun enhances the beauty of the red-coloured lotus rather than subduing it.

During the twilight hours, the infra-red colour of the setting sun's light adds to the natural red colour of the petals of the lotus flower to produce a cumulative effect of enhanced glow and charm of the lotus. On the other hand, this infra-red colour neutralizes the colour of the lotus flower with blue petals, making them look lusterless and shrunk.

Tulsidas has used this metaphor from Nature to emphasise that the glow and charm of Lord Ram's face was the same when the Lord slept as when he was awake. This special mention was necessary because when a person sleeps he is unable to smile or show any sort of other emotions. So, if Lord Ram looked attractive to others just because he always sported a pleasing smile on his face, or made friendly eye-contact with everyone around, or even slightly nodded to acknowledge their presence and politely exchanged greetings with them, no such gesture was possible when the Lord slept. But it did not mean that the prettiness of his face, the charm of his countenance and the divinity of him was diminished even a bit.

²At the time of the marriage ceremony at Janakpur, similar songs laced with taunts were sung by the women-folk of the city to add a lot of fun and jest to the occasion—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 329.

It is a custom that the women keep awake during the first night of the arrival of the groom with his bride in their home. There is a lot of excitement, singing, celebration and rejoicing so much so that no one finds time to go to sleep. This practice also has its origin in the ancient belief that keeping awake during the first night helps to ward-off any evil spirit which may want to sneak in and harm the newly arrived couple.

It ought to be noted also that the celebrations in the royal household were shared by each and every citizen of the capital—whether it was singing, playing of musical instruments, decorating the homes, etc. Abundant instances of this are available in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. For instance—(i) Doha no. 194; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 263; (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 287; (iv) Doha no. 296 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 2; (v) Doha no. 344 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 4; (vi) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 351.]

पुरी बिराजति राजति रजनी । रानीं कहहिं बिलोकहु सजनी ॥ ३ ॥
सुंदर बधुन्ह सासु लै सोई । फनिकन्ह जनु सिरमनि उर गोई ॥ ४ ॥

purī birājati rājati rajanī. rānīm kahahim bilōkahu sajanī. 3.

sundara badhunha sāsu lai sō'īm. phanikanha janu siramani ura gō'īm. 4.

In fact, the night looked so alive and vibrant with celebrations and rejoicings that it left the queens spell-bound. They exclaimed—‘Look friend, how wonderful the night appears to be! Not only our homes, but even the entire city appear to be decked up like a bride.’¹ (3)

The mothers-in-law clasped their beautiful daughters-in-laws to their bosoms when they went to bed to sleep just like the serpent, from whose hood a sac of luminescent sap issues, coils around it when it goes to sleep². (4)

[Note—¹At the time of birth of Lord Ram, the same situation prevailed in Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 195 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 2-8.

It was repeated once again when the news of Lord Ram's marriage arrived in the city—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 296—to Doha no. 297.

²A special category of serpents produces a sap-like substance from the top of its hood. This sap is viscous like thick jelly, effuses a glow, and is contained in a membranous sac. It is called a “Mani”, a gem. According to mythology, this type of serpent remains inside its hole in the daytime, and emerges only during the darkness of the night in search of its prey. But it can see only in the light emanating from this ‘Mani’ which the serpent always carries on its hood wherever it goes. If someone removes this Mani by deceit, the serpent is believed to go blind, and severely curses the stealer. This allegory is cited here to stress that the three mothers-in-law began to love their daughters-in-law with the same intensity of attachment and care that this category of serpent has for its Mani.

We have read earlier that king Dasrath had instructed the queens to take extra care of the four brides because they have come to an alien home, to a new culture, and may be feeling very uneasy, homesick, hesitant and shy. The queen mothers were obliged and expected to make them feel comfortable, relaxed, and at home—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 355.

Besides the orders of the king, the mothers themselves had taken likeness for the four brides and had become fond of them since the first moment they saw them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 349; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 349.

So, when the time came to go to bed, the queen mothers took the brides with them so that the young princesses did not feel lonely and homesick. It was a gesture to make the brides feel that they will get the same love and affection from their mothers-in-law as their own mothers had given them at Janakpur.]

प्रात पुनीत काल प्रभु जागे । अरुनचूड़ बर बोलन लागे ॥ ५ ॥

बंदि मागधन्हि गुनगन गाए । पुरजन द्वार जोहारन आए ॥ ६ ॥

prāta punīta kāla prabhu jāgē. arunacūṛa bara bōlana lāgē. 5.
bandi māgadhanhi gunagana gā'ē. purajana dvāra jōhārana ā'ē. 6.

The Lord (Sri Ram) woke up at dawn at an auspicious time when the cock began to crow¹. (5)

The royal bards and minstrels began singing laudatory verses even as the citizens collected at the gates of the palace calling out for Lord Ram to come to meet them². (6)

[Note—¹The same time of Lord Ram's waking up has been mentioned at Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 226.

²It was a standard practice during those days that bards and minstrels gathered at the gates of the palace to sing the glories of the royal family at dawn. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 194 where it is

mentioned that bards, minstrels and other singers sang the glories of the great royal family of king Raghu in laudatory verses.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37 where it is stated that the bards and minstrels had gathered at the gates of king Dasrath's palace at dawn, but were surprised to see that the king hadn't woken up by then though it was his practice—Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 37 along with its following verse nos. 1-2.]

बंदि बिप्र सुर गुर पितु माता । पाइ असीस मुदित सब भ्राता ॥ ७ ॥
जननिन्ह सादर बदन निहारे । भूपति संग द्वार पगु धारे ॥ ८ ॥

bandi bipra sura gura pitu mātā. pā'i asīsa mudita saba bhrātā. 7.
jananinha sādara badana nihārē. bhūpati saṅga dvāra pagu dhārē. 8.

The four brothers offered their respects to the Brahmins, the gods, the guru, and their parents. Having received their blessings, the brothers felt exhilarated¹. (7)

The queens reverentially gazed at his (Lord Ram's) countenance². Then he accompanied the king (his father, Dasrath) to the gate of the palace. (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram and his brothers were very diligent in obeying the noble traditions established by the scriptures and the society, and one of these traditions was to pay one's respects to the elders the first thing in the morning. Then the Lord carried out his duties as per instructions of his parents and guru. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205.

²Lord Ram is the hero of this epic story, is the eldest of the four brothers, and is the central figure in the narrative. Hence, all eyes are fixed on him, and he is the reference point for all discussions. He is the pivot upon which the entire story revolves and the acts of the epic drama unfold.

The mothers have thanked their good fortune earlier also when they had said that their life has been rewarded when they could see the divine form of the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 357 herein above.

The word “reverentially or respectfully” (“sādara”) implies that the queen-mothers held Lord Ram in high esteem, and treated him with the same honour that they had for their family deity. There is no surprise in this because mother Kaushalya had witnessed the Lord's mystical powers and his true form as the Viraat Purush when he was still a child—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 201—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 202.]

दो०. कीन्हि सौच सब सहज सुचि सरित पुनीत नहाइ ।
प्रातक्रिया करि तात पहिं आए चारिउ भाइ ॥ ३५८ ॥

dōhā.

kīnhi sauca saba sahaja suci sarita punīta nahā'i.
prātakriyā kari tāta pahim ā'ē cāri'u bhā'i. 358.

The four brothers performed all the purification acts and did their ablutions by bathing¹ in the holy river Saryu though they were inherently clean and pure.

Having done with their daily routine of cleaning themselves, they came to their beloved father (king Dasrath)². (Doha no. 358)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 227 where we read that Lord Ram and Laxman have cleaned themselves the first thing in the morning before they went to serve their guru, sage Vishwamitra, in the first morning after their arrival at Janakpur.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26.

²The same idea is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 205 that say Lord Ram first cleaned himself and then went to his father to take instructions from him to carry on with his assigned duties.]

चौ०. भूप बिलोकि लिए उर लाई । बैठे हरषि रजायसु पाई ॥ १ ॥
देखि रामु सब सभा जुड़ानी । लोचन लाभ अवधि अनुमानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bhūpa bilōki li'ē ura lā'ī. baiṭhē haraṣi rajāyasu pā'ī. 1.
dēkhi rāmu saba sabhā juṛānī. lōcana lābha avadhi anumānī. 2.

When the king saw the brothers, he embraced them affectionately¹. The brothers sat down cheerfully when they got instructions from their father to do so². (1)

When the members of the assembly (royal court) saw Lord Ram, all of them felt extremely blessed as if they have got the full reward of possessing their eyesight³. (2)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 308 that describe the exhilaration of king Dasrath when he met Lord Ram and Laxman at Janakpur.

²An extra-ordinary level of decorum and dignified behaviour were practiced in those times. The princes did not just come in and sat down near their father; they remained standing till the king ordered them to take their seats. Being obedient to the father and doing as told by him is the best form of fulfilling the edicts of Dharma (righteous behaviour)—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 35; and Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 205.

When Lord Ram and Laxman had returned from their visit to the city of Janakpur, they had bowed before their guru, sage Vishwamitra, and then sat down only when ordered by the sage—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 225.

Even after Lord Ram ascended the throne of Ayodhya, this decorum was maintained inasmuch as the three brothers always watched the face of Lord Ram and

waited for any instructions that the Lord may issue to them—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 25.

³The same idea is expressed when the marriage party had seen Lord Ram when it arrived at Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 309.

Seeing the Lord was extremely satisfying even for the great sages, such as Sarbhanga—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 8.]

पुनि बसिष्ठु मुनि कौसिकु आए । सुभग आसनन्हि मुनि बैठाए ॥ ३ ॥
सुतन्ह समेत पूजि पद लागे । निरखि रामु दोउ गुर अनुरागे ॥ ४ ॥

puni basiṣṭu muni kausiku ā'ē. subhaga āsanānhi muni baiṭhā'ē. 3.
sutanha samēta pūji pada lāgē. nirakhi rāmu dō'u gura anurāgē. 4.

Then sages Vasistha and Kushik (Vishwamitra) arrived in the court, and the king respectfully gave them beautiful thrones to sit upon. (3)

The king paid his obeisance to the two gurus by duly worshipping their feet along with his four sons¹. The two gurus meanwhile were enchanted when they saw Lord Ram (and a surge of affection for the Lord flowed through their inner-being)². (4)

[Note—¹Worshipping the feet of the guru was a standard practice—refer, for instance, Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 352 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 which are explicit on this point.

Earlier we read that the king had done the same thing on different occasions when he met the two great sages. For instance, with respect to sage Vishwamitra, we have two outstanding examples, one is when the sage had gone to Ayodhya to request for Lord Ram being sent to his hermitage to eliminate the demons (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 207), and the second instance is when the king met this great sage when he came to Janakpur with the marriage party (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 307 and its following Chaupai line no. 1).

As for sage Vasistha, we have the following instances: one is when the king had gone to him to request him to advise a way by which he can have sons as his heirs (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 189), and the other instance is when the king approached him to find out the auspicious time to anoint Lord Ram on the throne of Ayodhya (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 3).

²Lord Ram had enchanted everyone who saw the Lord, and the two gurus were no exception. For example, (a) refer to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207 when sage Vishwamitra saw Lord Ram and his brothers for the first time, and (b) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 10 when sage Vasistha meets Lord Ram in connection with the latter coronation, and once again when the sage met the Lord in Chitrakoot as narrated in Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 243.]

कहहिं बसिष्ठु धरम इतिहासा । सुनहिं महीसु सहित रनिवासा ॥ ५ ॥
मुनि मन अगम गाधिसुत करनी । मुदित बसिष्ठु बिपुल बिधि बरनी ॥ ६ ॥

kahahim basiṣṭu dharama itihāsā. sunahim mahīsu sahita ranivāsā. 5.
muni mana agama gādhisuta karanī. mudita basiṣṭa bipula bidhi baranī. 6.

Sage Vasistha narrated many an episodes from the scriptures such as the Itihas (ancient mythological history pertaining to the gods). The king attentively listened to them along with the members of his family¹. (5)

The marvelous deeds and achievements of sage Vishwamitra (son of Gaadhi) that were of an astounding nature and even incomprehensible for other sages, were narrated with great aplomb by sage Vasistha². (6)

[Note—¹Again, this was a standard practice that when sages sat anywhere, they would narrate stories from the scriptures bearing a moral and spiritual message—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 26 where the same thing has been said about sage Vasistha, but here the Vedas and the Purans have been mentioned instead of the Itihas.

We have read earlier that sage Vishwamitra had done the same thing—that is, he had narrated the stories from the Itihas and Purans—when he sat down to relax with the junior sages accompanying him to Janakpur during the first evening of his stay there: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 226.

Not only the sages, even Lord Ram had narrated extracts from the scriptures to entertain Laxman and Sita in the forest when they felt forlorn and sad, in order to keep their mind engaged and diverted from the travails of forest life—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 141.

²The story of sage Vishwamitra has been narrated as a note appended to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 206 at the beginning of this episode of Lord Ram's marriage.

Sages Vasistha and Vishwamitra had been arch enemies in some ancient time, but they had made up patched up later on. This praise of Vishwamitra by Vasistha was to cement their ties and bury whatever vestiges of ill-will that may have survived. It was also done to indicate to king Dasrath why Vasistha had prevailed upon him to let Lord Ram and Laxman go with sage Vishwamitra as no harm could ever come to the two brothers when they were under the protection of this great and mystically empowered sage.]

बोले बामदेउ सब साँची । कीरति कलित लोक तिहुँ माची ॥ ७ ॥
मुनि आनंदु भयउ सब काहू । राम लखन उर अधिक उछाहू ॥ ८ ॥

bōlē bāmadē'u saba sām̃cī. kīrati kalita lōka tihum̃ mācī. 7.
 suni ānandu bhaya'u saba kāhū. rāma lakhana ura adhika uchāhū. 8.

Whatever sage Vasistha said about Vishwamitra was endorsed by sage Vamdeo who said, ‘Everything is true. Indeed, the glories of sage Vishwamitra are well established in all the three levels or areas of the world.’ [These three levels are—the heaven, the earth, and the nether world.] (7)

Hearing these words and listening to the magnificent glories of sage Vishwamitra, everyone present there felt delighted, but Lord Ram and Laxman were more delighted than others¹. (8)

[Note—¹The reason for the two brothers feeling “more delighted than others” is that by this time they had developed a strong bond of affection and endearment with the great sage. They had experienced the depth and intensity of Vishwamitra’s love and affection for them, and had by then begun to see the sage fulfilling two roles simultaneously—one of their father king Dasrath, and the other of their guru Vasistha. For instance, (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 208 tells us that sage Vishwamitra assumed the role of their father; (ii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 209 which tell us how the sage taught the two brothers certain esoteric skills, thereby becoming their guru; (iii) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 226 tell us how affectionately the two brothers had served the sage by insisting upon massaging his legs even when the sage kept on telling them to go and sleep during their first night at Janakpur; (iv) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 237, and Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 240 where we read that the sage had blessed the brothers that their wishes would be fulfilled; and finally (v) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 254 where we read that sage Vishwamitra had spoken very lovingly when he had ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow.

To wit, Lord Ram and Laxman had begun to love sage Vishwamitra more than anyone else. They had become informal with him, had developed a special affection and affinity for him because the sage had shared with them some of the happiest moments of their lives—the time when they got married. The loving sage had played a stellar role in bringing this about.

Lord Ram and Laxman had been more informal and friendly with sage Vishwamitra than they had been with either their father king Dasrath or their guru sage Vasistha.]

दो०. मंगल मोद उछाह नित जाहिं दिवस एहि भाँति ।
 उमगी अवध अनंद भरि अधिक अधिक अधिकाति ॥ ३५९ ॥

dōhā.

maṅgala mōda uchāha nita jāhir̃ divasa ēhi bhām̃ti.
 umagī avadha ananda bhari adhika adhika adhikāti. 359.

Days passed away merrily with constant rejoicing and celebrations. It appeared that happiness and joy were sweeping across Ayodhya in wave after wave, each swelling higher and still higher than the previous one. (Doha no. 359)

[Note—Similar celebrations were witnessed in Ayodhya at the time of birth of Lord Ram and his three brothers—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345.]

चौ०. सुदिन सोधि कल कंकन छोरे । मंगल मोद बिनोद न थोरे ॥ १ ॥
नित नव सुखु सुर देखि सिहाहीं । अवध जन्म जाचहिं बिधि पाहीं ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

sudina sōdhi kala kaṅkana chōrē. maṅgala mōda binōda na thōrē. 1.
nita nava sukhu sura dēkhi sihāhīm. avadha janma jācahīm bidhi pāhīm. 2.

Deciding upon an auspicious day, the sacred strings (that were tied around the wrist and waist of the grooms and the brides as part of the marriage ritual to ward-off evil spirits and bad omens if any) were untied (removed) from the bodies (of the grooms and their respective brides) amid a lot of celebrations and fanfare. (1)

Observing that there were constant celebrations in Ayodhya and the atmosphere was rich in happiness and joy; the gods praised the city and prayed to the creator Brahma that they should be allowed to take birth in Ayodhya¹. (2)

[Note—¹The gods have praised the city of Ayodhya elsewhere also. For example, refer: Ram Charit Manas—(i) Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 195; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 196; as well as (ii) Uttar Kand, Doha no. 26. All these verses are explicit on this point that the gods were enchanted by the fabulous beauty and charm of Ayodhya.]

बिस्वामित्रु चलन नित चहहीं । राम सप्रेम बिनय बस रहहीं ॥ ३ ॥
दिन दिन सयगुन भूपति भाऊ । देखि सराह महामुनिराऊ ॥ ४ ॥

bisvāmitru calana nita cahāhīm. rāma saprēma binaya basa rahāhīm. 3.
dina dina sayaguna bhūpati bhā'ū. dēkhi sarāha mahāmunirā'ū. 4.

Sage Vishwamitra wanted to leave for his hermitage and expressed his intention daily, but he had to keep deferring it in deference to the requests of Lord Ram who wanted the sage to stay for some more time. (3)

The great sage who was like a king among sages (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) appreciated the ever-increasing respect for him that was expressed by the king (Dasrath)¹.

[So, despite his strong desire to leave for his hermitage as it was already very long since he left it with Lord Ram and Laxman when they went to Janakpur, he had

to keep postponing his departure because of Lord Ram's insistence and the respect that king Dasrath showed to him.] (4)

[Note—¹We have read that when Dasrath had wanted to leave Janakpur for his own city of Ayodhya after the marriage ceremony was finished, Janak had similarly prevailed upon Dasrath to stay for some more time. Janak's warmth of affection and hospitality was also so great that Dasrath could not muster enough courage to leave against Janak's wishes to avoid being impolite and making the latter feel insulted and offended. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 332.]

मागत बिदा राउ अनुरागे । सुतन्ह समेत ठाढ़ भे आगे ॥ ५ ॥
 नाथ सकल संपदा तुहारी । मैं सेवकु समेत सुत नारी ॥ ६ ॥
 करब सदा लरिकन्ह पर छोहू । दरसनु देत रहब मुनि मोहू ॥ ७ ॥

māgata bidā rā'u anurāgē. sutanha samēta ṭhārṇha bhē āgē. 5.
 nātha sakala sampadā tumhārī. maim sēvaku samēta suta nārī. 6.
 karaba sadā larikanha para chōhū. darasanu dēta rahaba muni mōhū. 7.

Finally, when many days had passed, one day the sage politely requested the king to let him leave. Hearing this, the king was overwhelmed with affections and stood reverentially before the sage accompanied by his sons. (5)

The king said affectionately and reverentially, 'Oh Lord! All my wealth and realm are yours. I too am your servant together with my sons and wives (i.e. my queens and daughters-in-law)¹. (6)

Be always kind, compassionate and loving upon your children (me and my family). Oh Lord, please be kind to let me have your Darshan (holy sight) time and again in the future also. [That is, kindly visit my kingdom often, and whenever you please. You are most welcome, and I will feel glad to worship you again and again in the future.]² (7)

[Note—¹A similar situation prevailed at the time of departure of the marriage party from Janakpur—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 340—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.

²Later on in the story we shall read that Lord Ram had also requested his friends, the monkeys led by Sugriv, the friendly demons led by Vibhishan, and the boatman named Nishad, at the time of their going back to their respective homes from Ayodhya where they had all come with Lord Ram when he returned from Lanka after the end of his 14 years of forest exile, that they should always remember the Lord affectionately, and keep coming back to Ayodhya whenever they wish—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 15—to Doha no. 16; and Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 20.]

अस कहि राउ सहित सुत रानी । परेउ चरन मुख आव न बानी ॥ ८ ॥
दीन्हि असीस बिप्र बहु भाँती । चले न प्रीति रीति कहि जाती ॥ ९ ॥
रामु सप्रेम संग सब भाई । आयसु पाइ फिरे पहुँचाई ॥ १० ॥

asa kahi rā'u sahita suta rānī. parē'u carana mukha āva na bānī. 8.
dīnhi asīsa bipra bahu bhāmṭī. calē na prīti rīti kahi jāṭī. 9.
rāmu saprēma saṅga saba bhāī. āyasu pā'i phirē pahumcāī. 10.

Saying this, the king fell at the feet of the sage together with his queens and his sons. He was so overwhelmed with emotions that words failed him and he could not say anything else. (8)

The Brahmin (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) in his turn blessed all of them profusely. Then the sage departed from there for his hermitage, but on the way he was himself overcome with emotions of love and affection for the whole royal family. This mutual affection and respect for each other were so profound and sincere that one cannot describe them.¹ (9)

Lord Ram, accompanied by his brothers, affectionately escorted the sage (to the outskirts of the city) and returned back only after he ordered them to do so². (10)

[Note—¹A similar situation prevailed when Lord Ram had to send his friends, the monkeys, the bears, the demons and the boatman, back to their homes from Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.

Similarly, Janak and his queen Sunayana were also overwhelmed with surging emotions when the marriage party finally left Janakpur for Ayodhya—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line nos. 5 that precedes Doha no. 336—to Doha no. 337; and (ii) Doha no. 338 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

²There are two other instances where we read that the host has escorted the guest when the latter was going away to his place.

One is when king Janak had gone a long distance with Dasrath to see him off when the marriage party was returning to Ayodhya. After paying his obeisance to all the Brahmins, sages and elders of the marriage party, as well as showing his respects to king Dasrath and love for all the four brothers, king Janak had finally returned home. This is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 340—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.

The other instance is when the friends of Lord Ram—the monkeys led by Sugriv, the bears led by Jamvant, the demons led by Vibhishan, and the head of the boatman community named Nishad who had come to Ayodhya aboard the air-plane in which Lord Ram had returned to Ayodhya after his 14 year forest exile—were requested by the Lord to go back to their respective homes. The Lord and his brothers had gone out to escort them from Ayodhya—refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 19; (ii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20. This entire episode however is narrated in Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 16—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 20.]

दो०. राम रूपु भूपति भगति व्याहु उछाहु अनंदु ।
जात सराहत मनहिं मन मुदित गाधिकुलचंदु ॥ ३६० ॥

dōhā.

rāma rūpu bhūpati bhagati byāhu uchāhu anandu.
jāta sarāhata manahim mana mudita gādhikulacandu. 360.

As the sage, who was like a moon in the family of king Gaadhi¹ (i.e. sage Vishwamitra), went on his way to his hermitage (which was located far away in the forest), he kept on praising in his Mana (mind and heart), all along the way, the beauty and the charm of the countenance and form of Lord Ram², the devotion and piety of king Dasrath, and the festivities, the joys and rejoicings of the events of the marriage ceremony. (Doha no. 360)

[Note—¹The metaphor of the moon is used to say that sage Vishwamitra was a prominent member of the family of Gaadhi, and that his glories shone brilliantly like that of the full moon in the night sky.

²When Lord Ram had sent-off his monkey, bear and demon friends back to their respective homes from Ayodhya, they had also remembered the Lord and his glories all along their way back—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Doha no. 17 Ka.]

चौ०. बामदेव रघुकुल गुर ग्यानी । बहुरि गाधिसुत कथा बखानी ॥ १ ॥
सुनि मुनि सुजसु मनहिं मन राऊ । बरनत आपन पुन्य प्रभाऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bāmadēva raghukula gura gyānī. bahuri gādhisuta kathā bakhānī. 1.
suni muni sujasa manahim mana rā'ū. baranata āpana pun'ya prabhā'ū. 2.

Sage Vamdeo and the wise¹ preceptor of the family of king Raghu, i.e. sage Vasistha, once again² narrated the glorious story of the son of the family of king Gaadhi, i.e. sage Vishwamitra. (1)

Hearing the famed glories of the sage (Vishwamitra), the king praised to himself his own good fortune and meritorious deeds (that had enabled him and his sons Lord Ram and Laxman to serve the great sage, and be lucky to have received his patronage and blessings)³. (2)

[Note—¹The use of the word “gyānī”, which means one who is wise and knowledgeable, implies here that whatever had been said about Vishwamitra by the wise sage (Vasistha) was genuine and truthful, and nothing by way of flattery.

Another important point is that this word “gyani” has been so strategically put that it applies equally to Vasistha as well as Vamdeo. In other words, it implies that both these sages who had narrated the glories of Vishwamitra, i.e. Vasistha and Vamdeo, were equally wise, learned and knowledgeable.

²This is the second time that sage Vishwamitra's immense achievements and mystical powers have been described by sage Vasistha. The first occasion was when the sages had assembled in the court of king Dasrath as narrated earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 359. At that time when sage Vasistha had lauded the stupendous glories of sage Vishwamitra, sage Vamdeo had endorsed them, saying that whatever Vasistha had said about Vishwamitra was indeed the truth.

On this second occasion, however, both the sages, i.e. Vasistha and Vamdeo, have together spoken highly of Vishwamitra. To speak highly of someone and praise him behind his back is the sincerest form of praise.

³The king felt extremely happy that he had been able to serve such a great sage even without having to make any special effort to do so. Normally one had to make a lot of effort to first find who a great and realized sage is, and then it takes a lot more effort to be able to serve such a sage so that he gets sufficiently pleased. In the case of Dasrath the tables were turned in as much as the sage himself had come to the king to seek his favour—which was to lend his two sons, Lord Ram and Laxman, to the sage so that the latter's fire sacrifice could be saved. In return, the sage rewarded king Dasrath by getting all his sons married to noble princesses belonging to the royal family of king Janak who was equal in stature to king Dasrath.]

बहुरे लोग रजायसु भयऊ । सुतन्ह समेत नृपति गृहं गयऊ ॥ ३ ॥
जहँ तहँ राम ब्याहु सबु गावा । सुजसु पुनीत लोक तिहँ छावा ॥ ४ ॥

bahurē lōga rajāyasu bhaya'ū. sutanha samēta nṛpati gṛham' गया'ū. 3.
jaham'taham'rāma byāhu sabu gāvā. sujasu punīta lōka tihum' chāvā. 4.

All the rest of the people who had assembled to see-off sage Vishwamitra were given instructions to go their way. Then the king, accompanied by his sons, went to his palace¹. (3)

Everyone (i.e. the citizens of the city of Ayodhya and the subjects of the extended kingdom, the gods in heaven, the people of the world at large, in all its corners) fondly sang (i.e. narrated and discussed) about the marriage ceremony (of Lord Ram and his brothers) so much so that its magnificent events and cheerful moments had spread in all the three spheres of the world (the heaven, the earth and the subterranean or nether world)². (4)

[Note—¹The king was always accompanied by his sons. There are many instances of this mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand. For instance, (i) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 309; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 315; (iii) line no. 1 of Doha no. 354; (iv) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 358; (v) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 359; (vi) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 360.

In other words, king Dasrath was so fond of Lord Ram and his brothers that he tried to keep them with him as much as possible and practical. This is clear when he had declined to oblige sage Vishwamitra when the sage asked for Lord Ram to be sent

with him to the forest for protecting his fire sacrifice. The king had told the sage that all the four sons were equally dear to him, and in fact were dearer to him than his own life. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 208.

This was in line with what Dasrath had himself sought as a boon from Lord Vishnu in his previous life as Manu when he had done severe Tapa (penance) to have a divine vision of the Lord. Manu had asked Lord Vishnu to bless him so that “his life depended upon the love of the Lord just like the life of a serpent depends upon the Mani (gem) on its hood”—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 151.

²The messengers of king Janak had also endorsed this fact that the glory of Lord Ram has been established in all the three worlds when they were describing the events leading upto the breaking of Lord Shiva’s bow by Lord Ram and the subsequent marriage of the Lord with Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 291.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 265 which also reiterates that the news of Lord Ram marrying Sita after breaking the bow of Lord Shiva had spread to all the corners of the world—i.e. in the heaven where the gods live, on the earth where the mortal creatures live, and in the subterranean world where the serpents live.]

आए ब्याहि रामु घर जब तें । बसइ अनंद अवध सब तब तें ॥ ५ ॥
प्रभु बिबाहँ जस भयउ उछाहू । सकहिं न बरनि गिरा अहिनाहू ॥ ६ ॥

ā'ē byāhi rāmu ghara jaba tēm. basa'i ananda avadha saba taba tēm. 5.
prabhu bibāham' jasa bhaya'u uchāhū. sakahim na barani girā ahināhū. 6.

Ever since the time Lord Ram had arrived home after his marriage, all sorts of happiness and joys took up residence in Ayodhya¹. (5)

Even the goddess of speech (“Gira”; goddess Saraswati or Sarada) and the lord of serpents (i.e. Lord Seshnath with a thousand tongues) were not able to describe the immensity and intensity of celebrations and festivities that attended the marriage ceremony of the Lord (i.e. Sri Ram, and by inference all the brothers—because all of them were married simultaneously under the same canopy that was erected for the wedding rituals, and married to the princesses of the same family, the royal family of king Janak).

[To wit, it was beyond the abilities of Saraswati and Seshnath to describe the celebrations and festivities associated with the marriage of Lord Ram and his brothers.]² (6)

[Note—¹Though Ayodhya was always an abode of happiness, joy and prosperity, on special occasions it looked more wonderful with all the extra decorations and festivities. This is clearly mentioned in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 296.

This time around the glory of Ayodhya was enhanced because now Sita, who was actually goddess Laxmi personified, has come to live here. Laxmi is the goddess of all-round prosperity and well-being, so all sorts of happiness and joy, the sense of

contentedness and fulfillment that are associated with this goddess being pleased upon a person, came and blessed Ayodhya so much so that the city appeared to be an abode of prosperity, happiness, abundance and well-being.

The intensity of happiness and joy that prevailed in Ayodhya was compounded with the arrival of Sita, though of course all aspects of well-being and cheerfulness were always associated with the city by virtue of it being the home of Lord Ram who himself was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Refer specially to: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 195; and (b) Uttar Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 20—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 24; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Doha no. 30.

²Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 331 which say the same thing.]

कबिकुल जीवन् पावन जानी । राम सीय जसु मंगल खानी ॥ ७ ॥
तेहि ते मैं कछु कहा बखानी । करन पुनीत हेतु निज बानी ॥ ८ ॥

kabikula jīvanu pāvana jānī. rāma siya jasu maṅgala khānī. 7.
tēhi tē mair̥m kachu kahā bakhānī. karana punīta hētu nija bānī. 8.

[Now, Tulsidas talks about his own good luck that he has had the rare opportunity to sing the divine glories of Lord Ram and Sita by way of narrating their divine marriage, when even Saraswati and Seshnath were unable to do so. In other words, Tulsidas says that he has tried his best to narrate the story of Lord Ram's wedding with Sita, but his narration is not enough or sufficient because even divine Beings such as goddess Saraswati and Lord Seshnath had failed to do so.]

I regard my life as a poet worthwhile and rewarded because I have been able to narrate, as much and as best as I could, the divine glories and famed deeds of Lord Ram and Sita. (7)

I (Tulsidas) have attempted to narrate a bit of it just to purify my words and speech. [To wit, though I am absolutely incompetent to narrate the divine story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita, I still took the plunge because I wished to purify and wash clean my own faculty of speech and polish my words. I did not narrate this story to boast of my writing prowess or poetic skills, but to take a dip, as it were, in this holy pond of nectar in order to purify my mind and its faculty of thought and speech.] (8)

[Note—An exactly similar emotion has been expressed by Tulsidas in the beginning of the narration, by way of a preamble, in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Doha no. 10 along with its preceding Chaupai line no. 7-10 and Chanda line nos. 1-4; (iii) Doha no. 12 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-12; and (iv) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 355.]

छं०. निज गिरा पावनि करन कारन राम जसु तुलसीं कह्यो । १ ।
रघुबीर चरित अपार बारिधि पारु कबि कौनें लह्यो ॥ २ ॥

उपबीत ब्याह उछाह मंगल सुनि जे सादर गावहीं । ३ ।
 बैदेहि राम प्रसाद ते जन सर्बदा सुखु पावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija girā pāvani karana kārana rāma jasu tulasīm kahyaō. 1.
 raghubīra carita apāra bāridhi pāru kabi kaunēm lahyaō. 2.
 upabīta byāha uchāha maṅgala suni jē sādara gāvahīm. 3.
 baidēhi rāma prasāda tē jana sarbadā sukhu pāvahīm. 4.

Tulsidas says that he has narrated the magnificent tale of Lord Ram's hallowed life and divine deeds just to purify and sanctify his own tongue and its faculty of speech. (Chanda line no. 1)

Otherwise, since Lord Rajubhir's (i.e. Lord Ram's) story is like a limitless ocean, which poet (in his right senses) would even ever think of attempting to narrate it?¹ (Chanda line no. 2)

Indeed, those who reverentially hear and devotionally sing the auspicious events and celebrations associated with Lord Ram's sacred-thread ceremony (i.e. his childhood days) and his marriage ceremony (i.e. his adulthood days)² on a daily basis (i.e. regularly; whenever they wish to purify their mind and heart, as well as to free themselves from worldly taints and tensions), [Chanda line no. 3]----

---Such persons are always blessed with great happiness and well-being by the grace of Lord Ram and Vaidehi (Sita) [Chanda line no. 4].

[Note—¹Tulsidas says in effect—‘Inspite of knowing the impossibility of ever accomplishing the formidable task of fully and correctly depicting the glorious life and time of Lord Ram successfully by narrating his divine story, I (Tulsidas) still went ahead with this formidable task just to purify my inner self, my mind and heart, my faculty of speech and my whole being.

Despite being fully aware that it is not possible to ever describe the life and times of Lord Ram, who was a personified form of the Supreme Being himself, in its entirety, and even if one tries then to do justice with this narration, and though I was fully aware of my own inadequacies, my limitations and incompetencies, I nevertheless still chose to go ahead with this narration, singing and glorifying the Lord, narrating various events of his hallowed life and the divine deeds done by him just because I wanted to sanctify my own words by using them in honour of Lord Ram.

I simply wished to worship my Lord God, Sri Ram, by sacrificing all the skills I had to serve him. And since by vocation I am a poet and writer, the best form of service I could think of was to spend my time and life singing the divine glories of the Lord to the best of my abilities, and in the best way my mind and heart guided me to do. It is my humble way of serving my Lord God and put myself in his service.

I wished to cleanse all the impurities that had been clinging to my inner-self, my heart and my mind, by devoting them exclusively in the thoughts of Lord Ram, and writing of the Lord was a natural outcome of this emotion; narrating the story of Lord Ram is my way of venting my emotion of devotion and love for Lord Ram, and it is completely free from pretensions or boast.

I just wanted to sacrifice my self, both the grosser aspect of the body consisting of such organs as that of speech, sight, touch and hearing, as well as its subtler aspect consisting of the mind and heart, in the service of Lord Ram whom I hold dear to my inner-being.

Let it be clear from my side that I do not want anyone to think that I am showing-off my prowess as an expert writer and word-smith. I am neither of them. I have already made these points very clear repeatedly in the very beginning of my narration of Ram Charit Manas. Refer, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 12; and (iii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 355.’

²The “childhood days of Lord Ram” have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from the Chanda that precedes Doha no. 192—to Doha no. 205.

The “adulthood days of Lord Ram” have been described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from the Chaupai line no. 1 precedes Doha no. 206—to the end of Baal Kand in Sortha no. 361 herein below.]

सो०. सिय रघुबीर बिबाहु जे सप्रेम गावहिं सुनहिं ।

तिन्ह कहँ सदा उछाहु मंगलायतन राम जसु ॥ ३६१ ॥

sōraṭhā.

siya raghubīra bibāhu jē saprēma gāvahim sunahim.

tinha kahum̐ sadā uchāhu maṅgalāyatana rāma jasu. 361.

Those who listen carefully, with great devotion and affection, the story narrating the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, they will always enjoy all round auspiciousness and well-being by the grace and blessing of the Lord. Such is the glory of Lord Ram!! (Sortha/Doha no. 361)

इति श्रीमद्रामचरितमानसे सकलकलिकलुषविध्वंसने

प्रथमः सोपानः समाप्तः

(बालकाण्ड समाप्त)

iti śrīmadrāmacaritamānasē sakalakalikaluṣavidhvansanē prathamahṣ sōpānaḥ samāptaḥ.

[PAUSE 12 FOR A THIRTY-DAY RECITATION]

Thus ends Baal Kand (Canto no. 1) of this divine nectar-like auspicious story of Lord Ram that is known as “Ram Charit Manas”.

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Appendix

(1) Other Volumes in this series are as follows:

Volume 2: Chapter 5.2 / Canto 2: Ayodhya Kand

Volume 3: Chapter 5.3 / Canto 3: Aranya Kand

Volume 4: Chapter 5.4 / Canto 4: Kishkindha Kand

Volume 5: Chapter 5.5 / Canto 5: Sundar Kand

Volume 6: Chapter 5.6 / Canto 6: Lanka Kand

Volume 7: Chapter 5.7 / Canto 7: Uttar Kand

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(2)

About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

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(B) The Author's Books listed under (A-1) are available as e-books and printed books on the internet at the following websites: (a) www.amazon.com; (b) www.draft2digital.com; and (c) www.pothi.com.

Books listed under (A-2 and A-3) have been published in 'Printed-Book Editions' by the following two reputed Indian Publishers (details given below) :

(B-1)

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